

**ITEM 9:**

Consider a 10-year update to the Picayune Strand State Forest Management Plan (Lease No. 3927).

**LOCATION:**

Collier County

**DSL STAFF REMARKS:**

*Background*

Picayune Strand State Forest (PSSF) consists of 74,008 acres in the heart of Big Cypress Basin in Collier County. The forest is comprised of two tracts, the South Golden Glades Estates Tract to the east and the Belle Meade Tract to the west. The Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (Trustees) holds fee simple title. Land acquisition began in 1983 as part of the Save Our Everglades project under the Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) program. Acquisition continued in the following decades using funds from the Preservation 2000 and Florida Forever programs. Additional acquisition funds totaling approximately 38 million dollars were provided by the federal government (Department of the Interior, DOI).

The majority of this hydric forest is under water during the wet season. The forest is a mosaic of cypress strands, wet prairie, and pine flatwoods in the lowlands and subtropical hardwood hammocks in the uplands. The northern section of the Belle Meade Tract contains many second-growth south Florida slash pine, with many remnant trees being over 100 years old.

The primary mission of the Florida Forest Service (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 PSSF center on the multiple-use concept, as defined in sections 589.04(3) and 253.034(2)(a) F.S. Implementation of this concept will utilize and conserve state forest resources in a harmonious and coordinated combination that will best serve the people of the state of Florida, and that is consistent with the purpose for which the forest was acquired. Multiple-use management for PSSF 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.
- Provide research and educational opportunities related to natural resource management.

*Management Plan Overview*

In 2018, the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) completed an inventory and natural community mapping project on PSSF and a historic natural community type map was created.

Twelve natural community types are found on PSSF. The predominant natural community is strand swamp, followed by wet flatwoods. There are sixteen endangered or threatened animal species and twenty-seven endangered or threatened plant species documented on PSSF.

A review of information contained in the Department of Historic Resources (DHR) Florida Master Site file has determined that there are eighty-five recorded archaeological sites and four resource groups on PSSF. FFS will consult with DHR's public lands archaeologists as necessary to determine an appropriate priority and frequency of monitoring at each of the listed sites and protection measures that might be required. 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.

Picayune Strand State Forest offers a number of recreational opportunities, including, camping, horseback riding, hiking, hunting, wildlife viewing, trail bike riding, scenic drives, fishing, kayaking, and geo-caching. Horseback riding is focused along the 22-mile Belle Meade Horse Trail and accompanied by 29 paddocks, non-potable water, and an equestrian camping area at the trailhead. Hiking the 3.2-mile Sabal Palm Hiking Trail provides plant and wildlife viewing opportunities in a pine flatwoods community that meanders through cypress strands. Picnic and restroom facilities are available at many of the sites. Fishing at the Port of the Islands Recreation Area provides an opportunity for freshwater fishing in the Faka-Union Canal. Hunting is available and coordinated through FWC on the Picayune Strand Wildlife Management Area. Camping is available at a limited number of primitive tent and RV campsites. Cycling over an extensive road system provides excellent terrain for off-road biking. PSSF is an Operation Outdoor Freedom (OOF) program site and provides recreational opportunities to wounded veterans.

The PSSF 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 PSSF, efforts in this regard 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 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*

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 PSSF Management Plan Advisory Group and was reviewed at a public hearing on November 14, 2019. The majority of the public comments were in regard to trail signage, trailhead locations, and commending forestry staff.

*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 PRSF 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 PSSF is recommended for potential surplus.

*State Land Management Review Team*

Land Management Reviews (LMR) were conducted in July 2013 and May 2018. The review teams unanimously 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. Three consensus recommendations were offered:

- 1) The team recommends the FFS continue to explore opportunities and projects at reducing sabal palm densities on the forest. This includes, but is not limited to sales, herbicide, mechanical removal, and emerging research.
- 2) The team recommends the FFS pursue prescribed burning along the property boundary adjacent to other conservation lands.
- 3) The team recommends the FFS increase their effort to rehabilitate the plow lines associated with wildfire suppression.

The review team recommendations were considered and addressed in this plan, as appropriate.

**DSL STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve the management plan.

**ARC RECOMMENDATION:**

**APPROVE**

**APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DEFER**

**WITHDRAW**

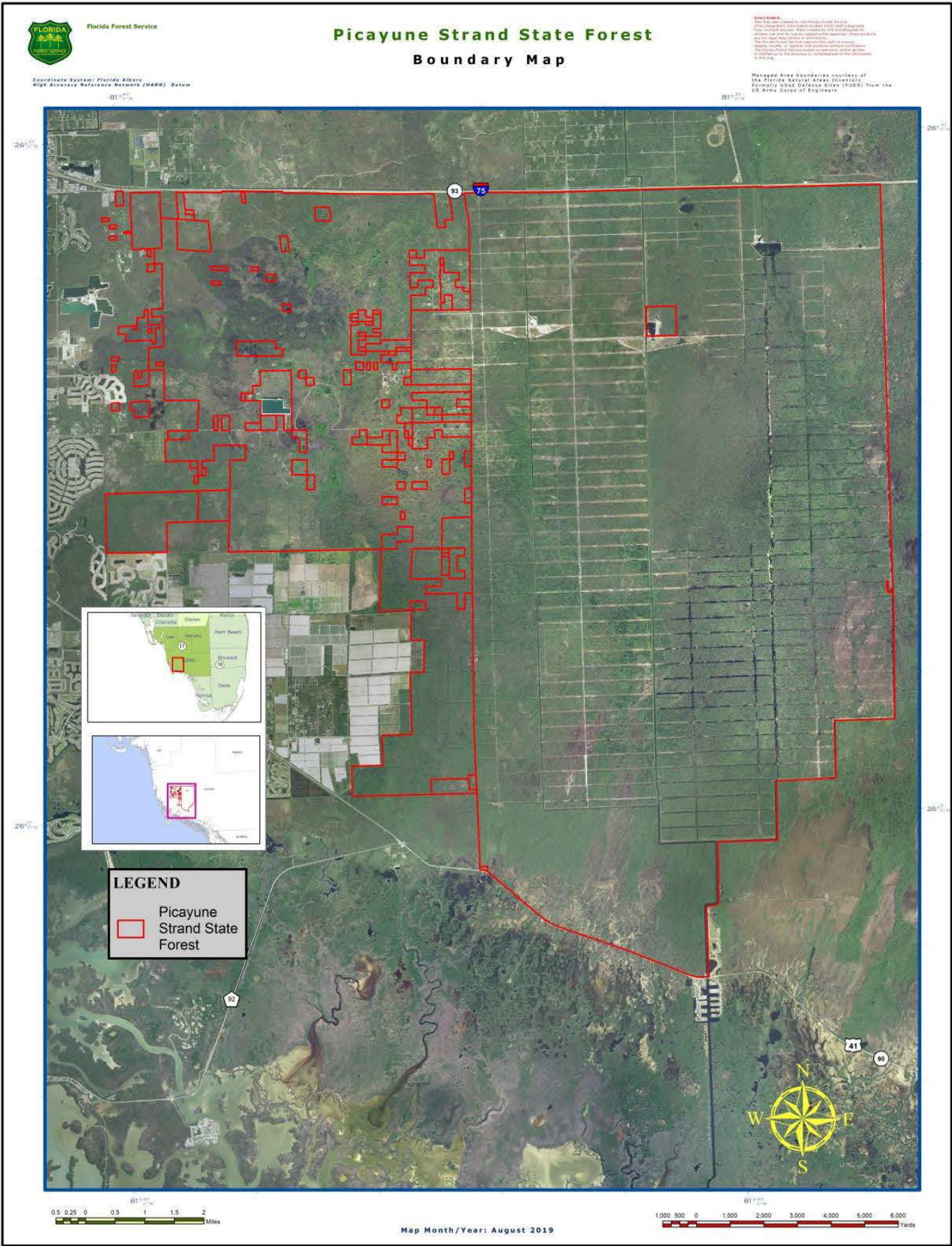
**NOT APPROVE**

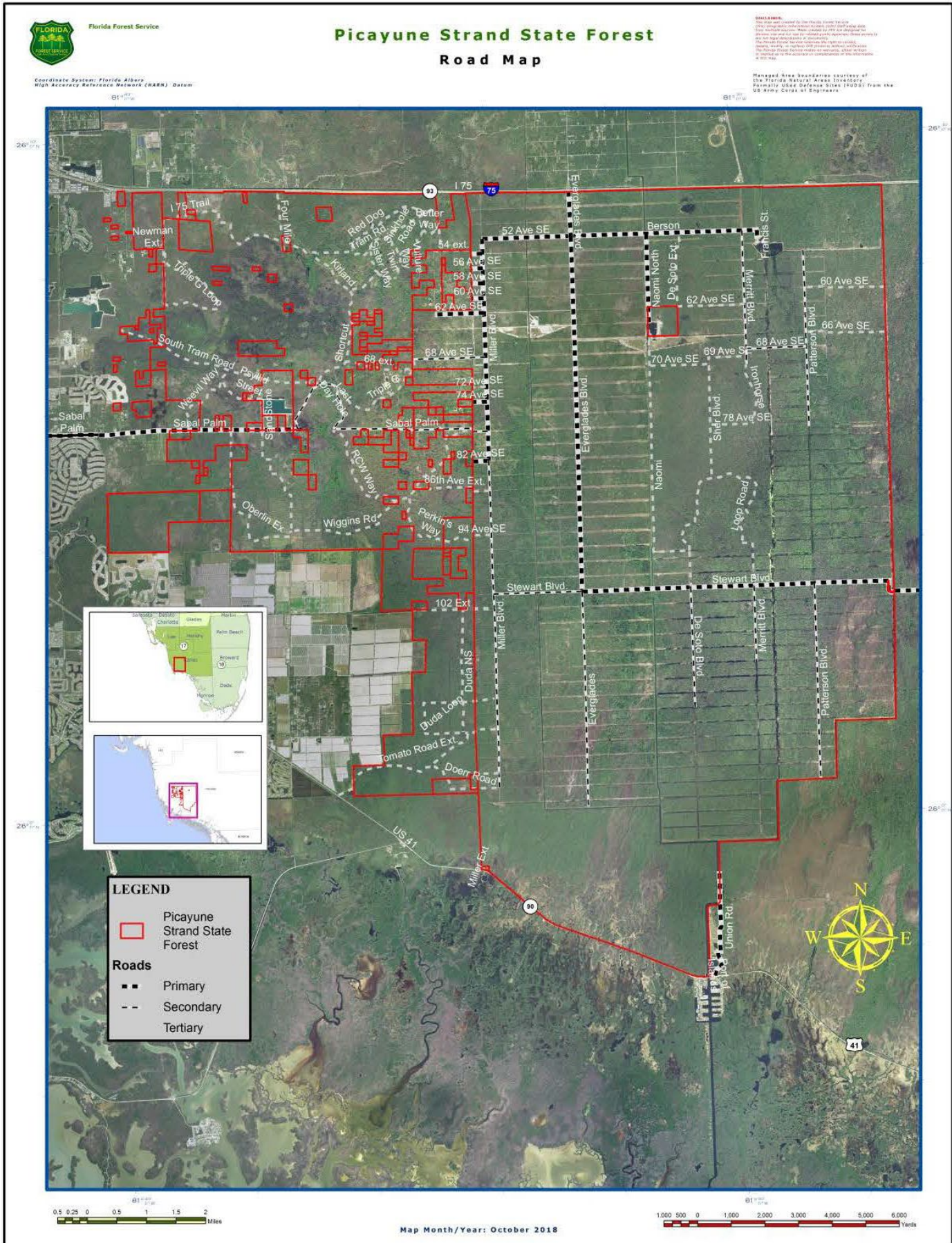
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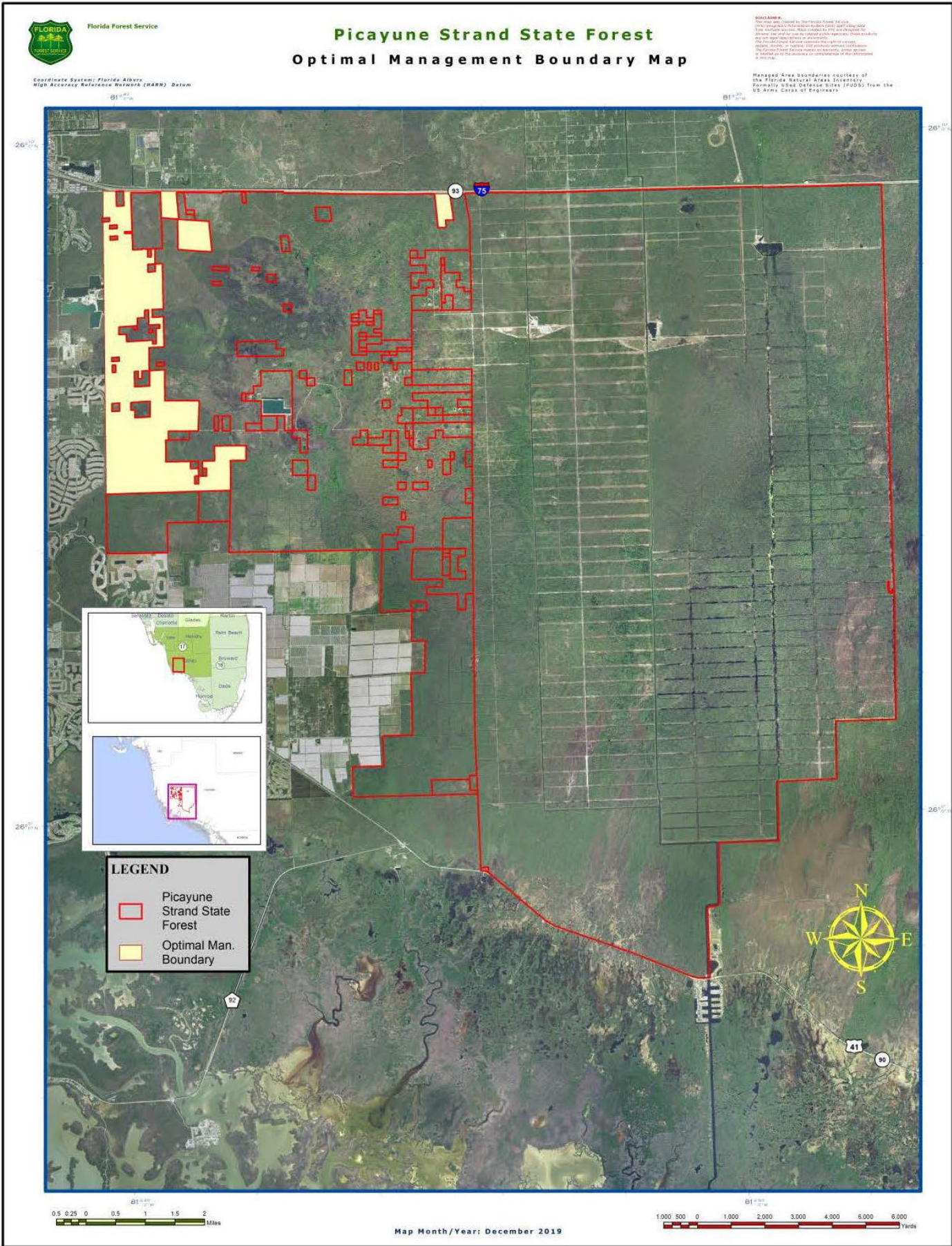
**Picayune Strand State Forest**  
**Land management plan short term goals**

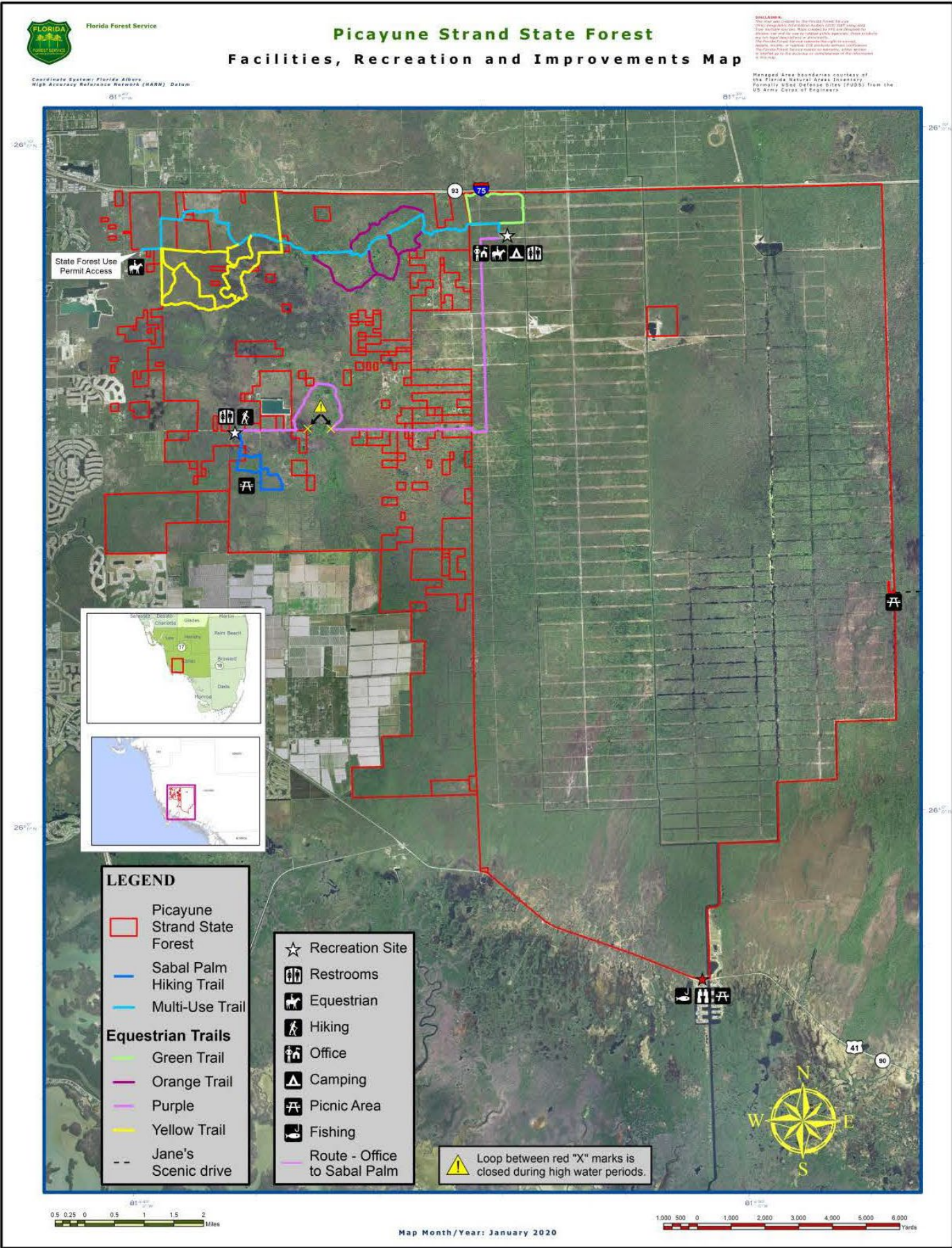
Goal (ST)	Details of Goal	Objective	Details of Objective	Measures
2	Public Access and Recreational Opportunities.	3	Assess additional public access and recreational opportunities.	Number of additional visitor opportunities., Number of commercial vendor permits., Number of private, special events.

*Source:* Florida DEP, Office of Environmental Services, Revised 2019.

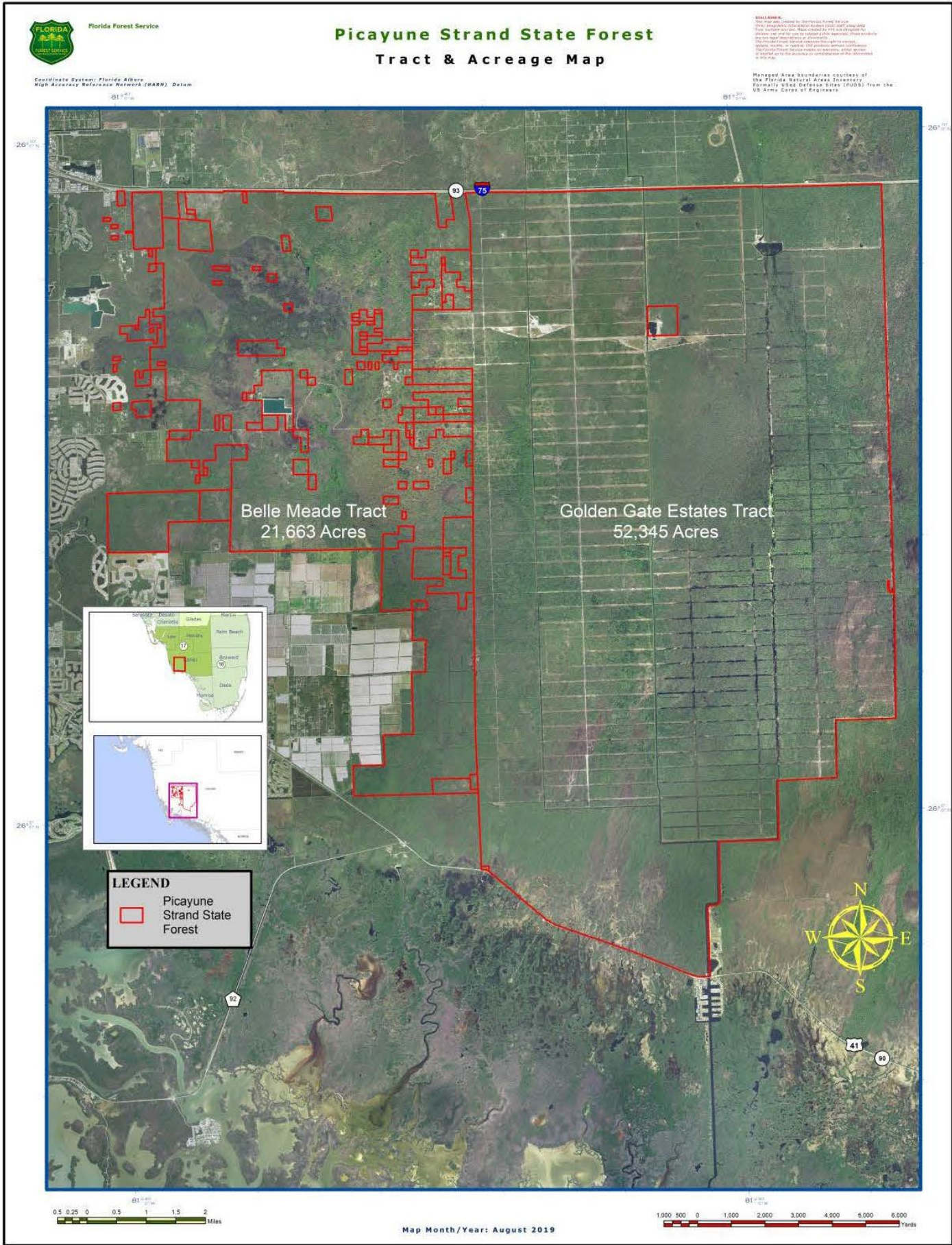


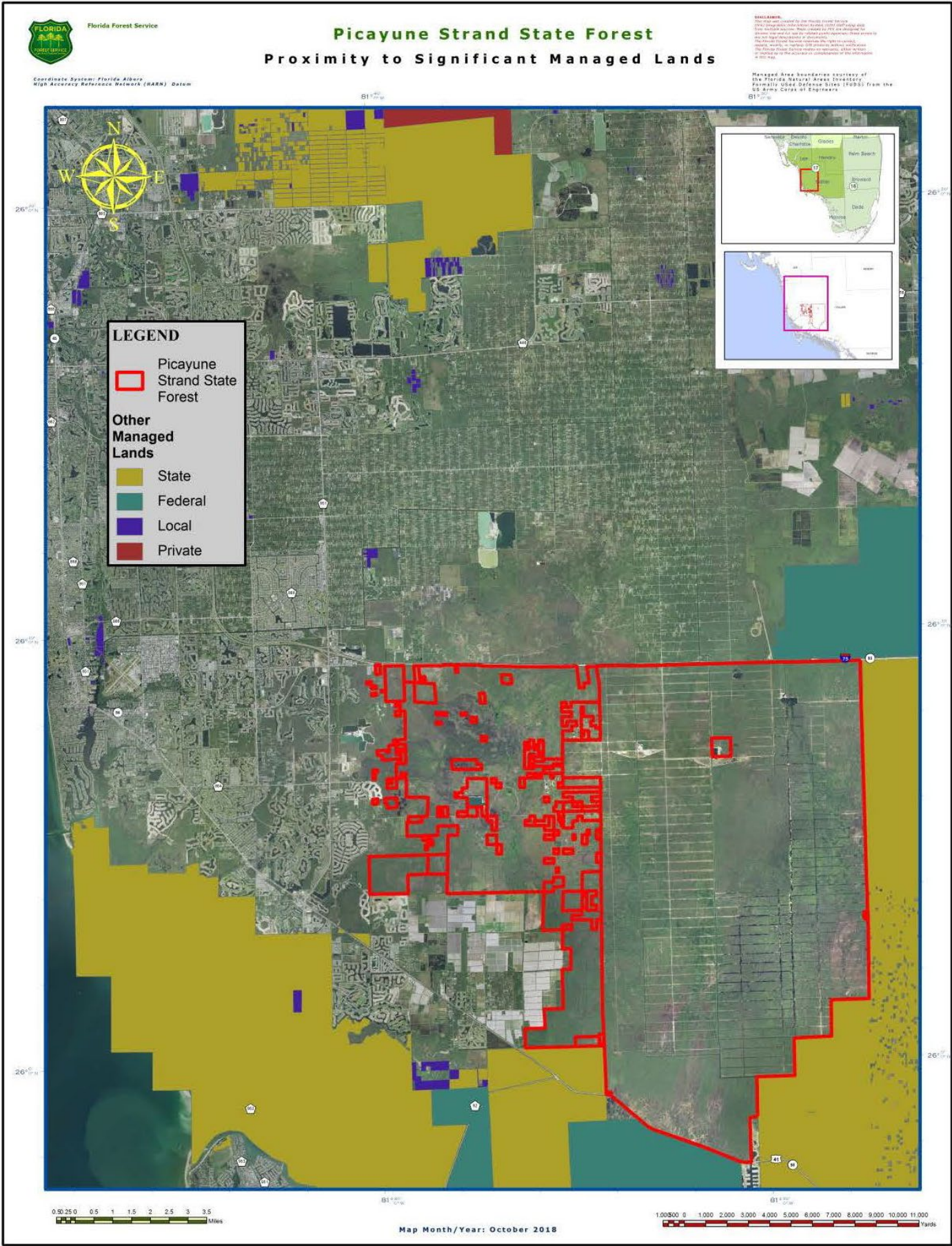


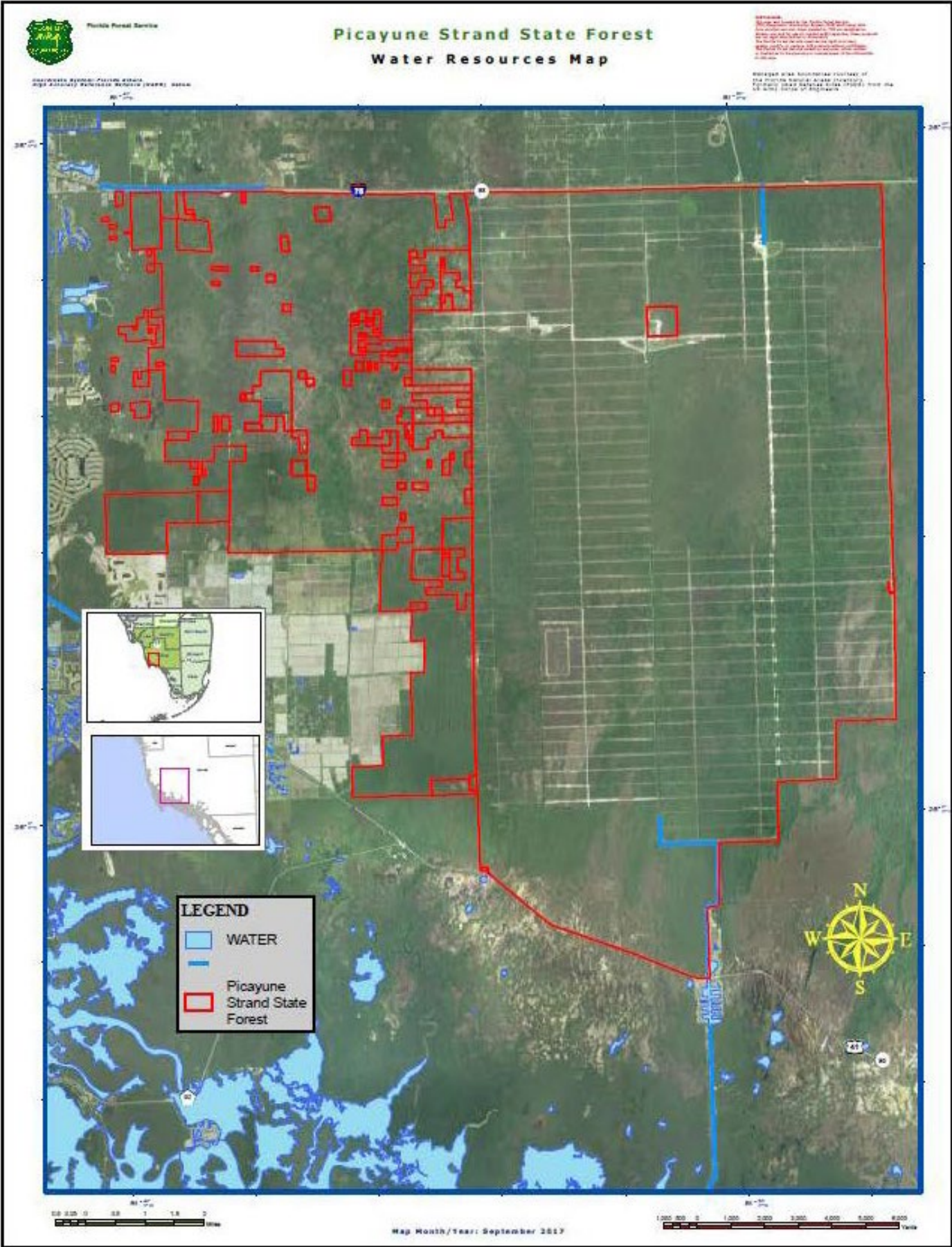


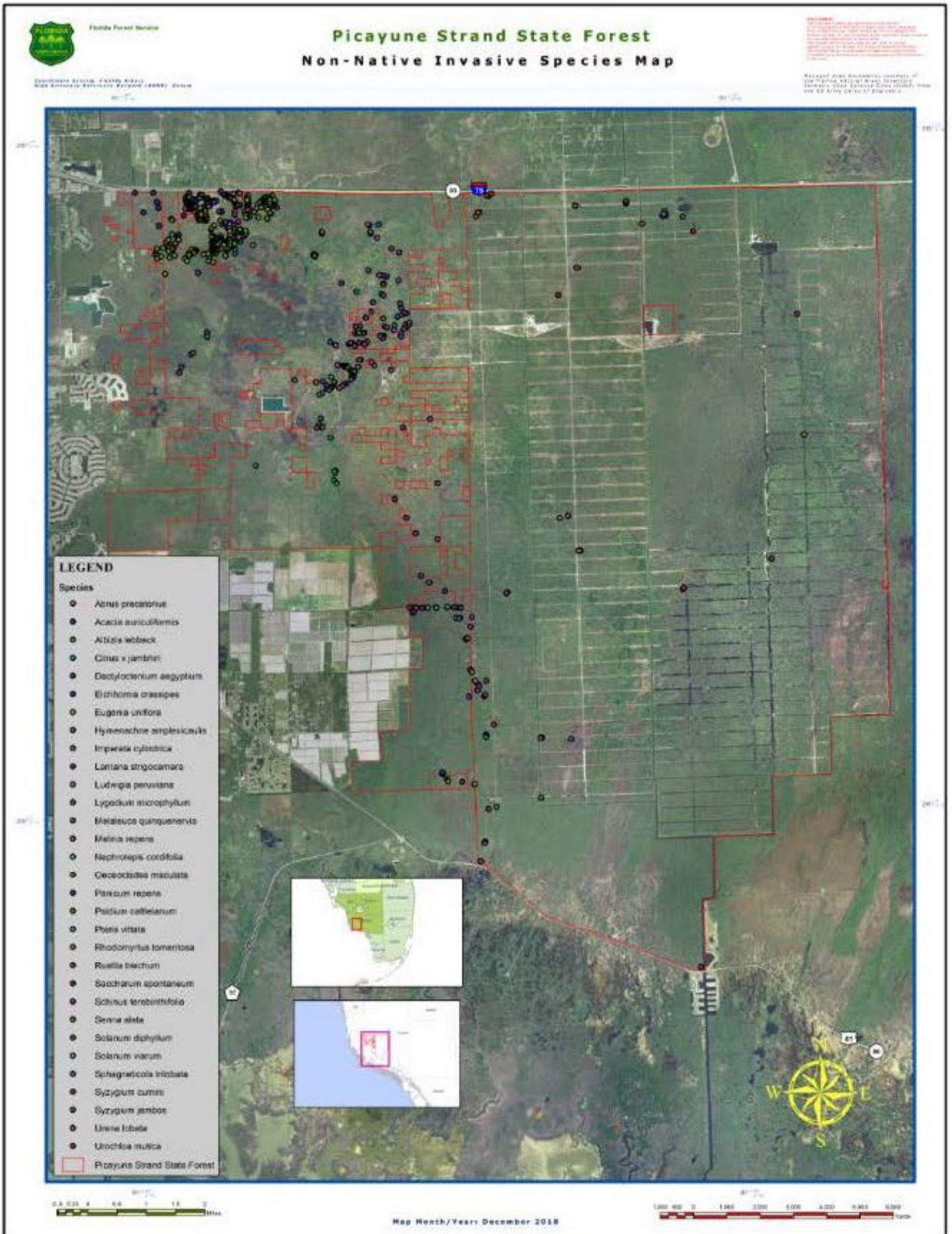


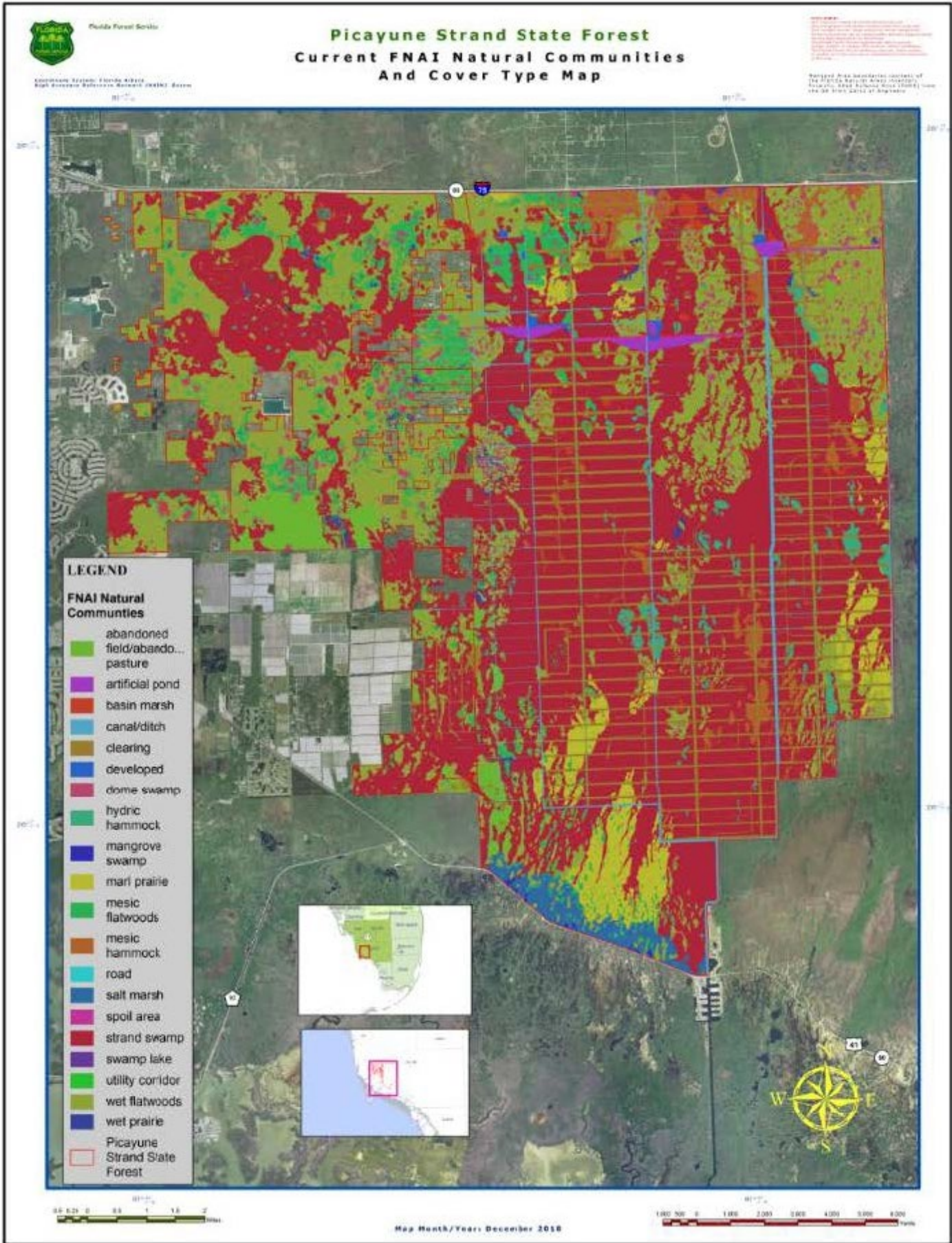


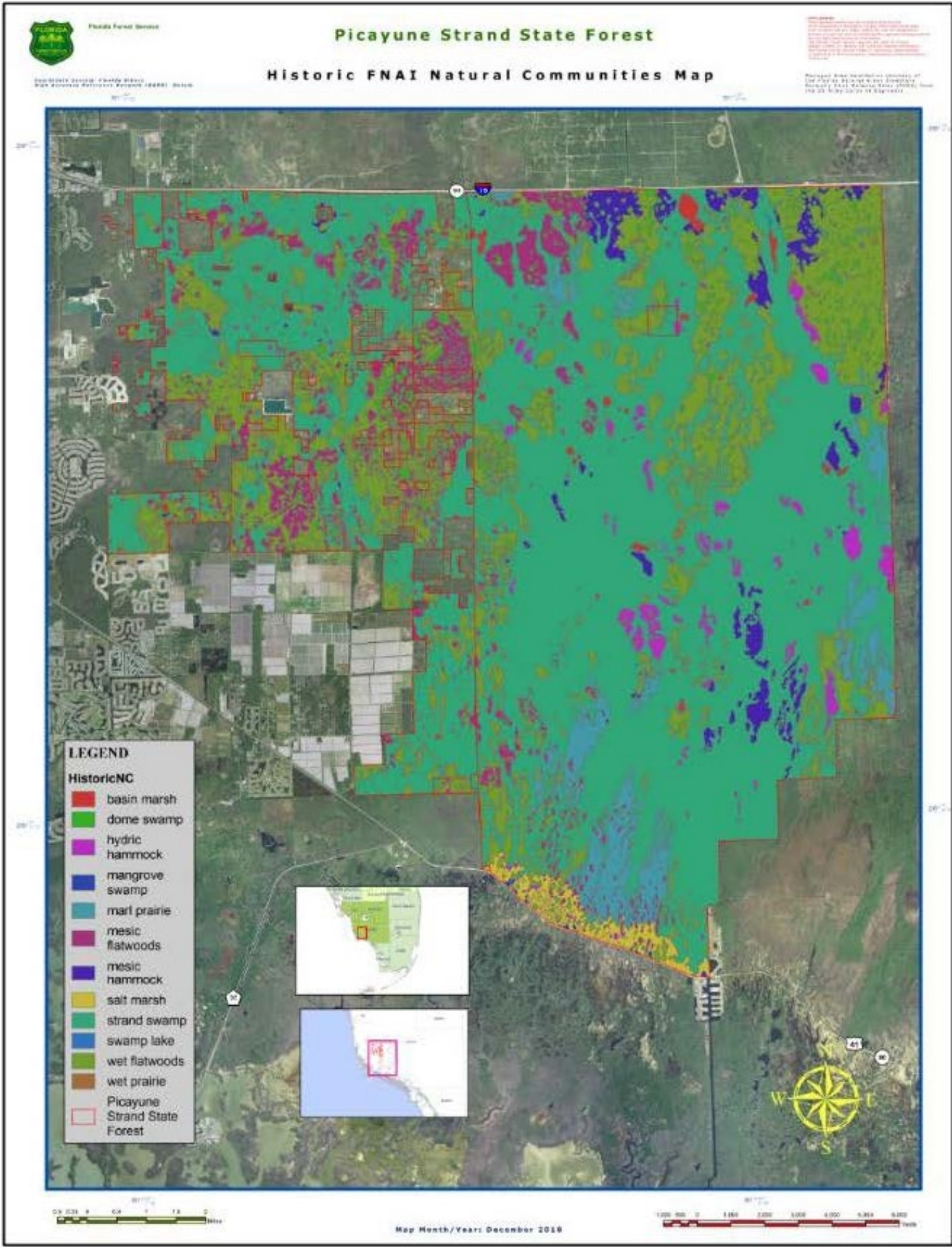














# Picayune Strand State Forest Proposed Bike Trails Map

**DISCLAIMER:**  
This map was prepared by the Florida Forest Service. It is not intended to be used for any purpose other than the general information it provides. It is not a legal document and should not be used to make any legal decisions. The Florida Forest Service is not responsible for any errors or omissions on this map. The Florida Forest Service is not responsible for any damages or injuries resulting from the use of this map. The Florida Forest Service is not responsible for any claims or liabilities resulting from the use of this map. The Florida Forest Service is not responsible for any claims or liabilities resulting from the use of this map.

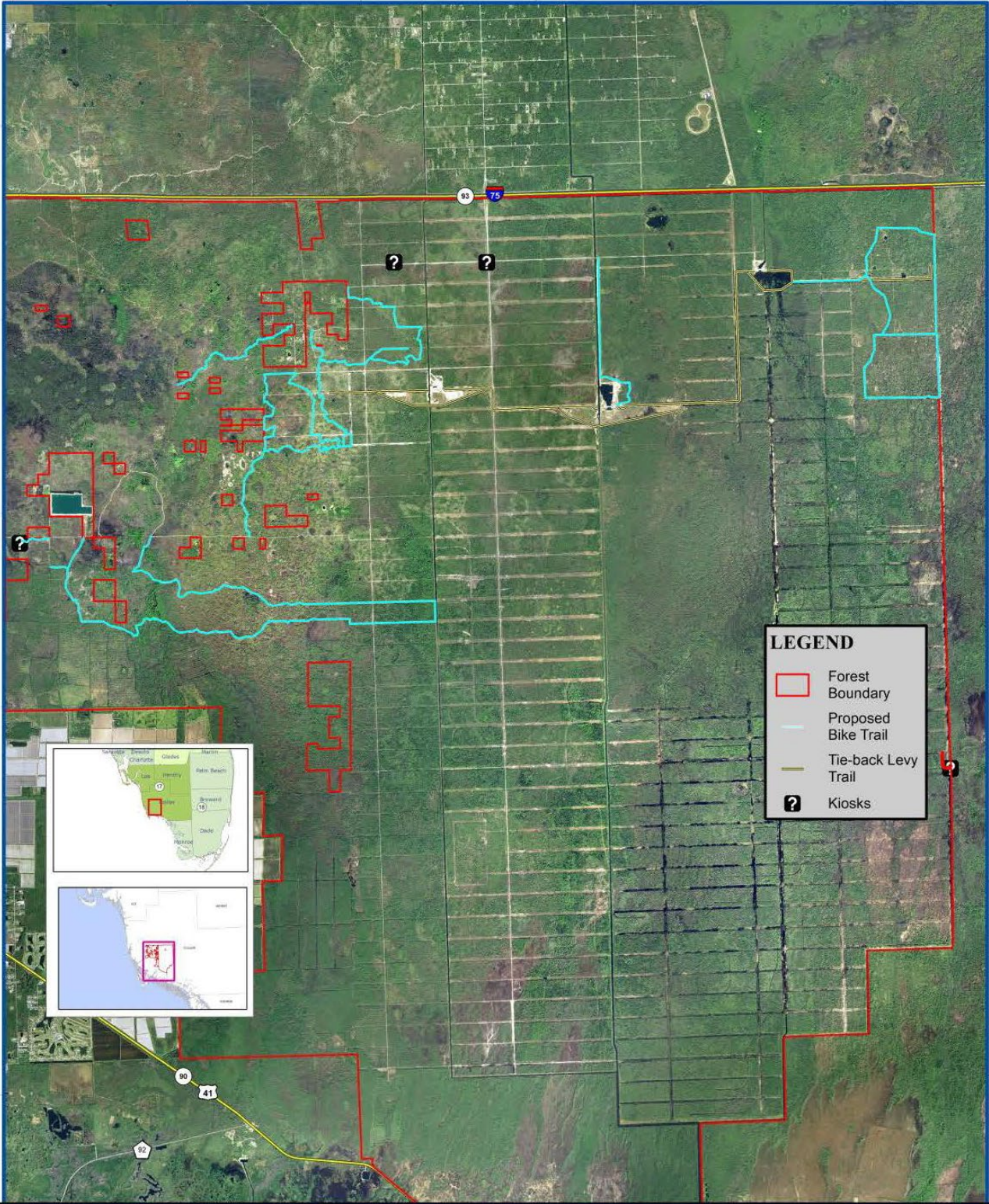
Managed Area boundaries courtesy of the Florida Natural Areas Inventory. Parcelly Listed Database Sites (PLDS) from the US Army Corps of Engineers.

Coordinate System: Florida Albers  
High Accuracy Reference Network (HARN) Datum

81° 00'

26° 00'

26° 00'



**LEGEND**

- Forest Boundary
- Proposed Bike Trail
- Tie-back Levy Trail
- ? Kiosks

0 0.45 0.9 1.8 2.7 3.6 Miles

Map Month/Year: June 2019



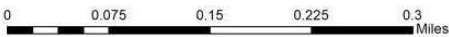
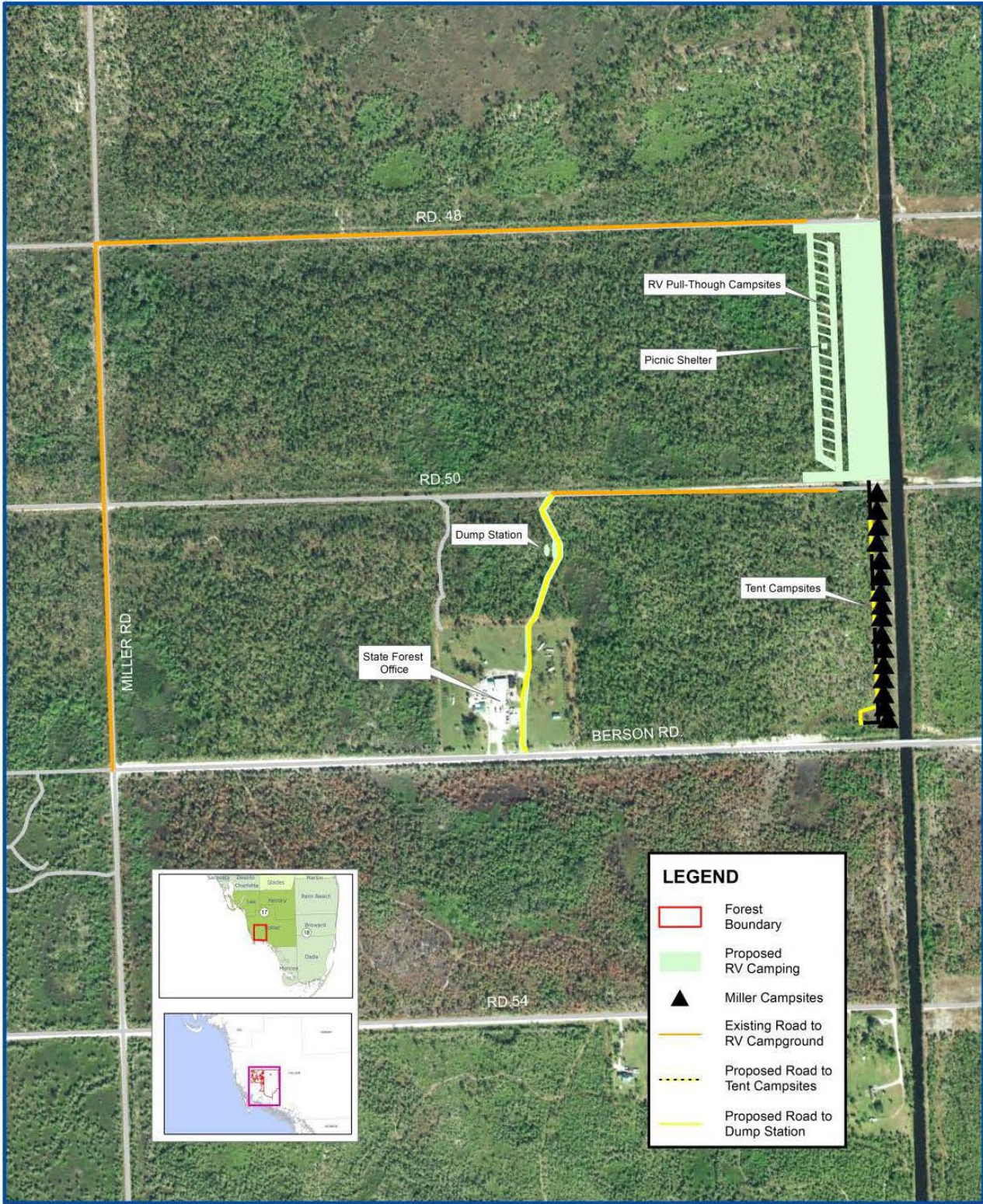
0 0.5 1 2 3 4 Kilometers



# Picayune Strand State Forest Proposed Campground Map

Coordinate System: Florida Albers  
High Accuracy Reference Network (HARN) Datum

**DISCLAIMER:**  
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Managed Area boundaries courtesy of the Florida Natural Areas Inventory, formerly USGS Defense Site (FSDS), from the US Army Corps of Engineers.



Map Month/Year: June 2019

