

ITEM 5:

Consider a 10-year update to the Julington-Durbin Preserve Management Plan (Lease No. 4402).

LOCATION:

Duval and St. Johns counties

APPLICANT:

St. Johns River Water Management District

STAFF REMARKS:

Background

The Julington-Durbin Preserve (Preserve) consists of approximately 2,042 acres located on a peninsula formed at the confluence of Julington and Durbin creeks and has approximately nine miles of shoreline along the two creeks. The peninsula is a long sandy ridge that grades into floodplain swamp and marsh along the creeks' shores. The uplands are dominated by sandhill along the crest of the peninsula grading to mesic flatwoods along the flanks of the ridge. This natural area provides important habitat for a diverse assemblage of plants and animals.

Recreational opportunities include hiking, picnicking, paddling, fishing, bicycling, horseback riding, and wildlife viewing.

The Preserve is managed cooperatively by the St. Johns River Water Management District (District) and the City of Jacksonville (City) for the conservation and protection of natural and cultural resources and nature-based public outdoor recreation. Title interest in the Julington-Durbin Creek tract is Trustees (75 percent) and the District (25 percent).

Management Plan Overview

The natural communities were mapped by District staff utilizing a combination of historic and recent aeriels, soils, and field verification. The Preserve is a peninsula with a sandy ridge running along its east-west spine. The sandhill community is located at the highest elevations and with the deepest sands. The flatwoods are found primarily on the flanks of the ridge. There are depression marshes and cypress domes embedded within the upland communities. Historically, the western end of the peninsula contained floodplain marsh. The margins of much of the property are floodplain swamp, associated with Julington and Durbin creeks, which flow into the St. Johns River. Overall, the Preserve contains eight natural communities and two altered landcover types. The major natural communities consist of floodplain swamp and sandhill.

The Preserve's entrance sign and access is on Bartram Park Boulevard in Mandarin. The facilities at the entrance area include a 0.5-acre stabilized parking area with handicapped parking, a short, paved walkway to a small picnic area, a wheelchair accessible portable restroom, and an informational kiosk. The only other structures at the Preserve are two wooden bridges located on the Red-spur Trail leading to Durbin Creek and scattered picnic tables, benches and hitching rails positioned along the trail system. The Preserve provides approximately 6.5 miles of marked, multi-use trails that are popular for hiking, bicycling, horseback riding and cross-country running/jogging. These natural surface trails also serve as management roads and firebreaks. Other recreational opportunities offered at the Preserve includes fishing on Durbin Creek, geocaching and wildlife viewing/nature observation. The

City’s Parks Naturalist also schedules monthly environmental education programs and guided hikes that are advertised to the public.

The Division of Historical Resources maintains a Master Site File that documents many of Florida’s archaeological and historical features. A review of information obtained from the Florida Master Site File disclosed there are twenty-three known archaeological resources associated with the Preserve. One site is a burial mound, twenty are small prehistoric sites with pottery (Orange Period to European contact), another is a nineteenth century road, and one is a nineteenth century historic site.

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

An advisory group meeting to discuss stakeholder input was held on October 28, 2020. A noticed public hearing to present the draft management plan was held on December 16, 2020.

Surplus Lands

In 2012, the District designed and implemented a comprehensive “Lands Assessment” process. This assessment identified a 10-acre upland parcel located south of Durbin Creek in Duval County for possible surplus or exchange. Further assessment of potential surplus type and appropriateness will be conducted for this parcel.

State Land Management Review Team

The District has conducted two Management Review Teams (MRT) since the 2006 land management plan on September 2010 and February 2018. The consensus for both MRTs was that the Preserve is being managed for the purposes for which it was acquired, it is being managed in accordance with its approved management plan, and the current management plan provides sufficient protection to the property’s natural and cultural resources.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the management plan.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

- APPROVE**
- APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS:** _____
- DEFER**
- WITHDRAW**
- NOT APPROVE**
- OTHER:** _____

Julington-Durbin Preserve Land management plan short term goals

Goal (ST)	Details of Goal	Objective	Details of Objective	Performance Measures
5.6	Develop and maintain the capital facilities and infrastructure necessary to meet the goals and objectives of this management plan	G	Expand parking lot.	Area (soft) expanded

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

LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LEAD AGENCY: St. Johns River Water Management District (District)

COMMON NAME OF PROPERTY: Julington-Durbin Preserve (Preserve)

LOCATION: Southern Duval and northern St. Johns counties

ACREAGE TOTAL: 2,042 acres

ACREAGE BREAKDOWN:

Natural Community	Acres	Natural Community	Acres
Floodplain swamp	796	Mesic flatwoods	324
Floodplain marsh	142	Wet flatwoods	234
Basin swamp	19	Blackwater stream	3
Depression marsh	8	Canal/ditch	4
Sandhill	506	Utility corridor	6

LEASE/MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT NO.: Board of Trustees Lease #4402

USE: Single:	Management Responsibilities:	
Multiple: X:	<u>Agency</u>	<u>Responsibilities</u>
	District	Lead Manager
	DEP/Trustees	Co-owner
	City of Jacksonville (City)	Co-manager/recreation management

DESIGNATED LAND USE: Conservation

SUBLEASES: Cooperative management agreement between District and City

ENCUMBRANCES: two utility easements, a drainage easement, and Trustees reservations

TYPES OF ACQUISITION: Preservation 2000, City of Jacksonville funds, and Mitigation Donation

UNIQUE FEATURES: The Preserve is a noteworthy peninsula with over nine miles of Julington and Durbin creek frontage. Uplands of the Preserve are dominated by sandhill habitat.

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES: Twenty three documented cultural sites

MANAGEMENT NEEDS: Habitat restoration and enhancement, exotic and invasive species management, public access and recreation management

ACQUISITION NEEDS/ACREAGE: None

SURPLUS LANDS/ACREAGE: A 10-acre parcel was identified for possible surplus or exchange.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: Management Advisory Group meeting and Public Hearing

DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE (FOR DIVISION OF STATE LANDS USE ONLY)

ARC Approval Date: _____ BTIITF Approval Date: _____

Comments:

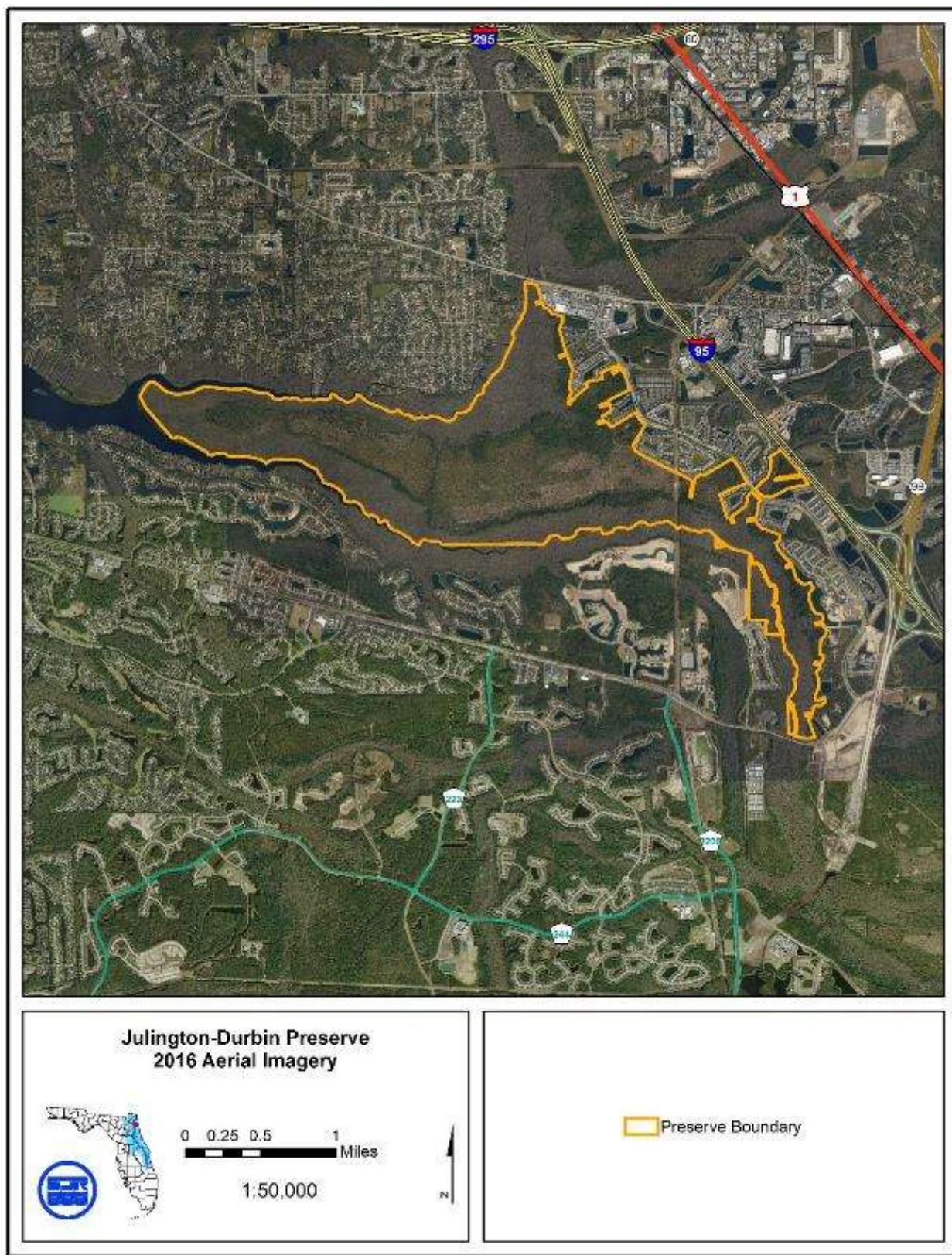


Figure 1 – Julington-Durbin Aerial Map – 2016 Imagery

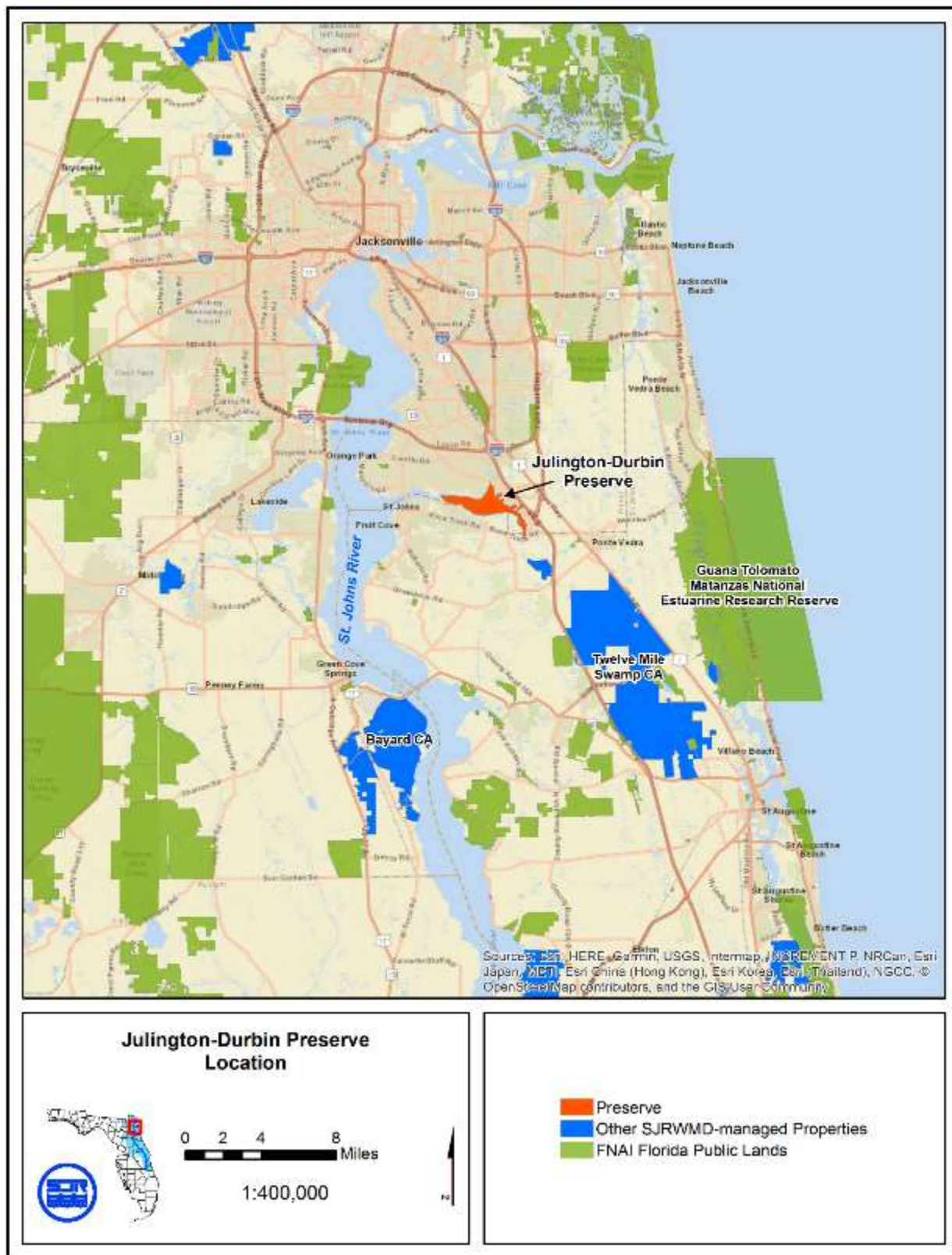


Figure 2 – Location Map



Figure 3 – Acquisition Map

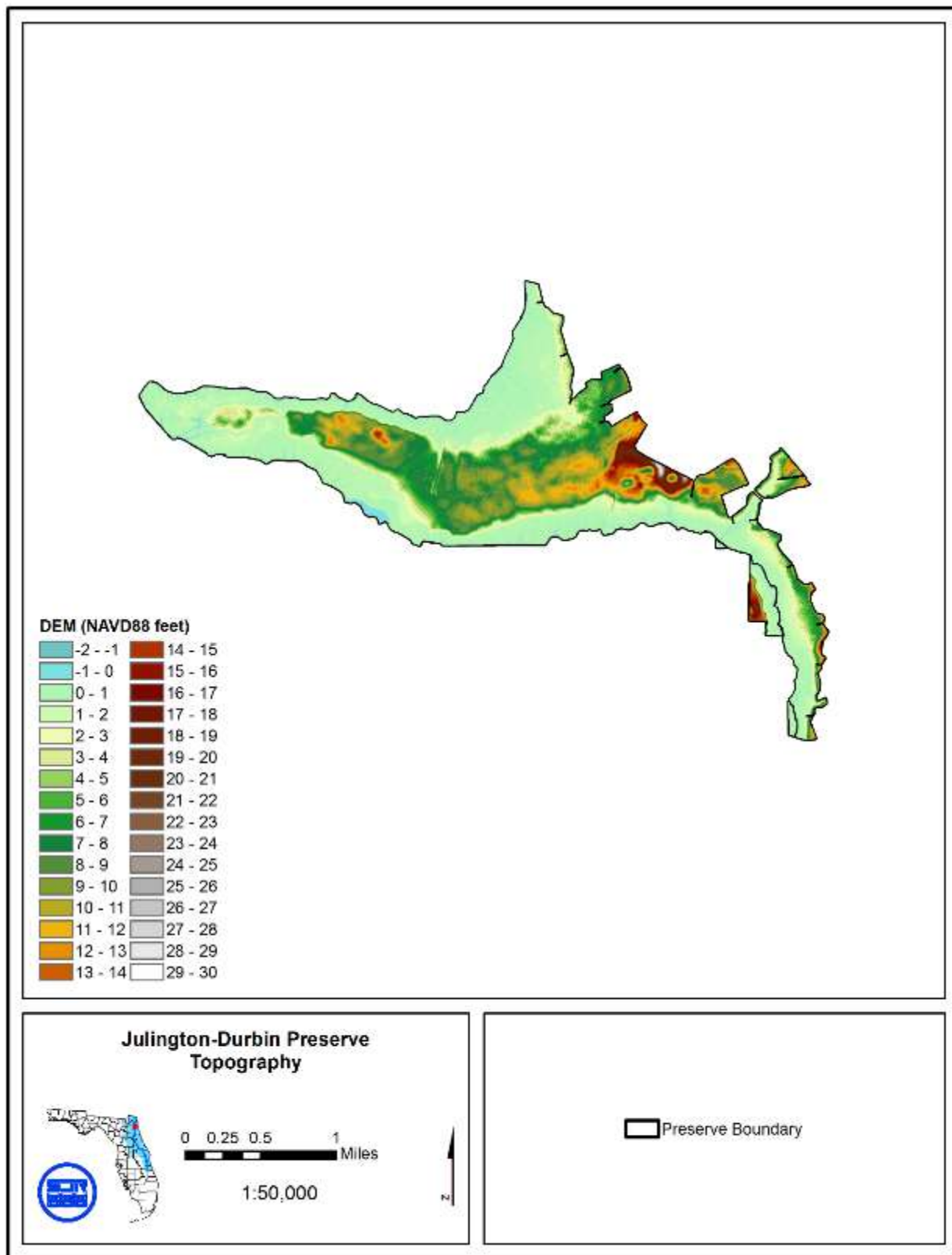


Figure 4 – Topography Map

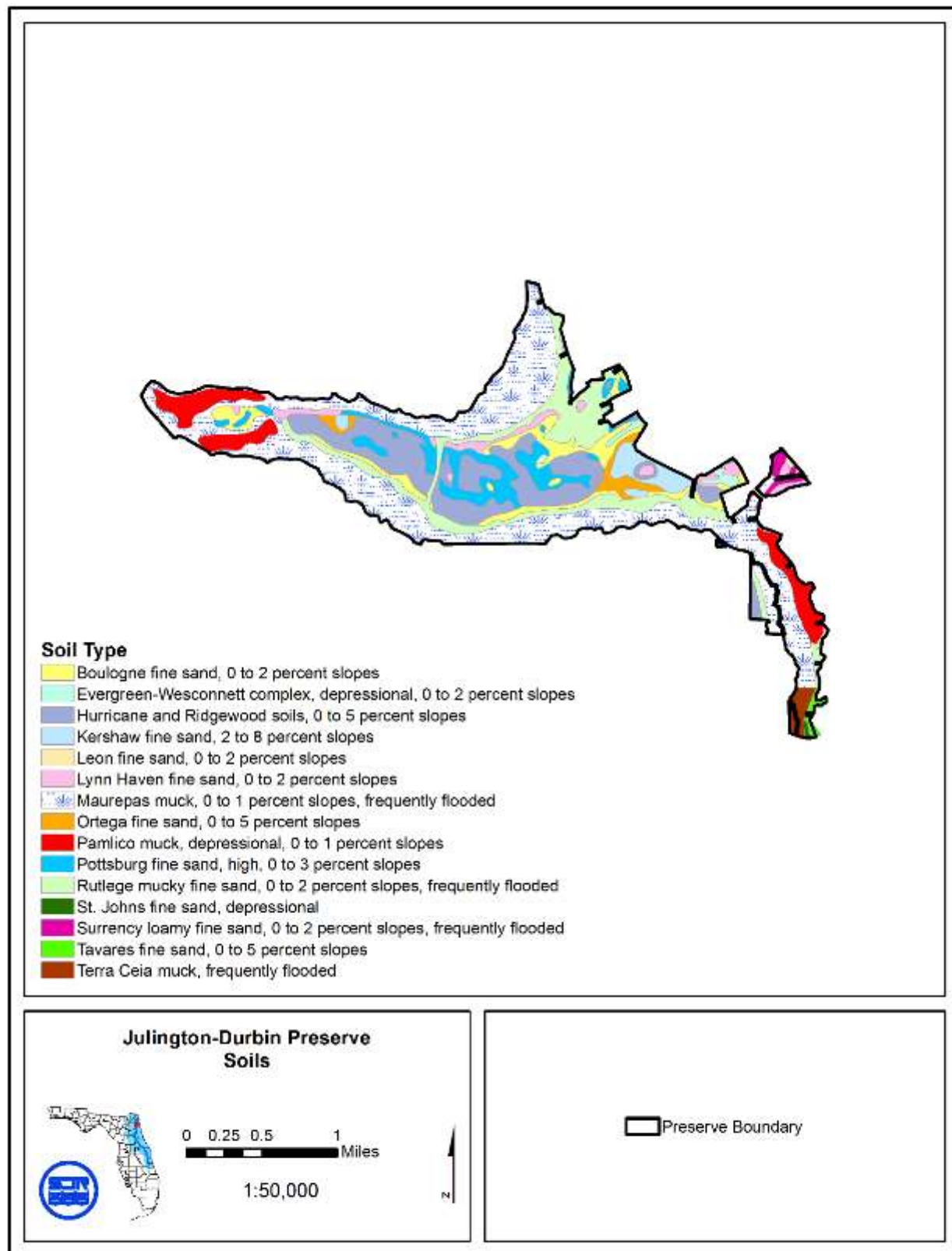


Figure 5 – Soils Map

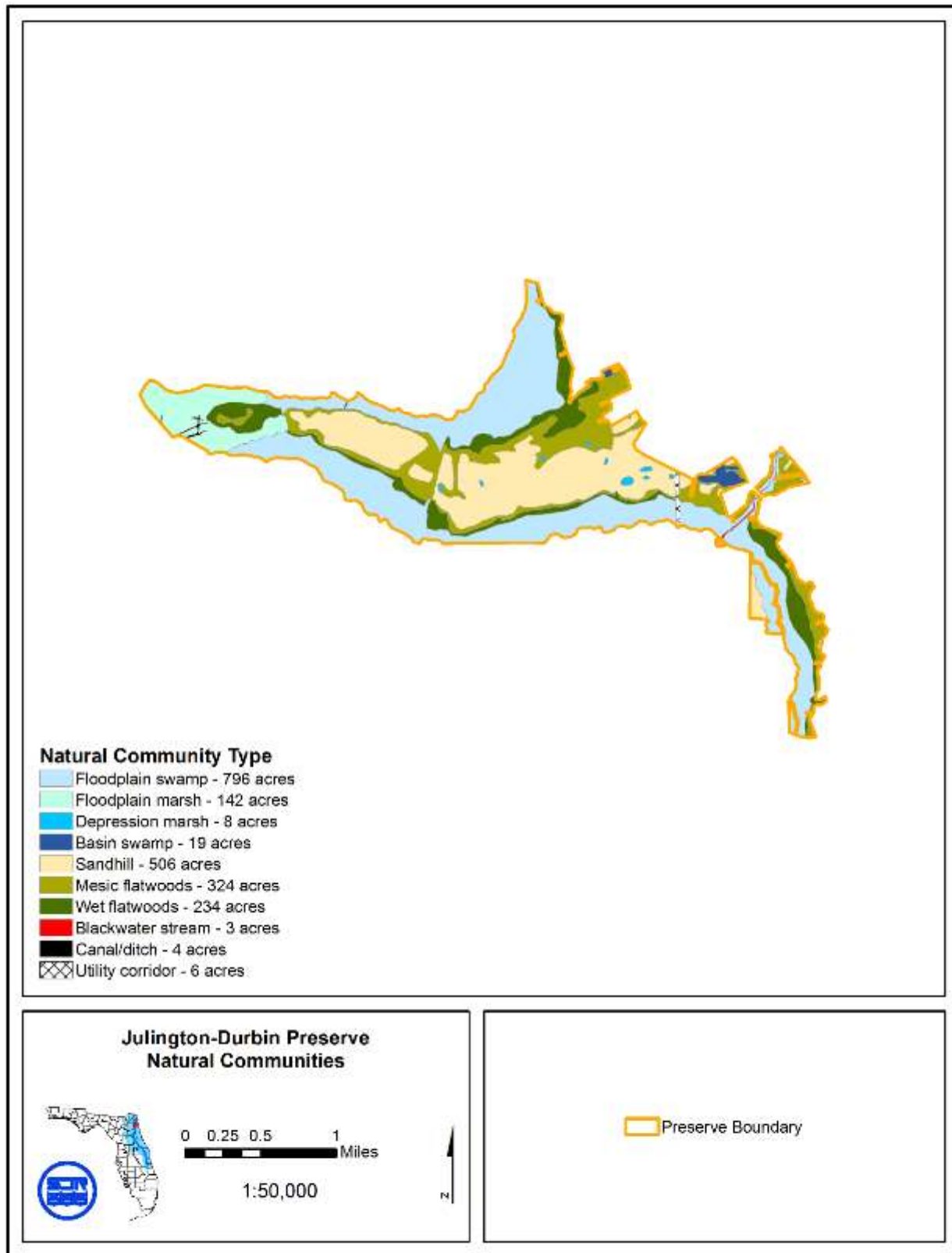


Figure 6 – Natural Communities

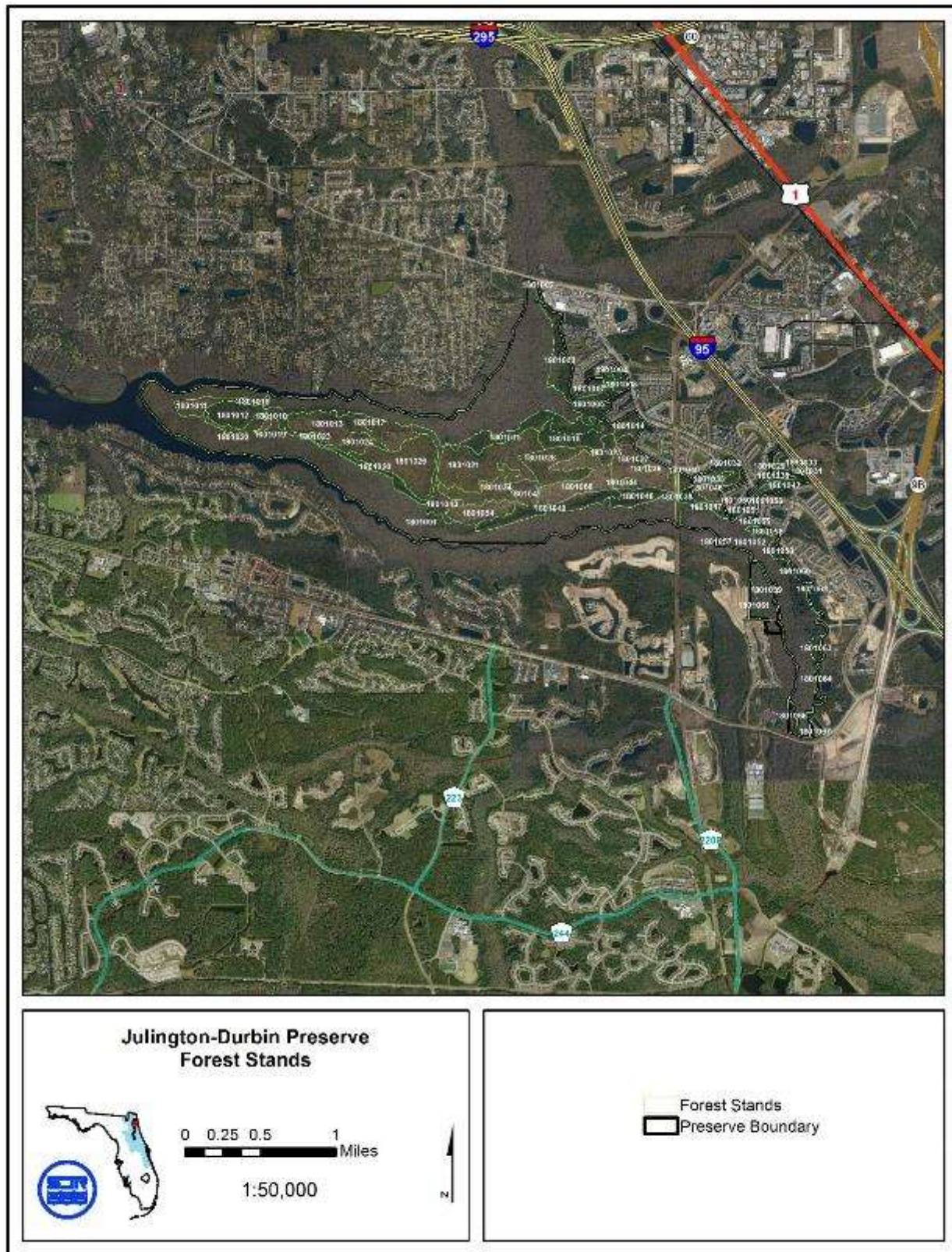


Figure 7 – Forest Stands Map

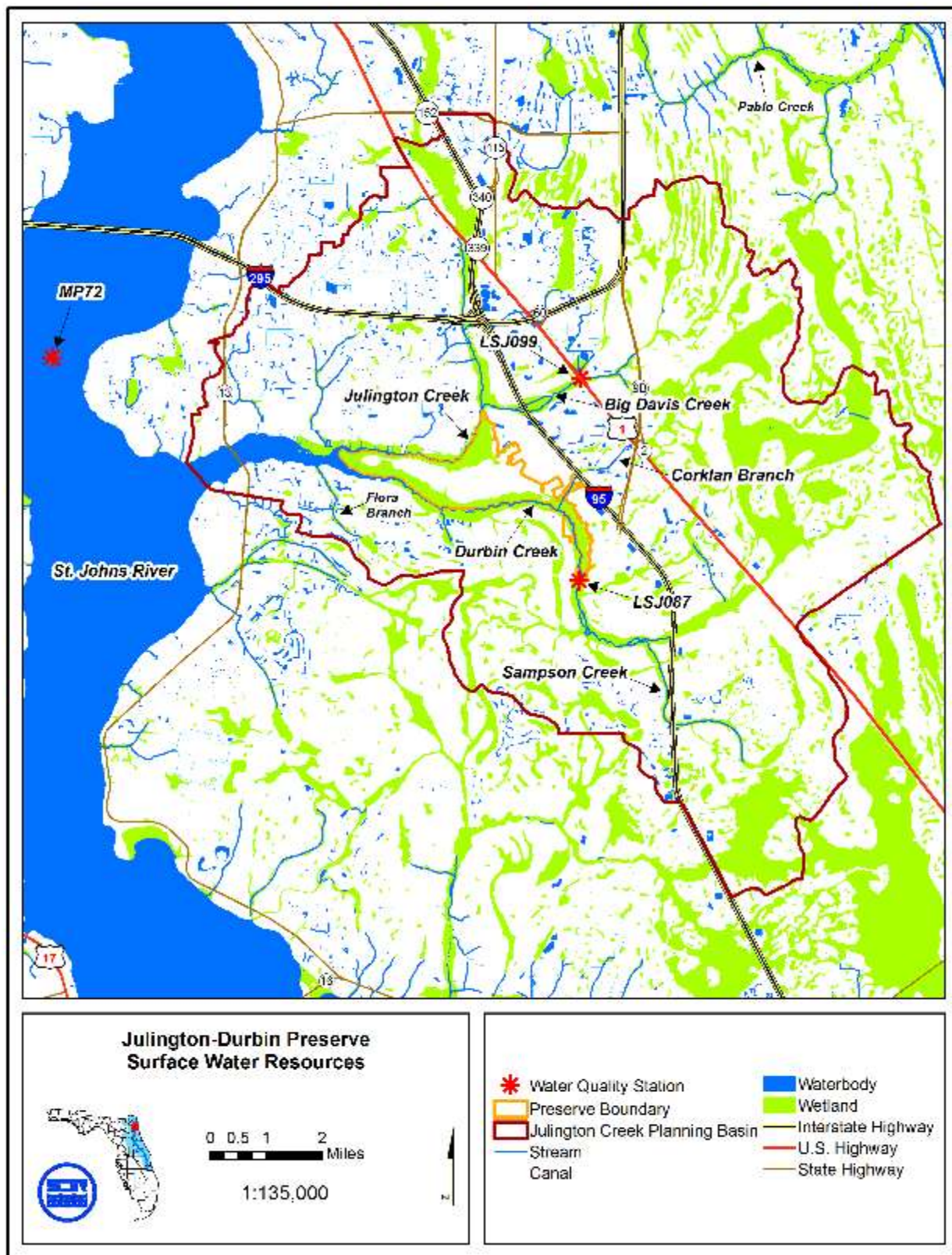


Figure 8 – Surface Water Resources

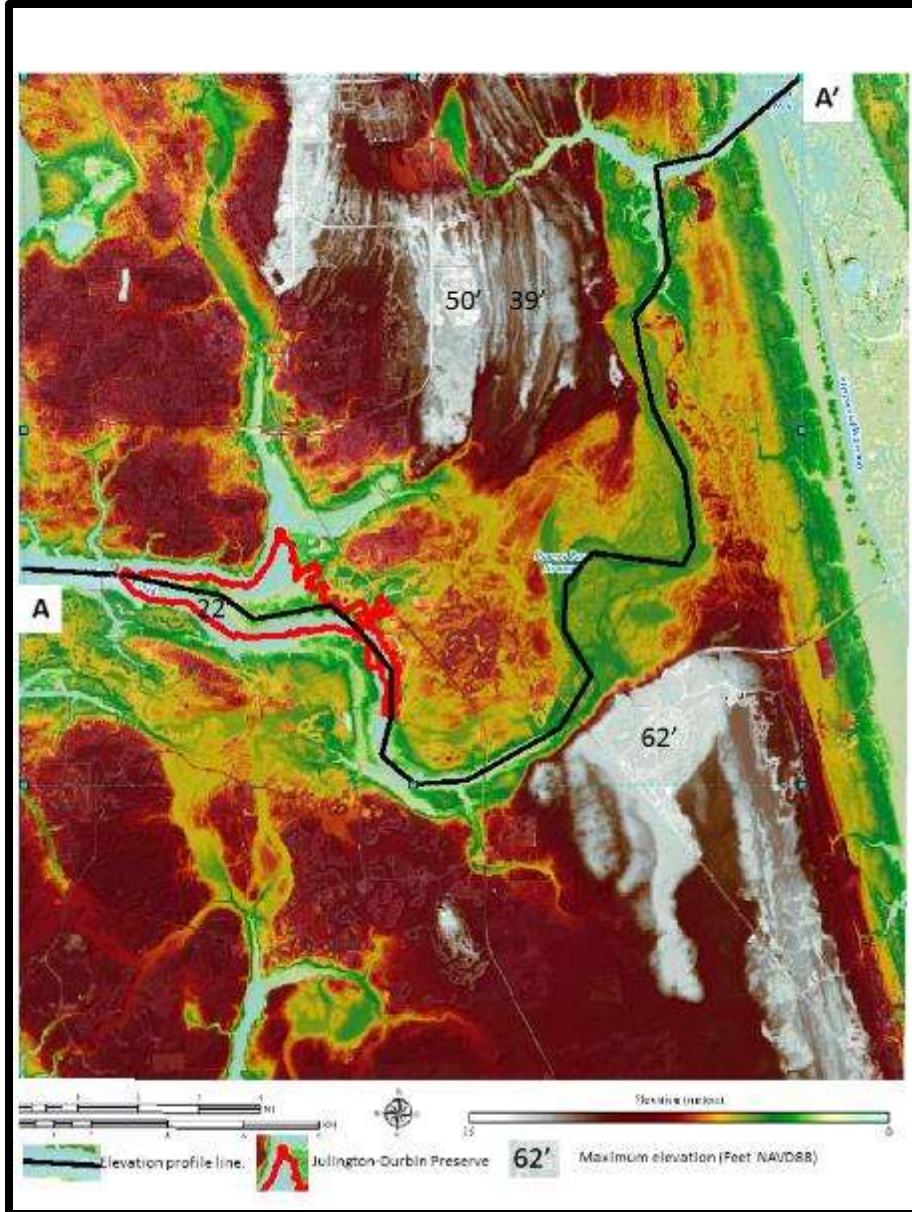


Figure 9 – LiDAR elevation model in the Julington Creek area (modified from Green and others, 2017). The black line represents where the elevation profile in Figure 10 below was derived.

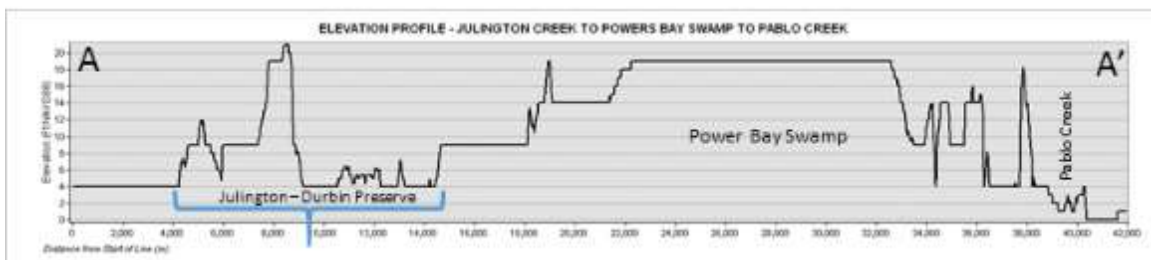


Figure 10 – Elevation profile A-A' from Julington Creek to Power Bay Swamp to Pablo Creek. This traverses the black line in Figure 9 above.

3.2 Purpose for Acquisition

The Preserve was part of a Conservation and Recreation Lands Program (CARL) project in the late 1980s and early 1990s. With funding from the Trustees, District, and City the Preserve was acquired in 1999 in conjunction with a Development of Regional Impact (Bartram Park). Primary objectives of acquisition were to protect, manage, and enhance important regional natural and cultural resources, in particular over 9 miles of creek frontage and associated floodplain swamp. According to Florida Statutes 253.034 the Preserve will be managed for conservation, outdoor resource-based recreation, and archaeological and historic preservation.

3.3 Single or Multiple-Use Management

The potential of the Preserve to accommodate multiple uses was analyzed in accordance with 253.034(5) F.S. The Preserve is managed under the multiple-use concept. Timber harvesting as part of the park's natural community management and restoration activities can be done in a manner that does not interfere with the primary purpose of resource-based outdoor recreation and conservation. Extraction of mineral resources is incompatible with conservation land uses.

All of the current uses and activities within the Preserve are in accordance with the purposes of acquisition, the District's mission, and the Conceptual State Lands Management Plan. During the planning process for this plan, it was determined that no additional uses and activities would be considered at this time.

3.4 Surplus Acreage

In 2012, the District designed and implemented a comprehensive "Lands Assessment" process (District 2012). This assessment identified a 10-acre upland parcel located south of Durbin Creek in Duval County for possible surplus or exchange (Figure 11). Further assessment of potential surplus type and appropriateness will be conducted for this parcel.



Figure 11 – Potential Surplus

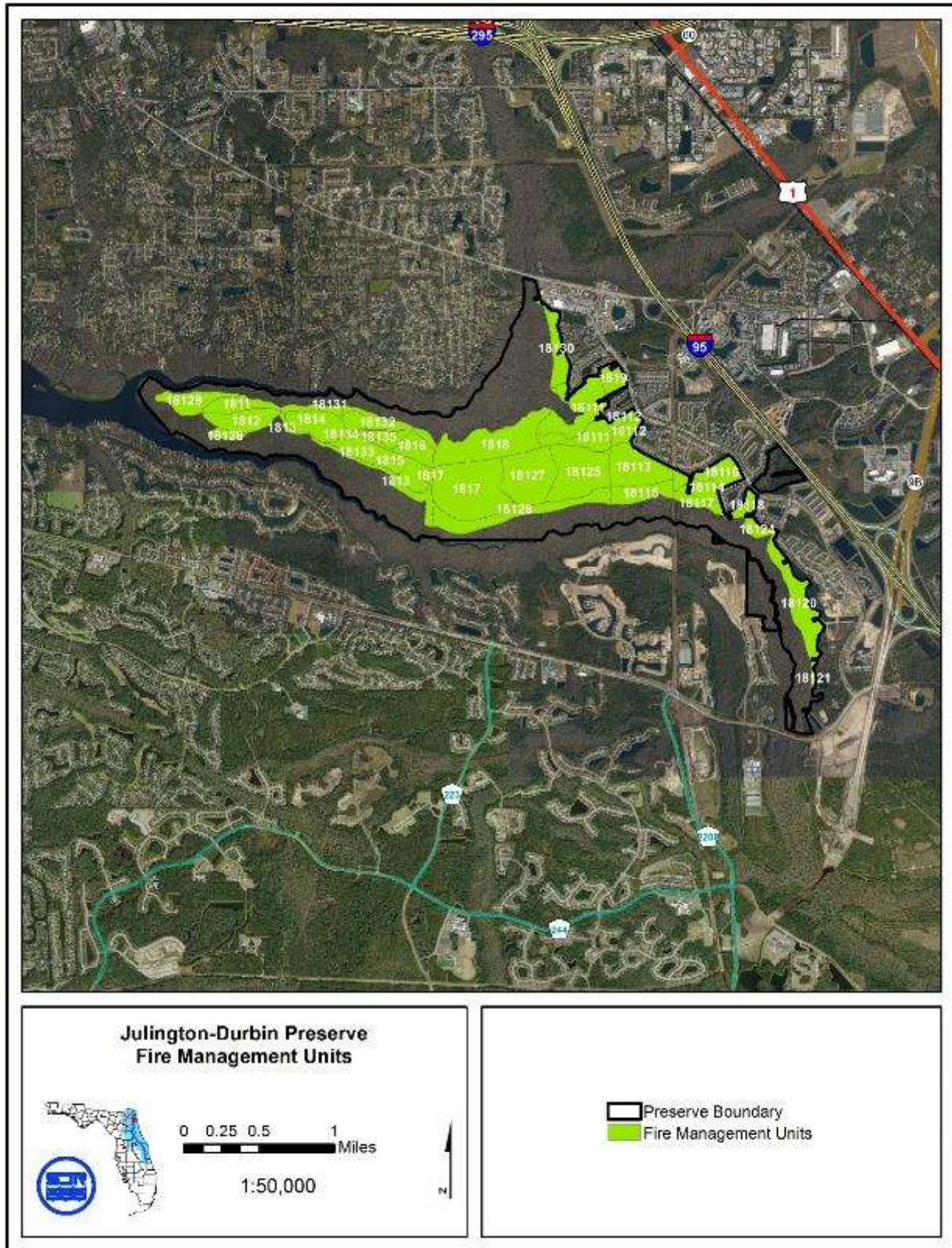
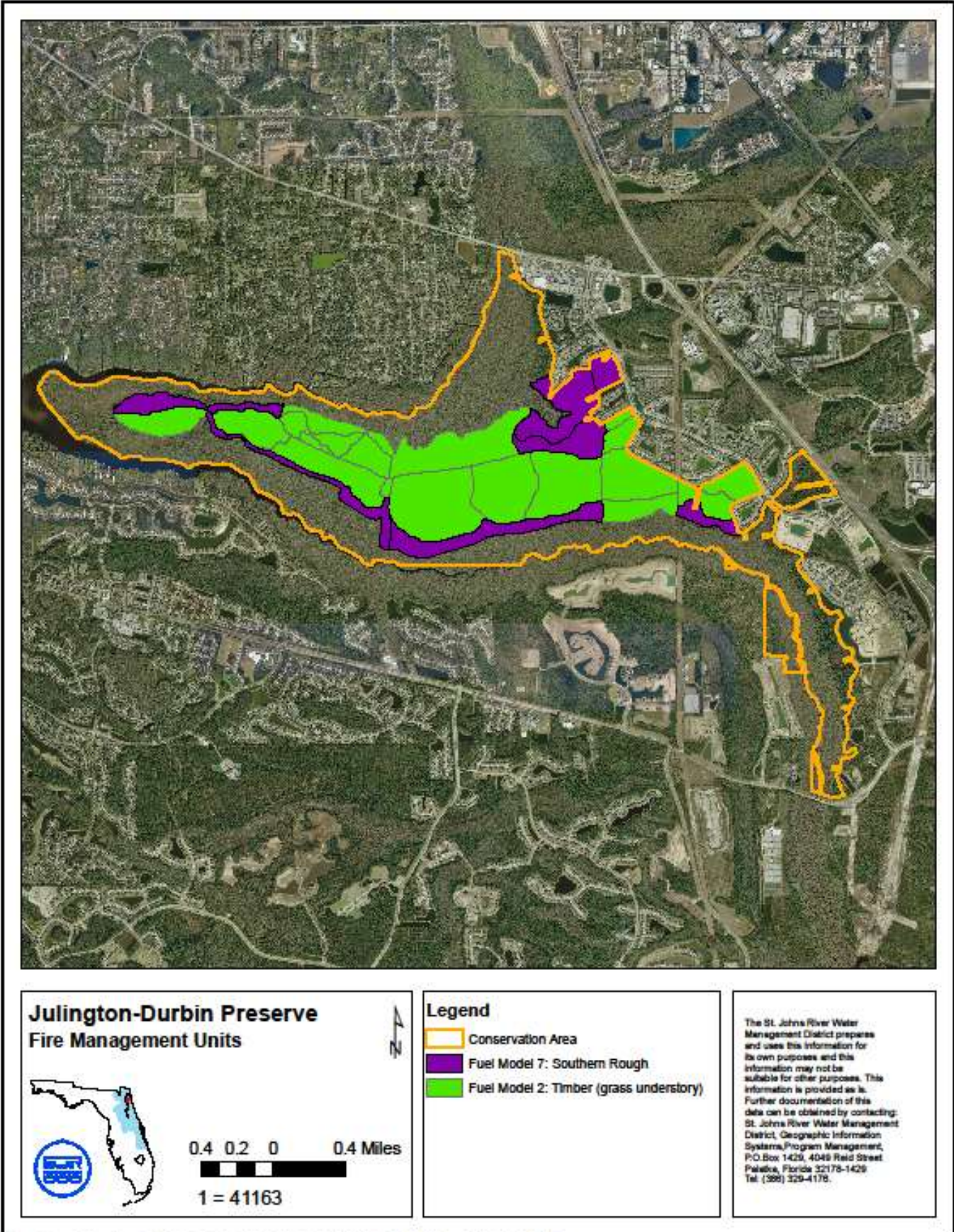


Figure 13 – Fire Management Units Map



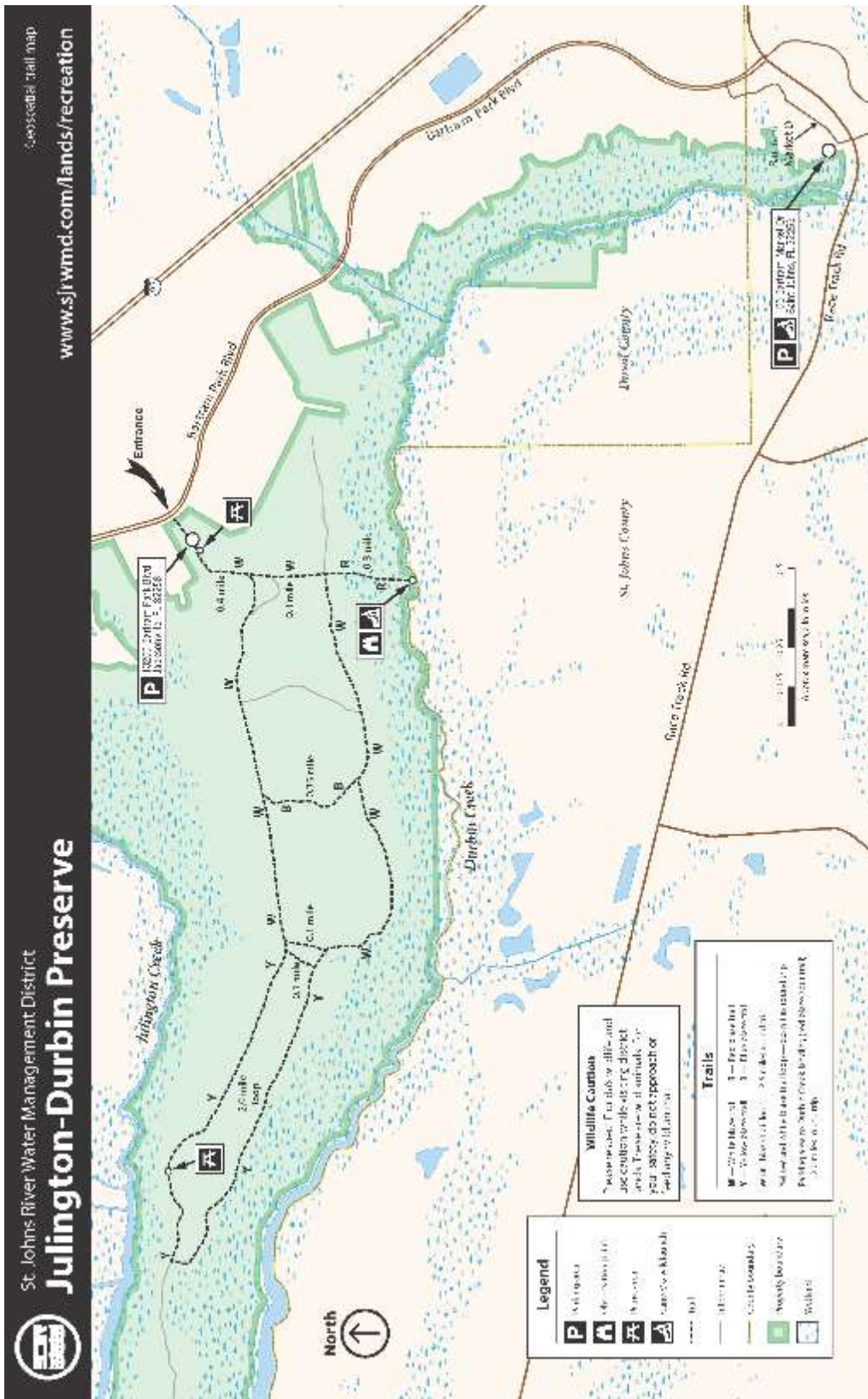


Figure 14 – Recreation Map