

FLORIDA GULF OF MEXICO

RESTORATION

PROJECT SUBMITTAL FORM

Form Purpose and Instructions:

- To assist the project proposal and review process, please complete this Submittal Form. Completion of the Form will contribute to the appropriate information being completely and accurately submitted for each project.
- Take as much space as needed for each question, but please keep responses as focused as possible. It may assist you to review all the questions before addressing any one question.
- Please submit one Form per project, if you have multiple projects - please submit one Form for each project.
- Please submit completed Forms to Restoration.Projects@dep.state.fl.us. Once your Form is successfully submitted, you will receive a confirmation email from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Project Name:

Tallahassee Community College - Wakulla Environmental Institute - Conservation Lands and Eco-Recreation Facilities

Contact Information *(Include at least one name, phone number, email address, and organization name if applicable):*

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Tallahassee Community College
444 Appleyard Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32304

Project Location *(Include a map, if possible, and the city, county, longitude/latitude, and watershed):*

The project is located in Wakulla County, Florida, approximately 4.25 miles south of Crawfordville, in the Ochlocknee-St. Marks Watershed, in Hartsfield River Survey Sections 504 and 505, Township 60N and Range 60E. The project area lies within the Gulf Coastal Plains Bioregion at approximately 30°07'53.87" North by 84°23'01.88" West (Figure 1)

Project Description *(Describe all aspects of the project):*

The proposal requests funding for the purchase of approximately 156 acres adjacent to the Tallahassee Community College (TCC) Wakulla Environmental Institute (WEI) campus (Figure 2), the design and construction of eco-recreational facilities, and associated environmental analysis and planning. Property acquisitions are needed to provide the campus with adequate space and ecologic diversity for educational programming, tourism, land management and ecologic restoration activities, eco-recreational facilities, and expansion associated with the Institute and Biophilia Center. Protection of this land will enhance habitat diversity, provide critical buffer zones between the campus and nearby residential areas, increase the viability of the campus as habitat for birds and other wildlife, increase opportunities for meaningful restoration and land management research and demonstration areas, and stimulate regional ecotourism. It will also buffer streams, protect critical groundwater recharge areas and allow for the demonstration of wildlife and water friendly building and land management practices.

Coastal Wakulla County is the gateway to the Gulf of Mexico from Florida's Capitol in Tallahassee and bridges the Florida panhandle from the "Forgotten Coast" to the west and Florida's Big Bend, "The Nature Coast," to the east. The Wakulla Environmental Institute (WEI) is an initiative by Tallahassee Community College (TCC) to 1) take advantage of this strategic location, 2) enhance the public's understanding and appreciation of the ecology and economy of the local Gulf of Mexico region, 3) train the "next generation" of natural resource managers and professionals, 4) stimulate a workforce to meet the public and private needs of a more sustainable Gulf future, and 5) bring new visitors from an expanded and properly marketed domestic and international ecotourism industry. The WEI will have three main missions: Education, Conservation and Recreation. These will be met by the six (6) following components:

1. Degree and professional certificate programs in environmental science technology, water quality, aquaculture, parks and leisure, and agribusiness, forestry, and wildlife management; non-degree workforce development courses in nature-based business; as well as professional certification and continuing education programs in a broad range of environmental specialties.
2. The Wakulla E.O. Wilson Biophilia Education Center (proposed) – a younger student and public education center on the region's rich biodiversity;

3. WEI Education and Training Center(proposed) – a multi-use facility for special training, education and community/ business programs;
4. TCC-WEI Lodge – a 200-room lodging facility for students and visitors to the Institute (to be privately funded and staffed by TCC);
5. WEI Aquaculture Program and Center(proposed) – a special jobs and marine products incubator for the region;
6. WEI Conservation Lands & Recreational Facilities (proposed here) – natural lands adjacent to the existing TCC-WEI campus and recreational facilities needed to stimulate ecotourism.

Together these six (6) components of WEI will provide state-of-the-art, environmentally sensitive and efficient learning laboratories for students and professionals seeking real life, hands-on training in conservation practices, resource management, recreation and regional ecotourism, while helping to create jobs and build a more vigorous ecotourism industry.

In addition to the WEI Conservation Lands & Recreational Facilities proposed here, separate proposals supporting other components of the WEI have been submitted. Figure 2 shows the location of properties and facilities anticipated in all three of these proposals in relation to the existing property of TCC-WEI.

This Proposal specifically requests funding for the acquisition of conservation lands to support the various components of the WEI, and for the development of environmentally friendly recreational facilities to attract ecotourism. This initiative will benefit the Gulf Coast by satisfying goals established by [December 2012 Gulf of Mexico Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy](#) (the Strategy), and enhance the effectiveness of a Gulf-wide Comprehensive Plan as described in the [Gulf Council's "Path Forward Report."](#) The focus of the Wakulla E.O. Biophilia Center will be on interactions between land use, water management, and the Gulf of Mexico, and educational efforts hosted by WEI will focus on a broad range of environmental skills and career areas. A larger land base is needed to provide adequate room and habitats for environmental education and interpretation, applied research, ecological restoration activities, wildlife and plant community management, recreation, and future facility expansion.

The development of new, innovative recreational amenities designed to celebrate the natural world are needed to increase tourism in the region, especially by domestic and international ecotourists. Proposed recreational developments will be located on site or through a management agreement on public lands near the WEI campus and will include:

- **Land acquisition:** Two parcels totaling 156 acres adjacent to the east and south of the existing WEI campus (Figure 2); one a 136-acre parcel containing mature and late successional mixed pine/hardwood forest, gum/cypress swamp forest, and portions of Black Creek to provide space for

nature trails, ecological restoration, and recreational facilities, and a second 20-acre parcel to the south of the existing WEI campus containing a medium-aged pine plantation and a portion of a sinkhole lake to provide buffer from adjacent home sites and to allow for connection to advanced sewage treatment facilities (if necessary) on adjacent middle school grounds to the southeast.

- **Predevelopment environmental assessment and permitting:** a detailed biological and geological assessment will be performed to inventory sensitive areas or critical species, evaluate the property in terms of environmental quality, sensitivity, and restoration potential, and assure that buildings and associated facilities are designed and located so as to avoid environmental impacts and create a net improvement in overall environmental quality.
- **Site design and construction:** Portions of properties to be acquired will host a system of interpretive nature and recreational trails and recreational facilities. These facilities are intended to benefit the local economy by encouraging regional ecotourism while inspiring recreational users to develop a deeper appreciation of nature and environmental stewardship. Each of these facilities will be sited, designed and constructed to minimize negative impacts to natural communities and manage water, waste, and energy in a sustainable manner.
- **Camping Facilities:** a variety of camping sites and facilities will be developed, including:
 - Sixty (60) traditional family campsites for tents and recreational vehicles;
 - Ten (10) equestrian camping sites with paddock and stable facilities;
 - Ten (10) YURTs (Year-round Universal Recreational Tents) - permanent canvas tent structures that provide the best of tent camping with some of the luxuries of a cabin. (YURTS have become very popular in Florida and other State Parks, especially with ecotourists.)
- **Forest Canopy Experience:** An interpretive pathway with stations and walkways high in the upland and swamp forest canopies. As opposed to the typical high-wire, thrill ride, the WEI Forest Canopy Experience would be both inspirational and educational. A majority of the life in a forest is found in the canopy, including insects, birds, and epiphytic plants, and ground based wildlife are not as frightened by humans in the air as on the ground. The WEI Forest Canopy Experience would provide a thrilling way to experience a natural community that most visitors never see, and to learn more about the dynamics of forest ecosystems.

Estimated Project Costs *(Describe the estimated costs of the project, including any assumptions for contingency and ongoing operations/maintenance. Identify other secured funding sources such as matching funds, in-kind contributions or state/federal dollars. In addition, if possible, complete and submit the Cost Appendix Sheet associated with this Form):*

Based on a preliminary program described above, the estimated costs of Conservation Lands and Recreational Facilities are as follows:

• Land Purchase - 156 Acres @ apx. \$5,320/acre	\$ 829,920
• Environmental Assessment, Design, Engineering, and Related	\$ 950,000
• Estimated Cost Recreational Facilities Construction:	
o Campgrounds	\$ 3,000,000
o Equestrian Sites	\$ 500,000
o YURT Camping	\$ 150,000
o Tree-house Cabins	\$ 650,000
o Canopy Encounter	\$ 250,000
o Nature Trail Construction	<u>\$ 500,000</u>
Total	\$ 6,245,000

Other Funding *(Indicate if the project is submitted for any potential funding or if it may be used to leverage additional funding, if so please describe the funding source [e.g. State/Federal Grants]):*

TCC received a \$4.5 million appropriation from the legislature and Governor last year to purchase the land and build the initial building for the TCC-WEI campus. No additional sources of funding have been identified for this proposal. However, TCC will provide funding to site, build, staff, and maintain the lodging and ancillary facilities of the WEI Campus through private and other sources. TCC and the State of Florida will also provide staffing, administrative support, and maintenance of the WEI campus and educational/training and recreational facilities through annual budget and Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) funds. The TCC Foundation, WEI stakeholders and other partners and parties will provide volunteer and other support of this project.

Technical Feasibility *(Describe the technologies involved and any relevant past experience or proven success with similar projects):*

Project partners, including TCC, cooperating resource agencies and stakeholders, and Ecology and Environment, Inc. and its associates will provide the necessary experience and technical knowledge to assess environmental assets and constraints on the property proposed for acquisition and recreational lands, and to develop a master plan for the sensitive siting of buildings, restroom facilities, camp sites, trails, outdoor learning labs, and other facilities. Ecology and Environment has extensive experience in environmental analysis and planning and a very successful and well-developed sustainable communities practice. The WEI has been approved by TCC, which has ample experience in the administration of educational campuses and training facilities throughout the region. In addition to the \$4.5 million appropriation last year by the Florida Legislature and Governor, TCC has administered and grown the highly successful Public Safety Institute in Gadsden County, which provides law enforcement education and training for officers throughout the State of Florida.

Environmental Benefits *(Describe the nature, magnitude, and timing of any environmental benefits attributable to the project. If possible, describe potential environmental performance measures [e.g. pollutant reduction]. Please address any potential environmental impacts associated with implementing or maintaining the project [e.g. loss of a habitat or conversion of habitat from one type to another during implementation]):*

The landscape in which the WEI is to be located is a microcosm of the county and region as a whole containing a patchwork of residential areas, small farms and managed forests, evergreen and mixed hardwood uplands, springs, sinkhole lakes and other karst features, emergent and forested wetlands, and blackwater streams. The management and use of all of these landscape features affect water quality and quantity and are integrally related to the health of nearby Gulf of Mexico coastal and marine habitats. Though the WEI will work to restore the 158-acre parcel currently under WEI control, it is dominated by prior disturbed pineland, somewhat limiting the current, immediate range of opportunities for ecological restoration, wildlife and plant community management, and environmental education. The acreage proposed for acquisition includes diverse swamp forest surrounding Black Creek and mature and medium-aged mixed hardwood forest. Protection of this land will increase the viability of the campus as habitat for birds and other wildlife; increase opportunities for restoration, land management research and demonstration areas; and provide a more diverse and interesting experience for students and visitors to the WEI Biophilia Center and Eco-recreation facilities. It will also buffer streams, protect critical groundwater recharge areas, and allow for the demonstration of wildlife and water friendly building and land management practices.

Current research indicates that ecotourists prefer to lodge and recreate in sustainably-designed facilities in or near interesting natural areas that offer opportunities to discover, enjoy, and learn about ecosystems and ecological restoration. The recreational facilities proposed here are to be located on site or on public lands near the WEI educational center, Biophilia Center, and Lodge and Training Center that are in an unmanaged, mid-successional stage of forest regrowth. Careful site assessment, planning, and location of recreational facilities in such a landscape will prevent impacts to mature ecosystems, allow ecological restoration to become part of the recreational experience, and lead to a greater appreciation and sense of stewardship for natural systems. As with all facilities proposed for inclusion in the WEI, recreational facilities will be designed to minimize their ecological footprint and demonstrate sustainable practices.

Economic and Social Benefits *(Describe the economic and social benefits including those related to the project's improved ecosystem services and any estimates on jobs created or preserved):*

The world class parks, preserves and natural amenities of Wakulla County are already important potential economic drivers of tourism, job growth, and overall economic vitality. The construction and operational needs of the WEI campus and nearby recreational facilities themselves will have an immediate positive impact on local employment, and increased tourism and a better trained workforce will have additional, positive social and economic impacts in the longer term. There are strong indications that with the right attractions, coordination, and marketing, tourism focused on the region's unique environmental amenities has tremendous growth potential (Figure 3). Adding to the size and

biodiversity of the WEI campus and providing environmentally focused trails and recreational facilities, especially in association with the Biophilia Center and Conference and Training Center will add critical mass to efforts to make Wakulla County an ecotourist destination. The trails and recreational facilities at WEI will also interpret and demonstrate current and emerging technologies and approaches to sustainability, including sustainable energy sources, water conservation and energy conservation that will encourage current and future developments in the region to be more resilient and sustainable. As with all components of the WEI, students will participate directly in the operation of recreational facilities and in ecological restoration efforts on parcels to be protected under this proposal, enhancing their practical knowledge and qualifications to secure employment in hospitality, recreation and related industries.

Community Resilience *(Describe if the project assists Florida's ability to anticipate, withstand, or recover from hazards or threats [e.g. hurricane preparedness, establishing living shorelines]):*

Community resilience in the Gulf Region typically relies on land use and planning choices, and the degree to which community members understand how these choices affect an ecosystem's ability to withstand and protect against natural and man-made disasters. The land acquisition and eco-recreational facilities here will complement the education efforts of the WEI that emphasize sustainability and community resilience, especially as they relate to land use and water quality. Eco-recreational facilities will bring tourists and recreationalists close to nature in a setting designed to both entertain and educate, thereby encouraging visitors to better understand and support sustainable practices and environmental stewardship.

Conflicts or Complements to Existing Efforts *(Describe any ongoing activities in the project implementation area, if the project is part of another plan, and why the project does or does not interfere with that work. Please consider how the project may complement existing local, regional, and state efforts/plans/objectives):*

There are no known conflicts with existing or planned projects in the implementation area. The proposed project actually supports a number of local, state, regional and national goals, objectives and strategies in the areas of comprehensive land management, education, visitation, outdoor recreation, job creation, and water and other natural resource conservation. A complete list of these plans can be compiled and referenced upon request. Acquisition of additional habitat and the provision of camping, trail, and recreational facilities are an essential element of the overall WEI plan and will compliment other WEI initiatives including the WEI Lodge Education and Training Center, WEI Biophilia Center, and the broad array of degree and non-degree continuing education programs offered by the Institute. Once a visitor has exhausted the recreational and educational opportunities provided on the TCC-WEI campus, they may be encouraged to explore and experience other area attractions and activities. A partial list of WEI partners is provided in the Partner Key to Figure 3 to satisfy these needs and interests.

Complies with Federal, State, Local, and Tribal Laws/Regulations *(Describe any concerns or potential conflicts):*

The project does not conflict with and will be developed in strict compliance with all relevant regulations.

Readiness for Implementation *(Describe if the project has had any design or permitting work started or completed [attach permits or design work]. Please address any issues that may delay start or finish of the project):*

The initial property for the TCC WEI education and training facilities (158 acres) has been purchased and all land use and zoning requirements have been met. Ground breaking for the initial WEI education and administration building is occurring on April 15, 2013. A master conceptual plan for the TCC WEI campus has been developed and is moving forward. This proposal is a part of that master plan.

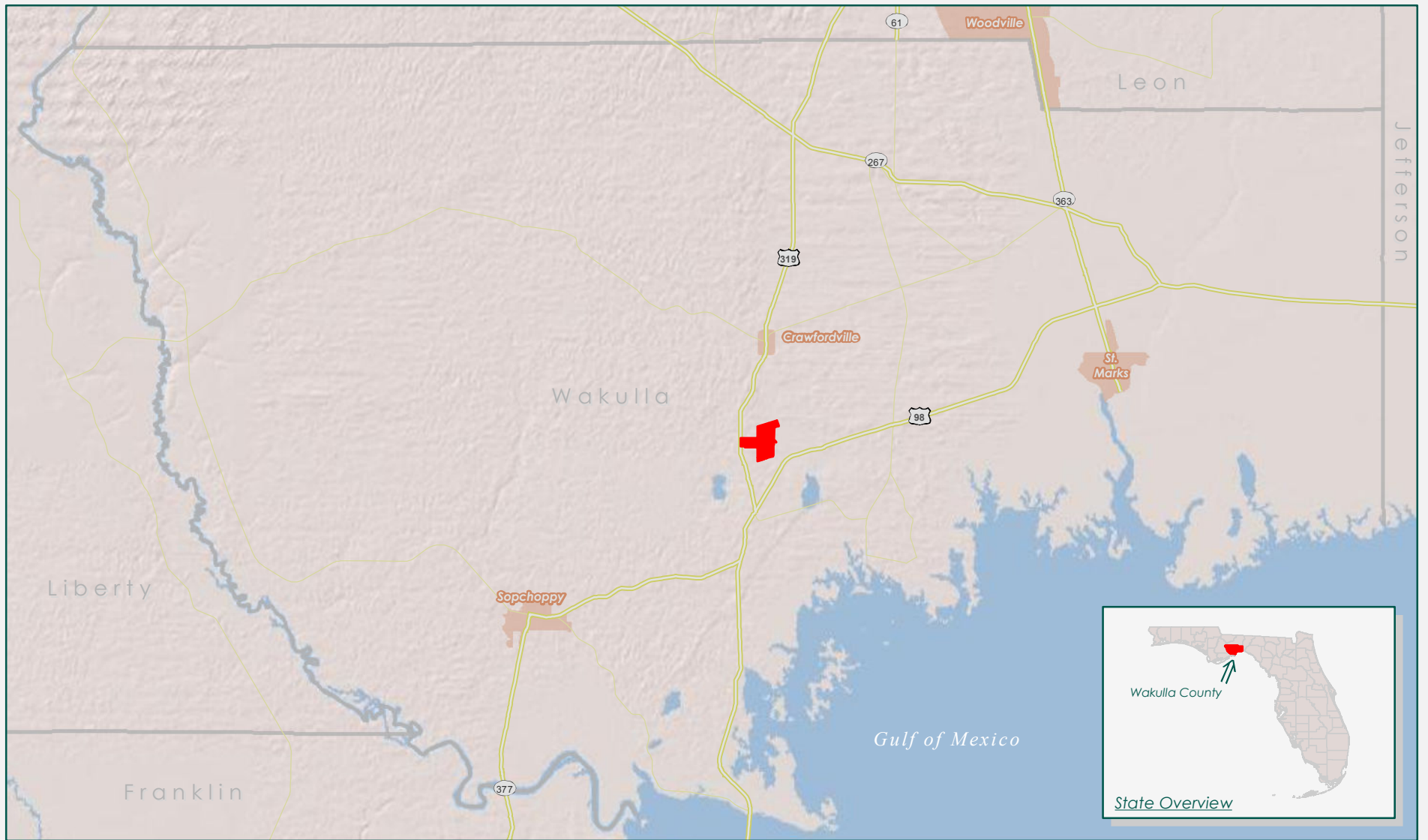
There are no anticipated issues that might delay start or completion of the proposed land acquisitions or recreational facilities developments as part of this proposal. As we intend to avoid impact to any regulated features such as wetlands or streams, we do not anticipate any delays due to environmental applications or permits. Through its partnership with Ecology and Environment, WEI is well positioned to begin environmental assessments and design processes as soon as funding is secured.

Public Acceptance *(Describe any known or potential public approval or opposition to the project):*

There is no anticipated public opposition to this project. The project has been approved by the President and Board of Trustees of TCC, and a broad range of stakeholders, including the Wakulla County Commission and many other government officials, has been engaged on an ongoing basis to provide input into planning. The TCC-WEI has broad public acceptance and support in the County and region. It intends to continue with the support of state, local and federal resource agencies (i.e. USFWS, NFS, NPS, DEP, FWC, DACS, DEO, DOH, etc.), Visit Florida and Workforce Plus, and other academic institutions (i.e., FSU, FAMU and others), in the region.

Additional Information you wish to provide *(Please include any maps, designs, drawings, photos, or background resources that may assist in completely and accurately understanding the project):*

See Figures 1-3 and the TCC-WEI Partner Key attached.



-  Project Area
-  County Boundary
-  Highway
-  Major Highway
-  City or Town

FIGURE 1

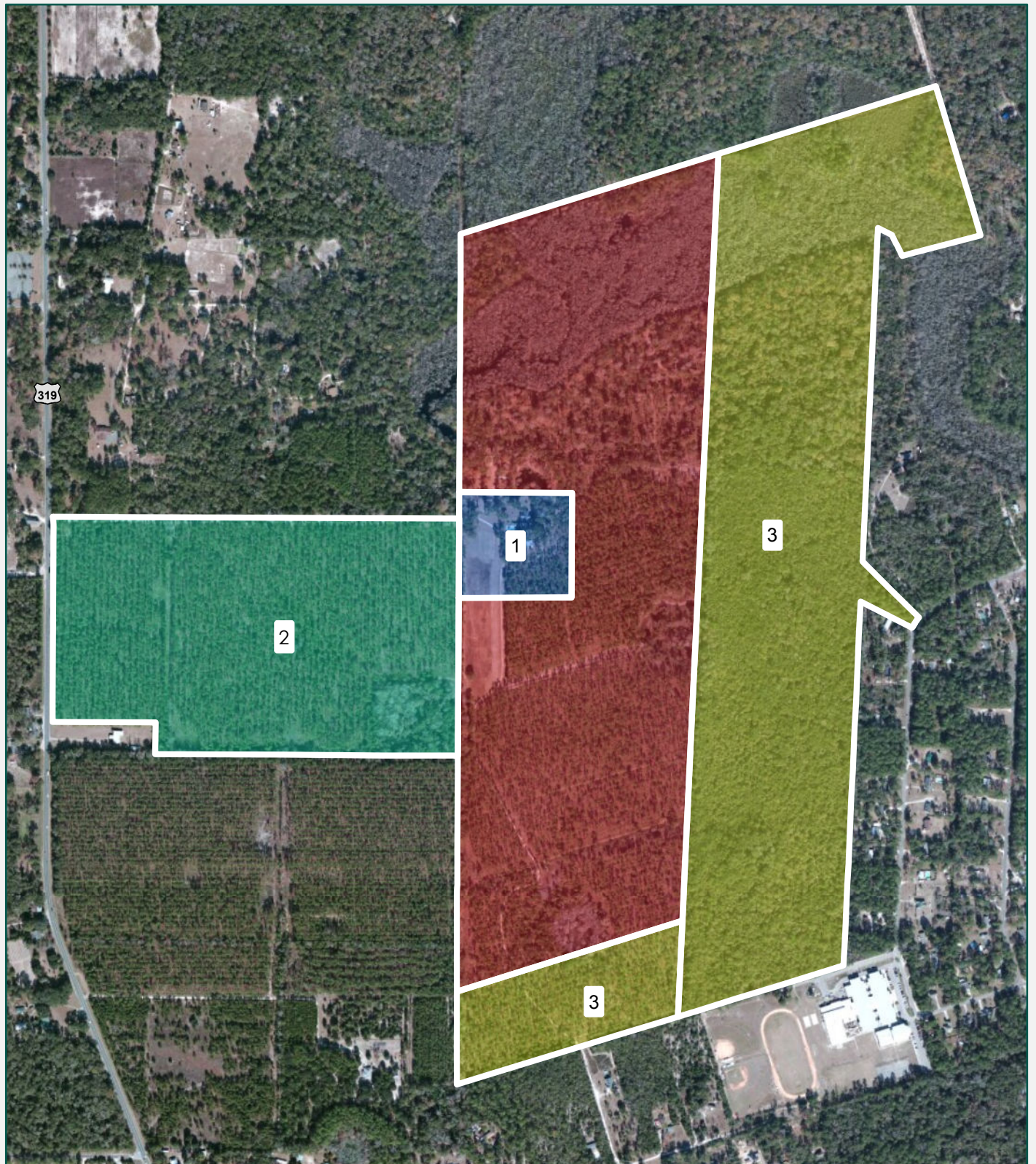
Project Location
Wakulla Environmental Institute

Source - ESRI 2010, FDOR 2012



0 1 2 3 4 5 Miles





Purchased Property

■ Wakulla Environmental Institute

Proposed Property Purchase

- 1 Biophilia Center
- 2 Lodge and Training Center
- 3 Conservation & Recreation Area

FIGURE 2

Tallahassee Community College
Wakulla Environmental Institute

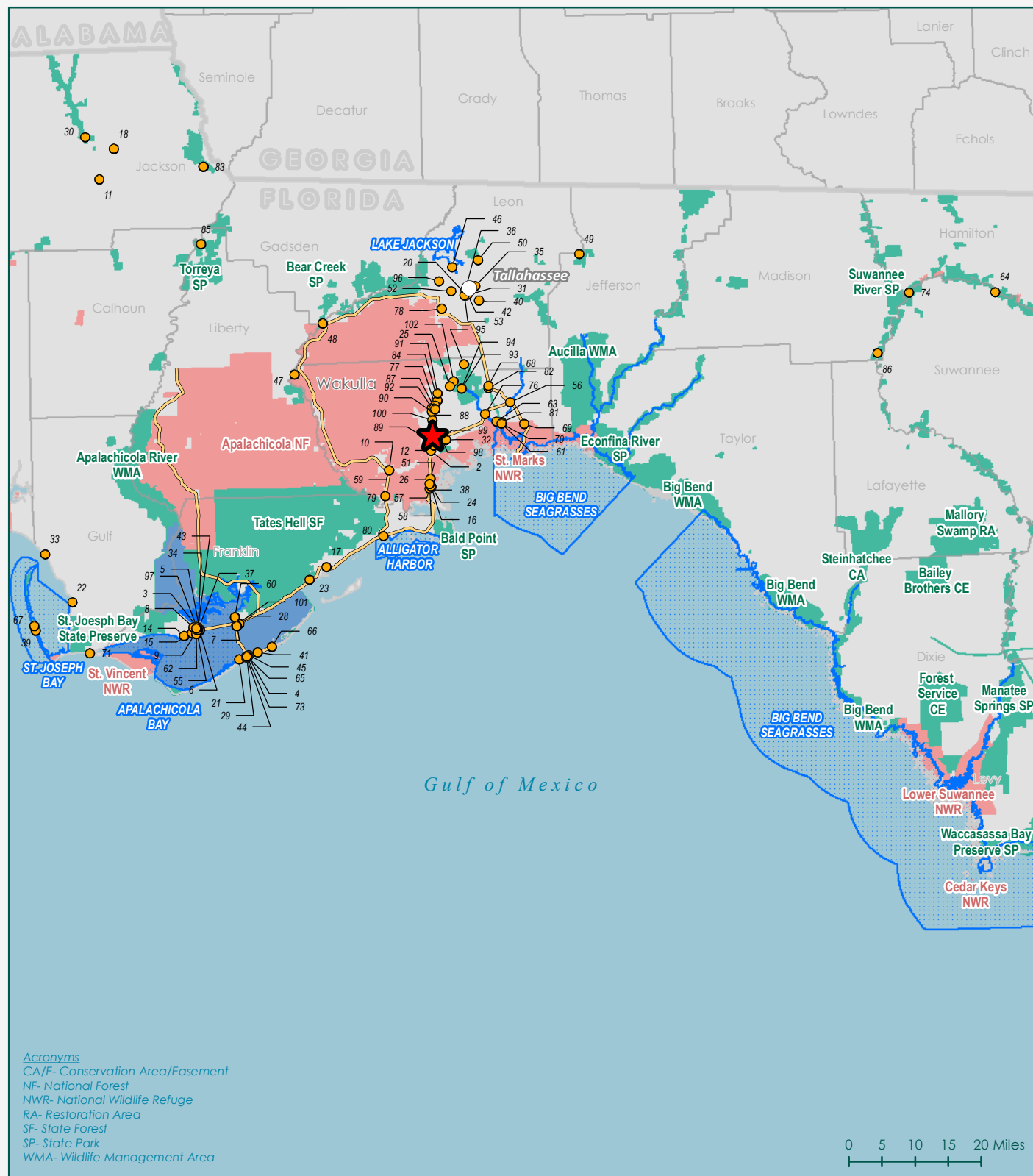
Source - ESRI 2010, FDOR 2012



ecology and environment, inc.
Global Specialists in the Environment

0 500 1,000 Feet





- Project Site
- Big Bend Scenic Byway
- Major City
- Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve
- TCC-WEI Partner*
- Aquatic Preserve
- County Boundary
- Florida Conservation Land
- State Boundary
- Federal
- State

*Figure 3 Partner Key Attached

FIGURE 3

Tallahassee Community College
 Wakulla Environmental Institute



Source - ESRI 2010, FDOR 2012,
 FNAI 2012, FDOT 2012, FDEP 2012



Figure 3 TCC-WEI Partner Key

Name	Map ID				
Adios Light Tackle Fishing Guide	1	Goodwood Museum and Gardens	35	St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge	69
Angie's Marine Supply, Inc	2	Governor's Mansion	36	St. Marks Smokehouse & Oyster bar	70
Apalachicola Bay Chamber of Commerce	3	Grady Market	37	St. Vincent Island Shuttle and Fishing Charters	71
Apalachicola Bay Serenity Charters	4	Gulf Specimen Marine Labratories Inc	38	Stephen Foster Folk Cultural Center State Park	72
Apalachicola Marina, Inc	5	Inshore Charters	39	Survivor's Bait and Tackle	73
Apalachicola Maritime Museum	6	Inspired Technologies	40	Suwannee River State Park	74
Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve	7	Island Outfitters	41	Suwannee River Wilderness Trail	75
Apalachicola Nature Center	8	John G. Riley Museum of African American History	42	T-N-T Hide-Away, Inc	76
Apalachicola Riverkeeper	9	John Gorrie Museum State Park	43	Talk of the Town Deli	77
Backwoods Bistro	10	Jolly Roger	44	Tallahassee Museum	78
Bearpaw Adventures Kayak and Canoe Trips	11	Journeys of St. George Island	45	Ochlockonee River State Park	79
Best Western Plus Wakulla Inn & Suites	12	Lake Jackson Mounds Archaeological State Park	46	The Florida State University Coastal and Marine Laboratory	80
Big Shoals State Park	13	Lake Talquin State Forest	47	The Sweet Magnolia Bed & Breakfast	81
Book Me A Charter	14	Lake Talquin State Park	48	The Wilderness Way	82
Boss Charters	15	Letchworth-Love Mounds Archaeological State Park	49	Three Rivers State Park	83
Buoy's Bayside Restaurant	16	MaClay and BaClay Gardens State Park	50	ThreeY Ranch and Outdoor Equipment	84
Camp Gordon Johnston WWII Museum	17	Mineral Springs by the Bay	51	Torreya State Park	85
Canoe Adventures	18	Mission San Luis	52	Twin Rivers State Park	86
Captain James PIC	19	Museum of Florida History	53	U.S. National Forest Service	87
Challenger Learning Center	20	O'Leno State Park	54	Wakulla Area Times	88
Charlie's Charters	21	Ormon House Historic State Park	55	Wakulla County Public Library	89
Constitution Convention Museum State Park	22	Ouzts Too Oyster Bar & Grill	56	Wakulla Extension Office/Florida Sea Grant	90
Crooked River Lighthouse	23	Panacea RV Park	57	Wakulla Produce	91
Crum's Mini Mall	24	POND	58	Wakulla Senior Citizen Center	92
Cypress Run Farms	25	Posh Java Organics & Gifts	59	Wakulla Springs Lodge	93
Dockside Cafe	26	Reel Time Charters	60	Wakulla Springs State Park	94
Falling Waters State Park	27	Riverside Cafe	61	Wakulla State Forest	95
Fisherman's Choice	28	Scipio Creek Marina	62	WAVE 94.1 FM	96
Fisherman's Headquarters	29	Shell Island Fish Camp & Marina	63	Wheelhouse Adventure Tours	97
Florida Caverns State Park	30	Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park and Campground	64	Wildwood Hotel	98
Florida Historic Capitol Museum	31	St. George Island Lighthouse	65	Wildwood Restaurant	99
Florida Wild Mammal Association	32	St. George Island State Park	66	Workforce PLUS	100
Forgotten Coast Adventures	33	St. Joe Peninsula State Park	67	WOYS Oyster Radio	101
Forgotten Coast Outfitters	34	St. Marks Historic Railroad Trail State Park	68	YMCA Camp Indian Springs	102