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SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

**MARTIN COUNTY LAND
ACQUISITION PROGRAM**





INTRODUCTION

- ▶ County spent over 30-years acquiring environmentally sensitive lands
- ▶ Citizens voted on several occasions to tax themselves to support acquisition efforts
- ▶ Working with State and Federal partners over 100,000-acres of land have been acquired



PROGRAM BENEFITS

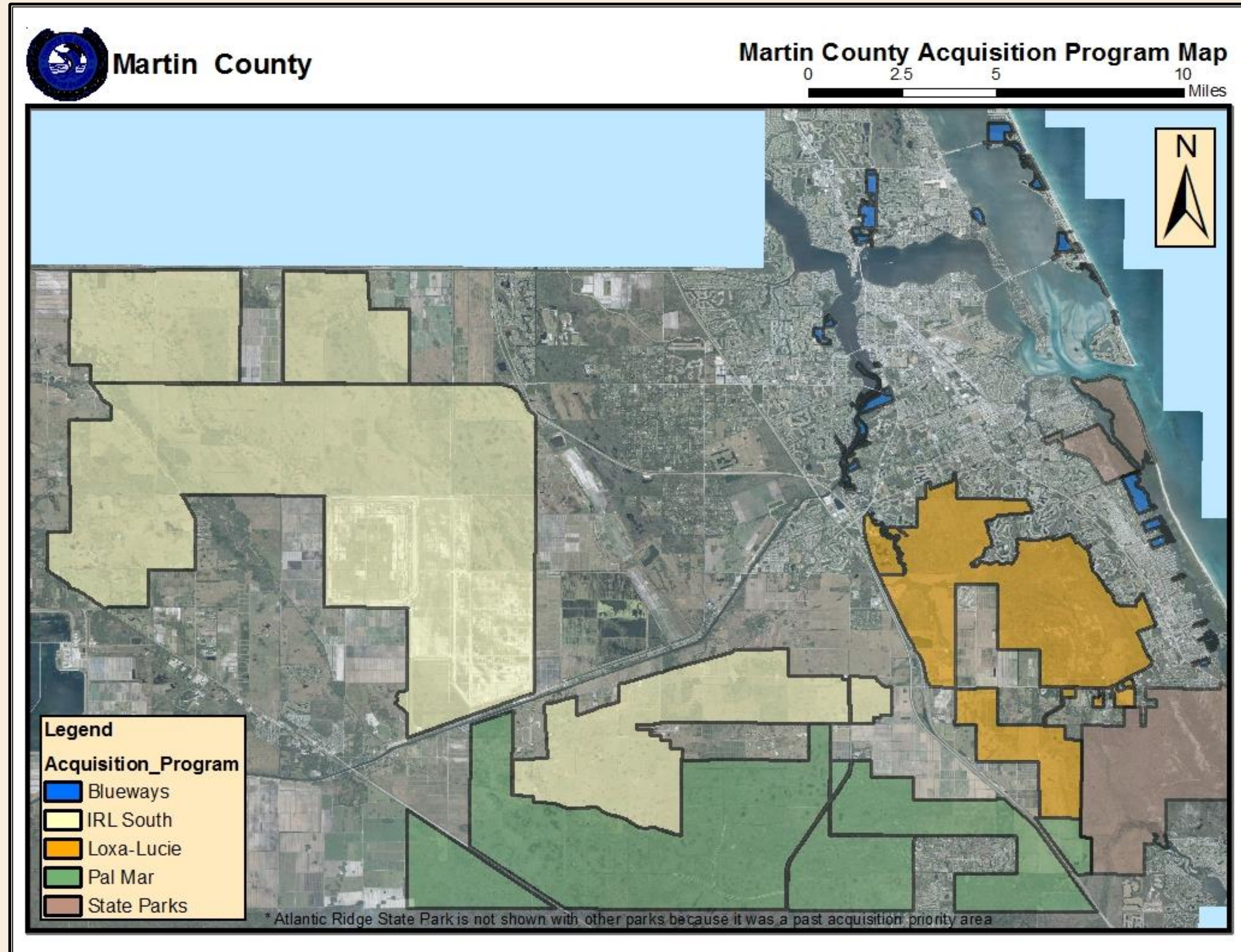
**Clean and restore river systems
(Loxahatchee, St. Lucie and Indian
River Lagoon)**

- ▶ **Save and protect wetlands**
- ▶ **Internationally known tourist destination**
- ▶ **Tremendous recreational potential**
 - ▶ **Represent a critical part of the community and helps set the County apart**



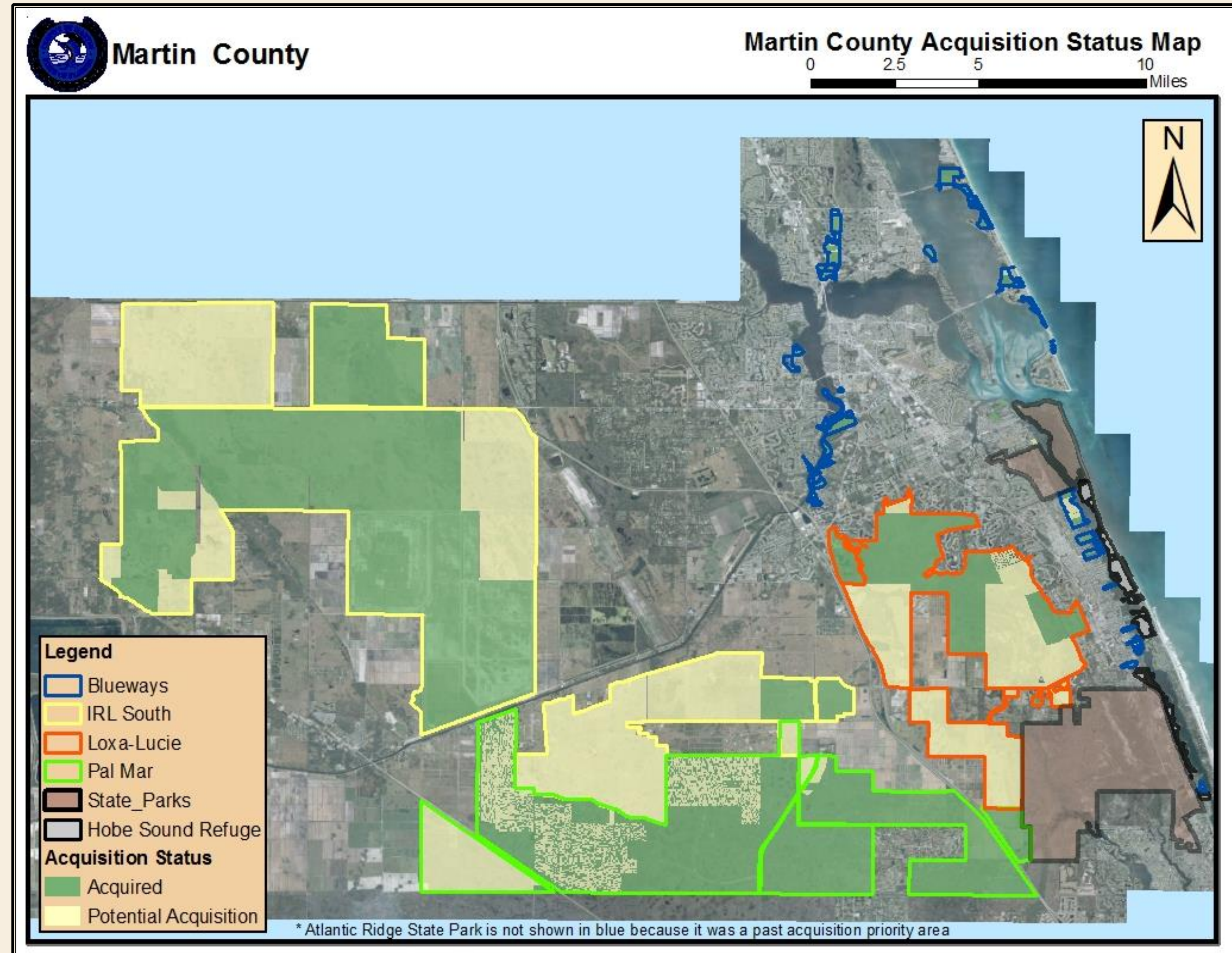
ACQUISITION EFFORTS FOCUSED ON FOUR PROGRAMS

- ▶ Indian River Lagoon South
- ▶ Pal Mar
- ▶ Loxa-Lucie
- ▶ Blueways Program



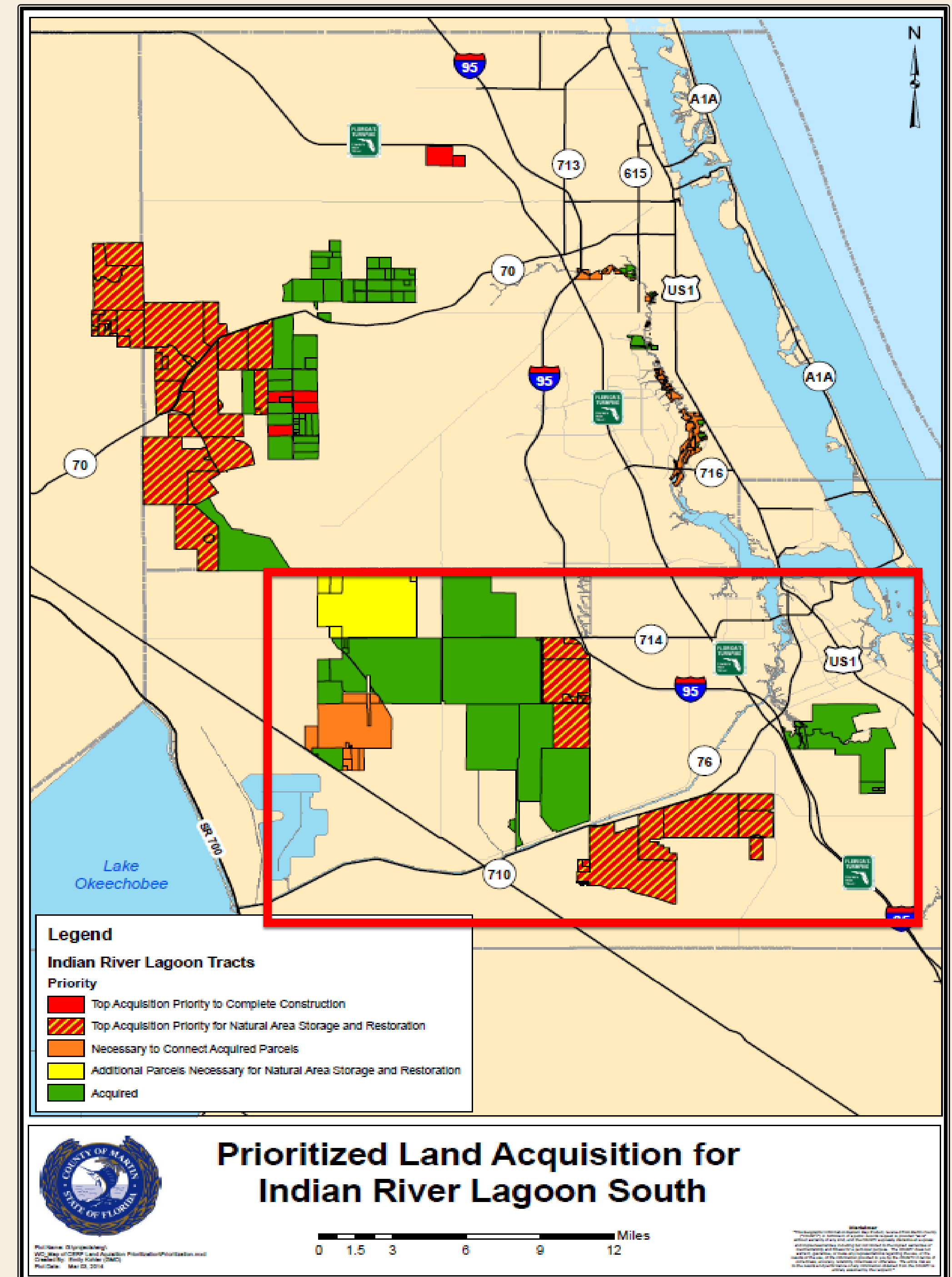
ACQUISITION STATUS MAP

- ▶ Over 116,000-acres in these acquisition footprints
- ▶ Over 71,000-acres already acquired with 45,000-acres of potential future acquisitions
- ▶ Cost would be close to \$650-\$750 million to acquire all remaining properties



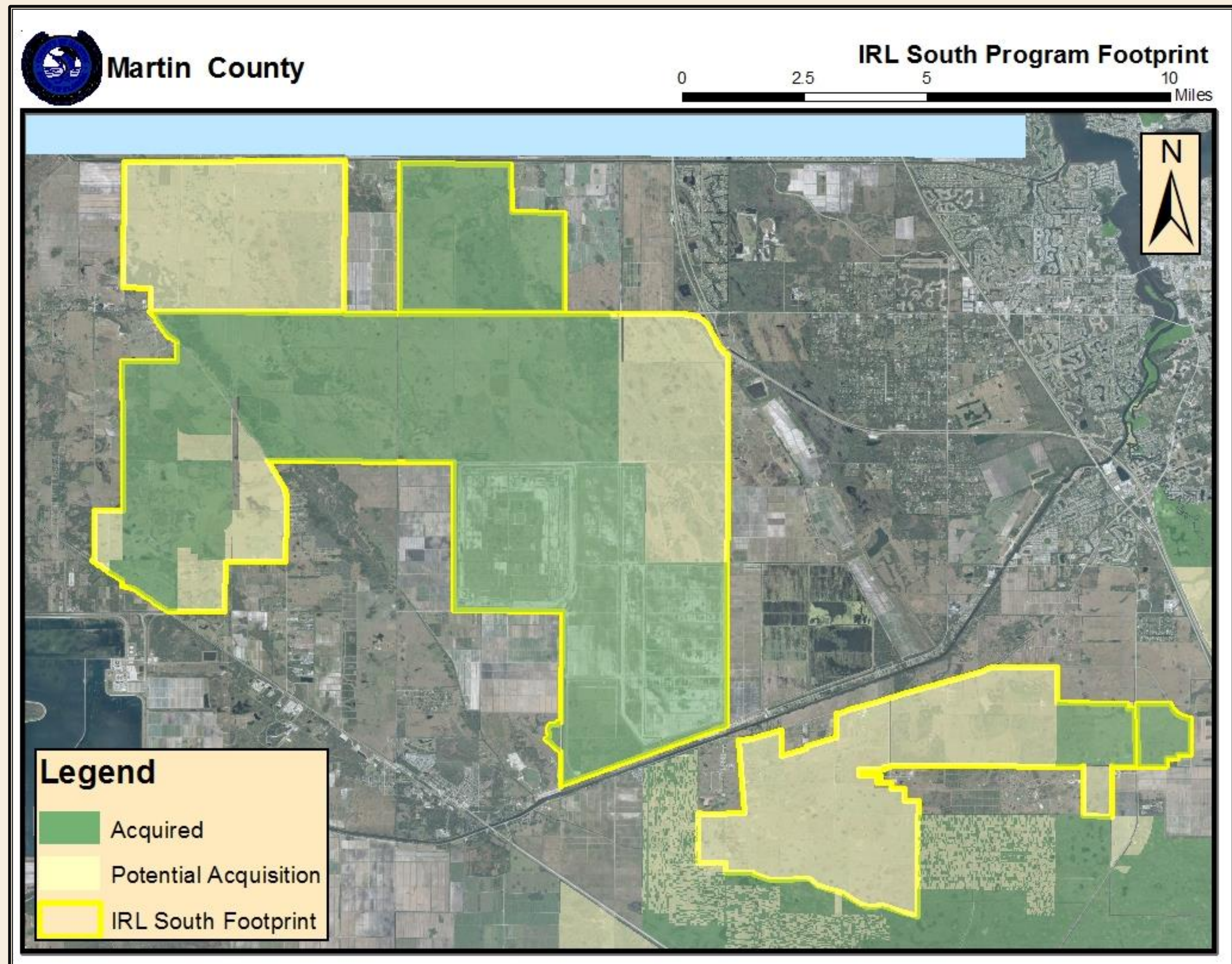
IRL SOUTH PROGRAM

- ▶ By far the largest acquisition footprint
- ▶ Past acquisitions include C-44 Project and Allapattah complex
- ▶ Close to 27,000-acres of potential acquisitions identified by CERP needed for shallow storage to protect St. Lucie River



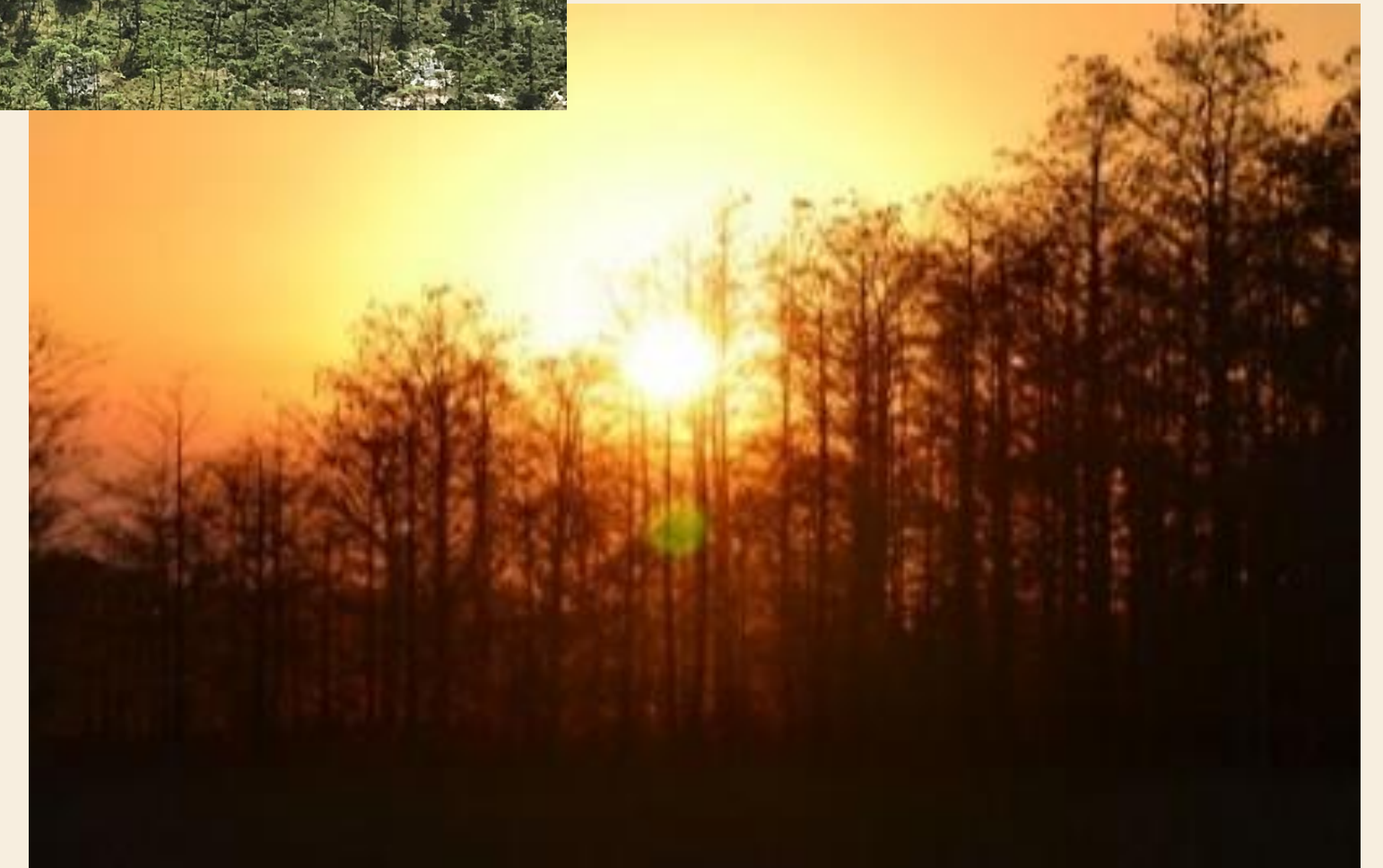
MORE ON IRL SOUTH

- ▶ Majority of lands being used for agriculture but are still large conservation pieces
- ▶ High probability of securing funds due to the CERP Project
- ▶ Cost per acre relatively low

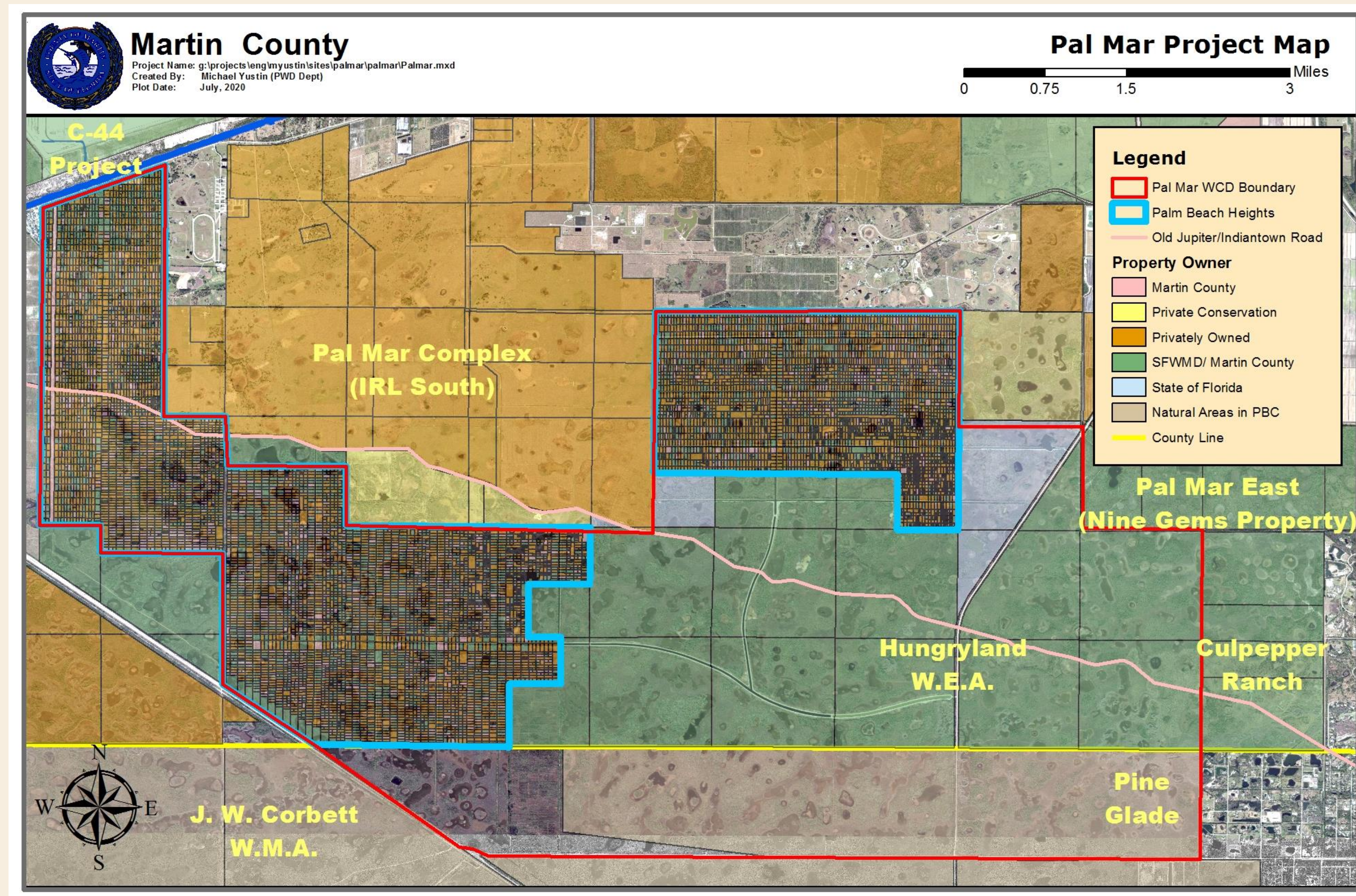


PAL MAR PROGRAM

- ▶ Located along south County line between I-95/ Turnpike and Indiantown
- ▶ Contains some of the highest quality wetland systems in Martin County
- ▶ Huge greenway system extending from Atlantic Ocean to Gulf of Mexico
- ▶ Headwaters to Federally Designated Wild and Scenic NW Fork of the Loxahatchee River
- ▶ Regional recreational opportunities and a major trail destination for the Public within Florida



MORE ON PAL MAR



- ▶ Acquired 24,000-acres but 8,500-acres remain in private ownership
- ▶ Most remaining lands within Palm Beach Heights area composed of small (1/4 to 1-acre) lots
- ▶ Facing imminent threat from off-road vehicles, poaching and other uses

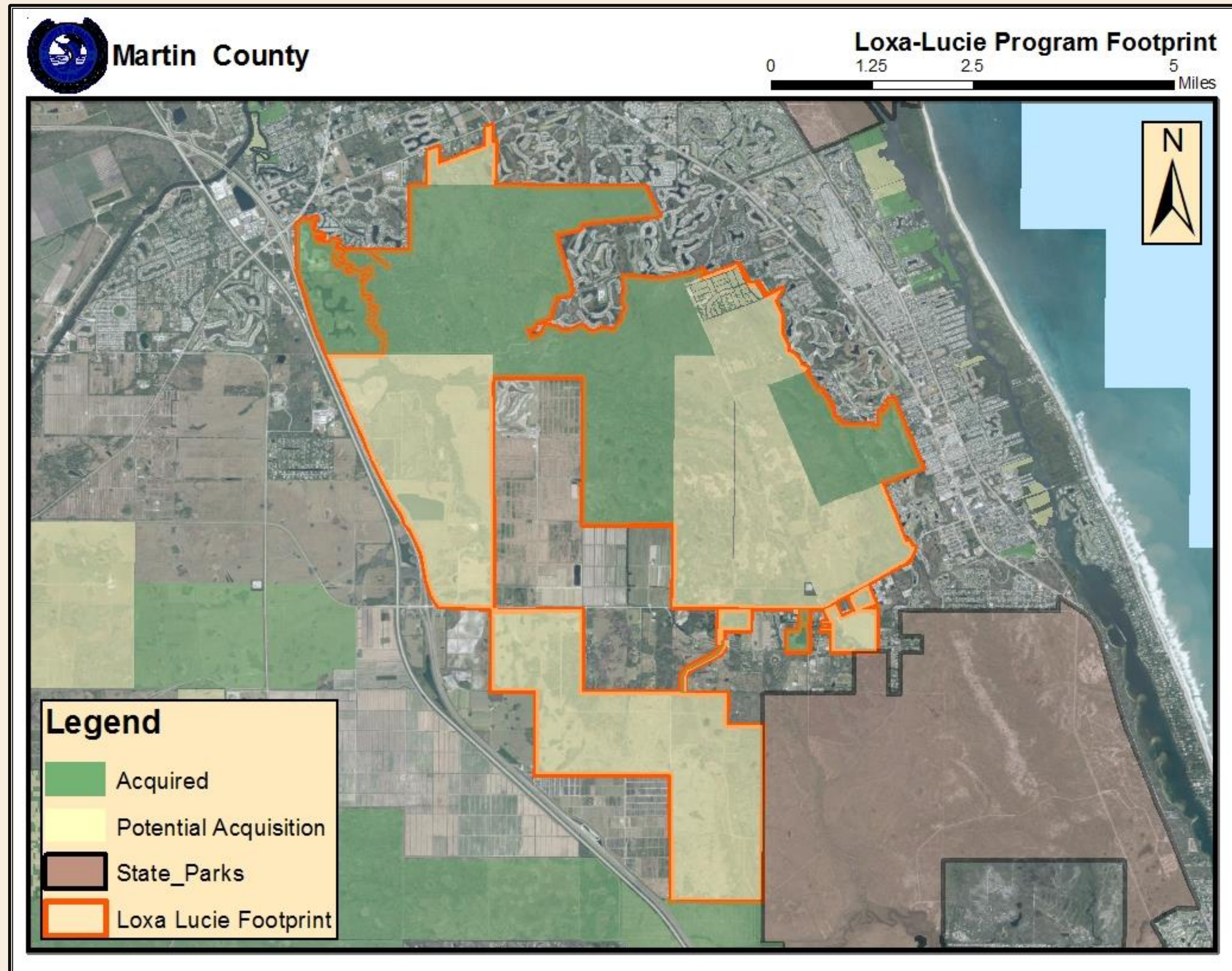
LOXA-LUCIE

- ▶ **Area south of Cove Road, north of County line, east of I-95 and west of US-1**
- ▶ **Important to Loxahatchee River and St. Lucie River restoration**
- ▶ **Potential trail connections between Stuart and Tequesta**
- ▶ **Mosaic of high-quality pine forests and wetland plant communities**



MORE ON LOXA-LUCIE

- ▶ Through past acquisition efforts 6,500-acres acquired with close to 10,000-acres in private ownership
- ▶ Some of the largest tracts of privately owned, undeveloped land near the east coast
- ▶ Proximity to urban services makes this area a prime target for future development
- ▶ Wildlife and recreation corridor that links Jonathan Dickinson and Atlantic Ridge State Parks



BLUEWAYS PROGRAM



- ▶ **Protect waterways by providing natural buffers**
- ▶ **Provides access to waterways, beaches and other shoreline areas**
- ▶ **Support high levels of rare and endangered species habitat**

MORE ON BLUEWAYS PROGRAM

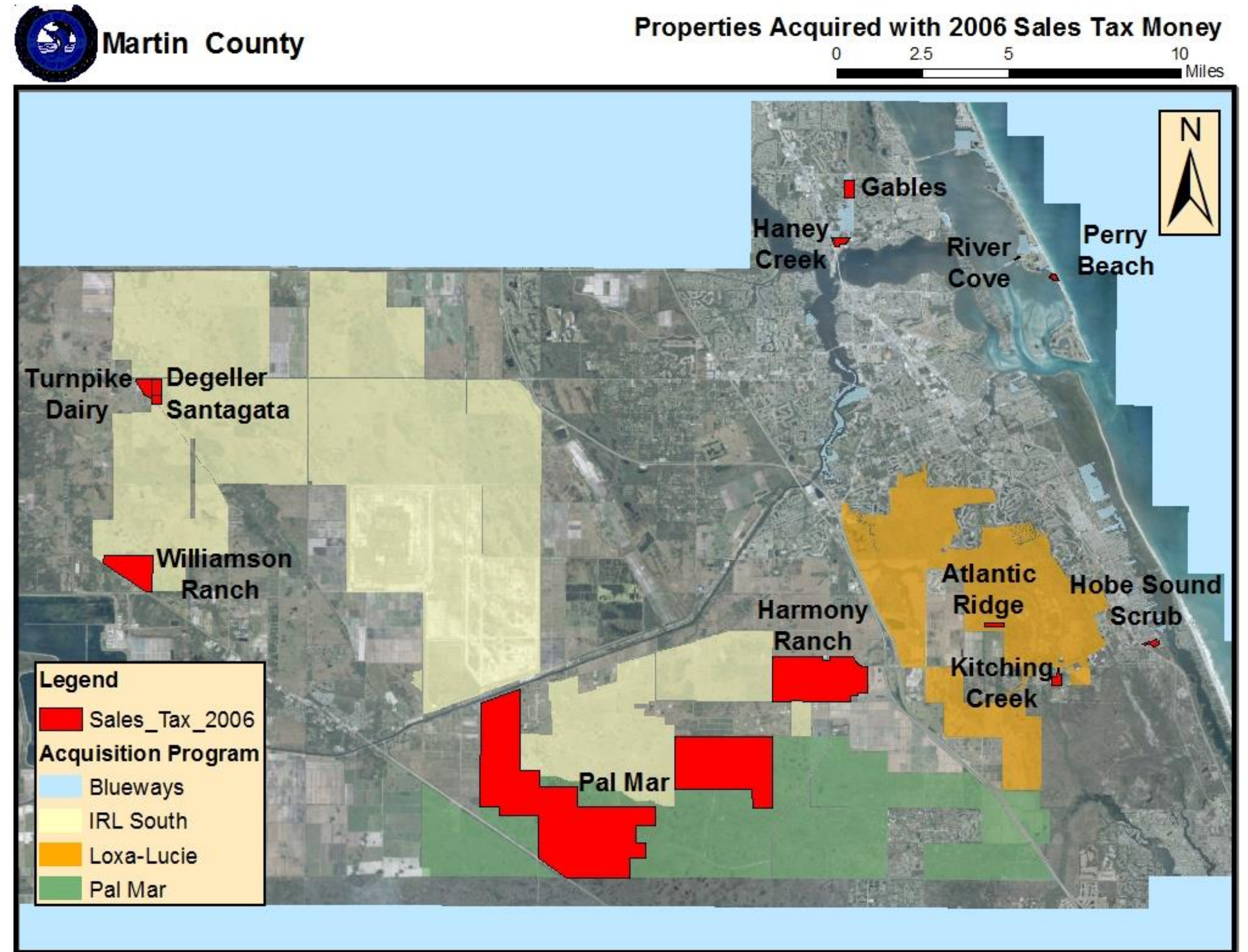
- Acquired most of the land within this project footprint (1,900-acres) and remaining parcels (400-acres) have high cost per acre
- The few remaining areas could help provide additional access to waterways
- Many areas in flood zones so acquisition helps with coastal resiliency
- Areas have a high probability of being developed in next 5-10 years

Martin County Blueway Paddling Trails



2006 HALF CENT SALES TAX

- ▶ \$27 mil spent on acquisition and \$3 mil spent on management
- ▶ Leveraged with \$30,000,000 in State/Federal funding for acquisition and management
- ▶ Acquired roughly 3,321-acres



CLIFTON S. PERRY BEACH



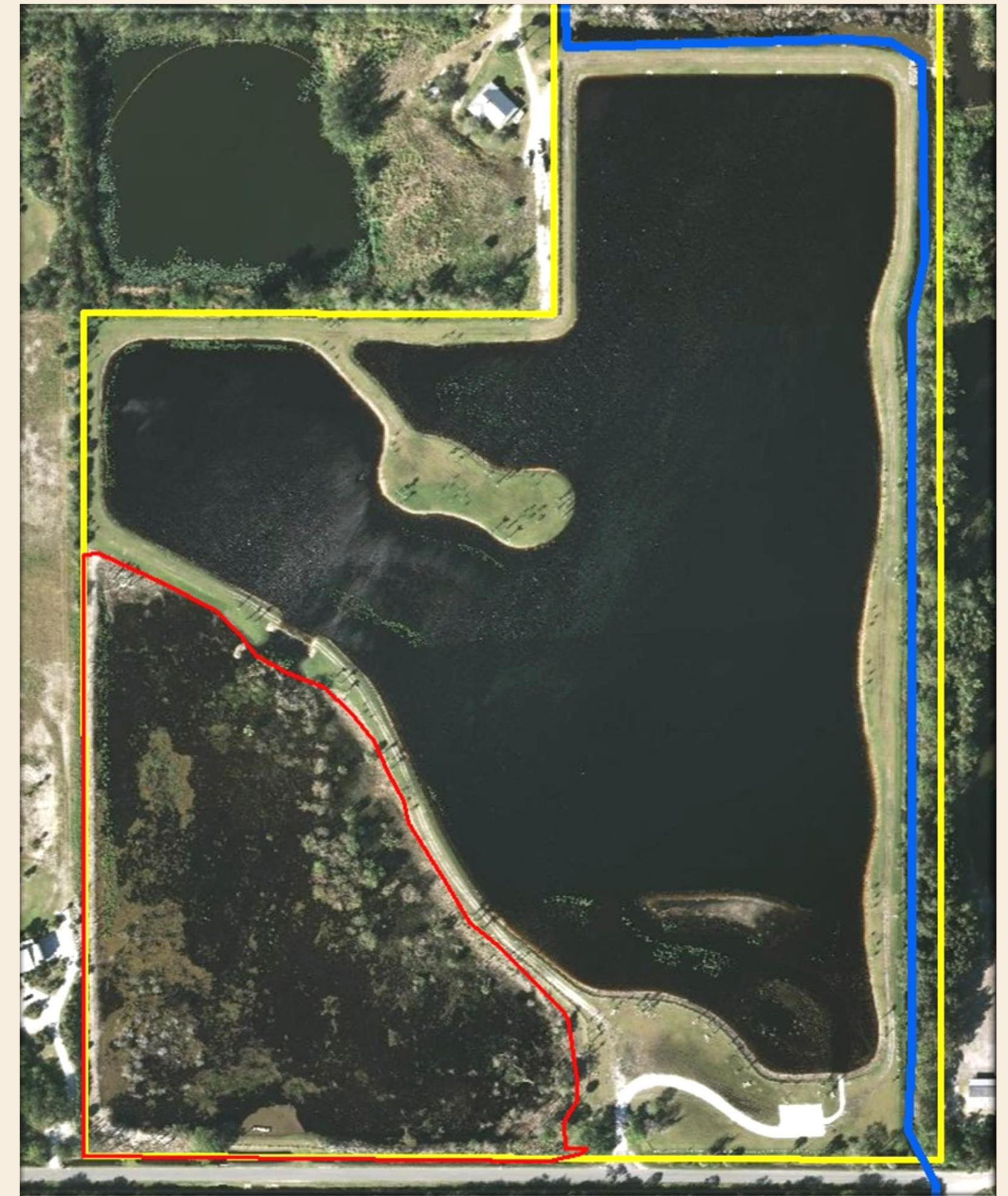
- Built parking facilities, boardwalks, paddle launch, overwater pavilion and fishing pier

HOBE SOUND SCRUB PRESERVE



► Built parking facilities, trails, pavilions, fitness stations and a covered bench

KITCHING CREEK PRESERVE



- ▶ Took a massive vegetation recycling facility and created a beautiful lake/ wetland system that is important to Loxahatchee River system and has become a popular recreational facility



REASONS TO CONTINUE ACQUISITION PROGRAM

- ▶ Still over 40,000-acres of unacquired land within a conservation footprint
- ▶ IRL South Program – alleviate damaging run-off into estuaries
- ▶ Pal Mar – Protect pristine wetland dominated habitat from off-road vehicle damage and create passive recreation opportunities
- ▶ Loxa-Lucie – Create an urban greenway corridor that spans eastern Martin County
- ▶ Blueways – Protect shoreline habitat and provide waterway access

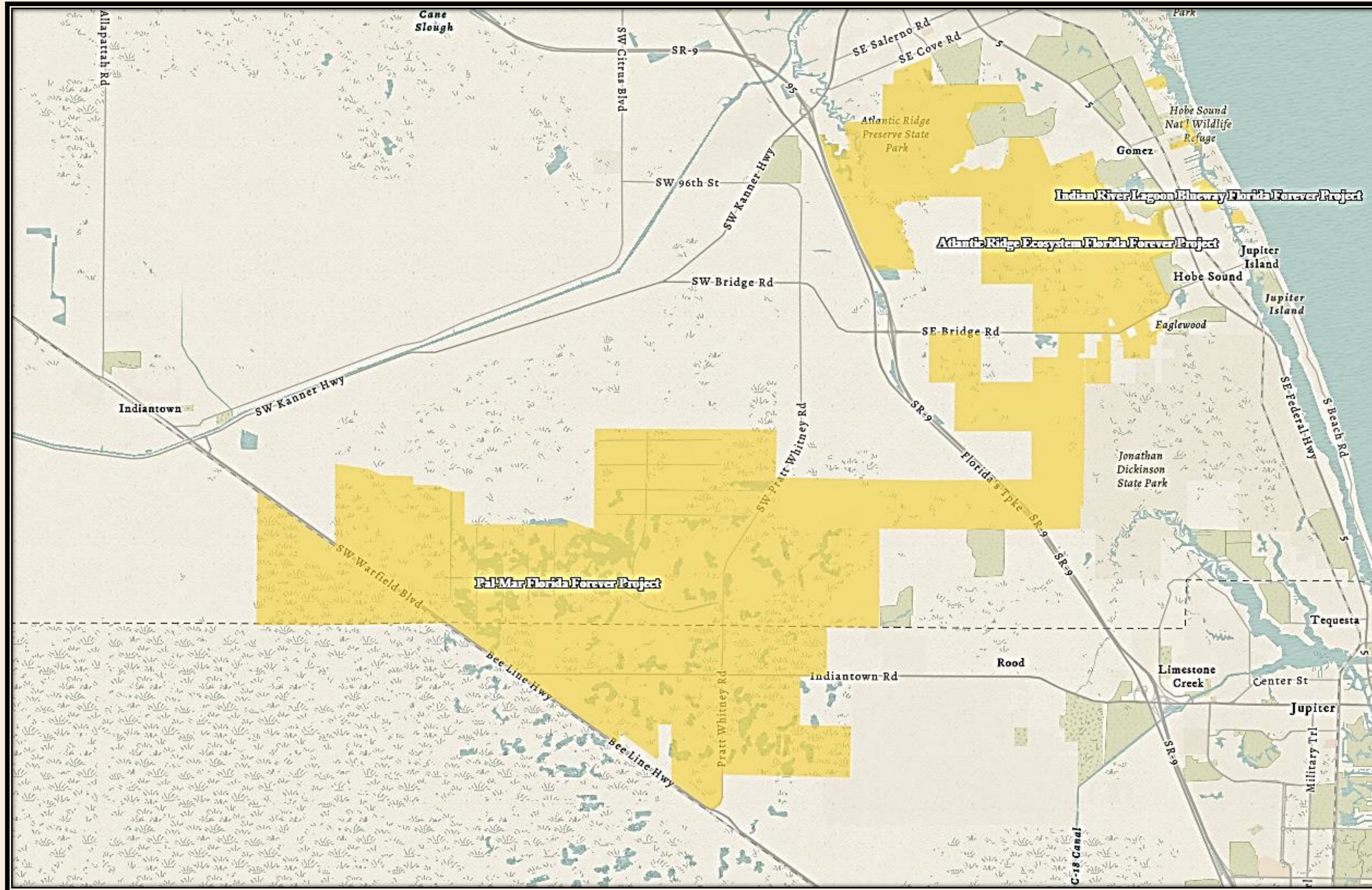


ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS



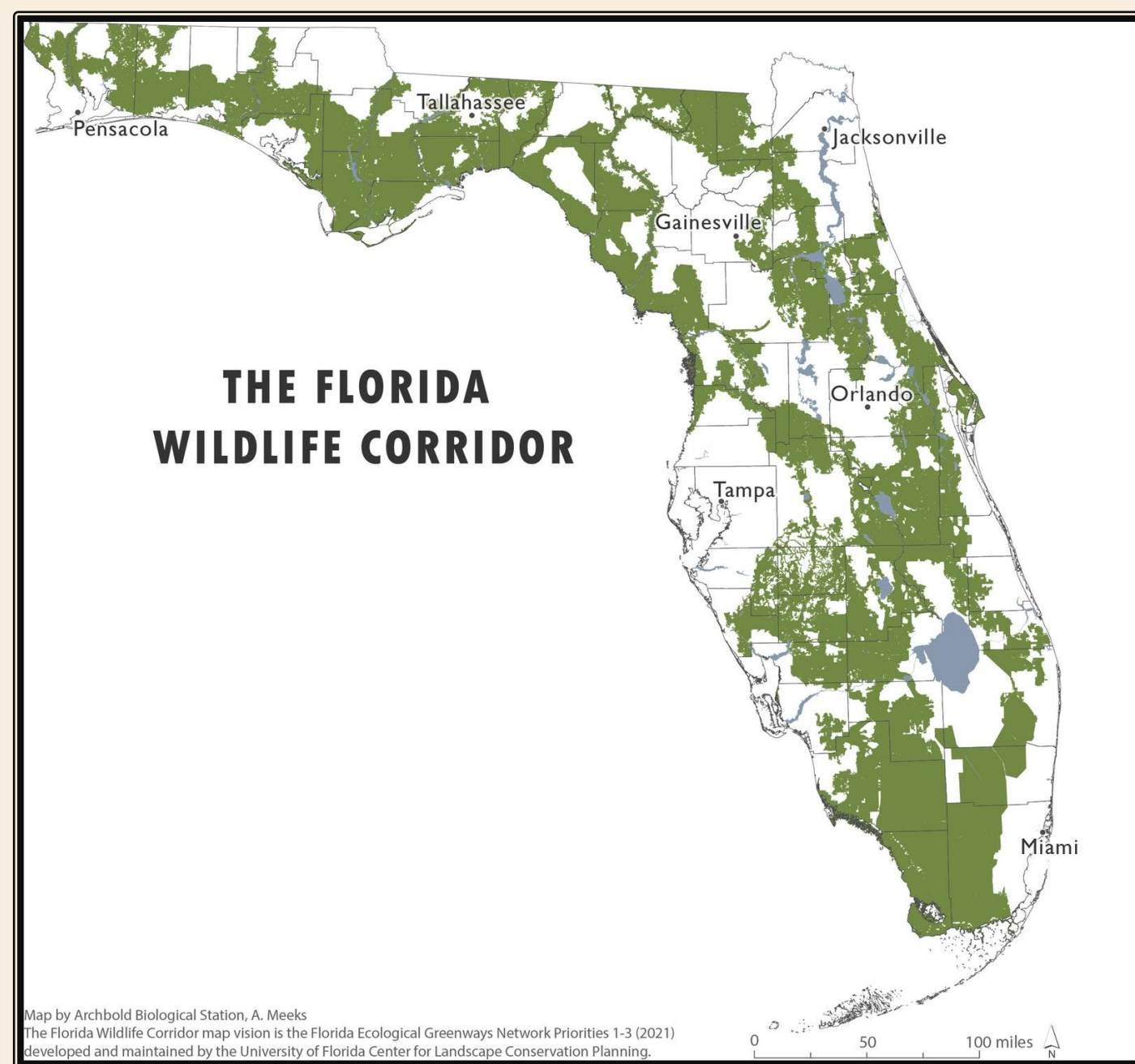
- ▶ Outdoor recreation accounts for 4.3% of Florida's GDP, results in \$58.6 billion in consumer spending and supports 500,000 jobs
- ▶ Fishing, hunting and wildlife-viewing alone contribute \$10.1 billion annually
- ▶ 75% of Florida visitors participate in nature-based activities during their visit
- ▶ Every \$1M spent on trails yields 9.6 jobs
- ▶ Health benefits, supports recreational and commercial fishing, access to clean water, storm protection and increase home values

FLORIDA FOREVER PROGRAM

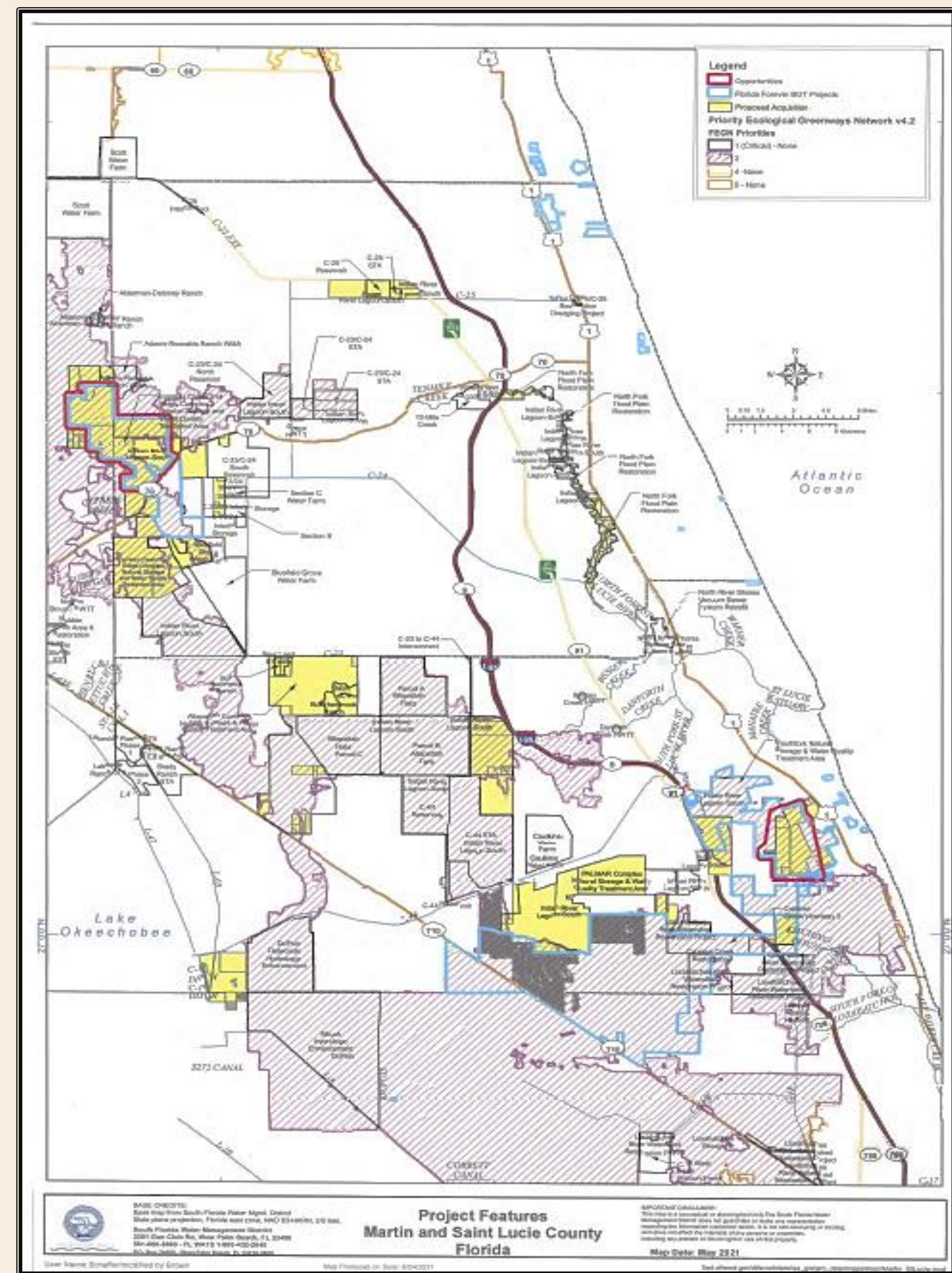


- ▶ Pal Mar, Loxa-Lucie and Blueways included in that program
- ▶ Potential to unlock state lands acquisition funding

FLORIDA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR



- ▶ State program focused on creating habitat corridors for wildlife
- ▶ Pal Mar, Loxa Lucie and IRL South are all components of the corridor
- ▶ Potential to unlock state acquisition funding

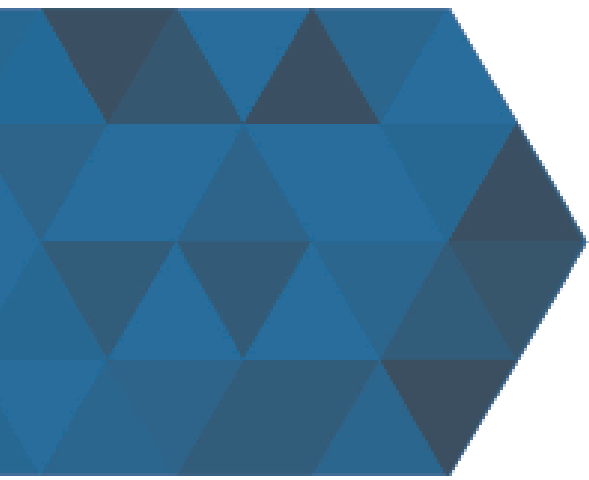




Recommendation

- Move that the Board designate the land acquisition program as a priority strategic objective and direct staff to bring back a detailed action plan with funding options.





Discussion



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