

ITEM 11:

Vote on whether to combine the Aucilla River Corridor, Econfina Timberlands, West Aucilla River Buffer, Wacissa/Aucilla River Sinks Florida Forever projects, and the Wacissa/Aucilla River Sinks tracts of the St. Joe Timberlands Florida Forever project and create a new Florida Forever project named the Aucilla/Wacissa Watershed Florida Forever project to be added to the 2023 Florida Forever Priority List.

LOCATION:

Jefferson, Madison, and Taylor counties

DSL STAFF REMARKS:

In April 2022, ARC approved the addition of the Aucilla River Corridor project (18,575 acres) to the 2023 Florida Forever Priority List. The Aucilla River Corridor, Econfina Timberlands, West Aucilla River Buffer, Wacissa/Aucilla River Sinks, and the Wacissa/Aucilla River Sinks tracts of St. Joe Timberland projects were all created to protect the Aucilla and Wacissa Rivers, their tributaries and strategic uplands within their surrounding watershed. When combined, these projects will create a single landscape-scale project that will ensure the health of the Aucilla River (an Outstanding Florida Water), Little Aucilla River, Wacissa River and related springs and tributaries by completing an existing corridor of public conservation lands and private working lands along the Aucilla and Wacissa Rivers. These projects share the common purpose to increase water quality, protect springs, aquatic caves and sinkholes, conserve Florida's rural landscape, provide and enhance wildlife corridors, and preserve important archaeological sites. These projects when combined with existing conservation lands, would protect approximately one-third of the Aucilla River watershed in Florida.

Exhibit A includes the current project status for each existing project as well as total acreage and tax assessed value for the yet unranked Aucilla River Corridor project. Parcels in these projects are proposed for both less-than-fee and fee simple acquisition. If approved the new combined project will be re-named as the Aucilla/Wacissa Watershed project and be placed in the Partnerships and Regional Incentives category.

FNAI Review:

According to the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI), 100% of the proposed Aucilla Wacissa Watershed project would contribute to Ecological Greenways (Priority 1 and 2). The project would make significant contributions to Surface Water Protection (98%), Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas (97%) and FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities (92%)The project would also contribute to Natural Floodplain Function (87%), Aquifer Recharge (75%) and the protection of 485 recorded archaeological sites.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Vote to approve combining the Aucilla River Corridor, Econfina Timberlands, West Aucilla River Buffer, Wacissa/Aucilla River Sinks Florida Forever projects, and the Wacissa/Aucilla River Sinks tracts of the St. Joe Timberlands to create a new project named the Aucilla/Wacissa Watershed Florida Forever project to be placed in the Partnerships and Regional Incentives category.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

Project	DHR	FFS	Lynetta Griner	FWC	Bill Palmer	Elva Peppers	DEP	Selected
Aucilla/Wacissa Watershed								

Exhibit A. Current project status for each project identified for inclusion in the proposed Aucilla Wacissa Watershed project

Project Name	Year Listed	Category	Rank	Total Project Acres	Acquired Acres	Remaining Project Acres	Percent Complete	Percent Remaining	2020 Tax Assessed Value of Remaining Acres
Wacissa/Aucilla River Sinks	1985	CNL	7	33,081	18,173	14,908	55%	45%	\$21,527,878
St. Joe Timberland* (*Wacissa/Aucilla River Sinks site)	2000	CCL	2	47,229	42,645	4,584	90%	10%	\$8,520,051
West Aucilla River Buffer	2007	LTF	30	710	0	710	0%	100%	\$2,562,557
Econfina Timberlands	2019	CNL	33	1,665	0	1,665	0%	100%	\$2,083,352
Aucilla River Corridor	2023 (anticipated)	PRI	Pending	18,575	0	18,575	0%	100%	\$14,572,633
TOTALS Aucilla Wacissa Watershed				101,260	60,705	40,555	60%	40%	\$46,641,077



To: Sine Murray, DEP/OES
 From: Dan Hipes, FNAI
 Date: July 21, 2022
 Subject: Proposed Consolidation of Aucilla River watershed Florida Forever BOT projects.

The Aucilla/Wacissa Watershed project is a (proposed) consolidation of current Florida Forever BOT projects within the Aucilla River corridor. These include the Aucilla River Corridor (added in 2022), the Econfina Timberlands (added in 2019), West Aucilla River Buffer (added in 2007), Wacissa/Aucilla River Sinks (added in 1985), and the Wacissa/Aucilla Sinks tracts of St. Joe Timberland (added in 2000). When combined, these projects will create a single landscape-scale project that will ensure the health of the Aucilla River (an Outstanding Florida Water), Little Aucilla River, Wacissa River and related springs and tributaries by completing a corridor of public conservation lands and protected private working lands along the Aucilla and Wacissa Rivers. These projects share the common purpose to increase water quality, protect springs, aquatic caves and sinkholes, conserve Florida's rural landscape, provide and enhance wildlife corridors, and preserve important archaeological sites. Combined, the overall project encompasses approximately 101,265 acres, portions of which have been purchased and are now within Aucilla and Big Bend Wildlife Management Areas managed by FWC and Middle Aucilla Conservation Area managed by Suwannee River Water Management District. Other nearby conservation lands include St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, Econfina River State Park, Econfina River Conservation Area, Avalon Plantation Conservation Area (TNC), Three Creeks Ranch Conservation Area (Tall Timbers Research) and Upper Aucilla Conservation Area. Parcels remaining within the proposed consolidated project are proposed for both less-than-fee and fee simple acquisition; these total approximately 40,263 acres.

The northern half of the Aucilla/Wacissa Watershed project lies within the Greenville Islands and Swamps Physiographic Sub-Province, an area of rolling clay hills similar to that of the Tallahassee Red Hills, but with less pronounced topography and with a greater limestone sub-surface component. The southern half of the project lies within the Big Bend Karst Physiographic Province, an erosional limestone plain overlain by shallow sands characterized by flatwoods, hydric hammocks and swamps.

Natural wetland communities in order of extent are basin swamp, dome swamp, floodplain swamp, hydric hammock, bottomland forest, baygall, wet flatwoods, and depression marsh. These wetlands remain essentially intact, but with some harvest of cypress and to a lesser extent hardwoods. Most of the uplands are pine plantation or plantation in some stage of restoration to mesic flatwoods or upland pine. Some improved pasture and other agricultural lands are present.

Many rare animal species have been documented within the Aucilla/Wacissa Watershed project (see table below). These species are primarily known from the areas that have been purchased and are part of Aucilla Wildlife Management Area. Additional occurrences are expected to be documented as more areas are protected and subject to future inventory efforts.

Rare plants and animals documented the Aucilla/Wacissa Watershed project

Scientific Name	Common Name	Global Rank	State Rank	Federal Status	State Status
Rare plants documented on site					
<i>Asarum arifolium</i>	little brown jug	G5*	S3	N	ST
<i>Carex chapmannii</i>	Chapman's sedge	G3	S3	N	T
<i>Cleistes divaricata</i>	large rosebud orchid	G4	S1	N	E
<i>Leitneria floridana</i>	corkwood	G3	S3	N	T
<i>Litsea aestivalis</i>	pondspice	G3?	S2	N	E
<i>Phyllanthus liebmannianus</i> ssp. <i>platylepis</i>	pinewoods dainties	G4T2	S2	N	E
<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>	cardinalflower	G5	SNR	N	ST
<i>Osmunda regalis</i>	royal fern	G5	SNR	N	CE
<i>Rhaphidophyllum hystrix</i>	needle palm	G4	S4	N	CE
<i>Salix floridana</i>	Florida willow	G2G3	S2S3	N	E
<i>Tipularia discolor</i>	crane fly orchid	G4G5	S4	N	ST
Rare animals documented on site					
<i>Acantharchus pomotis</i>	mud sunfish	G4G5	S3	N	N
<i>Alligator mississippiensis</i>	American Alligator	G5	S4	SAT	FT(S/A)
<i>Ambystoma cingulatum</i>	Frosted Flatwoods Salamander	G2	S1	T	FT
<i>Amphiuma pholeter</i>	One-toed Amphiuma	G3	S3	N	N
<i>Aramus guarana</i>	Limpkin	G5	S3	N	N
<i>Callophrys gryneus swadneri</i>	Florida Olive Hairstreak	G5T2	S2	N	N
<i>Cambarellus schmitti</i>	Fontal Dwarf Crayfish	G2G3	S2S3	N	N
<i>Crangonyx grandimanus</i>	Florida Cave Amphipod	G2G3	S2S3	N	N
<i>Crangonyx parhobbsi</i>	Florida Big Bend Cave Amphipod	G1G2	S1S2	N	N
<i>Crotalus adamanteus</i>	Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake	G3	S3	N	N
<i>Drymarchon couperi</i>	Eastern Indigo Snake	G3	S2?	T	FT
<i>Gopherus polyphemus</i>	Gopher Tortoise	G3	S3	C	ST
<i>Graptemys barbouri</i>	Barbour's Map Turtle	G2	S2	N	ST
<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Bald Eagle	G5	S3	N	N
<i>Macrochelys temminckii</i>	Alligator Snapping Turtle	G3	S3	PT	N
<i>Nerodia clarkii clarkii</i>	Gulf Salt Marsh Snake	G4T3	S2	N	N
<i>Nyctanassa violacea</i>	Yellow-crowned Night-heron	G5	S3	N	N
<i>Poanes yehl</i>	Yehl Skipper	G4	S2S3	N	N
<i>Procambarus horsti</i>	Big Blue Spring Cave Crayfish	G1	S1	N	N
<i>Pseudemys concinna suwanniensis</i>	Suwannee Cooter	G5T3	S3	N	N
<i>Pseudemys nelsoni</i> pop. 1	Florida Red-bellied Turtle, Panhandle Population	G5T2Q	S2	N	N
<i>Satyrodes appalachia</i>	Appalachian Brown	G4	S2S3	N	N
<i>Sphodros rufipes</i>	Red-legged Purse-web Spider	G4	S3	N	N
<i>Ursus americanus floridanus</i>	Florida black bear	G5T4	S4	N	N

*Species ranks and conservation status are described at

https://www.fnai.org/PDFs/Rank_and_Status_Explanation.pdf.

The Florida Forever Measures Evaluation (FFME) on the following page is based on the Florida Forever Conservation Needs Assessment developed by FNAI. The data used in that analysis represent a standardized, statewide perspective of natural community distributions based primarily on data from the Cooperative Land Cover Map. Nearly all of the project is within priority 2 through 5 Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas, priorities 2 through 6 FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities, priority 1 and 2 Ecological Greenways, Priorities 1 through 4 Natural Floodplain Function, and priorities 1 through 7 Surface Water Protection. Under-represented natural communities including mesic/wet flatwoods, sandhill, scrub/scrubby flatwoods, and upland hardwood forest cover 13% of the project. Sixty-four percent of the project contributes to priorities 1 through 3 for Functional Wetlands. Seventy-five percent of the project contributes to Aquifer Recharge.

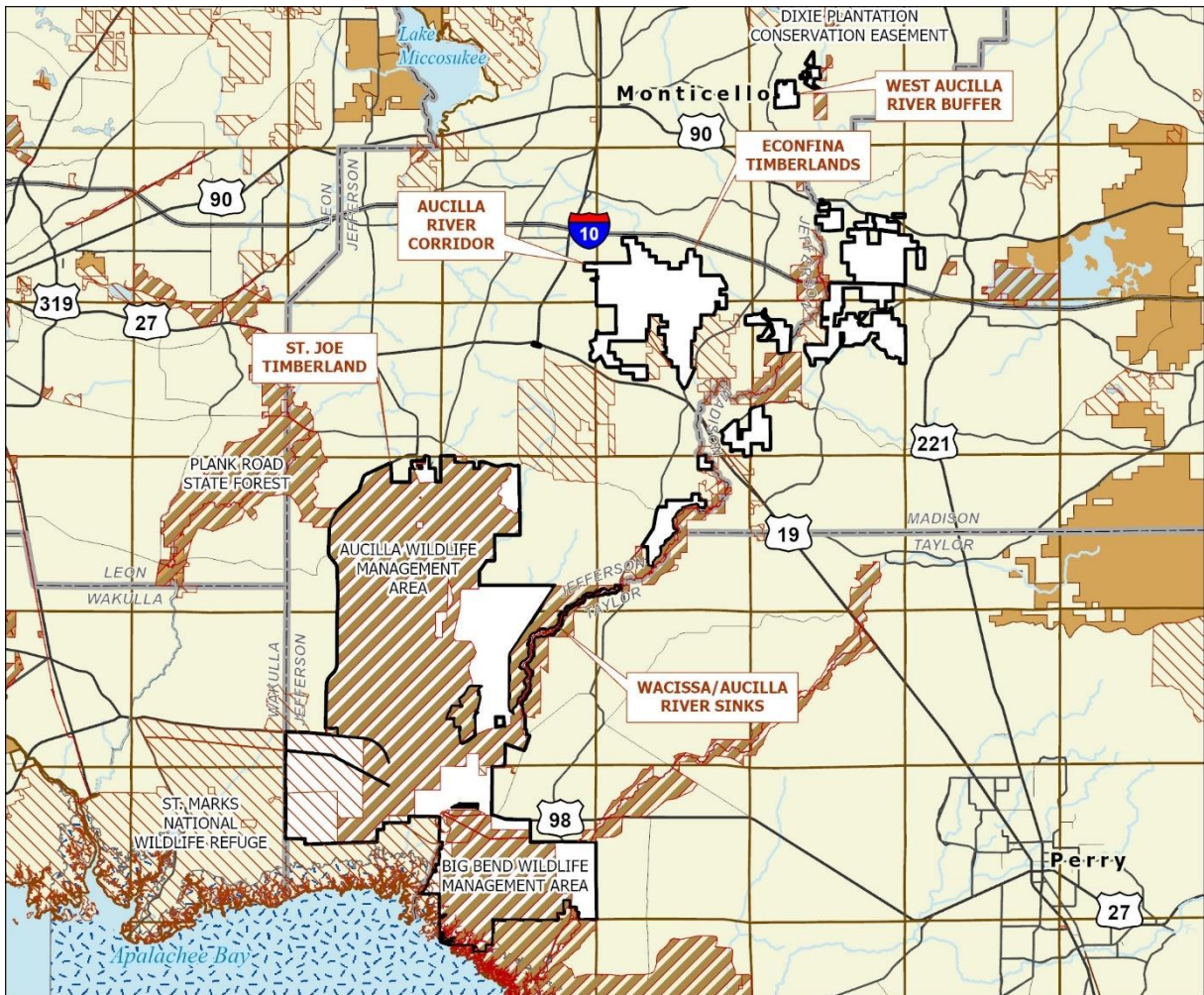
Aucilla/Wacissa Watershed: Florida Forever Measure Evaluation 20220720

GIS ACRES = 101,265

MEASURES	Resource Acres ^a	% of project
B1: Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	7,233	7%
Priority 3	77,679	77%
Priority 4	64	< 1%
Priority 5	13,316	13%
Total Acres	98,292	97%
B2: FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities		
Priority 1	68	< 1%
Priority 2	5,168	5%
Priority 3	32,584	32%
Priority 4	28,873	29%
Priority 5	23,597	23%
Priority 6	3,318	3%
Total Acres	93,607	92%
B3: Ecological Greenways		
Priority 1	73,622	73%
Priority 2	21,080	21%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	6,432	6%
Total Acres	101,134	100%
B4: Under-represented Natural Communities		
Upland Glade (G1)	0	0%
Pine Rockland (G1)	0	0%
Scrub and Scrubby Flatwoods (G2)	3	< 1%
Rockland Hammock (G2)	0	0%
Dry Prairie (G2)	0	0%
Seepage Slope (G2)	0	0%
Sandhill (G3)	5	< 1%
Sandhill Upland Lake (G3)	0	0%
Upland Pine (G3)	0	0%
Mesic/Wet Flatwoods (G4)	11,262	11%
Upland Hardwood Forest (G5)	2,080	2%
Total Acres	13,349	13%
B6: Occurrences of FNAI Tracked Species		
G1	4	
G2	20	
G3	29	
G4	6	
G5	13	
Total	72	
C4: Natural Floodplain Function		
Priority 1	27,895	28%
Priority 2	30,507	30%
Priority 3	19,874	20%
Priority 4	10,169	10%
Priority 5	22	< 1%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	88,467	87%

MEASURES (continued)	Resource Acres ^a	% of project
C5: Surface Water Protection		
Priority 1	9,258	9%
Priority 2	15,404	15%
Priority 3	7,365	7%
Priority 4	42,116	42%
Priority 5	8,936	9%
Priority 6	15,056	15%
Priority 7	1,131	1%
Total Acres	99,267	98%
C7: Fragile Coastal Resources		
Fragile Coastal Uplands	5	< 1%
Imperiled Coastal Lakes	0	0%
Coastal Wetlands	1,400	1%
Total Acres	1,405	1%
C8: Functional Wetlands		
Priority 1	26,344	26%
Priority 2	22,288	22%
Priority 3	12,141	12%
Priority 4	3,985	4%
Priority 5	3	< 1%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	64,760	64%
D3: Aquifer Recharge		
Priority 1	413	< 1%
Priority 2	3,612	4%
Priority 3	31,229	31%
Priority 4	25,718	25%
Priority 5	15,054	15%
Priority 6	206	< 1%
Total Acres	76,232	75%
E2: Recreational Trails (miles) <small>(prioritized trail opportunities from Office of Greenways and Trails & Univ. Florida)</small>		
Land Trail Priorities	33.7	
Land Trail Opportunities	8.5	
Total Miles	42.2	
F2: Arch. & Historical Sites (number)		
	485 sites	
G1: Sustainable Forestry		
Priority 1	7,059	7%
Priority 2	5,536	5%
Priority 3	24,637	24%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5 - Potential Pinelands	522	< 1%
Total Acres	37,754	37%
G3: Forestland for Recharge		
	15,790	16%

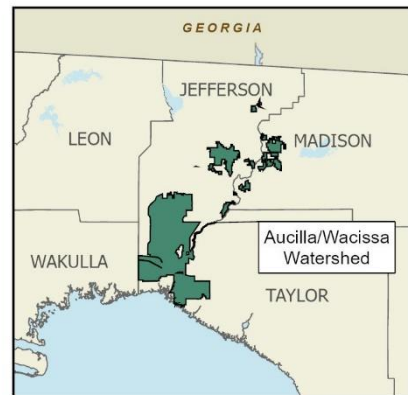
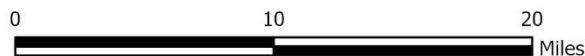
^aAcres of each resource in the project and percentage of project represented by each resource are listed except where noted. This analysis converts site boundary into pixels, which causes slight differences from GIS acres; this effect is most noticeable on small sites.



AUCILLA/WACISSA WATERSHED FLORIDA FOREVER PROPOSED PROJECT

JEFFERSON, MADISON, AND TAYLOR COUNTIES

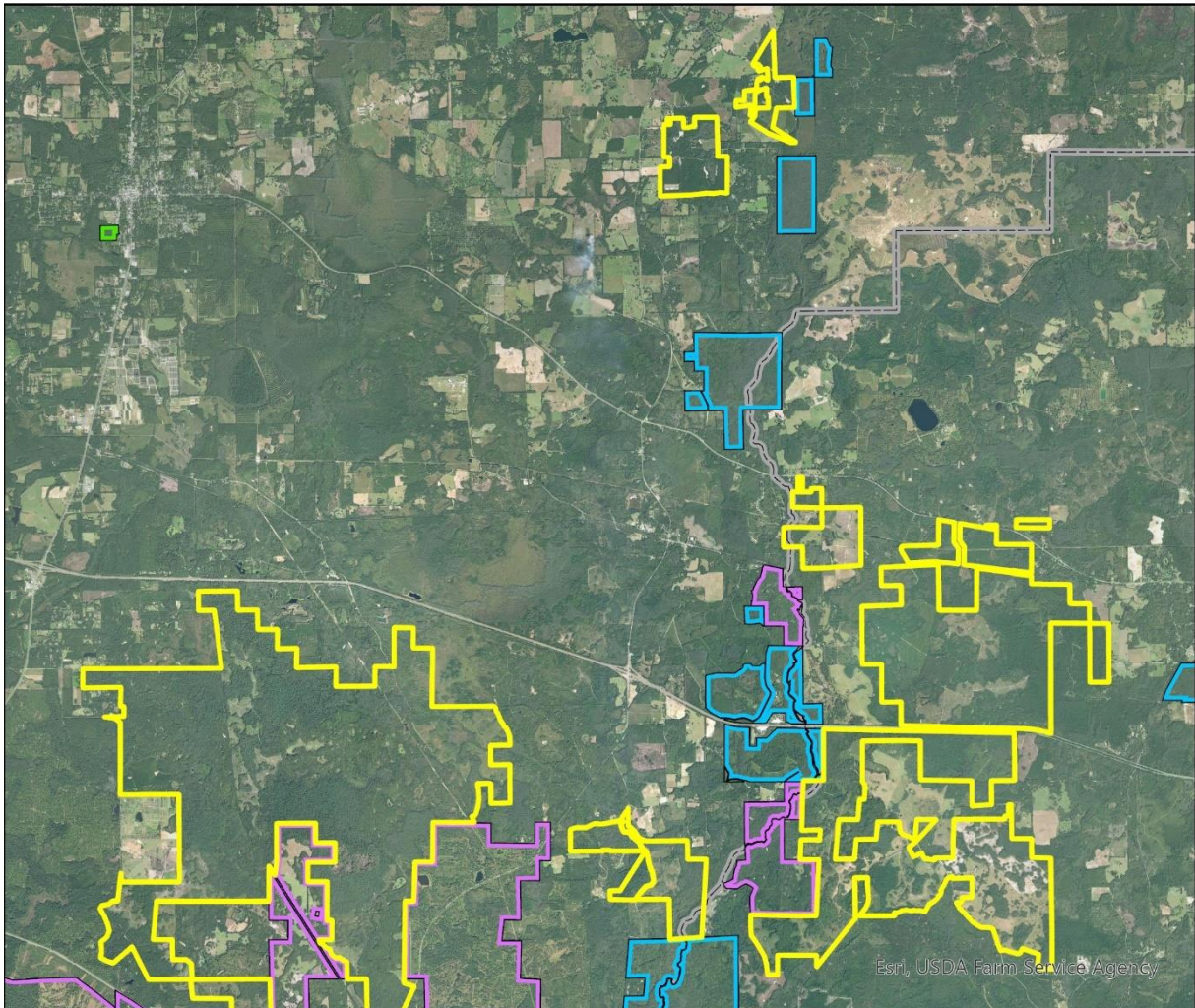
- Proposed Project
- Florida Forever BOT Projects
- State Owned Lands
- Other Conservation Lands
- State Aquatic Preserve



JULY 2022

Aucilla/Wacissa Watershed Proposed Project - Map 1

FLORIDA FOREVER BOARD OF TRUSTEES PROJECT PROPOSED COMBINATION AS OF JULY 2022

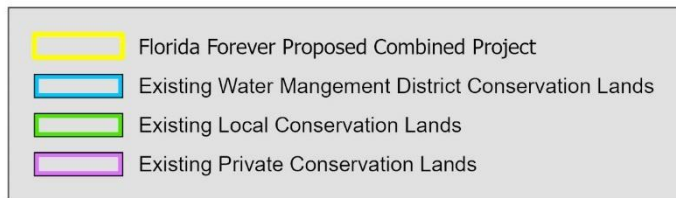
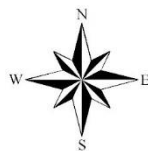


Map Produced by: N. Pasco, July 2022

Background: USA NAIP Imagery Resolution = 1.0 meter

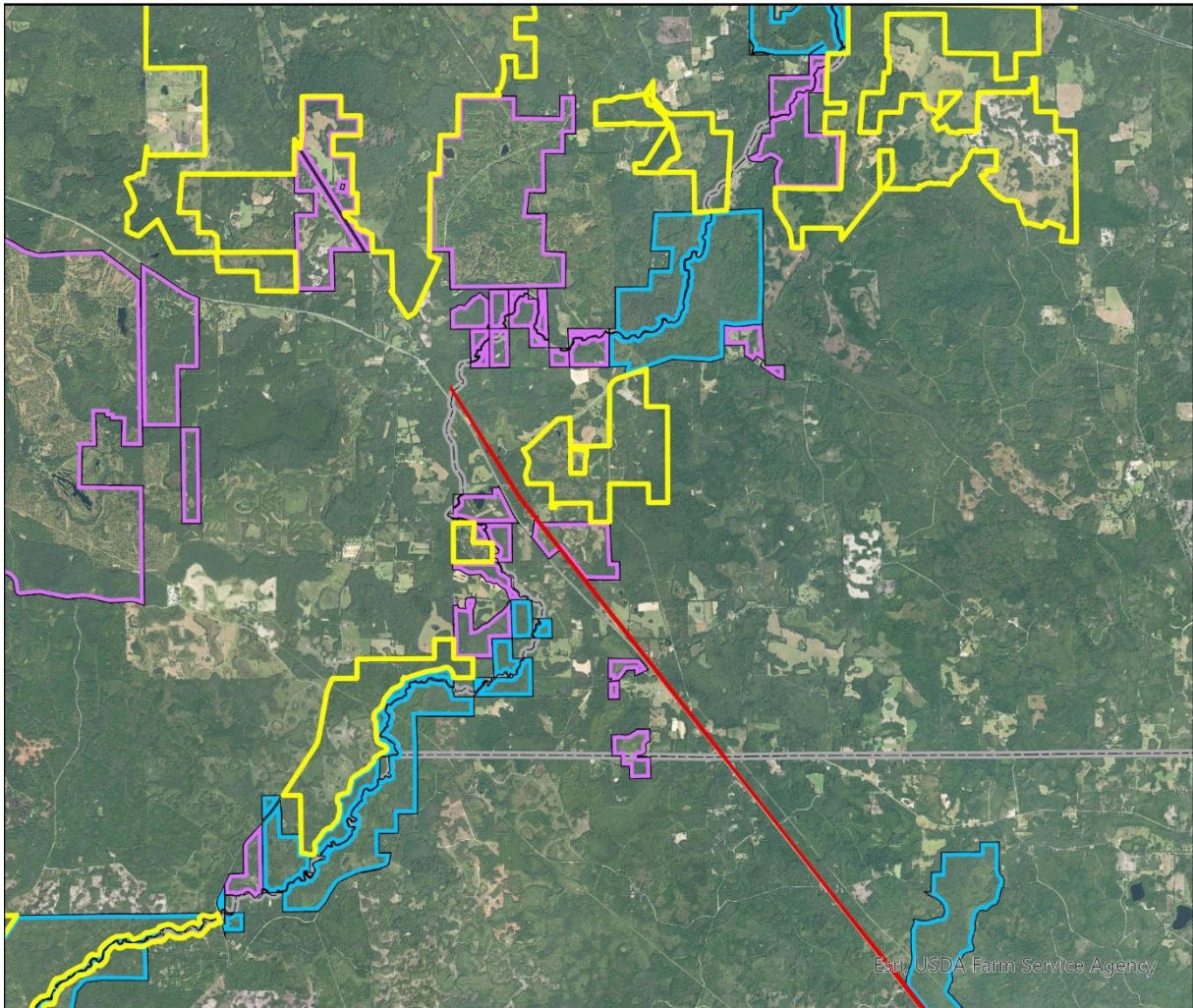


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Aucilla/Wacissa Watershed Proposed Project - Map 2

FLORIDA FOREVER BOARD OF TRUSTEES PROJECT PROPOSED COMBINATION AS OF JULY 2022

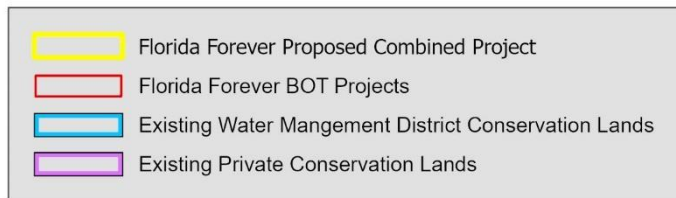
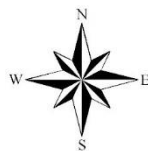


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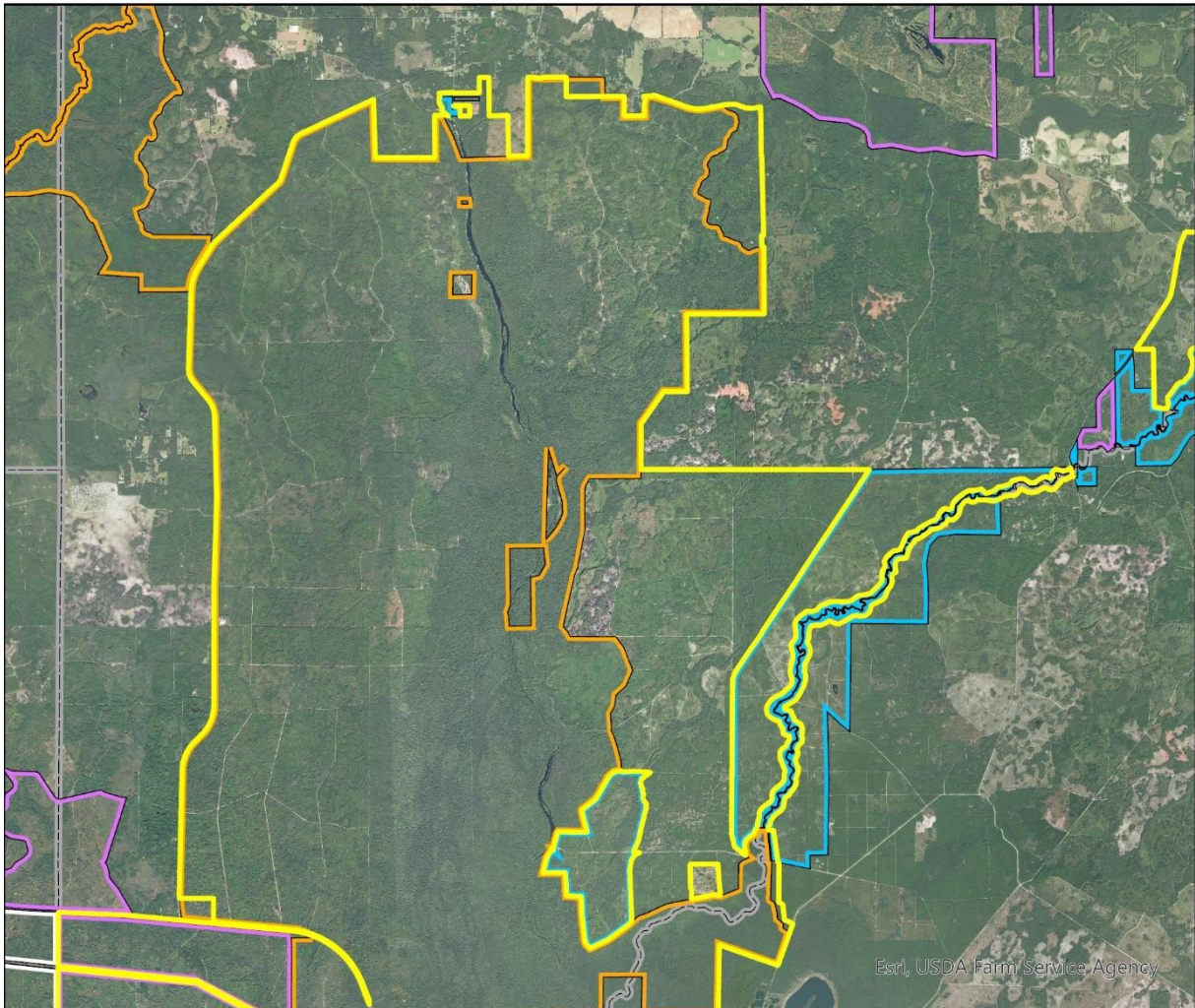


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Aucilla/Wacissa Watershed Proposed Project - Map 3

FLORIDA FOREVER BOARD OF TRUSTEES PROJECT PROPOSED COMBINATION AS OF JULY 2022



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Background: USA NAIP Imagery Resolution = 1.0 meter

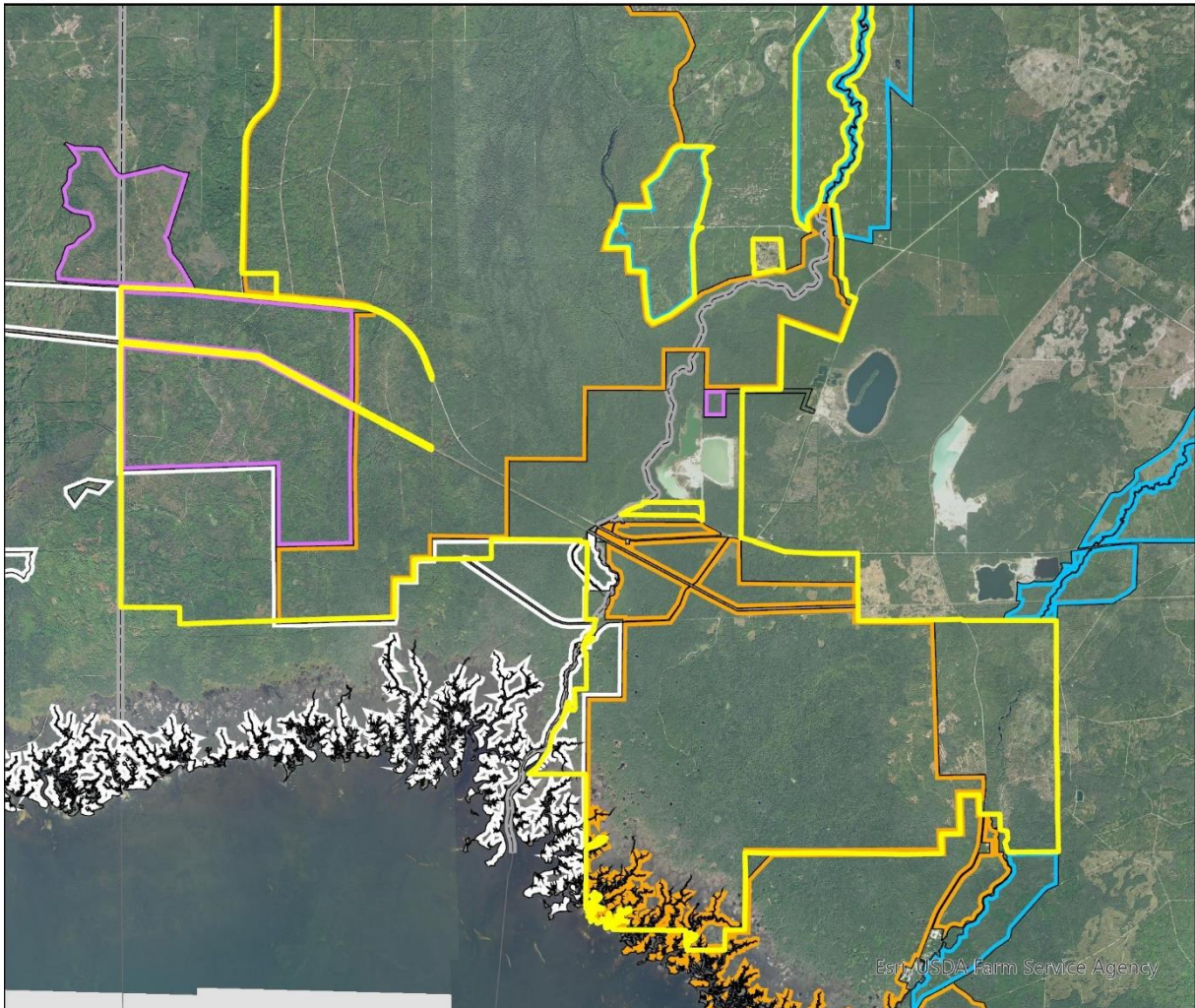


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Aucilla/Wacissa Watershed Proposed Project - Map 4

FLORIDA FOREVER BOARD OF TRUSTEES PROJECT PROPOSED COMBINATION AS OF JULY 2022



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