Ocklawaha River Restoration and The Florida Wildlife Corridor

Photo by fStop Foundation

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Center for Landscape and Conservation Planning

October 21, 2022

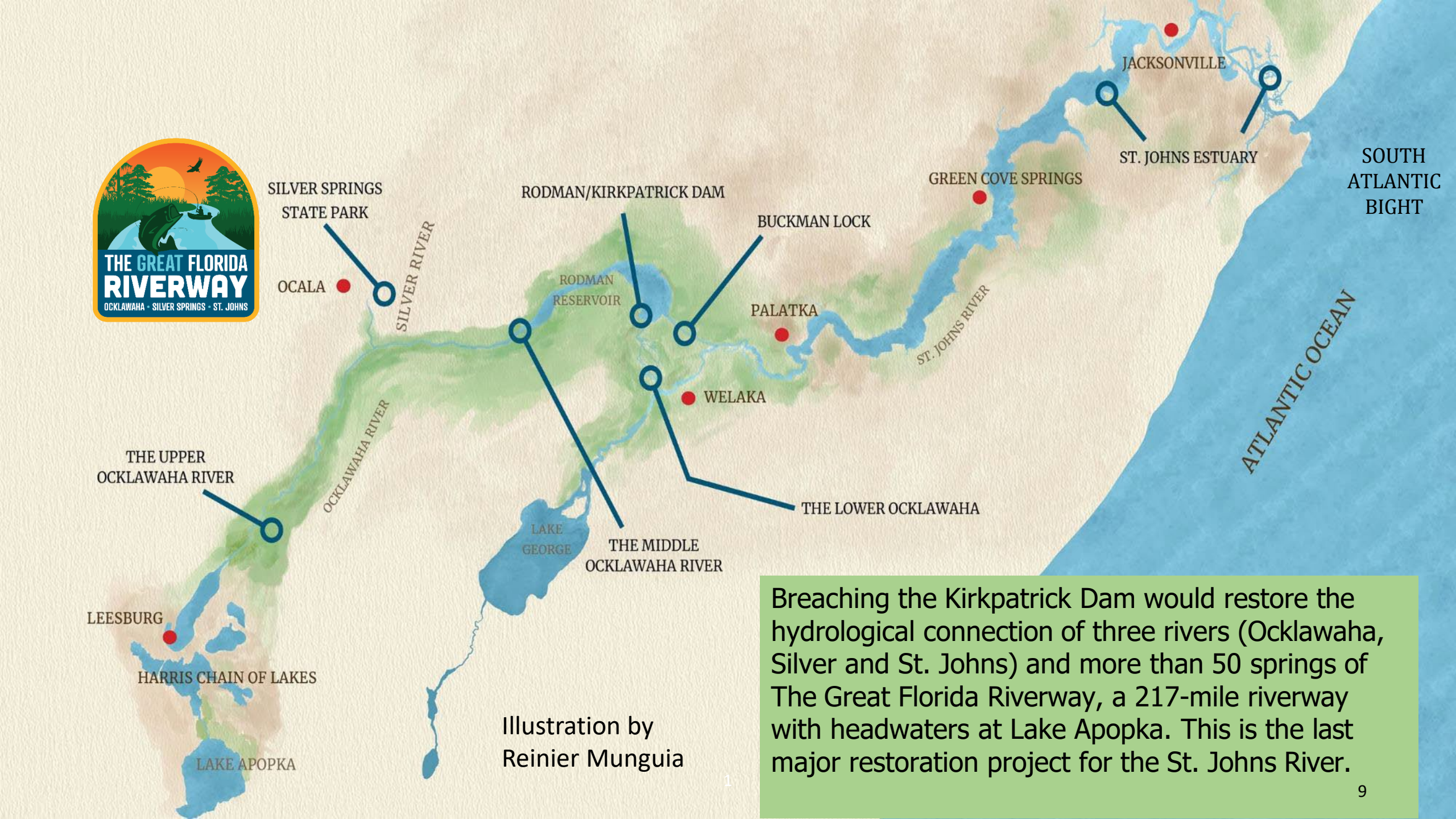


Illustration by Reinier Munguia

Breaching the Kirkpatrick Dam would restore the hydrological connection of three rivers (Ocklawaha, Silver and St. Johns) and more than 50 springs of The Great Florida Riverway, a 217-mile riverway with headwaters at Lake Apopka. This is the last major restoration project for the St. Johns River.

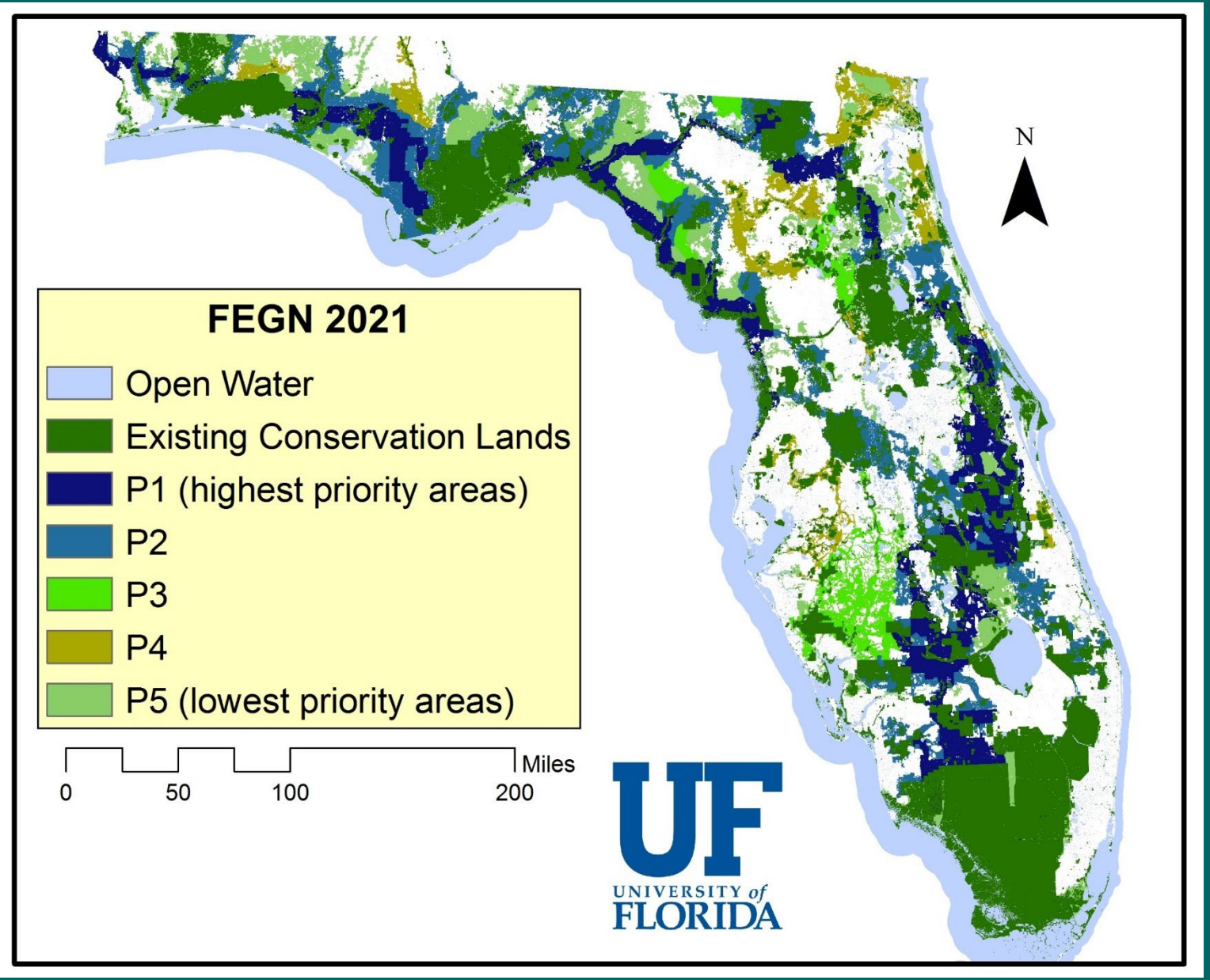
Why is the Ocklawaha River Basin a Critical Part of The Florida Wildlife Corridor?

Photo by Mark Emery

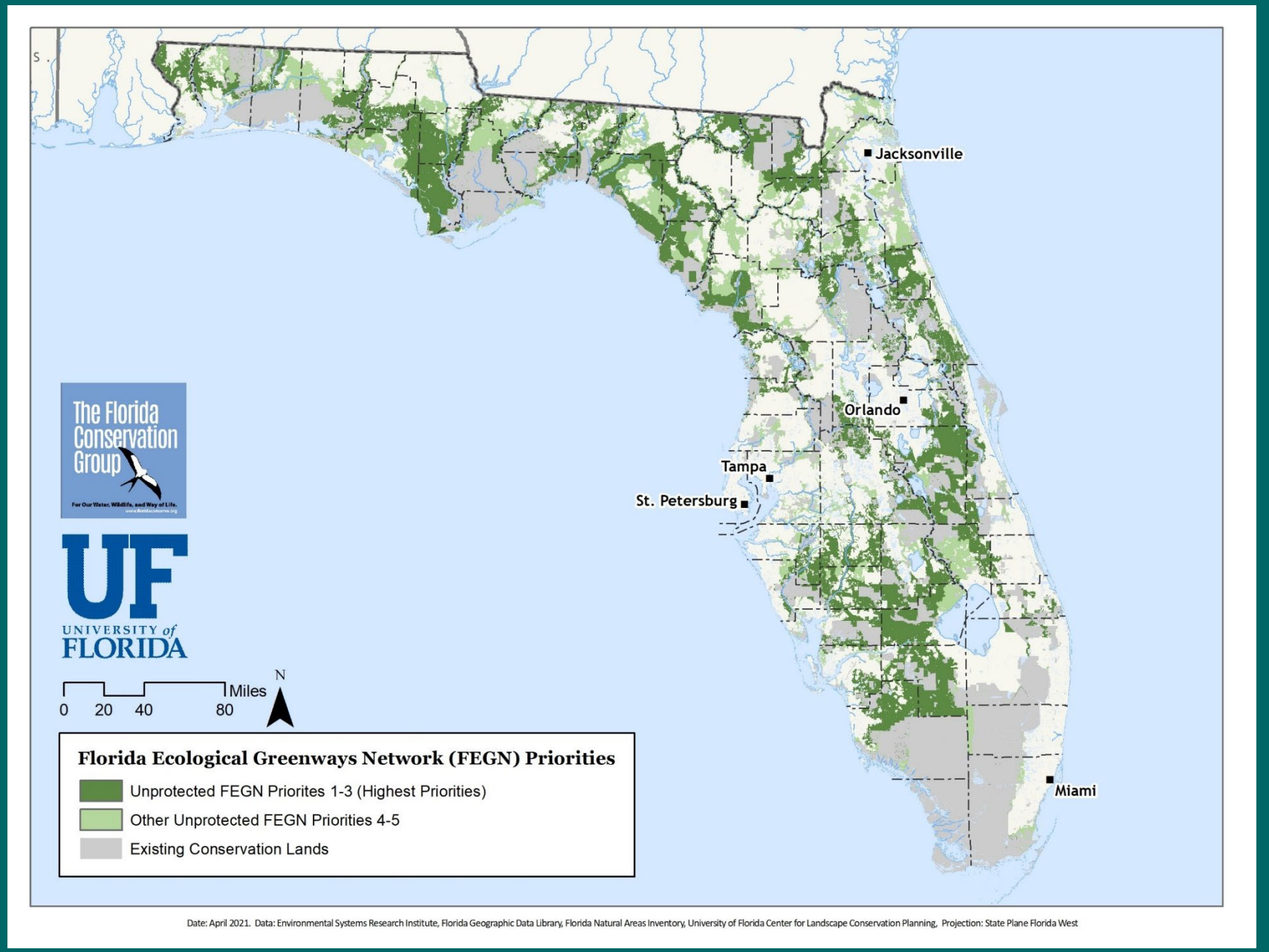
FEGN Purpose

- The FEGN identifies the best opportunities to connect large conservation lands for both biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- The Florida Ecological Greenways Network (FEGN) is part of the legislatively adopted Florida Greenways Plan administered by the Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT) in the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (Florida Statutes, Chapter 260).
- The FEGN is also used as the primary data layer to inform Florida Forever and other state and regional land acquisition programs regarding the location of the most important large, intact landscapes across the state.

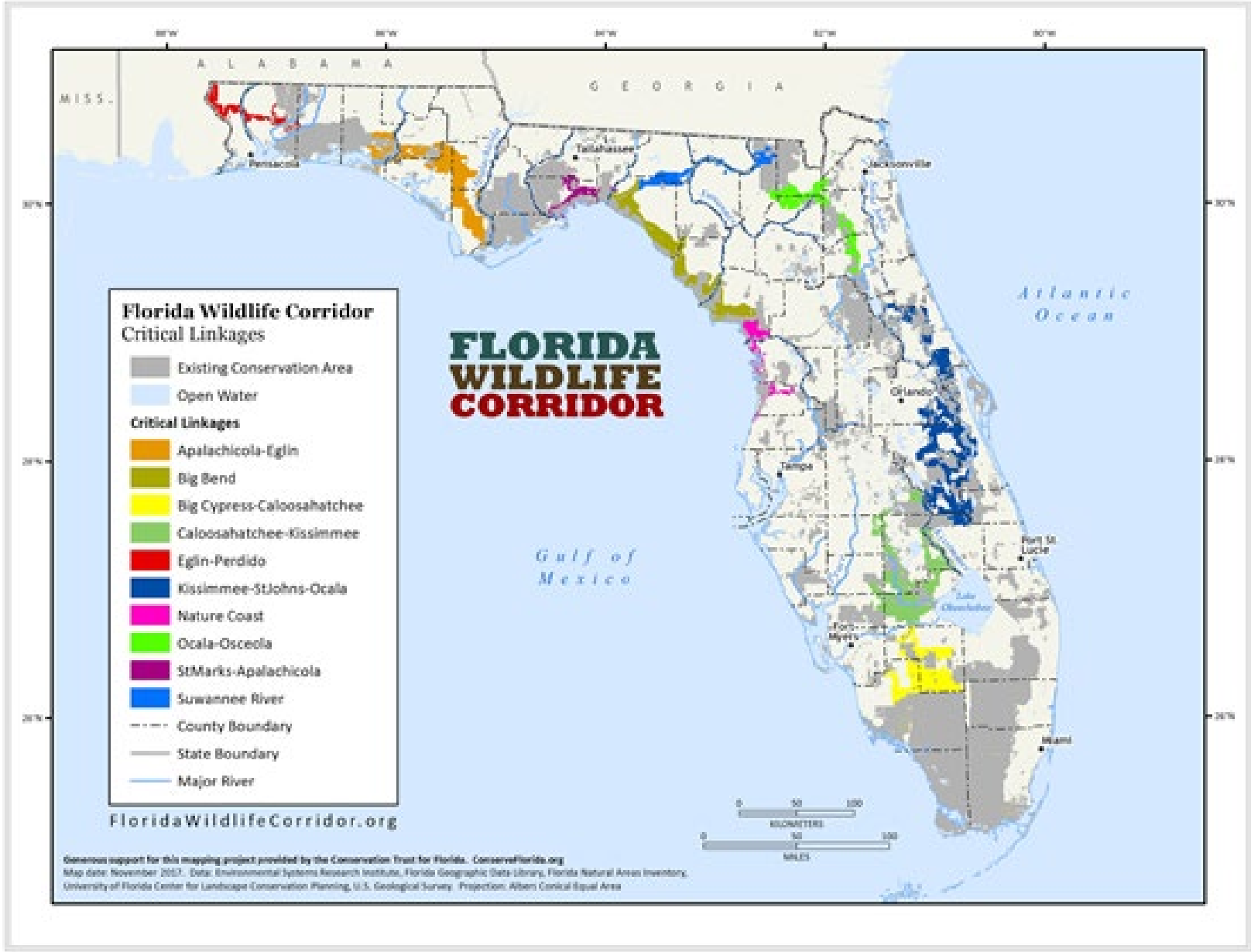
FEGN 2021


FEGN 2021
Open Water
Existing Conservation Lands
P1 (highest priority areas)
P2
P3
P4
P5 (lowest priority areas)
0
50
100
200
Miles
N
UF
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

FEGN P1-P3 (Florida Wildlife Corridor)



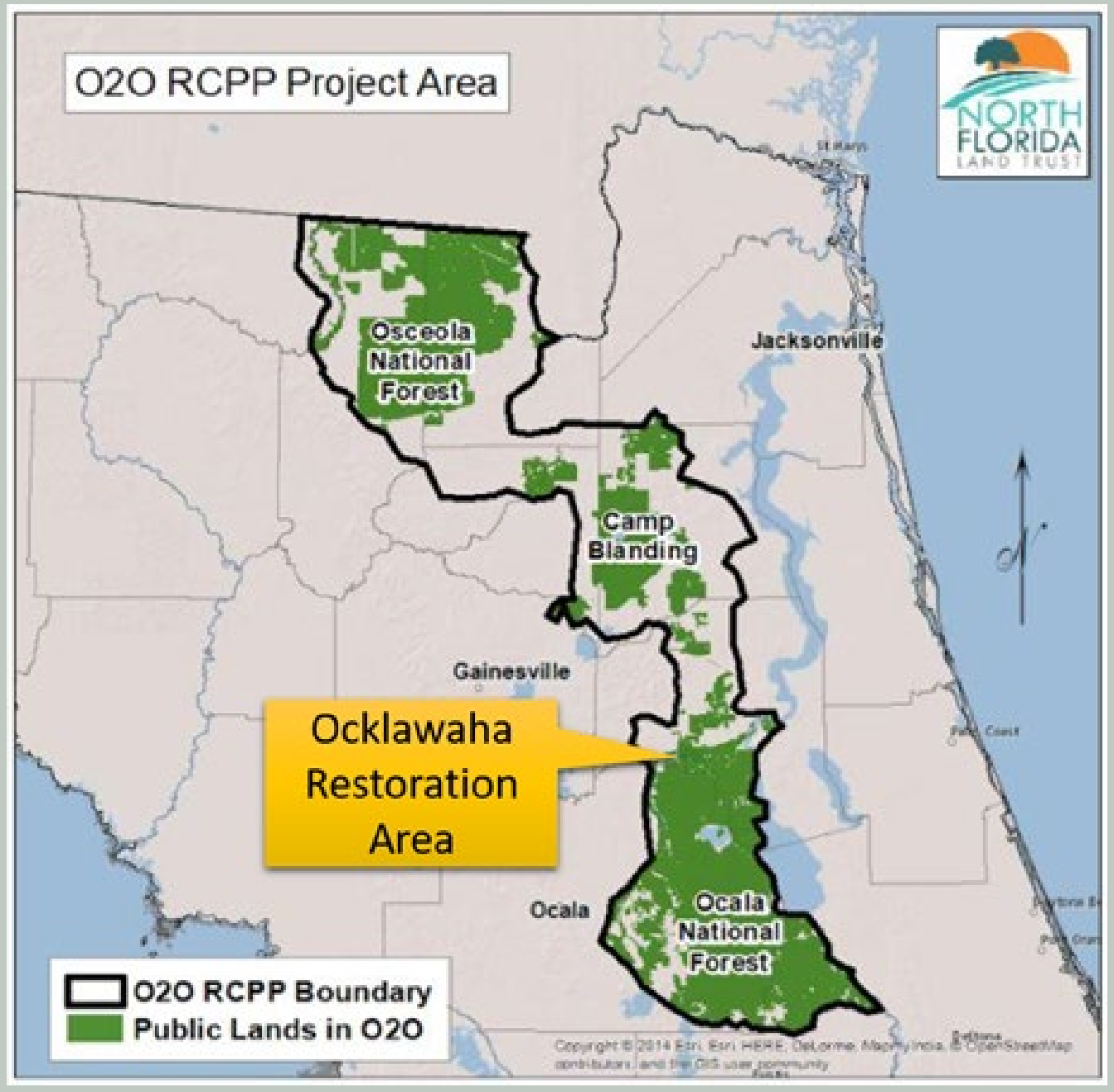
The Heart of the Florida Wildlife Corridor



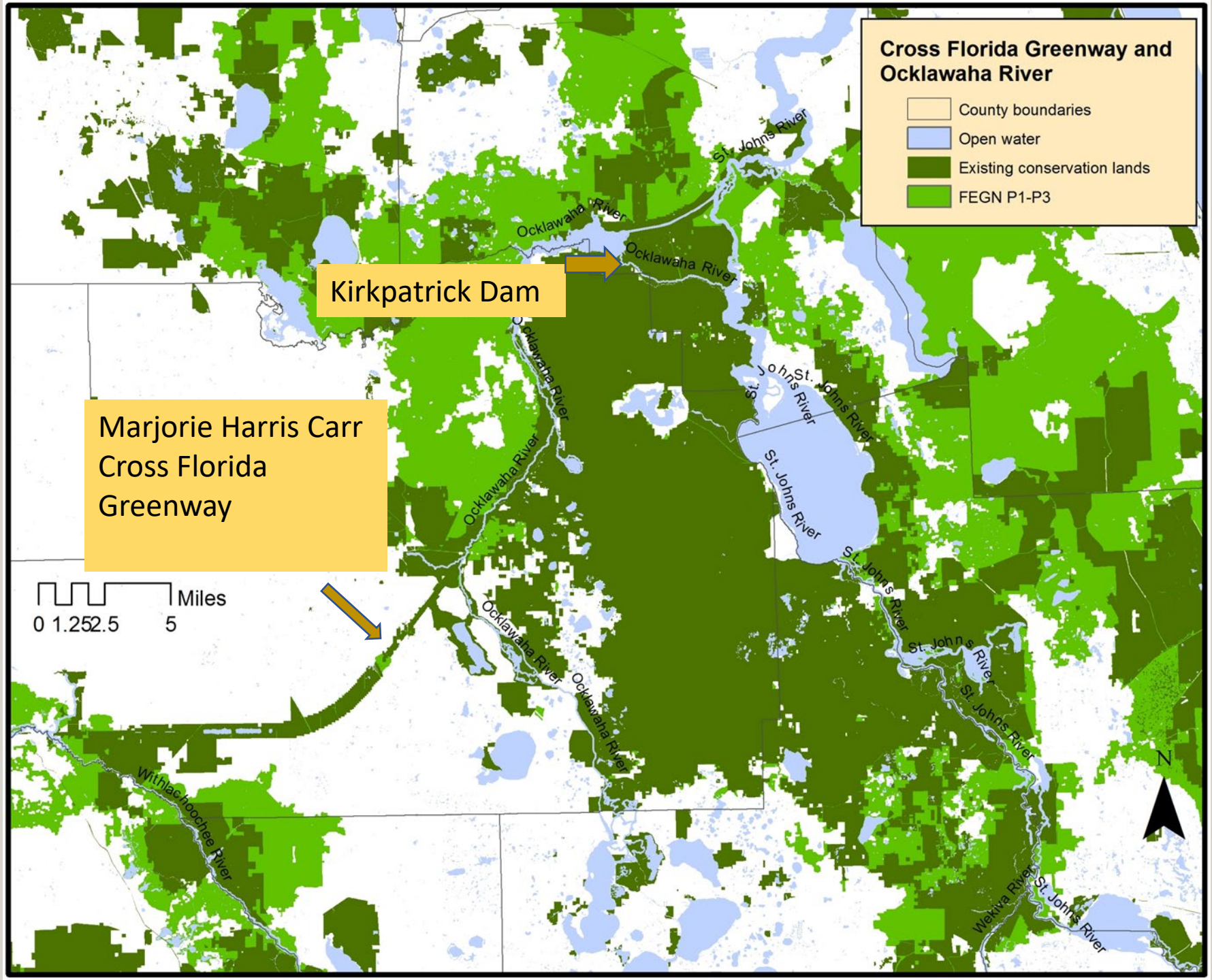
The O2O Corridor

The Ocklawaha River is a major riverine corridor in the Ocala-to-Osceola (O2O), a Statewide Conservation Priority.

It sits at the center of this system and plays a substantial role in North-South and East-West regional connectivity.

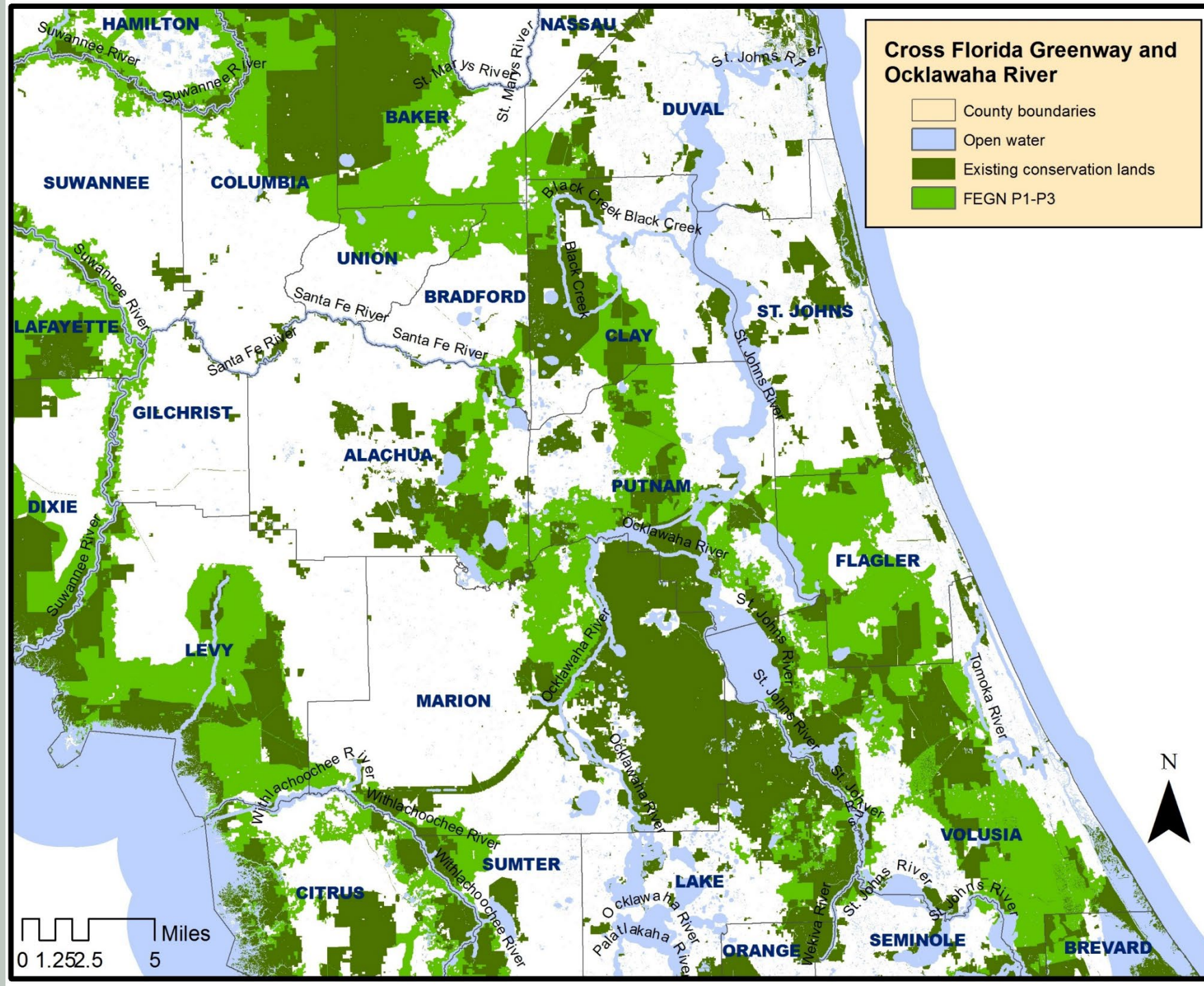


The Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway



East-West Corridor From Putnam to Alachua County

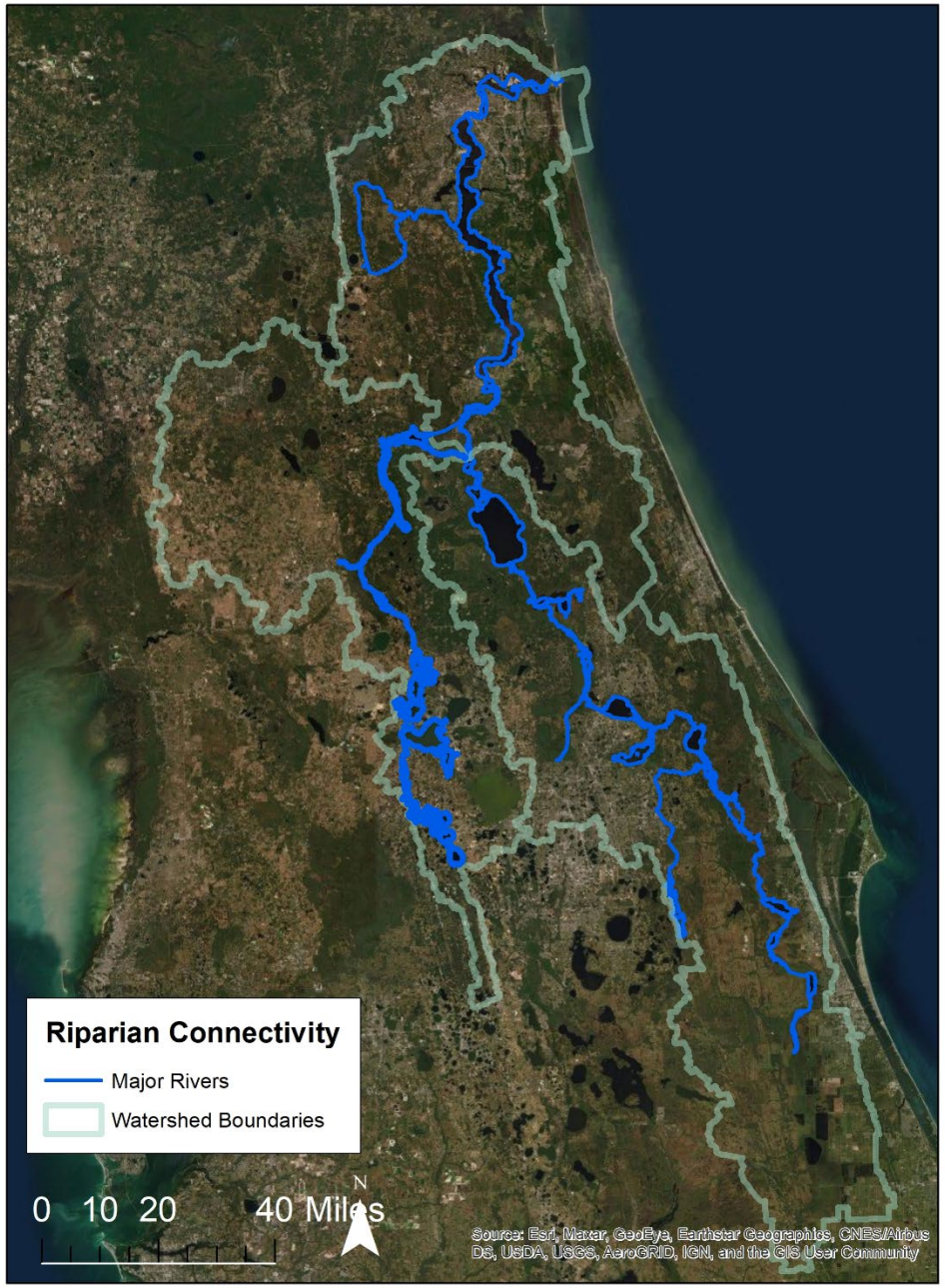
Relationship to Flagler and Volusia County Corridors



Ocklawaha River is Largest Tributary to the St. Johns River

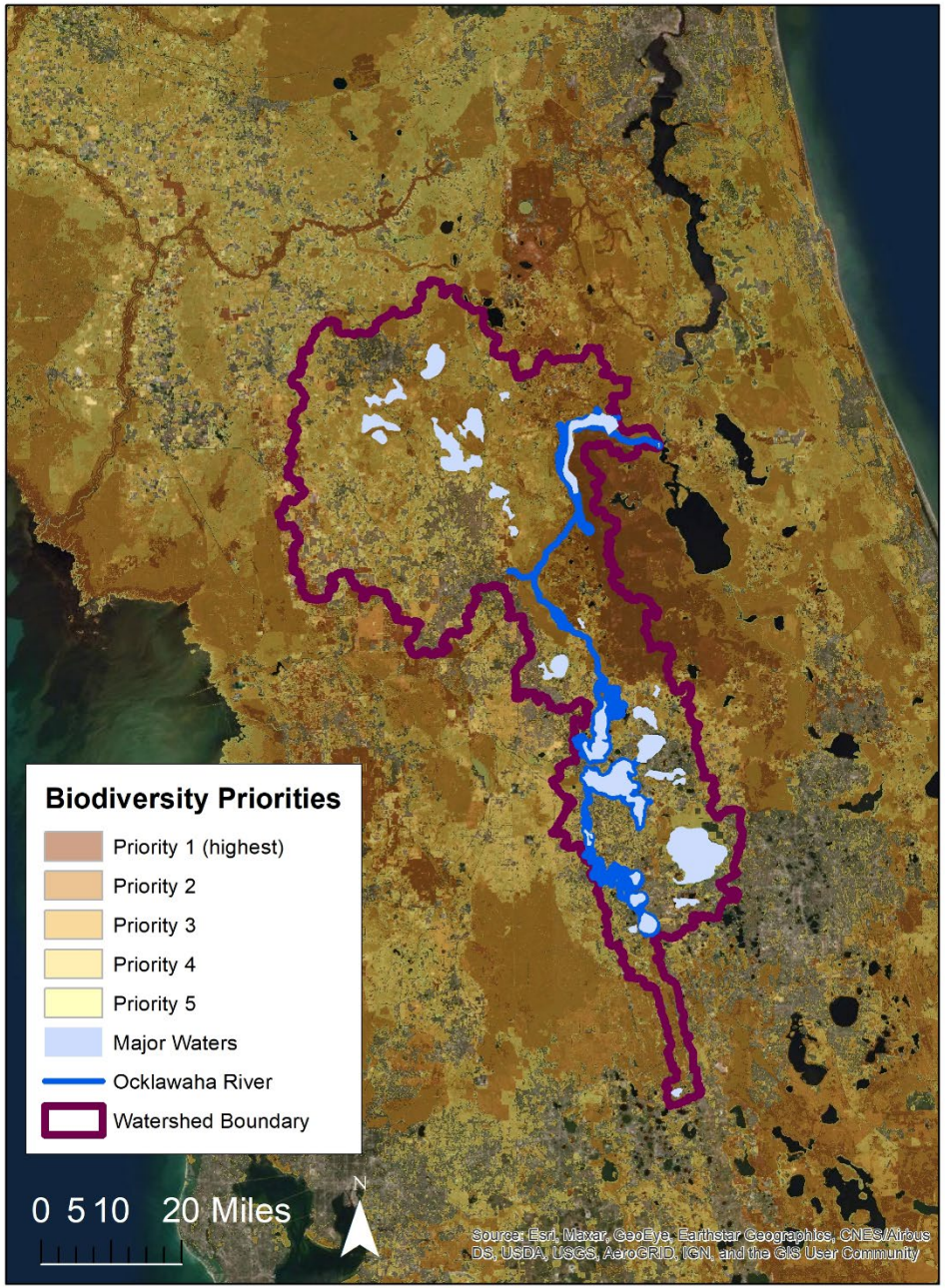
* Brings freshwater into the St. Johns River to help balance the salt and freshwater in the 100-mile estuary

* Natural freshwater flow has been diminished due to the dam



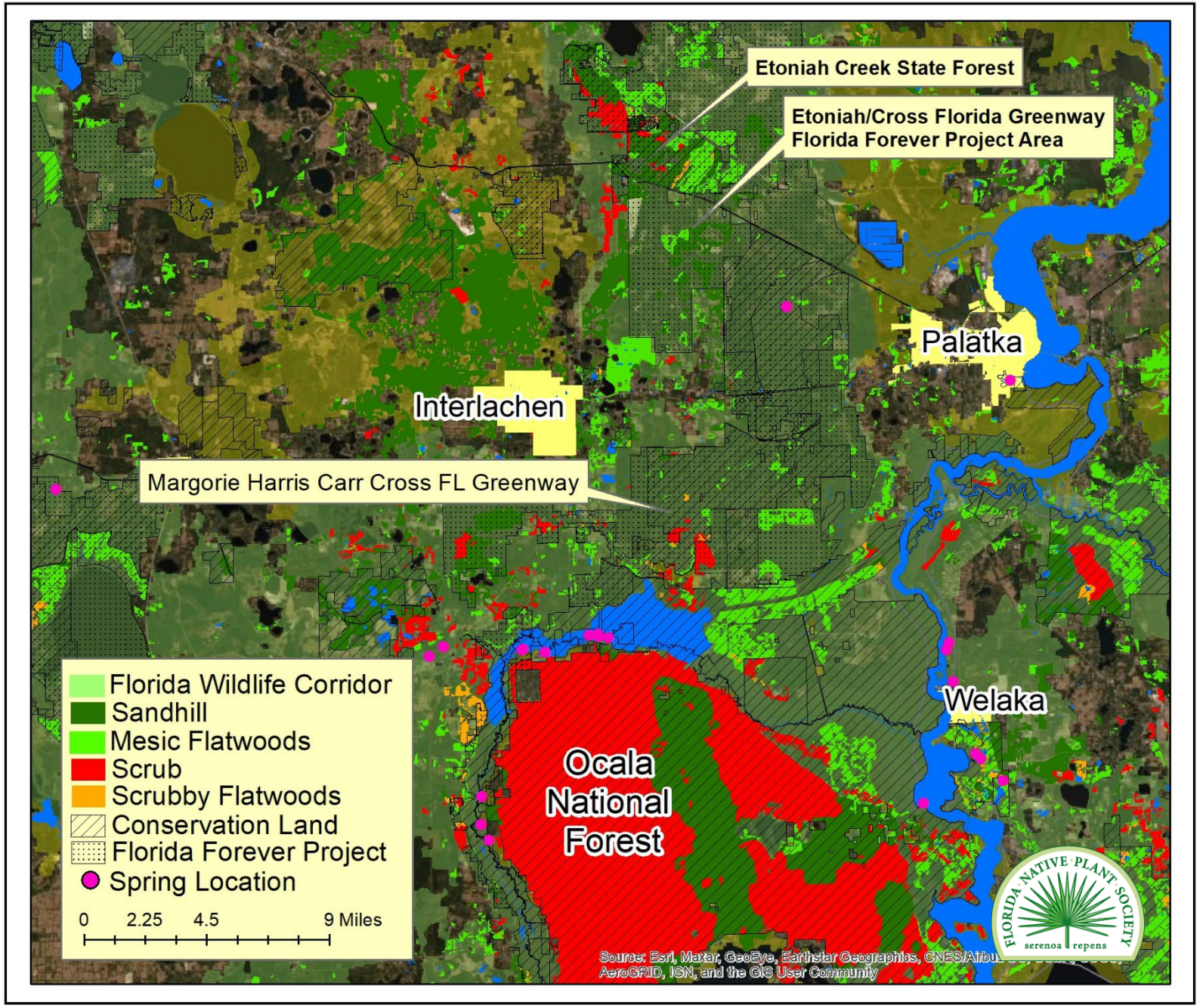
High Biodiversity Priority Region

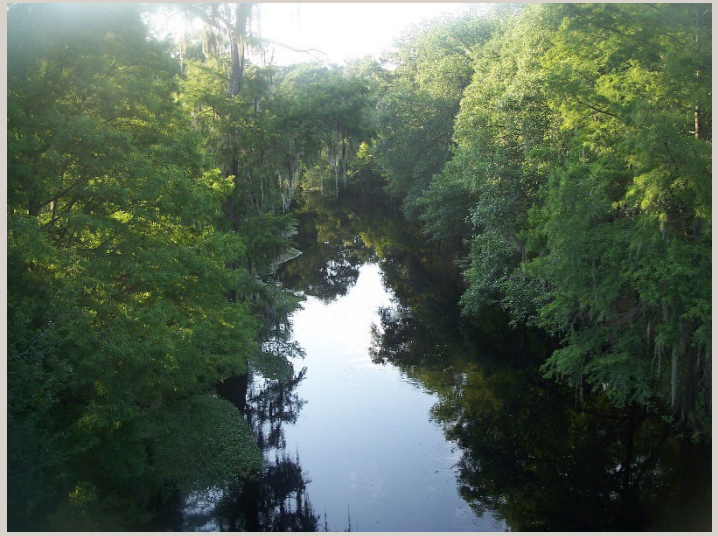
- ✓ Statewide conservation priority
- ✓ Strategic habitat conservation areas
- ✓ Rare species habitat priority
- ✓ Priority natural communities



Under-represented Natural Communities in the “O2O”

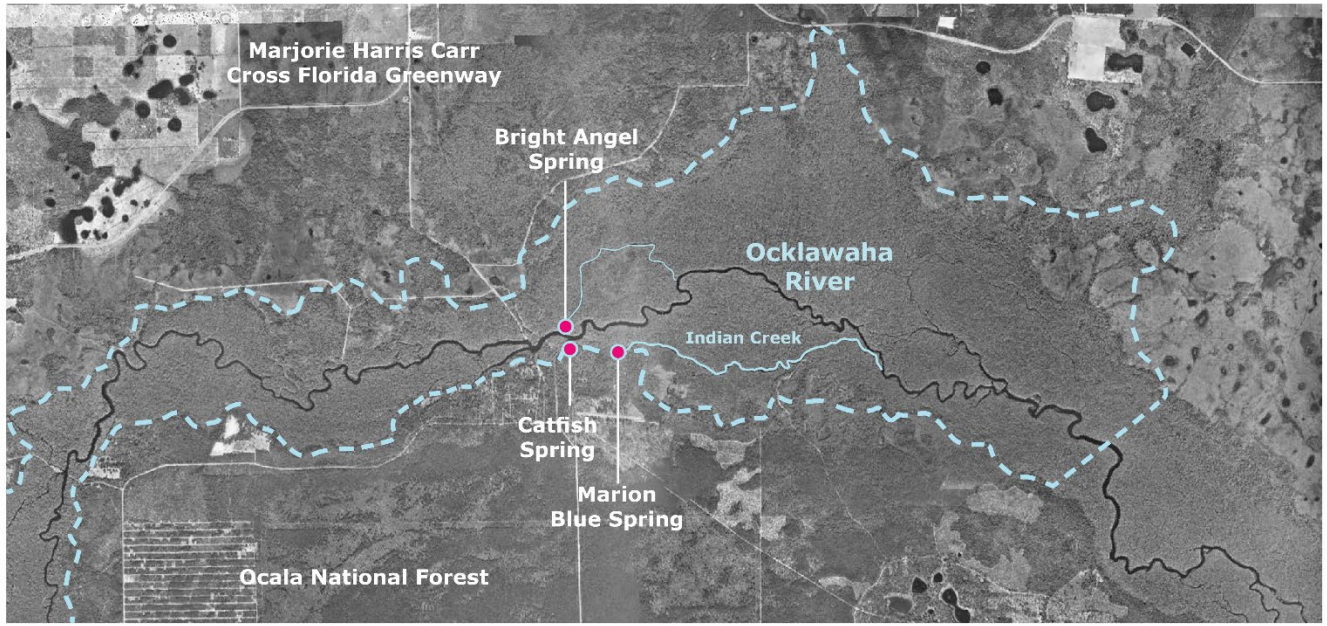
- Sandhill
- Mesic Pine Flatwoods
- Scrubby Flatwoods
- Scrub



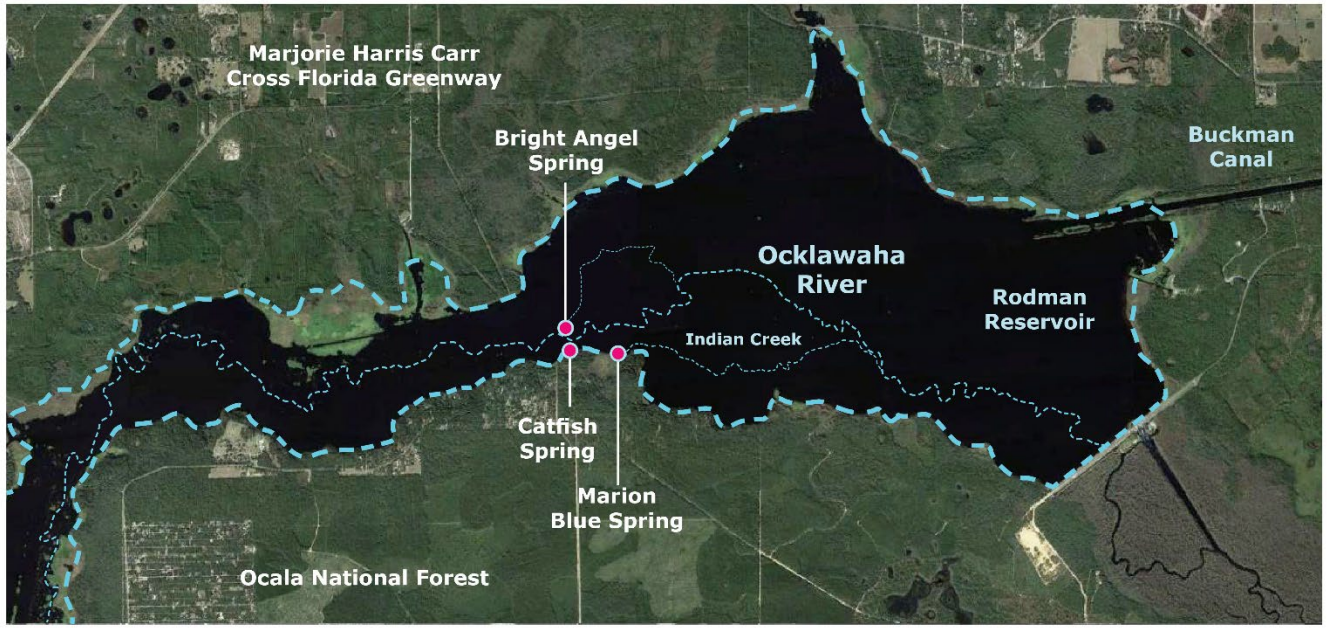


7,500 acres of floodplain forest restored in immediate project area

BEFORE DAM CONSTRUCTION (1964)



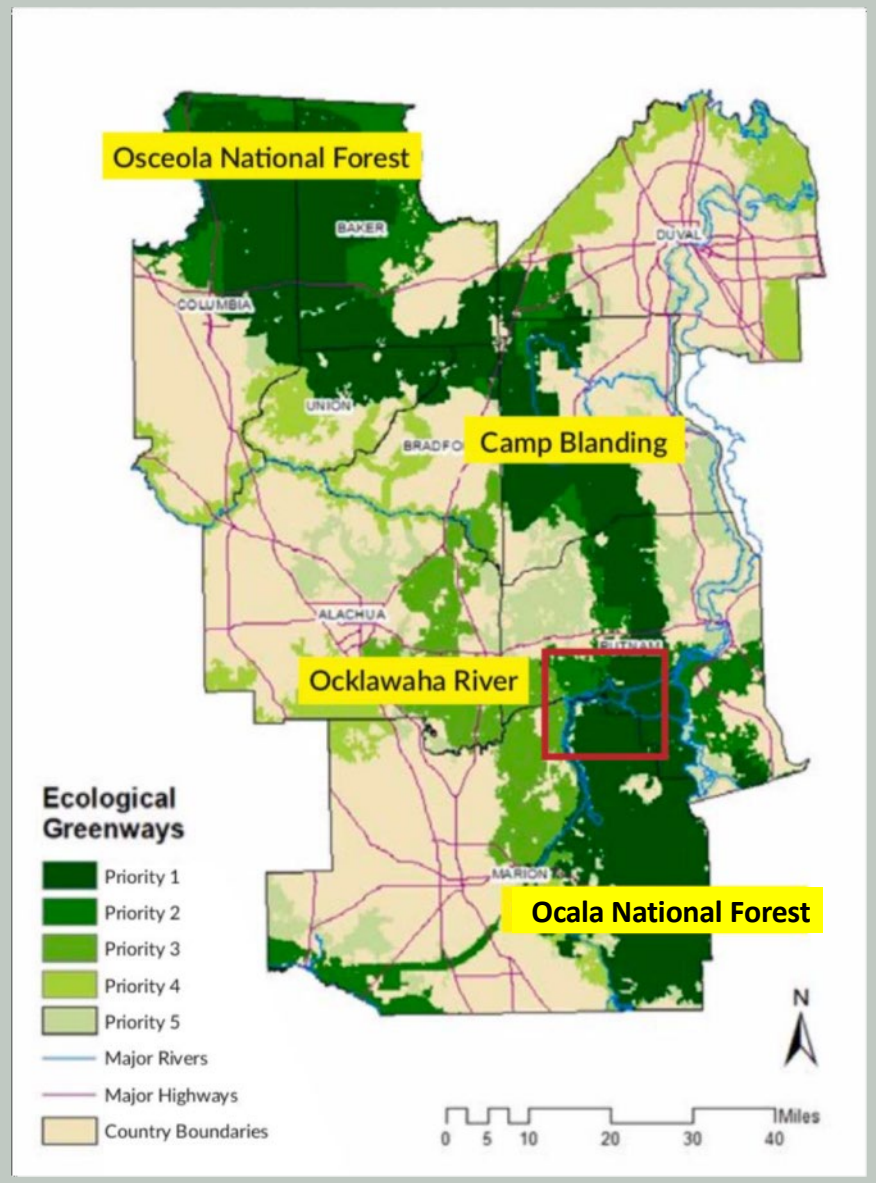
AFTER DAM CONSTRUCTION



How Partial Restoration of the Ocklawaha River Strengthens the Florida Wildlife Corridor

#2

Reestablishes a Critical Link in the Florida Wildlife Corridor



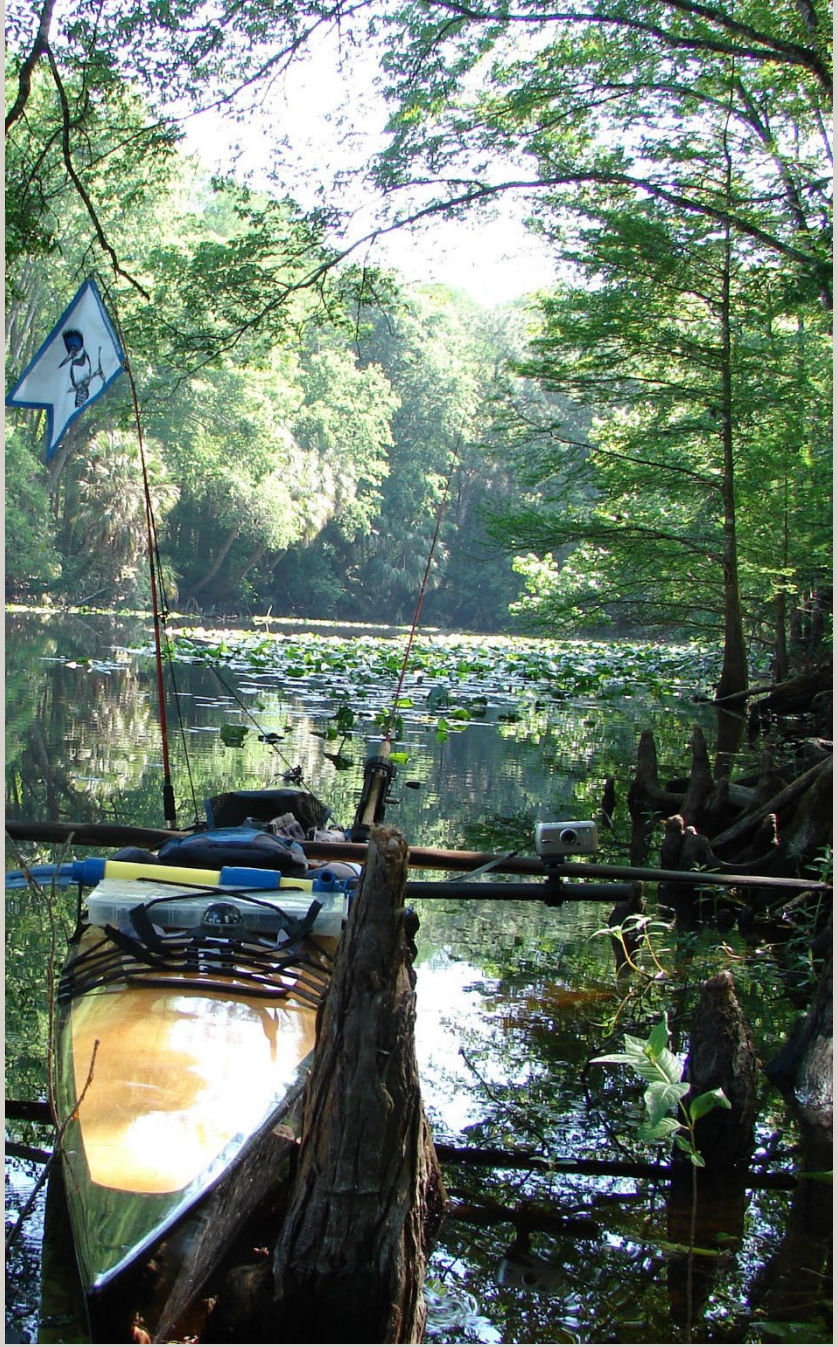
Map by Andrew Davidson.

Restores 7,500 acres of currently-flooded forested wetland habitat (Rodman Pool)

Reconnects corridor benefitting wide-ranging species: panther and black bear

Supports avian and terrestrial species like red-cockaded woodpecker, indigo snake, wood storks, wild turkey, etc.

After Restoration



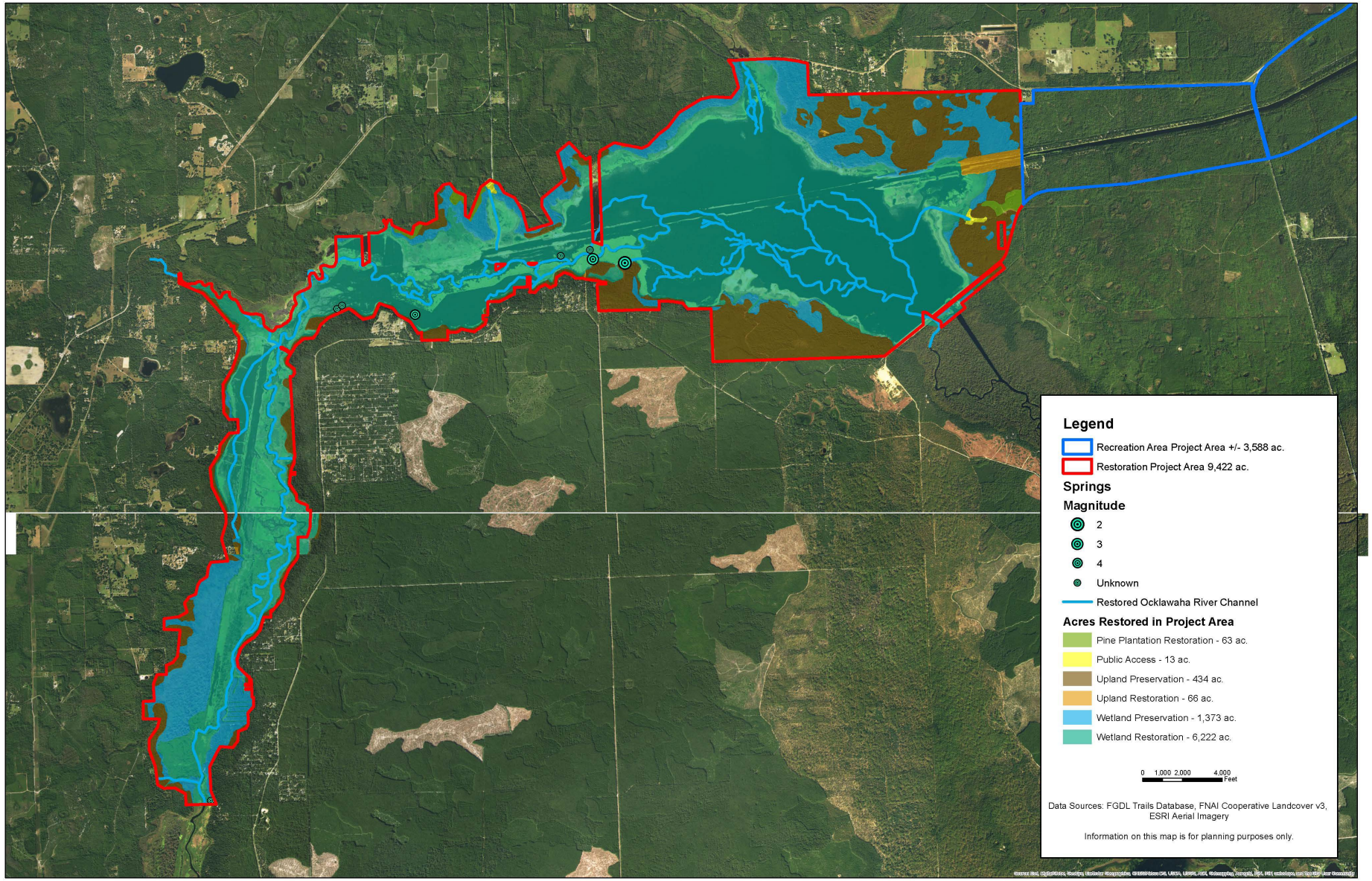
The Middle Ocklawaha by Matt Keene

"It is my opinion that restoring of the Ocklawaha River would have a significant habitat connectivity benefit for wide-ranging and landscape dependent focal species in Florida including the Florida panther and Florida black bear."

Thomas Hoctor, PhD, Director, UF Center for Landscape Conservation Planning

#3
Restores Significant Habitat Types

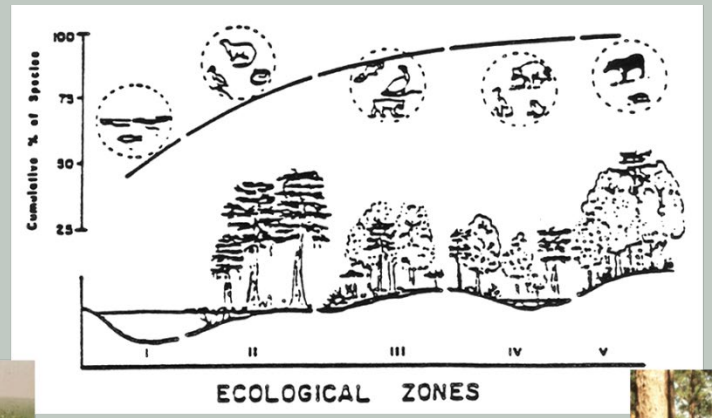
Additional habitat will be restored upstream and downstream of the direct project area.

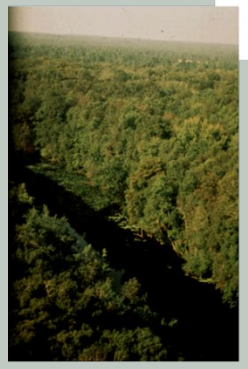


Map by Michael Spontak. For planning purposes only.

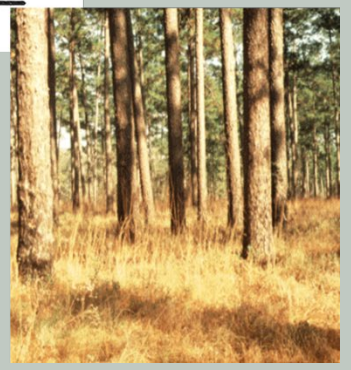
#4

Regains Habitat and Wildlife Diversity





Aquatic--wetlands--mesic uplands--xeric uplands

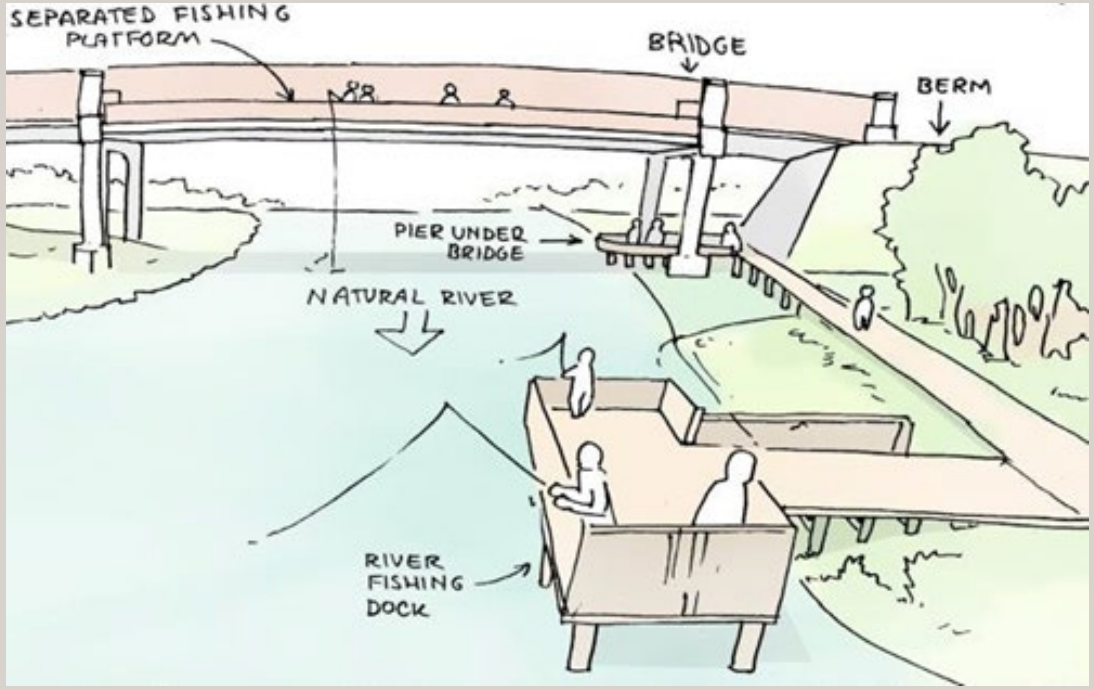


- Very significant gain in floodplain and swamp forest
- Restored function juxtaposition of forested wetlands and forested uplands
- Functional interactions between fire and flooding
- Habitat refuge for upland dependent species during droughts
- Focal and game species that will directly benefit: black bear, panther, fox squirrel, swallow-tailed kite, wood stork, bald eagle, eastern indigo snake, etc.

#5

Removes Barriers to Wildlife Movement and Fish Passage

- Manatees
- Striped Bass
- Sturgeon
- Catfish
- American and Hickory Shad
- American Eel



Restored Natural Ocklawaha River Passage Next to Existing Spillway Structure

Designs by Kathryn Stenberg

Improved Rodman Recreation Area

Summary

1. Improves public access for outdoor recreation
2. Reestablishes a critical link in the Florida Wildlife Corridor
3. Restores significant habitat types
4. Regains species and wildlife diversity
5. Removes barriers to wildlife movement and fish passage
6. Provides buffers for projected development

Photo by Alan Youngblood