

ITEM 4:

Consider a 10-year update to the Little Big Econ State Forest Management Plan (Lease No. 3958).

LOCATION:

Seminole County

APPLICANT:

Florida Forest Service (FFS), Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

STAFF REMARKS:

Background

Little Big Econ State Forest (LBESF) is located in Seminole County with more than 19 different natural community types comprising approximately 10,336 acres. The forest's unusual name comes from combining the names of the Little and Big Econlockhatchee Rivers. The Muskogee word Econlockhatchee translates to "earth-mound stream," and means the "river of many mounds." Long ago, Native Americans named the river for the multitude of man-made earthen mounds along the waterway.

The LBESF was established on March 24, 1994 by the state legislature and was purchased under the Save Our Rivers (SOR), Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL), and Preservation 2000 (P2000) acquisition programs, as part of the Econ-St. Johns Ecosystem Project. The 1,646.83 acres of land owned by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund was purchased with CARL funds. The 8,521.55 acres owned by the SJRWMD was purchased with SOR funds, and 68 acres were acquired through mitigation. These parcels are assigned to the FFS for management under Lease Agreement number 3958. The primary management goal of LBESF is to protect the Econlockhatchee River Basin and surrounding forest uplands through a stewardship ethic to assure these resources will be available for future generations.

The primary mission of the FFS is to "protect Florida and its people from the dangers of wildland fire and manage the forest resources through a stewardship ethic to assure they are available for future generations." Management strategies for LBESF center on the multiple-use concept, as defined in sections 589.04(3) and 253.034(2)(a) Florida Statutes (FS).

Multiple-use management for LBESF will be accomplished with the following strategies:

- Practice sustainable forest management for improved forest health and efficient generation of revenue in support of state forest management objectives;
- Provide for resource-based outdoor recreation opportunities for multiple interests;
- Restore and manage healthy forests and native ecosystems ensuring the long-term viability of populations and species listed as endangered, threatened or rare, and other components of biological diversity including game and nongame wildlife and plants;
- Protect known archaeological, historical, and cultural resources;
- Restore, maintain, and protect hydrological functions related to water resources and the health of associated wetland and aquatic communities; and
- Provide research and educational opportunities related to natural resource management.

Management Plan Overview

In 2016, the FNAI completed an inventory and natural community mapping project on LBESF and a historic natural community type map was created. Nineteen natural community types are found on LBESF. The predominant natural community is mesic hammock, followed by floodplain marsh. There are forty-eight endangered or threatened animal and plant species documented on LBESF.

A review of information contained in the Department of Historic Resource (DHR) Florida Master Site file has determined that there are seventeen recorded archaeological sites and two resource groups on LBESF. All archaeological and historical sites within the state forest will be monitored at least annually. FFS field staff will monitor the listed sites to note condition and any existing or potential threats.

The main recreational activities enjoyed at LBESF include canoeing, hiking, bicycling, hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and horseback riding. The forest is an Operation Outdoor Freedom program site and provides recreational opportunities to wounded veterans. FFS will continue to promote and encourage public access and recreational use by the public while protecting resources and practicing multiple-use management.

The LBESF is a participant in a Firewise community program. Communities in wildfire prone areas must work together to be fully prepared for wildfire. A “Fire Adapted Community” incorporates people, buildings, businesses, infrastructure, cultural resources, and natural areas to prepare for the effects of wildfire. The Fire Adapted Community concept serves as an umbrella to the various programs that help communities become more fire adapted. The FFS has implemented the Fire Adapted Community concept for prevention statewide. Specifically, in the area adjacent to or nearby LBESF, efforts will continue to identify communities at risk and to contact their representatives.

The Florida Legislature requires that all land management plans include long and short-term (ST) goals. These goals must be measurable objectives, and ST goals must be achievable within a two-year planning period. Pursuant to Section 253.034, F.S., the Division of State Lands tracks the status of ST goals in each land management plan approved since July 1, 2016. The ST goals from this management plan are included as part of this item.

Public Involvement

FFS responds to public involvement through liaison panels, management plan advisory groups, public hearings, and through ongoing direct contact with user groups. The plan was developed with input from the LBESF Management Plan Advisory Group and was reviewed at a public hearing on October 28, 2020. Comments received during the public meeting involved questions regarding invasive plant and the trail system.

Surplus Lands

On conservation lands where FFS is the lead manager, FFS assesses and identifies areas for potential surplus land. This consists of an examination of resource and operational management needs, public access and recreational use, and GIS modeling and analysis. The evaluation of LBESF by FFS has determined that all portions of the area are being managed and operated for the original purposes of acquisition, therefore, no portion of the LBESF is recommended for potential surplus.

State Land Management Review Team

A Land Management Review (LMR) was conducted in November 2019. The review team found that the property is managed in accordance with the purposes for which it was acquired and the management practices, including public access, are in compliance with the management plan. Four consensus recommendations were offered:

- 1) The team recommended FFS consider applying for FWC uplands invasive plant management funding for the larger infestations on the property.
- 2) The team recommended FFS consult with FNAI for reclassification of restoration mesic flatwoods to the more appropriate cover class.
- 3) The team recommended FFS include improved pasture and altered land covers in future land management planning.
- 4) The team recommended FFS work with SJRWMD to conduct a hydrological assessment for the property.

The 2019 LMR notes were reviewed as part of developing this plan and the agreed upon changes and recommendations were made to this management plan.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the management plan.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE

APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS: _____

DEFER

WITHDRAW

NOT APPROVE

OTHER: _____

Little Big Econ State Forest
Land Management Plan Short Term Goals

Goal (ST)	Details of Goal	Objective	Details of Objective	Measures
2	Public Access and Recreational Opportunities	2	Evaluate additional public access and recreational opportunities that are compatible with multiple-use management.	Number of additional visitor opportunities evaluated
7	Hydrological Preservation and Restoration	3	Conduct or obtain a site assessment/study to identify potential hydrological restoration needs.	Assessment conducted.

Source: Florida DEP, Office of Environmental Services, Revised 2018.

LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LEAD AGENCY: Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), Florida Forest Service
 COMMON NAME: Little Big Econ State Forest
 LOCATION: Seminole County
 ACREAGE TOTAL: 10,336.25 acres

Historic Natural Communities*	Approximate Acreage
Floodplain marsh	2,298
Mesic Hammock	2,271
Mesic flatwoods	1,695
Wet Prairie	753
Blackwater Stream	740
Scrubby Flatwoods	496
Wet Flatwoods	487
Hydric Hammock	401
Depression Marsh	274
Scrub	176

Historic Natural Communities*	Approximate Acreage
Baygall	154
Basin Swamp	131
Basin Marsh	128
Sandhill	82
Dome Swamp	72
River Floodplain Lake	26
Floodplain Swamp**	10
Alluvial	6
Xeric Hammock	4

* 100 Acquisition acres have not been mapped

** Includes Floodplain Forest

TIITF LEASE AGREEMENT NUMBER: 3958

USE: Single Multiple

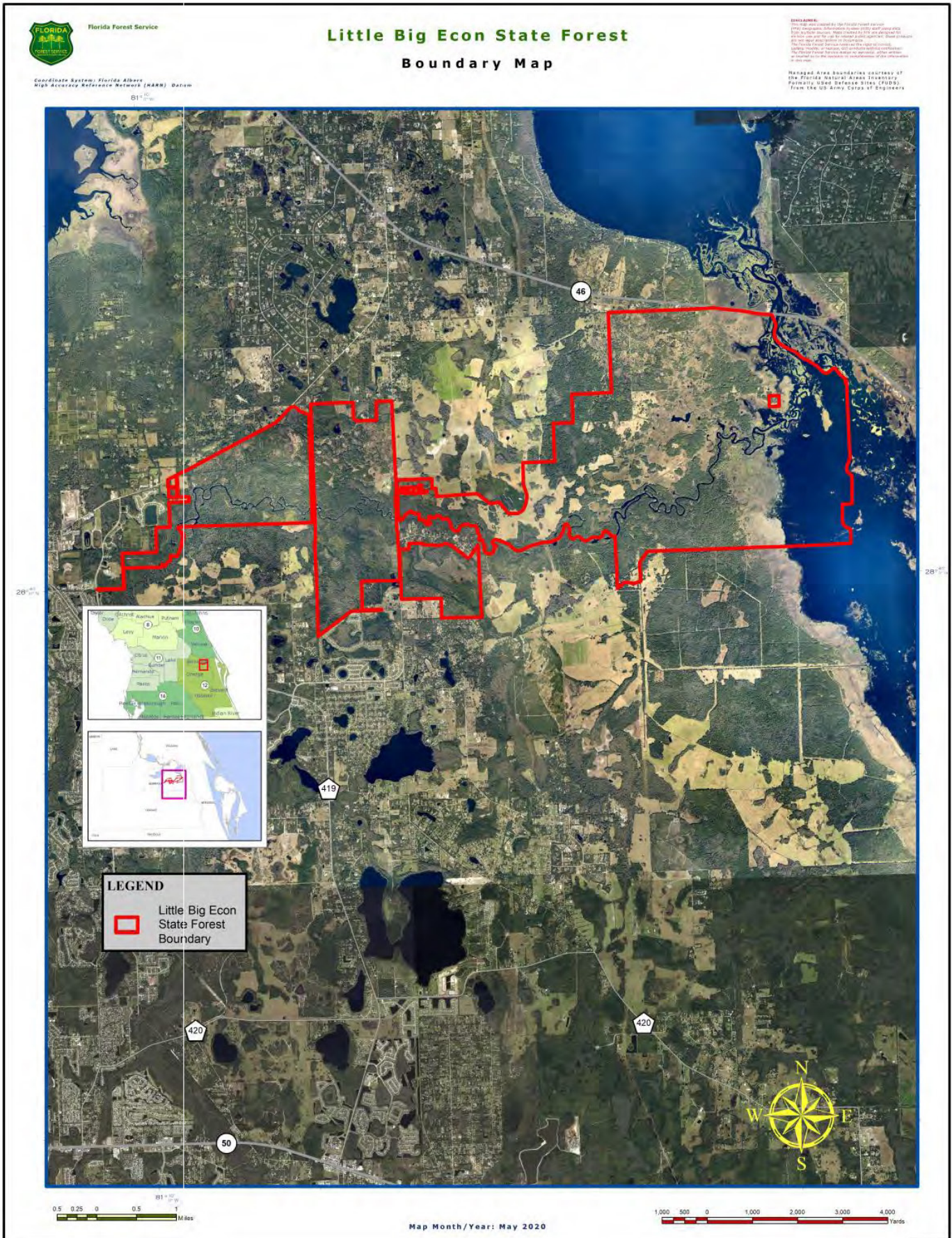
MANAGEMENT AGENCY

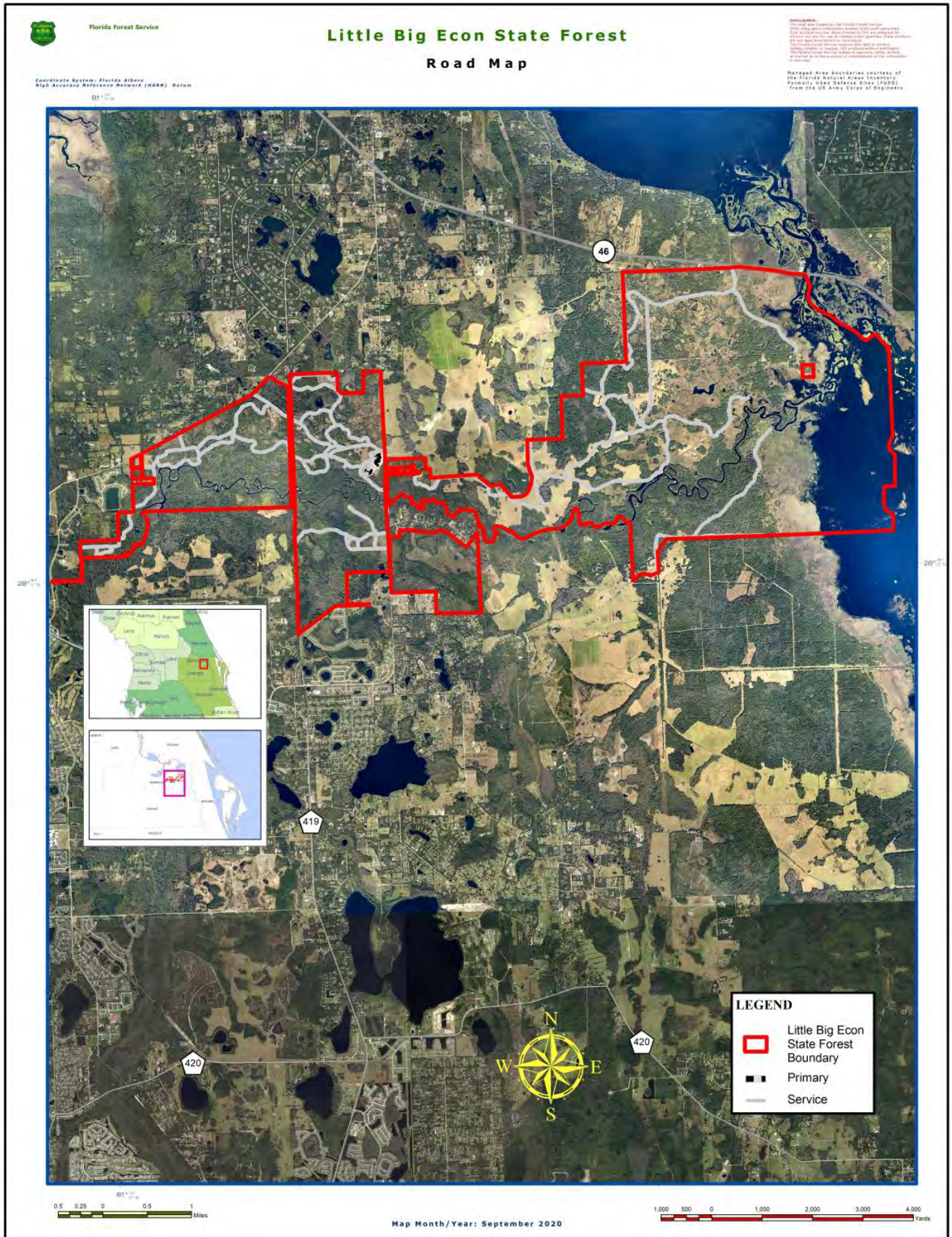
Florida DACS, Florida Forest Service
 Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
 St. Johns River Water Management District
 Department of State, Division of Historical Resources

RESPONSIBILITY

General Forest Resource Management
 Wildlife Resources & Laws
 Water Resource Protection & Restoration
 Historical & Archaeological Resource Management

DESIGNATED LAND USE: Multiple-Use State Forest
 SUBLEASES: None
 ENCUMBRANCES: Seminole County
 TYPE ACQUISITION: CARL, SOR and Preservation 2000 (P2000)
 UNIQUE FEATURES: Econlockhatchee River and St. Johns River, an Outstanding Florida Water (OFW); Mesic flatwoods, sandhill and hydric hammock
 ARCHAEOLOGICAL / HISTORICAL: Seventeen (17) known sites and two (2) resource groups
 MANAGEMENT NEEDS: Restoration and maintenance of native ecosystems and disturbed site restoration
 ACQUISITION NEEDS: Remainder of Econ-St. Johns Ecosystem Project
 SURPLUS ACREAGE: None
 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: Board of County Commissioners of Seminole County, State Forest Liaison Group, Management Plan Advisory Group Public Hearing, St. Johns River Water Management District Governing Board Public Hearing -----







Florida Forest Service

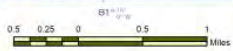
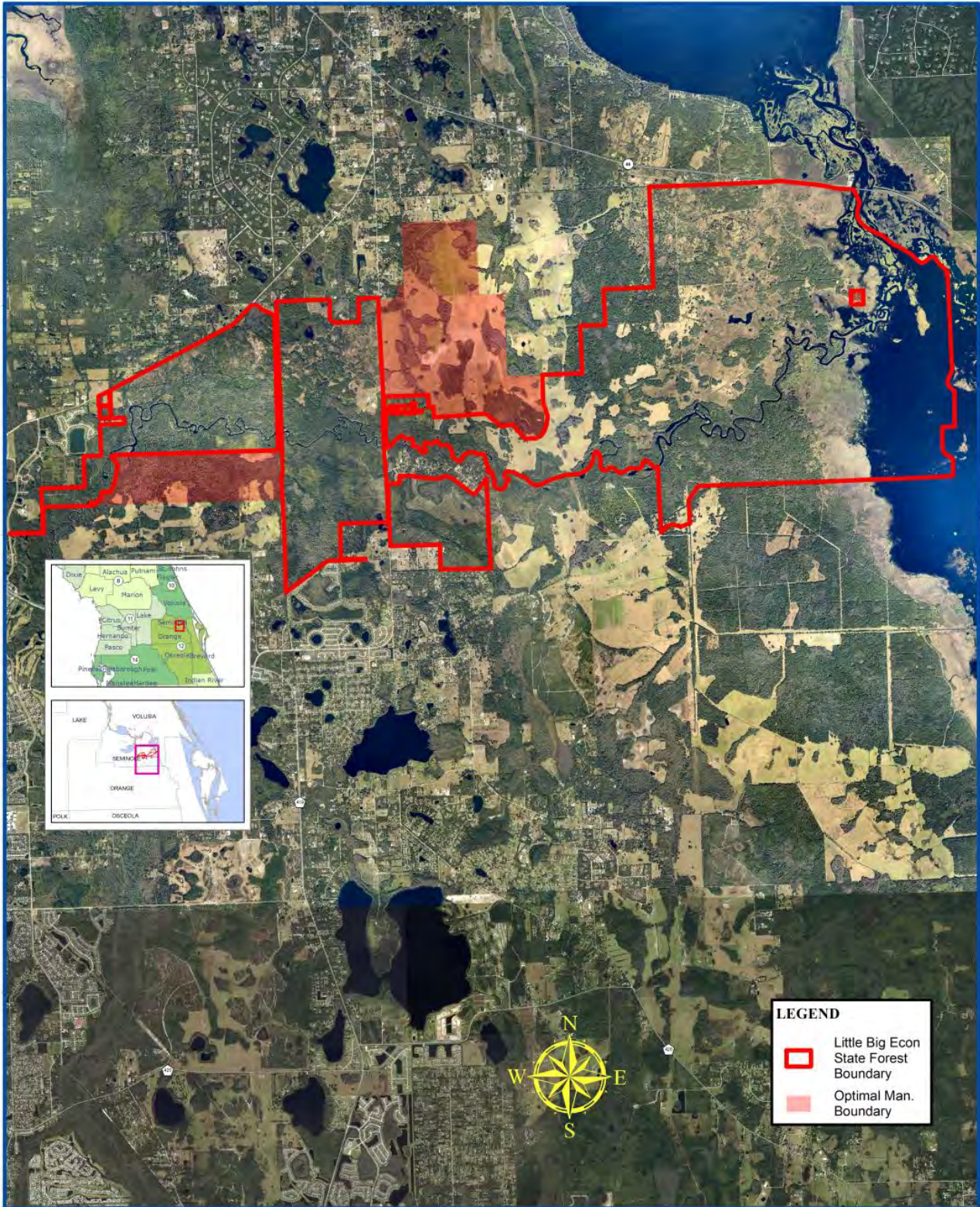
Little Big Econ State Forest

Optimal Management Boundary

Coordinate System: Florida Albers
Map Accuracy Reference Network (NAD83) Datum

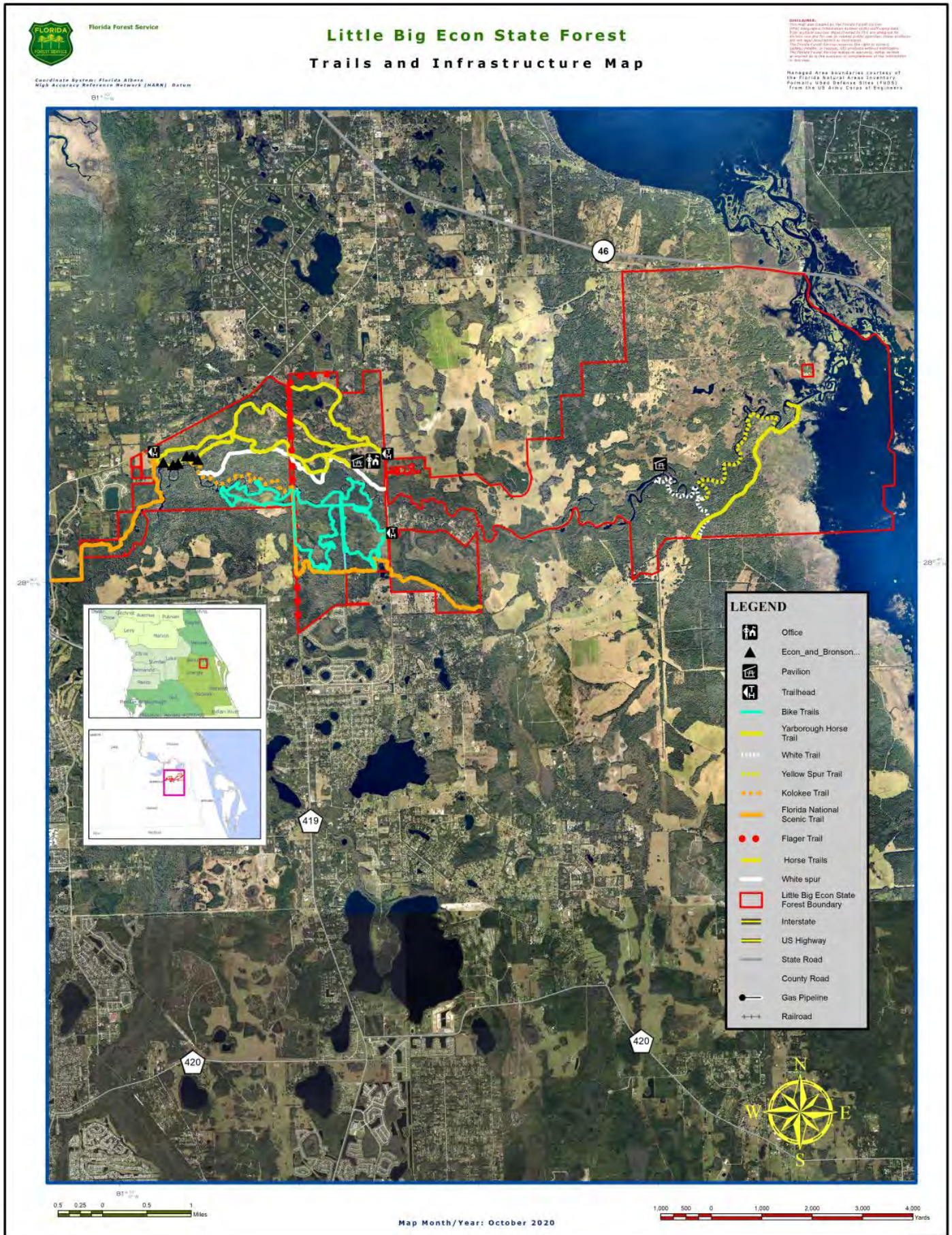
DISCLAIMER:
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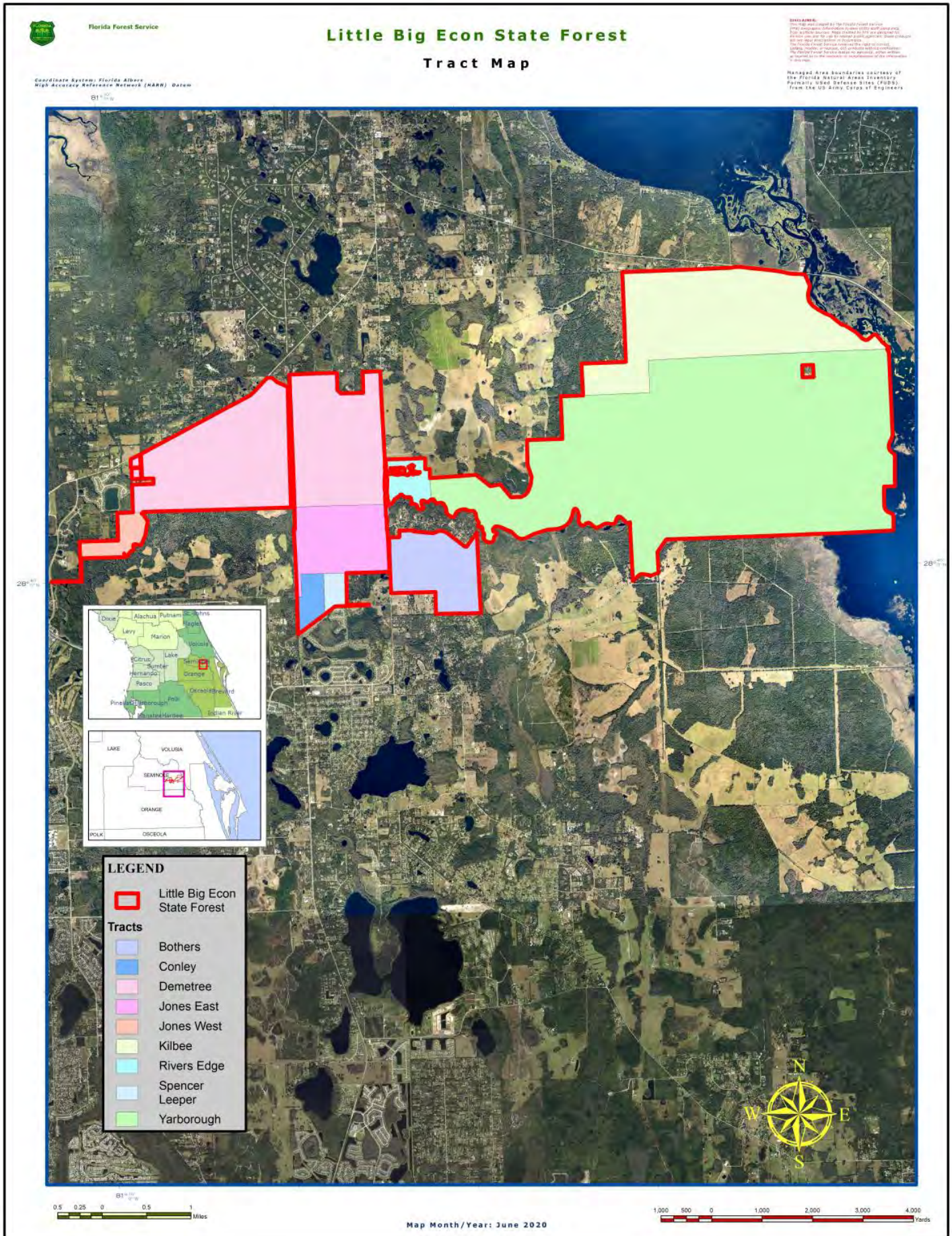
Managed Area Boundaries courtesy of the Florida National Areas Inventory, Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS), from the US Army Corps of Engineers

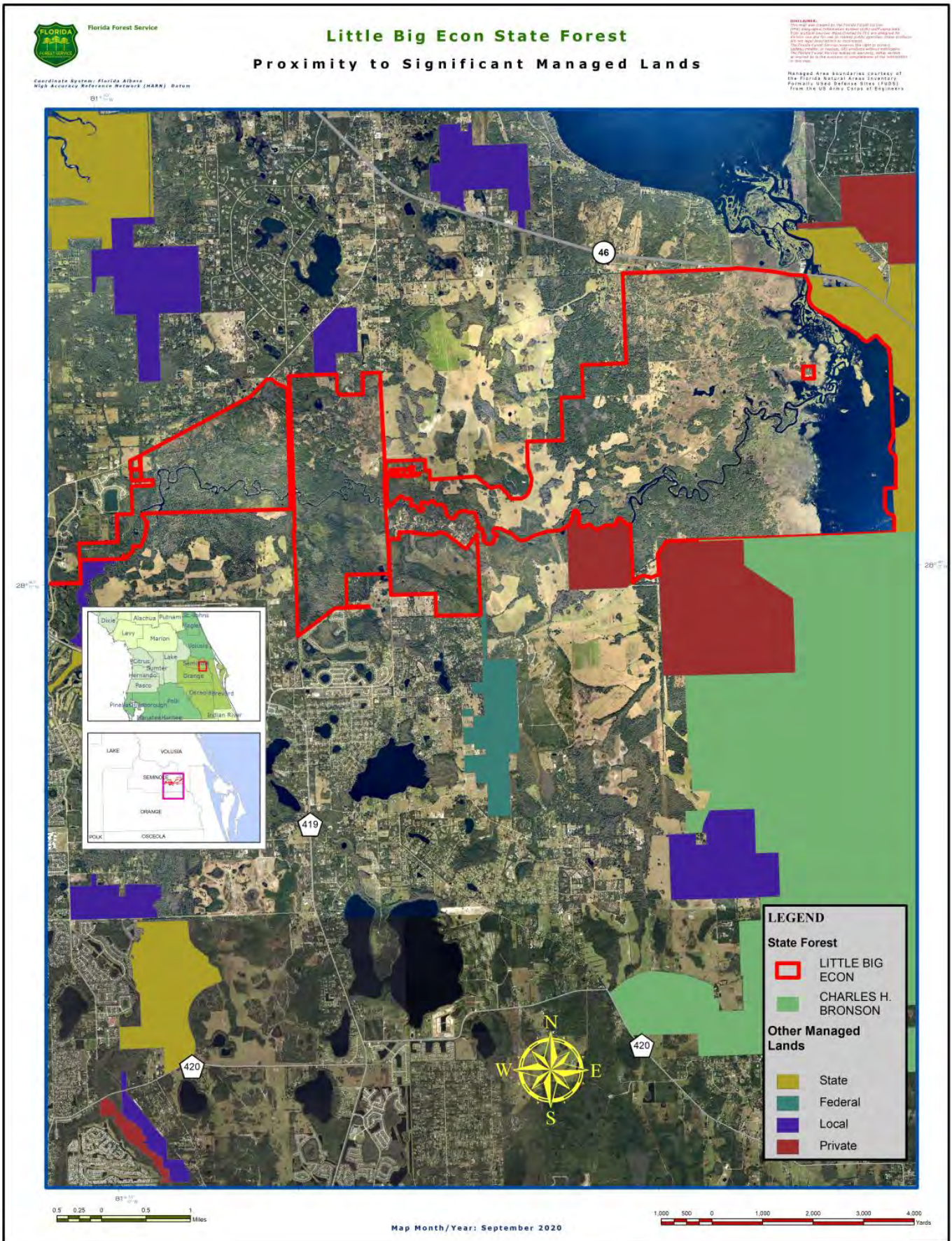


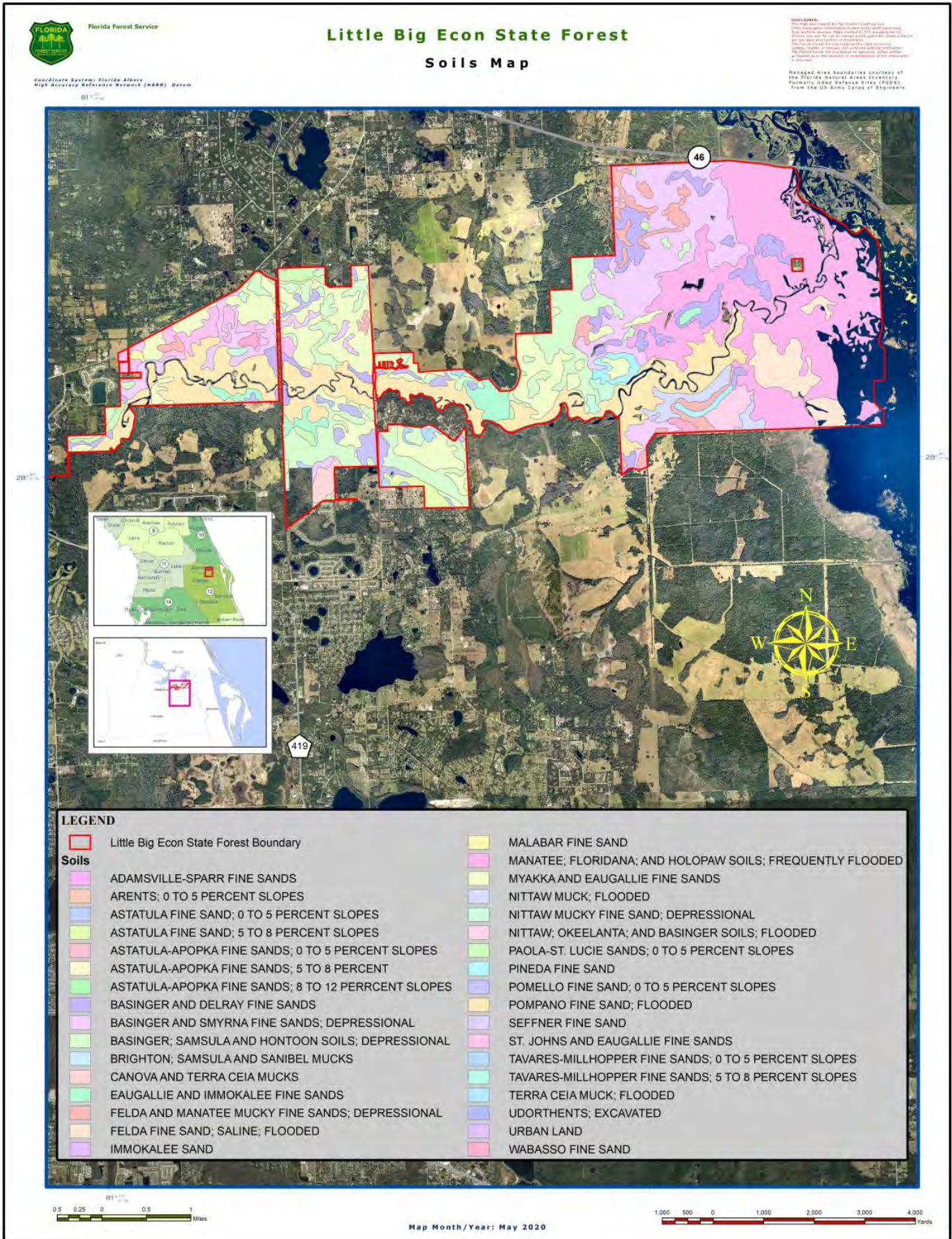
Map Month/Year: May 2020

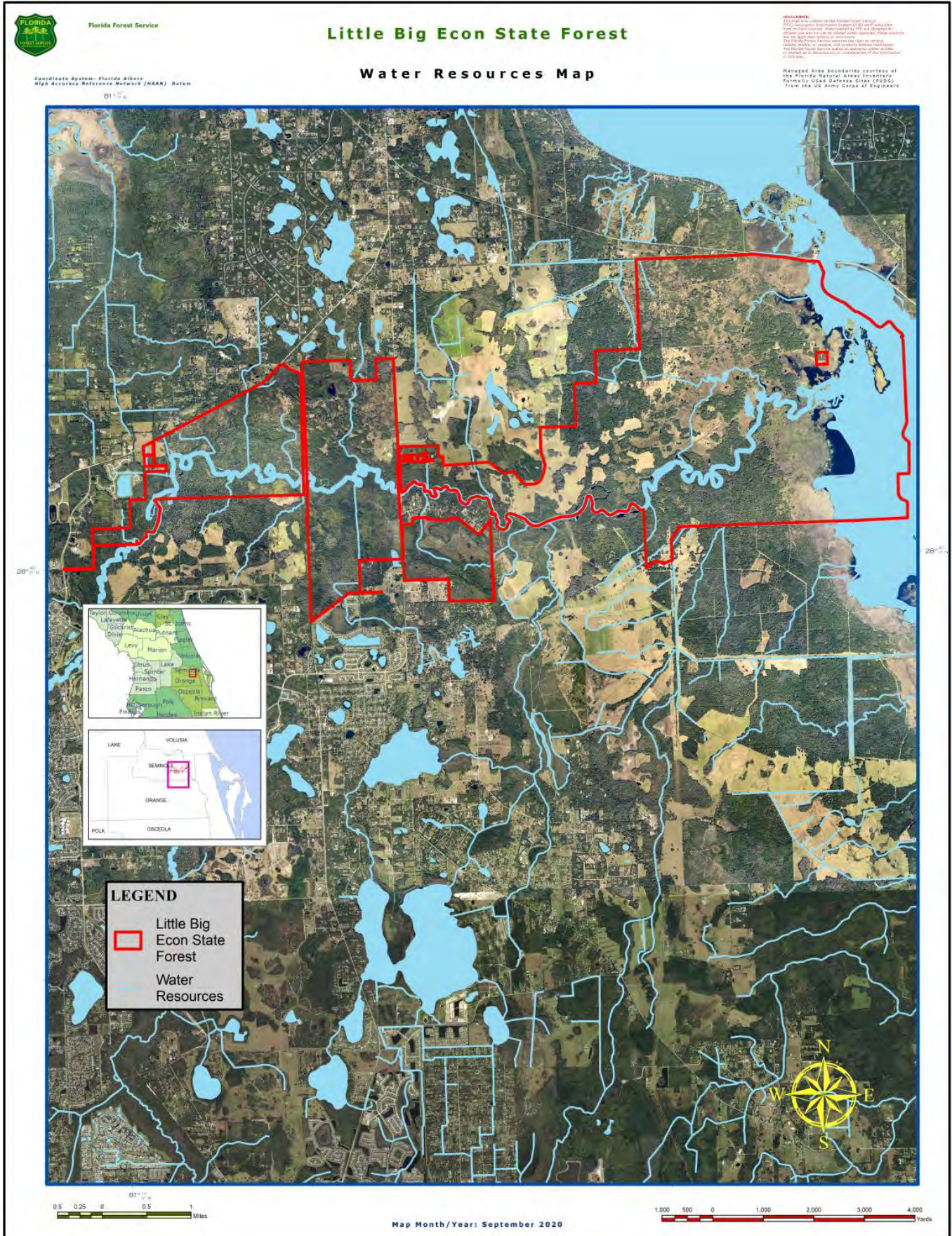




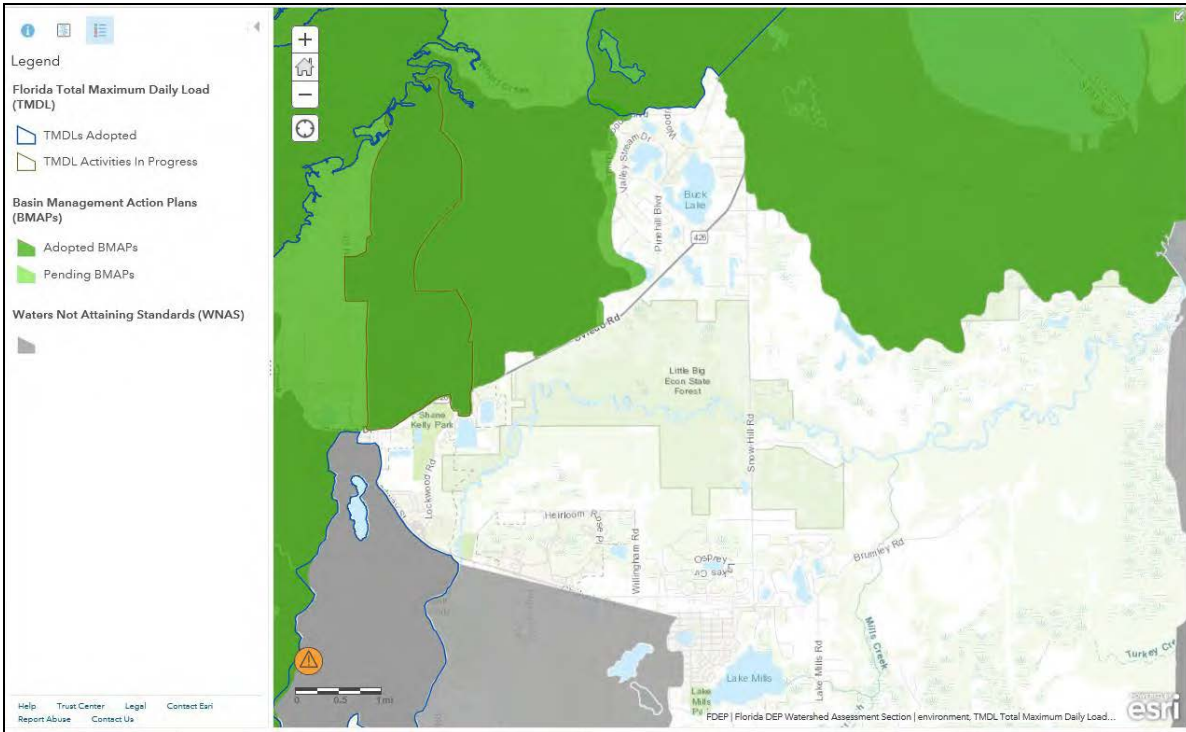








FDEP Water Quality Assessment, TMDLs and BMAP



The purpose of this map is to display the status of the Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration efforts in Florida. This map displays those water body ID's (WBIDs) in Florida that are not attaining standards, WBIDs for which Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) have been developed and areas that have Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs) implemented or in progress.

