

ITEM 8:

Consider a 10-year update to the Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park Management Plan (Lease No. 3463).

LOCATION:

Wakulla County

APPLICANT:

Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP)

STAFF REMARKS:

Background

Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park (EBWSSP) is located in Wakulla County. Access to the park is from U.S. 319/Crawfordville Highway, SR61/Wakulla Springs Road, and SR267/Bloxham Cutoff Road. The park was initially acquired on September 17, 1986, with funds from the Conservation and Recreation Lands program. Currently, the park comprises 6,786.41 acres. The Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (Trustees) hold fee simple title to the park and on October 20, 1986, leased the property to DRP under a 50-year lease (Lease No. 3463). A new acquisition was added to EBWSSP in October 2019. This tract is located along SR61 and Old Shell Point Road. The 717-acre Ferrell Tract addition was acquired by the State of Florida utilizing funds from the USDA's Forest Legacy Program administered by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida Forest Service.

The purpose of EBWSSP is to preserve a landscape that has a 15,000-year history of human habitation. In addition, the park protects the Edward Ball legacy and the significant mark he left on the social, economic, and political life of the Floridian people.

Management Plan Overview

The Florida Natural Areas Inventory has identified 16 distinct natural community types and four altered landcover types at EBWSSP. The predominant natural community is upland mixed woodland followed by upland hardwood forest. The park provides refuge for thirty imperiled species. These include four plants, three arthropods, five reptiles, 15 birds, and three mammals.

The Division of Historical Resources maintains a Master Site File that documents many of Florida's archaeological and historical features. Seventy-nine archaeological sites, two historic cemeteries, one resource group, and seven historical structures have been identified at EBWSSP.

The heart of the park is the world-famous Wakulla Spring. Its 69-degree Fahrenheit water flows from the majestic spring to create the Wakulla River. Ranger-led boat tours provides world-class wildlife viewing opportunities for visitors to see alligators, native birds, turtles, and manatees. The tour also circles over the bowl of Wakulla Spring, one of the world's largest and deepest freshwater springs. The nature trails, which lead through southern hardwood forests and maple-cypress habitats, provide easy to moderate hiking along a 0.9-mile loop trail or six-mile linear trail. Several state and national champion trees mingle with other forest giants. A bridge over the Sally Ward Spring Run provides access to the upland hardwood forest on the north side of the Wakulla River. The elegant, two-story lodge was created by Edward Ball and opened in 1937. The lobby, with large fireplace and marble-topped checker tables, leads out to a glass enclosed

terrace with views of the spring. Most impressive, though, is the ceiling stenciled and painted with local wildlife scenes and European folk-art designs. The dining room, overlooking the spring, provides breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Gift items, light lunches and ice cream treats can be purchased in the gift shop at one of the world's longest marble counters.

The Florida Legislature requires that all land management plans include long and short-term goals. These goals must be measurable objectives, and short-term goals must be achievable within a two-year planning period. Pursuant to section 253.034, Florida Statutes, the Division of State Lands began compiling the short-term goals from each land management plan approved since July 1, 2016. The management plan identified objectives under the following short-term goals: protect water quality and quantity in the park, restore hydrology, and maintain, restore and maintain natural communities, maintain, improve, or restore imperiled species populations and habitats, remove exotic and invasive plants and animals from the park and conduct needed maintenance control, protect, preserve and maintain the cultural resources, and provide public access and recreational opportunities.

While the 10-year management plan serves as the basic statement of policy and future direction for each park, several annual work plans provide more specific guidance for DRP staff to accomplish many of the resource management goals and objectives of the park. Where such detailed planning is appropriate to the character and scale of the park's natural resources, annual work plans are developed for prescribed fire management, exotic plant management and imperiled species management. Annual or longer-term work plans are developed for natural community restoration and hydrological restoration.

Public Involvement

DRP solicited public input by conducting an advisory group and public workshop meeting on July 19, 2022, and August 9, 2022, respectively. The purpose of the advisory group meeting was to provide the members the opportunity to review and discuss the management plan. Based on the results of these meetings, staff recommendations include editorial revisions to the plan.

Surplus Lands

The evaluation by DRP determined that no portion of the EBWSSP is recommended for potential surplus designation.

State Land Management Review Team

A Land Management Review (LMR) was conducted in January 2022. 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, comply with the management plan. Two consensus recommendations were offered:

- 1) The team recommended DRP pursue strategies to increase burning in upland acres.
- 2) The team recommended DRP continue the environmental education of nutrient reduction to the spring shed. This would increase park reductions of fertilizer use and providing contained systems for restrooms (Cherokee Sink recreational area).

The 2022 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:** _____



EDWARD BALL WAKULLA SPRINGS STATE PARK

Draft Unit Management Plan

Executive Summary

Purpose and Significance of the Park

Park History

Wakulla Springs State Park was initially acquired on September 17, 1986, with funds from the Conservation and Recreation Lands Program (CARL). Currently, the park comprises 6,786.41 acres.

Park Significance

The park protects a first magnitude spring, which flows at a rate of 250 million gallons per day, that includes one of the world's largest basins and deepest cave systems as well as numerous other springs and sinkholes. The park protects natural communities such as upland hardwood forest, floodplain swamps and spring-run stream that provide scenic landscapes for park visitors and important habitat for imperiled species.





EDWARD BALL WAKULLA SPRINGS STATE PARK

Draft Unit Management Plan

Executive Summary

Park Interpretive Themes

Central Park Theme

The vast flow of Wakulla Springs and its connected environments is a window into the ancient and continuing relationships between people, wildlife, and water.

Primary Interpretive Themes

Habitats— From ancient cypress domes and old growth forests to one of the world's largest freshwater springs, Wakulla Springs State Park contains diverse natural habitats that spotlight Florida's flora, fauna, and geology.

Historic use— The Lodge and surrounding historic artifacts of Wakulla Springs attest to the allure and utilization of Florida's natural wonders by humanity over millennia.

Recreational opportunities— Responsible recreation throughout the park and its surrounding community safeguards the water quality and habitat protection of this ecological treasure.

Water quality— The health of the Wakulla River relies on collaborative regional management efforts that prioritize nitrogen reduction and water conservation.





EDWARD BALL WAKULLA SPRINGS STATE PARK

Draft Unit Management Plan

Executive Summary

Park Quick Facts

- ◆ Agency: Department of Environmental Protection - Division of Recreation and Parks
- ◆ Acreage : 6,786.41
- ◆ Location: Wakulla County
- ◆ Lease Management Agreement Number(s): 3463
- ◆ Use: Single
- ◆ Responsibility: Public Outdoor Recreation and Conservation
- ◆ Sublease: None
- ◆ Encumbrances: See Appendix 1 for details
- ◆ Public Involvement: See Appendix 2 for details
- ◆ Optimum Boundary: Approximately 4,903 acres (See Optimum Boundary Page)





EDWARD BALL WAKULLA SPRINGS STATE PARK

Draft Unit Management Plan

Executive Summary

Park Accomplishments: 2007 — 2022

Previous Accomplishments

Since the 2007 Unit Management Plan for Wakulla Springs the park has made significant accomplishments in terms of resource management and continued protection of the park. The park has added approximately 750 acres to the park. Since 2008 the park treated 15,261 acres with prescribed fire and treated 118 infested acres of invasive species in the park.

Future Objectives

Moving forward in the next 10 years, the park plans to continue resource management efforts by restoring altered landcover types into their desired future conditions. Restoration activities will be done through the continued use of prescribed fire applications, invasive species removal, and other management activities. To improve visitor use, the park will be making improvements to 9 use areas and creating 2 new use area.





EDWARD BALL WAKULLA SPRINGS STATE PARK

Draft Unit Management Plan

Executive Summary

Management Goals & Objectives

Hydrological & Natural Communities

Objective: Assess hydrological restoration needs, monitor water quality and quantity, and restore natural hydrological condition to 813 acres.

To restore the natural hydrological conditions, steps include reviewing all management zones in order to identify and prioritize any hydrological restoration needs. As there have been no major hydrological disruptions identified in the past, this is intended to be a comprehensive review in order to confirm/update this information. Additionally all wetlands delineated as protected areas and excluded from any new park development that would degrade or impact natural hydrological conditions.

Objective: Restore and improve approximately 1,140 acres of various natural communities, and apply fire to approximately 3,500 acres.

To restore and improve the natural communities, steps include developing a restoration plan for 890 acres of upland pine, 250 acres of upland mixed woodlands, and burning between 875-1,920 acres of fire dependent natural communities annually.





EDWARD BALL WAKULLA SPRINGS STATE PARK

Draft Unit Management Plan

Executive Summary

Management Goals & Objectives

Imperiled & Invasive Species

Imperiled Species Management

Goal: Maintain, improve, and restore imperiled species populations and habitats.

Objective: Monitor and document 7 imperiled plant and animal species.

Wakulla Springs State Park has documented populations of a number of imperiled animal species that would benefit from additional monitoring. The gopher tortoise, limpkin, manatee. Sweet shrub, eastern purple cone flower, green adder's mouth orchid, and little club spur orchid will be monitored and documented.

Invasive Species Management

Goal: Remove invasive species and conduct needed maintenance.

Objective: Annually treat 5 infested acres of invasive plant species in the park.

Various invasives including hydrilla, coral ardisia, and cogongrass are found within the park. Plans to remove these non natives include continuous treatment and survey. Removal will be done by park staff and contractors.





EDWARD BALL WAKULLA SPRINGS STATE PARK

Draft Unit Management Plan

Executive Summary

Management Goals & Objectives

Recreational Use & Infrastructure

Recreation and Facilities Management

Goal: Develop and maintain use areas and support infrastructure

Objective: Improve 9 use areas and create 2 new use area.

To improve and expand visitor use at the park, plans include the improvements below:

Park Entrance

- Replace Ranger Station
- Multi-Use Trail Connection
- Traffic Pattern Alterations

Main Day Use Area

- Interpretive Center
- Redesign Parking Area
- Remove Dogwood Pavilion
- Playground Improvements
- 2 Additional Trails
- Cypress Dome Observation

Lodge

- Replace Windows and Doors
- Repair/Replace Elevator

Water Structures

- Inspect and Improve Water Tower
- Repair Boat Dock and Observation Dock
- Replace Floating Swim Platforms
- Improve Dive Tower
- Maintain/Replace Tour Boats
- Enhance Ways Area for Park Boat Access
- Improve River Boundary Fence

River Sinks Day Use Area

- Perimeter Fencing

- Reconfigure Trails as Needed
- Enhance Interpretation

Emerald Sink Area

- Replace Stairs

Employee Entrance

- Improve Entrance
- Traffic Pattern Alterations
- Pedestrian Gate

Cherokee Sink

- Restroom
- Additional Swimming Option

Rock Road Trailhead

- Improve Trailhead

Sanctuary

- Designate as Wilderness Preserve

Ferrell Tract

- Stabilized Parking
- Trailhead Kiosk
- Potential Connection to State Forest
- Safety Enhancement with FDOT
- Configure Trails



EDWARD BALL WAKULLA SPRINGS STATE PARK

Draft Unit Management Plan

Executive Summary

Management Goals & Objectives

Optimum Boundary

Several parcels are highlighted throughout the Wakulla region for acquisition. The primary objective is to protect the quality and flow of Wakulla Springs but also to protect the many springs and sinkholes in the region.

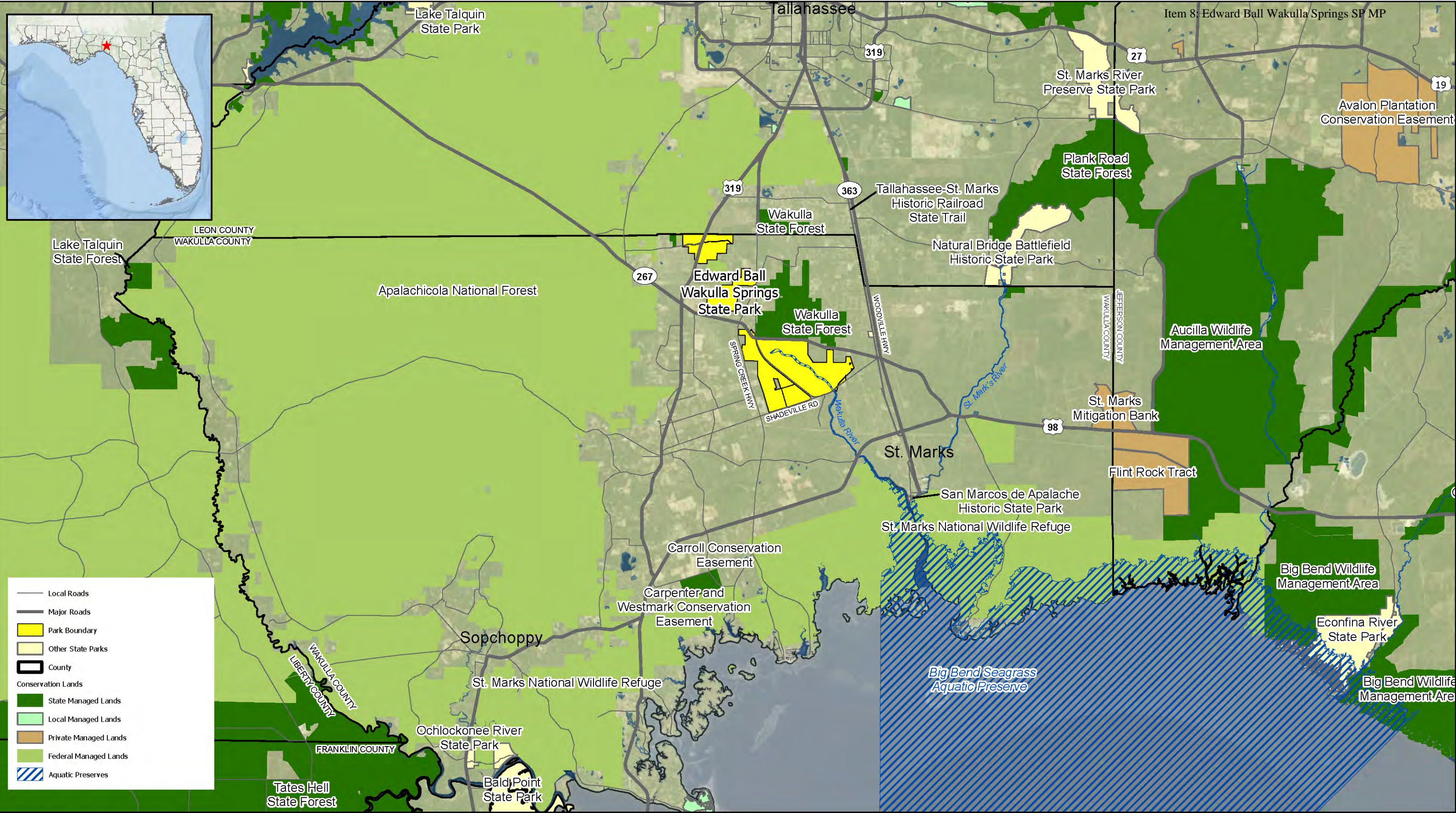
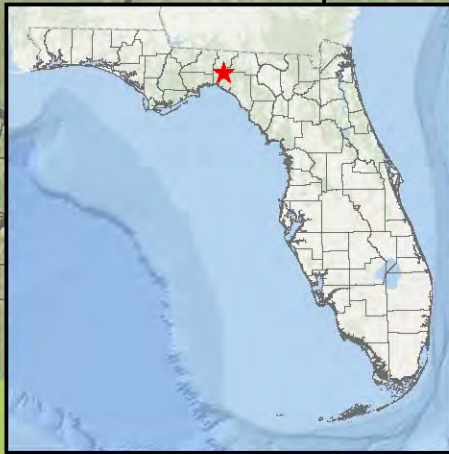
The optimum boundary for the park consists of 178 parcels that total approximately 4,903 acres. The properties are divided between numerous lands both large and small. For this description, the parcels have been divided into four geographic groups. The groups are Northwest, Northeast, Central, and South.

The Northwest Group consist of 11 parcels that total approximately 629 acres. None of the properties lie within the Wakulla Springs Protection Zone Florida Forever Project. These areas would help protect the springs recharge area, protect sinkholes and springs, and could provide a suitable site for future park activities.

The Northeast Group consist of 41 parcels that total approximately 1,773 acres. The majority of these (1,667 acres) are within the Wakulla Springs Protection Zone Florida Forever Project. These properties contain natural communities that would improve the buffer and the habitat protection potential of the park. They would also connect areas of the park that are currently disconnected, expand recreational opportunities, and protect the quality and flow of Wakulla Springs.

The Central Group consist of 59 parcels that total approximately 1,387 acres. Of this area 822 acres lie within the Wakulla Springs Protection Zone Florida Forever Project. These properties would connect the newly acquired Ferrell tract to the main park property, reduce inholdings and unify the park boundary, ensure additional protection of the springshed of Wakulla Springs, and would provide road access to Turner Sink via Bloxham Cutoff Road.

The South Group consist of 67 parcels that total approximately 1,114 acres. Of these, 886 acres are within the Wakulla Springs Protection Zone Florida Forever Project. These properties would provide further protection of the Wakulla springshed, protect additional habitat for imperiled species, reduce inholdings, further protect Cherokee Sinks, and would facilitate additional fire and invasive management practices.

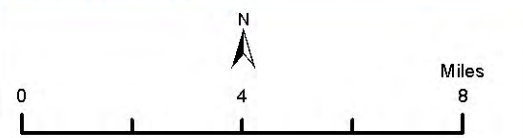


- Local Roads
- Major Roads
- Park Boundary
- Other State Parks
- County
- Conservation Lands
 - State Managed Lands
 - Local Managed Lands
 - Private Managed Lands
 - Federal Managed Lands
 - Aquatic Preserves

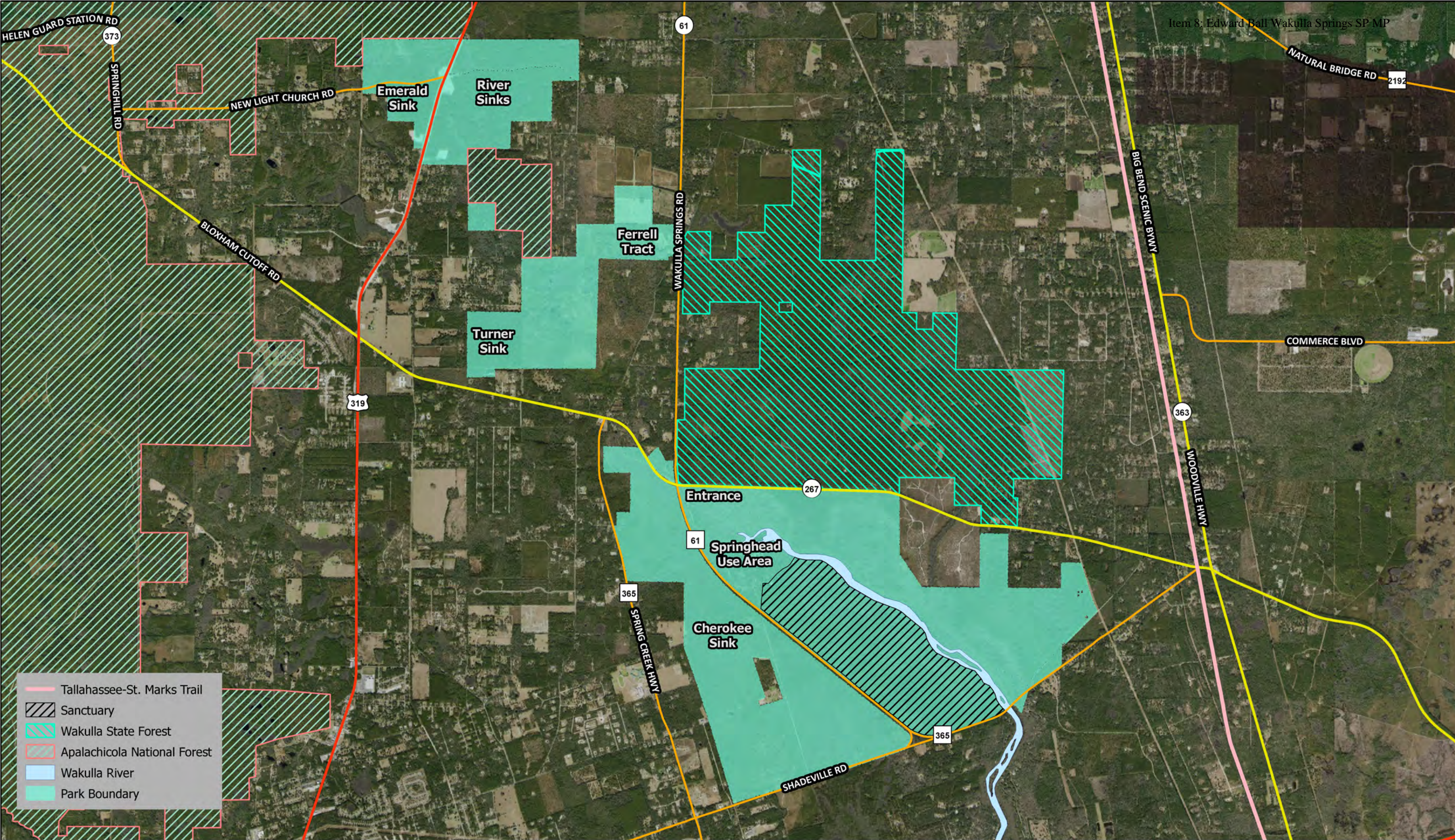








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Vicinity Map



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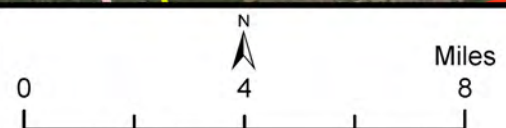


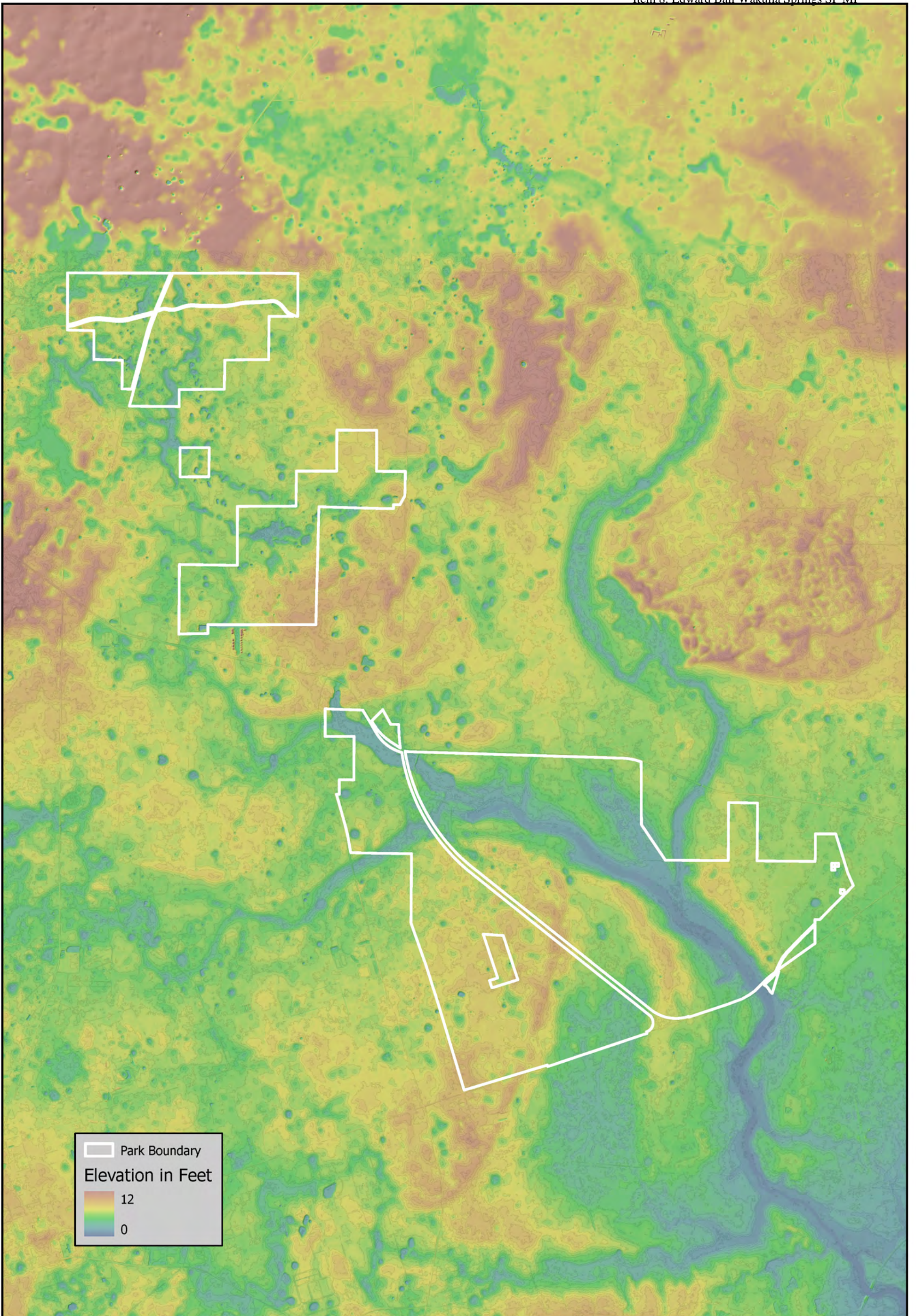
-  Tallahassee-St. Marks Trail
-  Sanctuary
-  Wakulla State Forest
-  Apalachicola National Forest
-  Wakulla River
-  Park Boundary






Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park
Reference Map

December 2022 ARC Meeting





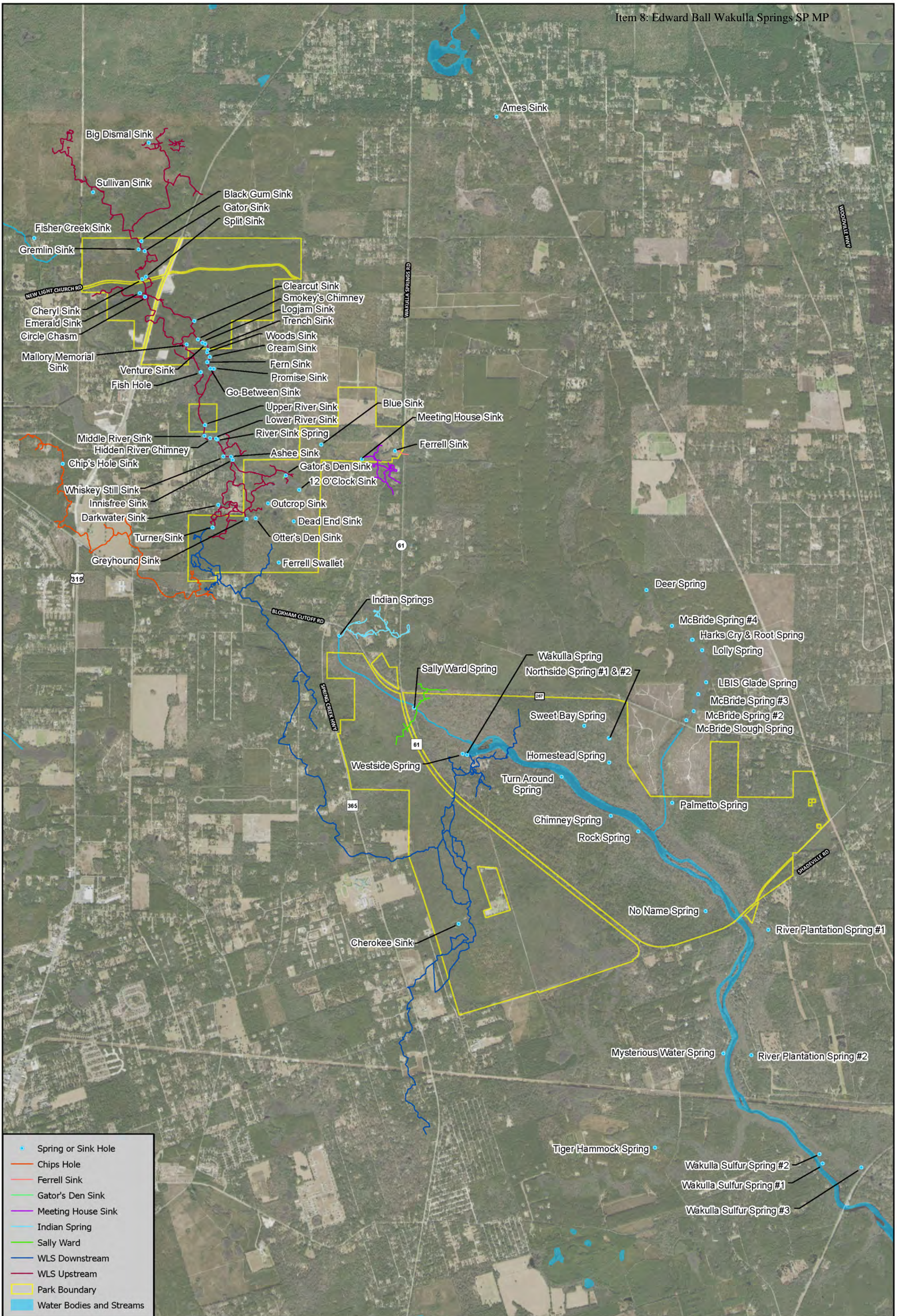
	Park Boundary
Elevation in Feet	
	12
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Topography



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- Spring or Sink Hole
- Chips Hole
- Ferrell Sink
- Gator's Den Sink
- Meeting House Sink
- Indian Spring
- Sally Ward
- WLS Downstream
- WLS Upstream
- ▭ Park Boundary
- ▭ Water Bodies and Streams



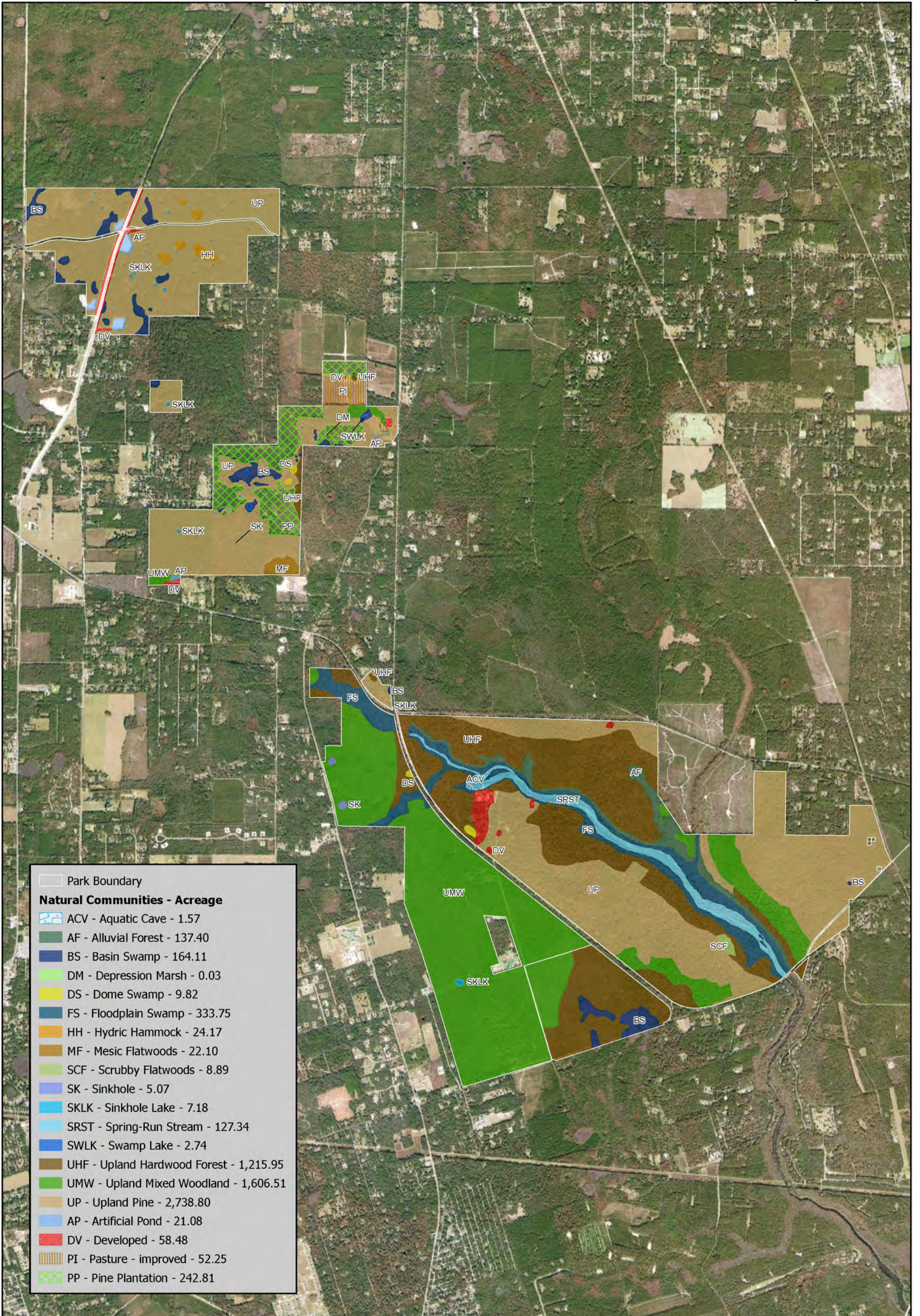
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December 2022 ARC Meeting

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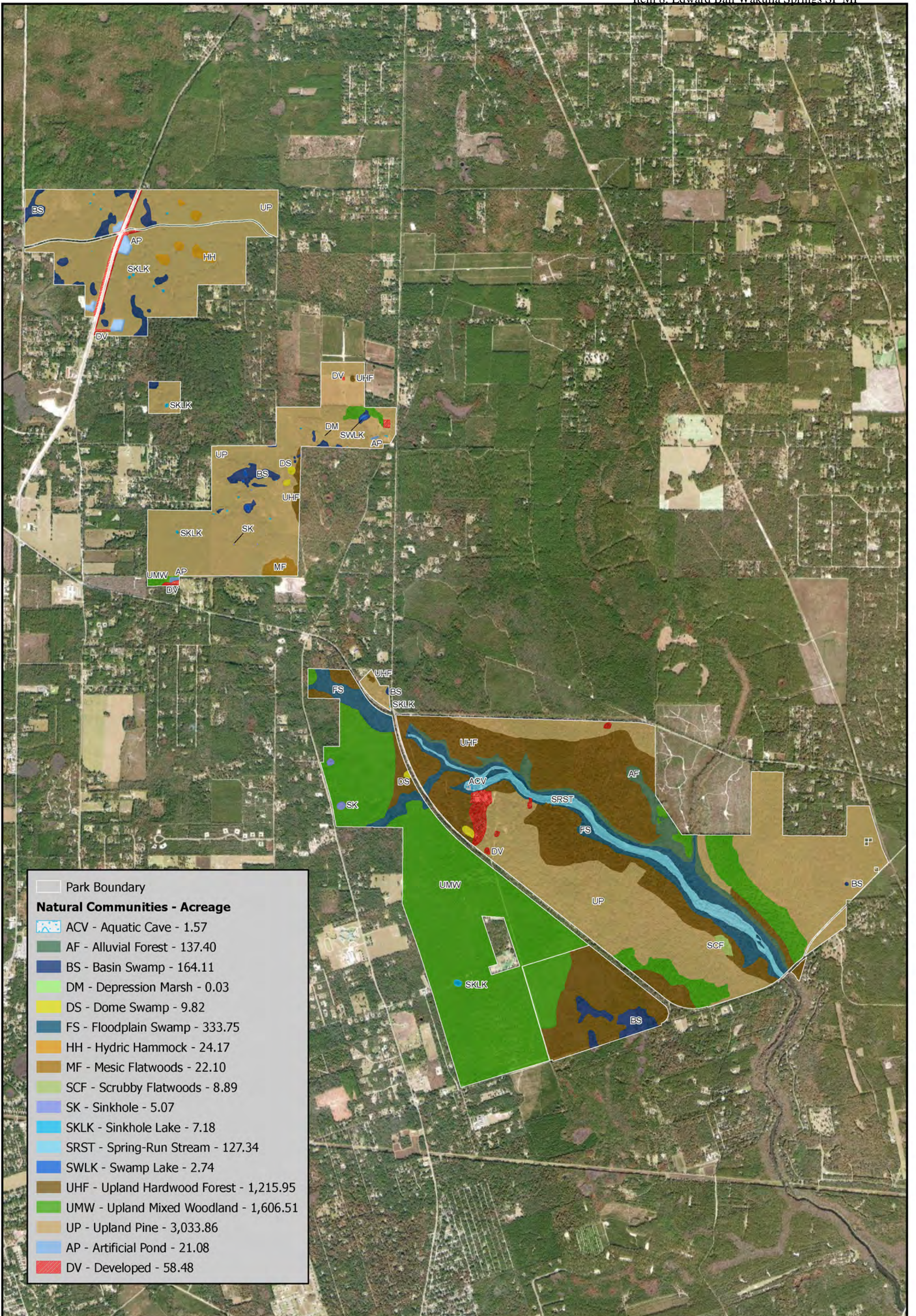
	Park Boundary
Natural Communities - Acreage	
	ACV - Aquatic Cave - 1.57
	AF - Alluvial Forest - 137.40
	BS - Basin Swamp - 164.11
	DM - Depression Marsh - 0.03
	DS - Dome Swamp - 9.82
	FS - Floodplain Swamp - 333.75
	HH - Hydric Hammock - 24.17
	MF - Mesic Flatwoods - 22.10
	SCF - Scrubby Flatwoods - 8.89
	SK - Sinkhole - 5.07
	SKLK - Sinkhole Lake - 7.18
	SRST - Spring-Run Stream - 127.34
	SWLK - Swamp Lake - 2.74
	UHF - Upland Hardwood Forest - 1,215.95
	UMW - Upland Mixed Woodland - 1,606.51
	UP - Upland Pine - 2,738.80
	AP - Artificial Pond - 21.08
	DV - Developed - 58.48
	PI - Pasture - improved - 52.25
	PP - Pine Plantation - 242.81



EDWARD BALL WAKULLA SPRINGS STATE PARK
Existing Conditions



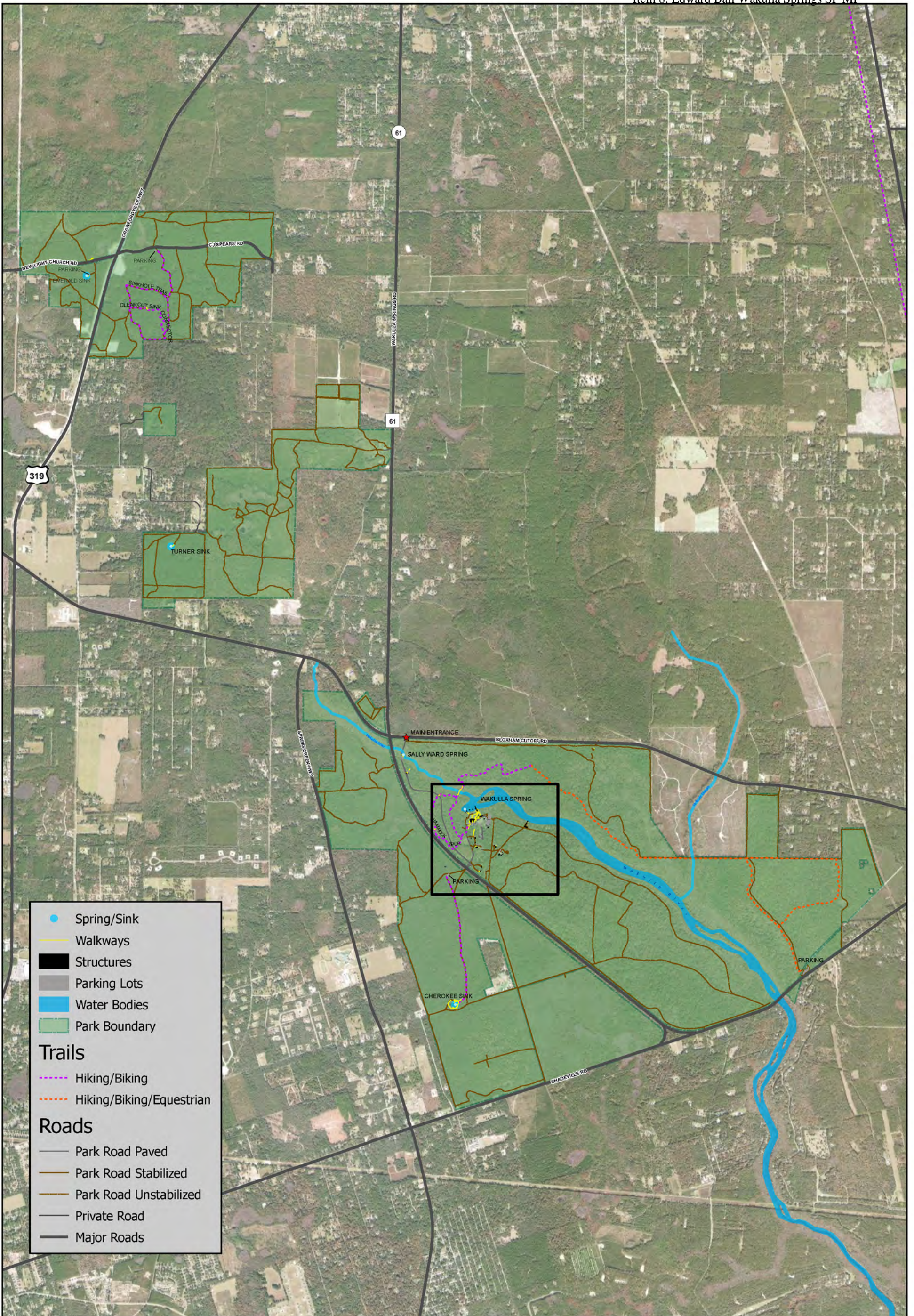
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Desired Future Conditions



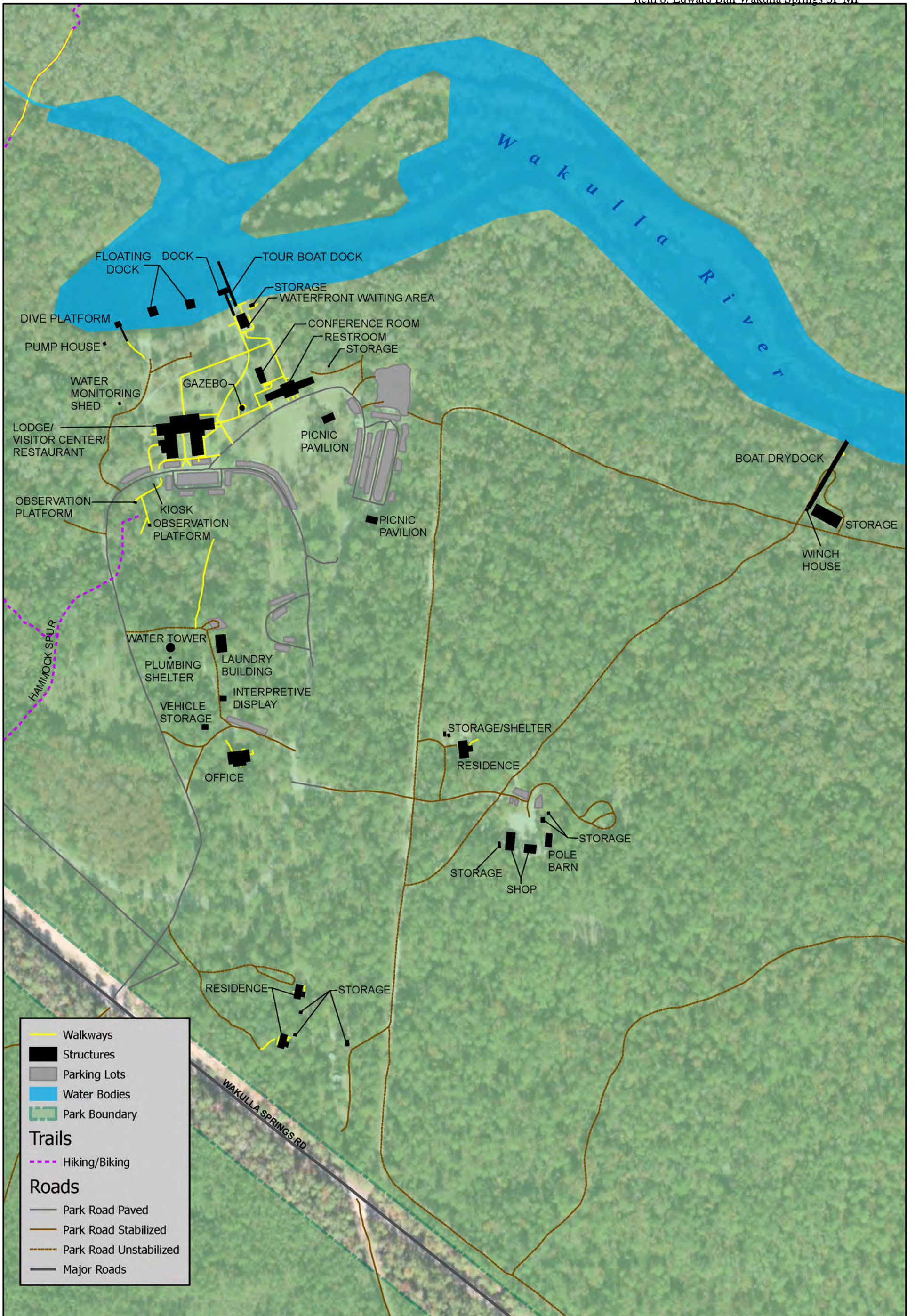
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Existing Facilities Page 1



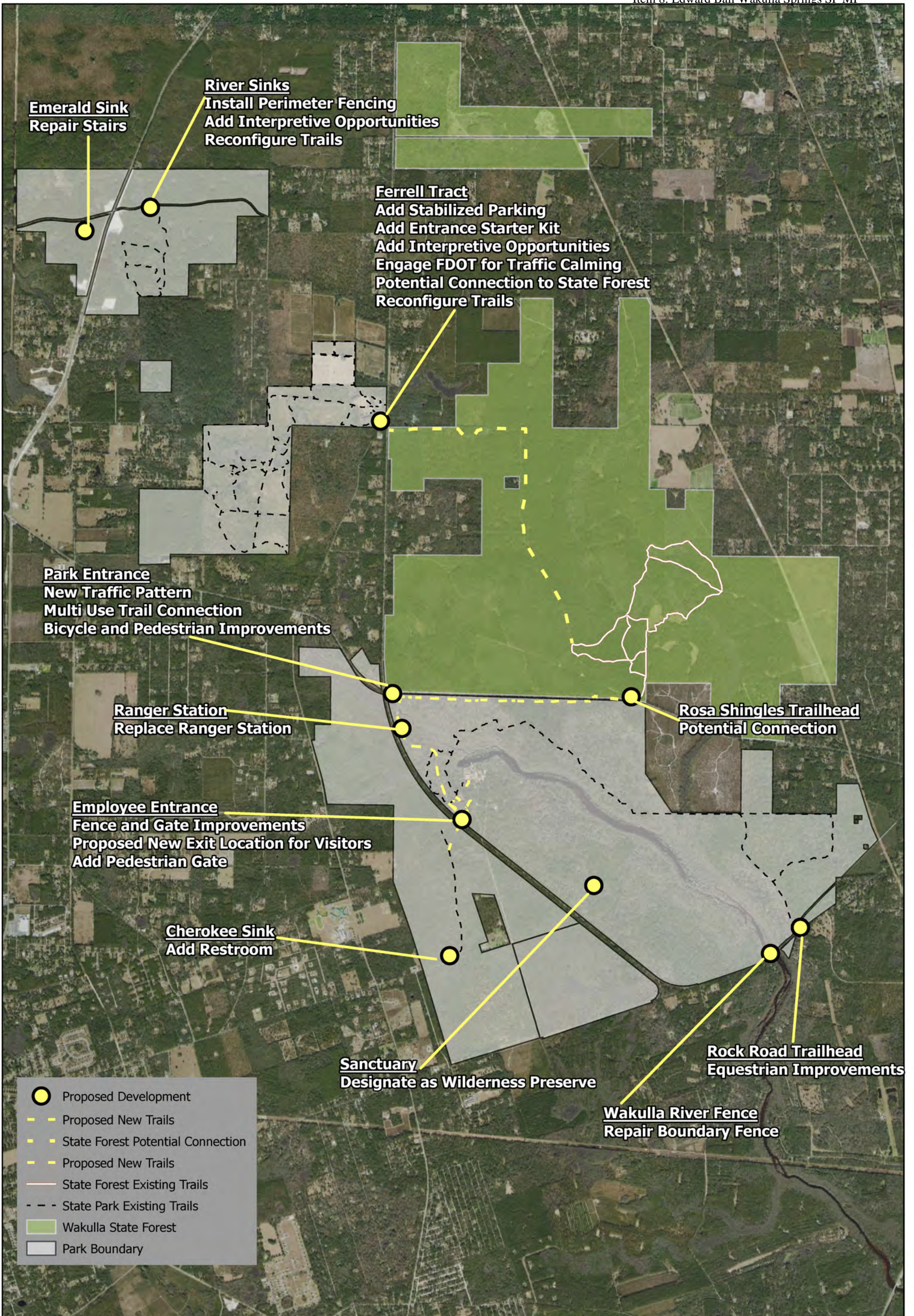
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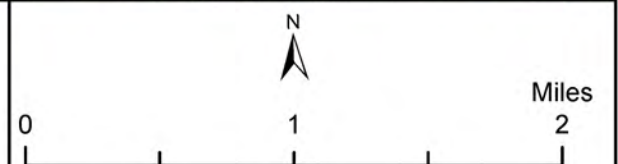
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Existing Facilities Page 2



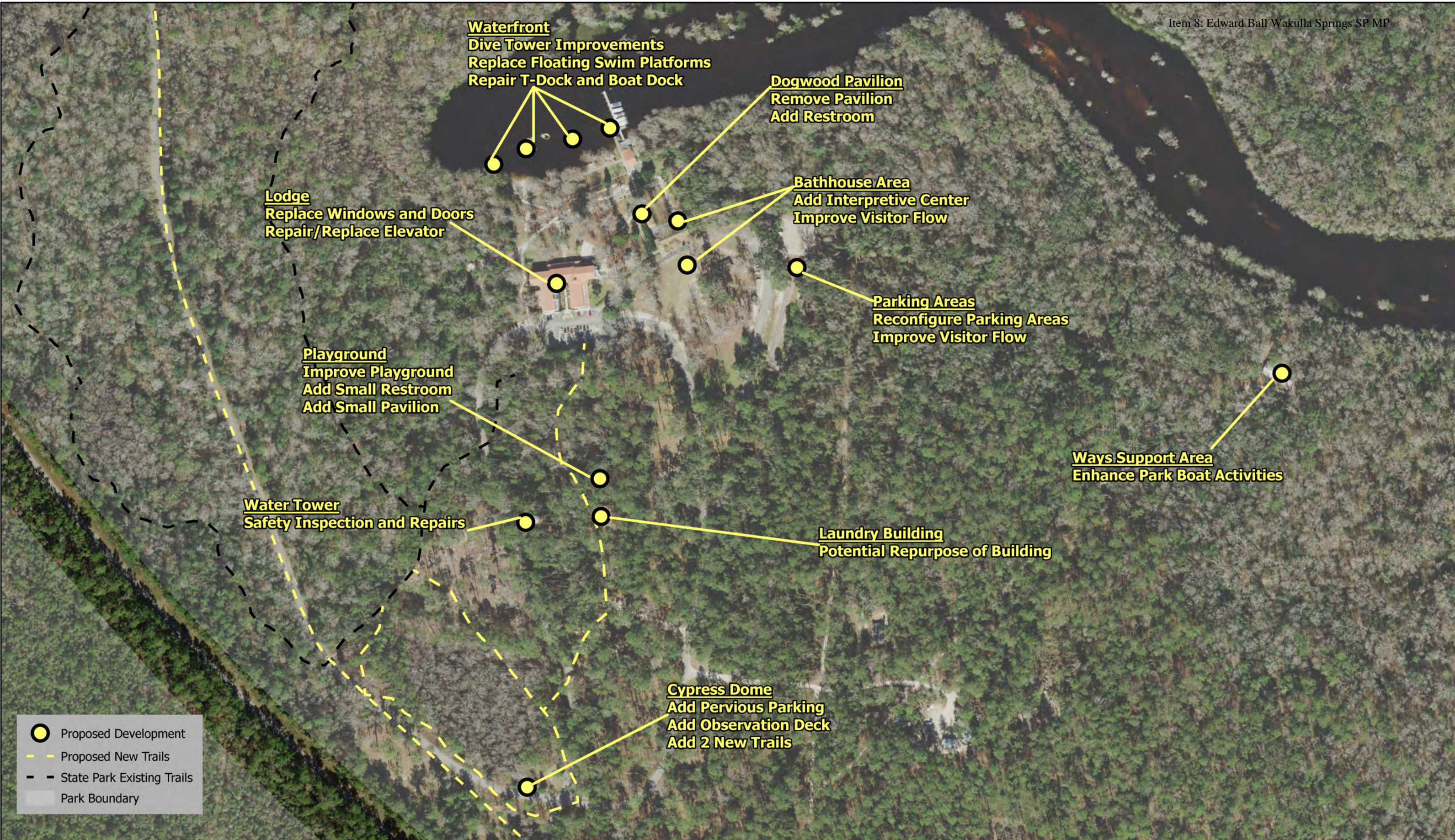
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Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park
Conceptual Land Use Plan Page 1



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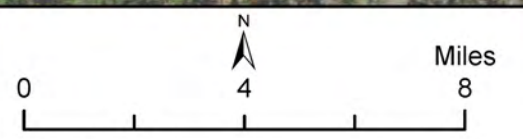


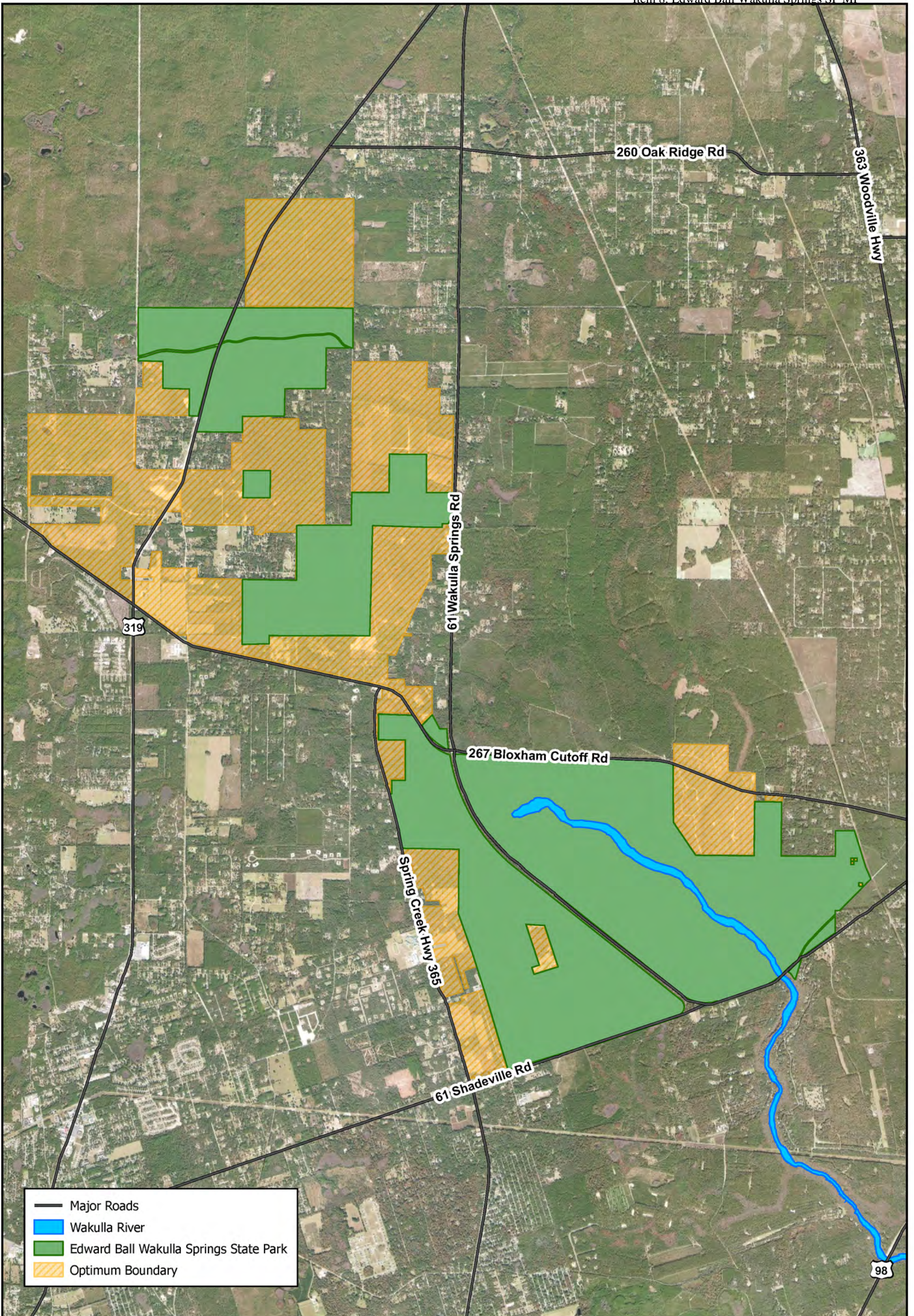
- Proposed Development
- Proposed New Trails
- State Park Existing Trails
- Park Boundary







Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park
Conceptual Land Use Plan Page 2

December 2022 ARC Meeting





	Major Roads
	Wakulla River
	Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park
	Optimum Boundary



EDWARD BALL WAKULLA SPRINGS STATE PARK Optimum Boundary



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