

ITEM 4:

Determine whether a 20-acre conservation easement in Putnam County, Florida, over property belonging to Nora and Jeffrey Hanson fulfills a clearly delineated state conservation policy and yields a significant public benefit.

LOCATION:

Putnam County

APPLICANT:

Nora and Jeffrey Hanson

DSL STAFF REMARKS:

The Hanson's request a determination that a conservation easement held by the Putnam Land Conservancy, Inc. (PLC) fulfills a clearly delineated state conservation policy and yields a significant public benefit pursuant to Section 196.26(4), Florida Statutes, to qualify for an *ad valorem* tax exemption for properties less than 40 acres in size. The easement was granted voluntarily to protect, in perpetuity, the ecological and open space resources and the conservation interests and values of the Hanson family while permitting compatible uses of the property that are consistent with the property's conservation values. It is not a regulatory easement granted to offset alteration or destruction of another habitat.

The owner submitted copies of the recorded conservation easement, baseline documentation report and management plan with the designated manager. The 20-acre property was acquired by the Hanson's to preserve the natural landscape consisting of mixed hardwood hammock containing several large specimen live oak trees that was formerly managed as a fern farm growing tree ferns. The property is bordered on the south side by CR 308, to the northeast by CSX rail line and to the west by rural residential and undeveloped parcels. A large portion of the property is within Florida Ecological Greenways Network Priority 2. The property contains gopher tortoise burrows mostly in the remnant upland pine community in the NW portion of the property.

According to the management plan and easement, the property will be managed to restore native species, control the non-native invasive species and allow primitive camping sites. The conservation easement restricts subdivision, commercial activities, utilities easement and connection to the power grid. The owners intend to develop off-grid ecological sites used to demonstrate and teach organic food forest gardening, composting, solar energy collection and rainwater harvesting along with ecological restoration and management.

Staff concludes that the property as described and managed pursuant to the conservation easement, baseline documentation and management plan fulfills several clearly delineated state conservation policies including:

- Located within a Strategic Habitat Conservation Area (Priority 3 and 5)
- Provides habitat for endangered or threatened species
- Located within the Florida Wildlife Corridor (Priority 2)
- Protects functional wetlands
- Provides groundwater recharge (Priority 2 and 3)

Staff also concludes that the property as described in the baseline documentation report and managed in accordance with the management plan provides a significant public benefit by providing a meaningful effect on the state conservation policies mentioned above because it encourages ecological restoration and ecological practices through community involvement and education outreach.

DSL STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Determine that the conservation easement fulfills a clearly delineated state conservation policy and that it yields a significant public benefit.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

Fulfills a clearly delineated state conservation policy:

Yes **No**

Yields a significant public benefit:

Yes **No**

Defer

Conservation Easements under 40 acres in size Application

Use of this form is required for applications to the Acquisition and Restoration Council for determination of whether a conservation easement under 40 acres in size fulfills a clearly delineated state conservation policy and yields a significant public benefit pursuant to section 196.26(4), Florida Statutes. When possible please submit application packages (including maps) either electronically (preferred) or in an 8.5 x 11 paper size format.

General Information

Owners Name:

Acres:

City or Town/Zip:

County:

Property Address:

Mailing Address:

Phone:

Email:

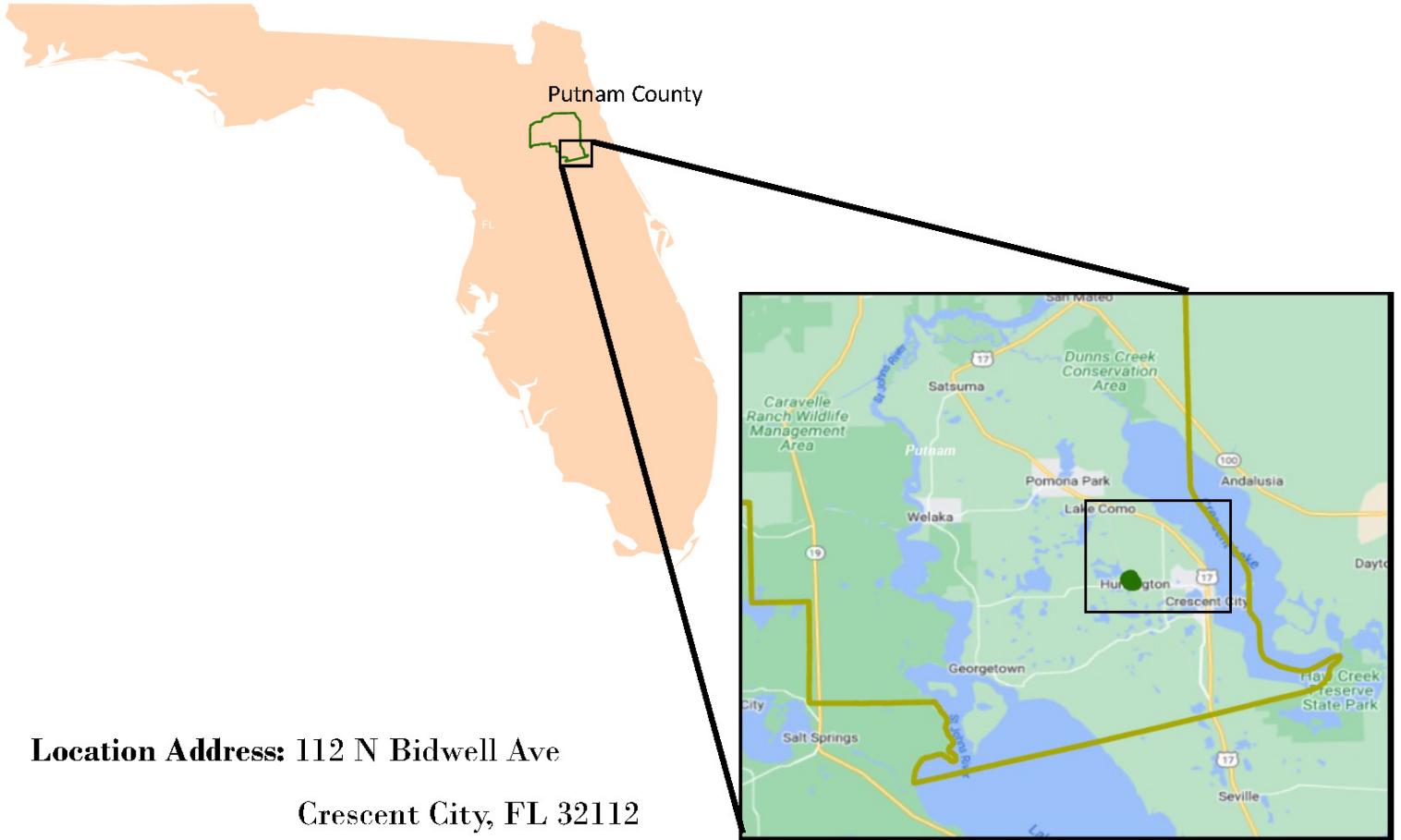
Submit complete applications to:

ARC_Mailinglist@FloridaDEP.gov

Or by mail to:

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of State Lands
Office of Environmental Services
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard., Mail Station 140
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000
Phone: 850-245-2555

Exhibit A: Project Location



Location Address: 112 N Bidwell Ave
Crescent City, FL 32112

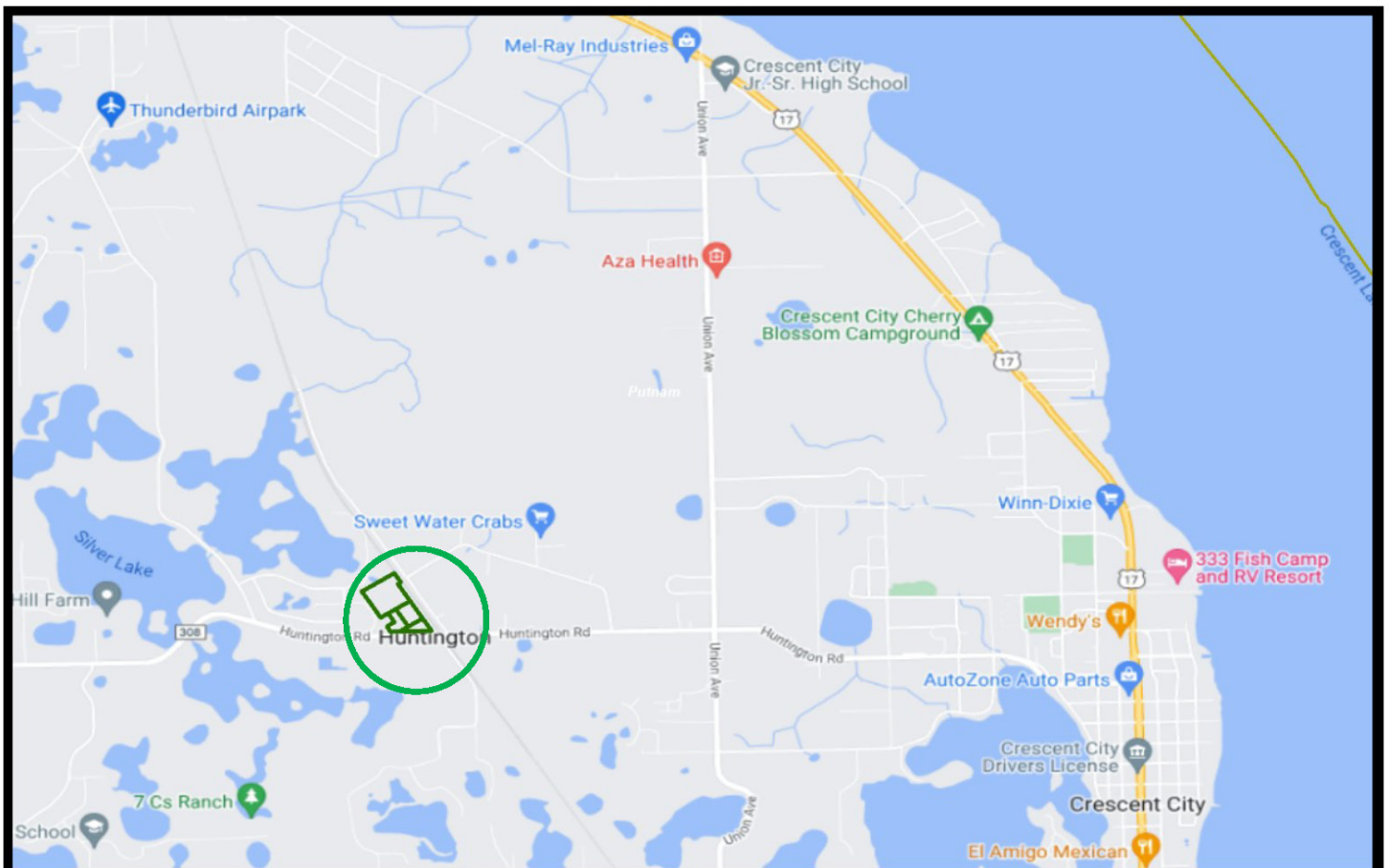


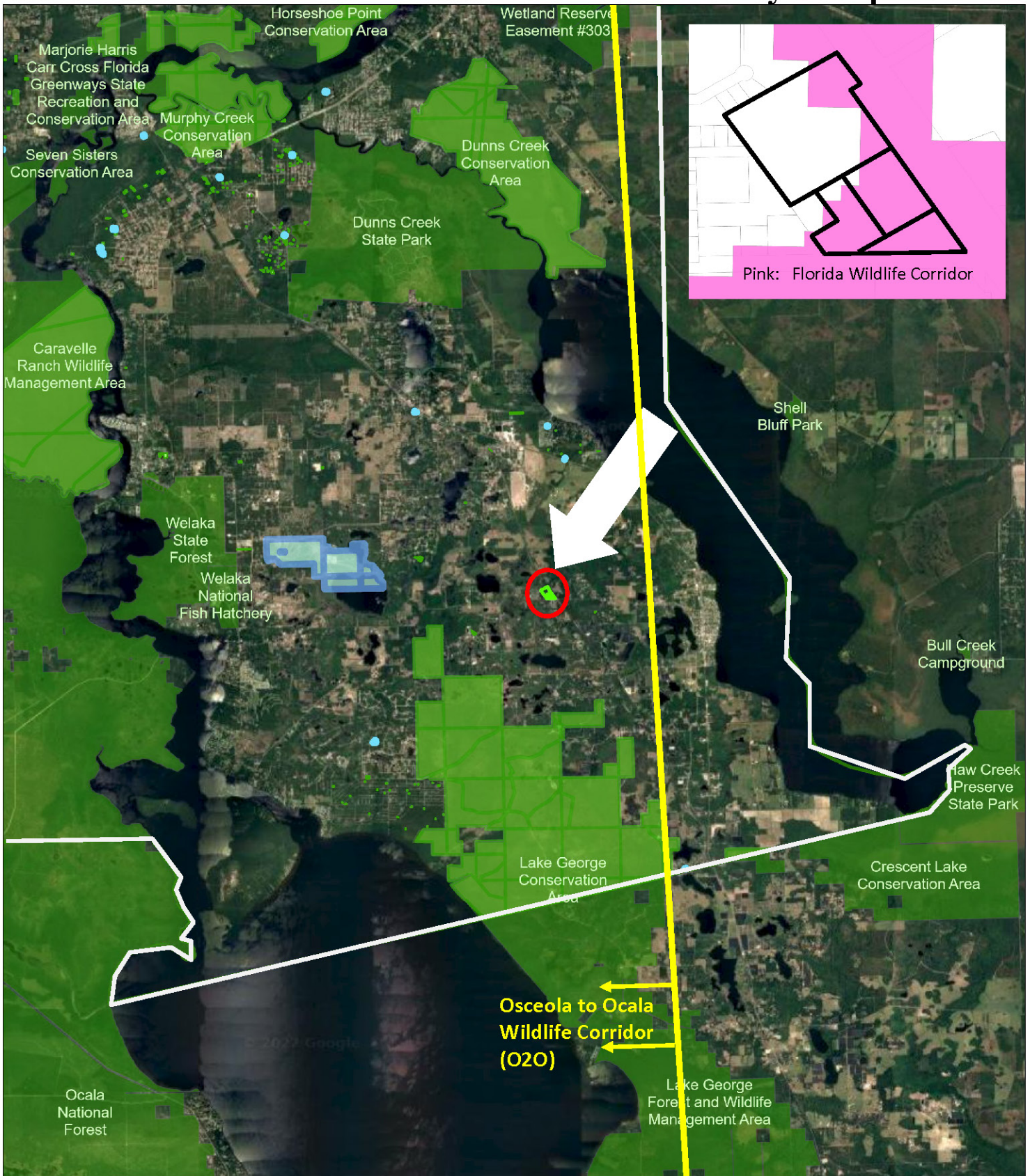
Exhibit C: Detailed Aerial View of Hanson Parcels



Source: Google Earth
June 2023 ARC Meeting
Imagery date: 5/7/2021



Exhibit D: Conserved Areas Proximity Map



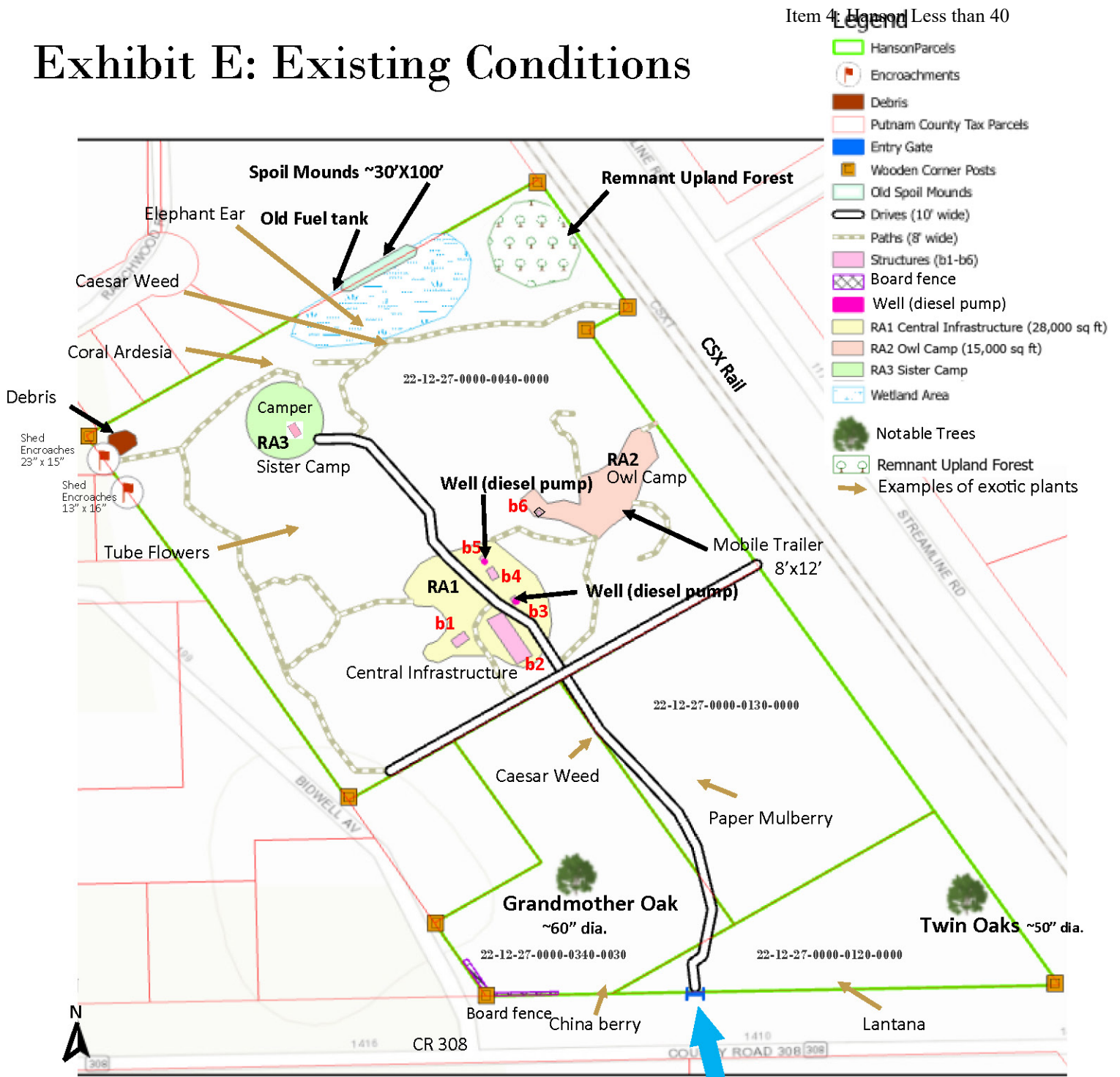
Legend

- Hanson Parcels
- PLC CE's Putnam (5/26/2022)
- PLC_Putnam_6_24_22
- Osceola to Ocala Wildlife Corridor

- FL Managed Areas from FNAI (June 2022)
- Welaka Woods CE (Conservation Easement)
- Putnam County



Exhibit E: Existing Conditions



Existing Throughout Property:

Sprinkler system

Exotic Plants:

Cat's Claw

Kudzu

Tree "Fern" (*Asparagus virgatus*)

Glossary

RA = Reserved Area

b = Building

b1 Wood Shed 10'x18'

b2 Tin & Block Storage Shed 28'x50'

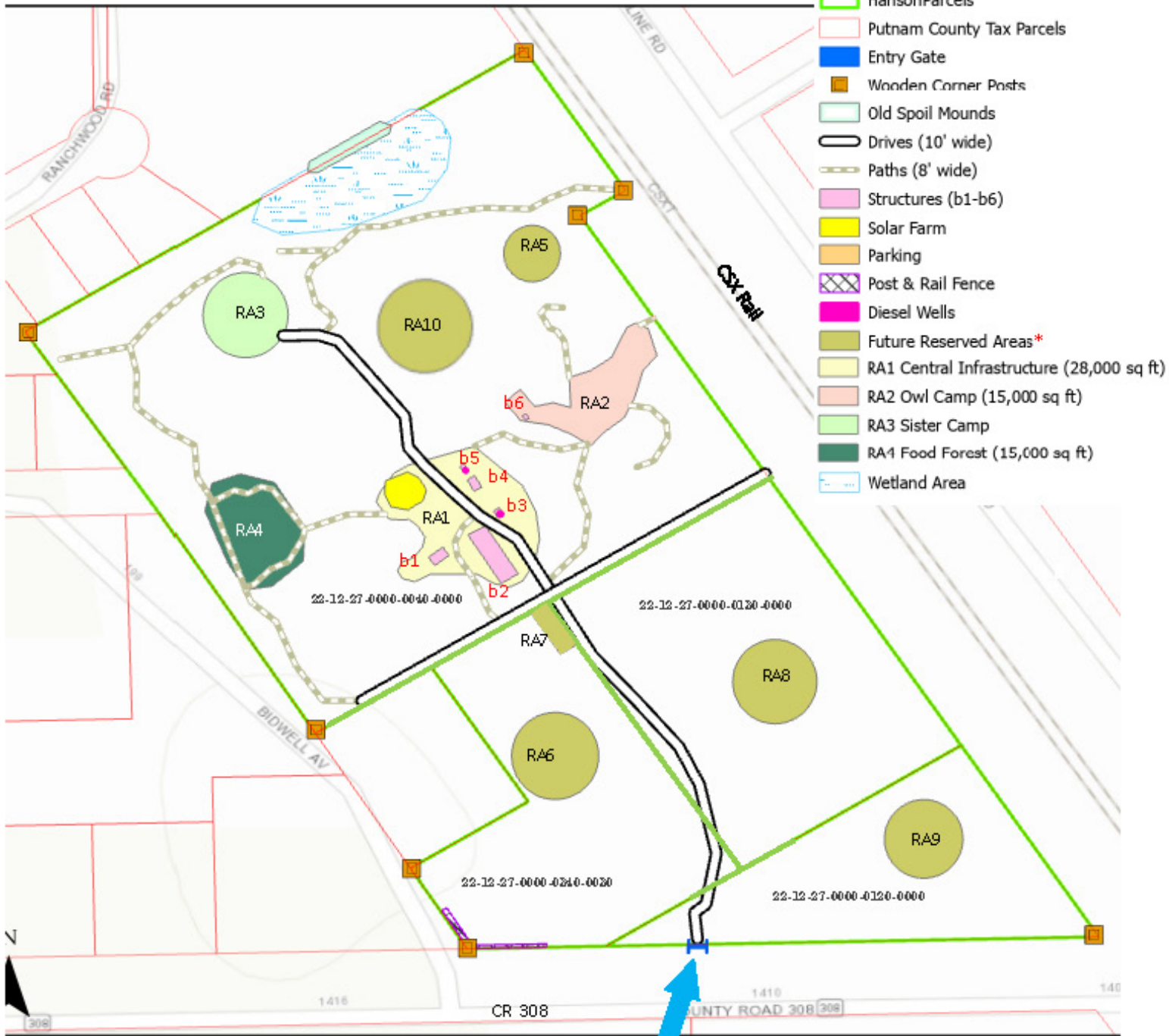
b3 South Pump House 8'x13'

b4 Metal Storage Shed 12'x29'

b5 North Pump House 7'x10'

b6 Owl Shed 8'x10'

Exhibit F: Reserved Areas



***All future reserved areas are "Location to be Determined"**

Appendix B: Natural Communities Description



Mixed Scrub-Shrub Wetland (FLUCCS 6460)

This class is used for wetlands that are dominated by woody vegetation less than 20 feet in height. It is most common in disturbed communities on drier sites.

Hammock Ferns (FLUCCS 2432)

This description is for lands that have been converted to agricultural uses retaining an overstory of hardwood trees with groundcover dominated by ornamental “ferns.”

Source:

June 2023 ARC Meeting

Florida Land Use Cover and Forms Classifications System (FLUCCS)

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Conservation Easement Management Plan

This management plan template is intended to be a guide for landowners to use in conjunction with an application to the Acquisition and Restoration Council for determination of whether conservation easements over property less than 40 acres in size fulfill a clearly delineated state conservation policy and yield a significant public benefit. It is intended to address the requirements of section 196.26(4), Florida Statutes, related to property tax exemptions for lands protected by conservation easements.

A. General Information

1. Property Owner: Nora and Jeff Hanson
2. Number of Acres: 20
3. Name of individual who is managing property: Nora and Jeff Hanson
4. Contact Person and Address: Nora and Jeff Hanson, 2041 Sugarloaf Blvd, Summerland Key, FL 33042
5. Attach a map showing the location and boundaries of the property including:
 - a) the location and type of structures or improvements currently on the property:
 - b) the location and type of proposed improvements:
6. Attach a map showing any adjacent conservation areas.

B. Natural Resources

7. Please identify natural resources on the property that are listed in the Florida Natural Areas Inventory.

Active Gopher Tortoise burrows on site

8. Are there any imperiled natural communities, unique natural features, or any State and federally listed endangered or threatened plant or animal species, on site?

YES NO

If YES, please describe key management activities necessary to identify, locate, protect and preserve these species.

The upland pine area with active Gopher Tortoise burrows will not be disturbed.

If you would like further information regarding natural resources or endangered species, please contact the FNAI:

Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI)

1018 Thomasville Road, Suite 200-C
Tallahassee, Florida 32303
(850) 224-8207
<https://www.fnai.org/>

9. Please identify the water resources including swamps, marshes, or other wetlands, on the property including the water quality classification for each water body and if the water body has been designated "Outstanding Florida Waters."

The property borders a small wetland area as indicated on the attached map.

10. Are there any unique natural features, such as coral reefs, beaches, dunes, natural springs, caverns, large sinkholes, virgin timber stands, scenic vistas, natural rivers and streams, and outstanding native landscapes containing relatively unaltered flora, fauna, and geological features on site?

YES ___ NO X___

If YES, please identify and provide locations on a map.

11. Are there fish or wildlife resources (both game and non-game) on the property?

YES X___ NO ___

C. Management Activities

12. Please state the desired outcome for the natural resources on the property and describe the management activities that will be used to ensure protection of those resources. The description should include any applicable activities related to habitat restoration and preservation (including prescribed burning where appropriate), practices for monitoring listed plant and animal species, activities related to hydrological and wetland restoration and preservation, and activities related to sustainable silviculture.

The site consists of 4 contiguous parcels containing an abandoned fernery under a hardwood hammock with a small wetland area along the northern border. The 20 acres will be rewilded to restore native species and natural habitat for the region. Other than the allowed use of 5 primitive camping sites and a small food forest gardening area, there is no planned development thus preserving all natural resources. As owner of the conservation easement, the Putnam Land Conservancy will provide oversight of the land conservation practices.

13. Please describe measures used to prevent/control invasive, non-native plants.

Invasive plant species will be removed as deemed necessary by the Putnam Land Conservancy in collaboration with the property owners.

Attachment D.

Explanation of How Property Fulfills a Clearly Delineated State Conservation Policy and Yields a Significant Public Benefit

As all four parcels of the subject conservation easement fall within the Florida Wildlife Corridor, the primary community benefits of the property are the protection of its green infrastructure and natural resources in accordance with Section 704.06, of the Florida Statutes. This includes helping protect the Florida Wildlife Corridor, functional wetlands protection, groundwater recharge critical to numerous nearby springs, flood capacity, enhancing air and water quality, climate moderation, and protection of significant habitat for endangered species (including the gopher tortoise, a state-designated threatened species) and migratory birds. These lands are now protected in perpetuity by a Conservation Easement donated by owners Nora and Dr. Jeffrey Hanson to the Putnam Land Conservancy. Dr. Hanson is an earth scientist from Johns Hopkins University with a passion for ecological restoration and management. Their donated easement protects these lands from further sub-division or commercial development and prevents any use of the Property that will impair or interfere with the conservation values of the Property. Furthermore, it is intended that up to five off-grid ecological sites on the Property will be used to demonstrate and teach sound ecological practices including organic food forest gardening, composting, solar energy collection and rainwater harvesting. Community involvement and educational outreach will be coordinated through local civic groups, who we are already in communication with regarding ecological and restorative preservation of the Property.