

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION  
TYPE 2 CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

Florida Department of Transportation

SR 35 (US 98) FROM N OF WEST SOCRUM LOOP RD TO S OF CR 54

District: FDOT District 1

County: Polk County

ETDM Number: 14334

Financial Management Number: 436673-1-22-01

Federal-Aid Project Number: N/A

Project Manager: David C. Turley

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 14, 2016 and executed by the Federal Highway Administration and FDOT.

This action has been determined to be a Categorical Exclusion, which meets the definition contained in 40 CFR 1508.4, and based on past experience with similar actions and supported by this analysis, does not involve significant environmental impacts.

Signature below constitutes Location and Design Concept Acceptance:

Director Office of Environmental Management  
Florida Department of Transportation

For additional information, contact:

David C. Turley, PE  
Project Manager  
Florida Department of Transportation  
801 N. Broadway Avenue  
Bartow, FL 33830  
(863) 519-2255  
david.turley@dot.state.fl.us

Prime Consulting Firm:  
AIM Engineering & Surveying, Inc.

Consulting Project Manager:  
Jeffrey Jacquin, PE

This document was prepared in accordance with the FDOT PD&E Manual.

This project has been developed without regard to race, color or national origin, age, sex, religion, disability or family status (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended).

On 12/29/2020 the State of Florida determined that this project is consistent with the Florida Coastal Zone Management Program.

# Table of Contents

1. Project Information .....	2
1.1 Project Description .....	2
1.2 Purpose and Need .....	5
1.3 Planning Consistency .....	6
2. Environmental Analysis Summary .....	8
3. Social and Economic .....	9
3.1 Social .....	9
3.2 Economic .....	10
3.3 Land Use Changes .....	10
3.4 Mobility .....	10
3.5 Aesthetic Effects .....	11
3.6 Relocation Potential .....	11
3.7 Farmland Resources .....	12
4. Cultural Resources .....	13
4.1 Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act .....	13
4.2 Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act of 1966, as amended .....	14
4.3 Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 .....	15
4.4 Recreational Areas and Protected Lands .....	15
5. Natural Resources .....	16
5.1 Protected Species and Habitat .....	16
5.2 Wetlands and Other Surface Waters .....	17
5.3 Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) .....	19
5.4 Floodplains .....	19
5.5 Sole Source Aquifer .....	19
5.6 Water Resources .....	19
5.7 Aquatic Preserves .....	20
5.8 Outstanding Florida Waters .....	20
5.9 Wild and Scenic Rivers .....	20

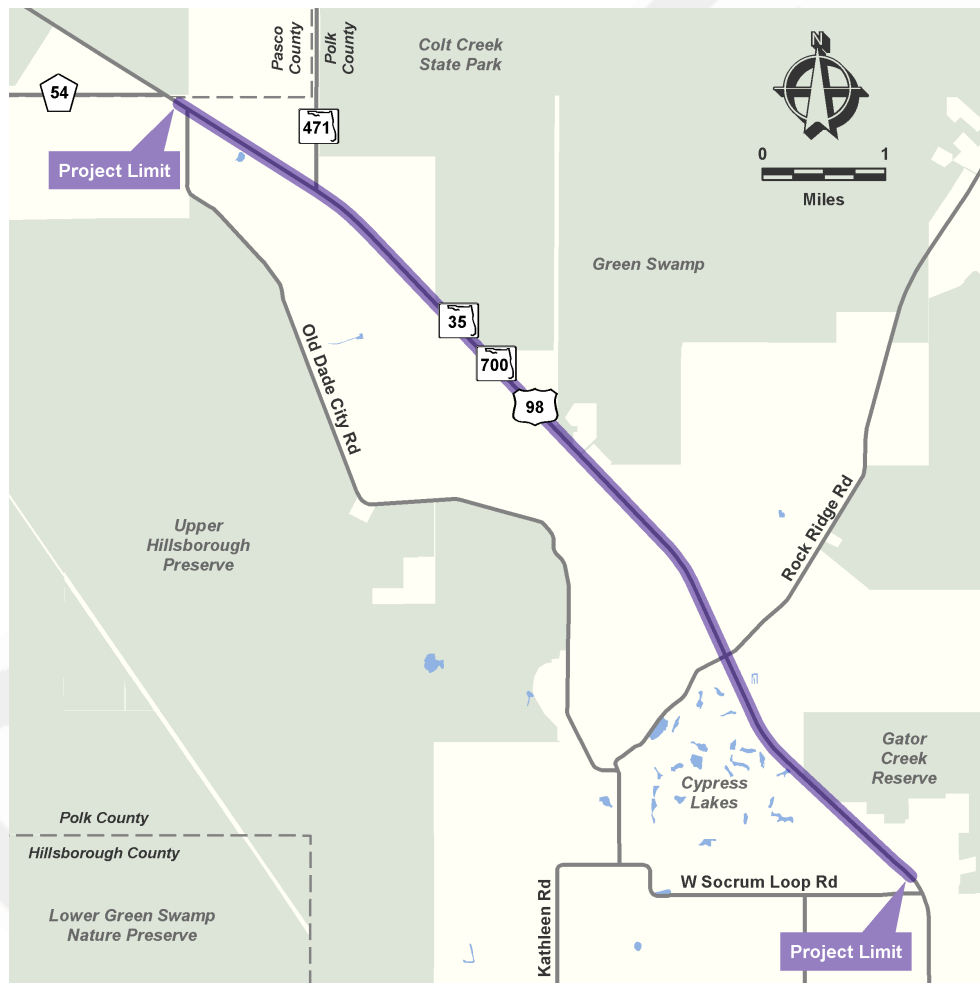
5.10 Coastal Barrier Resources .....	20
6. Physical Resources .....	21
6.1 Highway Traffic Noise .....	21
6.2 Air Quality .....	22
6.3 Contamination .....	22
6.4 Utilities and Railroads .....	23
6.5 Construction .....	23
7. Engineering Analysis Support .....	25
8. Permits .....	26
9. Public Involvement .....	27
10. Commitments Summary .....	28
11. Technical Materials .....	29
Attachments .....	30



# 1. Project Information

## 1.1 Project Description

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District One is conducting a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) study to evaluate capacity and safety improvements along SR 35 (US 98) from north of West Socrum Loop Road to south of CR 54 in Polk County. Throughout the remainder of this document only the US 98 designation will be used. The project limits are shown in **Figure 1** and the total project length is approximately 8.7 miles. The purpose of this PD&E study is to evaluate and document the benefits, costs, and impacts of widening US 98 from the existing two-lane undivided roadway to a four-lane divided roadway. US 98 is not designated as a Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) facility. The portion from West Socrum Loop Road to just north of Rock Ridge Road is functionally classified as Urban Principal Arterial Other, while the portion from just north of Rock Ridge Road to CR 54 is functionally classified as Rural Principal Arterial Other.



**Figure 1 - Project Location Map**

This PD&E study will aid FDOT District One and the FDOT Office of Environmental Management (OEM) in determining the type, preliminary design, and location of the proposed improvements. This improvement is necessary to provide additional capacity to accommodate the future year travel demand generated by the projected population and employment growth in both northwest Polk County and southeast Pasco County. US 98 is a major north-south roadway that connects US 92 (Memorial Boulevard) in Lakeland to US 301 (Gall Boulevard) in Dade City and provides a critical regional

connection between Polk and Pasco Counties. US 98 is a designated evacuation route and is also included in the Polk Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) Regional Freight Network.

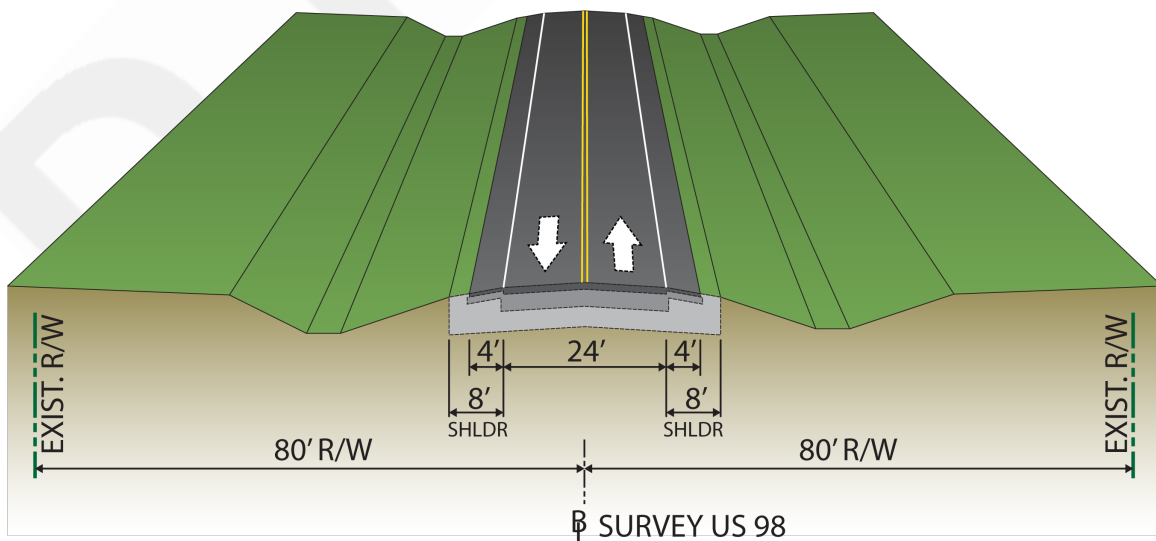
This project was screened through the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process as ETDM Project Number 14334. The initial results were published in the *Preliminary Programming Screen Summary Report* on March 11, 2021, with comments provided by the Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT). The ETAT evaluated the proposed project's effects on various natural, physical, and social resources. The Class of Action was determined to be a Type 2 Categorical Exclusion (Type 2 CE).

### Existing Facility

US 98 is a two-lane undivided facility with a posted speed limit of 60 miles per hour (mph) throughout the project limits. The roadway is centered within 160 feet of existing right-of-way (ROW) and consists of one 12-foot travel lane in each direction and eight-foot outside shoulders (four feet paved). There are no existing designated bicycle or pedestrian facilities. Stormwater runoff is collected in roadside ditches that outfall to adjacent wetlands and is ultimately conveyed to the Hillsborough and Withlacoochee River watersheds. There are 22 cross drains within the project limits, including bridge culverts at Main Stream, Fox Branch, and Cypress Run. The US 98 intersection with Rock Ridge Road is signalized and there is a flashing signal at the intersection with SR 471. Overhead utilities are located throughout the project limits and conservation lands are present along portions of the corridor. The assigned US 98 Context Classifications within the project limits are shown in **Table 1** and the existing typical roadway section is depicted in **Figure 2**.

**Table 1 - Existing Context Classification**

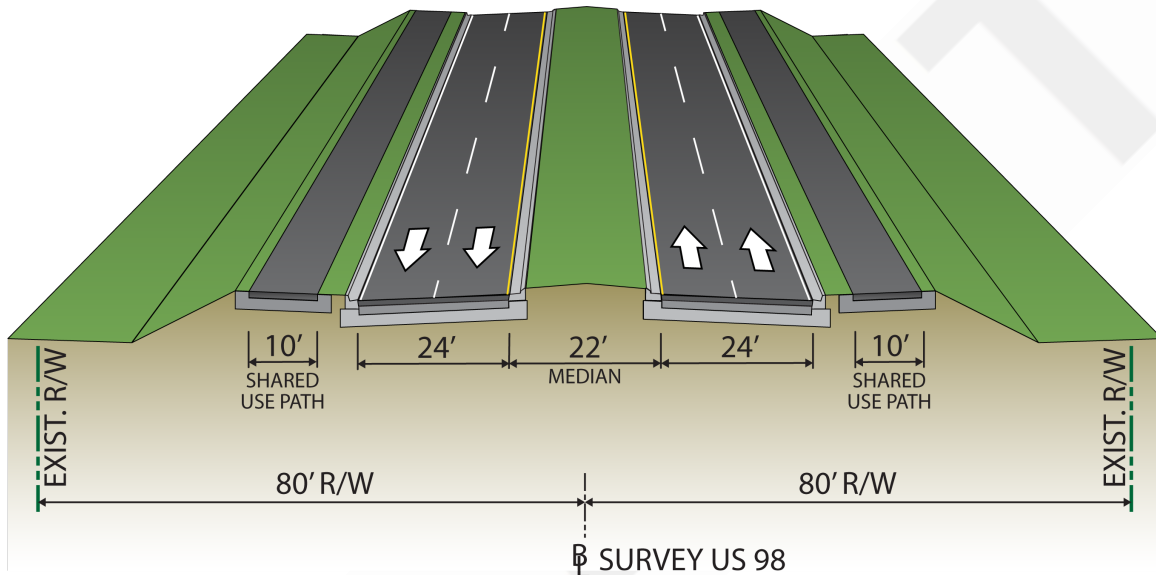
Begin Limit	End Limit	Context Classification
North of West Socrum Loop Road	Rock Ridge Road	C3R - Suburban Residential
Rock Ridge Road	CR 54	C2 - Rural



**Figure 2 - Existing US 98 Typical Section**

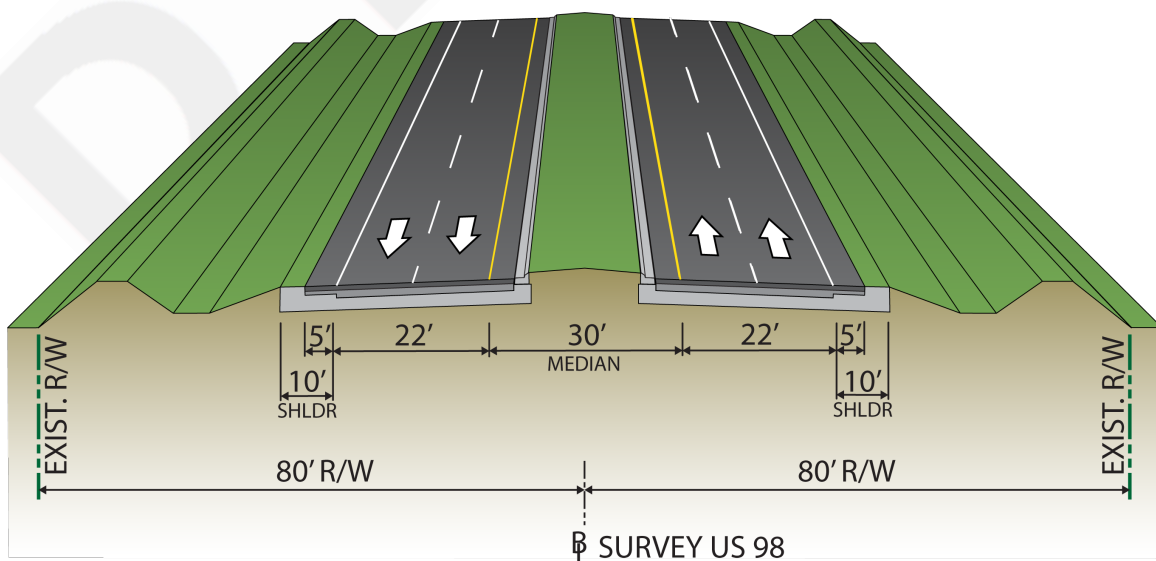
## Proposed Improvements

The proposed build alternative is a four-lane divided roadway throughout the project limits. The typical section for the portion of US 98 from north of West Socrum Loop Road to Rock Ridge Road includes 12-foot travel lanes, curb and gutter along the inside and outside edges of pavement, a 22-foot grassed median, and 10-foot shared use paths on both sides of the roadway, as shown in **Figure 3**. Design, target, and posted speeds of 45 mph are proposed for this 2.3-mile section of the project.



**Figure 3 - Proposed US 98 C3R (Suburban) Typical Section**

The typical section for the portion of US 98 from Rock Ridge Road to CR 54 includes 11-foot travel lanes, four-foot paved shoulders with curb and gutter on the inside, ten-foot outside shoulders (five feet paved), and a 30-foot grassed median, as shown in **Figure 4**. Design, target, and posted speeds of 55 mph are proposed for this 6.4-mile section of the project.



**Figure 4 - Proposed US 98 C2 (Rural) Typical Section**



Both typical sections can be accommodated within the existing ROW. Stormwater runoff will be collected and conveyed to stormwater management facilities (SMFs) that will be constructed along the corridor and impacts to adjacent floodplains will be mitigated through the construction of floodplain compensation (FPC) sites.

## 1.2 Purpose and Need

The purpose of the project is to improve an existing traffic bottleneck along US 98 from north of West Socrum Loop Road to south of CR 54 within unincorporated Polk County. The need for the project is based on the following criteria:

### AREA WIDE NETWORK/SYSTEM LINKAGE - Improve Transportation Network Connectivity

The US 98 corridor is an intraregional connecting link between Polk and Pasco Counties. The project segment of US 98 transitions from four lanes just north of West Socrum Loop Road to an undivided two-lane facility, creating a traffic bottleneck. The project is intended to enhance transportation network connectivity by:

- Maintaining a critical link to an SIS facility (i.e., I-4), and
- Providing a viable alternate route to parallel north-south arterials (i.e., Kathleen Road and Old Dade City Road).

### CAPACITY/TRANSPORTATION DEMAND - Improve Operational Conditions

US 98 serves as a regional freight mobility corridor as it connects to I-4 (an SIS facility) and US 301 (a designated regional freight mobility corridor). Approximately 13.1 percent of the Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) volume on US 98 is composed of trucks. Defined Freight Activity Centers (FAC's) in the area (clusters of industrial land parcels) include the Kathleen Road FAC, North Combee Road FAC and West Lakeland Industrial Area FAC. Not only does this roadway facilitate truck traffic and the distribution of goods to local activity areas, but it also functions as an important north-south corridor for commuters between Pasco and Polk Counties.

According to Momentum 2040 (the Polk TPO's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)), the northwest area of Polk County where the project corridor is located, is projected to increase in population by approximately 39,000 people and employment by approximately 11,000 employees by 2040.

Per the Polk TPO's 2020 Roadway Network Database and Momentum 2040:

#### 2019 AADT

- From West Socrum Loop Road to Rock Ridge Road = 16,900 vehicles per day (vpd)
- From Rock Ridge Road to SR 471 = 11,900 vpd
- From SR 471 to CR 54 (Pasco County Line) = 10,400 vpd

#### Existing Level of Service (LOS)

- From West Socrum Loop Road to Rock Ridge Road = LOS "C"
- From Rock Ridge Road to SR 471 = LOS "C"
- From SR 471 to CR 54 (Pasco County Line) = LOS "D"

#### Existing Volume-to-Capacity Ratio

- From West Socrum Loop Road to Rock Ridge Road = 0.51
- From Rock Ridge Road to SR 471 = 0.64
- From SR 471 to CR 54 (Pasco County Line) = 1.11

#### 2040 Volume-to-Capacity Ratio

- From West Socrum Loop Road to SR 471 = 1.25 - 1.50
- From SR 471 to CR 54 (Pasco County Line) = 1.00 - 1.25

It is important to note that a Volume-to-Capacity (V/C) ratio greater than 1.0 means the volume of vehicles on the roadway segment is greater than what the roadway was designed for when it was constructed. The existing V/C ratio on US 98 from SR 471 to CR 54 is 1.11. The 2040 V/C ratios for the project corridor are 1.25 - 1.50 from West Socrum Loop Road to SR 471 and 1.00 - 1.25 from SR 471 to CR 54. Conditions along the roadway are anticipated to worsen by 2040 if no improvements occur as the roadway will exceed its capacity and not be able to accommodate future travel demand. The project is anticipated to enhance operational conditions within the corridor by increasing its capacity.

#### **SAFETY - Improve Safety Conditions**

According to Polk TPO's 2020 Roadway Network Database, during the five-year period from 2014 - 2018, there were 167 total crashes. The total number of crashes per roadway segment, along with the statewide average crash rate for similar facility types, are provided below:

##### From West Socrum Loop Road to Rock Ridge Road - 37 crashes

- Actual crash rate = 0.471
- Statewide average crash rate = 1.202 (Suburban 2-3 lanes - 2-way undivided)

##### From Rock Ridge Road to SR 471 - 93 crashes

- Actual crash rate = 0.841
- Statewide average crash rate = 0.768 (Rural 2-3 lanes - 2-way undivided)

##### From SR 471 to CR 54 (Pasco County Line) - 37 crashes

- Actual crash rate = 1.336
- Statewide average crash rate = 0.768 (Rural 2-3 lanes - 2-way undivided)

The crash rates for two of the project roadway segments exceed the statewide average crash rate. The high number of crashes may be attributed to the current roadway's operational conditions. If no improvements are made to the existing roadway, the greater the probability for vehicle-to-vehicle conflicts to occur as traffic increases along the project corridor.

The proposed project is anticipated to improve safety conditions along the roadway by:

- Reducing congestion through the provision of additional capacity, and
- Enhancing a viable parallel alternate north-south route to Kathleen Road and Old Dade City Road that will aid in emergency access and response times.

### 1.3 Planning Consistency

Currently Adopted LRTP-CFP	COMMENTS			
	The Polk Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) (also known/branded as Momentum 2045) was adopted in March 2021. This project is included in Figure 4-6: Roadway Plan (Winter Haven Area). The latest Polk TPO Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) for FY2021/22 - FY2025/26 was adopted on June 10, 2021. This project is included in the TIP.			
	Currently Approved	\$	FY	COMMENTS
PE (Final Design)				
TIP	Y	\$1,000 \$4,500,000 ----- \$4,501,000	<2022 2022 ----- All years	
STIP	Y	\$4,525,000 ----- \$4,525,000	2022 ----- All years	
R/W				
TIP	N		2022 ----- All years	
STIP	Y	\$15,000,000 ----- \$15,000,000	2022 ----- All years	
Construction				
TIP	N			
STIP	N			

## 2. Environmental Analysis Summary

Issues/Resources	Significant Impacts?*			
	Yes	No	Enhance	NoInv
<b>3. Social and Economic</b>				
1. Social	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Economic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Land Use Changes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Mobility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Aesthetic Effects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Relocation Potential	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7. Farmland Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4. Cultural Resources</b>				
1. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act of 1966	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4. Recreational Areas and Protected Lands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>5. Natural Resources</b>				
1. Protected Species and Habitat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Wetlands and Other Surface Waters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4. Floodplains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Sole Source Aquifer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6. Water Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Aquatic Preserves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8. Outstanding Florida Waters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9. Wild and Scenic Rivers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10. Coastal Barrier Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>6. Physical Resources</b>				
1. Highway Traffic Noise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Air Quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Contamination	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Utilities and Railroads	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Construction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### USCG Permit

- ☒ A USCG Permit IS NOT required.  
☐ A USCG Permit IS required.

\* **Impact Determination:** Yes = Significant; No = No Significant Impact; Enhance = Enhancement; NoInv = Issue absent, no involvement. Basis of decision is documented in the referenced attachment(s).

### 3. Social and Economic

The project will not have significant social and economic impacts. Below is a summary of the evaluation performed.

#### 3.1 Social

The proposed roadway widening will reduce congestion and enhance safety conditions for the people living and working within the project limits. Access to existing facilities will be maintained with minimal disruption during construction, and the project construction contractors will be required by FDOT's Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction to maintain access for emergency services to all adjacent properties throughout construction.

##### 3.1.1 Community Demographics

The demographics of the study area were obtained through the FDOT's Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) Environmental Screening Tool (EST) Sociocultural Data Report (SDR) (Dated July 2021), using American Community Survey (ACS) 2014-2018 Census Data. According to the SDR, the study area's population within a half-mile buffer is 2,228 individuals residing in 993 households. The median household income is approximately \$47,000.

Almost nine percent of households fall below the poverty line and less than one percent of households receive public assistance. The median age is 44 years old and approximately 40 percent of the population is over the age 65. Over 17 percent of the population ages 20-64 years old have a disability and just under three percent of the occupied housing units in the study area are zero vehicle households. The majority, over 75%, of the housing consists of owner-occupied units.

The percent of the total population within the study area who reported that they speak English "not well" or "not at all" is less than one percent. This includes people who speak Spanish, Indo-European languages, Asian and Pacific Island languages, and "Other" languages. Based on an evaluation of the four Limited English Proficiency (LEP) factors outlined in Part 1, Chapter 11, of the PD&E Manual, it was determined that bilingual translation and distribution of materials was not required. Moreover, given the demographics of the study area, disproportionate impacts on low-income, minority or LEP populations are not anticipated as a result of the Preferred Alternative.

##### 3.1.2 Non-Discrimination Considerations

Executive Order (E.O.) 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations, signed by President Bill Clinton on February 11, 1994, directs federal agencies to take appropriate and necessary steps to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse effects of federal projects on the health or environment of minority and low-income populations to the greatest extent practicable and permitted by law.

No minority or low-income populations have been identified that would be adversely impacted by the proposed project, as determined above. Based on the above discussion and analysis, the project will not cause disproportionately high and adverse effects on any minority or low-income populations in accordance with the provisions of E.O. 12898 and FHWA Order 6640.23A.

##### 3.1.3 Community Cohesion

Existing residential land uses are sporadic and generally occur throughout the study limits in the form of single family residential. The existing corridor does not bisect any neighborhoods, nor will the proposed improvements bisect any neighborhoods in the future. The Preferred Alternative will widen the existing roadway within the existing US 98 ROW, with the exception of minor ROW needs at project intersections. Offsite ROW for stormwater ponds and floodplain compensation sites will be acquired from undeveloped parcels. The proposed ROW will not result in potential residential relocations or business displacements. The Preferred Alternative will make it safer for local residents and regional travelers on US 98 to access local residential, commercial, and other community features. Given these factors, the Preferred Alternative is expected to have no significant impact on community cohesion.

### **3.1.4 Community Facilities and Services**

Within the study limits, there are several community facilities including the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8002, Polk County Fire Department and Rescue Station 120, Green Swamp Wildlife Management Area East and West Tracts, Colt Creek State Park, Gator Creek Preserve, Lakeland Acres Baptist Church, and the Cypress Lakes Golf and Country Club. With the exception of the proposed roundabout at the Big Cypress Boulevard entrance to the Cypress Lakes Golf and Country Club, no ROW will be required from these facilities.

## **3.2 Economic**

US 98 provides north-south travel between Polk and Pasco Counties and also serves regional truck traffic as it connects freight activity centers in the area near I-4. Nearby regional freight activity centers (FAC) include the Kathleen Road FAC, North Combee Road FAC, and the West Lakeland Industrial Area FAC. Businesses along the corridor include Central Florida Paintball, Circle K, Dollar General, Chevron, Conibear RV Center, and several smaller businesses related to home and wellness services.

The proposed two lane to four lane widening is anticipated to enhance economic conditions in the area by addressing existing and future roadway operational deficiencies, including increased commuter traffic, and by better facilitating the movement of freight to local activity centers. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative is expected to enhance the economics of the project corridor.

## **3.3 Land Use Changes**

The study area consists primarily of low-density and rural residential, conservation/recreation/open space, and agricultural land uses. Some commercial land uses are also present, most of which directly front US 98. According to the Polk County Future Land Use Map, the study area is anticipated to continue to support residential and conservation/recreation/open space land uses. Overall, the Preferred Alternative is expected to have no significant impact on land use along the US 98 corridor.

## **3.4 Mobility**

There are no existing designated bicycle lanes, sidewalks, or shared use paths within the study limits; moreover, there is no existing or planned transit service. As previously mentioned, US 98 is designated as an "Other Urban Principal Arterial" and provides north-south travel between Polk and Pasco Counties. US 98 also serves regional truck traffic as it connects

freight activity centers (FAC) in the area near I-4, a Strategic Intermodal Facility, including the Kathleen Road FAC, North Combee Road FAC, and the West Lakeland Industrial Area FAC. Travel demand in the area is anticipated to increase as both employment and population numbers in the northwest area of Polk County are projected to increase by 11,000 and 39,000 by 2040, respectively.

The Preferred Alternative includes 10-foot-wide shared use paths on both the left and right sides of the roadway from West Socrum Loop Road to north of Rock Ridge Road. North of Rock Ridge Road, the project includes five-foot paved shoulders which extend to the northern terminus at CR 54. Overall, the proposed two lane to four lane widening is expected to enhance mobility along the corridor by:

- Providing physically separated bicycle and pedestrian facilities within the developed portion of the project,
- Alleviating roadway operational deficiencies,
- Providing additional capacity to meet the future travel demand, and
- Better facilitating the movement of freight to local activity centers.

### 3.5 Aesthetic Effects

The study area primarily consists of low-density and rural residential, conservation/recreation/open space, and agricultural land uses. Smaller amounts of commercial uses are also present in sporadic areas fronting US 98. According to the Polk County Future Land Use Map, the study area is anticipated to continue to support residential and conservation/recreation/open space land uses. The project is not located along, nor does it intersect, any designated Scenic Highway.

The FDOT may consider context sensitive solutions such as aesthetic features and landscaping during the design phase so that the project is in harmony with the surrounding area and preserves and/or enhances the natural, environmental, scenic, and aesthetic values of the area. The placement and maintenance of any landscaping shall comply with the required clear zone and sight distance standards along the roadway and at intersections.

Visual impacts associated with clearing and grubbing, storage of construction materials, and the establishment of temporary construction facilities may occur but will be temporary in nature and the proposed roadway improvements will not impact the future land use nor the aesthetic character of the corridor. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative is expected to have no significant impact on the aesthetics of the corridor.

### 3.6 Relocation Potential

The study area primarily consists of low-density and rural residential, conservation/recreation/open space, and agricultural land uses. Existing ROW along the project corridor is 160 feet in width and proposed ROW is only required for intersection improvements and for offsite drainage facilities sited on undeveloped lands. No residences or businesses are expected to be relocated. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative is expected to have no involvement with relocation within the corridor.

The proposed project, as presently conceived, will not displace any residences or businesses within the community. Should this change over the course of the project, a Right of Way and Relocation Assistance Program will be carried out in accordance with Florida Statute 421.55, Relocation of displaced persons, and the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (Public Law 91-646 as amended by Public Law 100-17).

### **3.7 Farmland Resources**

A Farmlands Evaluation was conducted in October 2021 through coordination with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The evaluation assessed impacts to farming operations and to Prime and Unique Farmlands. The resulting Farmlands Evaluation (form NRCS-CPA-106) is attached. The evaluation indicated 2.3 acres of soils classified as Prime and Unique Farmlands may occur. The NRCS Farmlands Conversion Impact Rating of 68.5 was less than the 160 points required for further consideration of protection of farmlands. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative is expected to have no significant impact on farmlands within the project area.



## 4. Cultural Resources

The project will not have significant impacts to cultural resources. Below is a summary of the evaluation performed.

### 4.1 Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

A Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (CRAS), conducted in accordance with 36 CFR Part 800, was performed for the project, and the resources listed below were identified within the project Area of Potential Effect (APE). FDOT found that these resources do not meet the eligibility criteria for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurred with this determination on 02/16/2022. Therefore, FDOT, in consultation with SHPO, has determined that the proposed project will result in No Historic Properties Affected.

A CRAS Report was prepared for the proposed roadway widening and a CRAS Technical Memorandum was prepared for the proposed offsite drainage facilities. The archaeological APE was defined as the footprint of the existing and proposed ROW plus an additional 20-ft buffer. The historical/architectural APE includes immediately adjacent parcels where resources within 200 ft of the existing ROW were surveyed along the project corridor.

Archaeological background research indicated that two archaeological sites (8PO01538 and 8PO06189) are partially located within the APE and one site (8PO06188) is adjacent to the APE. Based on previous investigations in similar environmental settings, the APE was determined to have a low to moderate potential for the occurrence of aboriginal archaeological sites and a low occurrence for historic archaeological sites. The field investigations resulted in no evidence of the previously recorded sites being found within the APE. Two Archaeological Occurrences (AO) were found in FPC 1B and Pond 3D-1 and one lithic scatter site (8PO08686) was found in FPC 1B. Neither the AOs nor the one prehistoric archaeological site are considered eligible for listing in the NRHP.

Historic background research indicated that two historic resources were previously recorded within the APE. One resource is the circa (ca.) 1930 Neo-Classical Revival style Polk-Pasco County Line Obelisk (8PA03346) located on the northeastern side of US 98 at the intersection of CR 54. The other resource (8PO08681) is adjacent to FPC 5B and is a ca. 1971 Masonry Vernacular style building located at 10545 US 98 N. Both resources are outside of the construction limits of the Preferred Alternative and were identified and recorded during the CRAS for the US 98 PD&E study conducted by FDOT District Seven in Pasco County (FPID 443368-2).

The historical/architectural field survey resulted in the identification and evaluation of five historic resources within the APE. These five historic resources include two Masonry Vernacular style buildings (8PO08681 and 8PO08684), two Frame Vernacular style buildings (8PO08682 and 8PO08685), and one Mobile Home (8PO08683) constructed between ca. 1962 and ca. 1974. Overall, the buildings are common examples of their respective architectural styles that have been altered and background research did not reveal any historic associations with significant persons and/or events. Therefore, none of the newly identified historic resources appear eligible for listing in the NRHP, either individually or as part of a historic district. In addition to the five historic resources identified within the APE, the Polk County property appraiser identified four historic resources constructed between ca. 1968 and ca. 1973 that could not be evaluated or recorded during the field survey due to lack of accessibility and/or obstructed views from the US 98 ROW. The resources are located at 10285 US Highway 98, 10715 US Highway 98, 12548 US Highway 98, and 10708 Rock Ridge Road. Based on available information, the resources are probably a typical example of vernacular style buildings or mobile homes; however, the status and condition of the resource is unknown. There is no proposed ROW acquisition from these

parcels. Since the buildings are hidden by existing vegetation on the parcel and there is no proposed ROW acquisition, the proposed project should have no effect on the buildings.

Based on the background research and results of the field investigations, there are no cultural resources within the APE that are listed, determined eligible, or considered potentially eligible for the NRHP. Thus, it appears that the proposed project will result in no historic properties affected. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative is expected to have no involvement with sites protected under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

## **4.2 Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act of 1966, as amended**

The following evaluation was conducted pursuant to Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966, as amended, and 23 CFR Part 774.

Potentially protected Section 4(f) resources along the project corridor include: Gator Creek Reserve, Colt Creek State Park, Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve East Tract, and Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve West Tract. Conflicts with the potentially protected Section 4(f) resources have been avoided through the selection of the Preferred Alternative.

Gator Creek Reserve is a 2,700-acre public facility under the jurisdiction of Polk County and located on the east side of, and accessed via, US 98. Activities include hiking, biking, jogging and butterfly watching. Facilities in the reserve include picnic shelters and trails. Gator Creek Reserve falls within the Green Swamp Area of Critical State Concern, a designation protecting a resource of major statewide significance. The Preferred Alternative does not require any ROW from the reserve. Access to the reserve will be maintained during and after the construction phase.

Colt Creek State Park is a state park encompassing over 5,000 acres and located on the east side of SR 471, approximately 0.3 miles north of the intersection of US 98 and SR 471. Colt Creek State Park is managed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and includes a variety of uses. It contains over 15 miles of multi-use trails, shared by hikers, bicyclists and those riding horseback. Other activities include birding, camping, fishing, geo-seeking, paddling, picnicking, and wildlife viewing. The park also includes 27 full-facility campsites, six tent-only campsites, 10 equestrian campsites that accommodate horse trailers, two primitive campsites, canoe and kayak rentals, and three pavilions at the Mac Lake picnic area. The property does not directly abut US 98 and the Preferred Alternative does not require any ROW from the State Park.

The 51,149-acre Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve East Tract and the 37,350-acre Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve West Tract are wilderness preserves managed by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and located east of US 98. The East Tract is accessed from Rock Ridge Road and the West Tract is accessed from River Road. Combined, the preserves provide over 125 miles of multi-use trails and offer bicycling, birding, boating, camping, canoeing/paddling, equestrian uses, fishing, hiking, and hunting. The preserves are not accessed directly from US 98 and the Preferred Alternative does not require any ROW from the preserves.

The Preferred Alternative does not impact any of these resources and Section 4(f) "no-use" forms have been completed. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative is expected to have no involvement with sites protected under Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966, as amended, and 23 CFR Part 774.

#### **4.3 Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965**

There are no properties in the project area that are protected pursuant to Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund of 1965.

#### **4.4 Recreational Areas and Protected Lands**

There are no other protected public lands in the project area.

DRAFT

## 5. Natural Resources

The project will not have significant impacts to natural resources. Below is a summary of the evaluation performed:

### 5.1 Protected Species and Habitat

The following evaluation was conducted pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 as amended as well as other applicable federal and state laws protecting wildlife and habitat.

A Natural Resource Evaluation (NRE) (November 2021) was prepared under separate cover to document and summarize the potential impacts to natural resources including federal and state protected species. The NRE also documented commitments and implementation measures considered to avoid, minimize, and mitigate for potential impacts.

Coordination with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) during the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process indicated that the proposed project would not directly impact any NMFS trust resources (i.e., Essential Fish Habitat [EFH]). Therefore, EFH was not further evaluated. The evaluation also included coordination with United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), and the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI). Environmental scientists familiar with Florida natural communities conducted field reviews of the project study area June through September 2021.

Based on this evaluation, a total of 29 federally listed species and 39 state listed species were identified as potentially occurring within the project study area. Additionally, three other species were included in the analysis due to the regulatory protections associated with those species. **Tables 2, 3, and 4** provide summaries of the federally and state listed species and other protected species with a potential to occur within the project study area, along with their corresponding effect determinations. Upon completion of selecting the preferred SMF and FPC sites, further assessment of potential impacts to listed species was conducted and the results were provided in an addendum to the NRE [DATE].

The project study area was also evaluated for the presence of federally designated Critical Habitat as defined by Congress in 50 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) 17. Based on this evaluation, it was determined that no federally designated Critical Habitat is present within the project study area.

**Table 2 - Summary of Federally Listed Species Effect Determinations**

Project Impact Determination	Federal Species
May affect, not likely to adversely affect	Eastern Indigo Snake ( <i>Drymarchon couperi</i> ) Blue-tailed Mole Skink ( <i>Plestiodon egregious lividus</i> ) Sand Skink ( <i>Plestiodon reynoldsi</i> ) Eastern Black Rail ( <i>Laterallus jamaicensis jamaicensis</i> ) Wood Stork ( <i>Mycteria americana</i> ) Everglade Snail Kite ( <i>Rostrhamus sociabilis</i> )
No effect	Florida Panther ( <i>Puma concolor coryi</i> ) Florida Grasshopper Sparrow ( <i>Ammodramus savannarum floridanus</i> ) Audubon's Crested Caracara ( <i>Caracara cheriway</i> ) Federally listed plants

**Table 3 - Summary of State Listed Species Effect Determinations**

Project Impact Determination	State Species
No adverse effect anticipated	Gopher Tortoise ( <i>Gopherus polyphemus</i> ) Florida Pine Snake ( <i>Pituophis melanoleucus mugitus</i> ) Florida Sandhill Crane ( <i>Antigone canadensis pratensis</i> ) Florida Burrowing Owl ( <i>Athene cunicularia floridana</i> ) Little Blue Heron ( <i>Egretta caerulea</i> ) Tricolored Heron ( <i>Egretta tricolor</i> ) Southeast American Kestrel ( <i>Falco sparverius paulus</i> )
No effect anticipated	Short-tailed Snake ( <i>Lampropeltis extenuate</i> ) Least Tern ( <i>Sternula antillarum</i> ) State listed plants

**Table 4 - Summary of Other Protected Species Effect Determinations**

Project Impact Determination	Other Protected Species
No effect anticipated	Bald Eagle ( <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> ) Osprey ( <i>Pandion haliaetus</i> ) Florida Black Bear ( <i>Ursus americanus floridanus</i> )

Potential impacts to listed species and their habitats are described in more detail in the NRE. The NRE was submitted to the USFWS, NMFS, FWC, and Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) on December 9, 2021.

[Agency review comments/concurrence pending.]

Commitments and implementation measures addressing listed and protected species are discussed in the commitments section of this document. Based on adherence to these commitments, this project is expected to have no significant impacts to protected species or habitat.

## 5.2 Wetlands and Other Surface Waters

The following evaluation was conducted pursuant to Presidential Executive Order 11990 of 1977 as amended, Protection of Wetlands and the USDOT Order 5660.1A, Preservation of the Nation's Wetlands.

An NRE (November 2021) was prepared under separate cover to document and summarize the potential impacts to natural resources including wetlands and other surface waters. The NRE also documented commitments and implementation measures considered to avoid, minimize, and mitigate for potential impacts.

Based on this evaluation, approximately 23.48 acres of wetlands and 6.28 acres of other surface waters (i.e., ditches) occur within the ROW limits of the project area. Upon completion of selecting the preferred SMF and FPC sites, further assessment and delineations were conducted and the results were provided in an addendum to the NRE [DATE]. Approximately [XX] acres of wetlands and [XX] acres of other surface waters occur within the proposed SMF and FPC sites. To accommodate the proposed project, the existing surface waters (i.e., ditches) will be impacted; however, these impacts are proposed to be temporary as these ditches will be reconstructed and replaced in-kind. All of the cross drains will be replaced as part of the proposed project, but the locations will remain at or similar to the current locations.

Potential impacts to federally jurisdictional wetlands and other surface waters resulting from the proposed mainline widening include:

- 23.48 acres of direct wetland impacts
- 17.07 acres of secondary wetland impacts
- 1.87 acres of temporary other surface water impacts

Potential impacts to state jurisdictional wetlands and other surface waters resulting from the proposed mainline widening include:

- 4.41 acres of temporary other surface water impacts

Potential impacts to federally jurisdictional wetlands and other surface waters resulting from the construction of the proposed SMF and FPC sites include:

- *[Pending NRE addendum completion]*

Potential impacts to state jurisdictional wetlands and other surface waters resulting from the proposed construction of the proposed SMF and FPC sites include:

- *[Pending NRE addendum completion]*

The Uniform Mitigation Assessment Method (UMAM) was used to assess proposed project impacts to federal and state jurisdictional wetlands as a result of the mainline widening and SMF/FPC sites. The mainline widening and SMF/FPC sites would potentially result in a total functional loss of [XX] units resulting from direct and secondary impacts. Mitigation to compensate for impacts to wetlands will be in accordance with 373.4137, Florida Statutes (F.S.) to satisfy requirements of Part IV, Chapter 373, F.S. and 33 US Code (U.S.C) Section 1344. Anticipated mitigation requirements to offset wetland impacts resulting from the proposed mainline widening include a total of 2.52 credits (1.21 freshwater forested credits; 1.31 freshwater herbaceous credits) within the Withlacoochee Watershed and 12.41 credits (5.93 freshwater forested credits; 6.48 freshwater herbaceous credits) within the Hillsborough River Watershed. Anticipated mitigation requirements to offset wetland impacts resulting from the proposed SMF and FPC sites include a total of [XX] credits ([XX] freshwater forested credits; [XX] freshwater herbaceous credits) within the Withlacoochee Watershed and [XX] credits ([XX] freshwater forested credits; [XX] freshwater herbaceous credits) within the Hillsborough River Watershed.

There are several private wetland mitigation banks available that service the Hillsborough River and Withlacoochee Watersheds, are state and federally permitted, and provide wood stork foraging habitat. Each wetland impact will be mitigated dependent on the watershed it occurs in to satisfy state and federal mitigation requirements.

The wetlands and other surface waters identified within the project study area fall within the jurisdiction of the State 404 Program (state-assumed waters). Therefore, for the proposed project, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and SWFWMD regulate impacts to wetlands and other surface waters within the project study area. Final determination of wetland jurisdictional boundaries and mitigation requirements will be coordinated between FDOT and the permitting agencies during the final design phase of the project.

Potential impacts to wetlands and other surface waters are described in more detail in the NRE. In addition to the USFWS, NMFS, FWC, and FDACS, the NRE was submitted to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), SWFWMD, FDEP, and US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) on December 9, 2021.



*[Agency review comments/concurrence pending.]*

While no practicable alternative avoiding all wetland impacts was identified, wetland and other surface water impacts will be avoided and minimized to the greatest extent practicable during the project design and permitting. Temporary impacts due to construction will be minimized utilizing best management practices (BMPs), maintaining a stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP), and implementing FDOT design standards. Therefore, this project is expected to have no significant impacts to wetlands and other surface waters.

### **5.3 Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)**

There is no Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) in the project area.

### **5.4 Floodplains**

Floodplain impacts resulting from the project were evaluated pursuant to Executive Order 11988 of 1977, Floodplain Management.

A Location Hydraulics Report (LHR) (November 2021) for the project was prepared under separate cover. The purpose of the LHR is to address base floodplain encroachments resulting from the roadway improvements evaluated in the PD&E study. The intent is to avoid or minimize highway encroachments within the 100-year floodplains and to avoid supporting land use development incompatible with floodplain values. Analysis documented in the LHR determined that 19.61 acre-feet of 100-year floodplain volume will be impacted within the project limits. Mitigation of these impacts will be provided within the Preferred Alternative's proposed floodplain compensations areas. There are no federally regulated floodways within the project limits.

The proposed cross drains and floodplain compensation areas will perform hydraulically in a manner equal to or greater than the existing condition, and backwater surface elevations are not expected to increase. As a result, there will be no significant change in flood risk, and there will not be a significant change in the potential for interruption or termination of emergency service or to emergency evacuation routes. Therefore, it has been determined that this project will have no significant impact on floodplains.

### **5.5 Sole Source Aquifer**

There is no Sole Source Aquifer associated with this project.

### **5.6 Water Resources**

A Pond Siting Report (PSR) (November 2021) and a Water Quality Impact Evaluation (WQIE) checklist (November 2021) were each prepared under separate cover. As documented in the PSR, stormwater management for water quality treatment and runoff attenuation will be provided using wet detention ponds. The design of the drainage and stormwater facilities will comply with the standards set forth by the FDOT Drainage Manual and the SWFWMD Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) Manual.

An ERP is required. A National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) construction permit is needed and the associated requirement to develop and implement a SWPPP will be met. Project construction will also follow the standard FDOT specifications for erosion and sedimentation control. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative is expected to have no significant impact on water quality and stormwater.

### **5.7 Aquatic Preserves**

There are no aquatic preserves in the project area.

### **5.8 Outstanding Florida Waters**

There are no Outstanding Florida Waters (OFW) in the project area.

### **5.9 Wild and Scenic Rivers**

There are no designated Wild and Scenic Rivers or other protected rivers in the project area.

### **5.10 Coastal Barrier Resources**

There are no Coastal Barrier Resources in the project area.



## 6. Physical Resources

The project will not have significant impacts to physical resources. Below is a summary of the evaluation performed for these resources.

### 6.1 Highway Traffic Noise

The following evaluation was conducted pursuant to 23 CFR 772 Procedures for Abatement of Highway Traffic Noise and Construction Noise, and Section 335.17, F.S., State highway construction; means of noise abatement.

The evaluation uses methodology established by the FDOT and documented in the PD&E Manual, Part 2, Chapter 18 (July 1, 2020), Highway Traffic Noise.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approved Traffic Noise Model (TNM) Version 2.5 was used to predict traffic noise levels at 220 noise sensitive sites located adjacent to US 98 for the existing (2021) and future year (2045) conditions with and without the proposed improvements. Thirty-eight of the 220 noise sensitive sites are predicted to experience future noise levels with the proposed improvements to US 98 that approach, meet, or exceed FHWA's Noise Abatement Criteria (NAC) for their respective Activity Category. However, none of the 220 evaluated sites are predicted to experience a substantial increase of traffic noise as a result of the proposed improvements. A substantial increase is defined as an increase of 15 or more decibels above the existing noise level as a direct result of the transportation improvement project.

The 38 receptors that approach, meet, or exceed the NAC for their respective Activity Category are referred to as "impacted" receptors. Of the 38 impacted receptors, 37 represent residential properties (Activity Category B) and one receptor represents a tee box at the Big Cypress Golf Club (Activity Category C).

Traffic management measures, modifications to the roadway alignment, buffer zones and noise barriers were considered as potential abatement measures at the impacted receptor locations. Noise barriers were the only potential abatement measure found to be cost reasonable and feasible. The locations of these barriers are listed below:

- Barrier 1: Cypress Lakes North
- Barrier 2: Gator Creek RV Park

The FDOT is committed to the construction of noise barriers at the two locations listed above contingent upon the following:

- Detailed noise analyses during the final design process support the need, feasibility, and reasonableness of providing abatement;
- Cost analysis indicates that the cost of the noise barrier(s) will not exceed the cost reasonable criterion;
- Community input supporting types, heights, and locations of the noise barrier(s) is provided to the District Office; and
- Safety and engineering aspects as related to the roadway user and the adjacent property owner have been reviewed and any conflicts or issues resolved.

Final recommendations on the construction of abatement measures is determined during the project's final design and through the public involvement process. Because of the elapsed time between when the noise study was performed and when the Environmental Document will be signed by FDOT (known as the date of Public Knowledge), the potential exists for additional building permits for noise sensitive sites to be granted subsequent to this study. The date of the PD&E land use review was September 29, 2021. Any noise analysis performed during the design phase of this project will include a review of building permit dates. Any noise sensitive site that is identified as permitted between the completion of the land use review update and the Date of Public Knowledge will be analyzed for traffic noise impacts and, if impacts are predicted, abatement will be considered during the design phase of the project.

Based on the results of the traffic noise analysis, the Preferred Alternative is expected to have no significant impact on noise sensitive sites located along US 98.

## 6.2 Air Quality

This project is not expected to create adverse impacts on air quality because the project area is in attainment for all National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and because the project is expected to improve the Level of Service (LOS) and reduce delay and congestion on all facilities within the study area.

## 6.3 Contamination

A Level I contamination evaluation was conducted for the study and a Contamination Screening Evaluation Report (CSER) (January 2022) was prepared under separate cover pursuant to FHWA's Technical Advisory T 6640.8A. The Level I assessment was conducted to identify and evaluate sites containing hazardous materials, petroleum products, or other sources of potential environmental contamination within the US 98 project study area.

Twelve (12) sites along the corridor were evaluated and were assigned the following risk ratings: one (1) "High" risk site; four (4) "Medium" risk sites; four (4) "Low" risk sites; and three (3) "No" risk sites. Additionally, all of the proposed pond and floodplain compensation sites were evaluated, resulting in one (1) "High" risk floodplain compensation site.

- For the sites rated "No" for potential contamination, no further action is needed. These sites have been evaluated and determined not to have any potential environmental risk to the study area at this time.
- For sites rated "Low" for potential contamination, no further action is required at this time. These sites/facilities have potential to impact the study area, but based on select variables have been determined to have low risk to the corridor at this time. Variables that may change the risk rating include a facility's non-compliance to environmental regulations, new discharges to the soil or groundwater, and modifications to current permits. Should any of these variables change, additional assessment of the facilities should be conducted.
- Level II testing will be conducted for two High risk sites and four Medium risk sites. The Level II services can include hazardous material surveys, soil borings, monitor well installation, soil and groundwater sampling, and laboratory testing. Additional action is recommended during the design phase and should be coordinated with the District Contamination Impact Coordinator.

Therefore, the Preferred Alternative will result in no significant contamination impacts.

## 6.4 Utilities and Railroads

There are no railroads or railroad crossings located within the project limits.

*[Utilities section to be completed following ongoing UAO coordination]*

## 6.5 Construction

Construction activities may cause short-term air quality impacts in the form of dust from earthwork and unpaved roads. These impacts will be minimized by adherence to applicable state regulations and to applicable FDOT Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction.

Construction activities for the proposed project may cause minor short-term noise, water quality, traffic congestion, and visual impacts for residents and travelers within the immediate vicinity of the project.

Minor noise and vibration effects may occur from heavy equipment movement and construction activities. This will be minimized by adherence to noise control measures found in the most current edition of the FDOT's Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction. Specific noise level problems that may arise during construction of the project will be addressed by the Construction Engineer in cooperation with the appropriate Environmental Specialist.

Water quality impacts resulting from erosion and sedimentation during construction will be controlled in accordance with the most current edition of the FDOT's Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction, "Prevention, Control, and Abatement of Erosion and Water Pollution," and through the use of BMPs. An NPDES construction permit is needed and the associated requirement to develop and implement an SWPPP will be met.

Short-term construction related wetland impacts will be minimized by adherence to FDOT's Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction. These specifications include measures known as BMPs, which include the use of siltation barriers, dewatering structures, and containment devices that will be implemented for controlling turbid water discharges outside of construction limits. All permit conditions will be followed during construction.

Maintenance of traffic and sequence of construction will be planned and scheduled to minimize traffic delays throughout the project. Signage will be used as appropriate to provide pertinent information to the traveling public. The local news media will be notified in advance of road closings and other construction related activities that would excessively inconvenience the community so that motorists, residents, and businesspersons can make other accommodations. Applicable provisions of FDOT's Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction will be followed. A sign providing the name, address, and telephone of an FDOT contact person will be displayed on-site to assist the public in obtaining immediate answers to questions about project activity.

Access to local properties, businesses and residences will be maintained through controlled construction scheduling and the implementation of the project's specific Traffic Control Plan(s) and implementation of FDOT's Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction.

For residents living along the project, some of the construction materials stored for the project may be displeasing visually; however, this will be a temporary condition and should pose no substantial problem. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative is expected to have no significant impacts resulting from construction.

DRAFT

## 7. Engineering Analysis Support

The engineering analysis supporting this environmental document is contained within the [TO BE UPDATED].

DRAFT

## 8. Permits

The following environmental permits are anticipated for this project:

### State Permit(s)

DEP or WMD Environmental Resource Permit (ERP)  
DEP National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit  
State 404 Permit

### Status

To be acquired  
To be acquired  
To be acquired

## 9. Public Involvement

The following is a summary of public involvement activities conducted for this project:

### Summary of Activities Other than the Public Hearing

A comprehensive Public Involvement Plan (PIP) (April 2021) was prepared and initiated at the start of the study. This program was implemented in accordance with the FDOT PD&E Manual; Section 339.155, Florida Statute (F.S.); Executive Orders 11990, Protection of Wetlands and 11988, Floodplain Management; Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act; and 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 771. The PIP outlines the strategies used to address public involvement and outreach over the course of the study. Additionally, a Comments and Coordination Report (DATE) was prepared to fully document the public stakeholder involvement associated with this project and that information is provided below.

### Stakeholder and Agency Coordination

Numerous agencies were identified that would have an interest in the US 98 PD&E Study. The agency mailing list included representatives from the ETAT such as federal and state governments, and state permitting agencies.

A presentation was given to the Cypress Lakes Community residents on July 22, 2021. The presentation provided an outline of the PD&E processes and included typical roadway sections and proposed roadway widening concepts in the vicinity of the Cypress Lakes Community. The presentation was attended by 164 residents, as well as FDOT and consultant staff.

[To be expanded following additional stakeholder coordination]

**Date of Public Hearing:** 03/31/2022

### Summary of Public Hearing

[To be updated following the Public Hearing]

## 10. Commitments Summary

1. The loss of wetland functions and values as a result of constructing the proposed project will be mitigated pursuant to Section 373.4137, F.S. to satisfy all mitigation requirements of Part IV of Chapter 373, F.S. and 33 U.S.C Section 1344.
2. The most current version of USFWS-approved *Standard Protection Measures for the Eastern Indigo Snake* will be adhered to during all construction phases of the proposed project.
3. A land use review will be conducted during the design phase to identify noise sensitive sites that may have received a building permit subsequent to the PD&E noise evaluations but prior to the date of public knowledge (i.e., date that the environmental document has been approved by the FDOT Office of Environmental Management). If the review identifies noise sensitive sites that have been permitted prior to the date of public knowledge, those sites will be evaluated for traffic noise and potential abatement considerations.



## 11. Technical Materials

The following technical materials have been prepared to support this environmental document.

Farmlands NRCS-CPA-106  
Cultural Resources Assessment Survey  
CRAS Technical Memorandum for the Preferred Ponds  
Pond Siting Report  
WQIE Checklist  
Natural Resources Evaluation  
Noise Study Report  
Contamination Screening Evaluation Report  
Public Involvement Plan

## Attachments

### Cultural Resources

SHPO Concurrence Letter

Section 4(f) Report

DRAFT

## **Cultural Resources Appendix**

### **Contents:**

SHPO Concurrence Letter

Section 4(f) Report

DRAFT



## *Florida Department of Transportation*

RON DESANTIS  
GOVERNOR

801 North Broadway Avenue  
Bartow, FL 33830

KEVIN J. THIBAUT, P.E.  
SECRETARY

January 18, 2022

Dr. Timothy Parsons, Director  
Florida Division of Historical Resources  
Department of State, R.A. Gray Building  
500 South Bronough Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250

Attn: Transportation Compliance Review Program

**RE: Cultural Resource Assessment Survey  
Technical Memorandum Mainline and Ponds  
SR 35 (US 98) from North of West Socrum Loop Road to South of CR 54  
Polk County, Florida  
FPID No.: 436673-1; ETDM: 14334**

Dear Dr. Parsons:

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is conducting a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) study to evaluate the proposed widening of US 98 from north of West Socrum Loop Road to south of CR 54 in northern Polk County, a distance of 8.7 miles. The purpose of this PD&E study is to evaluate engineering and environmental data, and document information that will aid the FDOT Office of Environmental Management (OEM) in determining anticipated environmental impacts associated with the proposed project. This study is being conducted to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other related federal and state laws, rules, and regulations.

A Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (CRAS) was performed within the area of potential effect (APE) for the US 98 project. A CRAS Report was prepared for the proposed roadway widening and a CRAS Technical Memorandum was prepared for the proposed offsite drainage facilities. The archaeological APE was defined as the footprint of the existing and proposed right-of-way (ROW) plus an additional 20-ft buffer. The historical/architectural APE includes immediately adjacent parcels where resources within 200 ft of the existing ROW were surveyed along the project corridor.

This CRAS was conducted in accordance with the requirements set forth in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended), which are implemented by the procedures contained in 36 CFR, Part 800, as well as the provisions contained in the revised Chapter 267, *Florida Statutes*. The investigations were carried out in accordance with Part 2, Chapter 8 (Archaeological and Historical Resources) of the FDOT's PD&E Manual, FDOT's Cultural Resources Manual, and the standards contained in the Florida Division of Historical Resources (FDHR) Cultural Resource Management Standards and Operations Manual (FDHR 2003). In addition, this survey meets the specifications set forth in Chapter 1A-46, Florida Administrative Code.

[www.fdot.gov](http://www.fdot.gov)

Dr. Timothy Parsons, Director  
US 98 PD&E Study, Polk County  
FPID No.: 436673-1; ETDM: 14334  
December 18, 2021  
Page 2 of 3

Archaeological background research indicated that two archaeological sites (8PO01538 and 8PO06189) are partially located within the APE, and one (8PO06188) is adjacent to the APE. Based on previous investigations in similar environmental settings, the APE was determined to have a low to moderate potential for the occurrence of aboriginal archaeological sites and a low occurrence for historic archaeological sites. The field investigations resulted in no evidence of the previously recorded sites being found within the APE. Two Archaeological Occurrences (AO) were found in FPC 1B and Pond 3D-1 and one lithic scatter site (8PO08686) was found in FPC 1B. Neither the AOs nor the one prehistoric archaeological site is considered eligible for listing in the NRHP.

Historic background research indicated that one historic resource was previously recorded within the APE. The resource is the circa (ca.) 1930 Neo-Classical Revival style Polk-Pasco County Line Obelisk (8PA03346) located on the northeastern side of US 98 at the intersection of CR 54. The obelisk was recently identified and recorded during the CRAS for the US 98 PD&E study conducted by FDOT District Seven in Pasco County (ACI 2021). As a result of the Pasco County survey, the Obelisk was determined eligible for listing in the NRHP by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) in November 2021. The Obelisk is eligible at the local level under Criterion A in the areas of Transportation and Local History as a reminder of Polk County's contributions to the state roadway system. A review of relevant historic USGS quadrangle maps, historic aerial photographs, and the Polk County property appraiser's website data revealed the potential for five new historic resources, 46 years of age or older (constructed in 1975 or earlier), within the APE.

The historical/architectural field survey resulted in the identification and evaluation of five historic resources within the APE. These five historic resources include two Masonry Vernacular style buildings (8PO08681 and 8PO08684), two Frame Vernacular style buildings (8PO08682 and 8PO08685), and one Mobile Home (8PO08683) constructed between ca. 1962 and ca. 1974. Furthermore, the historic resource located at 10545 US 98 N (8PO08681) is a ca. 1971 Masonry Vernacular style building and is adjacent to FPC 5B. Overall, the buildings are common examples of their respective architectural styles that have been altered and background research did not reveal any historic associations with significant persons and/or events. Therefore, none of the newly identified historic resources appear eligible for listing in the NRHP, either individually or as part of a historic district. In addition to the five historic resources identified within the APE, the Polk County property appraiser identified four historic resources constructed between ca. 1968 and ca. 1973 that could not be evaluated or recorded during the field survey due to lack of accessibility and/or obstructed views from the US 98 ROW. The resources are located at 10285 US Highway 98, 10715 US Highway 98, 12548 US Highway 98, and 10708 Rockridge Road. Based on available information, the resources are probably a typical example of vernacular style buildings or mobile homes; however, the status and condition of the resource is unknown. There is no proposed ROW acquisition from these parcels. Since the buildings are hidden by existing vegetation on the parcel and there is no proposed ROW acquisition, the proposed project should have no effect on the buildings.

Based on the background research and results of the field investigations, no new historic or prehistoric archaeological sites were discovered and no evidence of the two previously recorded sites were found to extend into the APE. The historical/Architectural field survey resulted in the identification and evaluation of five historic resources (8PO08681-8PO08685) within the APE. None of the newly identified historic resources appear eligible for listing in the NRHP, either individually or as part of a historic district.

The Polk-Pasco County Line Obelisk (8PA03346) was determined eligible at the local level under Criterion A in the areas of Transportation and Local History and is located at the northeast

Dr. Timothy Parsons, Director  
 US 98 PD&E Study, Polk County  
 FPID No.: 436673-1; ETDM: 14334  
 December 18, 2021  
 Page 3 of 3

intersection of US 98 and CR 54 within the APE. Based on the proposed roadway improvements being performed under Financial Project ID No. 436673-1, all roadway work will end south of CR 54 and away from the Obelisk. As such, the obelisk will not be impacted and will maintain its current location. Based on the scope of work, the undertaking will not adversely result in physical destruction, damage, or alteration of all or part of the of the Obelisk. Therefore, it is the opinion of ACI, that the proposed undertaking will have *no adverse effect* on the Polk-Pasco County Line Obelisk (8PA03346).

The CRAS Report for the roadway widening and the CRAS Technical Memorandum for the proposed drainage sites are provided for your review and comment. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at (863) 519-2495 or email at [Jonathon.Bennett@dot.state.fl.us](mailto:Jonathon.Bennett@dot.state.fl.us).



Jonathon A. Bennett  
 Environmental Project Manager  
 ETDM Coordinator  
 Florida Department of Transportation, District One  
 801 North Broadway Avenue  
 Bartow, Florida 33830

Enclosures: One original copy of the CRAS (November 2021), One original copy of the CRAS Technical Memorandum for Proposed Drainage Facilities (November 2021), Eight FMSF Forms, Two Completed Survey Logs

CC: Jeffrey James (FDOT)  
 Jeffrey Jacquin, PE (AIM)  
 Maranda Kles, PhD, RPA (ACI)

The Florida State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) finds the attached Cultural Resources Assessment Survey Report complete and sufficient and ☒ concurs/ ☐ does not concur with the recommendations and findings provided in this cover letter for SHPO/FDHR Project File Number 2020-1391. Or, the SHPO finds the attached document contains ☐ insufficient information.

SHPO Comments:


---

---

---

---

---



Dr. Timothy Parsons, Director  
 State Historic Preservation Officer  
 Florida Division of Historical Resources

02/16/2022

Date

## Section 4(f) Resources

### Florida Department of Transportation

SR 35 (US 98) FROM N OF WEST SOCRUM LOOP RD TO S OF CR 54

District: FDOT District 1

County: Polk County

ETDM Number: 14334

Financial Management Number: 436673-1-22-01

Federal-Aid Project Number: N/A

Project Manager: David C. Turley

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 14, 2016 and executed by the Federal Highway Administration and FDOT. Submitted pursuant 49 U.S.C. § 303.

Table of Contents

Summary and Approval ..... 1

Gator Creek Reserve ..... 2

Colt Creek State Park ..... 3

Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve East Tract ..... 4

Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve West Tract ..... 5

Project-Level Attachments ..... 6

Resource Attachments ..... 7

DRAFT



## Summary and Approval

Resource Name	Facility Type	Property Classification	Owner/Official with Jurisdiction	Recommended Outcome	OEM SME Action
Gator Creek Reserve	Public park and recreation area.	Multiple Use Facility	Polk County	No Use	Determination Pending
Colt Creek State Park	State Park	Multiple Use Facility	Florida Department of Environmental Protection	No Use	Determination Pending
Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve East Tract	Wilderness Preserve	Multiple Use Facility	Southwest Florida Water Management District	No Use	Determination Pending
Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve West Tract	Wilderness Preserve	Multiple Use Facility	Southwest Florida Water Management District	No Use	Determination Pending

## Gator Creek Reserve

**Facility Type:** Public park and recreation area.

**Property Classification:** Multiple Use Facility

**Address and Coordinates:**

Address: US Highway 98 N, Lakeland, FL, 33809, USA

Latitude: 28.19803 Longitude: -82.00352

**Description of Property:**

Gator Creek Reserve is a 2,700 acre property under the jurisdiction of Polk County. It is open between the hours of 6:00 am and 6:30 pm during Standard Time and 5:30 am to 8:00 pm during daylight savings time. The park is open 365 days a year.

Activities include hiking, biking, jogging and butterfly watching; facilities in the reserve include picnic shelters and trails. Gator Creek Reserve falls within the Green Swamp Area of Critical State Concern, a designation protecting a resource of major statewide significance.

**Owner/Official with Jurisdiction:** Polk County

**Relationship Between the Property and the Project**

Gator Creek Reserve is a public facility located on the east side of, and accessed via, U.S. 98. The proposed project will not acquire any right-of-way from the reserve; moreover, access to the reserve will be maintained during the construction phase.

**Yes    No**

☐☒

Will the property be "used" within the meaning of Section 4(f)?

**Recommended Outcome:** No Use

**OEM SME Determination Date:** Pending

## Colt Creek State Park

**Facility Type:** State Park

**Property Classification:** Multiple Use Facility

**Address and Coordinates:**

Address: 16000 State Road 471, Lakeland, FL, 33809, USA

Latitude: 28.28108 Longitude: -82.03138

**Description of Property:**

Colt Creek State Park is a Florida State Park encompassing over 5,000 acres. It is open from 8:00 am to sundown every day of the year.

Colt Creek State Park is managed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and includes a variety of uses. It contains over 15 miles of multi-use trails, shared by hikers, bicyclists and those riding horseback. Other activities include birding, camping, fishing, geo-seeking, paddling, picnicking, gatherings/weddings and wildlife viewing. Facilities in the state park include 27 full-facilities campsites, six tent-only campsites, 10 equestrian campsites that accommodate horse trailers, two primitive campsites, canoe and kayak rentals, and three pavilions at Mac Lake picnic area.

**Owner/Official with Jurisdiction:** Florida Department of Environmental Protection

**Relationship Between the Property and the Project**

Colt Creek State Park is a Florida State Park located on the east side of S.R. 471 approximately 0.28 miles north of the intersection of U.S. 98 and S.R. 471. The property does not directly abut U.S. 98 and the project will not acquire any right-of-way from the State Park. The park is accessed via S.R. 471; therefore, access to the park will not be impacted during the construction phase.

**Yes No**

☐ ☒ Will the property be "used" within the meaning of Section 4(f)?

**Recommended Outcome:** No Use

**OEM SME Determination Date:** Pending

## Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve East Tract

**Facility Type:** Wilderness Preserve

**Property Classification:** Multiple Use Facility

**Address and Coordinates:**

Address: SR-471, Webster, FL, 33597, USA

Latitude: 28.61760 Longitude: -82.05473

**Description of Property:**

The Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve East Tract is a wilderness preserve encompassing approximately 51,149 acres. It is open daily from sunrise to sunset.

The Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve East Tract is managed by the Southwest Florida Water Management District and includes a variety of uses. It contains over 60 miles of multi-use trails. Activities include camping, fishing and hiking.

**Owner/Official with Jurisdiction:** Southwest Florida Water Management District

**Relationship Between the Property and the Project**

The Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve East Tract is contiguous to, and east of U.S. 98. The main vehicle access to the Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve East Tract is off of Rock Ridge Road, approximately 10 miles northeast of U.S. 98.

The project will not acquire any right-of-way from the preserve. Moreover, given the location described above, vehicular access will not be impacted during the construction phase.

**Yes   No**

☐☒

Will the property be "used" within the meaning of Section 4(f)?

**Recommended Outcome:** No Use

**OEM SME Determination Date:** Pending

## Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve West Tract

**Facility Type:** Wilderness Preserve

**Property Classification:** Multiple Use Facility

**Address and Coordinates:**

Address: 13447 Ranch Rd, Dade City, FL, 33525, USA

Latitude: 28.35375 Longitude: -82.12423

**Description of Property:**

The Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve West Tract is a wilderness preserve encompassing approximately 37,350 acres. It is open daily from sunrise to sunset.

The Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve West Tract is managed by the Southwest Florida Water Management District and includes a variety of uses. It contains over 65 miles of multi-use trails and offers bicycling, birding, boating, canoeing/paddling, equestrian uses, hiking and hunting. Facilities include picnic tables, a pavilion and equestrian and primitive campsites.

**Owner/Official with Jurisdiction:** Southwest Florida Water Management District

**Relationship Between the Property and the Project**

The main vehicle access to the Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve West Tract is off of River Road, approximately nine miles northwest of U.S. 98.

The project will not acquire any right-of-way from the preserve. Moreover, given the location described above, vehicular access will not be impacted during the construction phase.

**Yes No**

☐☒

Will the property be "used" within the meaning of Section 4(f)?

**Recommended Outcome:** No Use

**OEM SME Determination Date:** Pending

## Project-Level Attachments

None

DRAFT

## Resource Attachments

### Gator Creek Reserve

US98\_Section\_4f\_Map\_Gator\_Creek

### Colt Creek State Park

US98\_Section\_4f\_Map\_Colt\_Creek

### Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve East Tract

US98\_Section\_4f\_Map\_Green\_E

### Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve West Tract

US98\_Section\_4f\_Map\_Green\_W

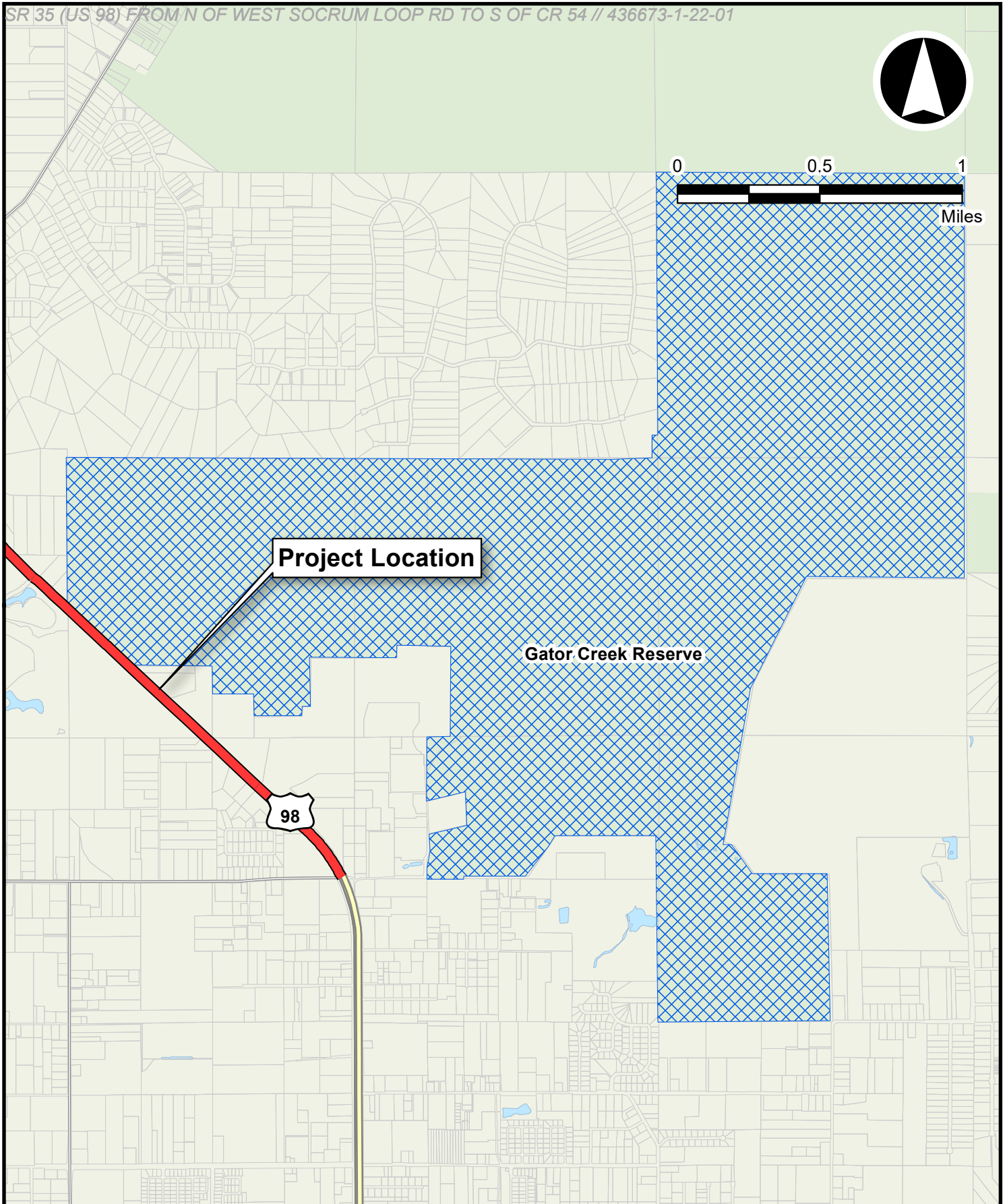
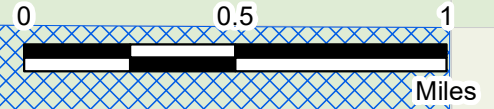
## Gator Creek Reserve

Contents:

US98\_Section\_4f\_Map\_Gator\_Creek

DRAFT



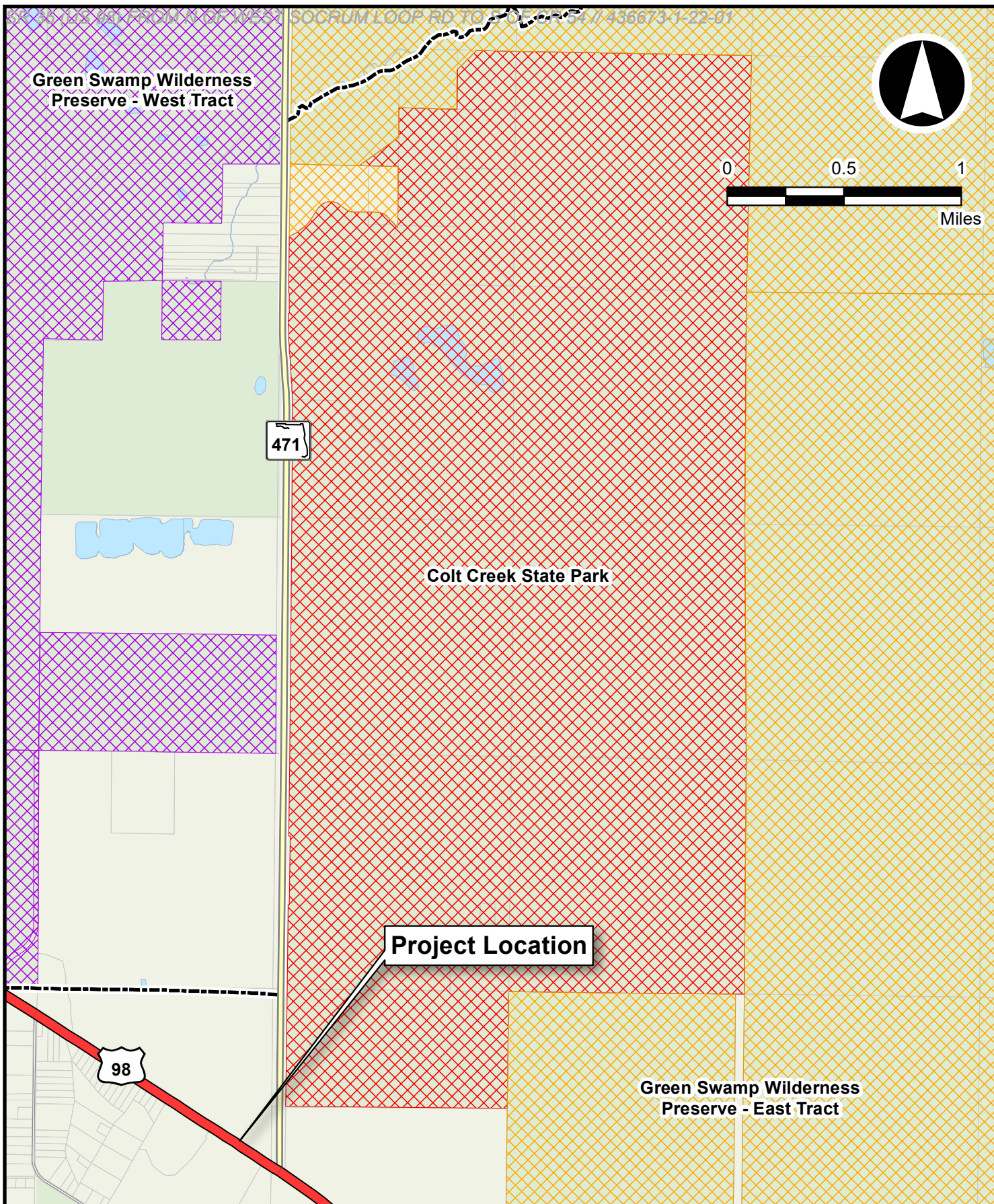


## Colt Creek State Park

### Contents:

US98\_Section\_4f\_Map\_Colt\_Creek

DRAFT



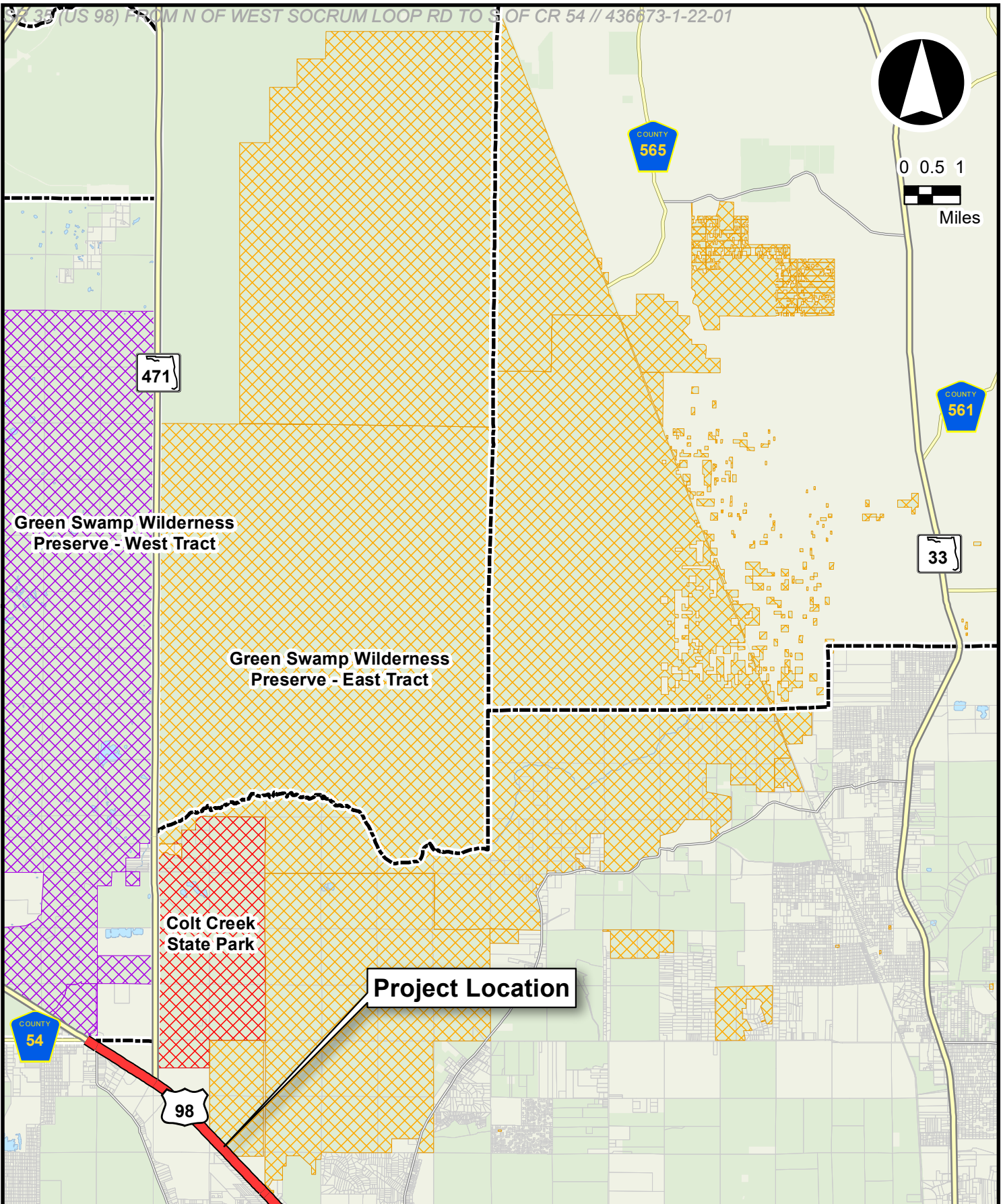
## Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve East Tract

Contents:

US98\_Section\_4f\_Map\_Green\_E

DRAFT





## Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve West Tract

Contents:

US98\_Section\_4f\_Map\_Green\_W

DRAFT

