

**ITEM 6:**

Consider the Silver Springs Sandhill Management Plan (Lease No. 4807).

**LOCATION:**

Marion County

**DSL STAFF REMARKS:**

*Background*

The Silver Springs Sandhill (SSS) is located in central Marion County near the northeastern corner of the City of Ocala city limits. The SSS consists of approximately 470 acres adjacent to the Marion County Coehadjoe Park (MCCP) and Indian Lake State Forest. The SSS was one of the remaining large undeveloped, publicly owned parcels within the Silver Springs Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) area and within the Marion County Primary Springs Protection Zone. It also lies in the 2-year Capture Zone for Silver Springs. Silver Springs and Silver River are Outstanding Florida Waters. Near the property, are the Ocklawaha River Aquatic Preserve, Silver Springs State Park, The Cross Florida Greenway, and the Indian Lake State Forest (ILSF). The SSS was acquired as part of the Florida First Magnitude Springs Florida Forever Project in 2017. The SSS property is owned by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund and leased to Marion County under Lease 4807.

*Management Plan Overview*

The two primary objectives of the acquisition of the SSS were to remove the threat of future development (conservation to protect water resources and aquifer protection) and to enhance access to public lands for limited passive resource-based recreation. The current use of the semi-improved pasture on the western half is cattle grazing, primarily as part of a cow/calf operation. The cattle lease is year-to-year and will expire when grazing and public use conflict. Existing features and improvements include perimeter fencing and limited interior fencing in the semi-improved pasture, and various jeep trails and woods roads. Currently, there are no existing recreational facilities on SSS.

Conservation and preservation of the Silver Spring Springshed and the natural and cultural resources of SSS are the primary focus of activity on the property. The secondary focus of the next ten years is to improve public access for passive recreation. Improved public access and use of SSS can be facilitated by interconnecting the site with the existing and proposed regional hiking and biking trails, especially utilizing amenities at the adjacent MCCP and ILSF. Proposed passive recreation improvements will include designating internal hiking and biking trails that interconnect with regional trails and providing way-finding and interpretive facilities at The Sandhill. Recreational use and site improvements must simultaneously preserve important aquifer recharge function and habitat value. Other proposed recreation program elements include, disc golf and archery.

The SSS is currently undeveloped. The western 213 acres of the SSS consists of semi-improved pasture. The remaining portion consist of sandhill, successional hardwood forest, and pine plantation.

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 no previously identified archaeological or historic

sites within the SSS. While there are no previously identified archaeological or historic sites within the SSS, there are known sites immediately adjacent to the property, as well as the extensive archaeological and historic remains within the nearby Silver Springs State Park. This suggests that the SSS has the potential to contain cultural resources, but the property has never been formally surveyed.

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 changes 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*

Marion County solicited public input by conducting an advisory group and public workshop meeting on September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, respectively. The purpose was to present the management plan to the public. The purpose of the advisory group meeting was to provide the Advisory Group members the opportunity to review and discuss the management plan. The draft management plan was available to the public through the Marion County website.

*Surplus Lands*

The evaluation of this site has determined that no portion of the property is to be declared surplus.

*State Land Management Review Team*

This property has not been subject to a recent review by an inter-agency land management review team.

**DSL STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve the management plan.

**ARC RECOMMENDATION:**

- APPROVE**
- APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS:** \_\_\_\_\_
- DEFER**
- WITHDRAW**
- NOT APPROVE**
- OTHER:**

**Silver Springs Sandhill**  
Land management plan short term goals

Goal (ST)	Details of Goal	Objective	Details of Objective	Action	Details of Action
I	Administration and Law Enforcement	A	Administration and Law Enforcement	N/A	N/A
III	Resource management	A	Continue exotic/invasive plant surveys and eradication efforts.	1	Focus on Mimosa and Cogongrass.
III	Resource management	A	Continue exotic/invasive plant surveys and eradication efforts.	2	Borrow Area
III	Resource management	A	Continue exotic/invasive plant surveys and eradication efforts.	3	Old home site (clearing/regeneration).
III	Resource management	A	Continue exotic/invasive plant surveys and eradication efforts.	4	Successional hardwood forest east of paved entrance road.

Goal (ST)	Details of Goal	Objective	Details of Objective	Action	Details of Action
III	Resource management	B	Remove trash from old home site (clearing/regeneration), borrow area and successional hardwood forest east of paved entrance road.	N/A	N/A
III	Resource management	C	Develop the prescribed fire management plan	N/A	N/A
III	Resource management	D	Begin the prescribed fire program	N/A	N/A
III	Resource management	E	Develop and implement environmental monitoring plan for	1	Listed plant and animal species.
III	Resource management	E	Develop and implement environmental monitoring plan for	2	Exotic/invasive species.

Goal (ST)	Details of Goal	Objective	Details of Objective	Action	Details of Action
III	Resource management	F	Develop restoration plans that address hardwood removal and restoration plantings for	1	Successional hardwood forest
III	Resource management	F	Develop restoration plans that address hardwood removal and restoration plantings for	1a	Hardwood removal
III	Resource management	F	Develop restoration plans that address hardwood removal and restoration plantings for	1b	Supplemental longleaf pine planting.
III	Resource management	F	Develop restoration plans that address hardwood removal and restoration plantings for	2	Pine plantation-sand pine.
III	Resource management	F	Develop restoration plans that address hardwood removal and restoration plantings for	2a	Remove sand pine

Goal (ST)	Details of Goal	Objective	Details of Objective	Action	Details of Action
III	Resource management	F	Develop restoration plans that address hardwood removal and restoration plantings for	2b	Prepare for planting longleaf pine
III	Resource management	F	Develop restoration plans that address hardwood removal and restoration plantings for	2c	Groundcover supplemental planting or seeding
III	Resource management	F	Develop restoration plans that address hardwood removal and restoration plantings for	3	Sandhill
III	Resource management	F	Develop restoration plans that address hardwood removal and restoration plantings for	3a	Prescribed fire.
VII	Support and Maintenance	A	Maintain existing jeep trails that are to be utilized as service roads and trails.	N/A	N/A

Goal (ST)	Details of Goal	Objective	Details of Objective	Action	Details of Action
VII	Support and Maintenance	B	Maintain perimeter and interior fire lines.	N/A	N/A
VII	Support and Maintenance	C	Maintain public use facilities.	1	Entrance and trail storage
VII	Support and Maintenance	C	Maintain public use facilities.	2	Trails
VII	Support and Maintenance	C	Maintain public use facilities.	3	Parking areas
VII	Support and Maintenance	C	Maintain public use facilities.	4	Jeep trails/service roads.
VIII	Tasks/Capital Improvements. Physical Assets	A	Install perimeter and MU fire lines.	N/A	N/A

Goal (ST)	Details of Goal	Objective	Details of Objective	Action	Details of Action
VIII	Tasks/Capital Improvements. Physical Assets	B	Install/remove rehabilitate perimeter fencing in selected areas if needed.	N/A	N/A
VIII	Tasks/Capital Improvements. Physical Assets	C	Install public use and recreational facilities.	1	Public entrances (MCCP entrance and Archery facility entrance)
VIII	Tasks/Capital Improvements. Physical Assets	C	Install public use and recreational facilities.	2	Public use signage with map.
VIII	Tasks/Capital Improvements. Physical Assets	C	Install public use and recreational facilities.	3	Public use and information kiosk
VIII	Tasks/Capital Improvements. Physical Assets	D	Install non-paved internal site trails with signage.	N/A	N/A
VIII	Tasks/Capital Improvements. Physical Assets	E	Develop plans for:	1	Paved Ocala connector trail



Goal (ST)	Details of Goal	Objective	Details of Objective	Action	Details of Action
VIII	Tasks/Capital Improvements. Physical Assets	E	Develop plans for:	2	ILSF connector trail
VIII	Tasks/Capital Improvements. Physical Assets	E	Develop plans for:	3	Archery facilities
VIII	Tasks/Capital Improvements. Physical Assets	E	Develop plans for:	4	Disc golf facilities
VIII	Tasks/Capital Improvements. Physical Assets	E	Develop plans for:	5	Pickleball courts.
VIII	Tasks/Capital Improvements. Physical Assets	E	Develop plans for:	6	Public information kiosks
VIII	Tasks/Capital Improvements. Physical Assets	E	Develop plans for:	6a	Sandhill restoration

Goal (ST)	Details of Goal	Objective	Details of Objective	Action	Details of Action
VIII	Tasks/Capital Improvements. Physical Assets	E	Develop plans for:	6b	Sinkhole/karst aquifer recharge importance.
VIII	Tasks/Capital Improvements. Physical Assets	E	Develop plans for:	6c	Prescribed fire importance.
VIII	Tasks/Capital Improvements. Physical Assets	E	Develop plans for:	6d	Listed species (gopher tortoise)

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Source: Florida DEP, Office of Environmental Services, Revised Sept\_2019\_MWE.

## Executive Summary

The Silver Springs Sandhill (The Sandhill), was purchased by the State of Florida in August 2017 as part of the Florida Forever Program through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), Bureau of Land Acquisition. This 470-acre property, comprised of five parcels, was one of the largest intact, undeveloped privately-owned tracts less than a mile from the Silver Springs headspring in Silver Springs State Park, a first magnitude spring and located in the most vulnerable aquifer recharge zone. This land management plan (LMP) is associated with a 60-acre decommissioned wastewater treatment site owned by Marion County. The 60-acre parcel and proposed facilities are not included in the State review. The Sandhill property was acquired for the express goals of preserving and protecting land around the spring and the Floridan Aquifer from the effects of commercial, residential, and agricultural runoff; clear-cutting and mining; and unsupervised recreation (Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund [TIITF], May 2005).

The State of Florida subsequently entered into a 50-year lease with Marion County for management of The Sandhill property with the requirement that a management plan be prepared and approved by the State of Florida. This document is the first 10-year LMP prepared for The Sandhill for the State of Florida. This document serves as the preliminary draft plan and is being submitted to Marion County. A key component of the plan is for the subject property to be developed, managed, and maintained as a passive park providing protection to the Silver Springs springshed while providing compatible recreational elements that are complementary to other activities in the region. Because of its proximity to Marion County's Coehadjoe Park (MCCP), Indian Lake State Forest (ILSF), Silver Springs State Park and other notable parks in the region, The Sandhill is an important connector in the Marion County Parks and Recreation Master Plan trail system.

Upland communities on the site include sandhill, sinkhole, successional hardwood forest, pasture (semi-improved), and pine plantation. Most of the site contains well-drained soils and karst geology and protection of the recharge of groundwater resources is of top priority. These communities support a diverse array of plant and animal species. Most of the site is disturbed by cattle grazing, varying degrees of fire suppression and historical timbering. Partnerships with other entities will be explored to continue prescribed fire and other management tools for the duration of this plan. A prescribed fire plan must consider the challenges presented with a complex urban interface.

Recreation use is projected to increase in the near future with the implementation of the proposed components of the Marion County Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This LMP will recommend development of a trail system on The Sandhill to connect MCCP through the site to the ILSF Connector Trail taking the user into ILSF to the north and Silver Springs State Park to the south and beyond. This will require a multiuse paved designation to allow biking through the site connecting to the other biking facilities. Other complementary passive recreation elements this LMP will include a disc golf course and the potential for an outdoor archery facility (primarily located on Marion County decommissioned wastewater facility [MCWF] parcel).

This LMP addresses the items on the Management Plan Compliance Checklist found at the beginning of this document, per Florida Statutes and the Florida Administrative Code provided by the FDEP, Office of Environmental Services, Division of State Lands, and is organized accordingly.

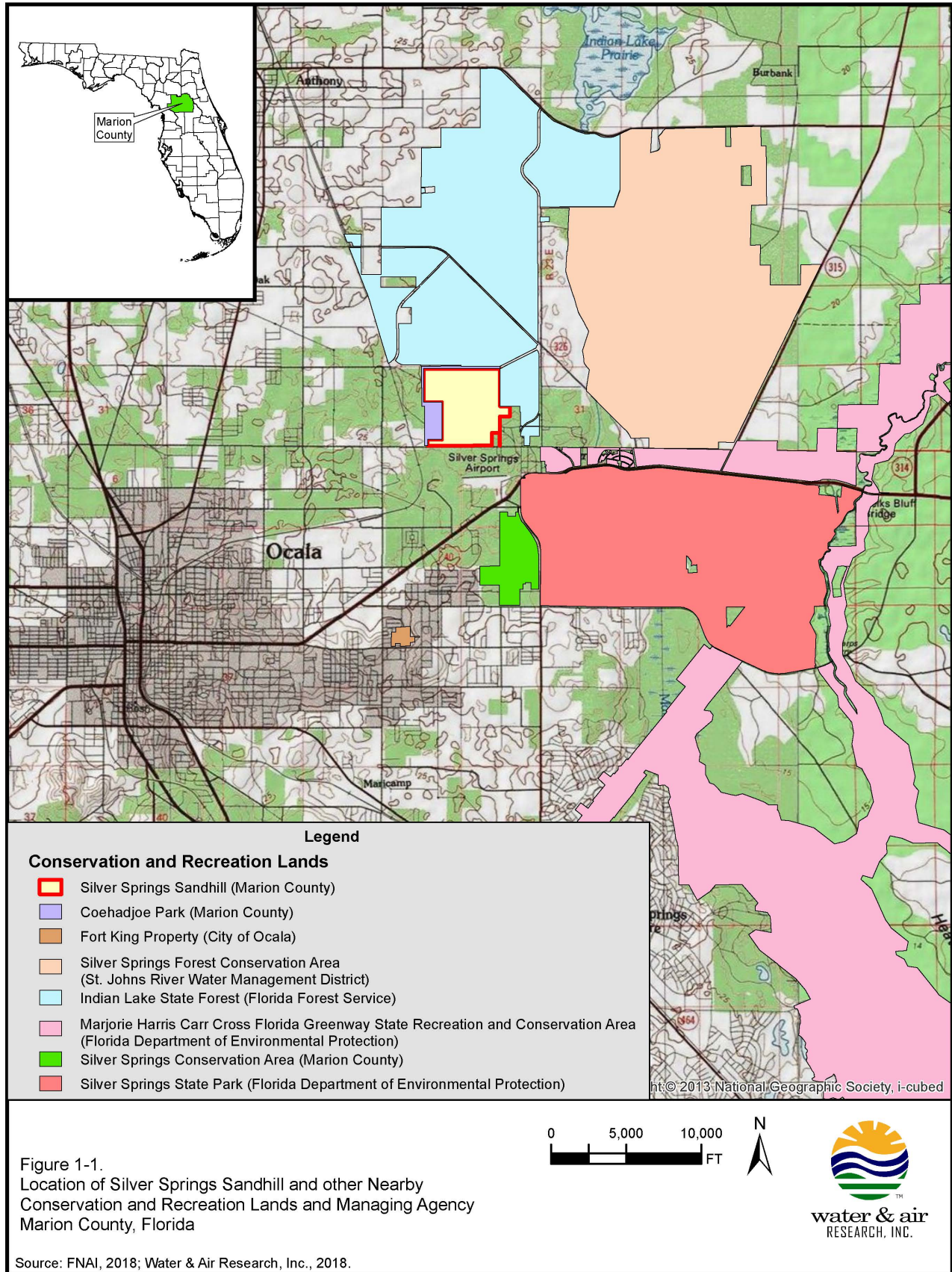
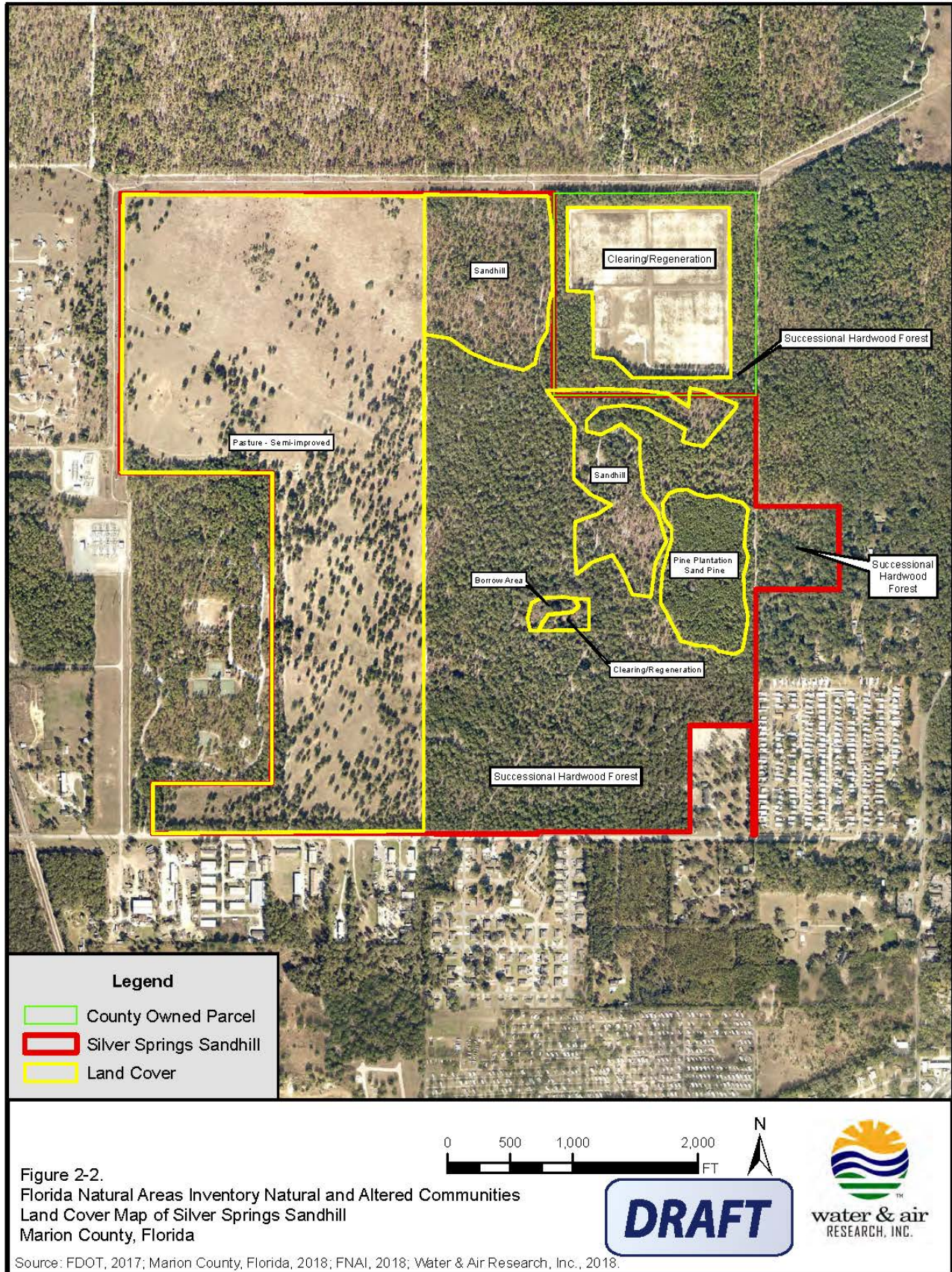
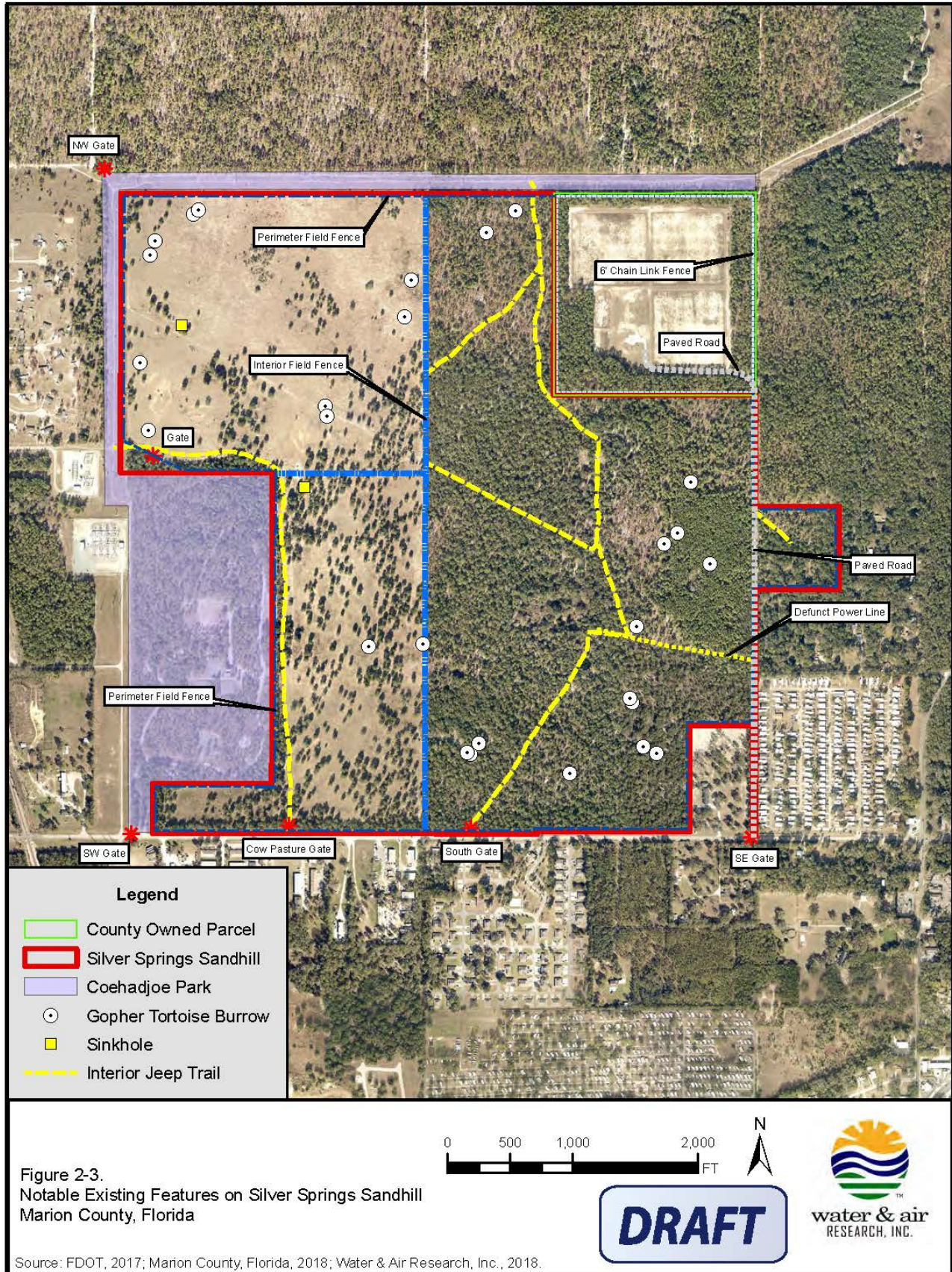


Figure 1-1.  
Location of Silver Springs Sandhill and other Nearby  
Conservation and Recreation Lands and Managing Agency  
Marion County, Florida

Source: FNAI, 2018; Water & Air Research, Inc., 2018.

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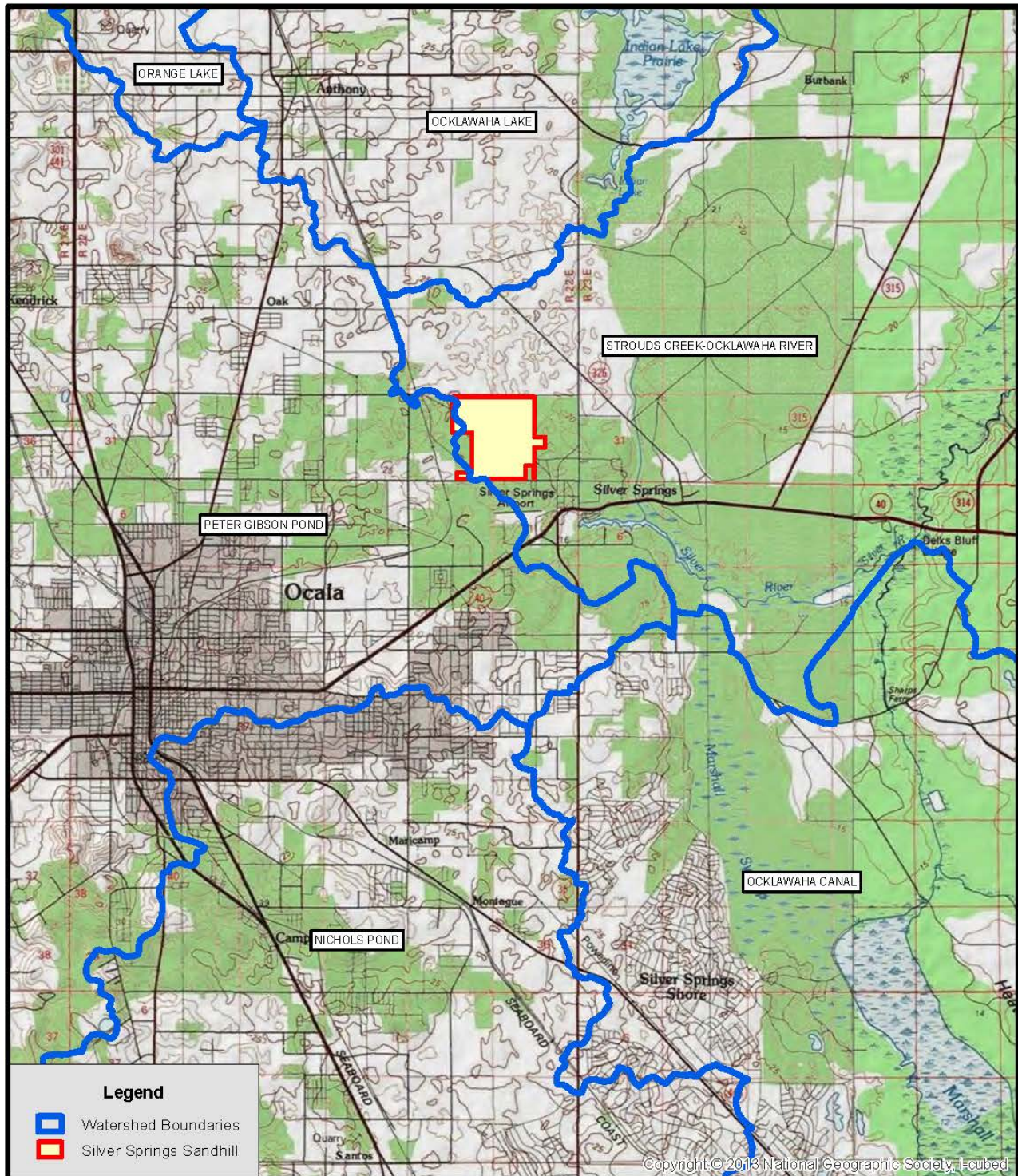
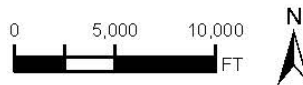


Figure 2-4.  
Watershed Boundary Map in the Vicinity of Silver Springs Sandhill  
Marion County, Florida

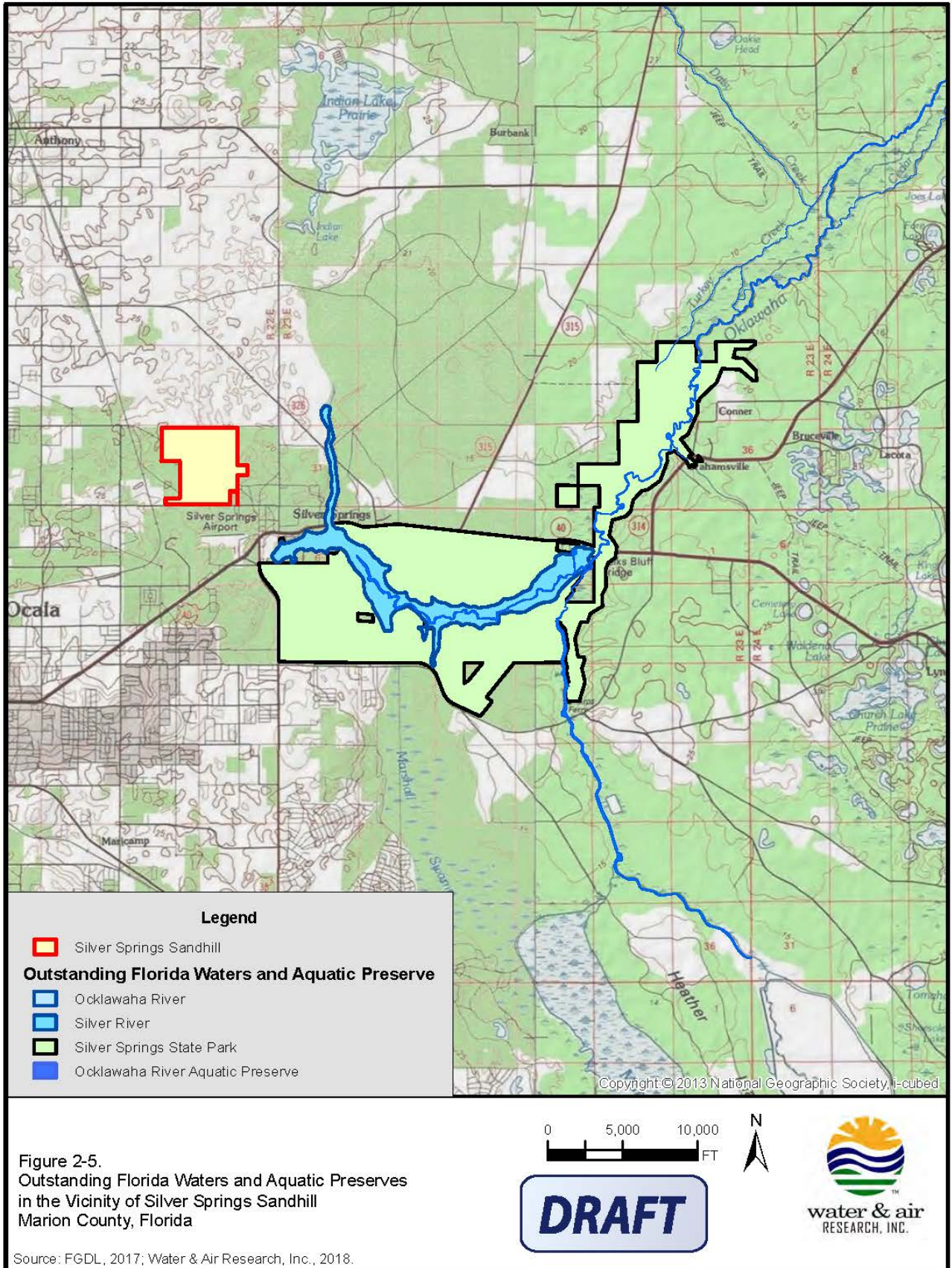
Source: U.S.G.S., 2005; Water & Air Research, Inc., 2018.

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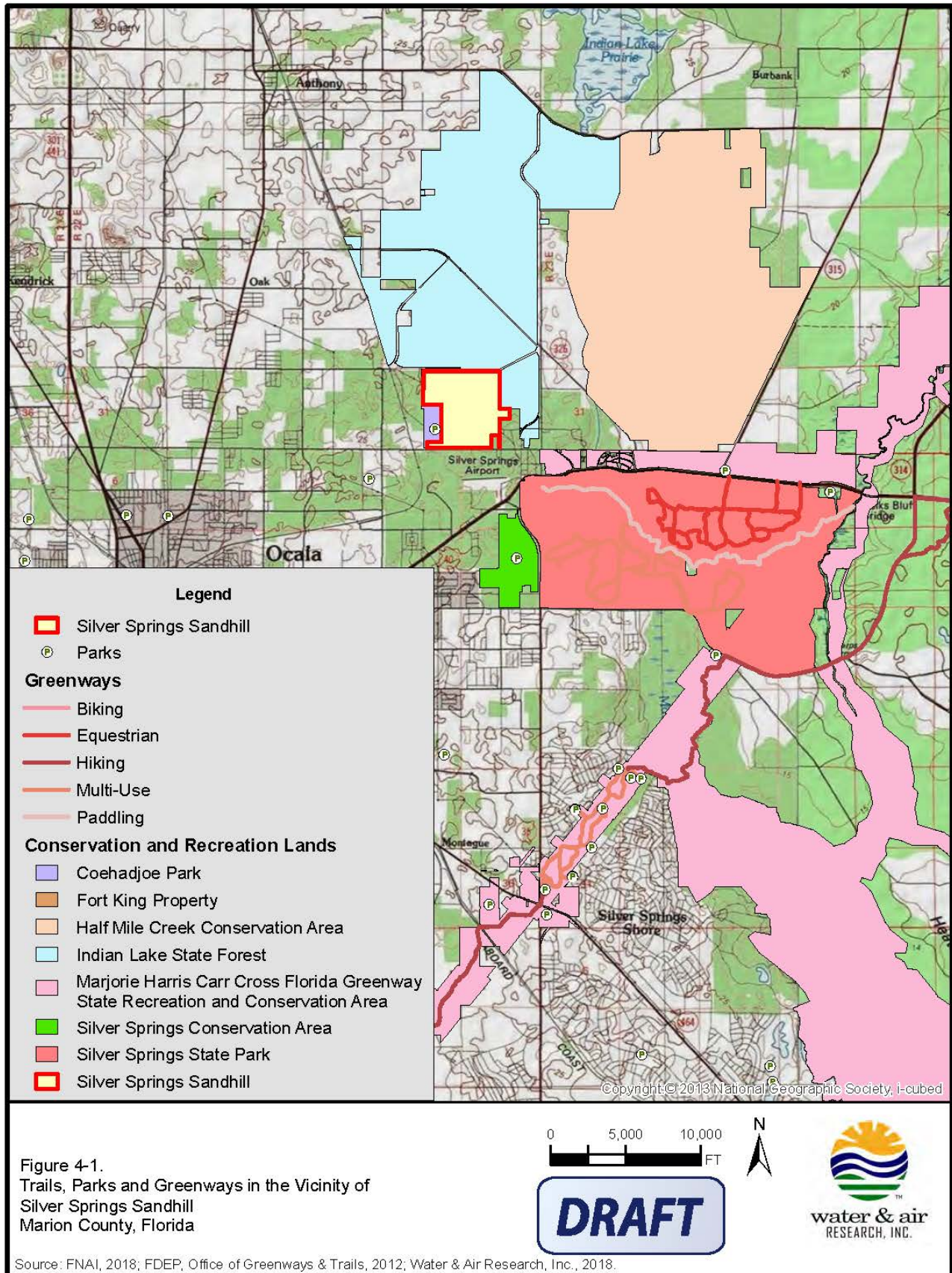
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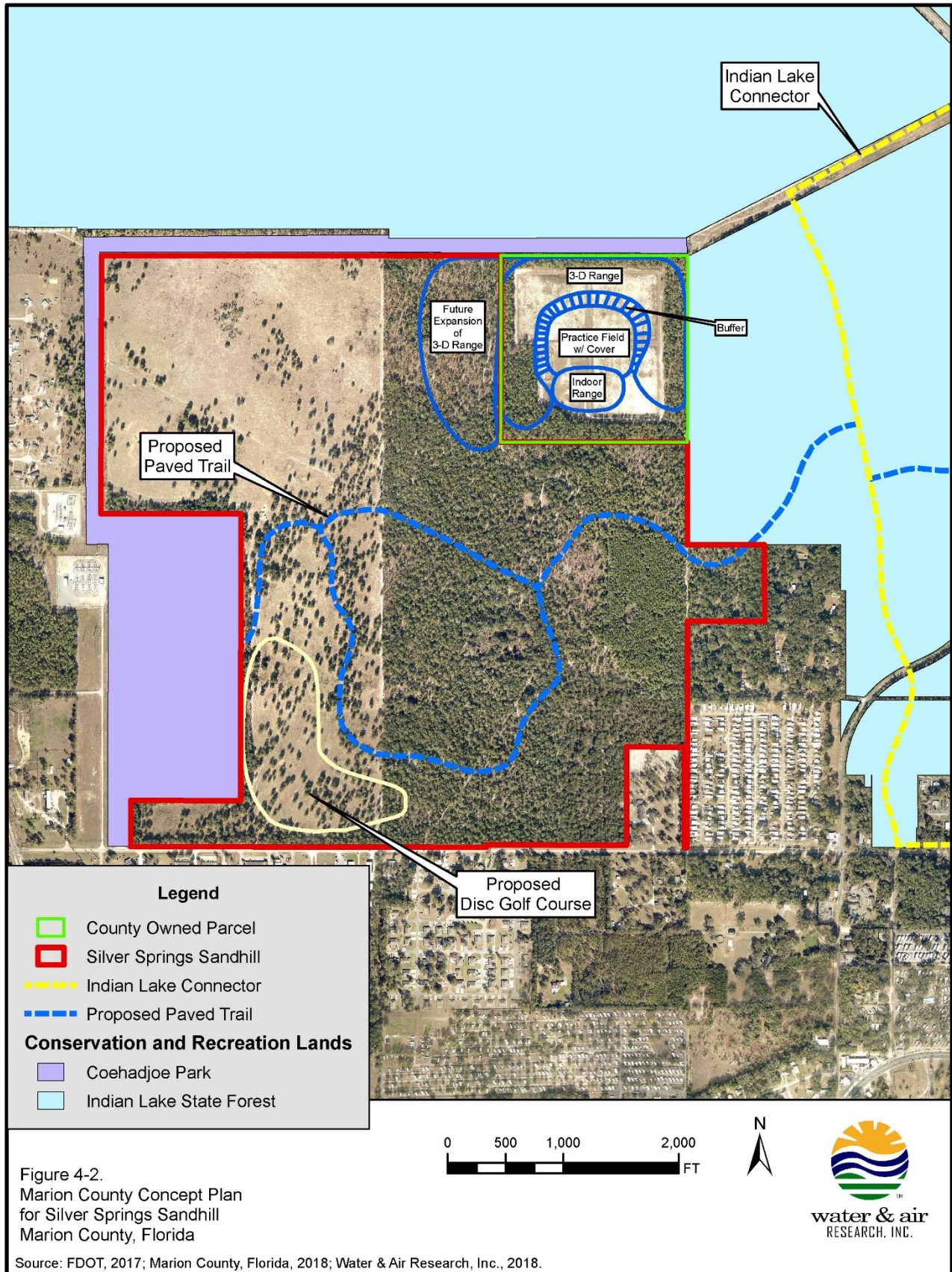
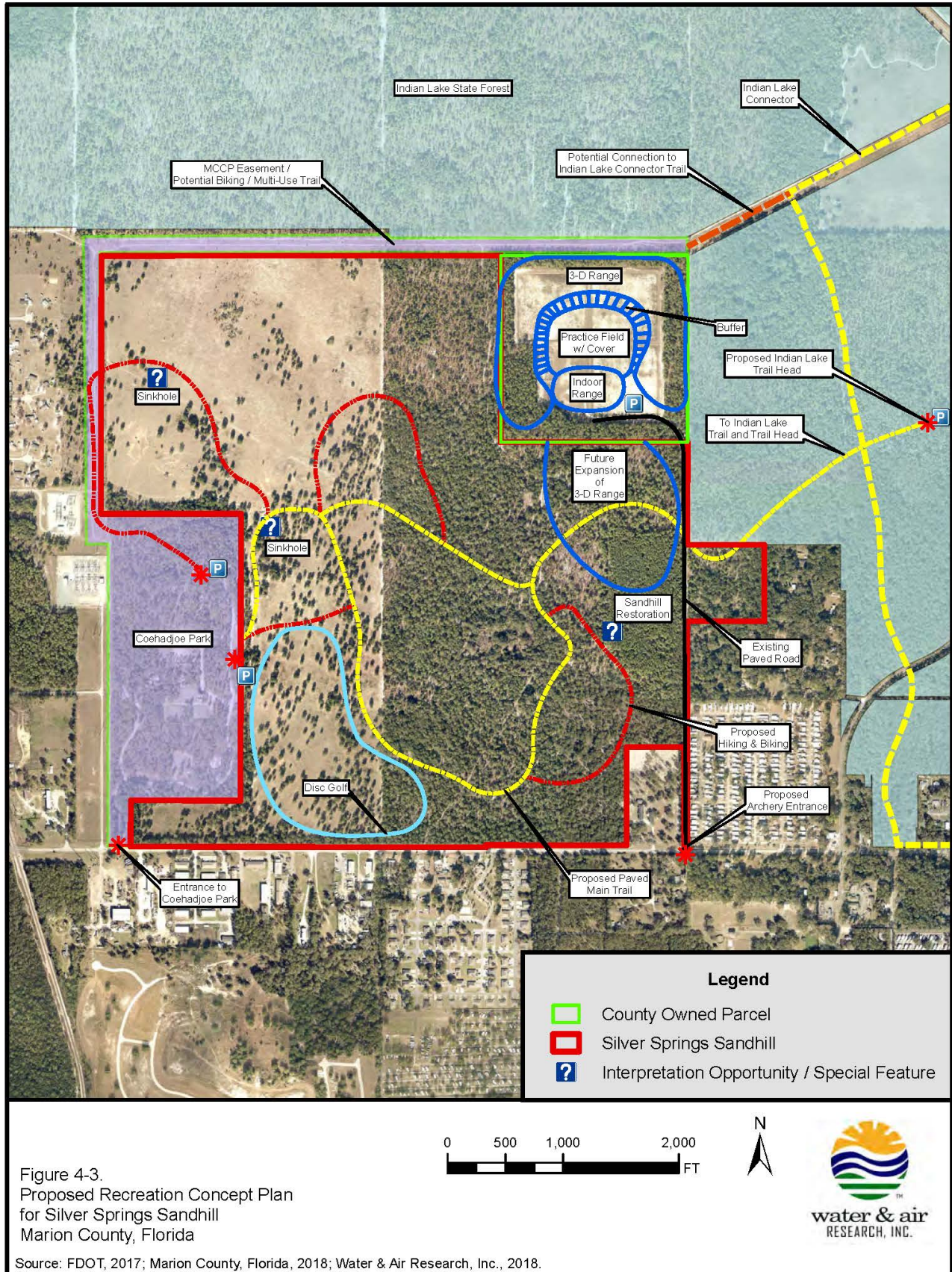


Figure 4-2.  
 Marion County Concept Plan  
 for Silver Springs Sandhill  
 Marion County, Florida

Source: FDOT, 2017; Marion County, Florida, 2018; Water & Air Research, Inc., 2018.

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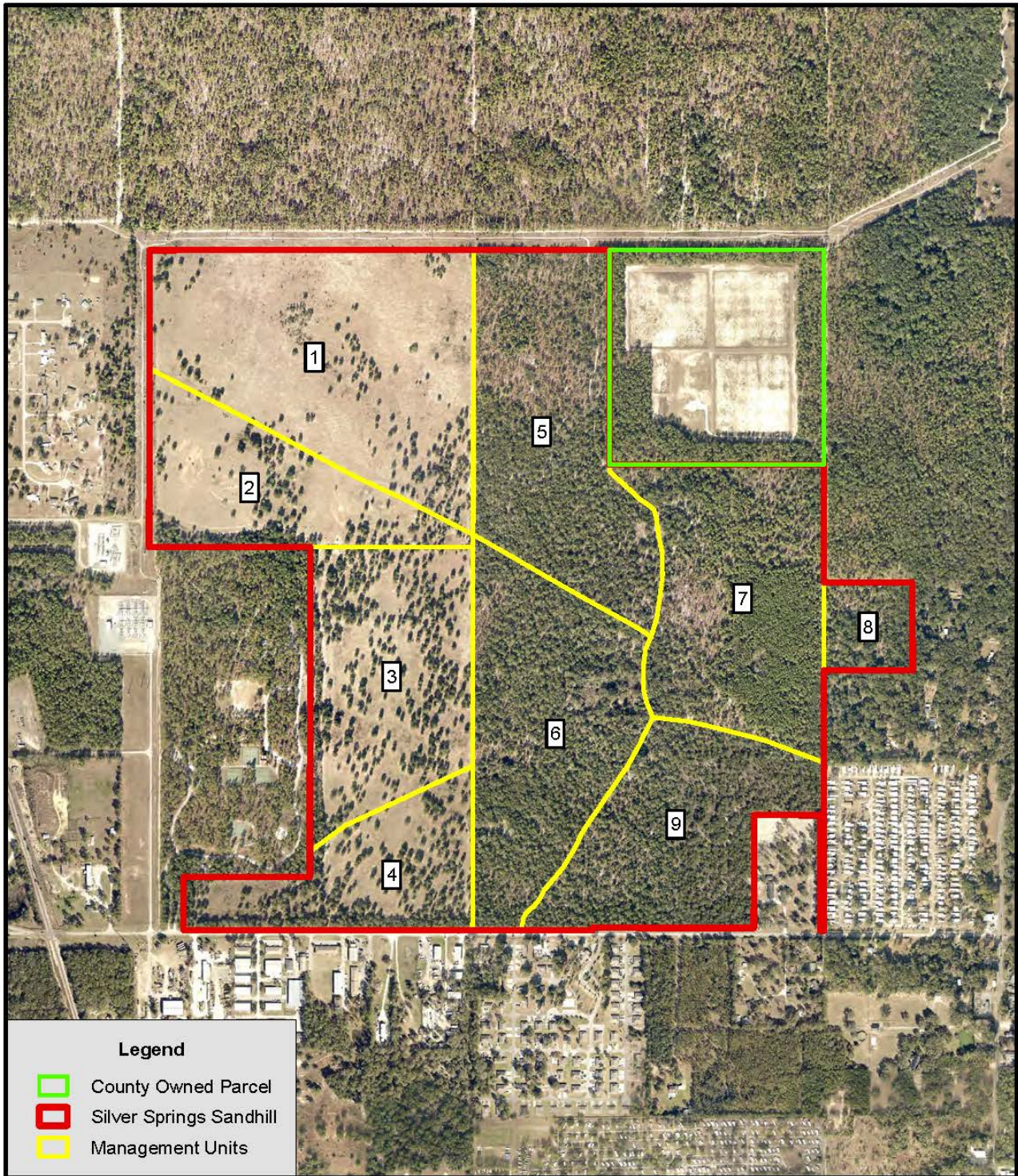
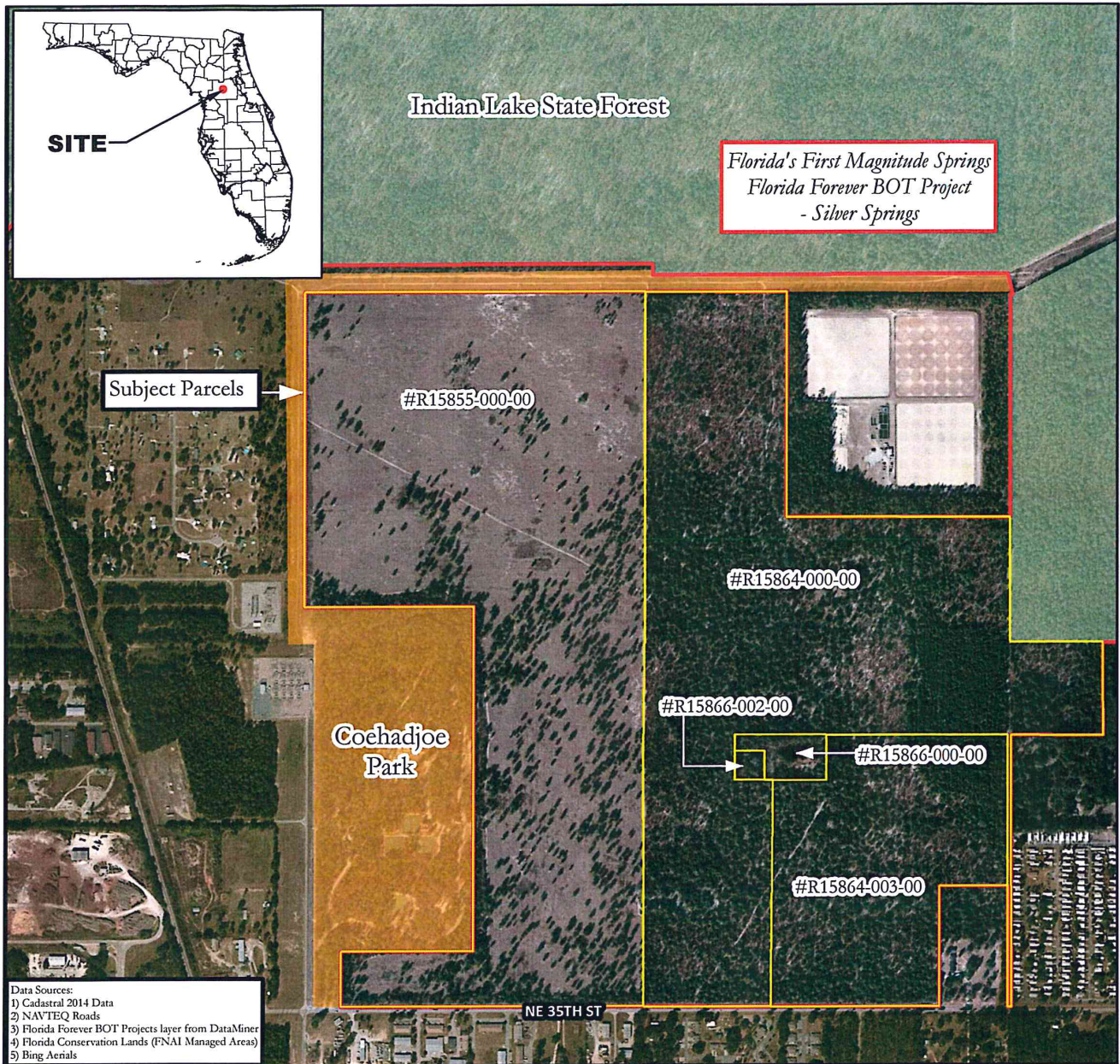


Figure 5-1.  
Management Units at Silver Springs Sandhill  
Marion County, Florida

Source: FDOT, 2017; Marion County, Florida, 2018; Water & Air Research, Inc., 2018.

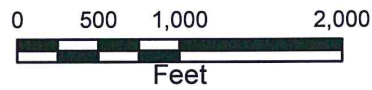
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Data Sources:  
 1) Cadastral 2014 Data  
 2) NAVTEQ Roads  
 3) Florida Forever BOT Projects layer from DataMiner  
 4) Florida Conservation Lands (FNAI Managed Areas)  
 5) Bing Aerials

- Subject Parcels
- Florida Forever Project
- State Managed Conservation Lands
- City/County Managed Conservation Lands



### FL First Magnitude Springs FF / Silver Springs Sandhill

Conservation Trust for Florida, Inc.

Owners: Silver Springs Ocala, LLC, Edgewood Ocala, LLC, & Edgewood Ocala II, LLC

Marion County, Florida

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