ITEM 26:

Vote on whether to amend the Lower Suwannee River and Gulf Watershed Florida Forever Project Boundary to add nine parcels totaling approximately 493.97 GIS acres in Dixie County with a tax assessed market value of $1,047,514.

LOCATION:

Dixie County

DSL STAFF REMARKS:

The Ippolito Property amendment proposed by the Florida Conservation Group adds nine parcels in Dixie County totaling approximately 493.97 GIS acres to the Lower Suwannee River and Gulf Watershed Florida Forever project. The proposal consists of nine parcels owned by Stephen Ippolito. The nine parcels have a combined tax assessed value of $1,047,514.

The proposal abuts the western boundary of the Lower Suwannee River and Gulf Watershed project. The Lower Suwannee River flows along its eastern boundary, contiguous with existing state conservations lands to the east. The parcels are proposed for less-than-fee acquisition. All landowners have been contacted and are willing sellers. The proposal is located within Priority 1 of the Florida Ecological Greenways Network. If acquired as a conservation easement, the property would build upon the large complex of existing conservation lands surrounding the Lower Suwannee River, protection of which would ensure habitat for imperiled species that naturally utilize this riparian corridor.

The proposal meets the criteria to be submitted as a boundary amendment. The parcels have a tax assessed value of less than $5 million. The proposal area should be designated as essential.

Project History:

The Lower Suwannee River and Gulf Watershed project will preserve the natural resources of the Suwannee River and the Gulf of Mexico and provide habitat and natural corridors for rare plants and animals over a wide swath of undeveloped public lands, including the Big Bend Wildlife Management Area, the Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge, Suwannee River Water Management District conservation areas and the Big Bend Seagrasses Aquatic Preserve.

The project includes over 58,638 acres with 12,090 acres remaining to be acquired. The tax assessed value for the remaining acres to be acquired is $18,975,618. The project is ranked number 12 in the Less-Than-Fee category on the 2024 Florida Forever Priority List.

FNAI Review:

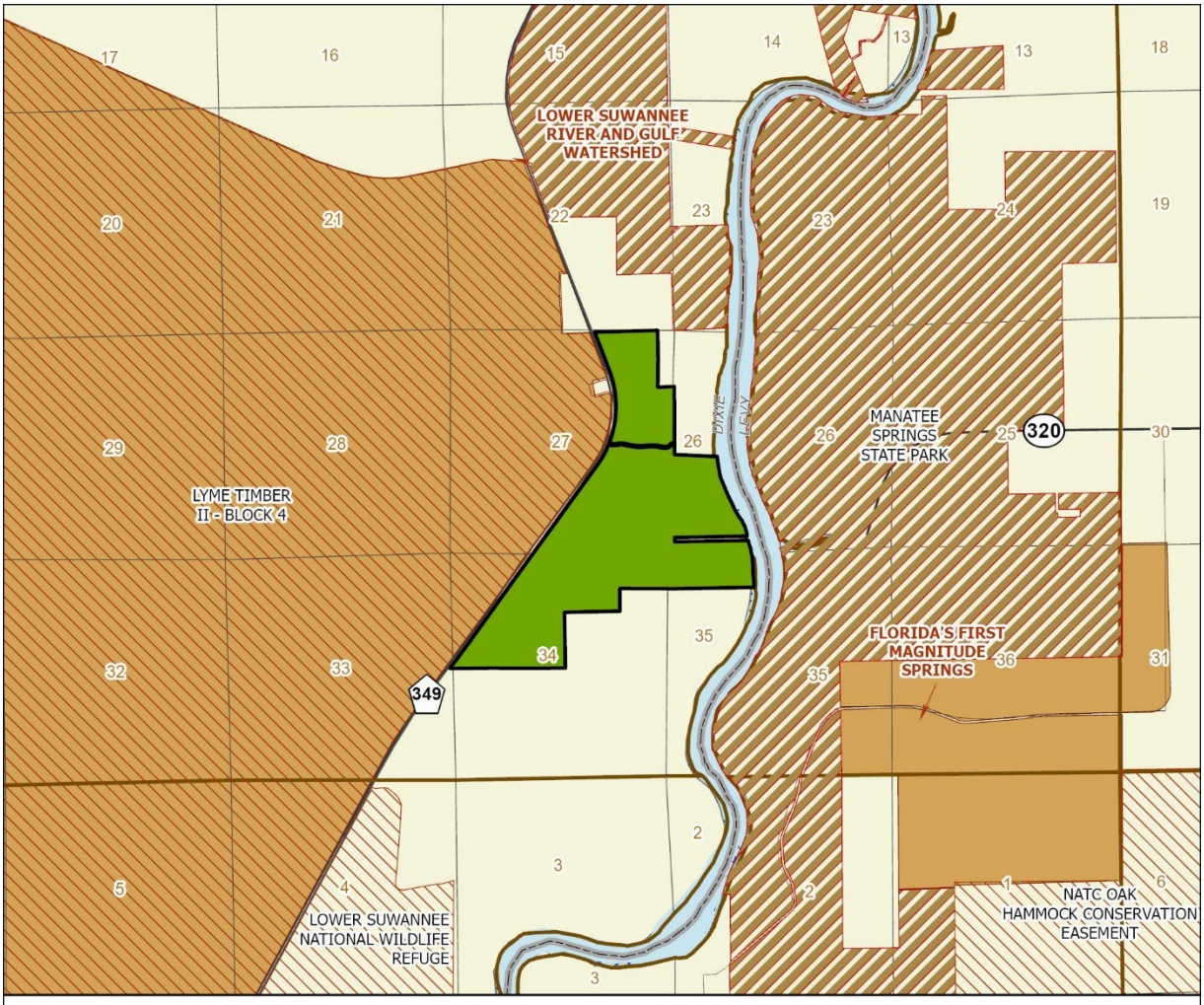
According to the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI), 97% of the site contributes to Ecological Greenways and Surface Water Protection. 96% of the site contributes to Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas and 80% to FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities. 8% of the site contains under-represented natural communities including upland hardwood forest and mesic/wet flatwoods.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Vote on the proposed boundary amendment.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

Project	DHR	FFS	Lynetta Griner	DEP	FWC	Bill Palmer	Elva Peppers	Selected
Lower Suwannee River and Gulf Watershed: Ippolito Property								Y



LOWER SUWANNEE RIVER AND GULF WATERSHED PROPOSED ADDITION (IPPOLITO PROPERTY)

DIXIE COUNTY

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

N

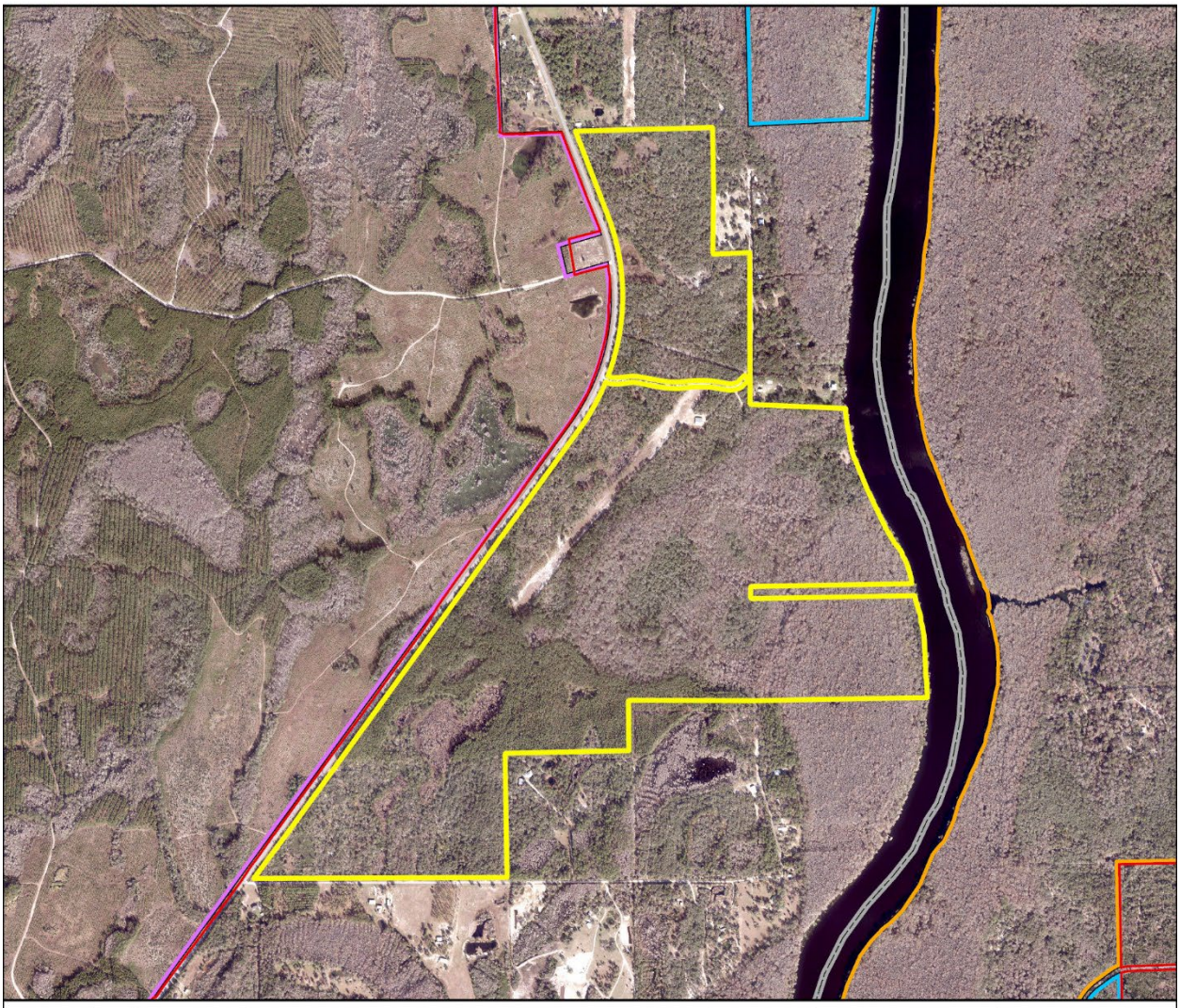
0 1 2 Miles



MAP BY FL NATURAL AREAS INVENTORY AUGUST 2024

Lower Suwannee River and Gulf Watershed Proposed Addition (Ippolito Property)

FLORIDA FOREVER BOARD OF TRUSTEES PROJECT PROPOSED ADDITION AS OF AUGUST 2024



Map Produced by: FL Natural Areas Inventory, N. Pasco, August 2024 Background: County Ortho Imagery 2022 Resolution = 0.15 meter

FNAI

- Florida Forever Proposed Addition
- Florida Forever BOT Projects
- Existing State Conservation Lands
- Existing Water Mangement District Conservation Lands
- Existing Private Conservation Lands

N

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Lower Suwannee River and Gulf Watershed Addition (Ippolito): Florida Forever Measures Evaluation 20240821

GIS ACRES = 494

MEASURES	Resource Acres[a]	% of project
B1: Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	392	79%
Priority 3	76	15%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	4	< 1%
Total Acres	472	96%
B2: FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities		
Priority 1	251	51%
Priority 2	39	8%
Priority 3	2	< 1%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	59	12%
Priority 6	44	9%
Total Acres	396	80%
B3: Ecological Greenways		
Priority 1	479	97%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	0	0%
Total Acres	479	97%
B4: Under-represented Natural Communities		
Upland Glade (G1)	0	0%
Pine Rockland (G1)	0	0%
Scrub and Scrubby Flatwoods (G2)	0	0%
Rockland Hammock (G2)	0	0%
Dry Prairie (G2)	0	0%
Seepage Slope (G2)	0	0%
Sandhill (G3)	0	0%
Sandhill Upland Lake (G3)	0	0%
Upland Pine (G3)	0	0%
Mesic/Wet Flatwoods (G4)	3	< 1%
Upland Hardwood Forest (G5)	34	7%
Total Acres	37	8%
B6: Occurrences of FNAI Tracked Species		
G1	0	
G2	1	
G3	0	
G4	1	
G5	0	
Total	2	
C4: Natural Floodplain Function		
Priority 1	114	23%
Priority 2	90	18%
Priority 3	37	7%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	0	0%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	241	49%

MEASURES (continued)	Resource Acres[a]	% of project
C5: Surface Water Protection		
Priority 1	2	< 1%
Priority 2	72	15%
Priority 3	323	65%
Priority 4	79	16%
Priority 5	2	< 1%
Priority 6	0	0%
Priority 7	0	0%
Total Acres	478	97%
C7: Fragile Coastal Resources		
Fragile Coastal Uplands	0	0%
Imperiled Coastal Lakes	0	0%
Coastal Wetlands	0	0%
Total Acres	0	0%
C8: Functional Wetlands		
Priority 1	95	19%
Priority 2	59	12%
Priority 3	22	4%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	0	0%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	176	36%
D3: Aquifer Recharge		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	315	64%
Priority 3	22	4%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	0	0%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	337	68%
E2: Recreational Trails (miles)		
(prioritized trail opportunities from Office of Greenways and Trails & Univ. Florida)		
Land Trail Priorities	0.0	
Land Trail Opportunities	0.3	
Total Miles	0.3	
F2: Arch. & Historical Sites (number)	0 sites	
G1: Sustainable Forestry		
Priority 1	61	12%
Priority 2	6	1%
Priority 3	3	< 1%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5 - Potential Pinelands	56	11%
Total Acres	126	25%
G3: Forestland for Recharge	64	13%

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

Florida Natural Areas Inventory

To: Meghan Lauer, DEP/OES
From: Dale R. Jackson, Ph.D., FNAI
Date: August 30, 2024
Subject: Proposed Boundary Modification to Florida Forever BOT Project: Lower Suwannee River and Gulf Watershed – Ippolito Property (Dixie County)

The major goals of the Lower Suwannee River and Gulf Watershed Florida Forever Project are to protect and enhance water quality, wetland communities, plant and wildlife habitats and natural corridors, and archaeological sites found along the Suwannee River and adjacent Gulf of Mexico. The ca. 492.0-acre Ippolito property in southeastern Dixie County is proposed as an addition to the project. The property is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition.

The Ippolito property lies ca. 7.5 miles west of Chiefland and is situated between County Road 349 to the west (where it has ca. 1.75 miles of frontage) and the Suwannee River (which it fronts for ca. 0.6 mile) to the east. Manatee Springs State Park is immediately across the river to the east. Immediately across CR-349 to the west is Lyme Timber II – Block 4, under state conservation easement and protected as part of the project. The site is separated by less than 0.1 mile from Yellow Jacket Conservation Area, which lies just to the northeast along the river.

The central, eastern portion of the property consist of swampy lowland probably chiefly supporting cypress and other hydric trees (elements of floodplain swamp and hydric hammock). Much of the southwestern portion of the property supports pine plantation, although this surrounds a swampy lake. More northern and western portions of the site may at least once have supported sandhill (or a more mesic forest type such as mesic flatwoods), some form of which appears to persist. Far more detailed vegetational descriptions are provided in the application, which additionally notes some stands of upland hardwood nestled within the swampier portion of the site.

Disturbances visible in aerial photography include a small building and an adjacent linear cleared area (possibly a runway) in the central-western upland portion of the site.

The Florida Natural Areas Inventory database contains one record of a rare species that is more or less on-site. This is a 1977 record of a road-killed pine snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus*, G4/S3, N, ST) adjacent to the upland area along the site's western edge. The dearth of other records may reflect lack of biological survey, particularly as numerous species have been documented in the state park across the river. Several rare aquatic species are documented from the adjacent Suwannee River, and many are noted in the application. These river dwelling species are not listed here as occurring onsite (although one – Suwannee alligator snapping turtle [*Macrochelys suwanniensis*] – accounts for the G2 in the FFME table); however, protection of properties along the river undoubtedly contribute to their

conservation. Although most of the site lies within a region where the Florida black bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*, G5T4/S4, N, N) is classified by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission as only occasional, the extreme southern end of the site lies in an area where the bear is considered common.

The Florida Forever Measures Evaluation (FFME) below is based on the Florida Forever Conservation Needs Assessment developed by FNAI. The data used in that analysis represent a standardized, statewide perspective of natural resources. At least 80% of the proposed site contributes to Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas (mostly priority 2), FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities (the majority in priority 1), Ecological Greenways (priority 1), and Surface Water Protection (chiefly priorities 2-4). Two-thirds contributes to Aquifer Recharge (mostly priority 2), one-third to one-half contributes to Natural Floodplain Function (priorities 1-3) and Functional Wetlands (priorities 1-3), and one-quarter contributes to Sustainable Forestry (priorities 1 and 5).