

# Etoniah/Cross Florida Greenway

Critical Natural Lands

Citrus, Clay, Levy, Marion and Putnam Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	1995
<i>Project Acres</i>	94,105
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	40,517
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$27,062,231
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	53,588
<i>2021 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$142,949,734

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Etoniah/Cross Florida Greenway project will protect large expanses of flatwoods, sandhills and scrub in central Putnam County, extending to the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway along the Ocklawaha River. The Etoniah/Cross Florida Greenway project will fill gaps in the greenway and guarantee habitat for imperiled species like Florida black bear, scrub jay and Etoniah rosemary. The project will support the expansion of outdoor resource-based recreation along the greenway, which is a unique piece of public conservation land that crosses the entire Florida peninsula from the Withlacoochee River to the St. Johns River and provides opportunities for long-distance hiking, fishing, camping and hunting.

## General Description

The project consists of a large tract extending north from the Cross Florida Greenway to Clay County, and four smaller tracts designed to fill in gaps in state ownership along the greenway. The original Etoniah/Cross Florida Greenway project is important habitat for the Florida black bear in northeast Florida. The site includes many acres of pine plantation and cutover flatwoods, but also high-quality sandhill, a unique white-cedar swamp along Deep Creek, and patches of sand pine scrub near Etoniah Creek that harbor at least a dozen rare species including fox squirrel, gopher tortoise, indigo and pine snakes, rare crayfish and seven rare plants, including the only known site of the federally listed Etoniah rosemary. The smaller tracts include high-quality floodplain swamps along the Ocklawaha River, mixed forest land near U.S. 441 south of Ocala, and disturbed pinelands between the old Cross Florida Barge Canal and the Withlacoochee River. Eight archaeological sites are known on the project.

The greatest threat to the project area is intensive logging, but the uplands on the larger tracts are suitable for residential development. The smaller sites would lose their value as connectors if developed for residences.



FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<b><u>FNAI Elements</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
<i>Etonia rosemary</i>	G1/S1
Florida scrub-jay	G1G2/S1S2
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Eastern indigo snake	G3/S2?
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Florida mouse	G3/S3
Swallow-tailed kite	G5/S2
Gopher tortoise acrolophus moth	G1/S1
<i>bog spicebush</i>	G3/S1
<i>Florida spiny-pod</i>	G2/S2
<i>pinkroot</i>	G2/S2
<i>Curtiss' loosestrife</i>	G2/S2

**Public Use**

The Cross Florida Greenway connectors will form part of a conservation and recreation area, and the majority of the Etoniah tract will become a state forest. The various parts of the project will offer opportunities for hiking, hunting, fishing, and nature appreciation. Acquisition would also help complete the Florida National Scenic Trail, a statewide non-motorized trail that crosses several Florida Forever project sites. The trail is a congressionally designated national scenic trail.

**Acquisition Planning**

**Etoniah Creek**

Phase I tracts include Stokes and Agricola, formerly Deltona, Union Camp, Manning and Interlachen Lake Estates Subdivision. Life-of-the-South (Odom) is also an essential tract. Phase II includes other large ownerships, such as Roberts, as well as other smaller tracts and subdivisions.

**Cross Florida Greenway**

Phase I includes the westernmost segment (Deep Creek Corridor) consisting of a portion of the Miller family ownerships and approximately 14 other owners.

**Cross Florida Greenway Phase II**

The priority tract within this portion of the project is the Inglis Island site (acquired by DEP's Office of Greenways and Trails).

**1994**

On July 20, 1994, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council added 210 acres to the boundaries of the predecessor projects.

**1995**

On December 7, 1995, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council approved the addition of 2,664 acres to the project boundary. The addition included lakeshore and lake bottom associated with Rodman Reservoir. A second modification was made to allow the St. Johns River Water Management District to acquire, on the





state's behalf, a large ownership (Odom) not identified in the original Phase I area. Acquisition of the canal easement areas is also a priority.

**1996**

On March 15, 1996, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council approved adding 141 acres to the project boundaries.

On December 5, 1996, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council transferred the Georgia-Pacific ownership (18,146 acres) to the Less-Than-Fee category.

**1998**

On October 15, 1998, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council designated as essential an additional 9,870 acres (Georgia-Pacific and seven smaller tracts in a corridor between two already acquired tracts, and portions of the Roberts ownership).

**2000**

On August 22, 2000, the Acquisition and Restoration Council added 2,110 acres to the project.

**2001**

On January 25, 2001, the Acquisition and Restoration Council added 1,543 acres to the project boundary in the Deep Creek area.

On May 1, 2001, the Acquisition and Restoration Council added 1,110 acres to the boundaries of the project.

**2003**

On February 25, 2003, the project was added to Group A of the Florida Forever priority list.

**2007**

On April 13, 2007, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved an 85-acre fee-simple addition (known as Foxtrotter Ranch) to the project boundary. It was sponsored by DEP's Office of Greenways and Trails, consisted of one landowner, Richard Simon, and had a taxable value of \$2,267,908. The Office of Greenways and Trails will manage the site. The house (approximately 2.5 acres) is not included in the addition. However, it may be donated to the state subsequent to acquisition.

**2008**

In June 2008, 1.19 acres (owned by the Harrington's) were purchased by the Florida Forest Service for \$15,000 using Florida Forever funds.

In September, October and November 2008, the Florida Forest Service used Florida Forever funds to buy the following acreages: 1.08 acres (Fred Yankee, LLC) for \$13,500; 0.87 acres (Goddard) for \$23,000; (Land Reclamation, Inc.) for \$15,000; (Cann) for \$23,000; 1.21 acres (Martin) for \$14,000; 1.27 acres (Vehoski) for \$14,000; 1 acre (Murray) for \$15,000; 1.25 acres (Uttech) for \$11,500; 2.5 acres (Lachmansingh) for \$25,000; 3.61 acres (Chapman) for \$37,500; 2.53 acres (Thornton) for \$23,000; 1.27 acres (Dubay) for \$14,000; 1.24 acres (Hood) for \$15,500; 1.25 acres (Contreras) for \$14,000; and 1.24 acres (South) for \$14,000.





## **2009**

On January 21, 2009, the St. Johns River Water Management District purchased 208 acres for \$474,363 (Plum Creek).

On June 1, 2009, the Nochaway Mitigation Bank was created (4,075.77 acres).

In October 2009, 1.25 acres were purchased from Margaret Vail for \$14,000.

In November 2009, 1.25 acres were purchased from Kenneth/Diane Schwing for \$15,500.

On December 10, 2009, the Florida Forest Service purchased 1.43 acres for \$13,500 and will manage this tract.

## **2010**

On November 4, 2010, the Florida Forest Service purchased 106 acres (Moore) for \$405,000 using Florida Forever funds. The Florida Forest Service will manage this tract.

## **2011**

On January 3, 2011, the Florida Forest Service purchased 1.29 acres (Williams) for \$18,000 using Florida Forever funds.

On May 2, 2011, the Florida Forest Service purchased 1.25 acres (Cearley) for \$12,000.

On August 3, 2011, the Florida Forest Service purchased 3.69 acres (Interlachen Lakes Estates) for \$27,500.

On August 30, 2011, FCT purchased 1,268 acres to create Nine Mile Swamp Park. Approximately 1,216 acres of the park are within the project boundary.

On December 9, 2011, the Acquisition and Restoration Council recommended a 1,509-acre reduction to the project boundary containing residential development, commercial buildings, and other infrastructure and placed this project in the Critical Natural Lands category.

## **2012**

On September 21, 2012, the BOT acquired 1.25 acres for \$6,000 to be managed as part of the Etoniah Creek State Forest.

On December 27, 2012, the St. Johns River Water Management District acquired the Bear Track Bay tract (625 acres) as Florida Department of Transportation mitigation.

## **2013**

On December 20, 2013, the St. Johns River Water Management District acquired the Highbrighton conservation easement on approximately 2,478 acres, of which approximately 849 acres are within the project boundary.

## **2015**

On April 30, 2015, the St. Johns River Water Management District exchanged the Bear Track Bay tract (625 acres) for two new parcels and retained a conservation easement on the property.





## **2018**

On August 24, 2018, Acquisition and Restoration Council members voted to amend the project by adding two parcels in Putnam County, totaling 48 acres, to the project boundary. The addition was proposed by Patrick E. Troxel and is near the town of Satsuma.

On October 19, 2018, Acquisition and Restoration Council members voted to amend the project by adding the O'Connor Tract, comprised of 10 parcels totaling approximately 821 acres in Putnam County, to the project boundary. This includes approximately 120 acres that are submerged by the Rodman Reservoir.

## **2020**

In January 2020, a 3,562-acre conservation easement was acquired from Wetlands Preserve, LLC in Putnam County for \$3,380,000. The Division of State Lands will serve as the easement monitor for the property.

In February 2020, a 47.96-acre property was acquired fee-simple from the Estate of Eddie Elray Troxel for \$22,500. This will be managed by the Division of Recreation and Parks as part of the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway. Two donations containing 74.77 acres were acquired and will be managed by the Florida Forest Service as part of Etoniah Creek State Forest.

## **2021**

DEP acquired fee simple 1,889.71 acres in Marion County from Florida Power and Light Company that will be managed by the Division of Recreation and Parks as an addition to Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway.

## **2022**

On December 9, 2022, the Acquisition and Restoration Council voted to add approximately 1,469 acres (Interlachen Timberlands, 906 acres, and J-Mil, 563 acres) to the project boundary.

DEP acquired a conservation easement in Putnam County totaling 215.91 acres from Wetland Preserve, LLC.

## **Coordination**

The St. Johns River Water Management District was the intermediary in the acquisition of the Manning tract and has provided information and expertise on several other tracts. DEP's Office of Greenways and Trails used additions and inholding funds to acquire Inglis Island. The Division of State Lands will assume the lead on acquisition of the remaining tracts.

## **Management Policy Statement**

The primary goals of management of the Etoniah/Cross Florida Greenway project are: to conserve and protect environmentally unique and irreplaceable lands that contain native, relatively unaltered flora and fauna representing a natural area unique to, or scarce within, a region of this state or a larger geographic area; to conserve and protect significant habitat for native, endangered and threatened species; to conserve, protect, manage or restore important ecosystems, landscapes and forests in order to enhance





or protect significant natural resources; and to provide areas, including recreational trails, for natural-resource-based recreation.

### Manager (s)

The Florida Forest Service proposes to manage the 57,000-acre Etoniah Creek portion of the project and the Division of Recreation and Parks will manage the remaining lands near the old Cross Florida Barge Canal. The Florida Forest Service will monitor compliance with the terms of any less-than-fee purchase agreement.

### Management Prospectus

#### **Qualifications for State Designation**

The large size, restorable pine plantations, and diversity of the Etoniah Creek portion of this project make it highly desirable for management as a state forest. The Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway includes scenic and historic rivers, lakes, wetlands and uplands. It is also near, or contiguous with, many other state-owned lands. The Cross Florida Greenway portion of this project (along with the lands already in the greenway) has the configuration, location and the resources to qualify as a state recreation area.

#### **Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management**

Because there are no known major disturbances in the Etoniah Creek portion that will require extraordinary attention, management intensity is expected to be typical for a state forest. Lands in the Cross Florida Greenway portion are generally moderate-need tracts.

#### **Management Implementation, Public Access, Site Security and Protection of Infrastructure**

Once the core area of the Etoniah Creek portion is acquired, the Florida Forest Service will provide access to the public for low-intensity outdoor recreation. Initial activities will include securing the tract, providing public and fire management accesses, inventorying resources and removing trash. The Florida Forest Service will provide access to the public while protecting sensitive resources. The tract's natural resources and threatened and endangered species will be inventoried to provide the basis for a management plan. Long-range plans for the Etoniah Creek portion will generally be directed toward restoring disturbed areas to their original conditions, as far as possible, as well as protecting threatened and endangered species. An all-season burning program will use, whenever possible, existing roads, black lines, foam lines and natural breaks to contain fires. Timber management will mostly involve thinning and regeneration harvests. Plantations will be thinned and, where appropriate, reforested with species found in natural ecosystems. Stands will not have a targeted rotation age.

Infrastructure will primarily be in disturbed areas and will be the minimum required for management and public access. The Florida Forest Service will promote environmental education. For the Cross Florida Greenway portion, activities within the first year after acquisition will primarily consist of site security, resource inventory, removal of trash, and resource-management planning. Long-range activities proposed include a multi-purpose trail and facilities for public access.





### Revenue-generating Potential

In the Etoniah Creek portion of the project, the Florida Forest Service will sell timber as needed to improve or maintain desirable ecosystem conditions. These sales will provide a variable source of revenue, but the revenue-generating potential for this project is expected to be moderate. In the Cross Florida Greenway portion, no revenues are expected to be generated within the first three years after acquisition. However, as the portion is developed during its 20-year facility development plan, revenues will be derived from user fees, the sale of products from the lands (limerock berm and timber) and the sale of surplus lands.

### Cooperators in Management Activities

The Florida Forest Service will cooperate with and seek the assistance of other state agencies, local government entities and interested parties as appropriate. Currently, properties along the Greenway are managed in partnership with Marion County, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and private individuals for recreational purposes.

#### Management Cost Summary

<u>DRP</u>	<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Source of Funds	LATF	LATF
Salary	\$36,380	\$36,380
OPS	\$72,660	\$72,660
Expense	\$62,301	\$46,362
OCO	\$3,167	\$0
FCO	\$100,000	\$0
TOTAL	\$274,508	\$155,402

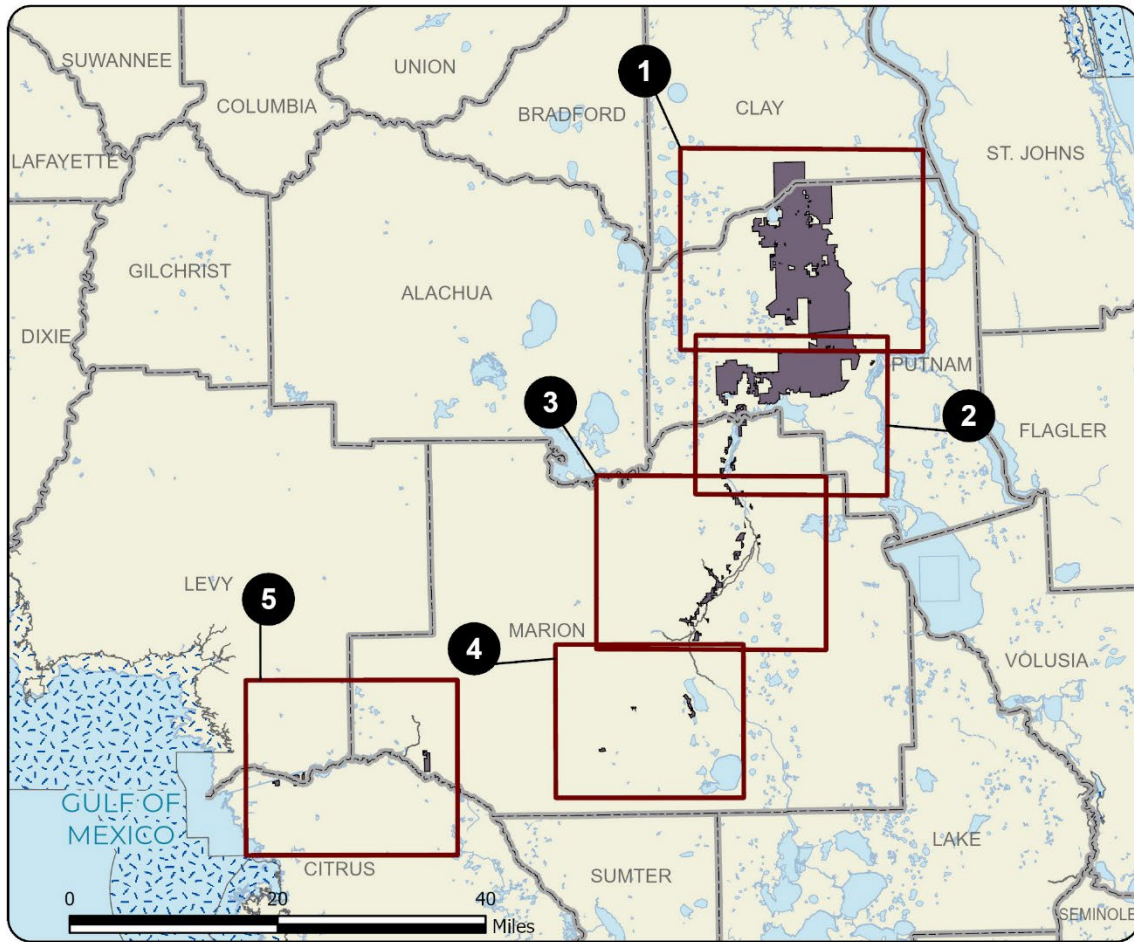
Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted

#### Management Cost Summary

<u>FFS</u>	<u>1996/97</u>	<u>1997/98</u>
Source of Funds	LATF	LATF
Salary	\$45,337	\$56,487
OPS	\$0	\$3,000
Expense	\$11,225	\$22,825
OCO	\$43,320	\$50,500
FCO	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$99,882	\$132,812

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted



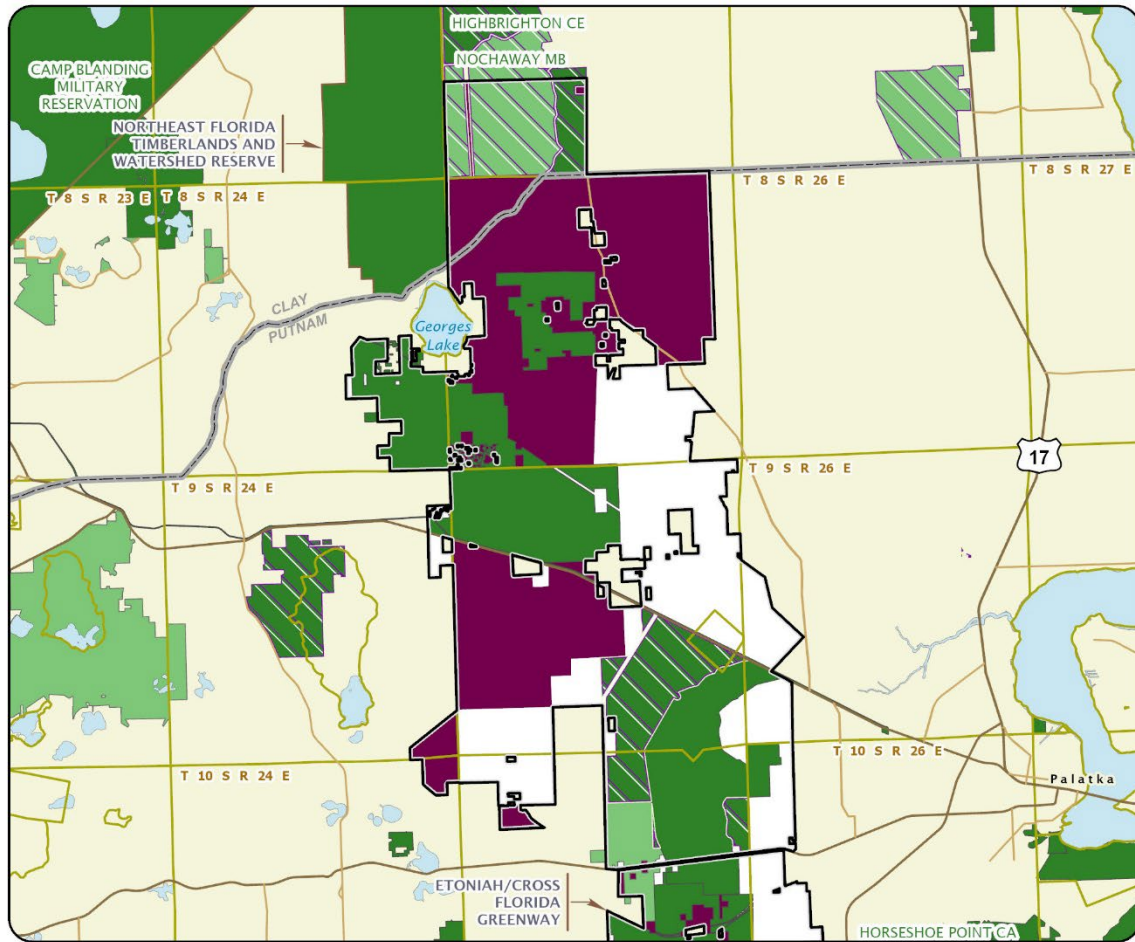


### ETONIAH/CROSS FLORIDA GREENWAY: OVERVIEW

CITRUS, CLAY, LEVY, MARION, AND PUTNAM COUNTIES



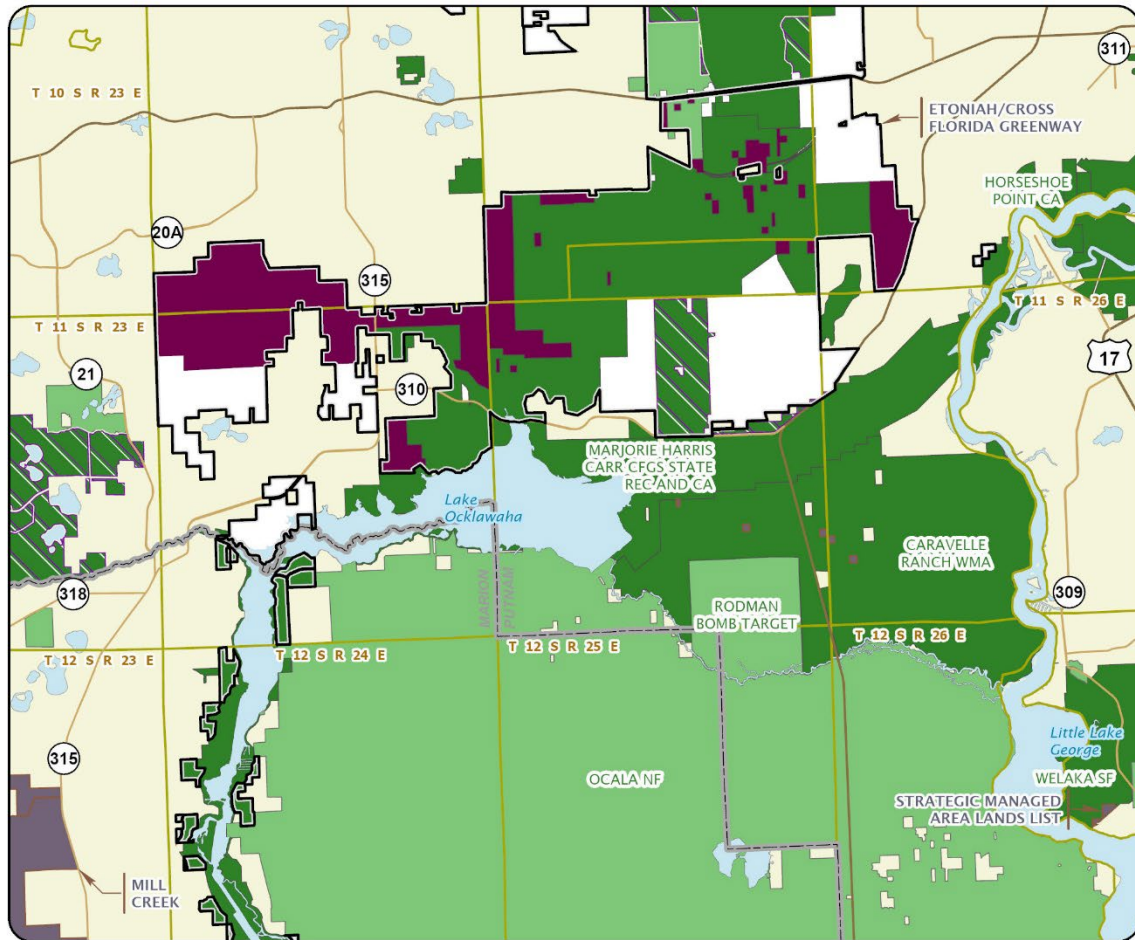




**ETONIAH/CROSS FLORIDA GREENWAY: MAP 1**

**CLAY AND PUTNAM COUNTIES**

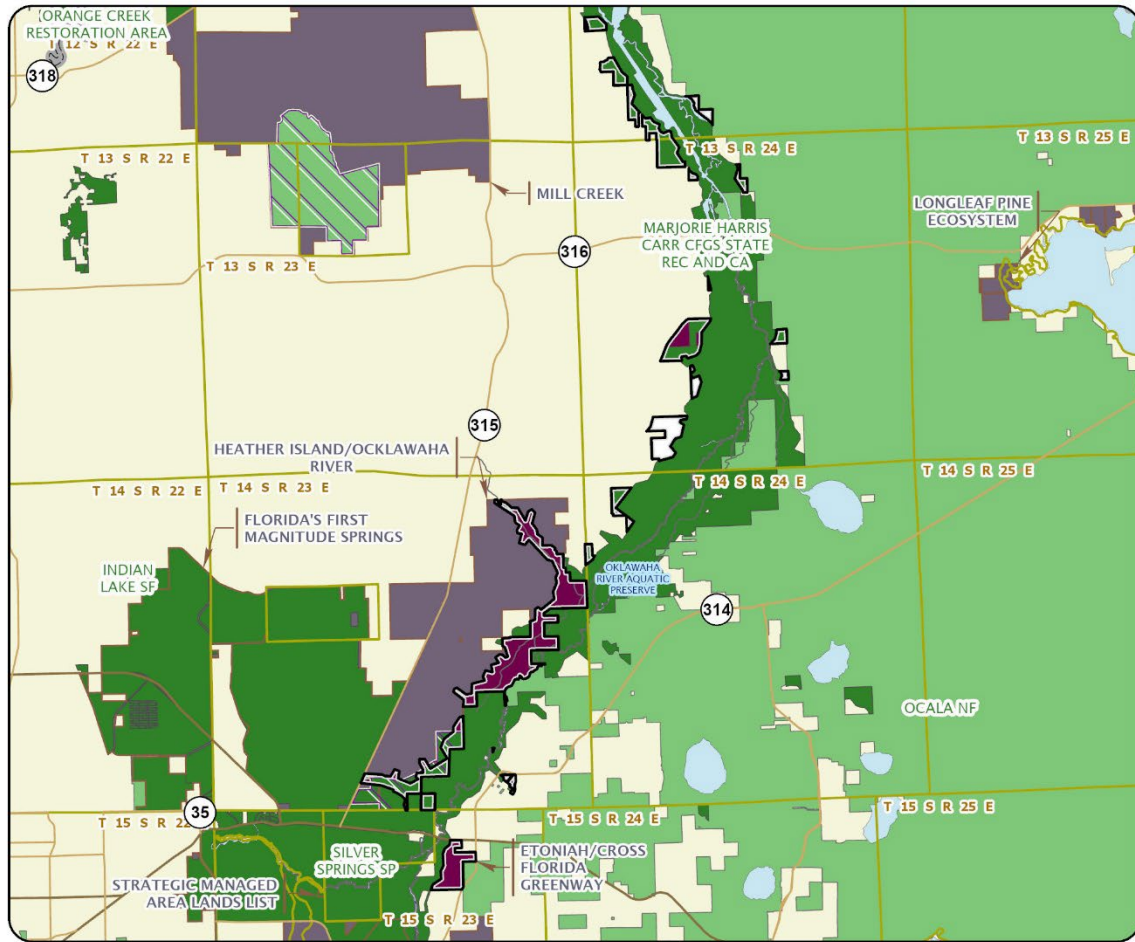




**ETONIAH/CROSS FLORIDA GREENWAY: MAP 2**

**MARION AND PUTNAM COUNTIES**

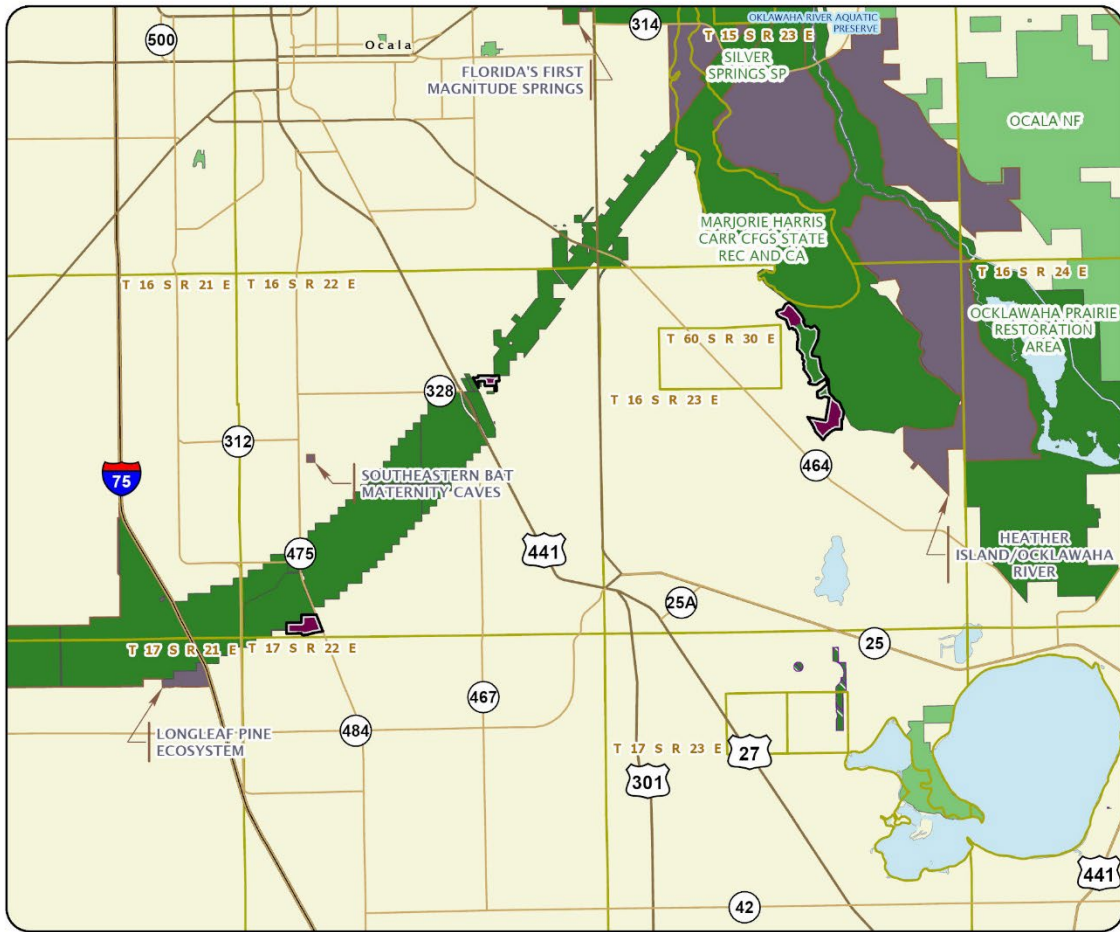




**ETONIAH/CROSS FLORIDA GREENWAY: MAP 3**

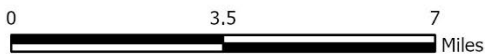
**MARION COUNTY**

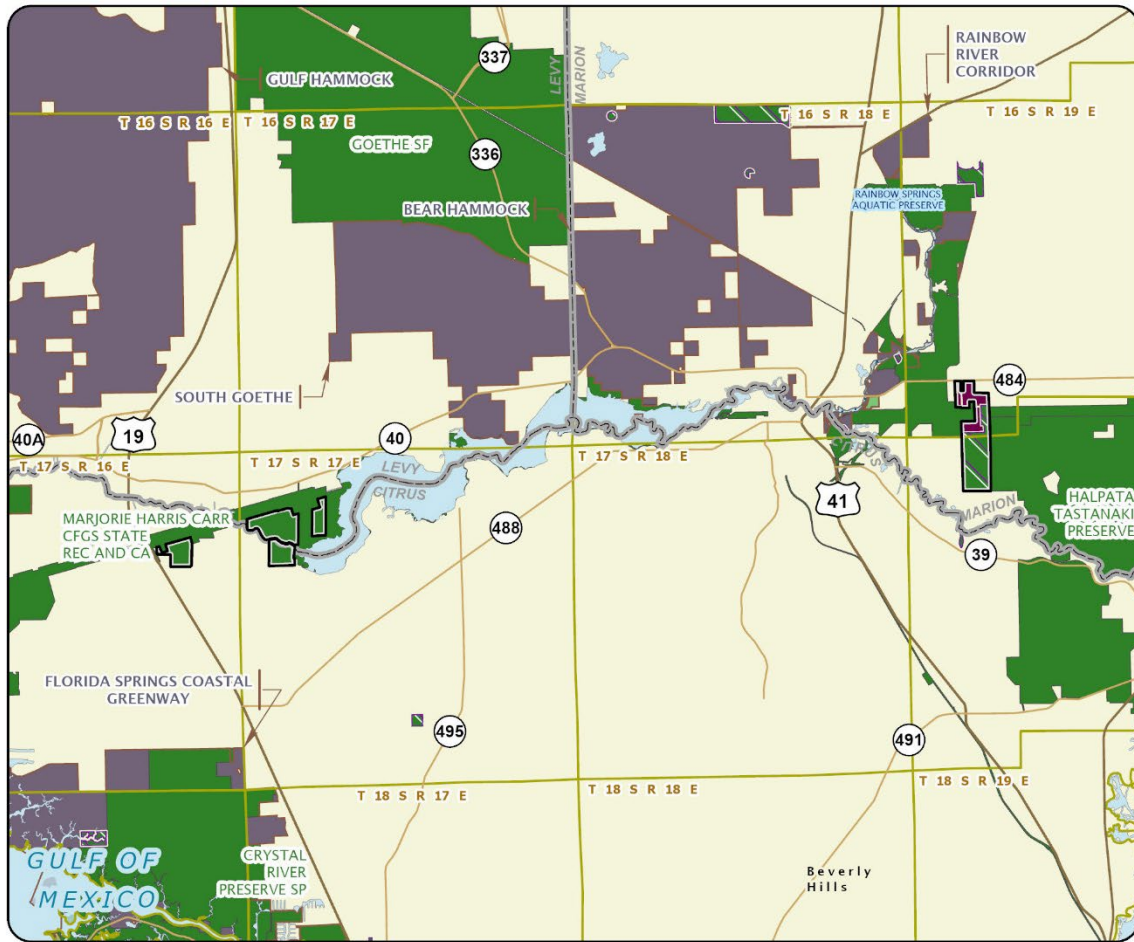




ETONIAH/CROSS FLORIDA GREENWAY: MAP 4

MARION COUNTY





**ETONIAH/CROSS FLORIDA GREENWAY: MAP 5**

**CITRUS, LEVY, AND MARION COUNTIES**

