
EVERGLADES HEADWATERS CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP:

**DRAFT LAND PROTECTION PLAN
FOR THE PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF
THE EVERGLADES HEADWATERS
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
AND CONSERVATION AREA**

Polk, Osceola, Okeechobee, and Highlands Counties, Florida

**U.S. Department of the Interior
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I. Introduction and Purpose

Widely recognized as a nationally important landscape and area of biological diversity, the Kissimmee River Basin in central Florida contains a network of existing conservation lands that includes state parks, state wildlife management areas, other state lands, agricultural working lands (e.g., with conservation easements), Avon Park Air Force Range, Disney's Wilderness Preserve, and other conservation lands. The proposed Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and Conservation Area (Conservation Area) would help connect these existing conservation lands, further protecting watersheds and wildlife corridors and enhancing the ecological functioning of the Kissimmee River Basin. The planning process for the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area has helped with coordination and collaboration between the various management entities within the Kissimmee River Basin to support a more functional conservation landscape into the future, forming the Everglades Headwaters Conservation Partnership. Key conservation agencies and organizations have a long tradition of working in the Kissimmee River Basin landscape, including the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA); Avon Park Air Force Range, U.S. Air Force; Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC); Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS); Florida Division of Forestry (FDOF), FDACS; Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP); Florida Division of State Lands, FDEP; South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD); and The Nature Conservancy. As the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) endeavors to fill in some of the conservation gaps in the Kissimmee River Basin landscape, coordination and consultation with these partners have been keys in developing this proposal. The Service also works with Native American tribes to ensure timely and effective cooperation and collaboration. During this planning process, the Service contacted several tribes with interest in this landscape: Seminole Tribe of Florida; Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida; Seminole Nation of Oklahoma; Muscogee (Creek) Nation; and Poarch Band of Creeks. Further, various state and local governmental agencies, organizations, businesses, and the public, with interest in this landscape, participated in the planning process.

The specific action identified in this Draft Land Protection Plan (Draft LPP), to establish the Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area, is the Service's first major contribution in this partnership effort. The Greater Everglades Partnership Initiative, which includes other federal agencies, state and local agencies, and non-governmental organizations, and which covers the greater Everglades area, including the headwaters area, seeks collaborative and cost-effective ways to conserve the land, water, and wildlife resources in central and south Florida, while honoring the legacy of stewardship handed down through generations of Floridians.

Recognizing the generations of responsible stewardship within this working rural landscape, this proposal seeks to work with willing landowners to secure a legacy of conservation lands for future generations to enjoy. This proposal aims to protect and restore one of the great grassland and savanna landscapes of eastern North America, conserving one of the nation's prime areas of biological diversity. Further, the proposal aims to address threats from habitat fragmentation and urban development, altered ecological processes, and impacts from global climate change. Key species and habitats of concern for this area include the Florida grasshopper sparrow, Everglades snail kite, Florida black bear, Audubon's crested caracara, red-cockaded woodpecker, and cutthroat wetlands.

Working with the key partners, as well as with other state and local governments, Native American tribes, businesses, non-governmental organizations, and the public, the Service examined the needs for wildlife habitat protection within the biologically important Kissimmee River Basin of Florida (Figure 1). During the planning process, this Study Area was further refined to encompass a smaller, approximately 816,000-

acre area referred to as the Conservation Partnership Area, wherein the Service proposes to acquire less than fee title interest in up to 100,000 acres (with a conservation easement focus) and fee title interest in up to 50,000 acres. It is critical to note that the Service's policy is to work with willing sellers to acquire fee title or less than fee title interest in property.

This Draft LPP identifies the proposed establishment of the Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area, as outlined in the Service's Proposed Action (Alternative C, Conservation Partnership Approach) in the Draft Environmental Assessment (Draft EA). The purposes of this Draft LPP are to:

- announce the Service's intent to establish the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area;
- provide landowners and the public with an outline of Service policies, priorities, and protection methods for property in the project area;
- assist landowners in determining whether their properties are located within the proposed refuge boundary; and
- inform landowners about the Service's long-standing policy of acquiring land only from willing sellers.

The Draft LPP presents the methods that the Service, conservation partners, and interested landowners could use to accomplish wildlife and habitat goals and objectives for the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area.

The table and maps contained in Attachment 1 identify the land parcels contained within the proposed Conservation Focal Area, the area within which the Service would seek to acquire up to 50,000 acres of fee title interest (Figures 3a-3f). A corresponding table in Attachment 1 (Table 6) groups parcels together by landowner and lists each parcel, each parcel identification number, estimated acres, type of ownership, preferred method of acquisition, overall priority ranking for a single or group of parcels under one landowner, acres by parcel and landowner in the tiers I, II, and III; and the figure number where each parcel or group of parcels can be found.

The scope of the Draft EA and Draft LPP is limited to the proposed acquisition of lands, in fee title and less than fee title, within the Conservation Partnership Area, including the Conservation Focal Area. The Draft EA and Draft LPP are not intended to cover the development and/or implementation of detailed, specific programs for the administration and management of those lands. A conceptual management plan and interim compatibility determinations would guide management and public use on newly established refuge lands and conservation easements until a comprehensive conservation plan and compatibility determinations are developed (see Appendices A and B, Draft EA, for the conceptual management plan and interim compatibility determinations, respectively).

A. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The generalized area of interest (Study Area) for the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area is located within portions of Polk, Osceola, Okeechobee, Highlands, and Glades Counties, Florida, in the Kissimmee River Basin (Figure 1). It is bounded by the city of Orlando to the north, Lake Okeechobee to the south, on the east by the St John's River watershed, and on the west by the Lake Wales Ridge. This Study Area was determined based on a number of factors, including hydrologic basin, the Lake Okeechobee shoreline, and the western edge of the Lake Wales Ridge. The proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area would protect a combination of wetland and upland habitats supporting migratory birds, federal and state listed species, and

regionally important wildlife and plant communities in the Kissimmee River Basin. The proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area include portions of one of the great grassland and savanna landscapes of eastern North America. Habitats include a mosaic of seasonally wet grasslands, longleaf pine savannas, sandhill and scrub, and forested wetlands that support a number of imperiled vertebrate wildlife. This area is part of the Lake Okeechobee and greater Everglades watershed, providing improved water quality and groundwater recharge benefits. Undeveloped lands and area waters provide a host of wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, and wildlife-watching amid an increasingly urbanized landscape.

The following definitions aid in outlining the Proposed Action:

Conservation Partnership Area	<p>A specified area within which the Service would work with partners and willing landowners to achieve conservation goals and within which the Service would have authority to work with willing landowners to acquire less than fee title interest or enter into management agreements. The Service would only be authorized to acquire up to a specified amount or acreage cap.</p> <p>Alternative C identifies an approximately 816,000-acre Conservation Partnership Area. The Service would have an acquisition cap of 100,000 acres for less than fee title acquisitions (with a conservation easement focus). The designation of a Conservation Partnership Area would not convey authority to establish rules and regulations throughout the Conservation Focal Area.</p>
Conservation Area	<p>The less than fee title interest acquired within the Conservation Partnership Area. As less than fee interests in lands were acquired from willing landowners, they would become the Conservation Area.</p> <p>Under Alternative C, the Conservation Area total would be 100,000 acres.</p>

Conservation Focal Area

A specified area within which the Service would have the authority to purchase property for a proposed refuge, but where the Service would be limited to an acquisition cap smaller than the Conservation Focal Area itself. The Service would be limited to acquiring property within the Conservation Focal Area, but would have the ability to adjust specific parcel acquisition to respond to changing landowner interest, conditions, and opportunities.

Under Alternative C, the Conservation Focal Area would be 130,000 acres with an acquisition cap of 50,000 acres.

Refuge Acquisition Boundary

A Refuge Acquisition Boundary defines specific parcels of property which the Service would have the authority to purchase from willing sellers.

Under Alternative B, the proposed Refuge Acquisition Boundary would be 50,000 acres.

Refuge Boundary

A Refuge Boundary is the management boundary of an approved refuge. A Refuge Boundary is generally comprised of Service-owned property, but can include other properties through some sort of agreement with the landowner (e.g., management agreement, lease, and easement).

Under both Alternatives B and C, the proposed Refuge Boundary would be 50,000 acres.

Study Area

A generalized area of interest within which the Service would evaluate opportunities for additional conservation measures.

The Study Area for this project totals approximately 1.8 million acres of the Kissimmee River Basin. The designation of a Study Area does not convey authority to establish rules and regulations throughout the 1.8 million-acre area.

PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA OVERVIEW

During the development of this document, the original 1.8 million-acre Study Area was refined and reduced to an approximately 816,000-acre Conservation Partnership Area. If approved, it is within this Conservation Partnership Area that the Service would have the ability to work with willing landowners and partners on conservation programs and agreements. Within the Conservation Partnership Area, the Service would be authorized to acquire up to 100,000 acres of less than fee title interest from willing landowners. Once 100,000 acres were acquired for the Conservation Area, any proposal to expand beyond the authorized 100,000 acres would require an additional planning effort by the Service, including public involvement, in accordance with applicable laws and policies. Participation by landowners in the Conservation Area would be voluntary. Landowners within an approved Conservation Partnership Area would be under no obligation to sell interest in their properties to the Service. The Conservation Partnership Area would provide important opportunities for conservation, while at the same time maintaining the ability of the ranching community to persist. Landowners in the proposed Conservation Partnership Area may voluntarily choose to participate, and participating lands would remain in private ownership. Private landowners who elected to participate would continue to control activities on their lands. If lands were to be acquired, they would become part of a 100,000-acre Conservation Area, which would reflect the vision, purposes, and goals of the overall project, but would be subject to the terms and conditions of whatever easement, agreements, and/or other tool(s) that would be used for less than fee title acquisition.

PROPOSED REFUGE OVERVIEW

The proposal includes an approximately 130,000-acre Conservation Focal Area within which the Service would be authorized to acquire up to 50,000 acres by working with willing landowners. Landowners within an approved Conservation Focal Area would be under no obligation to sell their properties to the Service. The preferred method of protection within the Conservation Focal Area would be fee title acquisitions, however less than fee title acquisition methods could also be employed. The Conservation Focal Area would allow the Service the flexibility to respond to changing landowner interest and acquisition opportunities within the landscape over time, but would limit the acquisition total to 50,000 acres. Any proposal to expand beyond the authorized 50,000 acres would require an additional planning effort by the Service, including public involvement, in accordance with applicable laws and policies.

Public uses proposed to continue to occur on the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR would be: hunting, fishing, environmental education and interpretation, wildlife observation and photography, research, camping, hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, and grazing. Potential public uses and activities supporting these uses would also be considered (depending on the specifics of a particular property acquired), such as all-terrain vehicle use on existing roads and trails and primitive camping to support hunting and research activities, motorized and non-motorized boating to support fishing activities, and facilities to support any of the approved uses. The Service would commit to working with the FWC to facilitate public use activities, specifically hunting and fishing.

For lands that the Service may come to own in fee title, habitat restoration and management would provide threatened, endangered, and resident wildlife with suitable habitat. Wetland drainage ditches may be filled to restore historic water storage capacity and provide breeding grounds for waterfowl. Prescribed fire would be used to remove excess vegetation and restore native plant communities. Invasive species would be controlled through manual, mechanical, and/or chemical means. Cultural and historical resources would be protected, and the public would be invited to enjoy these resources.

B. REFUGE PURPOSES, VISION, AND GOALS

Emphasizing migratory birds, listed species, and wetlands, while protecting the important fish and wildlife resources of this landscape, the listed purposes have been developed for the establishment of the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area.

"... conservation, management, and ... restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats ... for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans..." 16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(2) (National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act)

"...to conserve (A) fish or wildlife which are listed as endangered species or threatened species...or (B) plants..." 16 U.S.C. 1534 (Endangered Species Act of 1973)

"...the conservation of the wetlands of the Nation in order to maintain the public benefits they provide and to help fulfill international obligations contained in various migratory bird treaties and conventions ..." 16 U.S.C. 3901(b), 100 Stat. 3583 (Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986)

"...for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds...." 16 U.S.C. 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act)

"...for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude..." 16 U.S.C. 742f(b)(1) "...for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources...." 16 U.S.C. 742f(a)(4), (Secretarial powers to implement laws related to fish and wildlife) (Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

"...suitable for— (1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of endangered species or threatened species ..." 16 U.S.C. 460k-1 "... the Secretary ... may accept and use ... real ... property. Such acceptance may be accomplished under the terms and conditions of restrictive covenants imposed by donors ..." 16 U.S.C. 460k-2 [Refuge Recreation Act (16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4), as amended]

The vision for the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area is to: conserve, protect, and manage one of the great grassland and savanna landscapes of eastern North America for current and future generations, protecting the important wildlife and habitats of the working rural landscape of central Florida's Kissimmee River Basin that is home to abundant fish and wildlife resources; that is vital to restoration and protection of the water quality and quantity for the Everglades ecosystem; that is resilient to the effects of global climate change; and that offers outdoor recreational opportunities important to the region's economy.

Four overarching goals were developed for the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area. The goals are intentionally broad, descriptive statements of the desired future conditions. They embrace the proposed purposes and vision statement. The goals address a functional conservation landscape; habitat for fish and wildlife; water quality, quantity, and storage; and wildlife-dependent recreation, as listed.

Goal 1. Functional Conservation Landscape. The upper Everglades watershed will become a more connected and functional conservation landscape that will provide effective habitat connections between existing conservation areas and allow habitats and species to shift in response to urban development pressures and global climate change.

Goal 2. Habitat for Fish and Wildlife. The Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area will provide a wide range of quality Kissimmee River Basin habitats to support migratory birds, federal and state listed species, state designated species of special concern, and native wildlife diversity.

Goal 3. Enhanced Water Quality, Quantity, and Storage. Focusing on restoring or mimicking natural hydrologic processes, the Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area will contribute to water quality, water quantity, and water storage capacity of the upper Everglades watershed to support Everglades restoration goals and objectives and water quality and supply for central and south Florida.

Goal 4. Wildlife-dependent Recreation and Education. Refuge visitors of all abilities will enjoy opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation, while increasing knowledge of and support for conservation of the important grassland and savanna landscape of the headwaters of the Everglades.

II. Resources

A. RESOURCES TO BE PROTECTED

HABITAT AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES

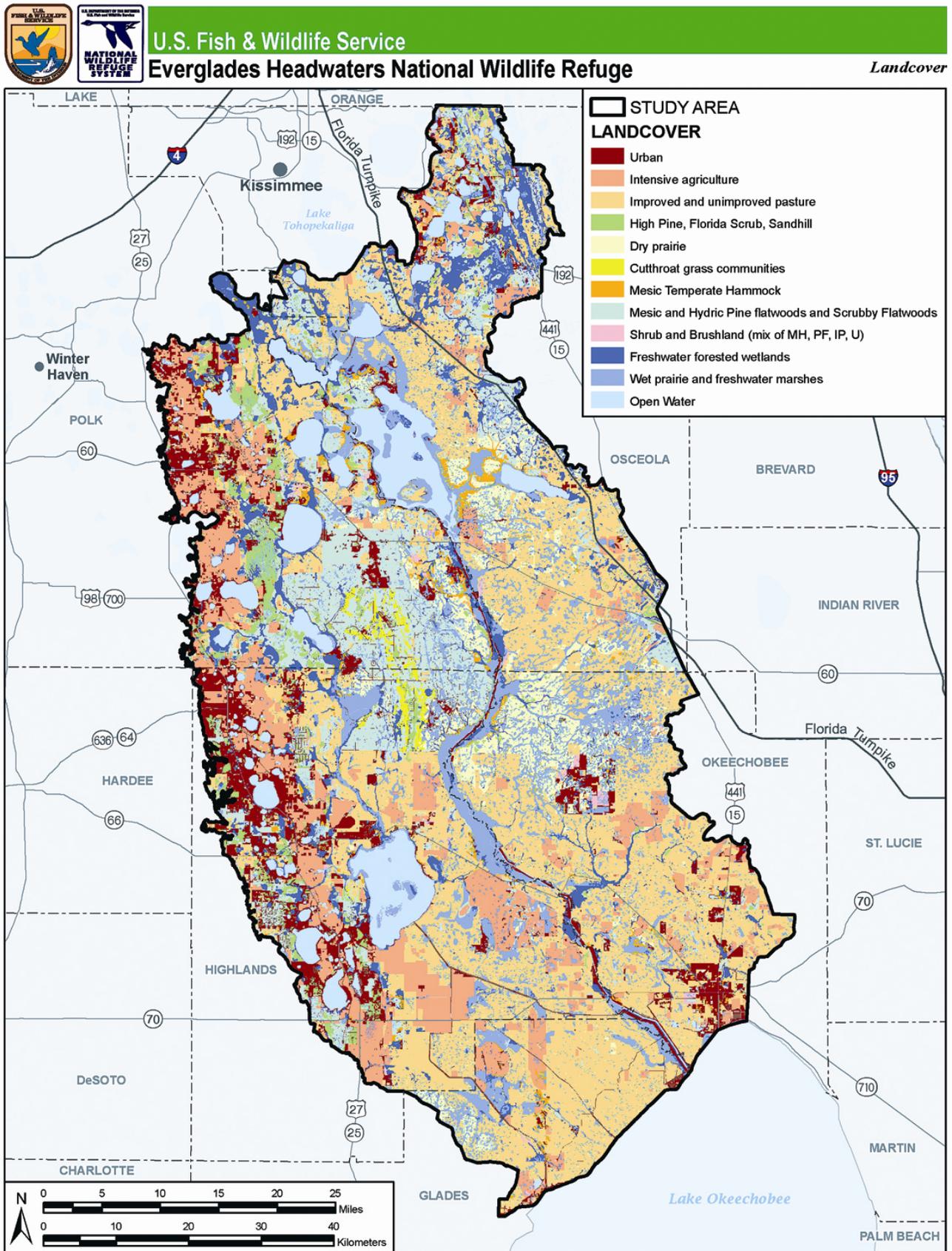
Habitat

The proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area lies in the Lake Okeechobee watershed of south-central Florida, a largely rural area that has a long history of cattle ranching, agriculture, and forestry. The Lake Okeechobee watershed includes the Kissimmee River Basin, as well as several other sub-watersheds which drain to the Gulf of Mexico, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Everglades. As further detailed in the Affected Environment chapter of the Draft EA, major habitat types in the Study Area consist of sandhill and scrub, freshwater wetlands, prairies, pine flatwoods, and pasture (Figure 2). A Conservation Focal Area of approximately 130,000 acres has been delineated, within which the Service proposes to acquire up to 50,000 acres (with a fee title acquisition focus) (Attachment 1, Figures 3a-3h). Major habitats located in the Conservation Focal Area consist of pasture (improved and unimproved), wet prairie and freshwater marshes, dry prairie, and forested wetlands (Table 1 and Figure 2). A comprehensive list of all habitat types can be found in Table 6. In addition, the Service would also seek to acquire approximately 100,000 acres of less than fee title interest as a Conservation Area from within a broader Conservation Partnership Area, which would complement existing conservation lands and the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR.

Table 1. Major habitat types and acreages within the Conservation Focal Area

Land Cover	Acres
Dry Prairie	13,414.6
Freshwater Forested Wetlands	9,181.2
High Pine, Florida Scrub, Sandhill	2,176.8
Improved and Unimproved Pasture	63,017.5
Intensive Agriculture	3,814.5
Mesic and Hydric Pine Flatwoods and Scrubby Flatwoods	10,123.4
Mesic Temperate Hammock	1,686.5
Open Water	169.6
Shrub and Brushland (mix of MH, PF, IP, U)	662.9
Urban	627.5
Wet Prairie and Freshwater Marshes	25,233.4
Total	130,107.9

Figure 2. Major habitat types within the Study Area



Wildlife

The variety of habitats found in the Conservation Partnership and Conservation Focal Areas supports a range of wildlife, including various amphibians and reptiles that tend to stay in localized areas to wide-ranging species such as Florida black bear. Numerous bird species, both resident and migratory, utilize project area habitats for foraging, resting, and breeding. Common species include white-tailed deer and a host of other mammals, including raccoon, opossum, various rodents, and bats. Project area waters provide habitat for a number of fish species, most of which are found across peninsular Florida.

Threatened and Endangered Species

As is further detailed in the Affected Environment chapter of the Draft EA, the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area provide habitat for a host of federal and state listed species. In addition, the Draft EA discussed habitat needs of several listed species and factors contributing to population declines. Listed species include most major taxonomic groups. However, plants, many of which are endemic, comprise a large proportion of the total. There are 39 federally listed or candidate plant and animal species, and 59 state listed species that may be present in the Study Area (Table 2). A more comprehensive list of at-risk species found throughout the five counties encompassing the Study Area can be found in Appendix H of the Draft EA.

Table 2. Federal and state listed threatened and endangered species likely to occur in the Study Area

Scientific Name	Common Name	Legal Status*	
		Federal	State
Invertebrates			
Highlands Tiger Beetle	<i>Cicindela highlandensis</i>	C	N
Amphibians and Reptiles			
Bluetail mole skink	<i>Eumeces egregious lividus</i>	T	T
Eastern indigo snake	<i>Drymarchon corais couperi</i>	T	T
Gopher tortoise	<i>Gopherus polyphemus</i>	N	T
Sand skink	<i>Neoseps reynoldsi</i>	T	T
Short-tailed snake	<i>Stilosoma extenuatum</i>	N	T
Birds			
Audubon's crested caracara	<i>Polyborus plancus audubonii</i>	T	T
Bald eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	N	T
Everglade snail kite	<i>Rostrhamus sociabilis</i>	E	E
Florida grasshopper	<i>Ammodramus savannarum floridanus</i>	E	E

Scientific Name	Common Name	Legal Status*	
		Federal	State
sparrow			
Florida sandhill crane	<i>Grus Canadensis pratensis</i>	N	T
Florida scrub-jay	<i>Aphelocoma coerulescens</i>	T	T
Red-cockaded woodpecker	<i>Picoides borealis</i>	E	T
Sandhill crane	<i>Grus canadensis pratensis</i>	N	T
Southeastern American kestrel	<i>Falco spaverius paulus</i>	N	T
Wood stork	<i>Mycteria americana</i>	E	E
Mammals			
Florida black bear	<i>Ursus americanus floridanus</i>	N	T
Florida bonneted bat	<i>Eumops floridanus</i>	C	E
Florida panther	<i>Puma concolor coryi</i>	E	E
West Indian manatee	<i>Trichechus manatus</i>	E	E
Plants			
American Chaffseed*	<i>Schwalbea americana</i>	E	E
Ashe's savory	<i>Calamintha ashei</i>	N	T
Avon Park harebells	<i>Crotalaria avonensis</i>	E	E
Britton's beargrass	<i>Nolina brittoniana</i>	E	E
Carter's warea	<i>Warea carteri</i>	E	E
Clasping warea	<i>Warea amplexifolia</i>	E	E
Curtiss' milkweed	<i>Asclepias curtissii</i>	N	E
Cutthroat grass	<i>Panicum abscissum</i>	N	E
Edison's St. John's-wort	<i>Hypericum edsonianum</i>	N	E
Florida bonamia	<i>Bonamia grandiflora</i>	T	E
Florida perforate cladonia	<i>Cladonia perforata</i>	E	E
Florida ziziphus	<i>Ziziphus celata</i>	E	E
Garrett's mint	<i>Dicerandra christmanii</i>	E	E
Highlands scrub	<i>Hypericum cumulicola</i>	E	E

Scientific Name	Common Name	Legal Status*	
		Federal	State
hypericum			
Lewton's polygala	<i>Polygala lewtonii</i>	E	E
Nodding pinweed	<i>Lechea cernua</i>	N	T
Papery whitlow-wort	<i>Paronychia chartacea ssp. chartacea</i>	T	E
Pine pinweed	<i>Lechea divaricata</i>	N	E
Pygmy fringe-tree	<i>Chionanthus pygmaeus</i>	E	E
Sandlace	<i>Polygonella myriophylla</i>	E	E
Scrub blazing star	<i>Liatris ohlingerae</i>	E	E
Scrub bluestem	<i>Schizachyrium niveum</i>	N	E
Scrub buckwheat	<i>Eriogonum longifolium var. gnaphalifolium</i>	T	E
Scrub lupine	<i>Lupinus aridorum</i>	E	E
Scrub mint	<i>Dicerandra frutescens</i>	E	E
Scrub pigeon-wing	<i>Clitoria fragrans</i>	T	E
Scrub plum	<i>Prunus geniculata</i>	E	E
Scrub stylisma	<i>Stylisma abdita</i>	N	E
Scrub willow	<i>Salix floridana</i>	N	E
Short-leaved rosemary	<i>Conrandina brevifolia</i>	E	E
Wedge-leaved button snakeroot	<i>Eryngium cuneifolium</i>	E	E
Wide leaf warea	<i>Warea amplexifolia</i>	E	E
Wireweed	<i>Polygonella basiramia</i>	E	E
Yellow star anise	<i>Illicium parviflorum</i>	N	E

* Federal and State Listings:

E = Endangered, T = Threatened, N = Not Listed, C = Candidate for Listing

*note: extirpated from the Study Area

THREATS TO THE RESOURCES

Resources that would benefit from increased protection under the proposed action are faced with the following major threats, all of which are likely to increase in scope and intensity over the next decades.

Habitat Fragmentation and Urban Development

Habitat loss continues to negatively impact Florida's wildlife, including numerous federal and state-listed species. Urban and suburban development and other wholesale land clearing are by far the major threats to this area. Existing roadways traverse wildlife corridors and are a leading mortality factor for wide ranging species such as the Florida panther and Florida black bear. The development and expansion of these roadways would create further barriers to wildlife movements. Further, habitat fragmentation and urban development also help to spread invasive species, negatively impacting native wildlife and habitats. The proposal would protect key habitat and habitat connections in an effort to address the threats associated with habitat fragmentation and urban development.

Altered Ecological Processes

Alterations of hydrology and fire regimes within the Everglades ecosystem are among the most harmful and damaging threats facing the Everglades headwaters. Stream channelization, wetland modification and drainage, and sediment and nutrient loading negatively impact water quality, water quantity, and water delivery throughout the ecosystem. Many of the habitat types found throughout the Conservation Partnership Area are dependent on frequent low-intensity lightning-caused fires. Fire suppression has led to changes in plant communities, creating habitat unsuitable for the threatened and endangered plants and animals that require a frequent fire regime. Altered ecological processes also help spread invasive species, negatively impacting native wildlife and habitats. The proposal would restore or mimic natural processes to minimize the impacts from altered ecological processes.

Impacts from Global Climate Change

This proposal has been developed in part to address conservation needs of wildlife in southern Florida that may be highly impacted by the effects of global climate change. As sea levels rise, temperatures increase, and precipitation decreases, lands in the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area would be key to the survival and management of many of Florida's rare, threatened, and endangered species. Further, impacts from climate change would likely increase the spread of invasive species, negatively impacting native wildlife and habitats. The proposal would begin to address some of the impacts associated with climate change, increasing resiliency of the landscape and assisting in wildlife response to climate change and associated stressors.

B. RELATIONSHIP OF PROJECT TO LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Numerous landscape level conservation programs, plans, and initiatives apply to the Kissimmee River Basin area. The proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area would contribute to and complement many of these, including the Peninsular Florida Landscape Conservation Cooperative, conservation and mitigation banks, national and international conservation plans and initiatives (including Partners-in-Flight Peninsular Florida Bird Conservation Plan; NRCS Wetlands Reserve Program, USDA; and America's Great Outdoors Initiative), and regional conservation plans and initiatives (including federal recovery plans, the State Wildlife Action Plan, Florida's Endangered and Threatened Species Management and Conservation Plan, Florida Forever Program, Critical Lands and Waters Identification Project, Avon Park Air Force Range Joint Land Use

Study, Kissimmee River Restoration Project, South Florida Water Management District General Management Plan, Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program, State of the Scrub, Highlands County Comprehensive Plan, Polk County Environmental Lands Program, Osceola County Environmental Lands Conservation Program, and Green Horizon Land Trust).

PENINSULAR FLORIDA LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION COOPERATIVE

The proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area are within the Peninsular Florida Landscape Conservation Cooperative's (LCC) area of interest. Comprising one of the 16 delineated LCCs in the continental United States, the Service's Peninsular Florida LCC includes several important areas with protective designations, including Ocala National Forest, Everglades National Park, Welaka National Fish Hatchery, and numerous national wildlife refuges. Various other local, state, and federal conservation areas are also located within the Peninsular Florida LCC. The Peninsular Florida LCC spans temperate and subtropical climates, numerous physiographic districts, and a wide variety of habitats. Barrier islands, xeric scrub, pine flatwoods, freshwater marshes, lakes, streams, springs, mixed hardwood/pine forests, cypress swamps and domes, dry prairies, maritime forests, hardwood hammocks, estuarine marshes, pine rocklands, sandhill woodlands, coastal strands, sawgrass prairies, sloughs, and tree islands of the Peninsular Florida LCC serve a variety of native wildlife, including over 100 federally listed species, as well as interjurisdictional fishes, neotropical migratory birds, nongame waterbirds, and waterfowl.

The biggest problem facing the landscape of the Peninsular Florida LCC is the loss of habitat through direct destruction and fragmentation, as well as through impacts from human activities. The predominant stresses to habitats found throughout the Peninsular Florida LCC are human population growth, tourism, agriculture, silviculture, mining, water channelization, urbanization, aquifer depletion, fire suppression, exotic species, nonpoint source pollution, and point source pollution. The actions of the Peninsular Florida LCC are guided by two categories: trust resources and management issues. The trust resources include: migratory birds, anadromous fish, endangered species, and marine mammals. The management issues focus on habitat protection and management, habitat restoration, contaminants, regulatory compliance, law enforcement, and biodiversity. The proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area would seek to address the threats and problems found within this landscape by working with the partners to develop a more functional conservation landscape within the Kissimmee River Basin.

CONSERVATION AND MITIGATION BANKS

Conservation banks are permanently protected lands that contain natural resource values. These lands are conserved and permanently managed for species that are endangered, threatened, candidates for listing, or are species-at-risk. Conservation banks function to offset adverse impacts to these species that occurred elsewhere, sometimes referred to as off-site mitigation. In exchange for permanently protecting the land and managing it for these species, the Service approves a specified number of habitat or species credits that bank owners may sell. Developers or other project proponents who need to compensate for the adverse impacts their projects have on species may purchase the credits from conservation bank owners to mitigate their impacts. Conservation banking offers opportunities for a variety of landowners through conservation, enhancement, restoration and/or establishment of habitat for species. Lands used for ranching, farming, and timber operations or similar agricultural purposes can function as conservation banks if they are managed as habitat for species. Degraded habitat, such as retired croplands or orchards, may be restored. Linear areas or corridors, such as stretches of streams and their associated riparian habitat that link populations of species, may also qualify as conservation banks. Currently, there are two skink and scrub-jay

conservation banks approved within the Study Area totaling approximately 630 acres. Five additional conservation banks are currently in negotiations, which total another 1,000 acres.

A mitigation bank is a wetland, stream, or other aquatic resource area that has been restored, established, enhanced, or (in certain circumstances) preserved for the purpose of providing compensation for unavoidable impacts to aquatic resources permitted under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act or a similar state or local wetland regulation. Mitigation banks require a formal agreement between the bank owners and regulators establishing liability, performance standards, management and monitoring requirements, and the terms of bank credit approval. They also identify a geographic area (service area) in which permitted impacts can be compensated for at a given bank. The value of a bank is defined in "compensatory mitigation credits." The bank's agreement identifies the number of credits available for sale and requires the use of ecological assessment techniques to certify that those credits provide the required ecological functions. Mitigation banks are a form of "third-party" compensatory mitigation, in which the responsibility for compensatory mitigation implementation and success is assumed by a party other than the permittee. At this time, there is one mitigation bank within the Study Area: the Split Oak Forest Wetland mitigation bank straddles the border between Osceola and Orange Counties. The bank is approximately 1,733 acres, with about 728 acres within the Study Area. Further, eight mitigation bank service areas include portions of the northern and eastern parts of the Study Area.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION PLANS AND INITIATIVES

Multiple partnerships have been developed among government and private entities to address the environmental problems affecting regions. A large amount of conservation and protection information helps define the role of the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area at the local, national, international, and ecosystem levels. Conservation initiatives include broad-scale planning and cooperation between affected parties to address declining trends of natural, physical, social, and economic environments. The proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area would support key national and international conservation plans and initiatives, including the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, which includes the Partners-in-Flight (PIF) Bird Conservation Plan; the Wetlands Reserve Program; and the America's Great Outdoors Initiative. Further, the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area and the Wetlands Reserve Program would work together to support conservation and restoration throughout the greater Everglades landscape.

North American Bird Conservation Initiative

Started in 1999, the North American Bird Conservation Initiative is a coalition of government agencies, private organizations, academic institutions, and private industry leaders in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, working to ensure the long-term health of North America's native bird populations by fostering an integrated approach to bird conservation to benefit all birds in all habitats. The four international and national bird initiatives include the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Partners-in-Flight, Waterbird Conservation for the Americas, and the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan. The proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area would play a role in supporting these plans.

Partners-In-Flight (PIF) Bird Conservation Plan

Managed as part of the PIF Bird Conservation Plan, the peninsular Florida physiographic area represents a scientifically based land bird conservation planning effort that ensures long-term maintenance of healthy populations of native land birds, primarily nongame land birds. Nongame

land birds have been vastly under-represented in conservation efforts, and many are exhibiting significant declines. The PIF Bird Conservation Plan is voluntary and non-regulatory, and focuses on relatively common species in areas where conservation actions can be most effective, rather than the frequent local emphasis on rare and peripheral populations. About 140,000 acres of public conservation lands are included in the peninsular Florida physiographic area, contributing to PIF goals and objectives (PIF 2009). The proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area would help support these goals and objectives through the conservation and connection of additional habitat to support a variety of bird species.

Wetlands Reserve Program

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. The USDA's NRCS provides technical and financial support to help landowners with their wetland restoration efforts. The NRCS goal is to achieve the greatest wetland functions and values, along with optimum wildlife habitat, on every acre enrolled in the program. This program offers landowners an opportunity to establish long-term conservation and wildlife practices and protection. NRCS is actively engaged in restoring wetlands in the greater Everglades landscape through the WRP.

America's Great Outdoors Initiative

President Obama launched the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative to develop a 21st Century conservation and recreation agenda for our nation. The AGO Initiative takes as its premise that lasting conservation solutions should rise from the American people – that the protection of our natural heritage is a non-partisan objective shared by all Americans. The vision of the AGO Initiative involves connecting Americans to the great outdoors, conserving and restoring America's great outdoors, and working together for America's great outdoors. The AGO Initiative seeks to empower all Americans—citizens, young people, and representatives of community groups; the private sector; nonprofit organizations; and local, state, and tribal governments—to share in the responsibility to conserve, restore, and provide better access to our lands and waters in order to leave a healthy, vibrant outdoor legacy for generations yet to come. The proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area serve the conservation initiative outlined by the AGO Initiative. (For more information about the AGO Initiative, please visit: <http://americasgreatoutdoors.gov/>.)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION PLANS AND INITIATIVES

The proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area would contribute to and complement a variety of regional conservation plans and initiatives, including recovery plans for federally listed species, the State Wildlife Action Plan, Florida's Endangered and Threatened Species Management and Conservation Plan, Florida Forever Program, Critical Lands and Waters Identification Project, Avon Park Air Force Range Joint Land Use Study, Kissimmee River Restoration Project, South Florida Water Management District General Management Plan, Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program, State of the Scrub, Highlands County Comprehensive Plan, Polk County Environmental Lands Program, Osceola County Environmental Lands Conservation Program, and Green Horizon Land Trust.

Federal Recovery Plans

The 1999 South Florida Multi-Species Recovery Plan is one of the first recovery strategies specifically designed to meet the needs of multiple species that do not occupy similar habitats. The proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area play a role in the recovery many of the species

listed in the Multi-species Recovery Plan, including Florida ziziphus (*Ziziphus celata*), Garrett's mint (*Dicerandra christmanii*), scrub lupine (*Lupinus aridorum*); Florida scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*), Everglades snail kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis plumbeus*), Florida grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum floridanus*), sand skink (*Neoseps reynoldsi*), and bluetail mole skink (*Eumeces egregious lividus*). Other species recovery plans that would be supported by the protection of lands include, Audubon's crested caracara (USFWS 1989), Eastern indigo snake (USFWS 1982), Florida panther (USFWS 2008), and wood stork (USFWS 1997).

State Wildlife Action Plan

As a requirement for participating in the Federal State Wildlife Grants Program, each state and territory created a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy for conservation of a broad array of fish and wildlife. Throughout the development process, the objectives were to identify species of greatest conservation need and their habitats and to develop high-priority conservation actions to abate problems for those species and habitats. These objectives have been developed in a prudent effort to prevent declines before species become imperiled, thereby saving millions of tax dollars. In addition, the matching requirement has encouraged partnerships and cooperation among conservation partners. To meet the intent of the Service's State Wildlife Grants Program, the FWC created Florida's Wildlife Legacy (FWL) Initiative.

The goal of the FWL Initiative was to develop a strategic vision for conserving all of Florida's wildlife. Florida's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (FCWCS) was completed and approved in 2005. The FCWCS emphasizes the building of partnerships with other agencies and the private sector, uses a habitat-based conservation approach, incorporates a broad definition of wildlife (to include invertebrates, aquatic species, and other species), and favors non-regulatory methods in its effort to reach conservation goals and objectives. The FCWCS identifies 118 state endangered, threatened, and species of special concern. Twenty-four projects have been identified in the FCWCS specific to interior scrub and sandhill taxa that utilize the refuge, including sand swimming reptiles and the Florida scrub-jay (FWC 2005). The proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area would protect and manage important scrub and other habitats identified as being threatened in the FCWCS..

Florida's Endangered and Threatened Species Management and Conservation Plan

Florida's Endangered and Threatened Species Management and Conservation Plan and annual Progress Report provide management and conservation guidance as required under Section 5 of the Florida Endangered and Threatened Species Act of 1977 [372.072, Florida Statutes (F.S.)]. The Act requires the preparation of an initial plan, and any subsequent revisions regarding the management and conservation of endangered and threatened species to be submitted annually. It addresses research and management priorities and FWC's citizen's awareness program, and it includes a progress report on FWC's actions for listed species. Many state listed species are known to occur on the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area, including Florida mouse (*Podomys floridanus*), Florida gopher frog (*Rana capito*) gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*), Florida scrub lizard (*Sceloporus woodi*), black bear (*Ursus americana*), cutthroat grass (*Panicum abscissum*), scrub stylisma (*Stylisma abdita*), nodding pinweed (*Lechea cernua*), scrub bay (*Persea humilis*), and Curtiss' milkweed (*Asclepias curtissii*).

Florida Forever Program

The Florida Forever Program, created by the Florida Legislature in 1999, follows in the footsteps of earlier successful land acquisition programs in the State of Florida by continuing to focus land

acquisition efforts in several resource categories including natural communities, forest resources, plants, fish and wildlife, freshwater supplies, coastal resources, geologic features, historical resources, and outdoor recreational resources. Lands have been proposed for acquisition in the Florida Forever Program because of outstanding natural resources, opportunity for natural resources-based recreation, or historic and archaeological resources. Some of the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and conservation easement lands are likely targeted for acquisition by Florida Forever. If the Service protects these lands, it would allow Florida Forever to direct its limited resources to other sites urgently needing protection, the reciprocal also being true.

Critical Lands and Waters Identification Project

The Critical Lands and Waters Identification Project (CLIP) is the Florida Century Commission's flagship project led by Thomas Hctor, Ph.D., of the GeoPlan Center at the University of Florida and Jonathan Oetting of FNAI at Florida State University. CLIP uses science and the best available statewide spatial data to depict Florida's critical environmental resources in a database that can be used as a decision-support tool for collaborative statewide and regional conservation and land use planning to envision and ensure the sustainability of Florida's green infrastructure and vital ecosystem services (Century Commission for a Sustainable Florida 2010). The use of CLIP data was instrumental in the initial development of this proposal.

CLIP science recommendations will be vetted with rural landowners, state agencies, regional planning councils, and other stakeholders through the Cooperative Conservation Blueprint Initiative, led by FWC in partnership with the Century Commission and the Cooperative Conservation Blueprint steering committee. The goal is to develop a strategic plan for land and water conservation in Florida, using a new and broader range of conservation incentives with a shared view of the priorities.

Avon Park Air Force Range Joint Land Use Study

The Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) is a collaboration with local cities and counties that includes portions of Polk, Osceola, Highlands, and Okeechobee Counties and the cities of Avon Park, Frostproof, and Sebring. The JLUS program encourages cooperative land use planning between military installations and the adjacent communities so future community growth and development are compatible with the training and operational missions of the installation. The JLUS is studying the planned land uses in the area that surround the range, and the military training needs of the armed forces, to determine their compatibility. It is designed to protect public health, safety, and welfare, while safeguarding the ability of the military services and homeland security agencies to provide needed training. A common recommendation for all counties and cities from this study includes developing policies to protect critical areas supporting military readiness and/or environmental conservation, including partnering opportunities with the U.S. Air Force, The Nature Conservancy, Florida Forever, Florida Defense Alliance, South Florida Water Management District, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and federal agencies to purchase conservation lands. As part of this program, potential funding sources should be identified and alternative mechanisms to fee simple purchase explored, such as restrictive use easements, aviation easements, land exchanges, and transfer of development rights.

Kissimmee River Restoration Project

In 1992, the U.S. Congress authorized the Water Resources Development Act to implement the Kissimmee River Restoration project, a cost-shared partnership between SFWMD and the USACE. Scheduled for completion in 2015, the Kissimmee River Restoration Project is targeted to restore over 40 square miles of the river/floodplain ecosystem, including 43 miles of meandering river channel and 27,000 acres of wetlands (<http://www.ces.fau.edu/education/riverwoods/kissimmee>).

South Florida Water Management District General Management Plan

The Lake Marion/Reedy Creek Management Area is a Save Our Rivers project that lists management goals and objectives, provides historic and current site information, and describes specific management issues and activities relating to natural resources, public use, and project administration from 2005 through 2010. Natural resource management of Lake Marion/Reedy Creek Management Area includes maintenance of natural vegetative communities, wildlife management, and the protection of threatened and endangered species. Current natural resource management activities focus on prescribed fire, vegetation management, and forest management, including exotic plant control, prescribed burning, and environmental restoration of these scrub sites (SFWMD 2005). Protection of the proposed lands would support some of the water quality and quantity conservation goals and objectives identified in the SFWMD plan.

Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program

In May 2007, the Florida legislature passed the Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program (NEEPP), which expanded the existing Lake Okeechobee Protection Act (LOPA) to include Caloosahatchee and the St. Lucie Rivers and Estuaries. The program promotes a comprehensive, interconnected watershed approach to protecting these systems and recognizes the importance and connectivity of the entire Everglades ecosystem from the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes south to Florida Bay. The Florida legislation charged the SFWMD, the FDEP, and the FDACS to effectively coordinate in order to create the NEEPP, with the primary goal to restore and protect surface water resources by addressing water quality, quantity, and the timing and distribution of water to the natural system. Refuge-managed units would play a role in the surface water quality objectives identified through NEEPP. The proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area would benefit NEEPP.

State of the Scrub

“*State of the Scrub*” by Turner et al. (2006) represents the most current information on conservation progress, management responsibilities, and land acquisition priorities for imperiled species of Florida’s Lake Wales Ridge. The report collates and synthesizes data on 36 of the ecosystem’s rare and endemic species (Turner et al. 2006) and evaluates the success of land acquisition efforts in reducing threats to imperiled species using a new quantitative approach (Turner et al. 2006). In addition, the report estimates the effectiveness of the reserve network that is likely to result from planned and future acquisitions (Turner et al. 2006). The State of the Scrub identifies several species on the Lake Wales Ridge that merit special attention from land managers, and quantification of the importance of each site to each of the rare species is provided, thereby highlighting those sites that are important to the survival of particular species (Turner et al. 2006). Finally, high-priority sites are determined for future acquisition based on their biological value and cost-effectiveness (Turner et al. 2006). The proposed areas targeted for protection by the Service include several sites that are identified in “State of the Scrub” for acquisition.

Highlands County Comprehensive Plan

Highlands County is a major contributor of natural area acquisition and protection in Highlands County, primarily through the vision and implementation of the Highlands County Comprehensive Plan. The Highlands County Comprehensive Plan identifies acquisition of natural resources including scrub and sandhill habitats (xeric habitats); endemic populations of threatened or endangered species, including species of special concern; wetlands and cutthroat seeps, and un-canalized freshwater estuaries feeding the lakes; important aquifer recharge functions; and unique scenic or natural resources through the plan’s Natural Resources Element utilizing the Conservation Trust

Fund account. Acquisition can be in the form of fee purchase, easements, donations, and other less than fee mechanisms of natural resources listed above for the enhancement, required maintenance, and/or management of publicly owned conservation-valued lands, as determined by the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners (Board). The Conservation Trust Fund is funded through voluntary contributions, mitigation or impact fees, matching grants, and referendum while other sources of funding as recommended by the Highlands County Natural Resources Advisory Commission (NRAC) are considered by the Board. NRAC was established in 1991 by the Board whose members include 11 full-time residents of Highlands County, including environmental, developmental, agricultural, professional, and at-large representatives, who function as an advisory body to the Board on matters of natural resource protection, environmental clearance, and the stewardship of conservation efforts by, in, and for Highlands County.

Polk County Environmental Lands Program

Polk County is a major contributor of natural area protection, acquiring more than 12,000 acres of diverse lands in the county through the Polk County Environmental Lands Program (Program). The Program accepts site nominations and then gathers pertinent information for each nomination. The Environmental Lands Criteria are used by the County's Technical Advisory Group and Conservation Land Acquisition Selection Advisory Committee (CLASAC) to rank sites and recommendations for or against acquisition of sites are forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) for consideration and approval. Costs for acquisition are shared with partners whenever possible. Once acquired, interim management begins and may include site security, debris removal, exotic species removal, and creation of visitor service amenities. A final management plan for each site is finalized and adopted by the BoCC based on evaluations of nature-based recreation opportunities and resource inventories to ensure compatibility with the site, and through input received via public review, CLASAC, and Polk County staff. Acquisition, management, and restoration of environmentally sensitive lands, water resources, and important wildlife habitat in Polk County are funded through a 1994 bond referendum utilizing ad valorem taxes (0.2 million) administered over a 20-year life span.

Osceola County Environmental Lands Conservation Program

Osceola County established the Environmental Lands Conservation Program to acquire and manage environmentally significant lands with a voter-endorsed ad valorem funding source. This property tax enables the program to issue bonds for the purchase of land for water resource protection, wildlife habitat, public green space and resource-based passive recreation. A Land Conservation Advisory Board ranks proposed properties for possible acquisition. It is comprised of nine members from the community representing such areas as, agriculture, business, education, the environment, government, civic organizations and the cities of Kissimmee and St. Cloud. An environmental lands coordinator assists the Land Conservation Advisory Board, county commissioners, county manager and staff with the responsibilities of acquiring and managing environmentally significant lands for public use in Osceola County. To begin acquiring and protecting natural lands and water resources, the process starts with a site nomination form, which is available from the environmental lands coordinator. The completed form will then be reviewed by the Land Conservation Advisory Board for consideration for purchase as an environmentally significant site.

Green Horizon Land Trust

The Green Horizon Land Trust was created to preserve environmentally valuable or sensitive lands and open space in and around the central Florida ridge systems for the benefit of the general public, and to educate the public as to the importance of such lands and their preservation. Green Horizon

is a local, nonprofit, 501(C)(3) Florida corporation incorporated in 1991 and governed by a Board of Directors consisting of local individuals from such diverse fields as business, law, banking, real estate, land planning, and conservation. Green Horizon uses a variety of creative methods to achieve its land conservation goals and to financially benefit donors. Conservation may be accomplished through outright purchases, bargain sales, donations, conservation easements, limited development agreements or similar techniques as landowners may be able to take advantage of income, estate, or property tax benefits that can help make land conservation affordable. The trust has acquired thousands of acres, mostly in Polk, Osceola, and Citrus Counties, and placed them in preservation for protection of habitat and for the enjoyment of the public in perpetuity. Some lands are managed directly by Green Horizon, but many have been acquired by donation or purchase then placed in the stewardship of cities, counties or Florida water management districts for the benefit of the public. With the exception of properties that are inaccessible by roads, all are planned to be or are currently open to the public for low impact recreation such as hiking, biking, canoeing, bird watching, or environmental education (Green Horizon Land Trust 2009). The proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area would complement Green Horizon protection efforts.

C. PARTNERSHIP EFFORTS/RELATED RESOURCES

Partnerships are integral to the conservation of this landscape. The protection and conservation of wildlife habitats and working landscapes is an issue of concern in the region. During the public scoping and conversations with landowners and other conservation partners for this proposal, the Service recognized that all interested parties would have an enhanced ability to protect and manage wildlife and habitats in the Kissimmee basin. Partners often assist with activities including environmental education and interpretive programs, land acquisition, public relations, habitat evaluations, species inventories, nest site and wildlife monitoring, and habitat restoration. For that reason, the Service recognizes the need to collaborate with other conservation organizations in the region and is facilitating a Greater Everglades Partnership Initiative.

Through this initiative, the Service would work to combine conservation efforts with those of many partners, including partners yet to be identified. Several federal and state agencies serve as key partners in this landscape, including Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA); Avon Park Air Force Range, U.S. Air Force; Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC); Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS); Florida Division of Forestry (FDOF); Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP); Florida Division of State Lands, FDEP; and South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). Figure 1 depicts current conservation lands and waters within the Study Area. Many of our partners already own or have future plans to protect lands in the project area through conservation or agricultural easements. Still others have completed on-the-ground habitat restoration projects throughout the Kissimmee River Basin. These partners use their individual mission statements to focus protection and restoration efforts. Taken together, those mission statements cover the protection of state and federal threatened and endangered species, rare habitats, prairie and flatwoods habitats, ranchlands, and recreational areas that have been identified through the scoping process as being important to the long-term ecological health, economy, and way of life of the region.

RELATIONSHIP TO STATE WILDLIFE AGENCY

A provision of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, and subsequent agency policy, is that the Service shall ensure timely and effective cooperation and collaboration with other state fish and game agencies during the course of acquiring and managing refuges. State wildlife management areas and national wildlife refuges provide the foundation for the protection of species, and contribute to the overall health and sustainment of fish and wildlife species in the State of Florida.

Key State conservation agencies in this landscape include the FWC, FDOF, FDACS, FDEP, SFWMD, and Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD).

Management of state fish and wildlife resources is administered by FWC, FDACS, and FDEP for the long-term well-being and benefit of people. FWC protects and manages habitats for more than 575 species of wildlife, more than 200 species of freshwater fish, and more than 500 native species of saltwater fish; while balancing these species' needs with the needs of nearly 19 million residents (U.S. Census Bureau 2011) and the 81 million annual visitors (FDOT 2010) who share the land and water with Florida's wildlife.

The FWC responsibilities include:

- Law Enforcement – to protect fish and wildlife, keep waterways safe for millions of boaters, and cooperate with other law enforcement agencies providing homeland security.
- Research – to provide information for the FWC and others to make management decisions based on the best science available involving fish and wildlife populations, habitat issues, and the human-dimension aspects of conservation.
- Management – to manage the state's fish and wildlife resources based on the latest scientific data to conserve some of the most complex and delicate ecosystems in the world along with a wide diversity of species.
- Outreach – to communicate with a variety of audiences to encourage participation and responsible citizenship and stewardship of the state's natural resources.

FWC, FDACS, and FDEP manage state lands and waters. FWC directly manages 1.4 million acres and participates with other public land managers on 2.9 million acres and 220,000 acres of private lands for recreation and conservation purposes. FDEP manages 150 state parks covering nearly 0.6 million acres and 57 coastal and aquatic managed areas, totaling over 5 million acres of submerged lands and coastal uplands.

FDOF manages over 1 million acres of state forests in Florida for multiple public uses including timber, recreation, and wildlife habitat. Operating from 15 field units throughout the state, FDOF maintains a mission to protect and manage the forest resources of Florida, ensuring that they are available for future generations. Wildfire prevention and suppression are key components in FDOF's efforts.

The SFWMD and SWFWMD are two of five state water management agencies. The districts are responsible for water management, water supply, and the conservation and protection of water resources, while providing environmental, economic, and recreational benefits in all or part of 32 south and southwest Florida counties. Together, the SFWMD and SWFWMD along with their partners manage more than 1.05 million acres (SFWMD 2011) for the purposes of protecting, supplying, and conserving the region's water resources.

The state's participation and contribution throughout this land protection process will provide for ongoing opportunities and open dialogue to improve the ecological sustainment of fish and wildlife in the State of Florida.

RELATIONSHIP TO TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

Native American tribes are also important partners in the greater Everglades landscape. The Service also works with the tribes to ensure timely and effective cooperation and collaboration. During this planning process, the Service contacted several Native American tribes with interest in this

landscape: Seminole Tribe of Florida; Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida; Seminole Nation of Oklahoma; Muscogee (Creek) Nation; and Poarch Band of Creeks.

The Service met with the Seminole Tribe of Florida during this planning process to develop an understanding of the Seminole Tribe of Florida's concerns, including those related to cultural and water resources. The Seminole Tribe of Florida administers a robust tribal government, operates various tourist and other enterprises, and supports the local economy and employment base. The Study Area for the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area encompasses numerous sites of interest to the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Sites that might be encountered within the proposed 50,000-acre refuge include green corn dance sites, villages, camps, cemeteries, and historic landscapes, such as the Okeechobee Battlefield. Further, the Brighton Reservation of the Seminole Tribe of Florida is located in Glades County, adjacent to the Study Area. One issue of concern to the Seminole Tribe of Florida is the protection and maintenance of water rights for the tribe.

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation and the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida have also expressed interest in the project. The Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation has requested copies of the Draft LPP and Draft EA when available for review. The Miccosukee Tribe's main interest appears related to tribal cattle grazing lands in Highlands County and burial sites.

III. Land Protection Strategy

A. ACTION AND OBJECTIVES

LAND PROTECTION AREA

The land protection area for the Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area has a boundary of up to approximately 150,000 acres within the Kissimmee River Basin (Attachment 1, Figure 3a). The Service concludes that acquiring identified habitat areas through Alternative C of the Draft EA over time would provide for the protection of imperiled species, enhance habitat connectivity, protect water resources, and mitigate the effects of global climate change. It would also help many of the more common game and nongame species. Additionally, this habitat complex would provide ample opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation, new and dynamic partnerships, and scientific research.

LAND USE/LAND COVER

Table 3 summarizes the general types and amounts of land use/land cover in the project area. In general, the land is a mix of wet and dry prairies, sandhill and scrub, pine flatwoods, various wetlands, ranchland, silviculture (tree farming) land, and open water. Numerous habitats could benefit from large-scale management (Figure 2).

Table 3. Land use/land cover acreages in the Study Area

LAND COVER	PROTECTED	UNPROTECTED	TOTAL
Cutthroat Grass Communities	11025.14831	35.29406212	11060.44237
Dry Prairie	48150.97319	34451.69118	82602.66437
Freshwater Forested Wetlands	47893.79642	81623.25912	129517.0555
High Pine, Florida Scrub, Sandhill	23548.83463	26073.72713	49622.56176
Improved and Unimproved Pasture	47991.69564	536487.8518	584479.5474
Intensive Agriculture	2952.517172	199254.1753	202206.6924
Mesic and Hydric Pine Flatwoods and Scrubby Flatwoods	103715.7486	76837.07646	180552.825
Mesic Temperate Hammock	11910.91234	18441.76734	30352.67968
Open Water	4302.101419	136224.385	140526.4864
Shrub and Brushland (mix of MH, PF, IP, U)	1315.609584	8168.007347	9483.616931
Urban	20172.65988	135357.3496	155530.0095
Wet Prairie and Freshwater Marshes	98252.21158	148938.7003	247190.9118
TOTAL	421,232.2087	1,401,893.285	1,823,125.493

B. LAND PROTECTION PRIORITIES

The Service's Proposed Action (Alternative C) would result in the protection of approximately 150,000 acres, using a combination of fee title acquisitions and less than fee title acquisitions (e.g., conservation easements and cooperative agreements) from willing sellers. The Service believes these are the minimum interests necessary to conserve and protect the fish and wildlife resources in the proposed area.

Private lands have been prioritized for acquisition using the listed criteria.

- Landscape connectivity and wildlife corridors
- Priority habitats for threatened and endangered species
- Restoration of wetlands and water quality in the Everglades watershed
- Opportunities for wildlife dependent recreation and education

Based on a GIS-based land prioritization analysis (Draft EA, Appendix F), three categories of land acquisition have been established: high, medium, and low. These priority ranks are high (Tier I), medium (Tier II), and low (Tier III). However, attributes of each group may increase the suitability for increasing a lower ranked priority group to a higher ranked priority group [e.g., a property needing habitat restoration (Tier III) may provide a critical habitat linkage after restoration, thus warranting elevating it to a Tier I or II rating]. In addition to the initial rank scoring of an individual property, a site visit and best professional judgment or management assessment would be used to assure properties receive appropriate consideration. A description of the lands within each of the three priority groups is given below. Specific parcels and group assignments are detailed in Attachment 1. Table 6 in Attachment 1 summarizes the Service's land protection priorities and proposed methods of acquisition. Figures 3a-3h (Attachment 1) detail the parcels included in the approximately 130,000-acre Conservation Focal Area, Figures 4a-4g (Attachment 1) shows the overall priority rankings for the 130,000-acre Conservation Focal Area, and Figure 5 (Attachment 1) shows the general priorities across the landscape.

TIER I GROUP

Lands identified in the Tier I group contain the higher ranked habitats based on our land prioritization model (Draft EA, Appendix F). One of the key attributes of the Tier I Group is that habitats are relatively pristine and ecologically intact. Examples of this habitat would be intact dry prairie or scrub habitat. Wetlands that have not been significantly altered would also be found within this group. Management is needed to maintain these habitats, but little is required for habitat restoration. Priority habitats and species are known to occur on these parcels. A second key attribute of this group is that it is adjacent to and increases connectivity of the existing conservation landscape. The combination of connectivity and quality of habitats provide the basis for inclusion in this priority group.

TIER II GROUP

Lands identified in the Tier II Group contain the medium ranked habitats based on our land prioritization model. This group may have high habitat value, but does not fully contribute to connectivity between conservation lands, or the inverse may be true. Also, habitats may be of high quality, being mostly intact but in need of some restoration activities. Examples of this habitat in this group would be the same as for the Tier I Group, but may include semi-improved pasture, degraded dry prairie, or overgrown scrub. Key attributes of the Tier II Group are that there is considerable opportunity for habitat restoration activities that require minimal activity (e.g., filling of surface ditches, reintroducing fire), and that connectivity with conservation lands can be demonstrated.

TIER III GROUP

Lands identified in the Tier III Group contain lesser amounts of habitat quality and connectivity based on our land prioritization model. However, restoration potential of this habitat is much higher with this group than with the other two groups. Habitats may be the same as the other groups, but may appear further degraded. Lack of site-specific scientific data may also be responsible for Tier III rating. Examples may be more intensive wetland drainage, or shifts in plant communities due to the lack of fire. One of the habitats found in greater quantities than the other groups is improved pasture. While improved pasture provides habitat for some imperiled species, such as Audubon's crested caracara, restoration of improved pasture would also provide habitat for other species, such as Florida grasshopper sparrow and Everglades snail kite. As such, the Tier III Group provides the greatest potential to not only restore habitat, but also to improve the quality of the overall landscape. It should be noted that all three of these priority groups have been ranked higher (according to our prioritization model) than other habitats found throughout the project area, thus all should be considered as suitable opportunities for conservation.

With the above criteria in mind, we configured the boundaries for the Conservation Focal Area. Lands to be included in the Conservation Partnership Area will be prioritized as willing landowners become known. The Service reserves the right to be flexible with the tier group rankings detailed above because a number of factors also influence the priority of land protection, including the availability of willing sellers, availability of funding, and increased scientific understanding. In addition, the Service must be flexible in its methods and priorities of land protection to meet the needs of individual landowners. Attachment 1 provides the parcel table, the parcel maps, and their associated priorities.

C. LAND PROTECTION OPTIONS

The Service acquires lands and interests in lands, such as easements, and management rights in lands through leases or cooperative agreements, consistent with legislation or other congressional guidelines and executive orders, for the conservation of fish and wildlife and to provide wildlife-dependent public use for recreational and educational purposes. These lands include national wildlife refuges, national fish hatcheries, research stations, and other areas.

We will use the listed options to implement this Land Protection Plan.

- Option 1: management or land protection by others
- Option 2: less than fee title acquisition by the Service
- Option 3: fee title acquisition by the Service

When land is needed to achieve fish and wildlife conservation objectives, the Service seeks to acquire the minimum interest necessary to meet those objectives, and acquire it only from willing sellers. Our proposal includes a combination of Options 1, 2, and 3 above. We believe this approach offers a cost-effective way of providing the minimal level of protection needed to accomplish refuge objectives, while also attempting to meet the needs of local landowners.

OPTION 1. MANAGEMENT OR LAND PROTECTION BY OTHERS

A great deal of land adjacent to and ecologically important to the proposed project is already owned by our partners or managed by our partners through conservation easements, and others are proposed (e.g., Florida Forever). It should also be noted that the conservation and protection of this landscape fits well into several partner agency initiatives. Management and protection of lands by others would continue, and the proposed project would complement those efforts.

OPTION 2. LESS THAN FEE TITLE ACQUISITION

Under option 2, we would protect and manage land by purchasing only a partial interest from willing landowners, typically in the form of a conservation easement. Other less than fee title acquisition methods that may be employed include leases, donations, mitigation and conservation banks, and/or cooperative agreements. Most of the less than fee options leave the parcel in private ownership, while allowing us partial control over land use in a way that enables us to meet our conservation goals, as well as providing the landowner continued stewardship and management of their lands. The structure of such easements would provide permanent protection of existing wildlife habitats while also allowing habitat management or improvements and access to sensitive habitats, such as for endangered species or migratory birds. We would determine, on a case-by-case basis, and negotiate with each landowner, the extent of the rights we would be interested in buying. Those may vary, depending on the configuration and location of the parcel, the current extent of development, the nature of wildlife activities in the immediate vicinity, the needs of the landowner, and other considerations.

In general, any less than fee acquisition would maintain the land in its current configuration with no further subdivision or development. Easements are a property right, and typically are perpetual. If a landowner later sells the property, the easement continues as part of the title. Properties subject to easements generally remain on the tax rolls, although the change in market value may reduce the assessment. The Service does not pay refuge revenue sharing (i.e., funds the Service pays to counties in lieu of taxes) on easement rights. Where we identify conservation easements, we would be interested primarily in purchasing development rights and some wildlife management rights such as restoring wetland or grassland habitat. Easements are best when:

- only minimal management of the resource is needed, but there is a desire to ensure the continuation of current undeveloped uses and to prevent fragmentation over the long term;
- a landowner is interested in maintaining ownership of the land, does not want it to be further developed, and would like to realize the benefits of selling development rights;
- current land use regulations do not limit the potential for adverse management practices;
- the protection strategy calls for the creation and maintenance of a watershed protection area that can be accommodated with passive management; or
- only a portion of the parcel contains lands of interest to the Service.

The determination of value for purchasing a conservation easement involves an appraisal of the rights to be purchased, based on recent market conditions and structure in the area. The Land Protection Methods section further describes the conditions and structure of easements.

Acceptance of interest in conservation and mitigation banks or entering into management agreements typically involves the acceptance of less than fee title interest. In these instances, the Service would accept the management responsibility while ownership would remain with the landowner. In those instances where the acceptance involves fee title transfer, the parcel would either need to be located within the Conservation Focal Area, or the Service would be required to conduct additional acquisition planning according to NEPA guidelines.

OPTION 3. FEE TITLE ACQUISITION

Under Option 3, we would acquire parcels in fee title from willing sellers, thereby purchasing all rights of ownership. This option provides us the most flexibility in managing priority lands, and ensuring the protection in perpetuity of nationally significant trust resources, and providing opportunities to engage the public with wildlife-dependent recreation and education opportunities.

Generally, the lands we would buy require more than passive management (e.g., controlling invasive species, mowing or prescribed burning, planting, or managing for the six priority public uses). We only propose fee acquisition when adequate land protection is not assured under other ownerships, active land management is required, or we determined the current landowner would be interested in a fee title transaction and is unwilling to sell a partial interest such as a conservation easement.

In some cases, it may become necessary to convert a previously acquired conservation easement to fee acquisition: for example, when an owner is interested in selling the remainder of interest in the land on which we have acquired an easement. We would evaluate this need on a case-by-case basis.

D. LAND PROTECTION METHODS

We may use several methods of acquiring either a full or a partial interest in the parcels identified for Service land protection: (1) Purchase (e.g., complete title, or a partial interest like a conservation easement); (2) leases and cooperative agreements; (3) mitigation and conservation banks, and (4) donations.

PURCHASE

For the up to 50,000 acres proposed for the Everglades Headwaters NWR, the preferred acquisition method would be fee title acquisition; however, less than fee interest would be considered. For the 100,000 acres proposed for the Conservation Area, the preferred acquisition method would be conservation easement; however, other less than fee interest acquisition methods could also be used.

Fee Title Purchase

A fee title interest is normally acquired when: (1) The area's fish and wildlife resources require permanent protection not otherwise assured; (2) land is needed for visitor use development; (3) a pending land use could adversely impact the area's resources; or (4) it is the most practical and economical way to assemble small tracts into a manageable unit.

Fee title acquisition conveys all ownership rights to the Federal Government and provides the best assurance of permanent resource protection. A fee title interest may be acquired by donation, exchange, transfer, or purchase (as the availability of funding allows).

Easement Purchase

Easement purchase refers to the purchase of limited rights (less than fee) from an interested landowner. The landowner would retain ownership and use of the land, but would sell certain rights identified and agreed upon by both parties. The objectives and conditions of our proposed conservation easements would recognize lands for their importance to wildlife habitat, and any other qualities that recommend them for additional conservation. Land uses that are normally restricted under the terms of a conservation easement include:

- Conversion of native habitats,
- Development rights,
- Alteration of the area's natural topography,
- Uses adversely affecting the area's floral and faunal communities, and
- Alteration of the natural water regime.

LEASES AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

Potentially, the Service can protect and manage habitat through leases and cooperative agreements. Management control on privately owned lands could be obtained by entering into long-term renewable leases or cooperative agreements with the landowners or other agencies. Short-term leases can be used to protect or manage habitat until more secure land protection can be negotiated.

DONATION

We accept donations and transfer of lands from other agencies, organizations, and individuals in fee title or conservation easement within approved areas. We are currently aware of potentially three formal opportunities to accept donations of parcels in our land protection boundary for this project.

MITIGATION AND CONSERVATION BANKS

Conservation and mitigation banks provide a unique opportunity for the Service to manage lands, and completely restore wetlands and/or endangered species habitat as part of the Refuge System. Additionally, funding under conservation and mitigation banks would also provide for management and monitoring activities associated with managing the bank. Trust fund management could reside with other entities (e.g., land trusts and non-governmental organizations) and the Service would provide its management expertise. Ownership of title to the bank itself could be another agency, organization, individual, or the Service.

EXCHANGE

We have the authority to exchange land in Service ownership for other land that has greater habitat or wildlife value. Inherent in this concept is the requirement to get dollar-for-dollar land value with, occasionally, an equalization payment. Exchanges are attractive because they usually do not increase federal land holdings or require purchase funds. However, they also may be very complicated and take a long time to complete.

E. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE LAND ACQUISITION POLICY

It is the Service's policy to work with willing sellers to acquire fee title or less than fee title interest in property.

CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP AREA

During the development of this document, the original 1.8 million-acre Study Area was refined and reduced to an approximately 816,000-acre Conservation Partnership Area. It is within this Conservation Partnership Area, if it were approved, that the Service would have the ability to work with willing landowners and partners on conservation programs and agreements. The Service would have the authority to acquire up to 100,000 acres of less than fee title interest; once 100,000 acres were acquired for the Conservation Area, any proposal to expand beyond the authorized 100,000 acres would require an additional planning effort by the Service, including public involvement, in accordance with applicable laws and policies. Participation would be voluntary. Landowners within an approved Conservation Partnership Area would be under no obligation to sell interest in their properties to the Service. The Conservation Partnership Area would provide important opportunities for conservation, while at the same time maintaining the ability of the ranching community to persist. Landowners in the proposed Conservation Partnership Area may voluntarily choose to participate and participating lands would remain in private ownership. Private landowners who elected to

participate would continue to control activities on their lands. As lands were acquired, they would become part of a 100,000-acre Conservation Area, which would reflect the vision, purposes, and goals of the overall project, but would be subject to the terms and conditions of whatever easement, agreements, and/or other tool(s) that would be used for less than fee title acquisition.

CONSERVATION FOCAL AREA

Once a Conservation Focal Area has been approved for fee title purchase, we would contact landowners within the boundary to determine whether any landowners are interested in selling. If a landowner expresses an interest and gives us permission, a real estate appraiser would appraise the property to determine its market value. Once an appraisal has been approved, we can present an offer for the landowner's consideration. In the case of this project, a Conservation Focal Area of 130,000 acres was identified, within which the Service would only have authority to acquire up to 50,000 acres.

Appraisals conducted by Service or contract appraisers must meet federal as well as professional appraisal standards. In all fee title acquisition cases, the Service is required by federal law to offer 100 percent of the property's appraised market value, which is typically based on comparable sales of similar types of properties. However, we can accept landowner offers of less than the appraised value.

We based the proposed Conservation Focal Area on the biological importance of key habitats and connectivity within the landscape. The establishment of this boundary gives the Service the opportunity to negotiate with landowners that may be interested in selling their land. With this internal approval in place, the Service can react more quickly as important lands become available. The Service's long-established policy is to work with willing sellers as funds become available. Lands within an approved Conservation Focal Area do not become part of the refuge unless their owners willingly sell or donate them to the Service.

F. FUNDING

Much of the funding for the Service to buy land comes from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which derives proceeds from certain user fees, the proceeds from the disposal of surplus federal property, the federal tax on motor boat fuels, and oil and gas lease revenues. About 90 percent of that fund now derives proceeds from Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas leases. The Federal Government receives 40 percent of these funds to acquire and develop nationally significant conservation lands.

For the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area, LWCF funds would likely be used to acquire land and easements for properties that consist mainly of dry prairie, flatwoods, and upland areas. Another potential source for funding is the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, which awards fund to wetland conservation projects for the benefit of wetlands-associated migratory birds and other wildlife.

OWNERSHIP, ACQUISITION METHOD, AND ACQUISITION COSTS

There are 45 known landowners within the proposed Conservation Focal Area of approximately 130,000 acres (of which the Service has authority to acquire only up to 50,000 acres) (see Attachment 1, Table 6). Many other landowners throughout the Kissimmee River basin have expressed interest in the project. The estimated cost of acquiring the proposed 150,000 acres for the Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area is \$625 million. This rough estimation is based on the listed assumptions.

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- 50,000-acre Everglades Headwaters NWR. All fee simple lands acquired would primarily be ranchland. We used a median estimated price of \$5,000 per acre for ranchland. Thus, the cost of acquiring all the ranchland in the project area would be: 50,000 acres multiplied by \$5,000/acre = \$250,000,000. Please note, any properties that are donated would lower this estimated total. Table 6 outlines approximately 142 acres that would likely be donated by private interests (about 101.9 acres), donated by the SFWMD (~17.7 acres), or transferred by the Federal Government (about 22 acres) to the refuge, lowering the total by an estimated \$2,500,000.
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 - 100,000-acre Conservation Area. The Service would target the use of conservation easements as the primary tool for the Conservation Area. All conservation easements would total about 100,000 acres. Based on our knowledge of acreage values for the area, the median price of \$3,750/acre is estimated. Hence, the cost of acquiring the available conservation easements would be 100,000 acres multiplied by \$3,750/acre = \$375,000,000.

Hence, our total estimated cost would be the costs of fee simple lands plus conservation easements or $\$250,000,000 + \$375,000,000 = \$625,000,000$ (potentially less \$2,500,000 or more for donated properties) to purchase the 150,000 acres in the project area. It must be noted that these costs are outlined here only to provide an approximation based on currently available information and the assumption that all lands would be purchased at current market value. Donations, mitigation and conservation banks, the ratio of fee to easement purchases, and land value fluctuations over time would likely influence the costs associated with completion of the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area.

FINANCIAL STRATEGY – ANNUAL OPERATING AND MAINTENANCE, STAFFING, AND REFUGE OPERATING NEEDS PROJECTS

This plan assumes the Service would acquire some structures as part of fee title acquisitions which would not support the refuge or Service mission and would be slated for demolition. Structures likely to be obtained include single-family homes, hunting cabins, and ranch structures (pens, loading chutes, barns). Some buildings that are in excellent condition could be used for refuge quarters, equipment storage or a visitor contact facility, although we did not identify that as an objective in the Draft EA. The most cost-effective way to remove a structure is usually for the staff or a contractor to demolish it, although other methods would be used, where available and appropriate (i.e., local fire department burning for training, etc.). All structures would be surveyed for historical significance prior to demolition. Tables 4 and 5 below show the anticipated costs. The Service also identified the costs associated with posting signs for boundaries and seasonal closures. There would likely be contaminant costs because of the possibility of contamination from previous land uses such as agriculture. The Service does not anticipate acquiring any contaminated sites because they would require substantial funding for remediation.

Adding new lands to the refuge would result in additional public use opportunities and costs. In the project area, planned facilities could include hiking trails, several observation areas, and other public use infrastructure. Lands would also be opened to the public for hunting. The exact number and location of these public use improvements and opportunities are currently unknown, although some additional details are provided in the Draft EA Appendices for the Conceptual Management Plan and Interim Compatibility Determinations. Details would be further defined and announced to the public as new lands are acquired.

Alternative C of the Draft EA proposes three full-time refuge employees to initially meet the refuge's proposed management requirements.

Table 4. One-time costs associated with operating and maintaining lands outlined in this Draft LPP

Estimated One-Time Operating Costs	Costs in Dollars
Post boundary signs (\$875 per mile @ 80 miles)	\$70,000
Survey boundary (\$5,000 per mile @ 80 miles)	\$400,000
Demolition of houses/small buildings (\$25,000 per structure @ 3)	\$75,000
Demolition of barns (\$10,000 per structure @ 3)	\$30,000
Contaminant (level 1) studies and soil testing (Service staff to conduct)	\$0
Construction of public use sites (boardwalk trails) (\$1.4m per mile)*	\$1,404,480
Construction/improvement of parking areas (\$16,000 ea per 6 lots)	\$96,000
New kiosks/exhibits (\$12,000 each @ 5)	\$60,000
Restore/refurbish historic structure (Edna Pierce Lockett Estate)	\$2,500,000
Office and visitor center (\$443 per SF @ 5,000 SF)	\$2,215,000
Heavy equipment needs	\$200,000
Total Estimated One-Time Operations Cost	\$7,050,480

**note: not considered in this figure area additional trails for public access which would be provided and consist of pre-existing gravel and dirt roads and trails*

Table 5. Annual costs associated with operating and maintaining lands outlined in this Draft LPP

Estimated Annual Operation & Maintenance Costs	Costs in Dollars
Habitat inventories (\$5,000 each @ 5)	\$25,000
General maintenance of public use facilities	\$200,000
Mowing (\$5 per acre @ 1,000 acres annually)	\$5,000
Prescribed fire program (\$15 per acre @ 20,000 acres annually)	\$300,000
Fencing (\$5 per linear foot @ 10,000 linear feet)	\$50,000
Invasive species (\$10 per acre @ 1,000 acres annually)	\$10,000
Building maintenance and utilities	\$100,000
Total Estimated Annual Operations & Maintenance Cost	\$690,000

IV. Coordination

Throughout the planning process for the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area, the Service solicited and carefully considered public comments regarding Service land protection within the Kissimmee River Basin landscape. The Service worked with other federal partners, Native American tribes, the State of Florida, county governments, various municipalities, local land trusts, local and national conservation organizations, landowners, ranchers and farmers, area residents, and the general public. Several federal and state agencies serve as key partners in this landscape, including NRCS, USDA; Avon Park Air Force Range, U.S. Air Force; FWC; FDACS; FDOF, FDACS; FDEP; Florida Division of State Lands, FDEP; and SFWMD. These partners were keys to the development of the proposal. The Service also contacted several Native American tribes with interest in this landscape: Seminole Tribe of Florida; Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida; Seminole Nation of Oklahoma; Muscogee (Creek) Nation; and Poarch Band of Creeks.

The public scoping period was initiated on January 12, 2011, and ended on March 31, 2011. In all, four public scoping meetings were held at four different locations in and around the Study Area. Over 38,000 comments were submitted during the public scoping period. Further details describing the scoping process and range of comments received can be found in Chapter I of the Draft EA under the Public Participation section, as well as at the Greater Everglades website: <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/evergladesheadwaters/>. This Draft LPP will be made available, as part of the Draft EA, to all potentially affected landowners; state and local governments; Native American tribes; other conservation partners; to those on the mailing list for the proposal; and through the Service's Greater Everglades website. The Service will make this document available for a 45-day public review and comment period during which public meetings will be conducted and public comments will be collected.

Following the public review and comment period, the Service will review all comments submitted to assist in evaluating this proposal and any needed changes to the documents. If the Service continues the planning process for this proposal, final documents will be developed for approval.

V. Socioeconomic and Cultural Impacts

We do not predict significant adverse socioeconomic or cultural impacts as a result of the proposed action, as further detailed in the Draft EA. There would be an overall positive effect on the socioeconomic environment as a result of the action outlined in the Draft LPP. Were the Service to buy fee title and less than fee title interests in most of the lands in the project area in pursuit of the 150,000 acres as outlined in the Draft LPP, we believe positive benefits for communities in Florida would include: increased property values, increased watershed protection, maintenance of many traditional uses, increased opportunities for public use activities, and increased revenues for local businesses from refuge visitors who participate in bird watching, hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation. Recreational use on national wildlife refuges generated almost \$1.7 billion in total economic activity during fiscal year 2006, according to the Service's *Banking on Nature 2006: The Economic Benefits to Local Communities of National Wildlife Refuge Visitation* report (Carver and Caudill 2007). According to the Banking on Nature study, nearly 35 million people visited national wildlife refuges in 2006, supporting almost 27,000 private sector jobs and producing about \$543 million in employment income (Carver and Caudill 2007). In addition, recreational spending on refuges generated nearly \$185.3 million in tax revenue at the local, county, state, and federal levels (Carver and Caudill 2007). An estimated 87 percent of refuge visitors travel from outside the local area (Carver and Caudill 2007).

The potential exists for some adverse impacts, namely a potential decline in tax revenue to local governments (as lands come under Service ownership). However, this decline may or may not occur, since those lost tax revenues would be offset by the Federal Government. The Refuge Revenue Sharing Act of June 15, 1935, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715s) requires the Service to make payments to local taxing authorities, typically counties, to offset the loss of local tax revenues due to federal ownership. The Service makes annual payments to local taxing authorities, based on the estimated values of lands that the Service owns located in those jurisdictions. Money for these payments comes from the sale of oil and gas leases, timber sales, grazing fees, the sale of other Refuge System resources, and from congressional appropriations, which are intended to make up the difference between the net receipts from the refuge Revenue Sharing Fund and the total amount due to local taxing authorities. The actual refuge Revenue Sharing payment does vary from year to year because Congress may or may not appropriate sufficient funds to make full payment. For the nearby Lake Wales Ridge NWR, 2009 Refuge Revenue Sharing payments were: \$23,252 for 1,685 acres in Highlands County and \$2,278 for 172 acres in Polk County. The Service would make similar payments for the proposed fee title lands.

Refuge lands would increase protection for cultural resources in the area. Service ownership would protect unidentified or undeveloped cultural sites from disturbance or destruction. Project-related and research-driven investigations would help elucidate the area's history, cultural adaptations to changing ecological and climatic conditions, and paleoecology. Partnering with the Seminole Tribe and/or other Native American tribes would aid in identifying and protecting sites, cultural landscapes, and specific biota of importance to the tribe(s). Planned interpretation and environmental education programs would continue to promote public understanding and appreciation of the area's rich cultural resources.

Taken together, we believe there to be a net positive effect to the region.

ATTACHMENT 1. PARCEL TABLE AND MAPS

The parcel maps (Figures 3a-3h) each show the project area and all land parcels in that area, providing detailed maps which can be used to locate each parcel. The corresponding table (Table 6) groups parcels together by landowner and lists each parcel, each parcel identification number, estimated acres, type of ownership, preferred method of acquisition, overall priority ranking for a single or group of parcels under one landowner, acres by parcel and landowner in the three tiers; and the figure number where each parcel or group of parcels can be found. Figures 4a-4g outline the overall priority rankings from Table 6 for the approximately 130,000-acre Conservation Focal Area for the proposed Everglades Headwaters NWR. Figure 5 outlines the priorities for the entire Conservation Focal Area and would be used during the evaluation and ranking of acquisition of less than fee title interest for the Conservation Area (e.g., through conservation easement). Appendix F of the Draft EA outlines the habitat prioritization methodology used to prioritize habitats and properties. Chapter III, Section B of the Draft EA provides an overview of that process. The information was derived from the county tax offices. Please note that the acreage derived from the Service GIS database may differ from the acreage on the county tax maps. The Service would acquire either full or partial interest in land parcels, as available from willing sellers over time and as the availability of funding allows. Listed are the definitions of the column headers in Table 6.

Owner Id Number	Numerical identifier for each landowner
Parcel Alpha Code	Alphabetical identifier for each parcel of a particular landowner
Parcel Id	Numerical identification number (property parcel or lot number)
Parcel Acres (estimate)	Estimated acres for each parcel (estimated using parcel data and GIS)
Type of Land Ownership	Private, local government, state, or federal landowner
Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)	Preferred method of acquisition using the minimum interest necessary to be acquired to meet outlined goals
Overall Priority Ranking	Priority ranking by landowner (i.e., for one or more properties grouped together on the landscape)
Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)	Number of acres of a landowner or by parcel that qualified for the high-priority ranking
Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)	Number of acres of a landowner or by parcel that qualified for the high-priority ranking
Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)	Number of acres of a landowner or by parcel that qualified for the high-priority ranking
Figure	Figure number that depicts each parcel and group of parcels

Table 6. Protection priorities for the proposed establishment of the Everglades Headwaters NWR and Conservation Area and recommended methods of acquisition

<u>Owner ID Number</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Figure</u>
1				9,072.8	Private	Fee Title	I	9,061.3	11.5		3b
	A	012632000000200000	15.8					15.8			
	B	022632000000200000	637.0					637.0			
	C	032632000000100000	645.7					645.7			
	D	042632000000100000	630.3					630.3			
	E	052632000000100000	643.4					643.4			
	F	082632000000100000	575.3					575.3			
	G	092632000000100000	105.4					105.4			
	H	102632000000100000	576.1					576.1			
	I	112632000000100000	644.2					644.2			
	J	122632000000200000	32.9					32.9			
	K	132632000000200000	30.4					30.4			
	L	142632000000100000	642.8					642.8			
	M	152632000000100000	633.3					633.3			
	N	162632000000100000	102.9					97.9	5.0		
	O	172632000000100000	6.5						6.5		
	P	172632000000300000	253.2					253.2			
	Q	212632000000100000	275.7					275.7			
	R	222632000000100000	605.2					605.2			
	S	232632000000100000	642.6					642.6			
T	242632000000200000	30.3	30.3								

<u>Owner ID Number</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Figure</u>
	U	252632000000200000	31.7					31.7			
	V	262632000000100000	642.3					642.3			
	W	272632000000100000	531.3					531.3			
	X	282632000000100000	138.5					138.5			
2				3,072.6	Private	Fee Title	II	998.3	2,074.3		3c
	A	313028000000000000	173.1					173.1			
	B	313029000000000000	510.9					510.9			
	C	313030000000000000	487.4					487.4			
	D	313031000000000000	641.8						641.8		
	E	313032000000000000	643.2						643.2		
	F	313033000000011010	598.3						598.3		
	G	313034000000033010	17.9						17.9		
3				39,643.1	Private	Fee Title	II	5,675.3	14,726.6	19,241.2	3d
	A	013232000000100000	631.2							631.2	
	B	023232000000100000	637.6							637.6	
	C	033232000000100000	666.0							666.0	
	D	043232000000100000	643.9							643.9	
	E	043233000000100000	634.8							634.8	
	F	053232000000100000	568.8							568.8	
	G	053233000000100000	629.4							629.4	
	H	063233000000100000	563.7							563.7	
	I	073132000000200000	208.1							208.1	
	J	073233000000100000	637.7							637.7	
	K	083232000000100000	191.3							191.3	

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Owner ID Number</u>
	641.5							641.5	083233000000100000	L	
		644.2						644.2	093232000000100000	M	
	481.6							481.6	093233000000100000	N	
	58.2							58.2	093233459000010010	O	
	0.2							0.2	093233459000080240	P	
	0.3							0.3	093233459000210120	Q	
	56.9							56.9	093233460000010010	R	
	693.7							693.7	103232000000100000	S	
		127.5						127.5	113131000000100000	T	
	652.3							652.3	113232000000100000	U	
	526.1							526.1	123131000000200000	V	
	657.0							657.0	123232000000100000	W	
		393.4						393.4	133131000000200000	X	
	654.1							654.1	133232000000100000	Y	
	651.1							651.1	143232000000100000	Z	
	688.0							688.0	153232000000100000	AA	
	143.4							143.4	163132000000200000	AB	
			53.0					147.3	163232000000100000	AC	
			7.1					27.3	163232362000010010	AD	
	3.8							27.4	163232363000010010	AE	
								25.2	163232363100010010	AF	
			14.0					27.3	163232363200010010	AG	
	643.8							643.8	163233000000100000	AH	
								473.0	173132000000200000	AI	
		473.0									

<u>Owner ID Number</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Figure</u>
	AJ	173233000000100000	643.1							643.1	
	AK	183132000000100000	754.9					754.9			
	AL	183233000000100000	641.7							641.7	
	AM	193132000000100000	443.0					443.0			
	AN	193233000000100000	645.5							645.5	
	AO	203132000000100000	647.8						647.8		
	AP	203233000000100000	644.7						644.7		
	AQ	213132000000100000	562.8							562.8	
	AR	213232000000100000	240.5						240.5		
	AS	213233000000100000	645.5					645.5			
	AT	223132000000200000	500.0							500.0	
	AU	223232000000100000	679.5							679.5	
	AV	233132000000200000	151.6							151.6	
	AW	233232000000100000	651.9							651.9	
	AX	243232000000100000	653.5							653.5	
	AY	253132000000300000	459.8							459.8	
	AZ	253232000000100000	655.1						655.1		
	BA	263132000000100000	656.9							656.9	
	BB	263232000000100000	654.4						654.4		
	BC	273132000000100000	656.6						656.6		
	BD	273232000000100000	640.2					640.2			
	BE	283132000000100000	564.2						564.2		
	BF	283232000000100000	59.6					49.2	10.4		
	BG	283233000000100000	649.1					649.1			

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Owner ID Number</u>
		657.6						657.6	293132000000100000	BH	
			646.4					646.4	293233000000100000	BI	
		560.9						560.9	303132000000200000	BJ	
	153.4							153.4	303133000000200000	BK	
	649.1							649.1	303233000000100000	BL	
		280.4						280.4	313132000000200000	BM	
	560.6							560.6	313133000000100000	BN	
		655.0						655.0	313233000000100000	BO	
	665.7							665.7	323132000000100000	BP	
	521.5							521.5	323133000000200000	BQ	
		644.9						644.9	323233000000100000	BR	
	564.9							564.9	333132000000100000	BS	
	246.4							246.4	333133000000300000	BT	
		277.7						277.7	333232000000200000	BU	
	657.2							657.2	333233000000100000	BV	
	659.3							659.3	343132000000100000	BW	
		659.0						659.0	343232000000100000	BX	
	660.2							660.2	353132000000100000	BY	
	654.5							654.5	353232000000100000	BZ	
	658.9							658.9	363132000000100000	CA	
	654.3							654.3	363232000000100000	CB	
4				III	Fee Title	Private	154.4				
	154.4						154.4	313133000000200000	A		
5				I	Fee Title	Private	27,072.3				
	3,597.6	5,942.9	17,531.8								

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Owner ID Number</u>
	322.3							322.3	013233000000200000	A	
	447.3							447.3	023233000000200000	B	
		602.0						602	033233000000200000	C	
		60.9						60.9	053234000000200000	D	
	198.7							198.7	063234000000200000	E	
		645.1						645.1	073234000000100000	F	
			636.1					636.1	083234000000100000	G	
			430.7					430.7	093234000000200000	H	
		657.0						657.0	103233000000100000	I	
			135.3					135.3	103234000000400000	J	
		649.1						649.1	113233000000100000	K	
	651.2							651.2	123233000000100000	L	
		652.8						652.8	133233000000100000	M	
	652.4							652.4	143233000000100000	N	
		1.0						1.0	143234000000200000	O	
		11.2						11.2	143234000000300000	P	
			311.5					311.5	143234000001200000	Q	
		5.0						5.0	143234000001250000	R	
	664.4							664.4	153233000000100000	S	
		643.6						643.6	153234000000100000	T	
		660.4						660.4	163234000000100000	U	
		652.3						652.3	173234000000100000	V	
		646.2						646.2	183234000000100000	W	
			645.6					645.6	193234000000100000	X	

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Owner ID Number</u>
			651.7					651.7	203234000000100000	Y	
			659.1					659.1	213234000000100000	Z	
			670.8					670.8	223233000000100000	AA	
			642.5					642.5	223234000000100000	AB	
			656.0					656.0	233233000000100000	AC	
			555.4					555.4	233234000000100000	AD	
			655.3					655.3	243233000000100000	AE	
			70.9					70.9	243234000000200000	AF	
			658.3					658.3	253233000000100000	AG	
			534.2					534.2	253234000000100000	AH	
			659.0					659.0	263233000000100000	AI	
			644.4					644.4	263234000000100000	AJ	
			675.6					675.6	273233000000100000	AK	
			642.4					642.4	273234000000100000	AL	
			658.2					658.2	283234000000100000	AM	
			650.3					650.3	293234000000100000	AN	
			645.7					645.7	303234000000100000	AO	
			646.3					646.3	313234000000100000	AP	
			648.0					648.0	323234000000100000	AQ	
			655.9					655.9	333234000000100000	AR	
		21.9						21.9	343133000000200000	AS	
		677.5						677.5	343233000000100000	AT	
			644.1					644.1	343234000000100000	AU	
			660.9					660.9	353233000000100000	AV	

<u>Owner ID Number</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Figure</u>
	AW	353234000000100000	642.1					642.1			
	AX	363233000000100000	661.3						661.3		
	AY	363234000000100000	502.4								
6			3,634.3	Private	Fee Title	II	1,347.8	2,286.5		3d	
	A	10733340A00000010000	485.0						485.0		
	B	10833340A00000010000	460.4						460.4		
	C	11233330A00000010000	645.0						645.0		
	D	11333330A00000010000	659.8					659.8			
	E	11733340A00000010000	688.0					688.0			
	F	11833340A00000010000	696.1						696.1		
7				21.5	Private	Fee Title	II		21.5		3d
	A	11333330A00000020000	21.5						21.5		
8				1,671.1	Private	Fee Title	II		1,671.1		3d
	A	10433340A00000010000	664.0						664.0		
	B	10933340A00000010000	97.7						97.7		
	C	10933340A0000001A000	52.5						52.5		
	D	10933340A0000001B000	52.5						52.5		
	E	10933340A0000001C000	52.4						52.4		

<u>Owner ID Number</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Figure</u>
	F	10933340A0000001D000	52.3						52.3		
	G	10933340A0000001E000	52.5						52.5		
	H	10933340A0000001F000	52.4						52.4		
	I	10933340A0000001G000	82.3						82.3		
	J	10933340A0000001H000	165.2						165.2		
	K	11633340A00000010000	347.3						347.3		
	9							2,261.8	Private	Fee Title	
	A	10133330A00000010000	667.5					667.5			
	B	10533340A00000010000	629.5					629.5			
	C	10633340A00000010000	657.5				657.5				
	D	10733340A0000001A000	157.1				157.1				
	E	10833340A0000001A000	150.2					150.2			
10				348.6	Private	Fee Title	III			348.6	3d
	A	11633340A0000001A000	348.6							348.6	
11				11,999.1	Private	Fee Title	II	3,991.2	6,330.5	1,677.4	3d
	A	10133340A00000010000	648.1					648.1			
	B	10133340A0000001A000	3.7				3.7				

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Owner ID Number</u>
		649.6						649.6	10233340A000000100 00	C	
		649.3						649.3	10333340A000000100 00	D	
		112.3						112.3	10633350A000000100 00	E	
		633.8						633.8	11033340A000000100 00	F	
		637.4						637.4	11133340A000000100 00	G	
		659.0						659.0	11233340A000000100 00	H	
	332.5							332.5	11333340A000000200 00	I	
	660.3							660.3	11433340A000000100 00	J	
	684.6							684.6	11533340A000000100 00	K	
		674.0						674.0	12133340A000000100 00	L	
		667.4						667.4	12233340A000000100 00	M	
		658.7						658.7	12333340A000000100 00	N	
		340.9						340.9	12433340A000000200 00	O	
			665.1					665.1	12633340A000000100 00	P	
			657.9					657.9	12733340A000000100 00	Q	
			670.2					670.2	12833340A000000100 00	R	

<u>Owner ID Number</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Figure</u>
	S	13333340A00000010000	660.7					660.7			
	T	13433340A00000010000	678.0					678.0			
	U	13533340A00000010000	655.6					655.6			
12			6,251.5	Private	Fee Title	I	3,402	2,199.1	650.4	3e	
	A	10734320A00000010000	668.7					668.7			
	C	11234310A00000010000	664.0					664.0			
	D	11334310A00000010000	630.1					630.1			
	I	12434310A00000010000	138.0					138.0			
	B	10834320A00000010000	669.3						669.3		
	E	11734320A00000010000	667.4					667.4			
	F	11834320A00000010000	667.5					667.5			
	G	11934320A00000010000	635.0					635.0			
	H	12034320A00000010000	666.0						666.0		
	J	12934320A00000010000	650.4							650.4	
	K	13034320A00000010000	195.1						195.1		
13				7,985.2	Private	Fee Title	I	5,998.1	1987.1		3e
	A	10734330A00000010000	661.6					661.6			

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Owner ID Number</u>
									00		
			664.3				664.3	11134320A000000100	B		
			667.2				667.2	11234320A000000100	C		
			665.7				665.7	11334320A000000100	D		
			663.4				663.4	11434320A000000100	E		
			671.3				671.3	11834330A000000100	F		
			670.7				670.7	11934330A000000100	G		
		663.8					663.8	12334320A000000100	H		
			666.3				666.3	12434320A000000100	I		
		660.9					660.9	12534320A000000100	J		
		662.4					662.4	12634320A000000100	K		
			667.6				667.6	13034330A000000100	L		
14		826.9		II	Fee Title	Private	826.9				
		34.1					34.1	11934320A000000200	A		
		237.0					237.0	12434310A000000400	B		
		124.6					124.6	12534310A000000400	C		
		431.2					431.2	13034320A000000200	D		

<u>Owner ID Number</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Figure</u>
		00									
15				595.3	Private	Fee Title	I	595.3			3e
	A	11134310A00000010000	427.0					427.0			
	B	11434310A00000010000	168.3					168.3			
16				459.5	Private	Donation	III		101.9	357.6	3f
	A	283210000000011020	9.9							9.9	
	B	283210000000012000	39.8							39.8	
	C	283210000000014010	36.6							36.6	
	D	283210000000021000	40.0							40.0	
	E	283210000000023010	29.0							29.0	
	F	283211000000023010	40.0							40.0	
	G	283211000000034010	22.8							22.8	
	H	283211000000034020	17.9							17.9	
	I	283211000000041010	146.5							146.5	
	J	283211000000042010	15.1							15.1	
K	283214000000011010	61.9			61.9						
17				3,076.4	Private	Fee Title	I	2,135.8	910.9	29.7	3f
	A	283209000000022020	29.7							29.7	
	B	283215000000020000	229.3							229.3	
	C	283215000000033000	115.4							115.4	
	D	283216000000010000	333.9							333.9	
	E	283216000000033010	43.8							43.8	
	F	283217000000021010	150.6							150.6	

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Owner ID Number</u>
		75.7						283217000000021020	G		
		16.7						283219000000012020	H		
		11.7						283219000000021030	I		
		11.6						283219000000022020	J		
			525.6					283220000000011000	K		
		72.0						283220000000033020	L		
			190.7					283223000000014010	M		
			398.1					283228000000013010	N		
			290.0					283229000000011000	O		
			142.4					283229000000021000	P		
			95.1					283229000000023020	Q		
			69.8					283229000000032010	R		
		0.4						283230000000011090	S		
			0.4					283230000000011100	T		
			0.4					283230000000011110	U		
		0.4						283230000000011150	V		
			0.4					283230000000011210	W		
			0.7					283230000000011220	X		
			21.2					283230000000011250	Y		
			0.4					283230000000012070	Z		
			0.4					283230000000012110	AA		
			49.9					283232000000011030	AB		
			199.7					283233000000013000	AC		
18				I	Fee Title	Private	1,943.0				
			1,511.5								3g

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Owner ID Number</u>
			2.6					2.6	27322500000022010	A	
			10.3					10.3	27322500000022020	B	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022030	C	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022040	D	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022050	E	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022060	F	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022070	G	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022080	H	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022090	I	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022100	J	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022110	K	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022120	L	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022130	M	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022140	N	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022150	O	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022160	P	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022170	Q	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022180	R	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022190	S	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022200	T	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022210	U	
			1.3					1.3	27322500000022220	V	
			125.3					125.3	27322500000022230	W	
			5.2					5.2	27322500000023040	X	

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Owner ID Number</u>
		81.3						81.3	273225000000032000	Y	
			5.2					5.2	273225000000041010	Z	
		76.1						76.1	273225000000043020	AA	
		5.2						5.2	273225000000043030	AB	
		24.9						24.9	273226000000012010	AC	
		1.2						1.2	273226000000012020	AD	
		6.2						6.2	273226000000012050	AE	
		1.3						1.3	273226000000021010	AF	
		65.4						65.4	273226000000021020	AG	
		1.3						1.3	273226000000021030	AH	
		1.3						1.3	273226000000021050	AI	
		1.3						1.3	273226000000021060	AJ	
		2.5						2.5	273226000000021070	AK	
		5.0						5.0	273226000000022010	AL	
		82.9						82.9	273236000000011010	AM	
		66.1						66.1	273236000000012010	AN	
		1.3						1.3	273236000000012020	AO	
		1.3						1.3	273236000000012030	AP	
		76.3						76.3	273236000000012040	AQ	
		1.3						1.3	273236000000014010	AR	
		1.3						1.3	273236000000014020	AS	
		1.3						1.3	273236000000014030	AT	
		1.3						1.3	273236000000014050	AU	
		1.3						1.3	273236000000014060	AV	

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Owner ID Number</u>
			1.3					273236000000014070	AX		
			2.6					273236000000031010	AY		
			1.3					273236000000031030	AZ		
			1.3					273236000000031040	BA		
			1.3					273236000000031060	BB		
			1.3					273236000000031050	BC		
			1.3					273236000000031070	BD		
			1.3					273236000000032010	BE		
		1.3						273236000000033010	BF		
		1.3						273236000000033030	BG		
	38.8						38.8	273236000000033040	BH		
			235.7				235.7	282825000000031010	BI		
			422.2				422.2	282826000000011010	BJ		
		39.7					39.7	282826000000031010	BK		
			164.5				164.5	282835000000011010	BL		
			37.3				37.3	282835000000013010	BM		
			103.8				103.8	282836000000031010	BN		
			127.3				127.3	282836000000032010	BO		
		77.4					77.4	283230000000041030	BP		
19			1.3	I	Fee Title	Private	1.3				
			1.3				1.3	273236000000014040	A		
20		1.3		II	Fee Title	Private	1.3				
		1.3					1.3	273226000000021040	A		
21		6.3		II	Fee Title	Private	6.3				

<u>Owner ID Number</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Figure</u>
	A	273225000000043010	1.3						1.3		
	B	273226000000012040	5.0						5.0		
22				1.3	Private	Fee Title	I	1.3			3g
	A	273236000000031020	1.3					1.3			
23				1.3	Private	Fee Title	I	1.3			3g
	A	273225000000041020	1.3					1.3			
24				1.3	Private	Fee Title	II		1.3		3g
	A	273226000000021080	1.3						1.3		
25				2.3	Private	Fee Title	II		2.3		3g
	A	273226000000012030	2.3						2.3		
26				2,778.3	Private	Fee Title	I	2,554.5	223.8		3h
	A	2526286140000A0010	601.1					601.1			
	B	2526286143000A0010	881.2					667.2	214.0		
	C	282814935310000001	97.7					97.7			
	D	282814935310000002	93.2					93.2			
	E	282814935310000004	9.8						9.8		
	F	292804988850001000	157.6					157.6			
	G	292804988850054000	113.0					113.0			
	H	292804988860001000	214.0					214.0			
	I	292804988860075010	158.4					158.4			
	J	292805988870001000	203.3					203.3			
	K	292805988870065010	249.0					249.0			
27				50.8	Private	Fee Title	II		50.8		3h
	A	282824000000022010	50.8						50.8		

<u>Owner ID Number</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Figure</u>
28				1,295.1	Private	Fee Title	II		1295.1		3h
	A	282823000000000000	658.8					658.8			
	B	282824000000010000	337.5					337.5			
	C	292819000000030000	298.8					298.8			
29				8.1	Private	Fee Title	I	8.1		3h	
	A	282826000000012010	8.1					8.1			
30				0.2	Private	Fee Title	I	0.2		3h	
	A	282814935310870037	0.2					0.2			
31				4,004.5	Private	Fee Title	II	1,302.4	2,702.1		3h
	A	282825000000011010	382.1					382.1			
	B	282835000000014010	216.2					216.2			
	C	282835000000042010	38.3					38.3			
	D	282836000000011010	322.8					322.8			
	E	282836000000013010	99.9					99.9			
	F	282901000000011010	625.2					625.2			
	G	292829000000021010	190.8					190.8			
	H	292830000000013010	422.8					422.8			
	I	292831000000011010	658.8					658.8			
	J	292832000000011010	39.8					39.8			
	K	292832000000013010	367.7					367.7			
	L	292833000000033010	6.3					6.3			
M	292906000000011010	633.8	633.8								
32				2.0	Private	Fee Title	I	2.0		3h	
	A	282826000000012020	2.0					2.0			

<u>Owner ID Number</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Figure</u>
33				203.8	Private	Fee Title	II		203.8		3h
	A	282824000000023010	203.8						203.8		
34				973.6	Private	Fee Title	I	846.4	127.2		3h
	A	282801934670000001	148.3					148.3			
	B	282801934670000002	188.3					188.3			
	C	282811935250001000	191.8					191.8			
	D	282811935250053010	263.9					263.9			
	E	282813935260001000	54.1					54.1			
	F	282813935260019010	127.2						127.2		
35				2.5	Private	Fee Title	I	2.5			3h
	A	282830000000013010	2.5					2.5			
36				5.0	Private	Fee Title	I	5.0			3h
	A	282830000000013050	5.0					5.0			
37				592.3	Private	Fee Title	I	442.2	150.1		3h
	A	282819000000011040	61.5					61.5			
	B	282819000000013010	142.4					142.4			
	C	282819000000013040	9.2						9.2		
	D	282819000000021000	82.1					82.1			
	E	282820000000031020	133.4						133.4		
	F	282820000000033050	41.7					41.7			
	G	282820000000033100	7.5						7.5		
	H	282820000000034010	10.4					10.4			
	I	282820000000034020	10.4					10.4			
J	282820000000044010	20.9	20.9								

<u>Owner ID Number</u>	<u>Parcel Alpha Code</u>	<u>Parcel Id</u>	<u>Parcel Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Owner Acres (estimate)</u>	<u>Type of Land Ownership</u>	<u>Preferred Method of Acquisition (minimum interest)</u>	<u>Overall Priority Ranking</u>	<u>Tier I Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier II Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Tier III Priority Group (acres, est.)</u>	<u>Figure</u>
	K	282830000000011020	10.0					10.0			
	L	282830000000011030	55.3					55.3			
	M	282830000000013030	7.5					7.5			
38			2.5	Private	Fee Title	I	2.5			3h	
	A	282830000000031010	2.5					2.5			
39			30.7	Private	Fee Title	I	30.7			3h	
	A	282829000000033010	20.7					20.7			
	B	282830000000013080	5.0					5.0			
	C	282830000000013090	5.0					5.0			
40			5.0	Private	Fee Title	I	5.0			3h	
	A	282830000000013070	5.0					5.0			
41			2.5	Private	Fee Title	I	2.5			3h	
	A	282830000000013000	2.5					2.5			
42			22.2	U.S. Gov't	Transfer	II		22.2		3h	
	A	282810000000042000	22.2					22.2			
43			2.0	Private	Fee Title	II		2.0		3h	
	A	282824000000022000	2.0					2.0			
44			10.0	Private	Fee Title	I	10.0			3e	
	A	10734330A00000020000	10.0					10.0			
45			17.7	State of FL	Donation	III				17.7	3e
	A	none	16.8							17.7	
Total			130,113.3					58,280.9	45,757.8	26,074.6	

Figure 3a. Parcels included in the proposed Conservation Focal Area, Planning Unit Overview

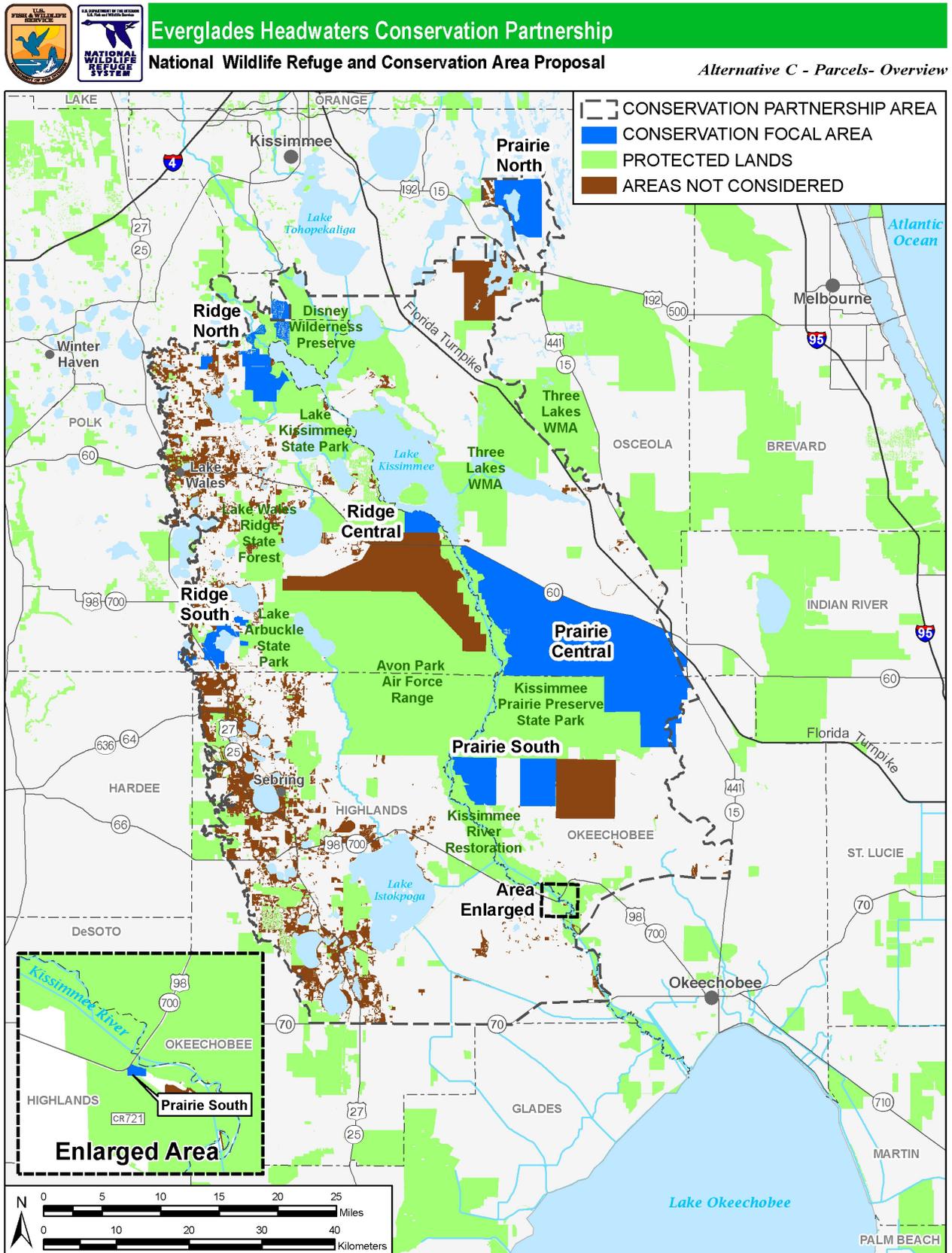


Figure 3b. Detail of parcels included in the Proposed Conservation Focal Area, Prairie North Planning Unit

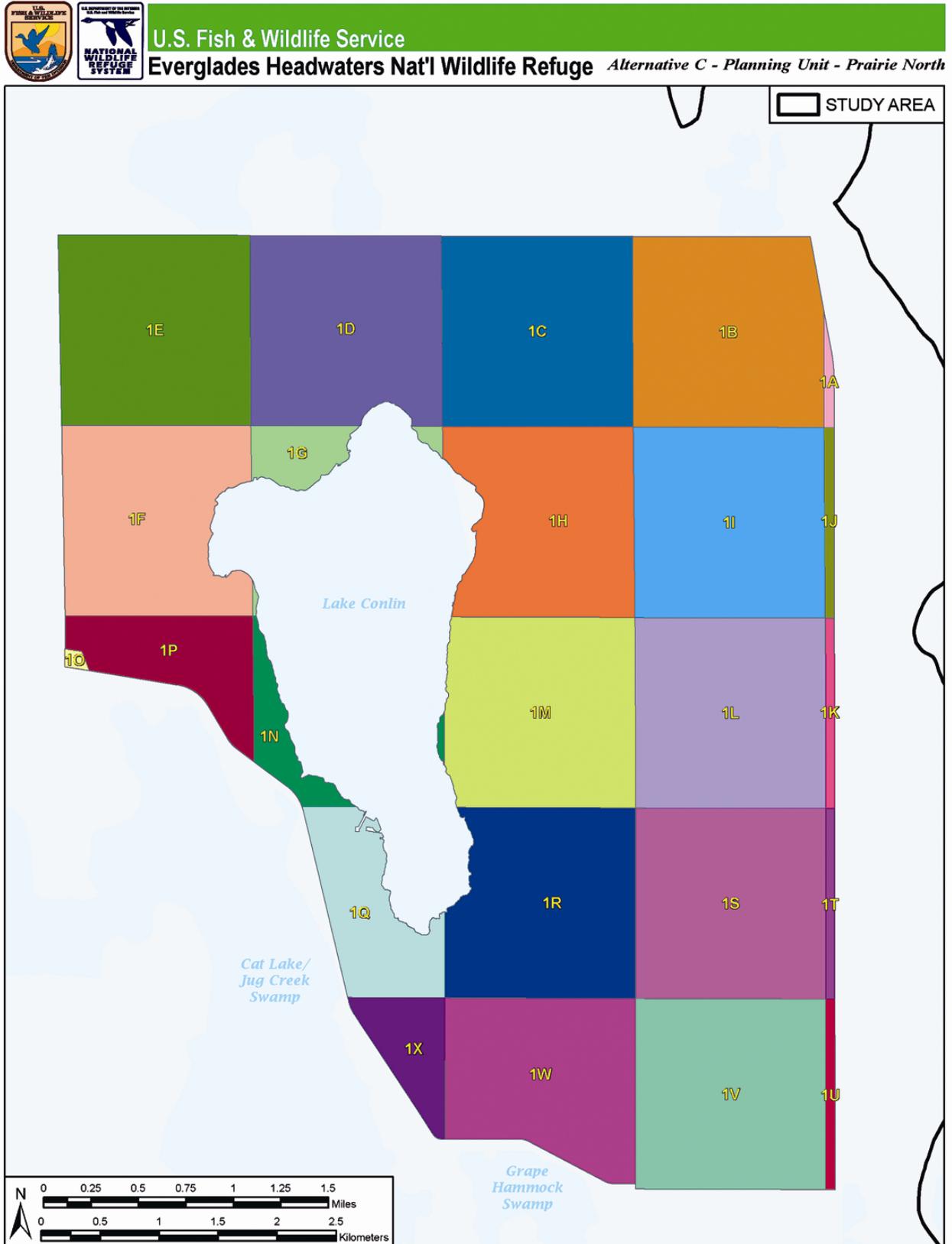


Figure 3c. Detail of parcels included in the Proposed Conservation Focal Area, Ridge Central Planning Unit

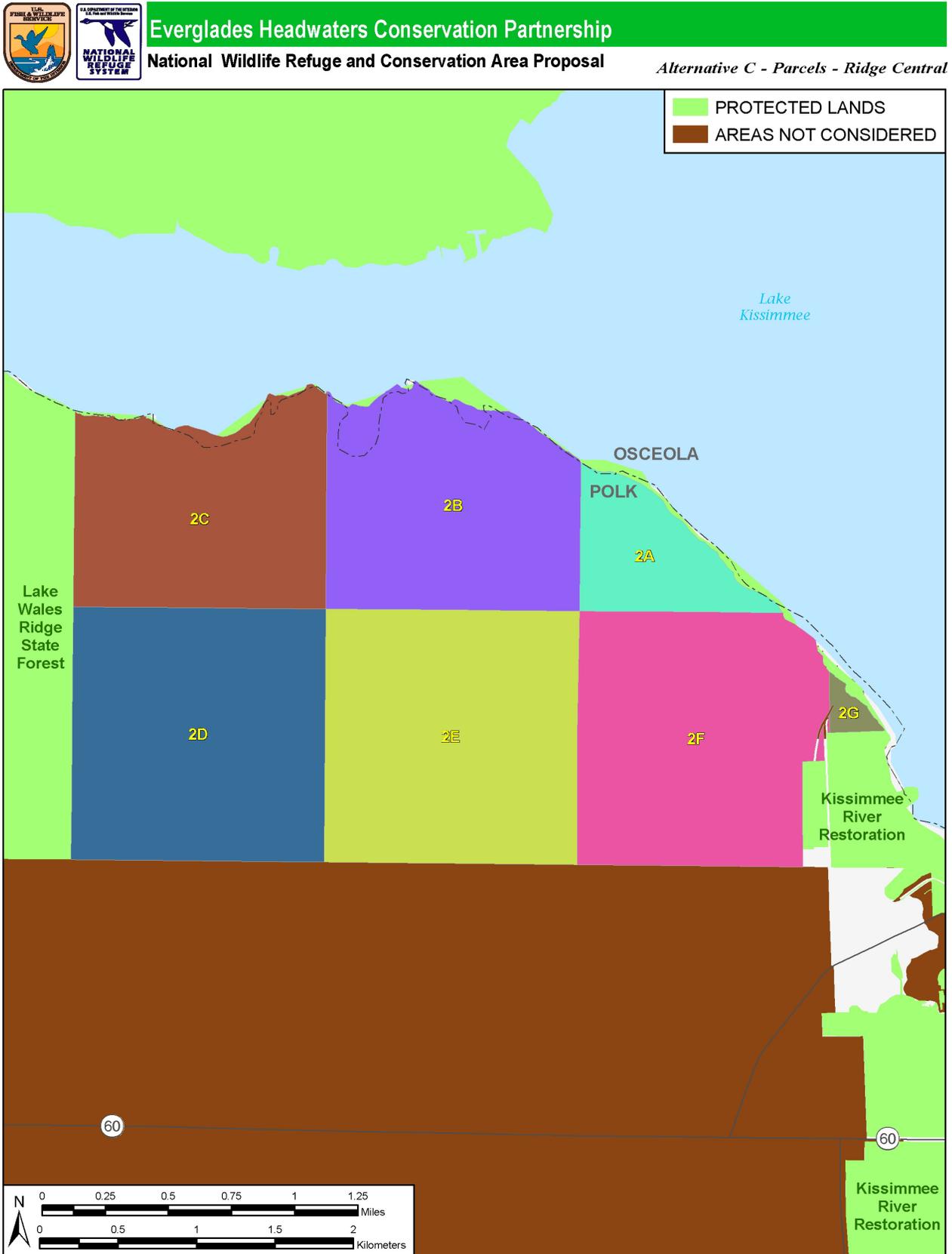


Figure 3f. Detail of parcels included in the Conservation Focal Area, Ridge South Planning Unit

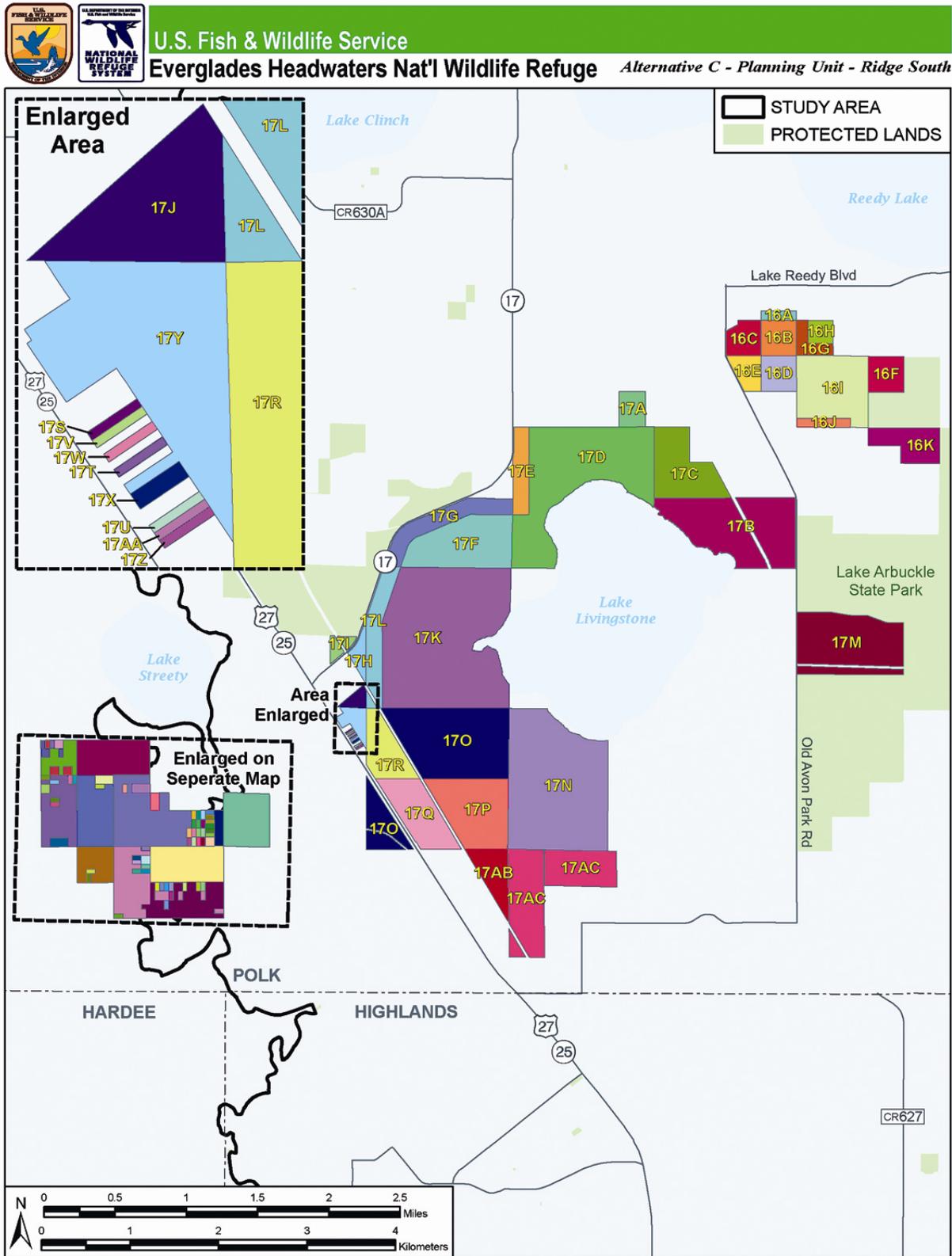


Figure 3h. Detail of parcels included in the Conservation Focal Area, Ridge North Planning Unit

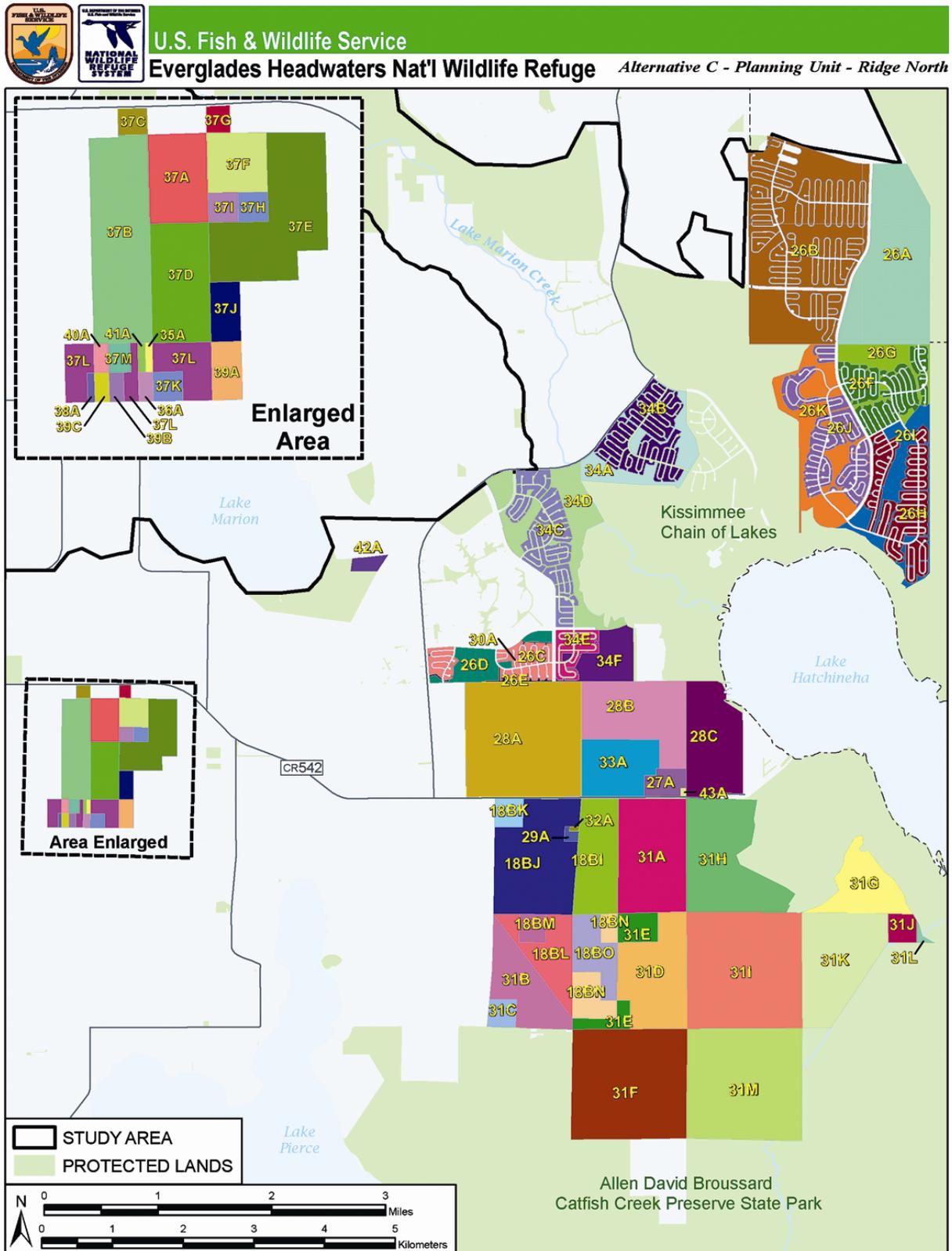


Figure 4a. Prairie North overall priorities

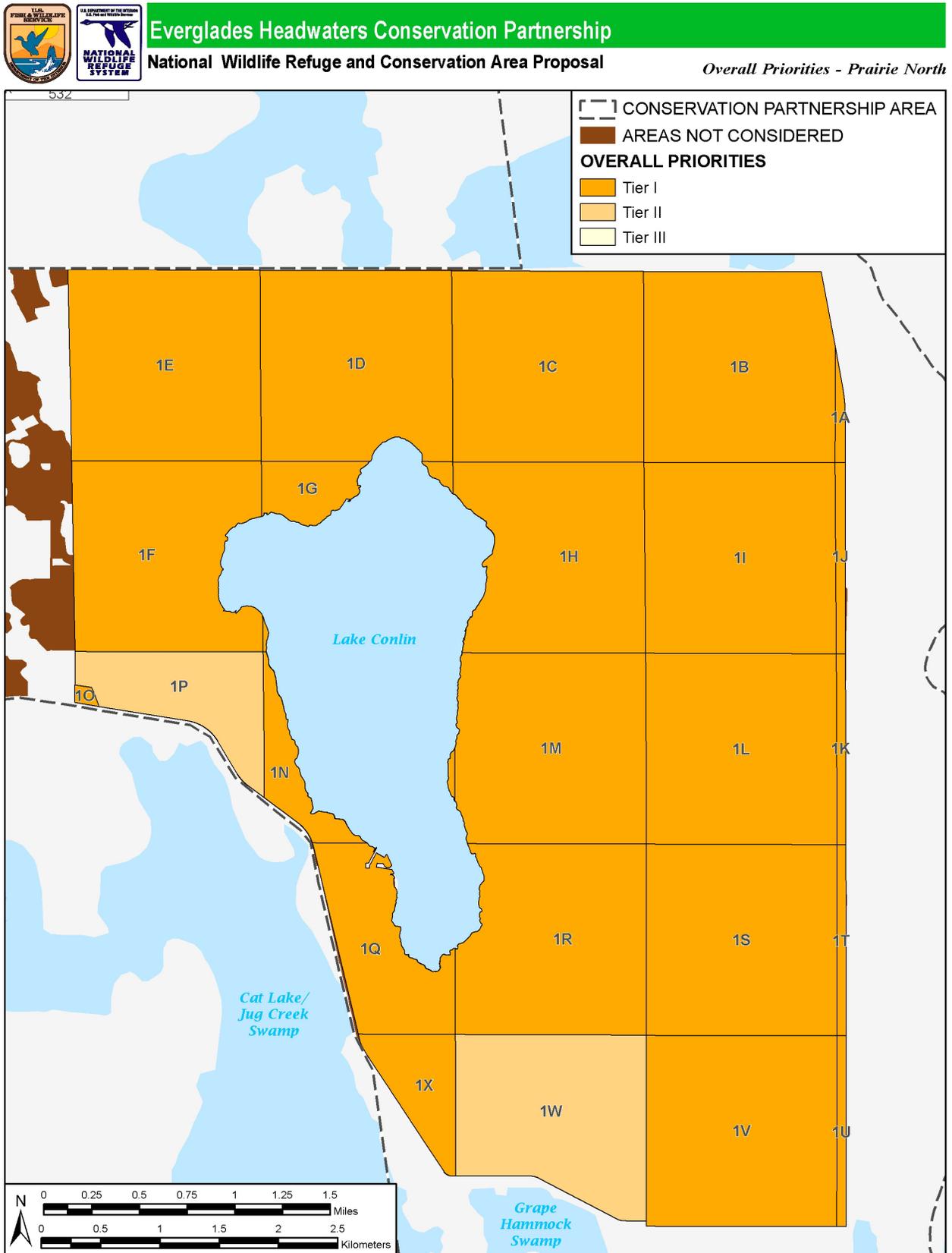


Figure 4d. Ridge North overall priorities

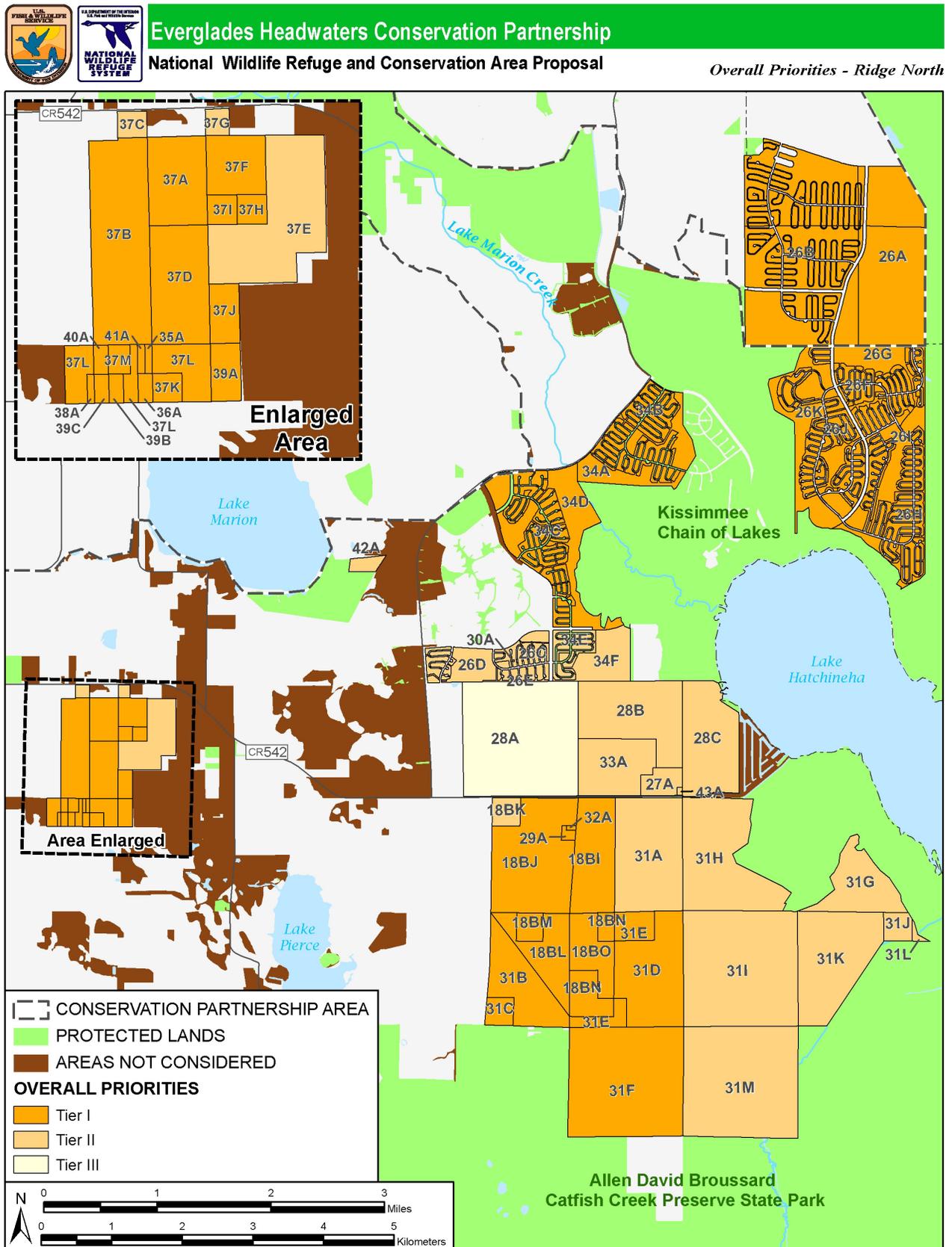


Figure 4e. Ridge Central overall priorities

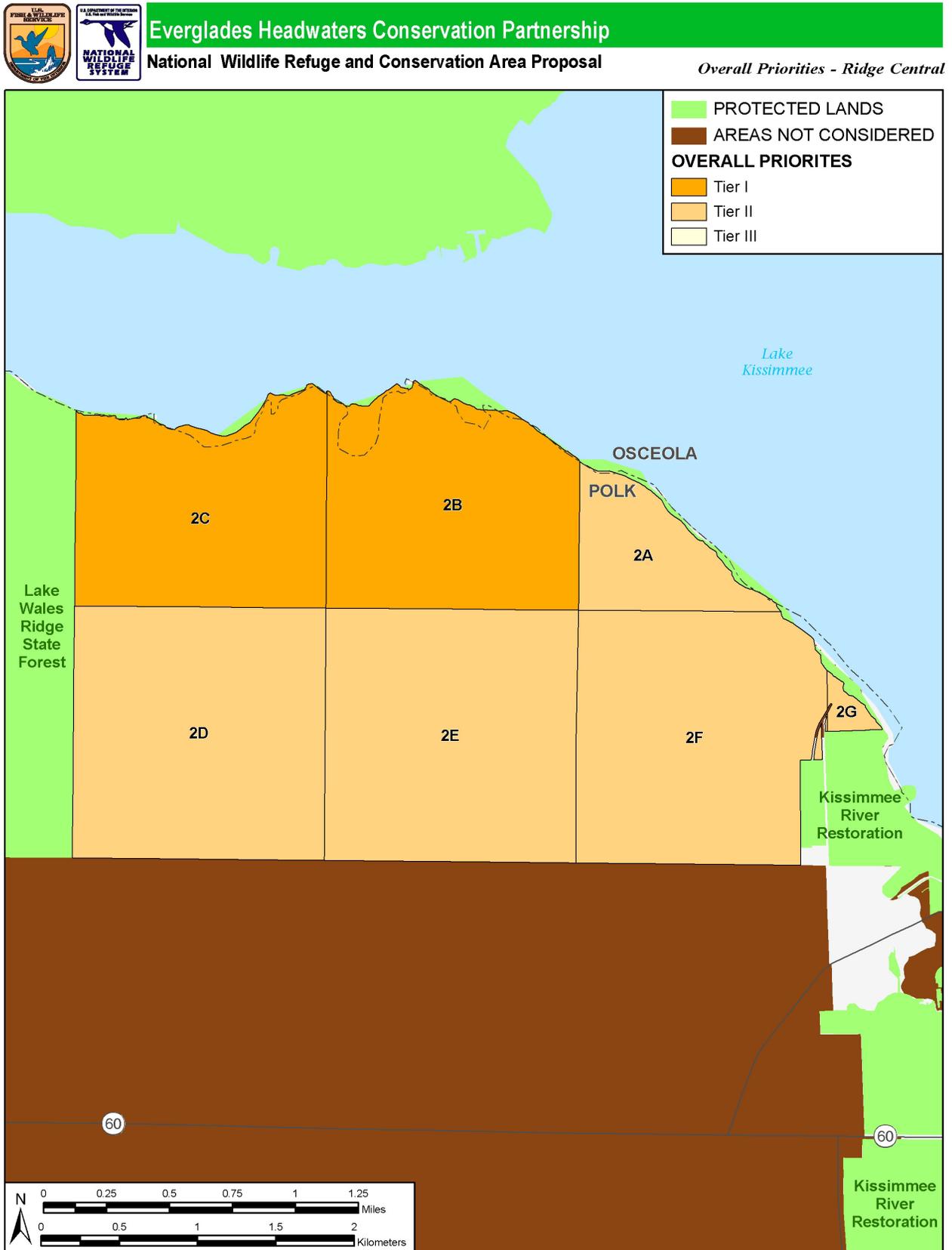


Figure 4f. Ridge South overall priorities

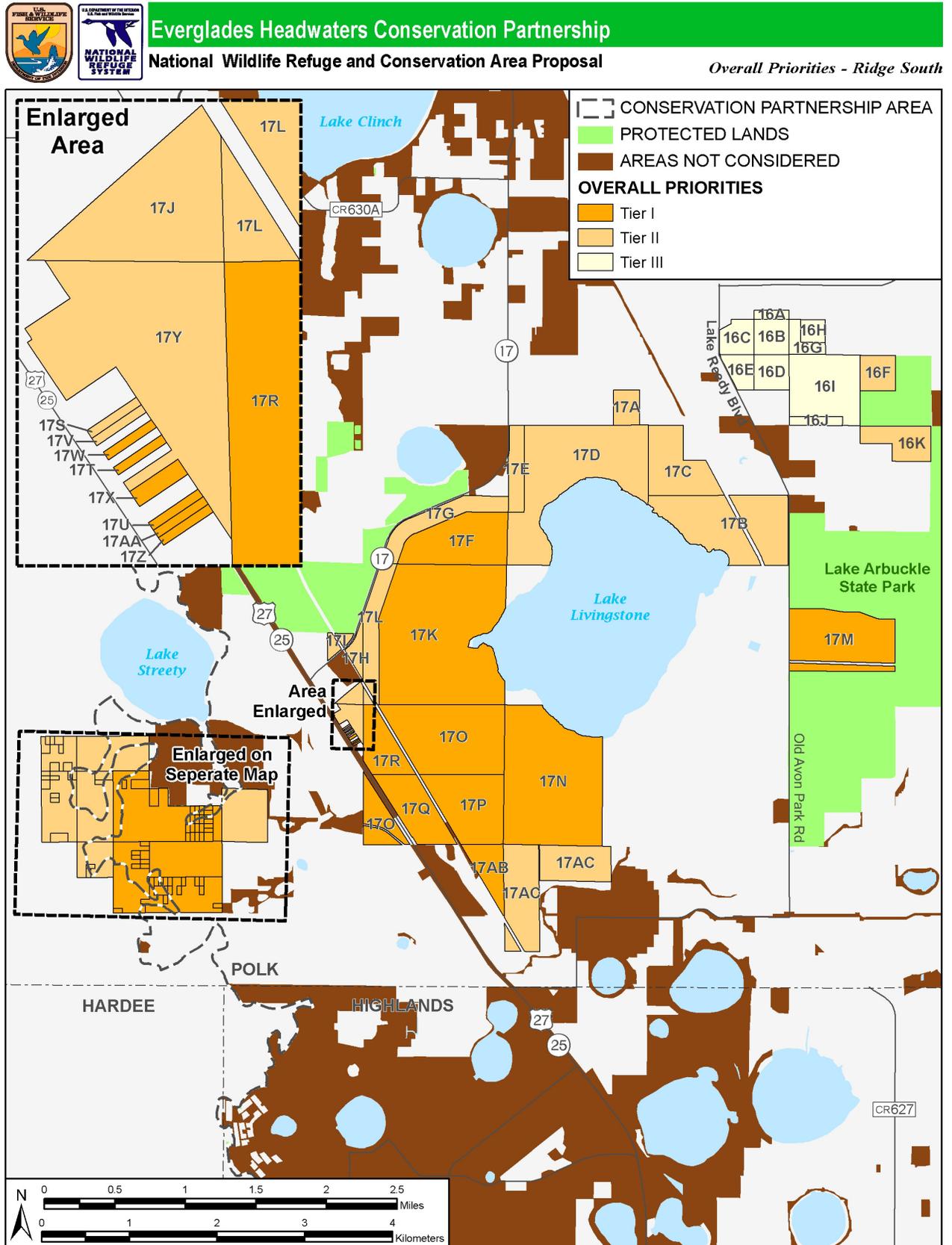


Figure 4g. Ridge South – enlargement overall priorities

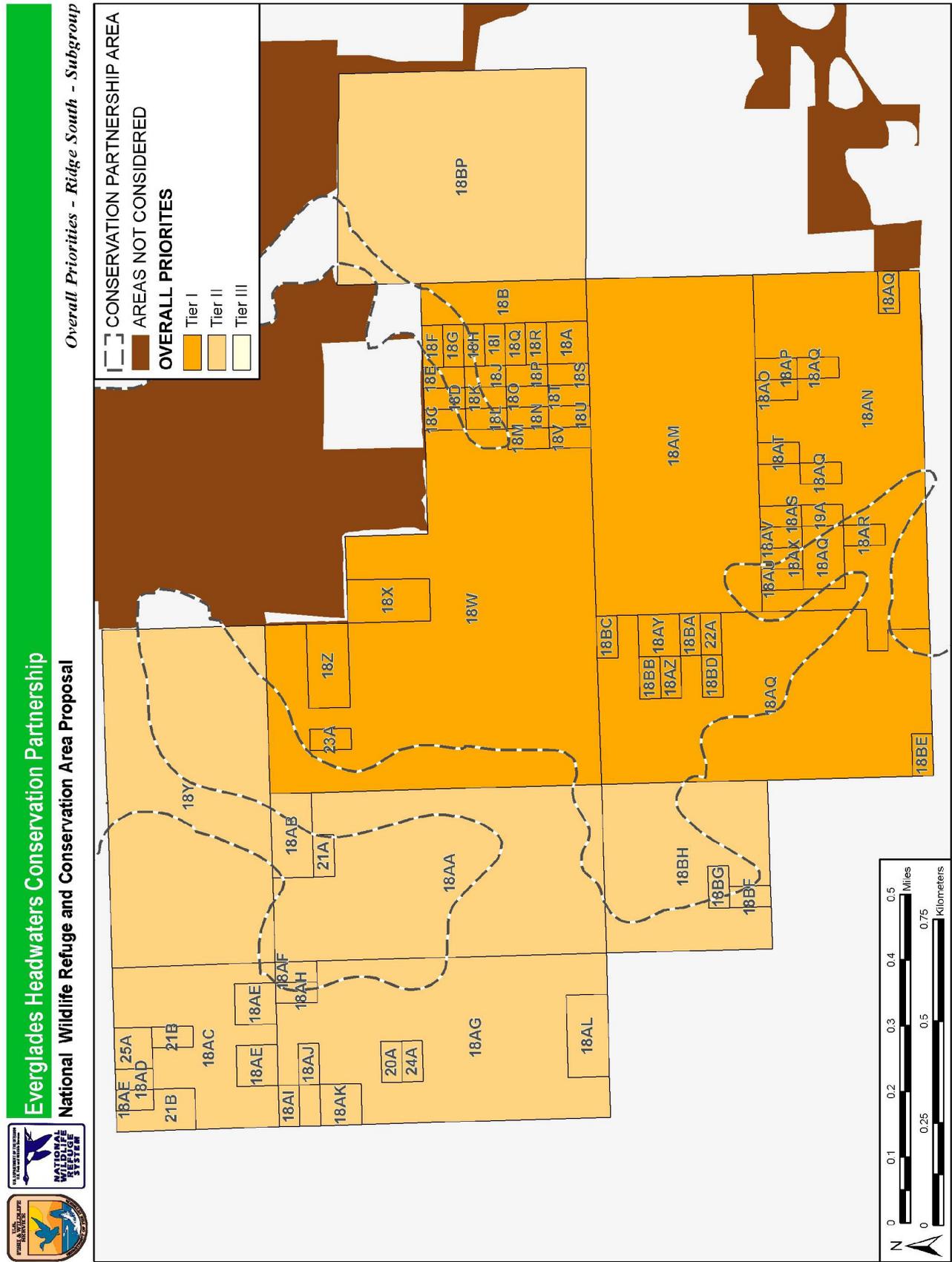
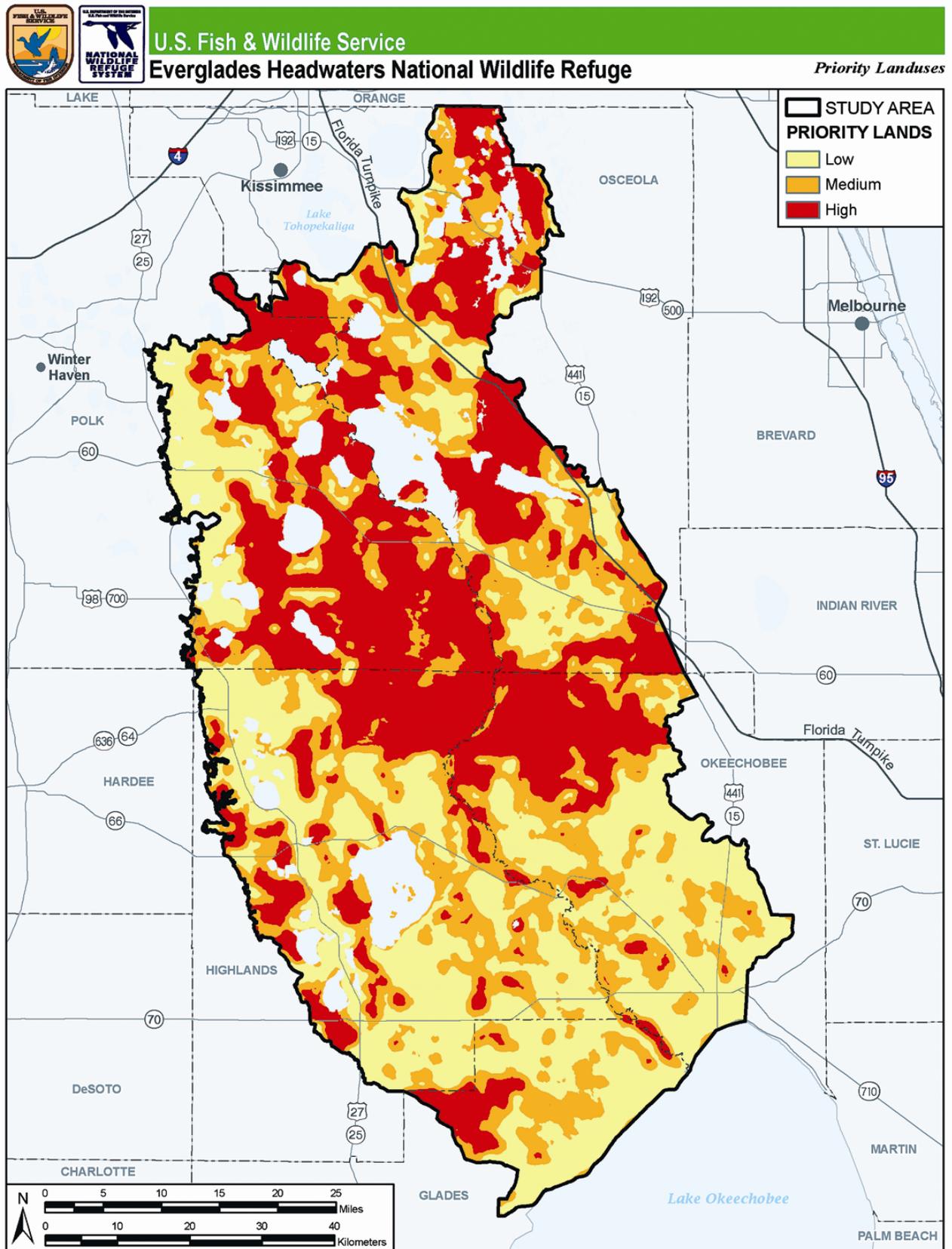


Figure 5. Land protection priority land covers within the Study Area



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