

ITEM 8:

Consider the 10-year update to the William Beardall Tosohatchee Wildlife Management Area management plan (Lease No. 4502).

LOCATION:

Orange County

APPLICANT:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

DIVISION OF STATE LANDS STAFF REMARKS:

Background

The William Beardall Tosohatchee Wildlife Management Area (WBTWMA) conserves approximately 30,701 acres of wildlife habitat in Orange County. The WBTWMA conserves a large mosaic of the remaining natural habitats along this stretch of the Upper St. Johns River. Providing important water quality and wildlife habitat protection, the WBTWMA has long been recognized for its stellar natural resources and “Old Florida” natural scenic beauty. The WBTWMA is an important link in a large chain of public and private conservation lands that form an important wildlife corridor within the St. Johns River System.

A majority of the WBTWMA is owned by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund, with a small parcel owned by the St. Johns River Water Management District. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has lead management authority for all resources within the established boundary.

The WBTWMA was originally acquired for the protection of wildlife, with an emphasis on rare, endangered, and threatened species; protection of natural plant communities, especially the virgin slash pine flatwoods and virgin cypress swamp; restoration, protection, and management of the extensive floodplain marsh for the safeguarding and improvement of the St. Johns River water quality; provision of natural flood storage area; and protection of Indian mounds. The WBTWMA is managed by the FWC for the purpose of operating a wildlife management area, providing ecological diversity, providing managed habitat for both common and imperiled wildlife, and providing the public with fish and wildlife-focused outdoor recreational opportunities.

Management Plan Overview

Through the services of the Florida Natural Areas Inventory, the FWC has mapped the current and historic natural and altered communities of the WBTWMA and documented 23 natural communities and altered landcover types. The primary natural community found within the WBTWMA is floodplain marsh. Currently, 24 imperiled plant species, five commercially exploited plant species, and 63 non-native plant species have been documented within the boundary.

The FWC has developed the Florida Landscape Assessment Model as a GIS-based assessment tool that incorporates a wide variety of landscape and wildlife species data. The Florida Landscape Assessment Model ranks habitat from zero to 10; a rank of 10 being of greatest value. The Florida Landscape Assessment Model indicates the WBTWMA has a high mean wildlife value of 8.0.

The Division of Historical Resources observations are broken down into five categories: archeological sites, resource groups, historical structures, historic bridges, and historic cemeteries. A review of the Florida Master Site File indicates that six previous cultural resource surveys have been conducted on the WBTWMA and 45 recorded cultural resources. The FWC consults with the Division of Historical Resources to determine the necessary actions for cultural resource inventory and preservation.

The Florida Legislature requires that all land management plans include long and short-term goals. These goals must include measurable objectives, and short-term goals must be achievable within a two-year planning period. Pursuant to section 253.034, Florida Statutes (F.S.), the Division of State Lands began compiling the short-term goals from each land management plan approved since July 1, 2016. The management plan identified objectives under the following short-term goals: Imperiled Species Habitat Maintenance, Enhancement, Restoration, or Population Restoration and Protect, preserve, and maintain cultural resources.

Public Involvement

The FWC conducted a Management Advisory Group meeting on November 19, 2025. Results of this meeting were used by the FWC to develop management goals and objectives and to identify opportunities and strategies for inclusion in this management plan. A public hearing, as required by section 259.032(10), F.S., was held on March 4, 2026.

Surplus Lands

The evaluation of the WBTWMA by the FWC has determined that all portions of the area are being managed and operated for the original purposes of acquisition and remain integral to the continued conservation of important fish and wildlife resources, and the provision of resource based public outdoor recreational opportunities. Therefore, no portion of the WBTWMA is recommended for potential surplus review.

State Land Management Review Team

A Land Management Review was conducted in June 2022. The review team found that the property is managed in accordance with the purposes for which it was acquired, and the management practices, including public access, comply with the management plan. There were two consensus recommendations offered.

- The review team recommended FWC investigate opportunities for more regular monitoring of hand fern populations.
- The review team recommended FWC recognize the regionally significant Florida Natural Areas Inventory described Cabbage Palm Flatwoods variant and incorporate it into the plan update.

The 2025 Land Management Review notes were reviewed as part of developing this plan and the agreed upon changes and recommendations were made within this management plan update.

DIVISION OF STATE LANDS STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the management plan.

ACQUISITION AND RESTORATION COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION:

- ☐ APPROVE
- ☐ APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS: _____
- ☐ DEFER
- ☐ WITHDRAW
- ☐ NOT APPROVE
- ☐ OTHER: _____

LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARYLead Agency: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)Common Name of Property: William Beardall Tosohatchee Wildlife Management AreaLocation: Orange County, FloridaAcreage Total: 30,701 acres

Acreage Breakdown:

Landcover Classification	Acres*	Percent of Total Area
Artificial Pond	106.86	0.37%
Baygall	0.79	<0.01%
Blackwater Stream	475.22	1.65%
Canal/Ditch	0.86	<0.01%
Clearing/Regeneration	427.84	1.49%
Depression Marsh	702.48	2.44%
Developed	9.52	0.03%
Dome Swamp	251.05	0.87%
Firebreak	36.83	0.13%
Floodplain Marsh	10,119.36	35.19%
Floodplain Swamp	2,331.67	8.11%
Hydric Hammock	5,411.53	18.82%
Linear Feature	0.46	<0.01%
Mesic Flatwoods	2,469.23	8.59%
Mesic Hammock	213.95	0.74%
Pine Plantation	10.18	0.04%
River Floodplain Lake	214.16	0.74%
Road	202.75	0.71%
Scrub	6.06	0.02%
Scrubby Flatwoods	3.38	0.01%
Spoil Area	1.11	<0.01%
Utility Corridor	231.99	0.81%
Wet Flatwoods	5,525.03	19.22%

*GIS-calculated acreage for land cover classification varies slightly from actual total acreage.

Lease/Management Agreement No.: 4502

Use: Single _____ Management Responsibilities:

Multiple XAgency FWC

Responsibilities

LEAD, LESSEE (Wildlife Management Area, resource protection, law enforcement)Designated Land Use: Wildlife Management AreaSublease (s): None

Encumbrances: Two right-of-way powerline easements; four sovereign submerged lands easements; one easement for the construction and/or improvement of a portion of State Road 524; 50% undivided perpetual mineral rights held by the St. Johns River Water Management District; a perpetual easement allowing the Florida Gas Transmission Company to construct, operate, and maintain up to two pipelines for the transportation of natural gas under and across the described lands

Type Acquisition: Environmentally Endangered Lands program

Unique Features: Natural communities include baygall, blackwater stream, depression marsh, dome swamp, floodplain marsh, floodplain swamp, hydric hammock, mesic flatwoods, mesic hammock, scrub, scrubby flatwoods, and wet flatwoods

Archaeological/Historical: 45 documented within the WBTWMA

Management Needs: Habitat restoration and improvement; public access and recreational opportunities;
hydrological preservation and restoration; invasive species maintenance and control;
imperiled species habitat maintenance, enhancement, and restoration

Acquisition Needs/Acreage: 17,381 acres on the FWC Additions and Inholdings list (Figure 12)

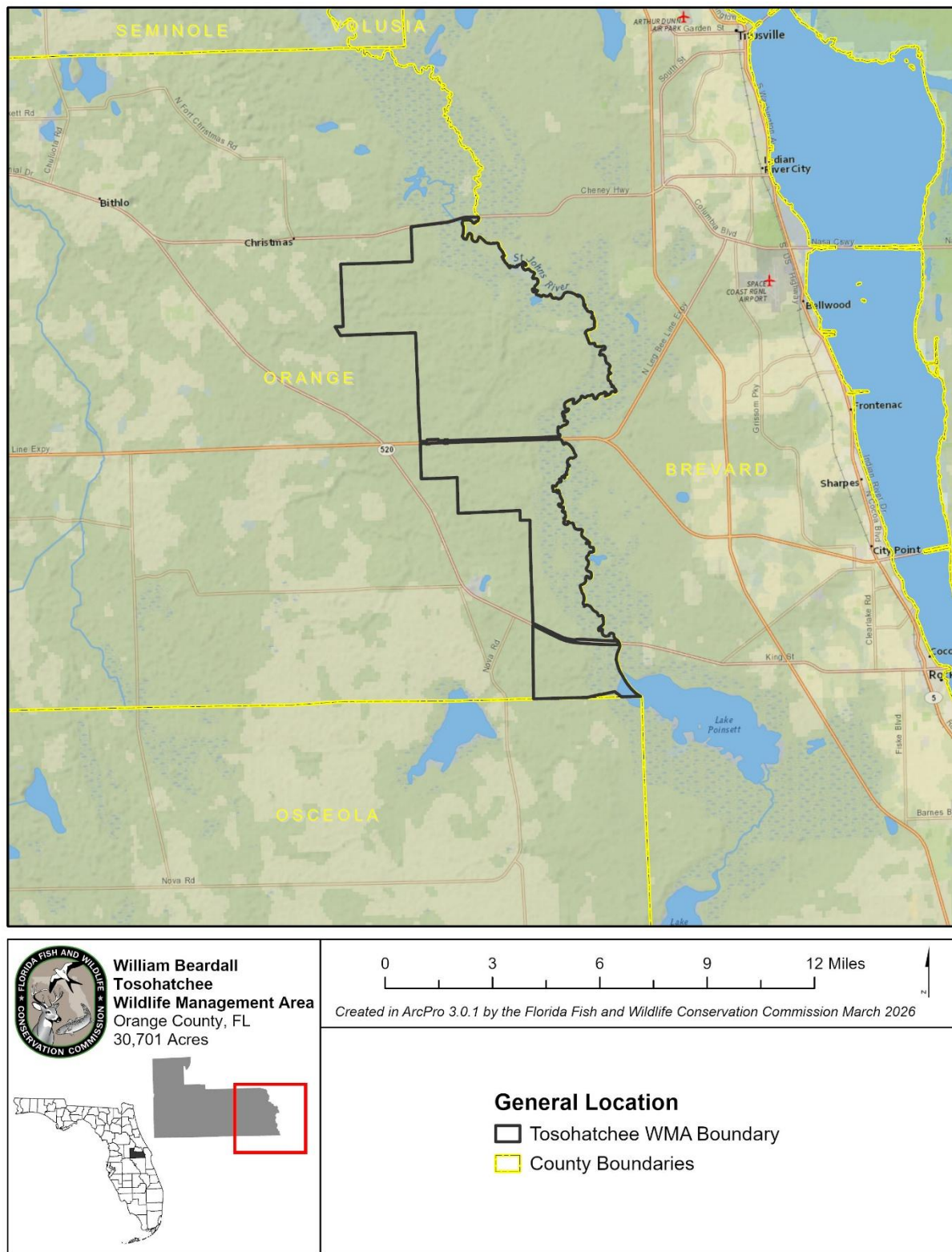
Surplus Lands/Acreage: None

Public Involvement: Management Advisory Group consensus building meeting and Public Hearing
(Appendix XX)

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ARC Approval Date _____ BTIITF Approval Date: _____

Comments: _____



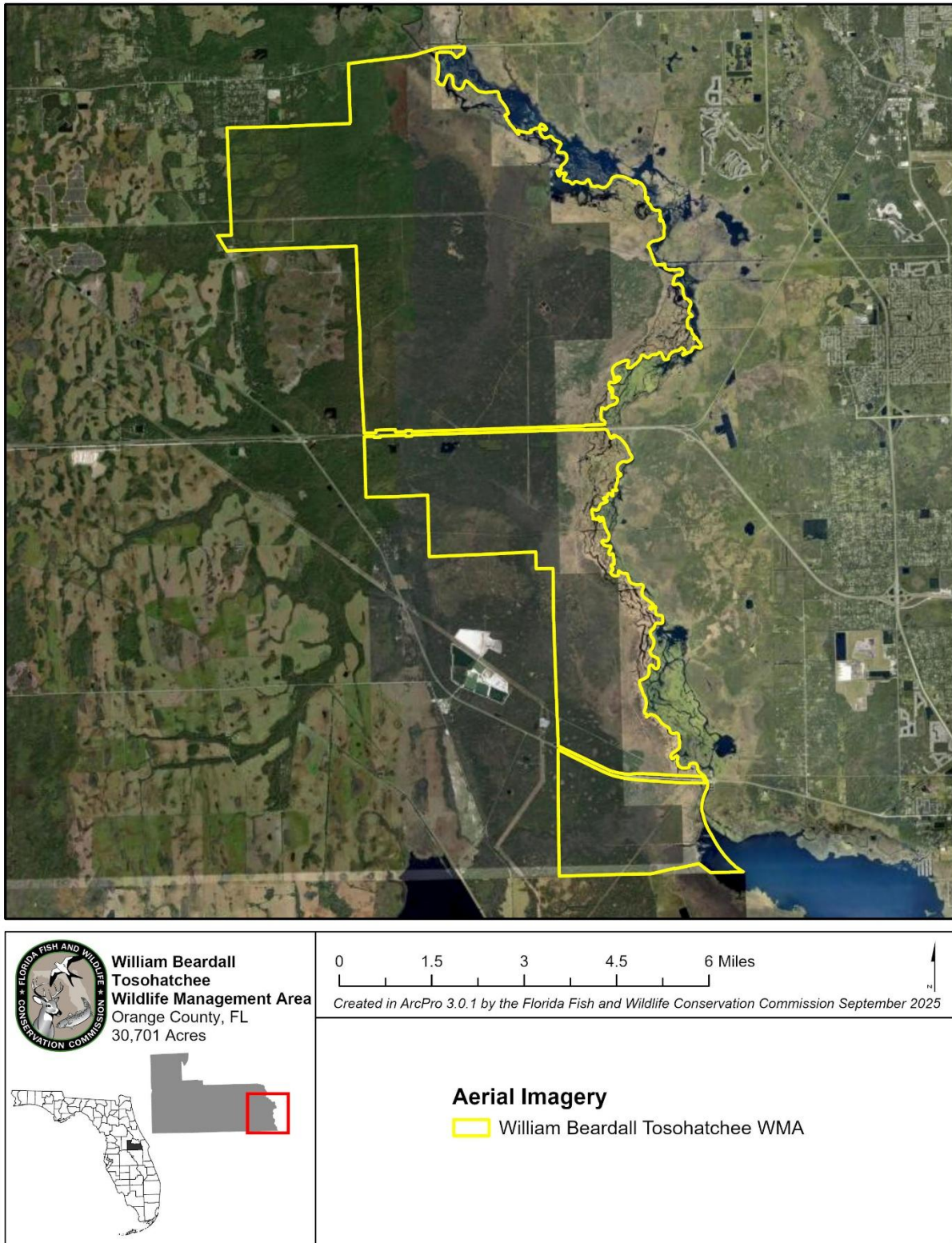


Figure 2. Aerial Imagery

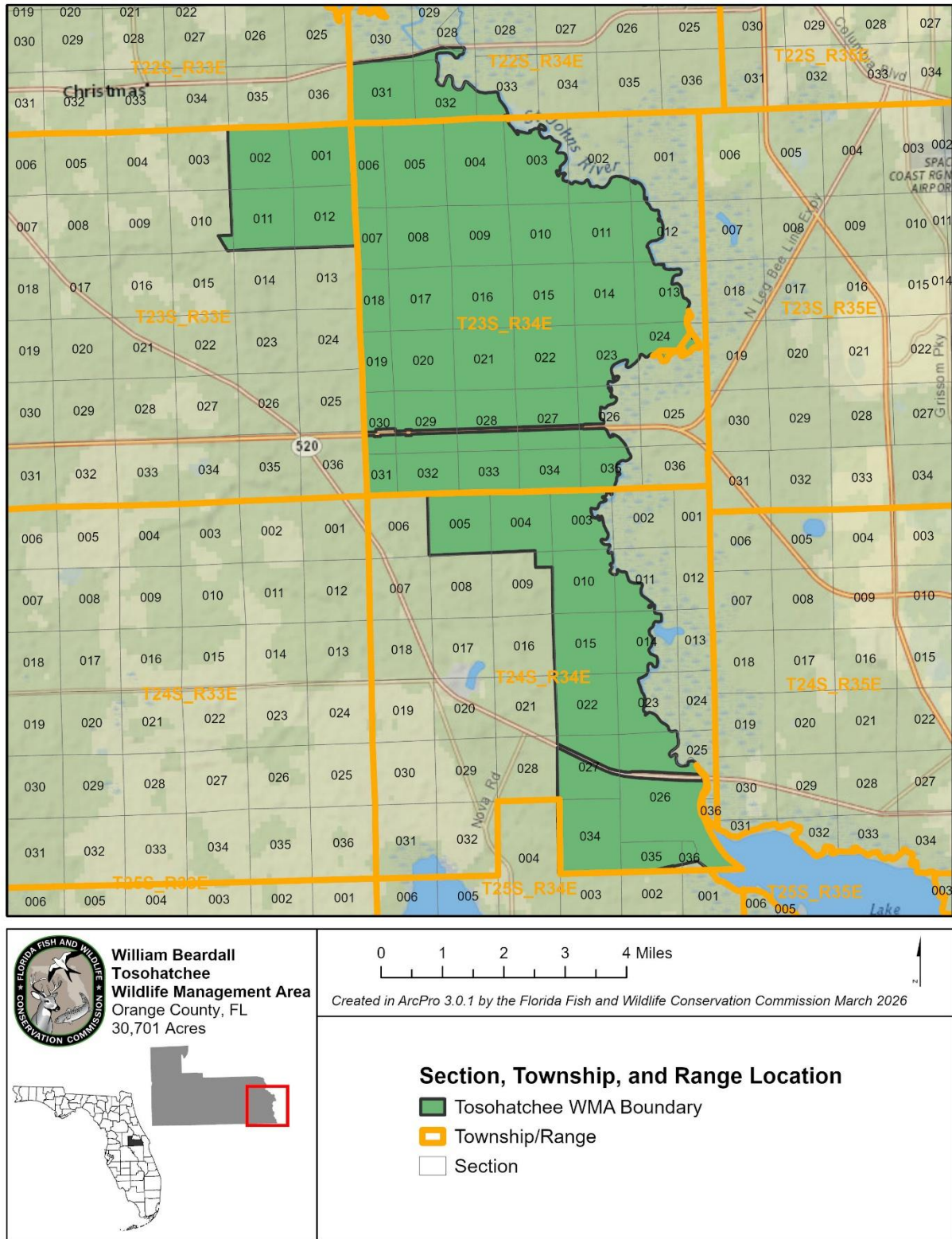


Figure 3. Section, Township, and Range Location

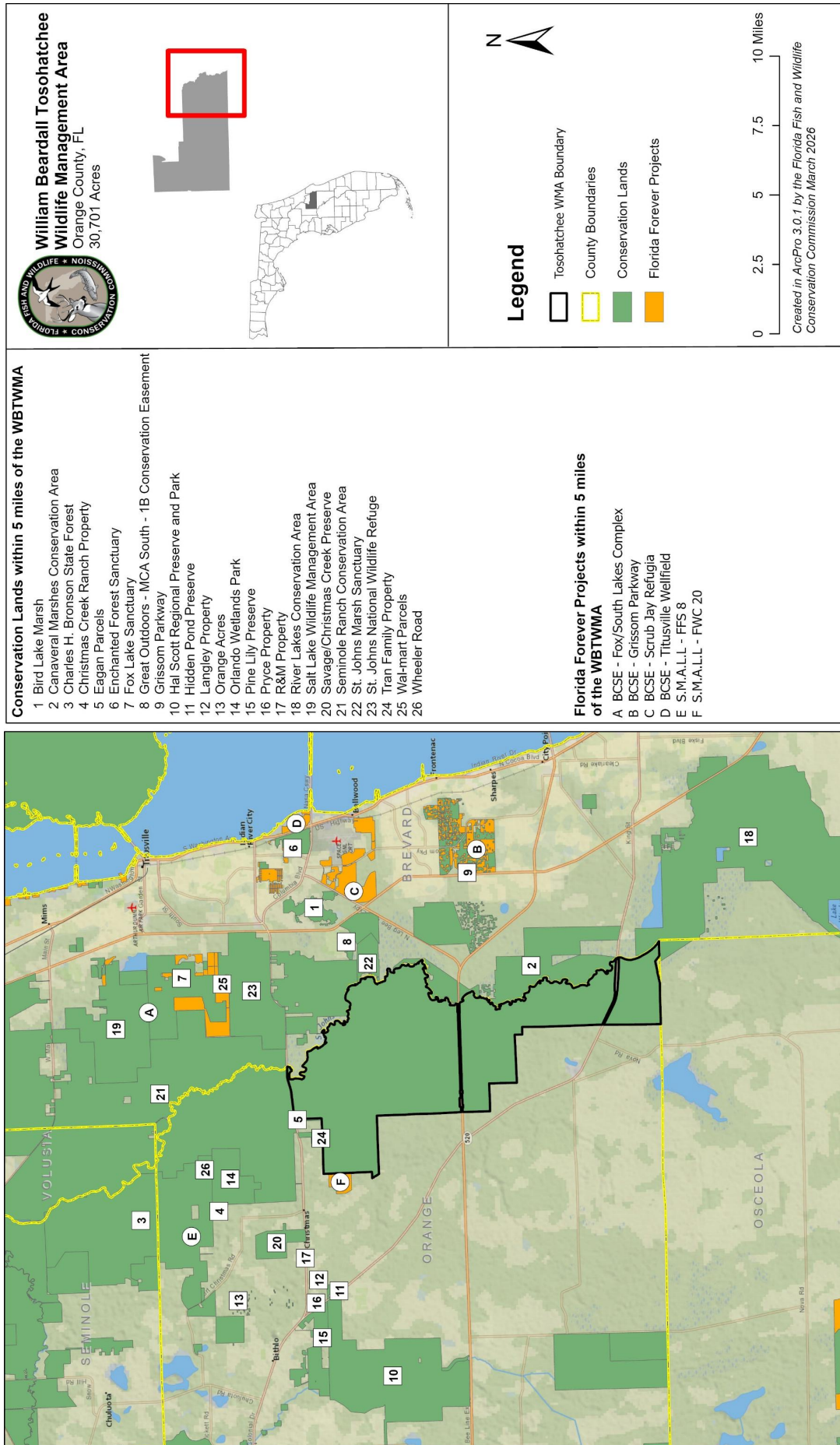


Figure 4. Nearby Conservation Lands and Florida Forever Projects

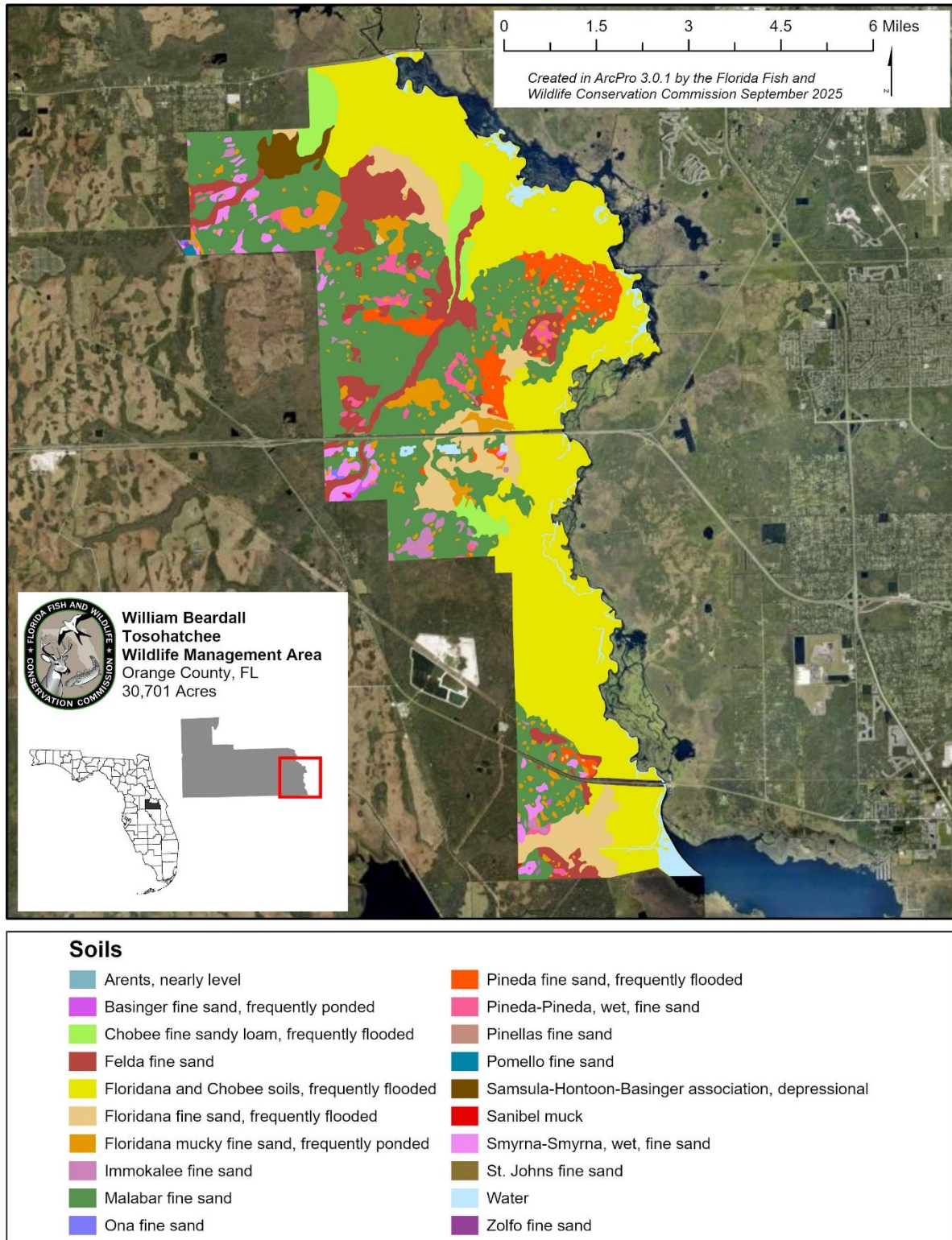


Figure 5. Soil Types

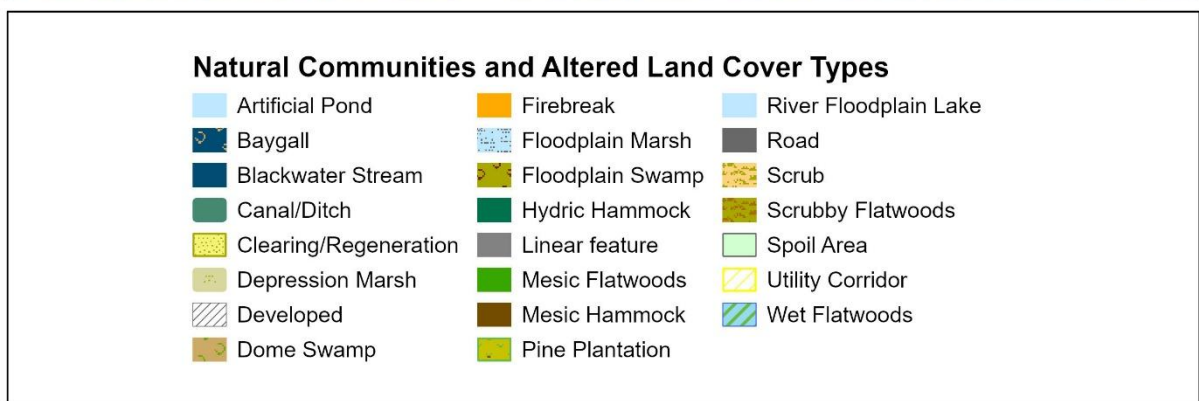
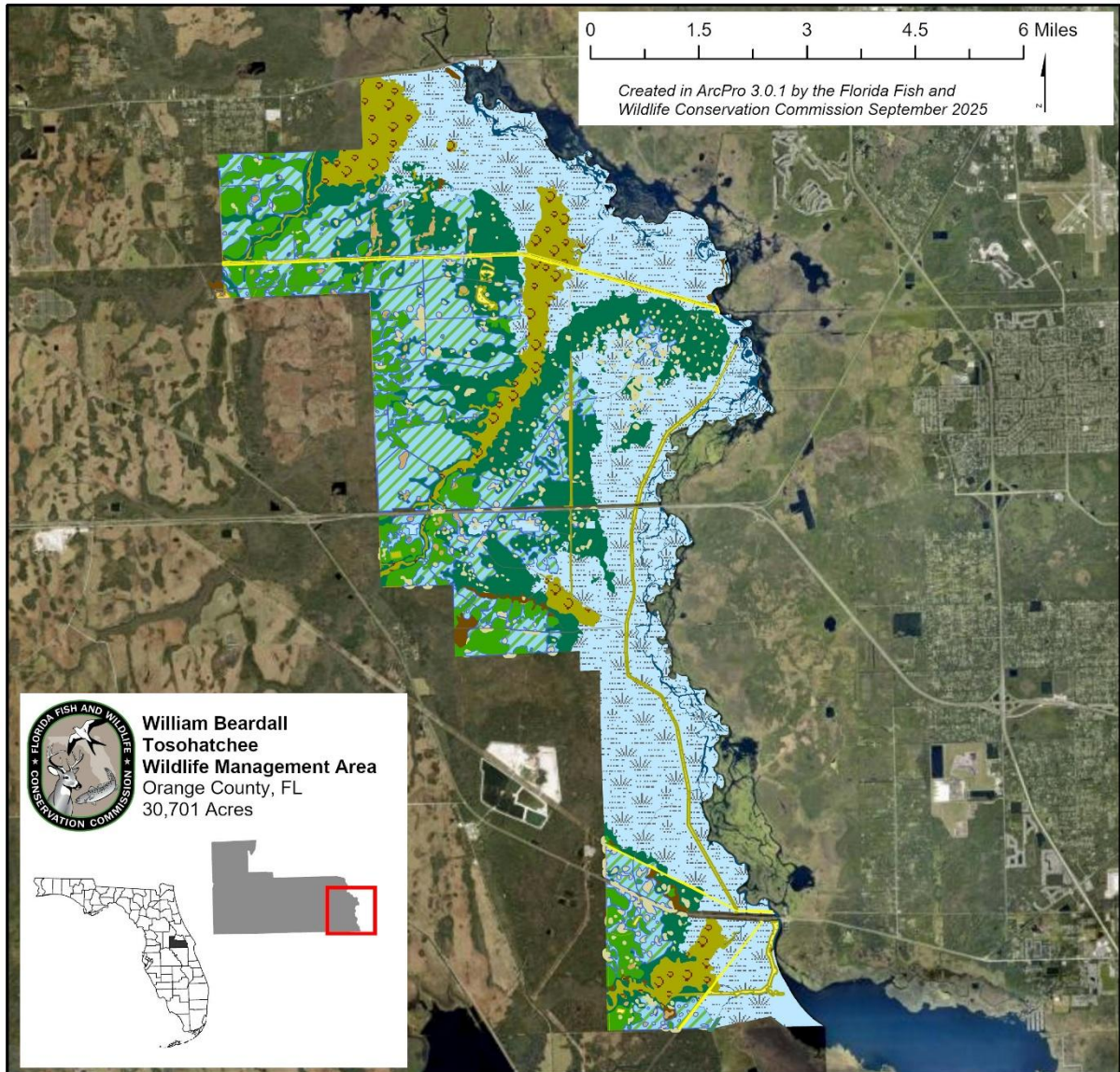


Figure 6. FNAI Current Natural Communities and Altered Landcover Types

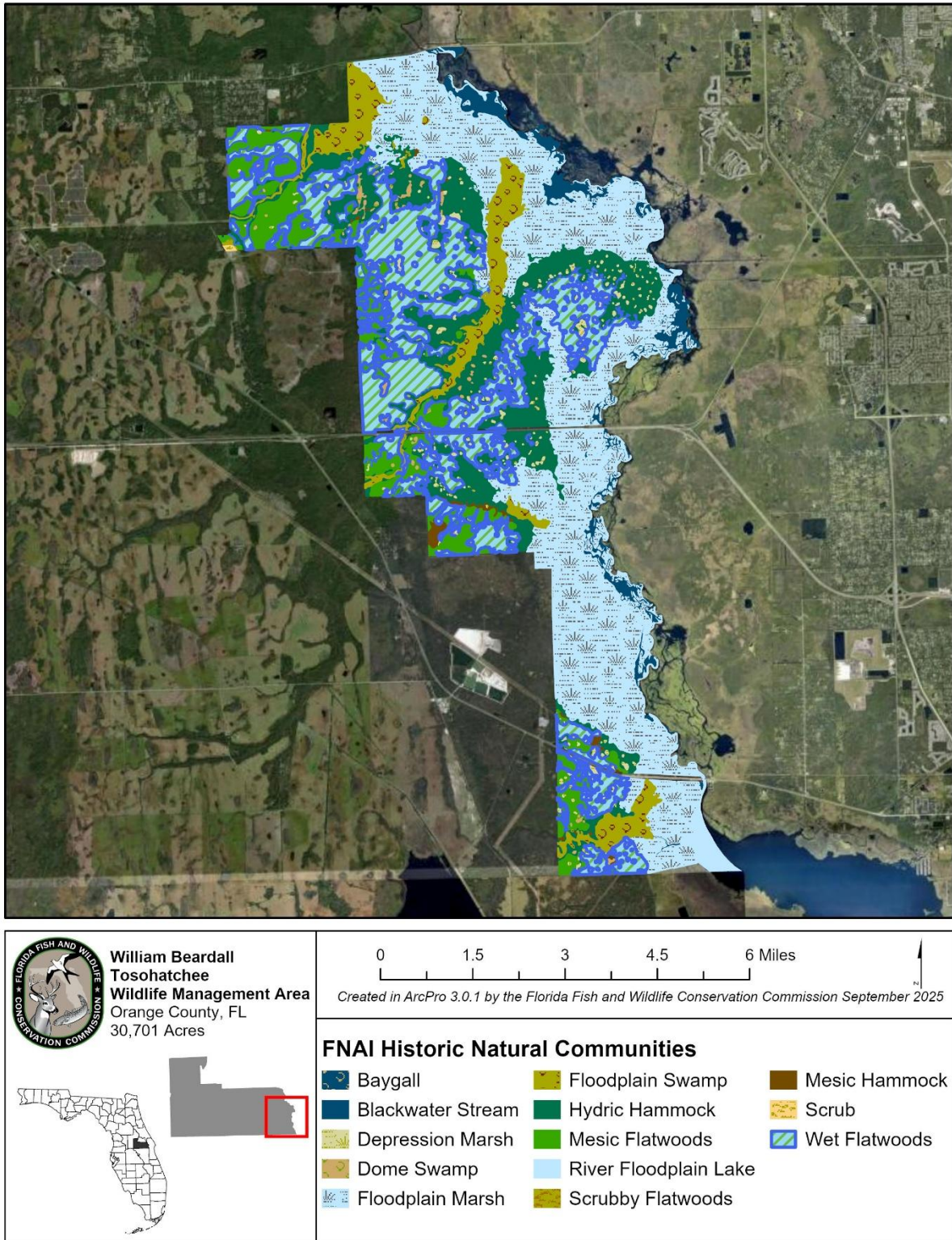


Figure 7. Historic Natural Communities

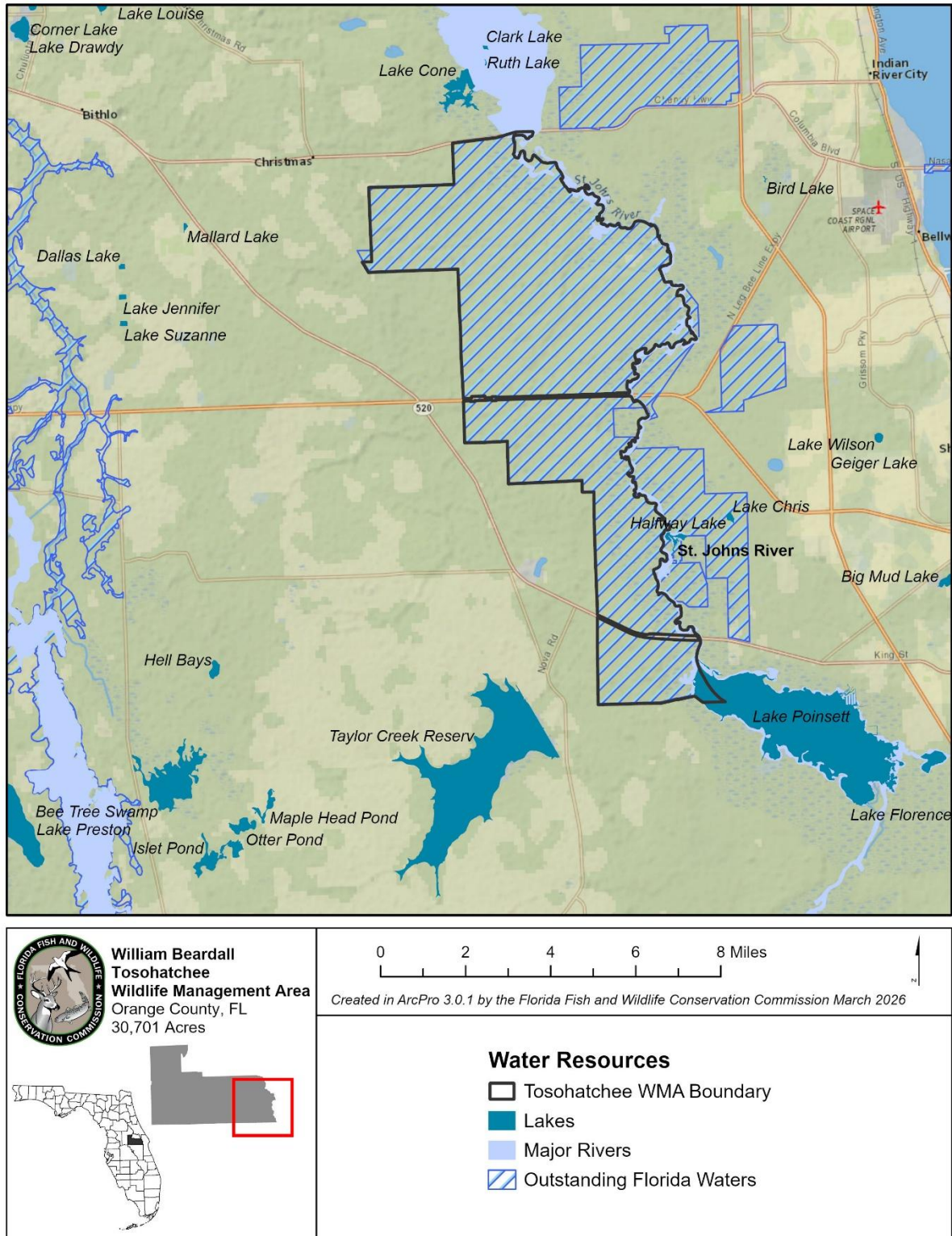


Figure 8. Water Resources

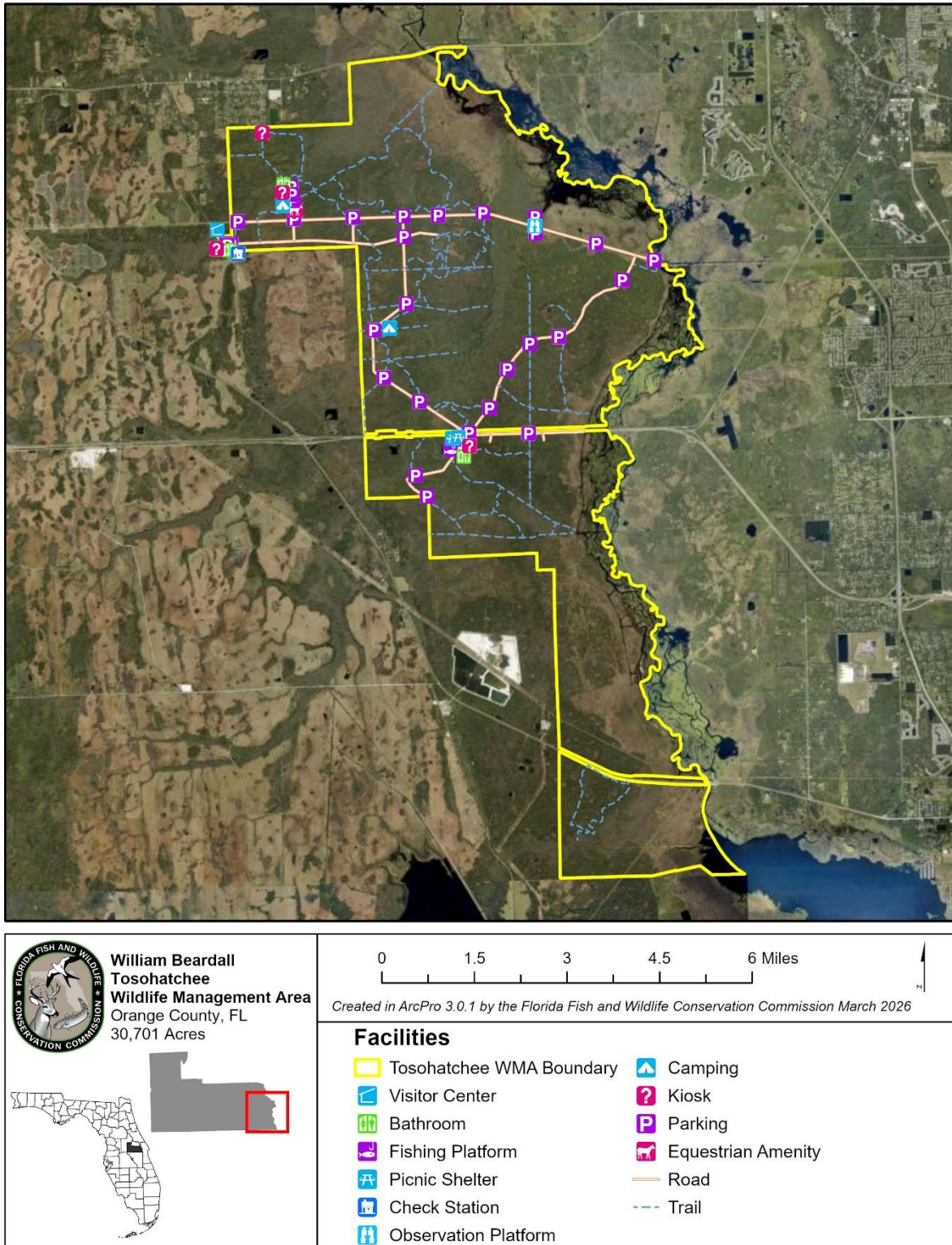


Figure 9. Facilities

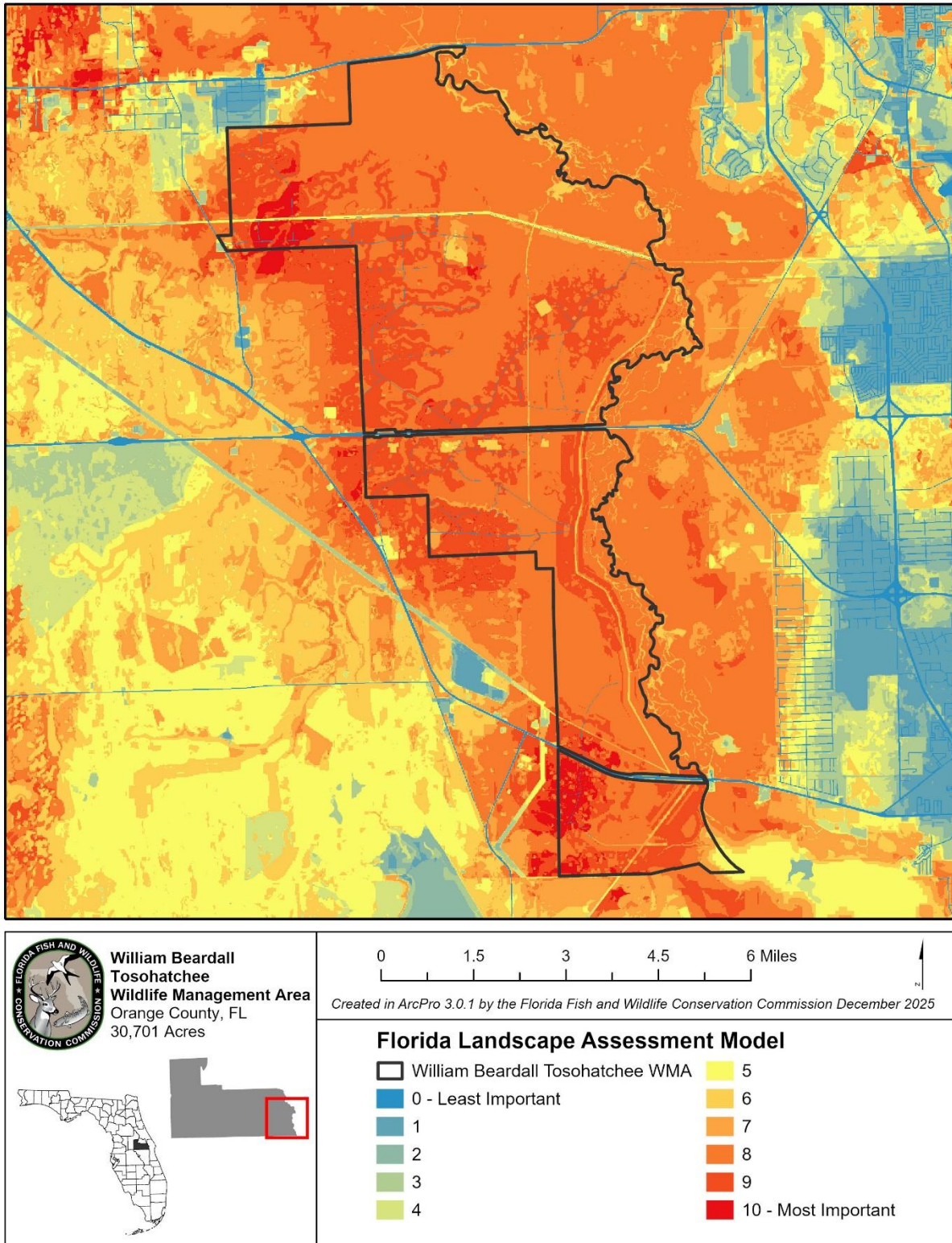


Figure 10. Florida Landscape Assessment Model

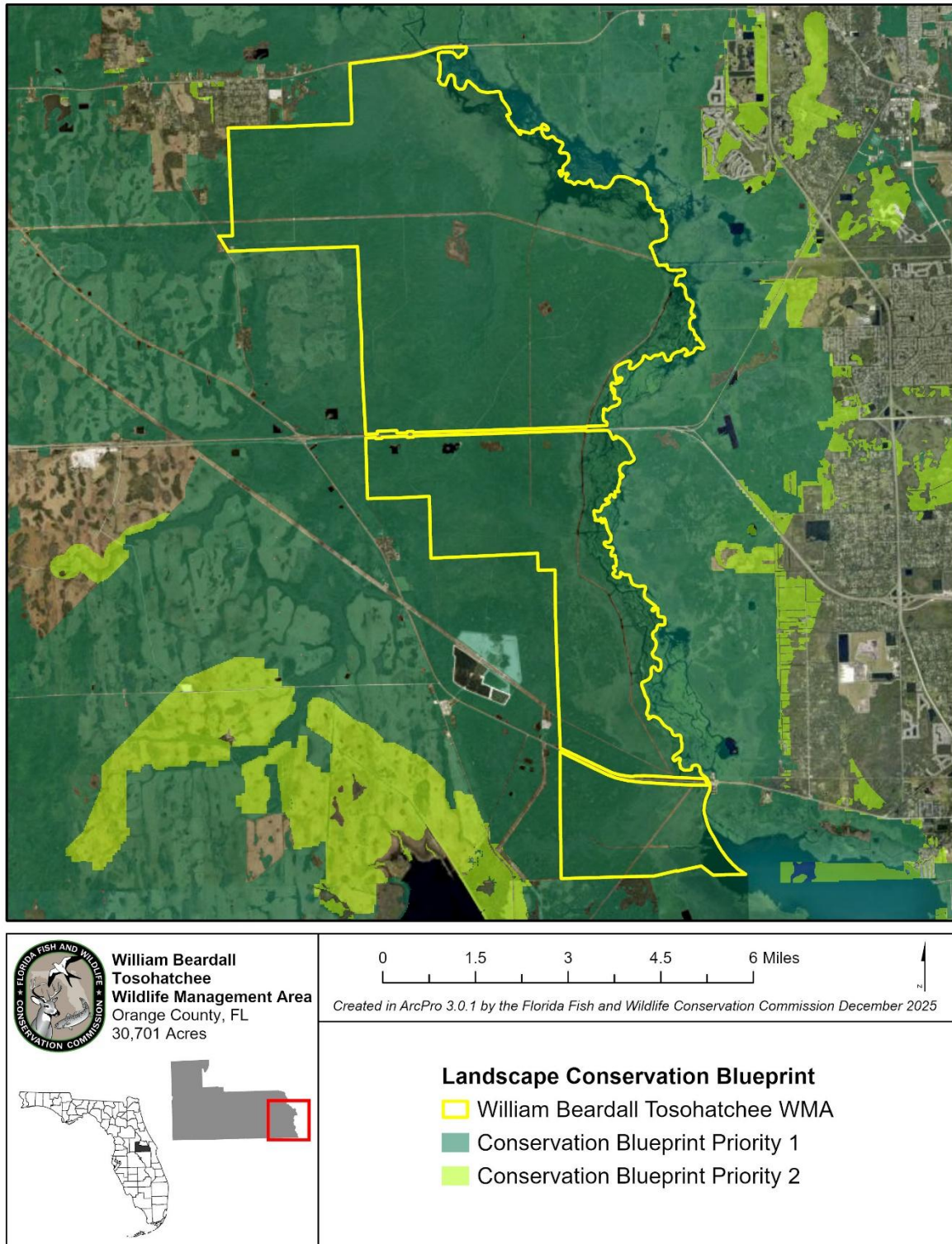


Figure 11. Landscape Conservation Blueprint

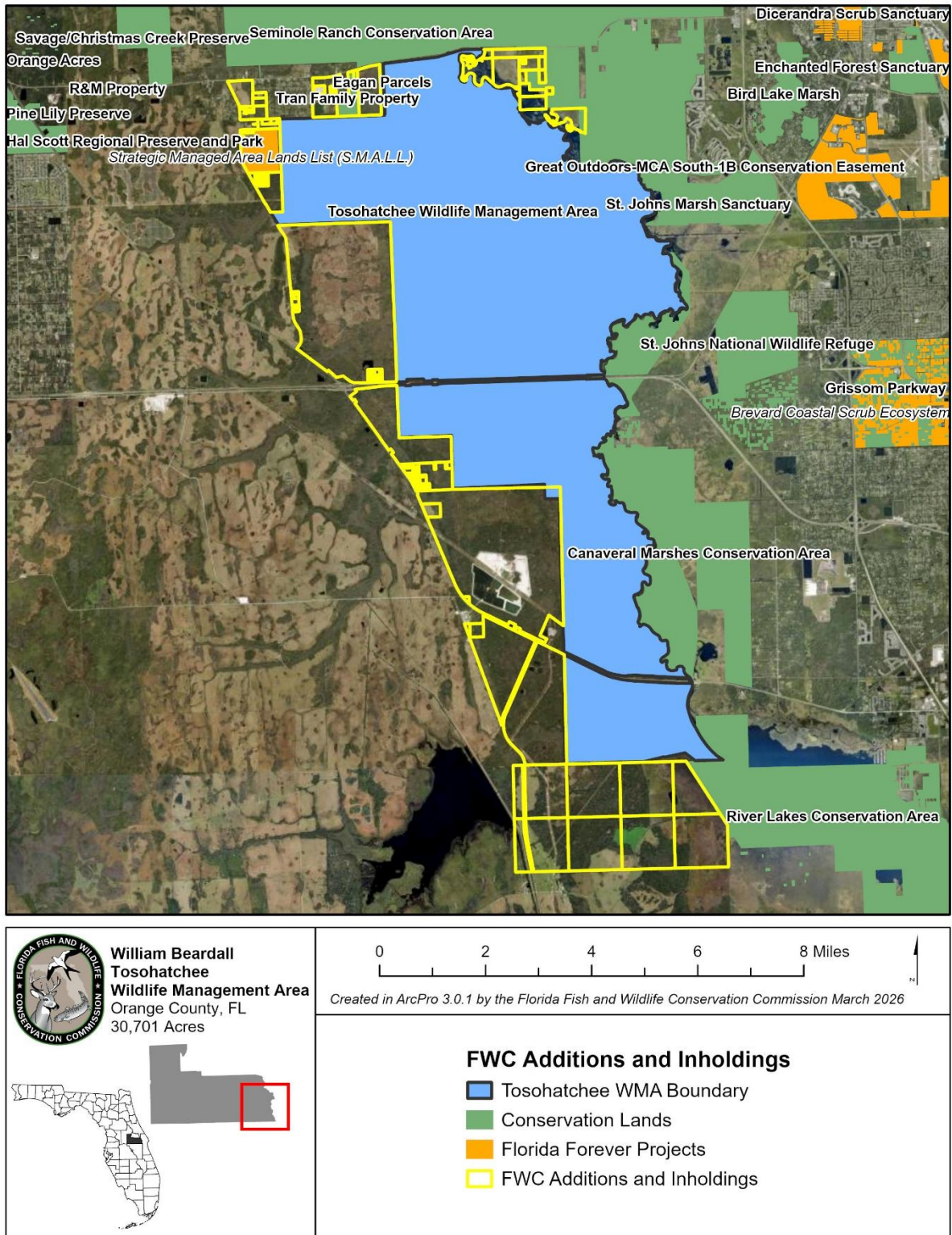


Figure 12. FWC Additions and Inholdings

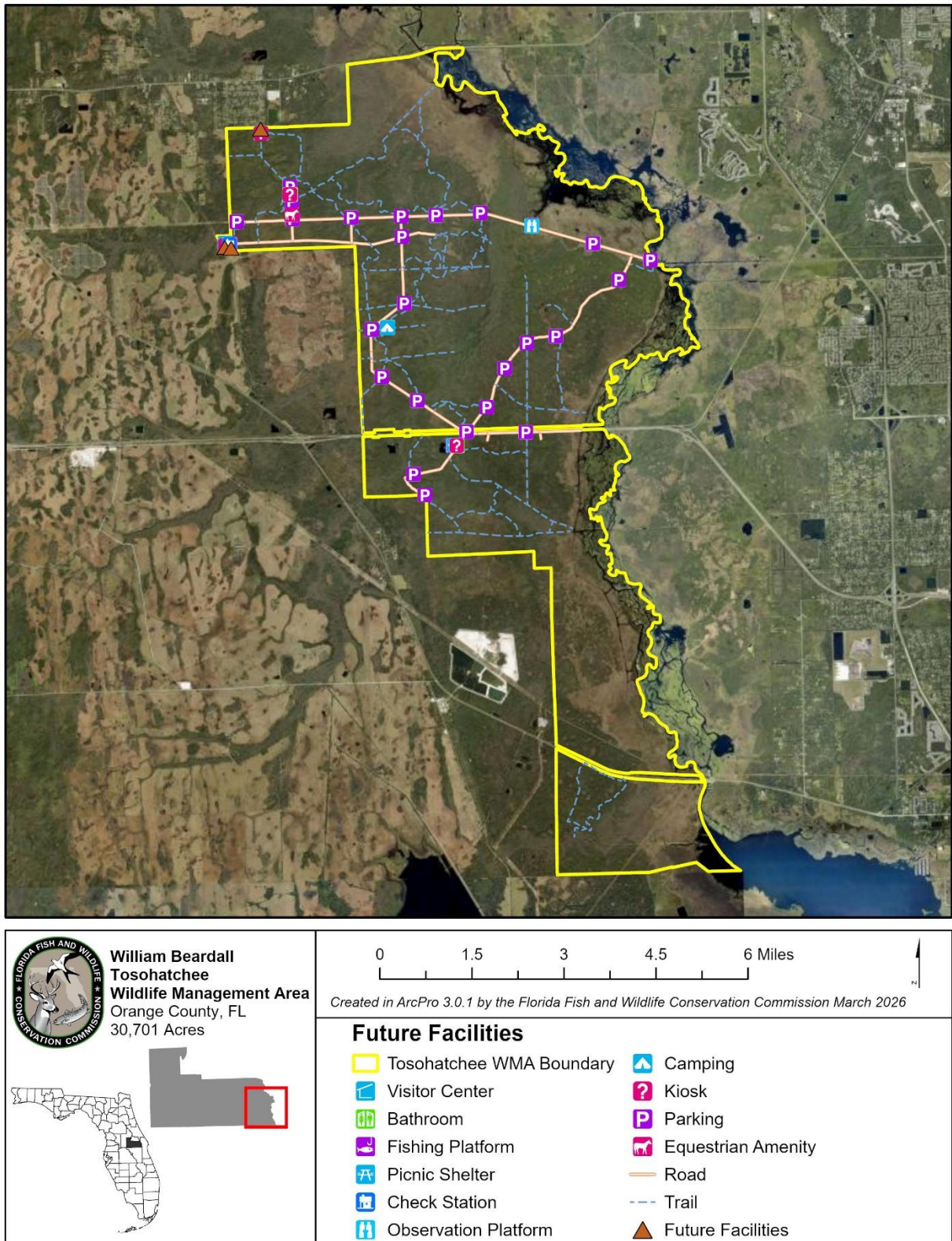


Figure 13. Future Facilities

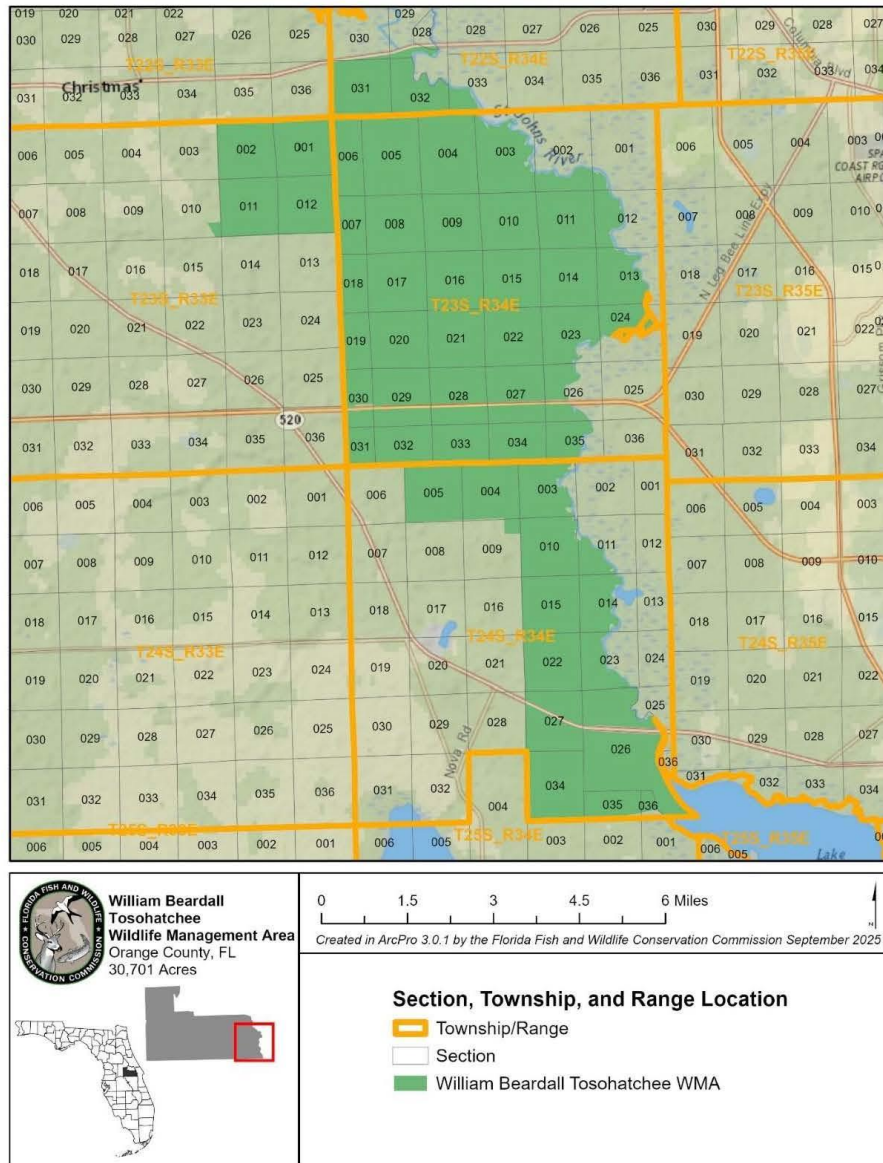


Figure 1: William Beardall Tosohatchee WMA – Section / Township / Range Map