



# J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area Environmental Assessment

Public Open House Meeting

February 2, 2005

## WELCOME

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (the Service) and Palm Beach County (the County) welcome you to the Public Open House Meeting regarding the Environmental Assessment (EA) to assess a proposed change in the use of lands within the J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area (JWCWMA) in Palm Beach County. The meeting is being conducted to afford citizens the opportunity to effectively participate in the review of the proposals, learn about them, and express their views concerning the proposed land transfer within the JWCWMA. The analysis considers the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts associated with the proposed change in use of JWCWMA lands, as well as the proposed mitigation for those impacts. An EA that contains an analysis of the potential for environmental impacts of six alternatives regarding the proposed action, including "No-Action" alternatives is available for review at tonight's meeting.

This Meeting is being held at the Western Pines Middle School in Royal Palm Beach, Florida. This is an informal open house meeting and there will be no formal presentation. Service and County representatives are available to answer questions and take your comments. All materials presented at this workshop may also be viewed on the project website at <http://southeast.fws.gov>.

## Project Description

*The EA addresses a proposed change in the use of lands within the JWCWMA in Palm Beach County. Two tracts of JWCWMA land (Corbett Parcels A and B), which were acquired partially with Federal funds, would be used for purposes other than which they were acquired. The proposed new uses would facilitate development of the Palm Beach County Biotechnical Research Park (PBCBRP) at the Mecca Farms site. The wildlife-related values of those two tracts would be replaced by adding to the JWCWMA, adjacent lands in Martin County, Florida (Minkin Parcel).*

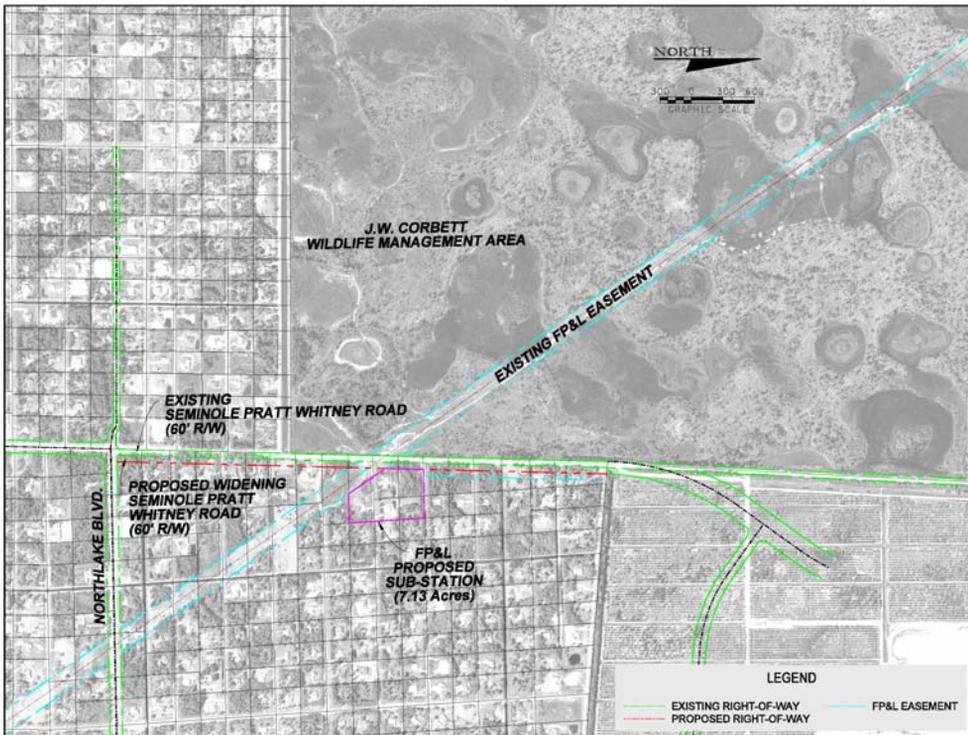
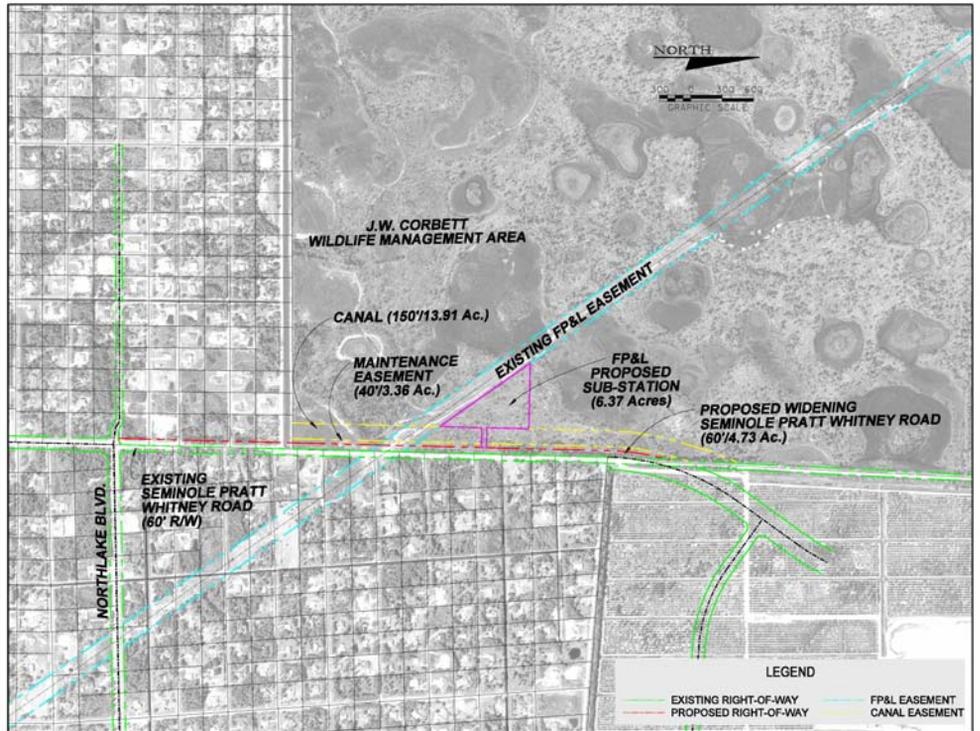


## COMMENTS WELCOMED

Please feel free to express your comments on the Comment Form included in this handout. All comments received will be taken into consideration before a final recommendation is made by the Service. You may drop the form in the comment box provided tonight, mail the comment form to the address provided on the form by February 14, 2005, or provide your comments on the project website at <http://southeast.fws.gov>. Comments received from the public, local governments, and review agencies will help the Service in making a decision regarding the EA. The Service could determine that the proposal is unlikely to have a significant impact or that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) should be prepared.

**Alternative 1B** is the proposed action alternative for Corbett Parcel B. This alternative would utilize an easement across the southeast corner of the JWCWMA. The easement would include 4.73 acres to accommodate the proposed 60-foot widening of Seminole Pratt Whitney Road including an underground power distribution line; 13.91 acres to allow for the construction of a 150-foot “canal/flow way” by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) as part of the CERP Project; 3.36 acres for the construction of a 40-foot canal maintenance area; and 6.37 acres to accommodate an electrical substation for FP&L adjacent to the existing power line transmission corridor. The canal maintenance area on the east side of the proposed Corbett Canal would also

provide for a hiking/biking/equestrian trail (activities trail) to a proposed trailhead located immediately east of the JWCWMA South Entrance. The easement being requested from JWCWMA would accommodate the future requirements of SFWMD and the CERP Project. The total acreage that would be impacted in the JWCWMA for this alternative is 28.37 acres. In addition to the JWCWMA impacts, the expansion of Seminole Pratt Whitney Road south of the JWCWMA to Northlake Boulevard would require the taking of land from six residential properties on the west side of Seminole Pratt Whitney Road.



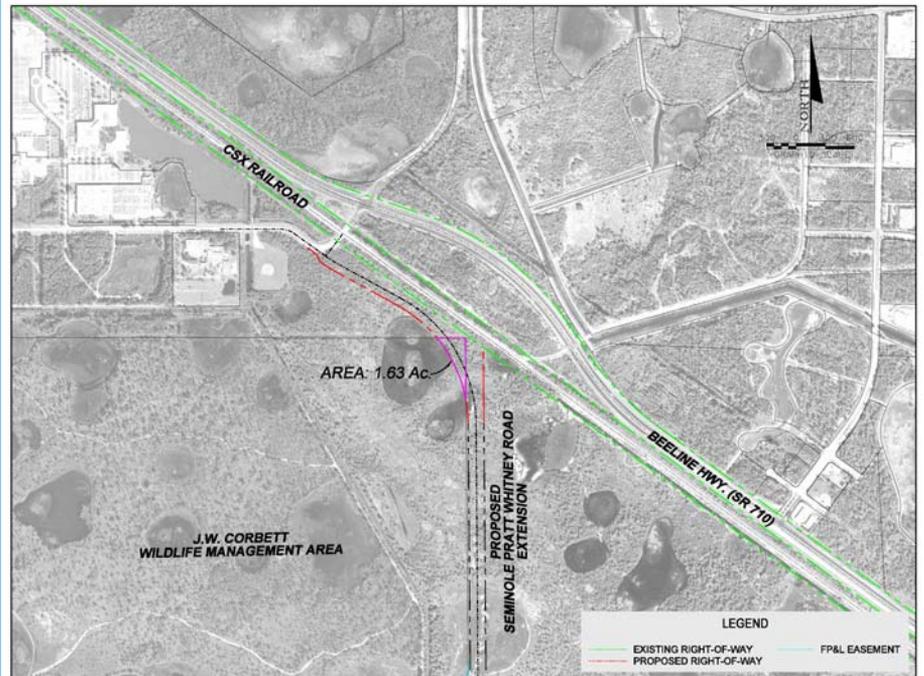
**Alternative 2B** is the no-action alternative for Parcel B and would involve no easements from the JWCWMA. This alternative accepts County assertions that all of the right-of-way for the expansion of Seminole Pratt Whitney Road would be obtained from properties on the east side of the existing Seminole Pratt Whitney Road, including residential lots in the area known as “The Acreage” between Northlake Boulevard and the Mecca property. The electrical substation would be sited on 7.13 acres at the northeast corner of the intersection of the existing electrical transmission lines and Seminole Pratt Whitney Road. Underground power distribution lines would be run within a 60-foot additional FP&L easement north from the

substation to the PBCBRP site. This alternative would have no involvement with the JWCWMA adjacent to and south of the PBCBRP site. This alternative does not include any accommodation for a canal/flow way (CERP Project) or an activities trail.

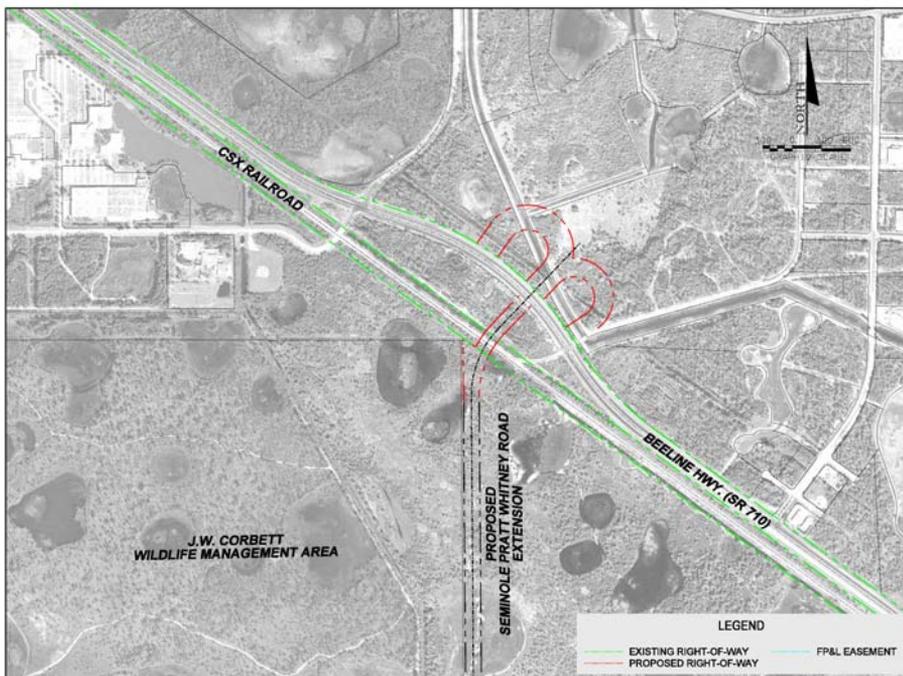
## PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

There are alternative actions for each of the JWCWMA parcels under evaluation in the EA. The map on the front of this handout shows the locations of the alternative actions for Corbett Parcels A and B. Alternatives to the proposed Parcel A transfer were considered independent of the alternatives for the proposed Parcel B transfer. There are two alternatives that comprise the proposed transfer (1A and 1B), two alternatives that comprise our no-action alternative (2A and 2B), and two alternative configurations of Parcel B that could address our need and partially address the County's goals (3B and 4B). Following are descriptions of each alternative being considered.

**Alternative 1A** is the proposed action alternative for Corbett Parcel A. Located at the northeast corner of the JWCWMA, this 1.63-acre parcel would accommodate the construction of a future two-lane, expandable to four- or six-lane divided, connection of Seminole Pratt Whitney Road to the Beeline Highway (State Road 710 [SR 710]). South of Parcel A, the County is proposing a four-lane roadway, expandable to six lanes, through the Mecca property to its south boundary, and from there continuing south as a six-lane roadway to Northlake Boulevard. In order for Seminole Pratt Whitney Road to connect to SR 710, it is necessary to cross existing CSX railroad tracks; the proposed action calls for utilizing the existing railroad crossing at the Pratt Whitney facility entrance. The CSX rail crossing would be upgraded as necessary to safely accommodate the additional lanes in accordance with the County, FDOT, and CSX rules and regulations. In order to make the westerly turn required to align with the existing crossing, it is necessary to cross a corner of the JWCWMA; this crossing results in the 1.63-acre impact.



**Alternative 2A** is the no-action alternative for Parcel A and would not involve an easement across the JWCWMA. This concept would place the new alignment for the Seminole Pratt Whitney Road extension entirely to the east of Parcel A on County-owned lands, cross the CSX railroad line above-grade, and interchange with SR 710 without any direct impact to the JWCWMA. Due to the close proximity of the potential new CSX crossing to the CSX spur track immediately to the east, and the existing Pratt-Whitney facility road crossing to the west, a grade-separated crossing of CSX would be required. This grade-separated crossing would require a minimum 23.5-foot clearance over the railroad. Approximately 19 to 20 trains per day use this section of CSX railroad line and it is also an AMTRAK route.

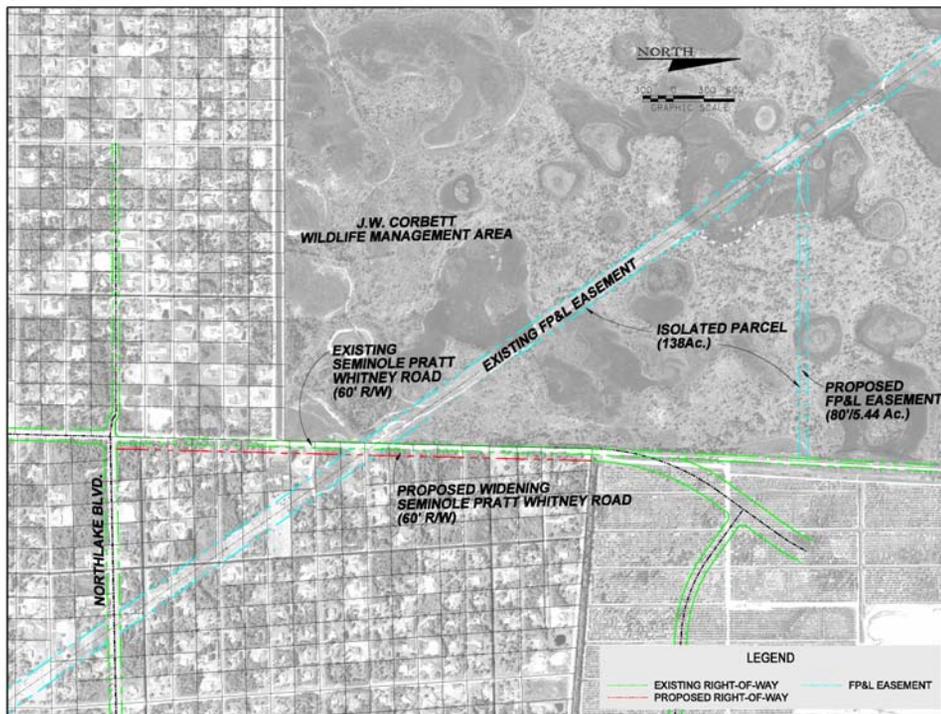
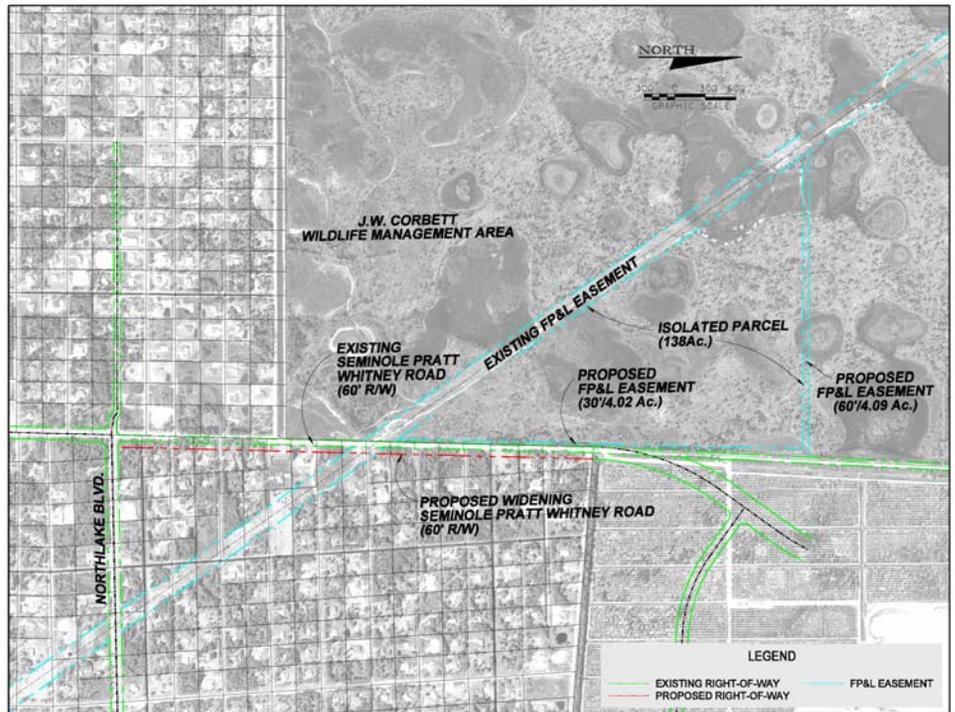


## MINKIN PARCEL

Thirty (30) acres of JWCWMA land, Corbett Parcels A (28.37 acres) and B (1.63 acres), would be used for purposes other than which they were acquired. To compensate for the loss of conservation lands within the JWCWMA, the County proposes to provide a 60-acre tract of land located adjacent to the JWCWMA's northern boundary. This tract of land is located in Martin County and is known as the Minkin Parcel. The Minkin Parcel is an unimpacted natural area consisting of hydric pine flatwoods, freshwater marsh, sawgrass marsh, and cypress stands. In addition, this parcel is listed on the longterm acquisition plan for the JWCWMA. The loss of wildlife-related values in Parcels A and B would be replaced (2:1) with the addition of the Minkin Parcel to the JWCWMA.



**Alternative 3B** would include the 60-foot expansion of Seminole Pratt Whitney Road on the east side of the existing roadway (requiring condemnation of right-of-way from 17 residential lots in The Acreage) and two new overhead power transmission lines in the JWCWMA to connect to a proposed utility pod in the PBCBRP. One of the new overhead transmission lines would be a single circuit transmission line within a 30-foot easement (4.02 acres) that would run along the west side of Seminole Pratt Whitney Road north to an electric substation within the PBCBRP. The second proposed overhead transmission line within a 60-foot easement (4.09 acres) would be a single circuit from the existing transmission corridor in the JWCWMA east to the electric substation in the PBCBRP, a distance of approximately 3,000 feet, with an above-grade patrol road for maintenance purposes. This alternative does not include any accommodation for a canal/flow way (CERP Project) or an activities trail. The total easement that would be required from the JWCWMA for this alternative is 8.11 acres. In addition to the 8.11 acres directly impacted, this alternative creates, from a management perspective, a completely isolated 138-acre parcel of property within the JWCWMA bordered by the existing and proposed FP&L transmission line easements.



**Alternative 4B** would include the 60-foot expansion of Seminole Pratt Whitney Road on the east side of the existing roadway (requiring right-of-way taking from 17 residential lots in The Acreage) and a new power transmission line in the JWCWMA to connect to a proposed utility pod in the PBCBRP. The new transmission line would run from the existing transmission corridor in the JWCWMA east to the substation in the PBCBRP, a distance of approximately 3,000 feet. The corridor for this transmission line would be 80 feet in width and requires 5.44 acres of land from the JWCWMA. This alternative does not include any accommodation for a canal/flow way (CERP Project) or an activities trail. The total easement that would be required from the JWCWMA for this alternative is 5.44

acres. In addition to the 5.44 acres directly impacted, this alternative creates, from a management perspective, a completely isolated 138-acre parcel of property within the JWCWMA bordered by the existing and proposed FP&L transmission line easements.

## SUMMARY OF IMPACTS BY ALTERNATIVE

Impact Topics	Alternative 1A	Alternative 2A	Alternative 1B	Alternative 2B	Alternative 3B	Alternative 4B
<b>Social or Economic Resources</b>						
Land Use Changes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Community Cohesion	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Relocation Potential	No	No	No	Yes - 8	Yes - 5	Yes - 5
Controversy Potential	Low	High	Low	High	High	High
Utilities	No	No	No	No	No	No
Railroads	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
<b>Cultural Resources</b>						
Historic Sites/Districts	No	No	No	No	No	No
Archaeological Sites	No	No	No	No	No	No
Recreation Areas <sup>1</sup>	Yes - 1.63 acres	No	Yes - 28.37 acres	No	Yes - 146.11 acres	Yes - 143.44 acres
<b>Physical Resources</b>						
Noise Sensitive Sites	No	No	Yes - 6	Yes - 9	Yes - 9	Yes - 9
Contamination (#/Rank)	No	I/Low	No	No	No	No
<b>Natural Resources</b>						
Wetlands	Yes - 4.67 acres	Yes - 5.90 acres	Yes - 16.21 acres	Yes - 1.22 acres	Yes - 4.85 acres	Yes - 4.34 acres
Water Quality	No	No	Positive	No	No	No
Wild and Scenic Rivers	No	No	Positive	No	No	No
Floodplains	No	No	Positive	No	No	No
Wildlife and Habitat <sup>2</sup>	Yes - 6.88 acres	Yes - 11.00 acres	Yes - 12.82 acres	Yes - 1.50 acres	Yes - 5.17 acres	Yes - 4.68 acres
<b>Cumulative Effects</b>	No	No	No	No	No	No

No = No adverse impact.

Yes = Adverse impact.

Positive = Positive impact.

<sup>1</sup> 2 to 1 mitigation proposed for Alternatives 1A and 1B by acquisition of the Minkin Parcel.

<sup>2</sup> Habitat acreage does not include wetlands.