

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION
TYPE 2 CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

Florida Department of Transportation

SR 70 FROM CR 721 S TO CR 599/128 AVE

District: FDOT District 1

County: Highlands County, Okeechobee County

ETDM Number: 14491

Financial Management Number: 450334-1-22-01

Federal-Aid Project Number: D123-018-B

Project Manager: Kathern Cothorn

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 May 26, 2022, 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 23 CFR 771.115(b), 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:



June 15, 2026

Director Office of Environmental Management
Florida Department of Transportation

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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 03/01/2023 the State of Florida determined that this project is consistent with the Florida Coastal Zone Management Program.

Table of Contents

1. Project Information	1
1.1 Project Description	1
1.2 Purpose and Need	7
1.3 Planning Consistency	8
2. Environmental Analysis Summary	10
3. Community Effects	11
3.1 Social	11
3.2 Economic	12
3.3 Land Use Changes	13
3.4 Mobility	15
3.5 Aesthetic Effects	16
3.6 Relocation Potential	16
3.7 Farmland Resources	17
4. Cultural Resources	18
4.1 Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act	18
4.2 Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act of 1966, as amended	21
4.3 Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965	22
4.4 Recreational Areas and Protected Lands	22
5. Natural Resources	23
5.1 Protected Species and Habitat	23
5.2 Wetlands and Other Surface Waters	26
5.3 Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)	28
5.4 Floodplains	28
5.5 Sole Source Aquifer	29
5.6 Water Resources	30
5.7 Aquatic Preserves	31
5.8 Outstanding Florida Waters	31
5.9 Wild and Scenic Rivers	31

5.10 Coastal Barrier Resources	31
6. Physical Resources	32
6.1 Highway Traffic Noise	32
6.2 Air Quality	33
6.3 Contamination	33
6.4 Utilities and Railroads	35
6.5 Construction	36
7. Engineering Analysis Support	38
8. Permits	39
9. Public Involvement	40
10. Commitments Summary	42
11. Technical Materials	43
Attachments	44

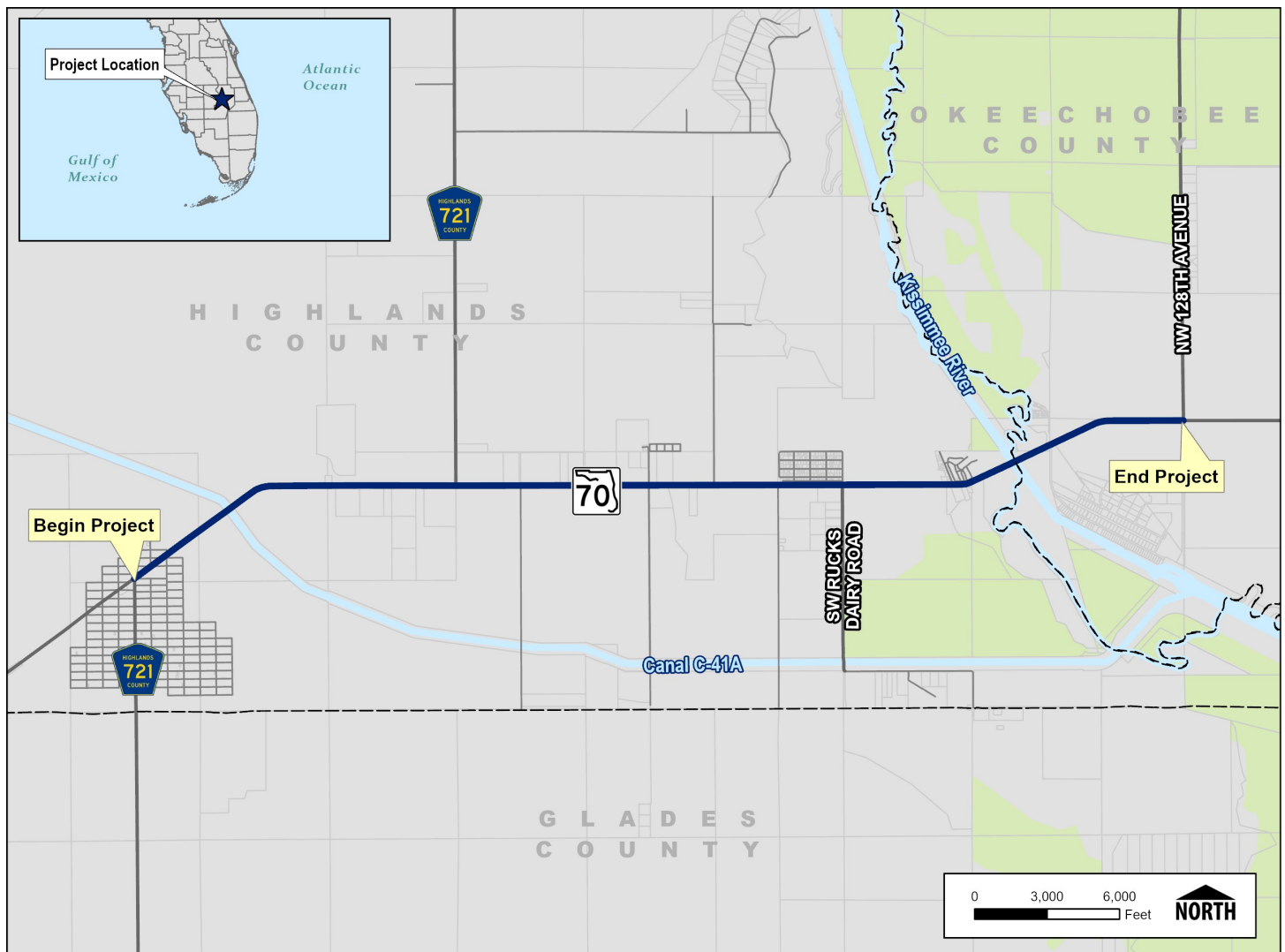
1. Project Information

1.1 Project Description

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District One, has conducted a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study to evaluate the proposed widening of State Road (S.R.) 70, from a two-lane, undivided roadway with no multi-modal accommodation to a four-lane divided roadway with a shared-use path on the south (eastbound) side, from County Road (C.R.) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue. This project is located in unincorporated Highlands and Okeechobee Counties. The total project length is approximately 8.6 miles, and the project limits are shown in **Figure 1**.

S.R. 70 is part of Florida's Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) highway network and designated state hurricane evacuation route network. As part of the National Highway System (NHS), S.R. 70 is critical in the transportation network as it facilitates local and regional traffic and the movement of goods/freight.

Figure 1. Project Location Map



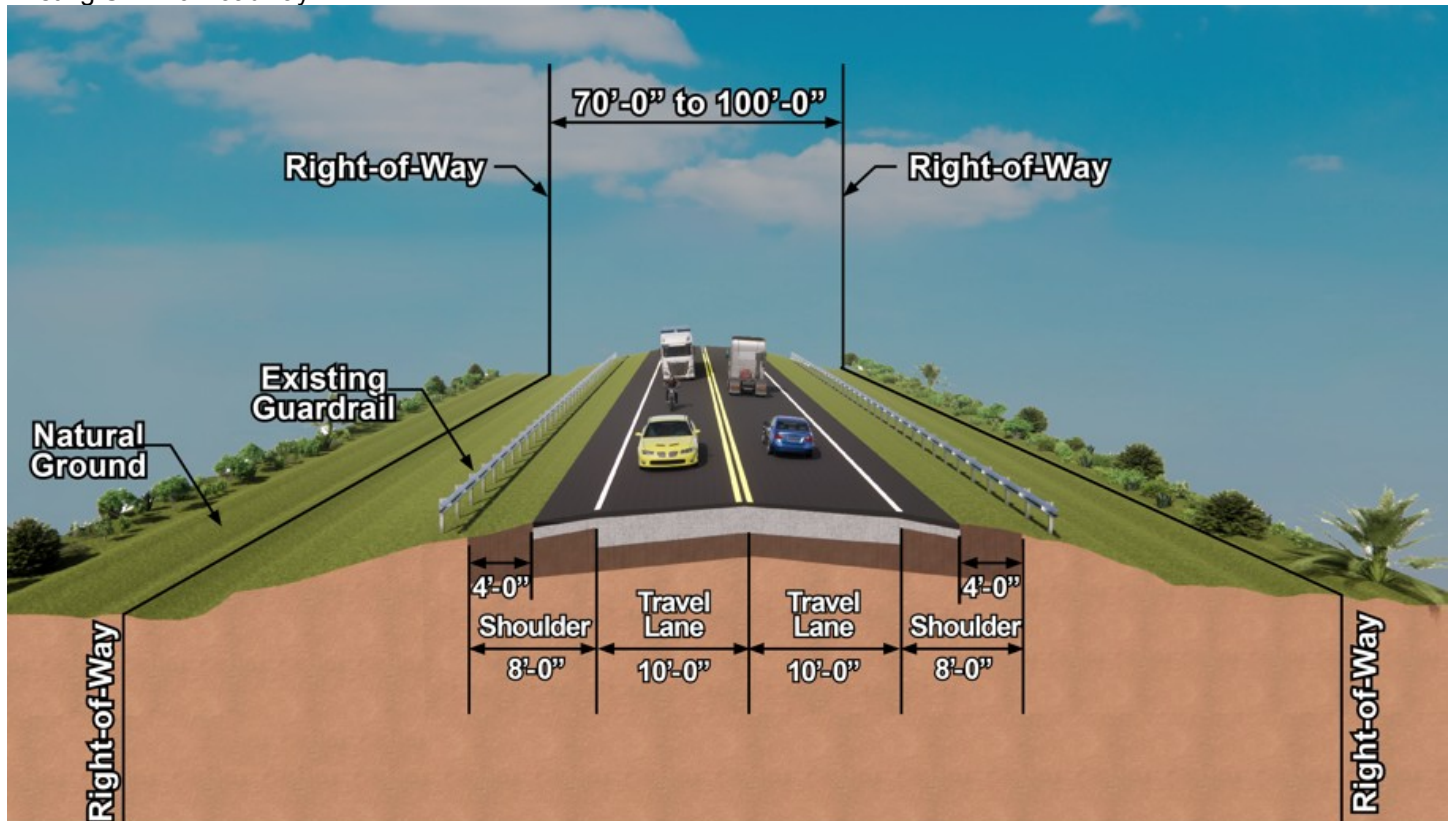
The corridor crosses both the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal and the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal). Both canals are maintained by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). Recent river restoration activities have altered the Kissimmee River north of the project limits; therefore, while the Kissimmee River is a navigable waterway in the project limits, it no longer has a navigable channel.

Existing Facility

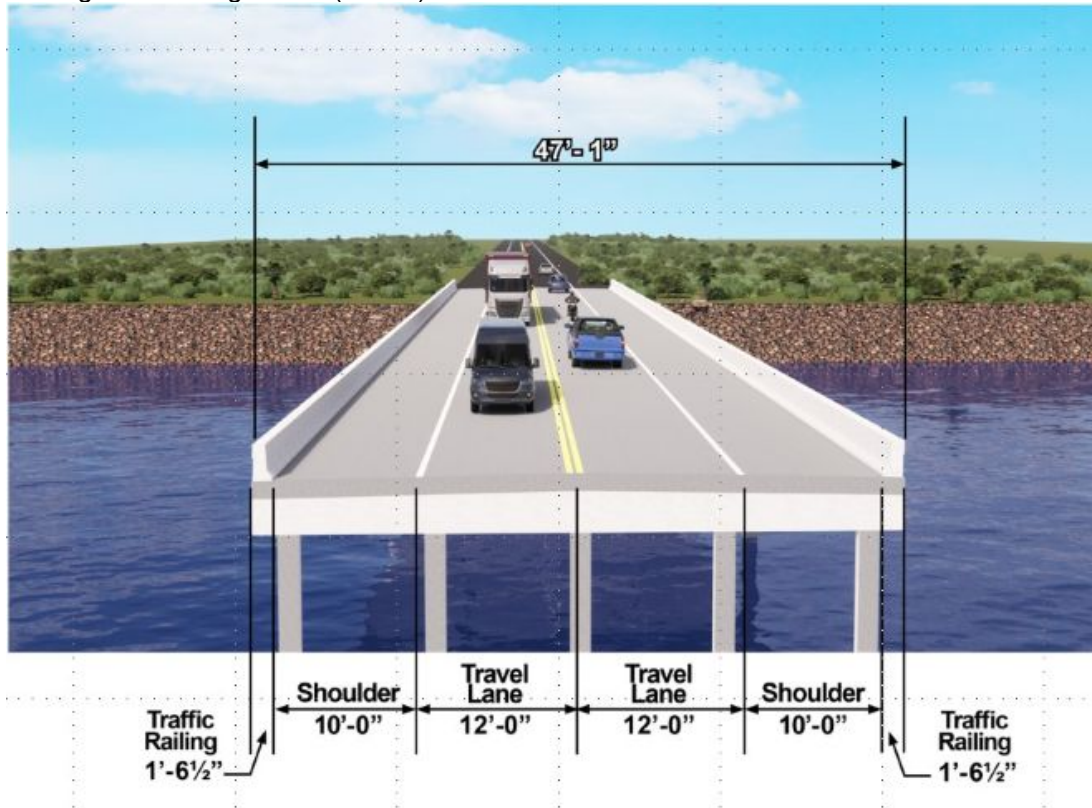
Within the project limits in Highlands County, S.R. 70 is a two-lane, undivided facility with 10-foot travel lanes (one in each direction), shoulders that range from six feet to 12 feet but generally consist of eight feet (four-foot paved), and no pedestrian or bicycle facilities. The Okeechobee County section has 12-foot travel lanes and 12-foot shoulders, four-feet of which are paved. Portions of the study area have guardrail on one or both sides of the road, with some only seven (7) or eight (8) feet from edge of pavement of the travel lanes. Stormwater runoff is collected in roadside ditches and swales and ultimately conveyed to the Kissimmee River. There are no signalized intersections along the corridor. The intersection of S.R. 70 and C.R. 721 South has a flashing yellow on S.R. 70 and a flashing red with STOP-control on the C.R. 721 South approach to S.R. 70. Overhead and buried utilities vary in location along the corridor. This includes the Florida Power & Light (FPL) high voltage transmission lines along the north side of S.R. 70 and the Florida Gas Transmission (FGT) line which runs parallel to and outside the existing right-of-way (ROW) but also varies in location north and south of S.R. 70 and crosses the corridor at four (4) locations. There are agricultural lands along both sides of the project limits. The existing bridge over C-41A Canal has two 12-foot travel lanes and 10-foot paved shoulders. The existing bridge over the Kissimmee River has two 12-foot travel lanes and two-foot shoulders. Neither bridge has bicycle lanes or sidewalks. **Figure 2** depicts the existing typical section for the S.R. 70 roadway and bridges.

Figure 2. Existing Typical Sections

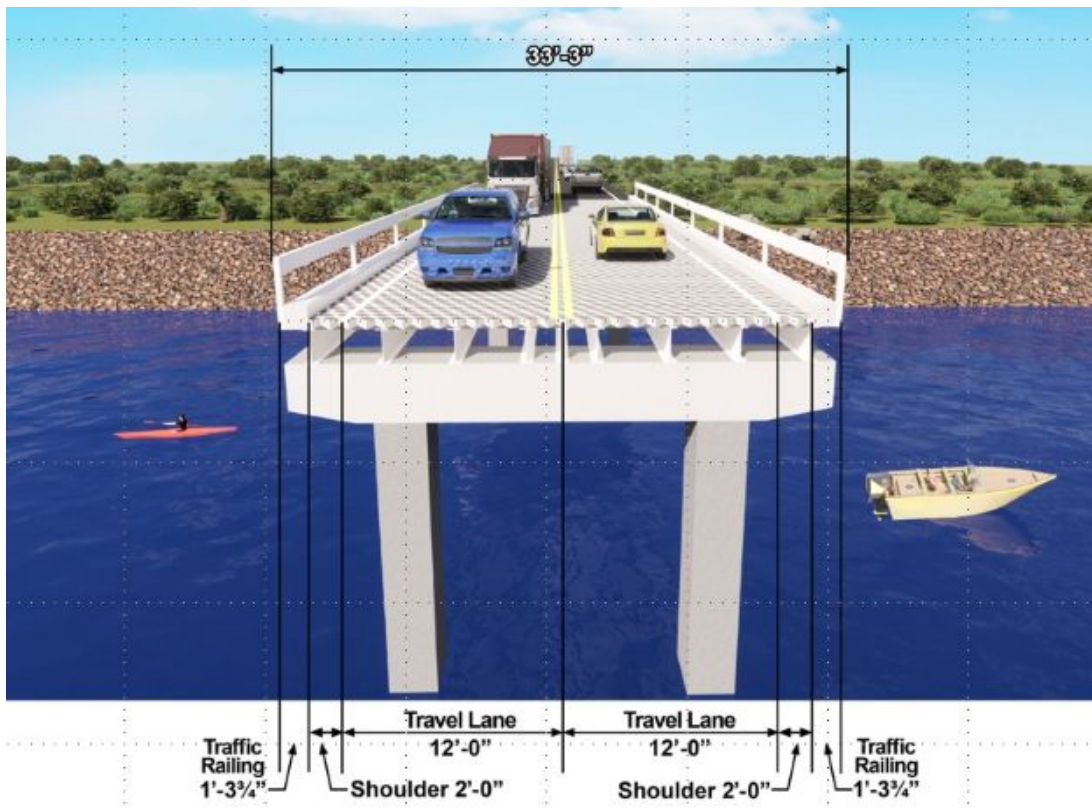
Existing S.R. 70 Roadway



Existing S.R. 70 Bridge over Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal



Existing S.R. 70 Bridge over Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal)



The roadway is classified as a "Rural Principal Arterial - Other" throughout the project study limits. The posted speed limit is 60 miles per hour (MPH). The context classification is C2 - Rural. S.R. 70 is also a designated hurricane evacuation route as per the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM). As part of Florida's Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) highway network, S.R. 70 connects regionally important routes (such as I-75, U.S. 27, Florida's Turnpike, and I-95) as well as serves as a regional through route for long-haul truck volumes and provides access to agricultural/ranching operations, industrial/commercial areas, and other intensive freight activity centers within Central Florida.

Proposed Improvements

The Preferred Alternative, Alternative 1, meets the purpose and need for the project as it provides for improved traffic safety conditions, emergency evacuation, and response times. It also enhances transportation network connectivity along this east-west roadway and in the region, as well as enhances freight movement.

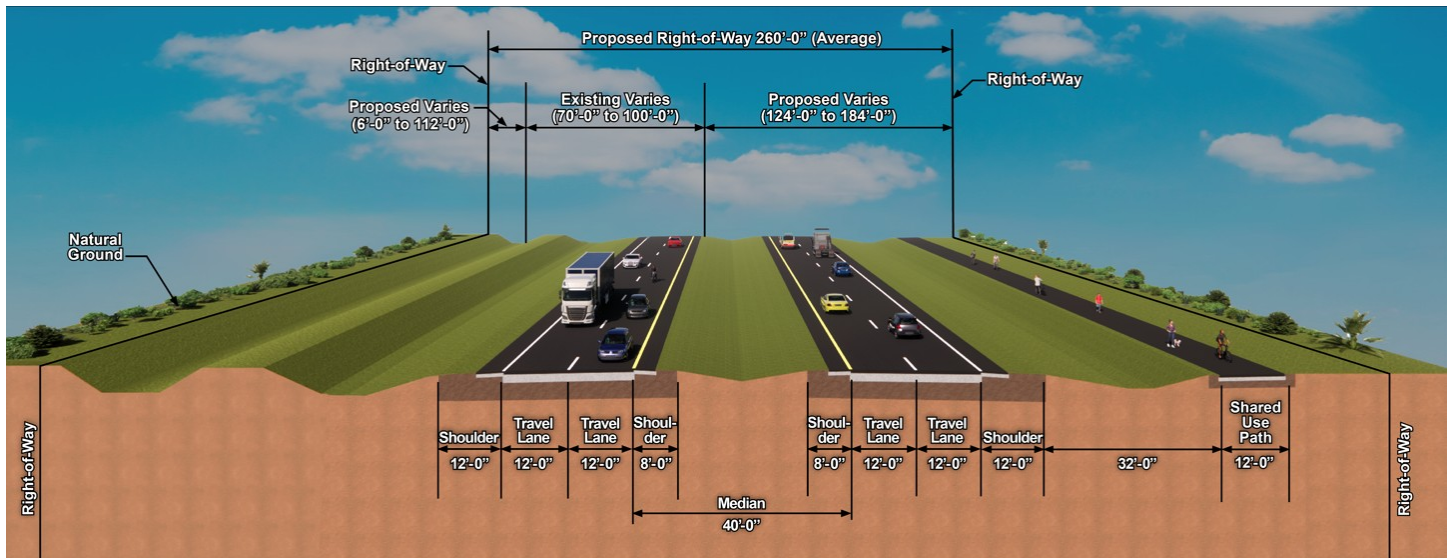
The Preferred Alternative has a rural typical section with an open roadway drainage system for the four-lane construction. The typical section includes: two 12-foot travel lanes in each direction; a 40-foot median with eight-foot inside shoulders (four-feet paved); 12-foot outside shoulders (five-feet paved); and a 12-foot shared use path on the south side of S.R. 70 adjacent to the eastbound travel lanes. The average width needed for the ROW is 260 feet but varies throughout the alignment from 210 feet to 290 feet. The target, design and posted speed are 65 MPH.

The proposed typical section for the bridge over Canal C-41A consists of two 12-foot travel lanes in each direction. 10-foot shoulders are adjacent to the westbound travel lanes. A six-foot inside shoulder and ten-foot outside shoulder are adjacent to the eastbound travel lanes. A 12-foot shared use path will continue to run adjacent to the eastbound travel lanes.

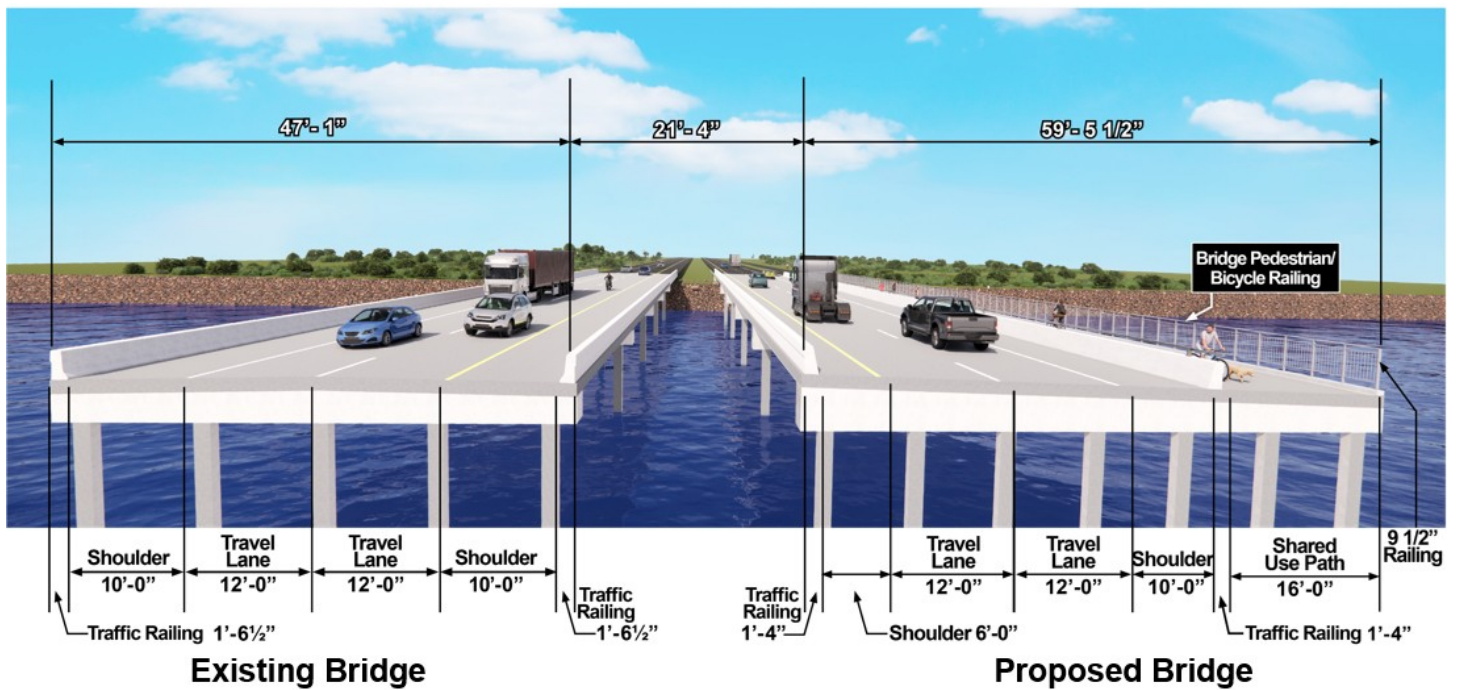
The proposed typical section for the bridge over the Kissimmee River consists of two 12-foot travel lanes in each direction. Adjacent to the inside travel lanes are six-foot shoulders and adjacent to the outside travel lanes are 10-foot shoulders. A 12-foot shared use path will continue to run adjacent to the eastbound travel lanes. **Figure 3** depicts the Preferred Alternative typical sections for the roadway and bridges.

Figure 3. Proposed Typical Sections

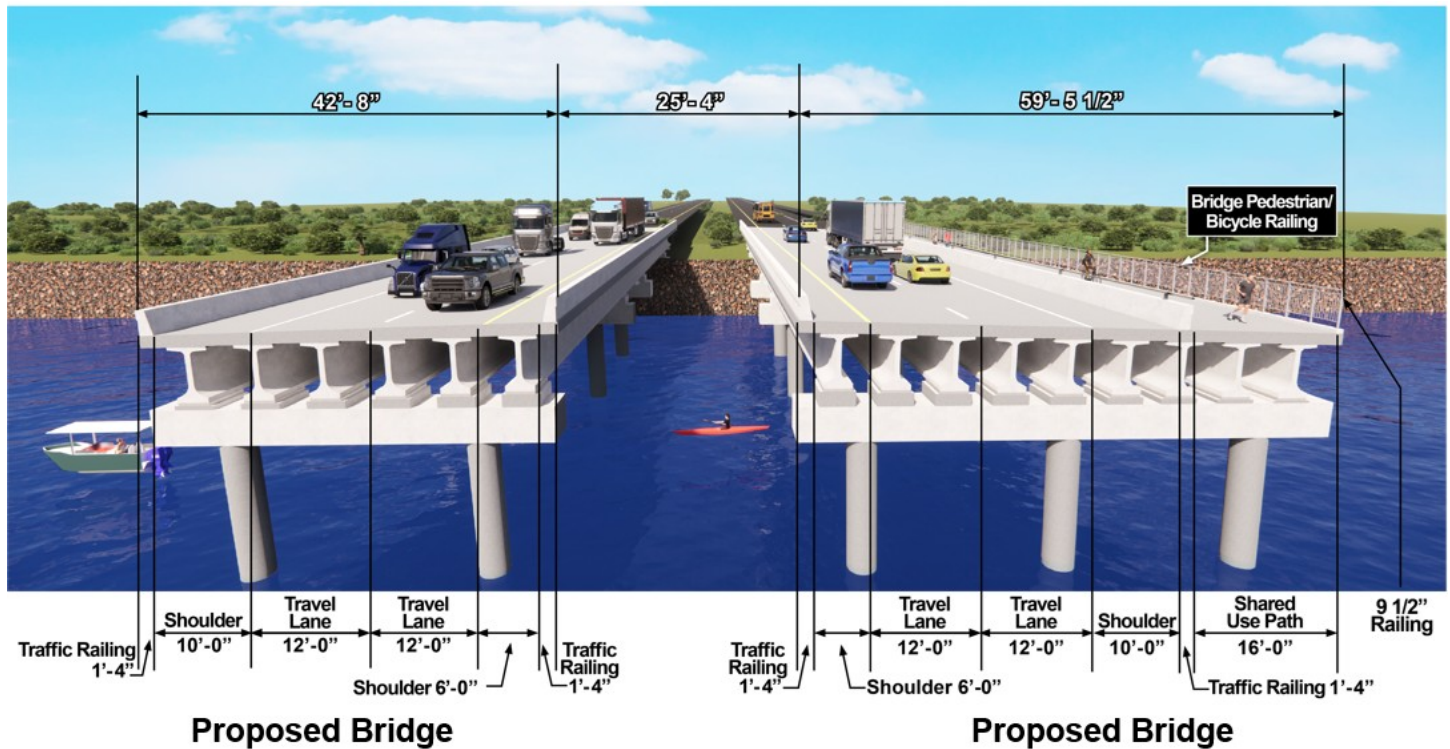
Proposed S.R. 70 Roadway



Proposed S.R. 70 Bridges over Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal



Proposed S.R. 70 Bridges over Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal)



The horizontal alignment uses the existing S.R. 70 ROW where possible but there are two (2) locations where the proposed facility is on new alignment. This first area is the beginning of the project at C.R. 721 South where the alignment is on the south side of the existing S.R. 70 to avoid impacts to the businesses, utilities, and church. The second location where S.R. 70 is proposed to be on new alignment is between Boney Lane and NW Riverside Road where the alignment also shifts to the south side to avoid impacts to Kissimmee River Estates. The remaining portions of the project aim to use the existing S.R. 70 alignment but additional ROW is still required to accommodate the wider typical section. A total of 206.7 acres of ROW is needed to accommodate the mainline roadway improvements.

The roadway stormwater runoff will be collected and conveyed in roadside ditches on each side of the travel lanes to stormwater management facilities that will be constructed along the corridor. Offsite and onsite stormwater runoff will be handled separately. Therefore, the typical section includes a second ditch on the north (westbound) side of the roadway to collect and convey offsite stormwater flow. In addition to the 206.7 acres of new ROW needed for the mainline roadway improvements, 61.7 acres of ROW is needed for the new stormwater management system.

The existing two-lane Kissimmee River bridge will be demolished and two new bridge structures, each carrying one direction of traffic, will be constructed. The existing bridge over the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal that currently carries two lanes of traffic will be retained and will carry westbound traffic in the future condition. A new two-lane bridge will be constructed on the south side of the existing bridge and will carry the eastbound traffic.

1.2 Purpose and Need

The purpose of this project is to address traffic safety conditions on S.R. 70 from C.R. 721 S to C.R. 599/128th Avenue in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties. Other goals of the project are to maintain important east-west connectivity within the regional transportation network and accommodate freight activity within the area. The need for the project is based on the following criteria:

PRIMARY NEED:

SAFETY: Improve Traffic Safety Conditions, Emergency Evacuation, and Incident Response Times

According to the FDOT State Safety Office Geographic Information System (SSOGIS) database, a total of 110 crashes were reported along the S.R. 70 project corridor during the 2015 to 2019 five-year period. Of the 110 crashes along the project corridor, 27 (25%) were front to rear crashes, 22 (20%) were other crashes, and 16 (15%) were angle crashes. The crash rate for this section of S.R. 70 is 1.56, which is notably higher than the Highlands County crash rate of 0.898 and Okeechobee County crash rate of 0.717 for similar facilities. In addition, the project segment of S.R. 70 experienced two fatal crashes during the five-year period. Both of these fatal crashes were front to front crashes, one of which involved improper passing and the other involved driving on the wrong side of the roadway.

Five (5) years of crash data (from January 2018 to December 2022) were extracted from the University of Florida's Signal 4 Analytics to examine more recent crash data. A total of 117 crashes were reported along the corridor, including five (5) fatal crashes and 73 injury crashes, and no crashes involving pedestrians/bicyclists. The estimated crash rate for each study intersection along the corridor was higher than the average districtwide crash rates of 0.223 and 0.400 crashes per million entering vehicles for three and four-leg intersections, respectively. There were eight (8) same-direction sideswipe crashes and fifteen rear-end crashes reported at the intersections. These crashes can be caused by the absence of turning lanes along the corridor intersections.

The project section of S.R. 70 presently features ten-foot wide travel lanes and eight-foot wide shoulders, four feet of which are paved. Guardrails, roadside swales, and fence posts are also in close proximity to the roadway. With a context classification of C2-Rural, the existing typical section does not meet current FDOT Design Manual standards. The substandard lane and shoulder widths and proximity of guardrails, roadside swales, and fence posts restrict the ability of drivers to avoid hazards within each directional travel lane without veering off the roadway causing direct impacts. According to "Evaluation of the Safety Effectiveness of the Conversion of Two-Lane Roadways to Four-Lane Divided Roadways: Bayesian vs. Empirical Bayes" referenced on the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Crash Modification Factors (CMF) Clearinghouse, widening a rural two-lane roadway to a four-lane divided roadway can help decrease fatal and injury crashes by 45 percent. In addition, due to the roadway's current configuration, there is limited space for an emergency service vehicle to pass to respond to a situation during periods of congestion or to accommodate a disabled vehicle to prevent it from obstructing traffic flow. According to the Highlands County Sheriff's Office, one of the two travel lanes (if not both) is often blocked during traffic incidents within the Highlands County portion of the project corridor.

S.R. 70 is part of the emergency evacuation route network designated by the FDEM as well as the network established by Highlands and Okeechobee Counties. This roadway is critical in facilitating traffic during emergency evacuation periods as it connects to other arterials and highways of the state evacuation route network [such as U.S. 27 (to the west) and C.R. 721 (within the project limits)] and serves as one of very few major east-west facilities that traverses Highlands and Okeechobee Counties. Under various FDEM evacuation scenarios for different storm events, FDEM noted that S.R. 70 has some of the longest lasting vehicle queues in the Central Florida region, contributing to prolonged clearance times. Clearance time, comprised of time required for mobilization of the evacuating population, travel time, and the delay time

caused by traffic congestion, is one input used by County emergency managers to determine when to recommend an evacuation order and is a key factor pertaining to public safety during an evacuation event.

SECONDARY NEEDS:

AREA WIDE NETWORK/SYSTEM LINKAGE: Maintain Important East-West Connectivity within the Regional Transportation Network

S.R. 70 is one of four corridors connecting Central and South Florida's west and east coasts as it spans from U.S. 41 in Manatee County (west coast) to U.S. 1 in St. Lucie County (east coast). It also connects to several major north-south transportation facilities of the state, including U.S. 41, I-75, U.S. 17, U.S. 27, U.S. 441, Florida's Turnpike, I-95, and U.S. 1. With the nearest available parallel east-west facilities being located nearly 10 miles or more to the north and south, S.R. 70 is integral to facilitating east-west travel within the regional transportation network of Florida's heartland.

TRANSPORTATION DEMAND: Accommodate Freight Activity

As part of Florida's SIS highway network, S.R. 70 connects regionally important routes (such as I-75, U.S. 27, Florida's Turnpike, and I-95) as well as serves as a regional through route for long-haul truck volumes and provides access to agricultural/ranching operations, industrial/commercial areas, and other intensive freight activity centers within Central Florida. FDOT Traffic Online 2021 data reports an Annual Average Daily Truck Traffic volume for the project corridor of 1,341 - 1,464 trucks per day; based on these volumes, truck traffic composes 24.4% - 25.3% of the Annual Average Daily Traffic volume for the project segment, which ranges between 5,300 - 6,000 vehicles per day. Truck volumes along S.R. 70 are expected to increase in the future as freight distribution and logistics activities continue to gain economic significance in Central Florida counties through the rapid growth occurring along the I-4 and I-75 corridors within the broader region. According to the Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO) 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), Highlands County is in the process of diversifying their economy, expanding the potential for freight distribution and logistics activity development. While Okeechobee County will continue to support existing industries such as cattle, trade, transportation, and agriculture, potential growth in logistics and manufacturing could increase freight volume on a regional basis.

According to the FDOT District 1 Freight Mobility and Trade Study: Technical Memorandum 5 - Freight Improvements Prioritization, improvements to S.R. 70 are the #1 long-term priority in Highlands County and the #2 long-term priority of Okeechobee County to facilitate the future growth of freight traffic in the region. Additionally, the HRTPO, its committees, and community stakeholders have identified S.R. 70 as the highest priority transportation facility in the region in need of improvements due to concerns pertaining to safety, freight mobility, and economic growth.

1.3 Planning Consistency

This project is listed in the HRTPO 2050 LRTP, adopted March 11, 2026. The project is identified in the LRTP as cost feasible through construction.

The HRTPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for Fiscal Years (FY) 2025/2026 - 2029/2030 was adopted on June 18, 2025, and has identified the project in the FY 2029/2030 Transportation Project Priorities list.

The HRTPO coordination is ongoing and the LRTP and TIP will be updated, as needed.

This project is also listed in the FDOT SIS Cost Feasible Plan 2035-2050, 2024 edition, as cost feasible.

Currently Adopted LRTP-CFP	COMMENTS			
Yes	This project is listed in the HRTPO 2050 LRTP, adopted March 11, 2026. The project is identified in the LRTP as cost feasible through construction. The HRTPO coordination is ongoing and the LRTP and TIP will be updated, as needed.			
	Currently Approved	\$	FY	COMMENTS
PE (Final Design)				
TIP	N			\$3.2M is programmed for PE funding in FY27.
STIP	N			
R/W				
TIP	N			The LRTP CFP shows \$8M in ROW funding for FY36-40.
STIP	N			
Construction				
TIP	N			The LRTP CFP shows \$98M in construction funding for FY 41-50.
STIP	N			

2. Environmental Analysis Summary

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

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 following sections.

3. Community Effects

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

3.1 Social

The proposed roadway widening will enhance safety conditions for all roadway users. As previously mentioned, S.R. 70 serves as part of the emergency evacuation route network designated by the FDEM and plays a critical role in facilitating traffic during emergency evacuation periods as it is one of the few roadways connecting the west and east Florida coasts. It also connects to other designated state evacuation routes aligned in a north-south direction, including U.S. 41, U.S. 301, I-75, U.S. 17, U.S. 27, U.S. 98, U.S. 441, the Florida's Turnpike, I-95, and U.S. 1. The project will improve emergency response times and access for the people living and working in the project region and for freight traffic. In addition, the Preferred Alternative provides pedestrian and bicycle facilities to enhance multi-modal opportunities.

The project is located within unincorporated southern Highlands County and unincorporated western Okeechobee County. The project area primarily consists of agricultural operations, including sod and cattle farms as well as field crops. The Kissimmee River Public Use Area (PUA), a large conservation area that spans multiple counties, is located in the project limits along the Kissimmee River and specifically, the Kissimmee River (KR) S-65E Impoundment (KR S-65E) is situated on the west side of the Kissimmee River, south of S.R. 70. Public use facilities located within the project area include a boat ramp at the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal and a "roadwalk" portion of the Florida National Scenic Trail (FNST), called the Okeechobee North Trail, located along SW 128th Avenue and crossing S.R. 70 at the project terminus. The Kissimmee River Fishing Resort is a mix of residential, commercial, and recreational uses and offers boat access to the Kissimmee River. There is one church, the Brighton Baptist Church, at the intersection of S.R. 70 and C.R. 721 South. No other community features (such as schools, community centers, healthcare facilities, etc.) are within the vicinity of the project.

Community Analysis

The demographics of the project study area were obtained through a Sociocultural Data Report (SDR) that is included in the project file. Because of the rural project area and surrounding area, the SDR evaluated demographics within one quarter-mile (1,320 feet) of the study area, using the intersecting feature which allows the compiled data to include the full census block groups that intersect with the quarter-mile buffer. **Table 1** summarizes the demographics of the study area and Highlands and Okeechobee Counties based on the 2010 Census data. This was the most current Census data available as listed in the SDR (dated August 2025). While more recent Census data (2020 as well as the American Community Survey 2019-2023) is available for Highlands and Okeechobee Counties as a whole, **Table 1** provides the 2010 Census data for the county-level as well for an equal data comparison. The study area has a lower minority population, lower Hispanic population, lower population below poverty, lower Limited English Proficiency (LEP) population, and higher median family income as compared to the counties as a whole. Additionally, there is a higher elderly population as compared to the Okeechobee County average. No disproportional impacts to distinct communities will occur.

Table 1. Project Area Demographics

Demographics	1/4-Mile Buffer	Highlands County	Okeechobee County
White (Race)	93.79%	70.68%	85.28%
African American (Race)	0.92%	9.77%	7.79%
*Other (Race)	4.29%	19.56%	6.93%
Hispanic (Ethnic Group)	7.57%	20.69%	22.91%
Minority	11.72%	35.29%	34.45%
Age 65+	27.92%	31.60%	17.29%
Under Age 18	17.17%	18.46%	23.93%
Housing Units with No Vehicle Available	2.55%	5.29%	5.86%
Persons with Disability Under Age 65	No Data	No Data	No Data
Limited English Proficiency	0.9%	7.82%	11.22%
Population Below Poverty	2.88%	16.89%	19.70%
Median Family Income	\$57,604	\$41,955	\$43,229

* "Other" includes Asian, American Indian, Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander Alone, Some Other Race, and Two or More Races

Community Cohesion

The impacts to parcels resulting from the Preferred Alternative will not impact community cohesion, community characteristics, special community designations, community goals, or quality of life as surrounding agricultural activities and land uses will remain in locations surrounding the project area. In fact, the Preferred Alternative includes two segments of new S.R. 70 roadway alignment to avoid impacts to community features that would result if the roadway widening were to remain on the existing S.R. 70 alignment in these areas. These two locations include businesses and a church at the begin project limits (S.R. 70 and C.R. 721 South intersection) and at the Kissimmee River Estates residential community. Therefore, ROW impacts will not prevent community features from continuing to service the community.

3.2 Economic

S.R. 70 is part of the SIS highway network, providing regional access to employment centers, agricultural lands, and residential areas across the state as well as facilitating the movement of significant truck traffic. The project segment of S.R. 70 currently supports a number of agricultural operations. The project corridor is located within Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, which are part of the six-county South Central Rural Area of Opportunity (RAO), a program defined under State of Florida legislature to encourage and facilitate the location and expansion of economic development projects of significant scale in rural communities to spur job creation (particularly high skill and high wage jobs). According to the HRTPO 2045 LRTP, Highlands County is in the process of diversifying their economy to expand opportunities to attract sectors beyond the traditional industries such as agriculture, business services, and natural resources. Freight distribution and logistics activities continue to gain economic significance in Central Florida counties including the S.R. 70 corridor.

According to the Highlands County and Okeechobee County Future Land Use Maps, the area encompassing the project segment will remain designated for agricultural uses with some conservation land uses and rural estates. As such, the

proposed project improvements will continue to support agricultural activities as well as the initiatives of the RAO by improving overall access to/from the area. While businesses adjacent to the corridor (primarily farms) may be affected temporarily during project construction, minimal economic impacts are anticipated as a result of the project. The Preferred Alternative addresses the project's purpose and need by improving transportation connectivity and economic development along this east-west SIS facility.

3.3 Land Use Changes

The 500-foot project buffer area primarily consists of agricultural uses with some public/semipublic, residential, and retail/office activities. Agricultural uses are present along the entire length of the project, and residential uses are primarily located on the eastern side of the project corridor. An existing land use map is provided in **Figure 4**. According to the Highlands County and Okeechobee County Future Land Use Maps, the project area will continue to support agricultural along with conservation land uses and rural estates. A future land use map is provided in **Figure 5**. However, as previously mentioned, Highlands County is in the process of diversifying their economy to expand opportunities to attract sectors beyond the traditional industries such as agriculture, business services, and natural resources. Freight distribution and logistics activities continue to gain economic significance in Central Florida counties including the S.R. 70 corridor. Therefore, while moderate changes to adjacent land uses will occur with the conversion of frontage areas to the expanded roadway, overall land use changes are not anticipated based on future land use maps and the HRTPO LRTP. Based on the future land use map and proposed improvements, the proposed project will not induce secondary development or change existing land use patterns.

Prime farmland is discussed in Section 3.7. In addition to potential impacts to prime farmland, approximately 23.5 acres of current agriculture use, consisting of rangeland and citrus row crops, are proposed for impact.

Figure 4. Existing Land Use Map

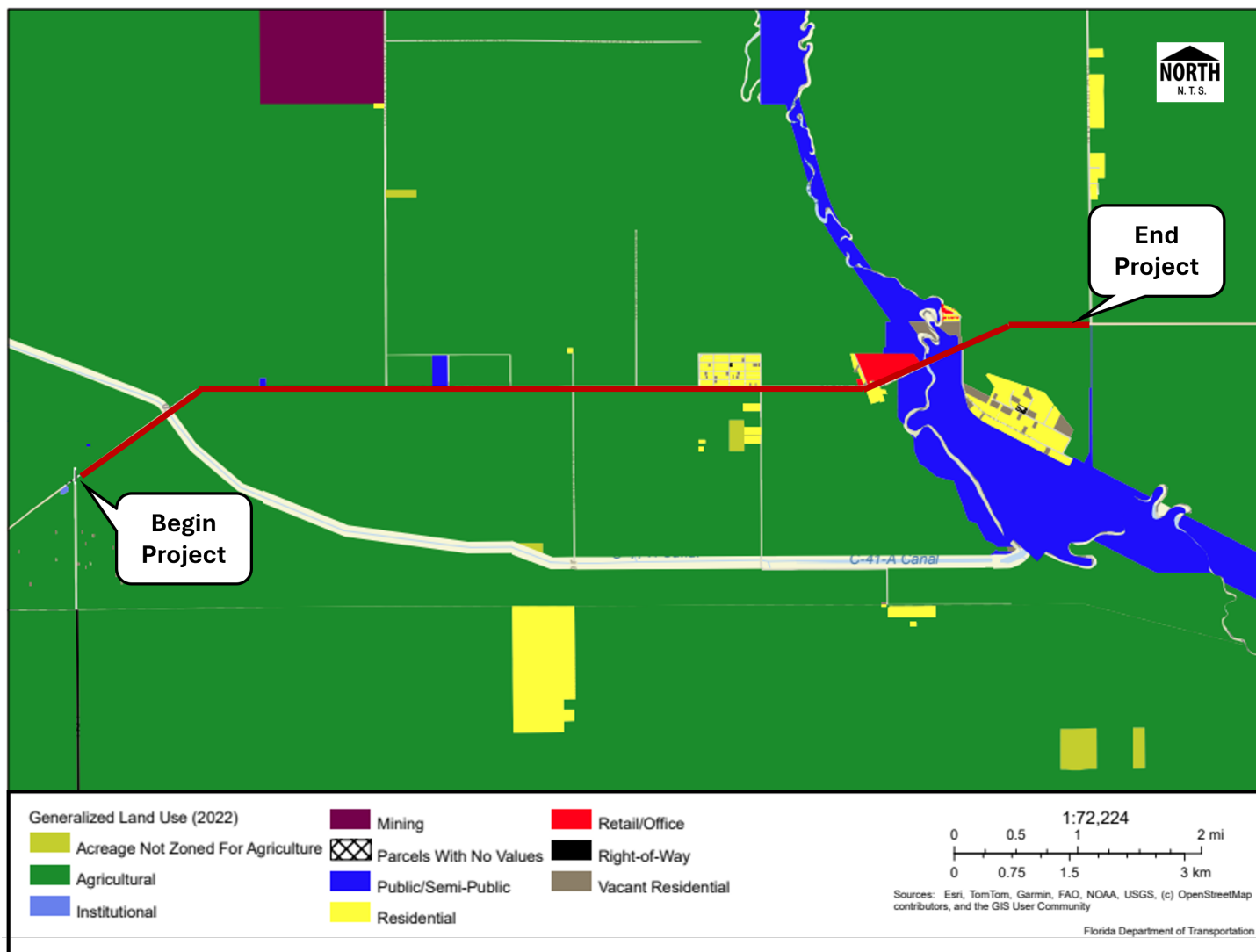
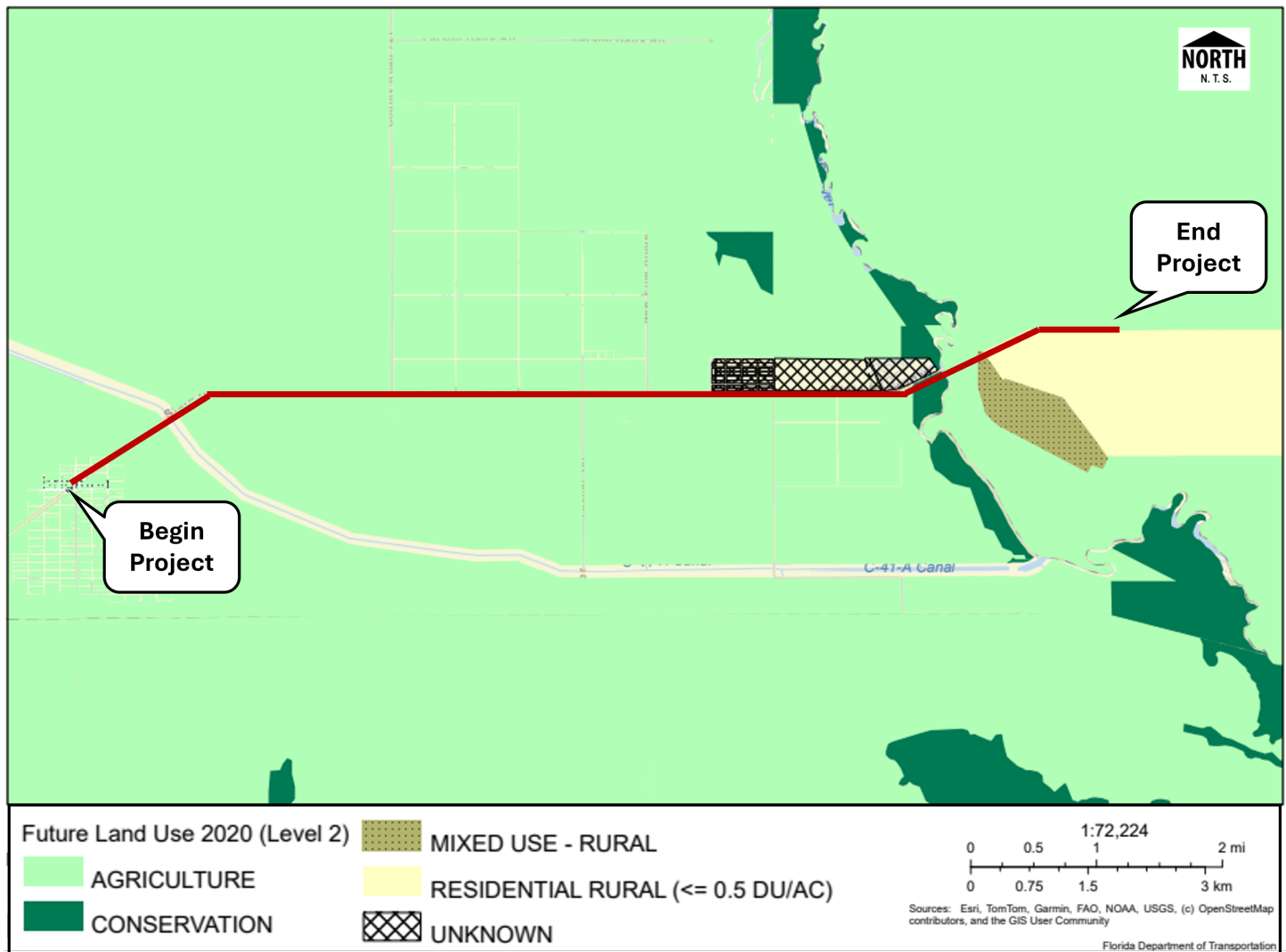


Figure 5. Future Land Use Map



3.4 Mobility

S.R. 70 is part of the SIS highway network, providing regional access to employment centers, agricultural lands, and residential areas across the state. Serving as one of two major east-west roadways within central/southern Florida (S.R. 60 serving as the second) and connecting to other regional transportation network facilities (such as I-75 and I-95), S.R. 70 is critical in facilitating the movement of local and regional traffic (including significant truck traffic). In addition, S.R. 70 is a designated state and county emergency evacuation route.

The Preferred Alternative will enhance mobility with widening of the S.R. 70 corridor to four lanes by 1) enhancing operational capacity of the corridor, thereby improving emergency evacuation/response times as well as access for standard roadway maintenance; and 2) improving safety conditions by adding capacity through additional lanes and a

median. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative is anticipated to enhance mobility within the project study area. Currently, there are no transit routes along the project corridor for non-driving populations based on review of the public transit data in the FDOT Environmental Screening Tool (EST) and review of Highlands and Okeechobee Counties websites. Also, there are no existing sidewalks or shared use paths within the project area. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative will enhance mobility for non-driving populations by providing a shared-use path for pedestrians and bicyclists to use in lieu of the S.R. 70 roadway or shoulder.

3.5 Aesthetic Effects

The project area primarily consists of agricultural activities (pasturelands, sod farms and field crops) with two residential communities near the Kissimmee River (Kissimmee River Estates and the Kissimmee River Fishing Resort). The Kissimmee River PUA is located on the south side of the project corridor adjacent to existing ROW. The Kissimmee River and the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal cross under the S.R. 70 roadway. According to the Highlands County and Okeechobee County Future Land Use Maps, the area encompassing the project segment will continue to support agricultural activities and objectives of the Conservation Partnership Areas of the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area. The proposed improvements to S.R. 70 are intended to support the agricultural operations of the area and Rural Area of Economic Opportunity initiatives. As such, the project is consistent with the future land use vision and aesthetic character of the corridor.

3.6 Relocation Potential

The S.R. 70 Preferred Alternative utilizes existing FDOT ROW and requires 206.7 acres of additional ROW for the roadway widening and 61.7 acres for the stormwater management facilities. The total additional ROW is approximately 268.4 acres and involves 59 parcels.

Business relocations are not required or proposed with the Preferred Alternative, however there are two (2) potential residential relocations. These are located on a single parcel in Highlands County, west of the Kissimmee River, at approximately STA 760+00 RT. The potential relocations consist of two (2) mobile homes located at the front of the parcel adjacent to the S.R. 70 roadway. The property address is 15624 S.R. 70 W, Okeechobee, FL 34974 and the parcel is # C-26-37-33-A00-0110-0000.

Comparable replacement housing is available. Within two (2) miles of the potential relocation sites, there are seven (7) residential properties for sale and one (1) residential property for rent. There are more residential rental properties located further from the immediate project area, in the City of Okeechobee and Buckhead Ridge.

A Conceptual Stage Relocation Plan (CSRP) (November 2025), prepared under separate cover and included in the project file, was developed to assess the demographic composition of the greater project area and to determine the availability of suitable replacement housing. The CSRP provides additional information relating to relocation assistance. Therefore, based on the implementation of this program, the Preferred Alternative will have no significant impacts.

In order to minimize the unavoidable effects of Right of Way acquisition and displacement of people, a Right of Way and Relocation Assistance Program will be carried out in accordance with Section 421.55, Florida Statutes, 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

Farmlands Conversion Impact Rating Forms [NRCS-CPA-106] were completed on January 22, 2026 in coordination with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and are attached. The project will impact 228.4 acres of Farmland of unique Importance with a total corridor assessment of 106 points for Highlands County and 112.9 points for Okeechobee County. Corridors receiving a total score of less than 160 points (per county) do not require further consideration. Therefore, the project will have no significant impacts to farmland resources.

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

The proposed project will result in unavoidable adverse effects to the resource(s) listed below, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). FDOT and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) has executed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), which outlined conditions to minimize and mitigate the adverse effects resulting from the project. Consequently, FDOT commits to the stipulations provided below as outlined in the MOA.

A Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (CRAS) was performed for the portion of the project that crosses the Kissimmee River (June 2024) given the elevated potential for project impacts to the historic bridge. This document was prepared under separate cover and is included in the project file. Historic background research, including a review of the Florida Master Site File (FMSF) and the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) databases, indicated that one historic bridge, S.R. 70 bridge over Kissimmee River (8HG01236/8OB00336), FDOT Bridge No. 910001, was previously recorded within the Area of Potential Effects (APE). Due to its location on the Okeechobee-Highlands County line, this bridge has been assigned a Highlands County FMSF number (8HG01236) and an Okeechobee County FMSF number (8OB00336). The S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge is a seven-span, concrete beam and girder bridge constructed in 1966 to carry S.R. 70 over the newly channelized Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal). The peak of the bridge is equipped with a steel, removable span which accommodates the passing of larger vessels while being more cost effective than a manned, operable span. The bridge was determined eligible for listing in the NRHP by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) in 2014 under Criterion C in the area of Engineering as an example of a removable span bridge. The S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge has not been significantly altered since it was determined eligible for listing in the NRHP by the SHPO and appears to remain eligible for individual listing in the NRHP under Criterion C in the area of Engineering as an example of a removable span bridge. Based on the scope of work, the undertaking will result in the physical destruction, damage, or alteration of all or part of the S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge. Therefore, FDOT determined that the proposed undertaking will have an **adverse effect** on the S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336). The SHPO provided concurrence on July 17, 2024 (attached).

Historical/architectural field survey resulted in the identification of a second historic resource, the newly identified Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489), constructed in 1966. Although the channelization of the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) is significant within the ecological and developmental history of south and central Florida, the majority of the linear resource is located outside of the APE, and a survey of the entire 69-mile-long channelized river is beyond the scope of this project. In addition, the linear resource has not been previously recorded elsewhere in Okeechobee or Highland Counties. As such, following the guidance of the Historic Linear Resource Guide provided by the Florida Division of Historic Resources (FDHR), there is insufficient information to evaluate the 102-foot segment of the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) that is contained within the APE.

The project will include the demolition of the existing S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River bridge and the construction of a westbound and eastbound bridge with two travel lanes each. Although this will result in the expansion of the existing bridge footprint and alteration to the earthen banking along the linear resource, these alterations are in keeping with the existing conditions of the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489) within the APE. Therefore, FDOT

determined that the proposed undertaking will have **no adverse effect** on the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489). The SHPO provided concurrence on July 17, 2024 (attached).

A Section 106 Consultation Case Study Report (August 2025), provided under separate cover and included in the project file, was prepared to evaluate the potential effects of the proposed undertaking to the historic property located within the APE, which includes the S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge, Bridge No. 910001 (8HG01236/8OB00336). Potential effects to this historic property were evaluated to comply with the provisions of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665, as amended), as implemented by 36 *CFR Part 800* ("Protection of Historic Properties," revised January 2004), and Chapter 267, Florida Statutes. This report includes a summary description of the project and of the significant historic property, as well as application of the Criteria of Adverse Effects, as defined in 36 *CFR Part 800.5*.

The FDOT applied the Criteria of Adverse Effect found in 36 *CFR Part 800.5* to the historic property determined eligible for listing in the NRHP located within the APE. This document provides information for consultation with the SHPO and Office of Environmental Management (OEM). Based on the proposed undertaking to replace the existing significant bridge, the findings indicate that the proposed undertaking will have an adverse effect to the NRHP-eligible S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge, Bridge No. 910001 (8HG01236/8OB00336). The SHPO provided concurrence on September 22, 2025 (attached).

The Electronic Section 106 (e106) form was submitted to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) on October 30, 2025 and is in the project file. Also included was the Section 106 Case Study Report. The intent of the submittal was to notify the ACHP of a finding that an undertaking will adversely affect historic properties, and/or invite the ACHP to participate in a Section 106 consultation related to the preparation of the MOA. Following an ACHP request for additional information, and FDOT response to the request, the ACHP responded on December 2, 2025 that their participation in the consultation to resolve adverse effects is not needed (attached).

Local historical societies, including Okeechobee County Community Services, Okeechobee Historical Society, Heritage Association of Highlands County, Inc., Highlands County Historic Preservation Commission, and Sebring Historical Society, were contacted on July 21, 2025 to inform them of the adverse effect to the bridge, the documents prepared to date (the CRAS), and documents in process (Section 106 Case Study and Memorandum of Agreement [MOA]). The entities were asked for feedback that would be considered for development of the MOA. Responses were received from the Okeechobee Historical Society and the Highlands County Historic Preservation Commission and incorporated into the draft MOA. The CRAS prepared for the bridge and the Section 106 Case Study were placed on the project website upon SHPO concurrence for public access.

Public engagement and appropriate coordination meetings occurred throughout the PD&E Study and will continue through the final design phase. Coordination among FDOT, District One, OEM, the SHPO, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), as well as the public was conducted to develop a sensitive and appropriate mitigation treatment plan. Measures to resolve the adverse effect have been documented in an MOA between FDOT, SHPO, and other affected parties. The MOA was executed on March 5, 2026 (attached) and the FDOT will ensure that the mitigation measures outlined in the MOA are implemented.

The MOA details mitigative measures including documentation prepared in accordance with Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) Level III standards, drawings, photographs, and written data. The FDOT will provide draft HAER documentation to the NPS and SHPO for concurrent review, then provide revised and final copies to the National Park Service (NPS), SHPO, and Okeechobee Historical Society. The existing commemorative bridge plaque will be

salvaged for use elsewhere following preparation of a salvage and relocation plan, and affording of the SHPO, Okeechobee Historical Society, and Highlands and Okeechobee Counties an opportunity to provide comments. Lastly, FDOT will assist with the development and funding of a single panel educational exhibit and installation in proximity to the bridge. The SHPO will be afforded the opportunity to provide comment. An electronic copy of the exhibit will be provided to local entities for installation at their discretion. These mitigative measures are included as project commitments.

A second CRAS (April 2025) was prepared for the remainder of the project, focusing on the roadway alignment. This document was prepared under separate cover and is included in the project file. Historic background research indicated that a third historic resource, the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127) was previously recorded within the APE. The segment of the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal was evaluated as eligible while having insufficient information for determining NRHP eligibility for the whole resource.

Historical/architectural field survey resulted in the identification of 46 historic resources within the APE. These include 34 buildings, ten (10) linear resources including the previously discussed Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal), the previously discussed Kissimmee River bridge, and one building complex resource group. Of these, 43 appear ineligible for listing in the NRHP. The remaining three (3) sites include the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127), Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489), and Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336).

The segment of the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127) within the APE was constructed in approximately 1944 as a later component of the Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project to improve and modify the Lake Okeechobee and Lower Kissimmee River/Lake Istokpoga Basins. The resource is also associated with the development of the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal). The segment of the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127) within the APE appears eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Agriculture; however, there is insufficient information to determine NRHP eligibility for the linear resource as a whole. Based on the scope of work, the undertaking will include the construction of an eastbound bridge with two travel lanes south of an existing bridge (Bridge No. 090053). Although this will result in a new bridge footprint and alteration to the earthen banking along the linear resource, these alterations are in keeping with the existing conditions within the APE. Therefore, FDOT determined that the proposed undertaking will have no adverse effect on Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127). The SHPO provided concurrence on September 22, 2025 (attached).

Archaeological surveys also were conducted. Archaeological field methods consisted of surface reconnaissance and both systematic and judgmental shovel testing. A small portion of the previously recorded site, Brighton Sugarcane #22 Site (8HG00894), was identified within the archaeological APE and there is insufficient information to make an evaluation of NRHP eligibility. The existing roadway and ROW extend through the north portion of the current site boundary and the proposed new ROW is adjacent to the site to the southeast, but does not go through it. The positive shovel tests were recorded within the extra 50-foot buffer, but outside of the footprint of construction. Within the footprint of construction, which includes a new alignment of S.R. 70, the field survey resulted in six (6) negative shovel tests and the area has been disturbed with the dredging of a canal in 2000. Current concept plans show avoidance of this site. Should the concept change during the project design phase and this site cannot be avoided, either Phase II excavations to further evaluate the eligibility of the site and/or monitoring of ground disturbing activities during widening and development will occur. Therefore, based on the current plans FDOT determined that the proposed undertaking will have **no adverse effect** on the Brighton Sugarcane #22 Site (8HG00894). The SHPO provided concurrence on September 22, 2025 (attached). This CRAS document was also provided to the Muscogee Creek Nation and Seminole Nation of Oklahoma on November 25, 2025. Neither tribe provided a response.

A CRAS Addendum (November 2025), included in the project file, was prepared to address the preferred pond sites for archaeological and historical involvement with the project. No previously recorded historic or pre-Contact archaeological sites were identified within the preferred pond sites and similarly, no archaeological sites were identified during the field survey. One (1) previously-identified historic resource eligible for listing in the NRHP, the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127) is located in the APE. Five (5) additional historic resources consisting of Lykes Drainage Canal (8HG01751), Lykes Drainage System (South) (8HG01725), Arrow B Ranch Canal (8HG01728), Unnamed Drainage Canal (8HG01752), and Kissimmee River Fishing Resort Canal (8HG01753) were identified but found to have insufficient information to make a determination of NRHP-eligibility. The FDOT determined that the proposed undertaking will have no adverse effect on these six (6) historic resources. The SHPO provided concurrence on December 22, 2025 (attached). This CRAS document was also provided to the Muscogee Creek Nation and Seminole Nation of Oklahoma on December 15, 2025. Neither tribe provided a response.

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 for recreational use along the project corridor include the Slough Ditch (C41-A) Canal at S.R. 70 Boat Ramp, the Okeechobee North Trail Connector, and the Kissimmee River PUA. Historical sites with Section 4(f) protection include the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal, Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal), and the S.R. 70 bridge over the Kissimmee River.

Table 2 below summarizes pertinent details for each of the Section 4(f) determinations and comprehensive analysis is available in the Section 4(f) Report (attached).

Table 2. Section 4(f) Resources Summary

Resource Name	Facility Type	Property Classification	Owner/Official with Jurisdiction	Recommended Outcome	OEM SME Action*
Slough Ditch (C-41A) at SR 70 Boat Ramp	Boat ramp	Park/Rec Area	SFWMD	No Use	Determination 11-04-2025
Kissimmee River Public Use Area: S-65E Impoundment	Water and wildlife management area with recreational use	Park/Rec Area	SFWMD and FWC	Not Applicable	Determination 1-30-2026
Okeechobee North Trail Connector	Pedestrian trail	Park/Rec Area	Okeechobee County	No Use	Determination 11-04-2025
Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127)	Historic Canal	Historic Site	State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)	<i>de minimis</i>	Concurrence 02-19-2026
Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489)	Historic Canal	Historic Site	State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)	<i>de minimis</i>	Concurrence 02-19-2026

SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336])	Historic Bridge	Historic Site	State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)	Programmatic	Concurrence 04-02-2026
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* SME = Subject Matter Expert

Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal and Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) *de minimis* impact determinations will be fully approved upon director's signature completed concurrently with the environmental document.

The Section 4(f) Report details the alternatives evaluation for the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) Bridge, public involvement activities, MOA, and is attached. OEM SME concurred with the documentation for the proposed Bridge Programmatic determination on April 2, 2026, and approval of the Bridge Programmatic determination will be completed concurrently with director's signature on the environmental document.

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

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 Resources Evaluation (NRE) (November 2025), included in the project file, was prepared as part of this project to analyze and document the effects of the Preferred Alternative on federal and state protected species and their habitats. Desktop review of existing data and field surveys were completed over the course of different seasons in 2023 to best identify protected plants and animals within the project limits. Species-specific surveys were completed for Audubon's crested caracara in January - April 2023 and Florida bonneted bat in May 2024. Observations of protected species and their habitats are detailed in the NRE. Several project commitments and implementation measures will help to protect species prior to and during construction.

Based on evaluation of collected data and field reviews, the federal and state listed species in **Table 3** and **Table 4** were observed or were determined to have the potential to occur within or adjacent to the project area. An effect determination was made for each of these federal and state listed species based on an analysis of the potential impacts of the proposed project on each species. The project is not within Critical Habitat for any species; therefore, no destruction or adverse modification of Critical Habitat will occur. The following tables list the effect determinations as presented in the NRE.

Table 3: Federally Listed Species Determinations of Effect

Project Effects on Federal Listed Species	Listing Status
NO EFFECT	
BIRDS	
Red-cockaded woodpecker (<i>Picoides borealis</i>)	E
Florida grasshopper sparrow (<i>Ammodramus savannarum floridanus</i>)	E
Florida scrub-jay (<i>Aphelocoma coerulescens</i>)	T
Snail kite (<i>Rostrhamus sociabilis plumbeus</i>)	E
Eastern black rail (<i>Laterallus jamaicensis</i>)	T
MAMMALS	
Florida bonneted bat (<i>Eumops floridanus</i>)	E
PLANTS	
Britton's beargrass (<i>Nolina brittoniana</i>)	E
MAY AFFECT, NOT LIKELY TO ADVERSELY AFFECT	
REPTILES	
Eastern indigo snake (<i>Drymarchon corais couperi</i>)	T
BIRDS	
Wood stork (<i>Mycteria americana</i>)*	T
MAMMALS	

West Indian manatee (<i>Trichechus manatus</i>)	T
Florida panther (<i>Puma concolor coryi</i>)	E
MAY AFFECT, LIKELY TO ADVERSELY AFFECT	
BIRDS	
Crested caracara (<i>Caracara plancus audubonii</i>)	T

* The wood stork is no longer a federally listed species, see below for details.

E = Endangered; T = Threatened; P = Proposed

Table 4: State Listed Species Determinations of Effect

Project Effects on State Listed Species	Listing Status
NO ADVERSE EFFECT ANTICIPATED	
REPTILES	
Gopher tortoise (<i>Gopherus polyphemus</i>)	T
Florida pine snake (<i>Pituophis melanoleucus mugitus</i>)	T
BIRDS	
Florida sandhill crane (<i>Antigone canadensis pratensis</i>)	T
Florida burrowing owl (<i>Athene cunicularia floridana</i>)	T
Little blue heron (<i>Egretta caerulea</i>)	T
Tricolored heron (<i>Egretta tricolor</i>)	T
Southeastern American kestrel (<i>Falco sparverius paulus</i>)	T
PLANTS	
Giant wild-pine (<i>Tillandsia utriculata</i>)	E
Cardinal wild-pine (<i>Tillandsia fasciculata</i>)	E
Pine lily (<i>Lilium catesbaei</i>)	T
Yellow fringeless orchid (<i>Platanthera integra</i>)	E
Celestial lily (<i>Nemastylis floridana</i>)	E
Cutthroatgrass (<i>Coleataenia abscissa</i>)	E
Piedmont jointgrass (<i>Coelorachis tuberculosa</i>)	T
NO EFFECT ANTICIPATED	
BIRDS	
Least tern (<i>Sternula antillarum</i>)	T
PLANTS	
Many-flowered grass-pink (<i>Calopogon multiflorus</i>)	T
Florida beargrass (<i>Nolina atopocarpa</i>)	T
Small's flax (<i>Linum carteri</i> var. <i>smallii</i>)	E
Sand butterfly pea (<i>Centrosema arenicola</i>)	E
Ashe's savory (<i>Calamintha ashei</i>)	T
Giant orchid (<i>Pteroglossaspis ecristata</i>)	T
Nodding pinweed (<i>Lechea cernua</i>)	T

The NRE was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), and Florida Division of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) on December 1, 2025.

Comments were received from the FWC on December 30, 2025, and are attached, stating agreement with the effect determinations and support for the project implementation measures and commitments for protected species. It was acknowledged that further coordination could be required during future species-specific surveys and project permitting. The FDACS commented on December 22, 2025, and are attached, that the agency finds the NRE document satisfactory, concurs with the proposed effect determinations for state and federal listed plant species, and commends the use of surveys for listed species and commitment to protect listed fauna, and use of mitigation to offset wetland impacts. The agency recommends that best management practices (BMPs) be used to protect wetlands and significant surface waters from construction impacts and that caution be exercised around invasive plants to prevent further spread. The agency advises that if any listed species are present, they should be protected to the degree possible or translocated to a suitable alternative site by an organization such as the Florida Native Plant Society; FDACS staff are also willing to assist with listed plant relocation efforts if needed.

The project is within the core foraging areas of two (2) wood stork colonies, wood storks were observed during field reviews, and the project area provides suitable foraging habitat for the species. The NRE, completed in November 2025, documents use of the consultation key resulting in a "may affect, not likely to adversely affect" determination for the wood stork. Additionally, a project commitment was detailed in the NRE to mitigate impacts to suitable foraging habitat through the purchase of credits from a USFWS-approved mitigation bank. However, the USFWS has removed the Southeast U.S. distinct population segment of the wood stork (*Mycteria americana*) from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife, effective March 12, 2026. Federal agencies (including FDOT under NEPA assignment) will no longer be required to consult with the USFWS under Section 7 of the Act for the wood stork. The wood stork is now a state-listed threatened species, occurring on Florida's Endangered and Threatened Species List with state protections through the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC) who regulate and manage these species (68A-27, F.A.C.).

Federally Listed Species- Basis of Effect Determinations

Any federal species for which a determination of "no effect" was made without the use of a species consultation key was found to not be present in the project area based on desktop and field reviews and similarly, habitat suitable to the species is also absent. This includes the red-cockaded woodpecker, Florida grasshopper sparrow, eastern black rail, Florida scrub-jay, snail kite, and Britton's beargrass. Species consultation keys were used for federally listed species where available. A species-specific survey was completed for the Florida bonneted bat (as per the 2024 survey guidelines) and a "no effect" determination was derived from use of the 2019 consultation key. Use of the eastern indigo snake key resulted in a "may affect, not likely to adversely affect" determination given that it uses a wide variety of habitats, but no species observations have been recorded within one mile of the project and none were observed during field reviews. The most current version of the USFWS' Standard Protection Measures for the eastern indigo snake will be implemented during construction; this is a project commitment. While no West Indian manatees were observed during field reviews, the species could potentially access the project area in the Kissimmee River. Use of the consultation key results in a "may affect, not likely to adversely affect" determination for the West Indian manatee. A project commitment is included to follow the most current version of the FWC Standard Manatee Conditions for In-Water Work. The project is not located within the Panther Focus Area but is within the Thatcher Dispersal Pathway. There have been no recorded observations of the Florida panther within two miles or within the last two years, and no evidence of panthers was observed during field surveys. Use of the consultation key results in a "may affect, not likely to adversely affect" determination for the Florida panther. There is existing crossing opportunity for the panther and other larger animals at the Kissimmee River bridge and Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal bridge but given the presence of rip rap rubble and steep side slopes, crossing feasibility is limited. There is opportunity to add wildlife features in these areas to enhance wildlife movement. FDOT will continue to evaluate the inclusion of wildlife crossings and/or habitat connectivity enhancements during design phase. This will include the evaluation of fencing/funneling features and landscaping that could improve use of the wildlife shelves.

Three (3) caracara nests were documented during species-specific survey. One nest is located outside the project limits and the project does not overlap the primary protection buffer of the nest. However, one nest will be directly impacted by the roadway improvements and the third nest will experience land conversion from potential habitat to roadway use within the primary protection zone. Since two nests will experience project impacts, a determination of "may affect, likely to adversely affect" was made for this species and formal consultation with the USFWS was initiated on December 1, 2025. Project commitments in the NRE include a financial contribution to the Crested Caracara Conservation fund and resurvey prior to construction. Formal consultation with the USFWS for proposed impacts to the crested caracara was completed on March 26, 2026, with the issuance of a Biological Opinion. Based on a minimization and avoidance measure included in the Biological Opinion, another commitment was added to avoid land clearing during the nesting season within the primary protection zones of any documented caracara nests or at minimum, after monitoring confirms that chicks have fledged or the nest is abandoned. In the Biological Opinion, the USFWS also provided concurrence on the "may affect, not likely to adversely affect" determinations for the Florida panther, eastern indigo snake, and West Indian manatee.

There are two (2) species proposed for federal listing, the tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*) and monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*). Since these are not yet listed, no determinations of effect have been made. FDOT will commit to re-initiating consultation with the USFWS if the listing status of the tricolored bat is elevated.

State Listed Species- Basis of Effect Determinations

For species with a "no effect anticipated" determination, it was found based on desktop and field surveys that there is no suitable habitat for these species and no evidence of the species to potentially occur. For the species with a determination of "no adverse effect anticipated", it was found that there is some habitat in the project area that could potentially be used by the species, and the project is within the documented range of the species. Of the state-listed species in the table above, only the gopher tortoise was observed during field reviews. Implementation measures for the project include a gopher tortoise survey prior to construction to identify the need for a FWC gopher tortoise relocation permit; and additional surveys for the Florida sandhill crane and southeastern American kestrel.

Protected, non-listed species were also evaluated in the NRE. These include the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), and Florida black bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*). An implementation measure to survey for bald eagle and osprey nests will identify any nests that may be impacted by the project. At this time, no active eagle nests are documented in close proximity to the nest such that the project overlaps with primary or secondary protection zones. Several osprey nests have been documented in the project area. The Florida black bear may occasionally use the project area but its presence is infrequent.

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 2025), included in the project file, was prepared as part of this project to analyze anticipated impacts of the Preferred Alternative on wetland resources, to ensure their protection to the extent practicable, and to determine appropriate mitigation.

For the Preferred Alternative (mainline), 13.71 acres of direct impacts to jurisdictional wetlands, 2.60 acres to surface waters (Slough Ditch [C-41A] Canal and Kissimmee River), and 24.19 acres to other surface waters (ditches) associated with fill for new roadway and embankment are anticipated. In addition, the stormwater management facilities would directly impact 0.17-acre of wetlands and 1.03 acres of other surface waters. This results in a total of 41.70 acres of direct impact overall. As an estimate for this project, approximately 4.47 acres of secondary impacts are anticipated to wetlands. A Uniform Mitigation Assessment Method (UMAM) analysis was performed and the estimated UMAM functional loss related to the Preferred Alternative impacts results 16.52 functional units for direct impacts and 0.29 functional units for secondary impacts for the mainline widening, and 0.46 functional units for direct impacts and 0.02 functional units for secondary impacts for the off-site stormwater management facilities. Details are provided in **Table 4** below and in the NRE.

Table 4: Summary of Wetland and Other Surface Water Impacts

System Type	Mainline Direct Impacts (acres)	Ponds Direct Impacts (acres)	Mainline Secondary Impacts (acres)	Ponds Secondary Impacts (acres)
Herbaceous wetlands	0.91	0.05	0.59	0.12
Shrub Wetlands	7.88	0.12	1.93	0.10
Forested wetlands	4.92	0.00	1.73	0.00
Other Surface Waters	24.19	1.03	0.00	0.00
Surface Waters	2.60	0.00	0.00	0.00
Totals	40.50	1.20	4.25	0.22
Overall Total	41.70		4.47	

The project is located within the SFWMD South Kissimmee Basin and entirely within one mitigation bank service area, Lake Istokopoga, and partially within the service areas of Twin Oaks and Bluefield Ranch mitigation banks. The project is located within the USACE-recognized Western Okeechobee Inflow (03090103) Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) Basin and Kissimmee (03090101) HUC Basin which differ from the SFWMD watershed boundaries. Mitigation credit availability from wetland mitigation banks changes over time, and use of some banks may require a "proximity factor" to be applied or a cumulative impact analysis to be prepared, in order to purchase credits from a bank that does not share the same watershed boundaries or mitigation bank service area as the project impacts. FDOT will continue to monitor wetland mitigation bank credit availability as the project proceeds to the design phase. As of the NRE (November 2025), Lake Istokopoga Mitigation Bank had just enough credits to cover this project, given the fairly low availability of herbaceous credits (although ample forested credits). Twin Oaks Mitigation Bank does not currently have credits available and this bank is only permitted with the state therefore could satisfy state mitigation requirements once credits are released mid 2026. Bluefield Ranch Mitigation Bank currently offers hundreds of both herbaceous and forested credits and therefore can more than adequately cover this project need.

FDOT will address all state and federal permitting requirements and provide appropriate compensatory wetland mitigation for final determination of jurisdictional wetland boundaries in future phases of this project. Wetland impacts resulting from the construction of this project will be mitigated pursuant to Section 373.4137, Florida Statutes (F.S.), to satisfy all mitigation requirements of Part IV of Chapter 373, F.S., and 33 U.S.C. 1344. Mitigation for this project will be completed through the use of mitigation banks and any other mitigation options that satisfy state and federal requirements.

The NRE was submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), SFWMD, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), and USACE on December 1, 2025. Comments were received from SFWMD on December 4, 2025 and relate predominantly to future permitting considerations and are attached. These include potential for SFWMD to require a secondary wetland impact buffer wider than 25 feet; requirement that UMAM datasheets code to the underlying vegetation type for exotic wetland hardwoods; a public easement or modification of an existing easement would be required for work over the Kissimmee River; need for SFWMD staff field review and approval of UMAM scores during permitting; ERP application requiring discussion of pond siting and design impacts on water quality, quantity, and/or gradient impact on adjacent wetlands; and ERP application requiring discussion of how the project incorporated elimination and reduction of wetland impacts. While SFWMD does not have jurisdiction over federally listed species, the agency stated in response to the proposed financial contribution to the Crested Caracara Conservation Fund that they "may not be able to authorize payment of monies as mitigation unless it can be documented that the monies will be used for a specific purpose or project that benefits the crested caracara".

The USACE responded on December 30, 2025 (attached) that the agency does not recognize the term "other surface water" and instead would like terminology such as ditch, tributary, pond, and canal. The agency also stated that they do not require UMAM scores for unvegetated, open water areas. The agency explained that they would like to review purpose and need information, specific measures taken to avoid and minimize impacts to aquatic resources, and an alternatives analysis. This information is included in the AN package and ETDM Programming Screen Summary Report, Pond Siting Report (PSR), and Preliminary Engineering Report (PER), respectively.

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 in accordance with Executive Order (EO) 11990 during the project design and permitting. The proposed project will have no significant short-term or long-term adverse impacts to wetlands because any unavoidable impacts to wetlands will be mitigated to achieve no net loss of wetland function. Furthermore, all wetland impacts will be avoided and minimized to the greatest extent possible and have been limited to those areas of previous disturbance and those which are required to meet minimum safety requirements. Temporary impacts due to construction will be minimized utilizing BMPs, maintaining a stormwater runoff control concept, and implementing FDOT design standards.

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 (November 2025), prepared under separate cover and included in the project file, assessed floodplain impacts associated with the project. The entire project limits are within FEMA flood zone A (refer to the attached floodplain map). These floodplains outfall to the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal and Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) which are not designated as regulated floodways. According to the FEMA Flood Zone A definition: *"The 1% annual flood (100-year flood), also known as the base flood, is the flood that has a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. A Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) is the area subject to flooding by the 1% annual chance flood."* The only SFHA within the project corridor is Zone A. Zone A designates base flood zones with no flood elevation.

Three (3) floodplain models were developed for the following scenarios: (1) existing conditions model, to establish the 100-year 72 hour floodplain elevations for the FEMA Zone A areas, (2) a post development model, by adding the proposed corridor to the existing model and evaluating the impacts to the existing floodplain elevations, and (3) a revised post development model with the compensation of the proposed ponds to mitigate areas where the floodplain elevation demonstrated a significant increase. As detailed in the Location Hydraulic Report, the proposed alignment and typical section is expected to have minimal to no impact on the existing floodplain.

Transverse floodplain impacts are those that result from cross drain extension in areas of the 100-year floodplain and longitudinal impacts occur due to the Preferred Alternative's roadway construction south of the existing S.R. 70 roadway and base flood elevation increase. While both perpendicular and parallel impacts to the 100-year floodplain will occur due to the Preferred Alternative, these impacts will be minimal. Given the limited number of cross drains, perpendicular impacts are minimal and can be mitigated through the replacement or widening of existing bridges. Additionally, based on coordination with the Highlands and Okeechobee County floodplain administrators, it was recommended to upsize the existing double 60-inch cross drain (CD-2) that interconnects a farmland irrigation canal and discharges into the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal to mitigate head loss from the longer culvert length. The floodplain analysis indicates that floodplains in adjacent basins along the corridor will experience minimal impacts, which will be addressed in the drainage design. The proposed concepts are anticipated to provide a net improvement to the floodplain as a result of the proposed stormwater pond sites and roadside ditches.

The floodplain encroachment areas are classified as minimal. Minimal encroachments on a floodplain occur when there is floodplain involvement but the impacts on human life, transportation facilities, and natural and beneficial floodplain values are not significant and can be resolved with minimal efforts. Normally, these minimal efforts to address impacts consist of applying FDOT's drainage design standards and following the SFWMD's procedures to achieve results that will not increase or significantly change the flood elevations and/or limits. 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

Biscayne Aquifer

The proposed project is located in a recharge area for the Biscayne Aquifer, a designated sole source aquifer. Pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water Act, as amended, 40 C.F.R. 149, the proposed project requires a sole source aquifer impact review and concurrence to ensure there is no potential for contamination. The FDOT has determined that through the implementation of stormwater treatment facilities and best management practices, the proposed project will not impact the sole source aquifer.

Coordination with the USEPA was initiated on August 27, 2025. An auto-generated letter was provided by the USEPA on August 27, 2025 and the additional USEPA concurrence was received on February 4, 2026; both correspondences are attached. Proposed bridge piles are approximately 50 - 70 feet deep, however the exact depth is currently unknown. According to best available data from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and SFWMD, the project area is in a Biscayne Aquifer Recharge Zone and will not interfere with the Biscayne aquifer itself. The potentiometric surface (the level that ground water in the aquifer reaches) for the upper Floridan aquifer is approximately +50 feet, NGVD 29 in the

project area, but the confining layer is greater than 100 feet. Standard penetration test (SPT) borings are recommended to be completed to determine if it is present and at what depth within the project corridor. During final design, detailed geotechnical surveys including SPT borings will be conducted. To avoid potential impacts to the Biscayne Sole Source Aquifer associated with construction of bridge foundation and/or construction dewatering, and as per the USEPA SSA letter, FDOT will implement BMPs from the FDM Chapter 251 (previously contained within Chapter 320 as referenced in the USEPA SSA letter), Stormwater Runoff Control Concept (SRCC) Development; follow FDOT Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction, Sections 6 (Control of Materials), Section 104 (Prevention, Control, And Abatement of Erosion and Water Pollution), and Section 455 (Structures Foundations); and follow the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Engineering Geology Field Manual - Chapter 20 Water Control.

5.6 Water Resources

A Pond Siting Report (PSR) (November 2025) was prepared for the project and is included in the project file. The purpose of the report is to present potential pond site locations for meeting applicable stormwater management criteria and identify ROW needs for the project. As documented in the PSR, stormwater management for water quality treatment and attenuation will be provided in proposed wet detention ponds or dry linear treatment ditches. Currently, there is no stormwater treatment or attenuation. Within one post-construction drainage basin, a regional pond alternative was evaluated. The existing land would not require any grading and therefore, there would be no disturbance to the existing land, habitats, or any environmental resources contain within. Therefore, this regional pond concept is viable and will be further evaluated in the subsequent design phase. A traditional, excavated stormwater pond has been selected as a preferred pond site within the basin should the regional pond concept later be found to be non-viable. The PSR provides more detail on this regional pond.

The project drains to two (2) maintained canals owned by SFWMD, the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) and the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal. The FDEP statewide comprehensive verified list of impaired waters was reviewed to identify any impaired Florida waterbody identification numbers (WBIDs) and/or Statewide Basin Management Action Plans (BMAP). The project study limits fall within WBID 3198 (impaired for nutrients), 3202 (impaired for nutrients), 3206 (impaired for dissolved oxygen), and 3209 (un-impaired). Additionally, the project lies within the Lake Okeechobee BMAP. Runoff is split along the centerline of the road and sheet flows directly into adjacent ditches that are interconnected by side drains that ultimately outfall into the SFWMD canals mentioned previously. Groundwater in the surficial aquifer is recharged primarily by precipitation, but also by irrigation from wells, seepage from lakes and streams, and the lateral groundwater inflow from adjacent areas.

The design of the drainage and stormwater facilities will comply with the standards set forth by the FDOT Drainage Manual and the SFWMD Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) Information Manual. Drainage patterns will be maintained in the project design. Water quality impacts resulting from erosion and sedimentation will be controlled through the use of BMPs. All state water quality criteria will be met. Short term construction related wetland impacts will be minimized with the use of BMPs such as the use of siltation barriers, dewatering structures, and containment devices to control turbid water discharges outside of construction limits.

An Individual ERP from the SFWMD will be required. A National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) construction permit is needed and the associated requirement to develop and implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will be met during the final design phase of the project. 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.

A Water Quality Impact Evaluation (WQIE) (October 2025) also was prepared for the project and is included in the project file. The Preferred Alternative is expected to have no significant impact on water quality and quantity.

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

It has been determined that this project is neither in the vicinity of, nor leads directly to a designated coastal barrier resource unit pursuant to the Coastal Barrier Resources Act of 1982 (CBRA) and the Coastal Barrier Improvement Act of 1990 (CBIA).

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.

Since the proposed project will provide additional through-lane capacity to S.R. 70 and also include a significant horizontal shift in the roadway alignment, it qualifies as a "Type I" project for which a traffic noise study is required. A Noise Study Report (NSR) (February 2026) was prepared under separate cover and is included in the project file. The project corridor consists primarily of agricultural land uses, with some areas of residential and public recreational land uses. Within the project limits, 105 receptors were modeled with the Traffic Noise Model (TNM) to evaluate traffic noise levels at 121 noise sensitive land uses. These consisted of 120 residences evaluated as Activity Category B (residential) and one picnic table evaluated as Activity Category C (recreational areas, picnic areas, amphitheaters, hospitals, libraries, places of worship, etc.). Exterior traffic noise levels were evaluated at all locations. Under existing conditions (2024), exterior traffic noise levels are predicted to range from 42.0 to 66.4 dB(A), and from 46.4 to 70.9 dB(A) with the future no-build condition. In the design year (2052) with the Preferred Alternative, traffic noise levels are predicted to range from 47.2 to 68.7 dB(A). Traffic noise levels are predicted to approach, meet, or exceed the NAC for Activity Category B at four residential receptors. When compared to existing conditions, the largest increase in traffic noise is predicted to be 12.7 dB(A), a level that does not constitute a substantial increase. Some noise sensitive land uses are predicted to experience a decrease in traffic noise as a result of the proposed southward shift in the S.R. 70 roadway alignment between Boney Lane and NW Riverside Road. **Table 6** presents the noise impacted sites and a map depicting the impacted sites is attached.

Table 6: Summary of Noise Impacted Sites

Noise Receptor No.	Location	Activity Category
72	15601 S.R. 70 W	Residential
76	15609 S.R. 70 W	Residential
101	743 SW 128TH AVE	Residential
103	12390 HWY 70 W	Residential

Noise abatement measures including traffic management and alternative roadway alignments were determined to not be feasible and/or reasonable abatement measures for the impacted residences. Noise contours are used to establish noise buffer zones and provide appropriate setback distances for noise sensitive development. These contours have been prepared for the future improved roadway facility and are discussed in the NSR.

A noise barrier was evaluated as a potential abatement measure for two of the impacted residential receptors located in Kissimmee River Fishing Resort. The results of the analysis indicate the barrier could not meet minimum noise reduction requirements at a reasonable cost. Noise barriers were not evaluated at the remaining two impacted residential receptors as they are considered "isolated impacts" where there is only one impacted receptor to potentially benefit, and as such, would not meet minimum feasibility requirements.

Based on the noise analyses performed to date, there are no feasible and reasonable solutions available to mitigate the predicted traffic noise impacts at the residential receptors. Therefore, noise barriers are not recommended for further evaluation as part of this project at this time. Should changes be made to the Preferred Alternative, additional analysis may be warranted.

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.

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.

6.3 Contamination

A Level-I contamination evaluation was completed for the project and a Contamination Screening Evaluation Report (CSER) (November 2025) was prepared under separate cover and is included in the project file. It documents potential contamination concern along the project corridor. Based on the methodologies performed as part of this study, nine (9) potential contamination sites were identified as having the potential for hazardous material or petroleum impacts. Of these nine (9) sites, three (3) received an initial risk rating of "No", three (3) sites received an initial risk rating of "Low", two (2) received an initial risk rating of "Medium" and one (1) received an initial risk rating of "High". **Table 7** lists each potential contamination site and a map exhibit is attached.

Table 7. Potential Contamination Sites

Facility Location Number	Facility Name	Facility Address / Location	Distance to Nearest Pond Parcel (feet)	Distance to Location of Identified Concern (feet)	Risk Rating
1	Lykes Bros Inc - FL Ranch	Corner Hwy 721 & Hwy 70	1,560	350	Low
2	Glades Electric Cooperative Inc Morris	20899 FL-70	3,240*	0	No
3	Florida Gas Transmission Company	20179 State Highway 70	2,000	N/A	Low
4	Arrow B Ranch	150 Fulmar Terrace	0	410	Medium
5	Circle G Ranch	7200 SW 196th Terrace	0	0	Low
6	Kissimmee River Fishing Resort	15601 Hwy 70	330	40	High

7	SFWMD/Davis Tract	SE Quadrant of Hwy 70 & C-38	180	N/A	No
8	Gloria Farms Inc	Platts Bluff Road	0	450	No
9	Rio Rancho Corp	12300 Hwy 70 W	4,780*	2,210	Medium

Notes: * Used to denote distance outside of applicable search buffer

Distance to Nearest Pond Parcel is defined as the distance from the contaminated parcel boundary to the nearest pond parcel identified.

Distance to Location of Identified Concern is defined as the distance from existing ROW to either the point assigned to the facility by the FDEP or the approximate location at which a potential source of contamination has been identified. If multiple facility IDs have been assigned by FDEP to a single parcel, the point nearest to the project area is used.

A total of eight (8) preferred pond sites were investigated for facilities or operations that may present the potential for finding petroleum contamination or hazardous materials and therefore may impact the proposed improvements for this project. Of the eight (8) sites investigated, the following risk ratings have been applied: five (5) "Low" risk, two (2) "Medium" risk (Pond 6C and Pond 7A), and one (1) High risk rating (Pond 5C). **Table 8** lists each pond site and nearest identified contamination site.

Table 8. Preferred Pond Sites and Proximity to Contamination Sites

Pond Site Number	Basin	Distance to Nearest Contamination Site	Contamination Concern	Distance to Location of Identified Concern (feet)	Risk Rating
1A	1	1,610 feet (Site 1-Lykes Bros Inc - FL Ranch)	Petroleum - AST	1,650	Low
2C	2	3,828* feet (Site 1-Lykes Bros Inc - FL Ranch)	Petroleum - AST	4,040*	Low
3B	3	3,454* feet (Site 2-Glades Electric Cooperative Ing Morris)	Electrical Transmission	3,280*	Low
4B	4	2,010 feet (Site 3-Florida Gas Transmission Company)	Gas Transmission	2,280	Low
5C	5	0 feet (Site 4-Arrow B Ranch) 1	Petroleum - LAST	100	High
6C	6	0 feet (Site 5-Circle G Ranch) 1	Petroleum - AST	260	Medium
7A	7	426 feet (Site 6-Kissimmee River Fishing Resort)	Petroleum - LUST	900	Medium
8A	8	0 feet (Site 8-Gloria Farms Inc)**	Petroleum - UST	1,170	Low

Notes: * Used to denote distance outside of applicable search buffer

** Used to denote same parcel or adjacent to a known contamination site.

For sites rated "No" and "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 variables such as current site operations and distance to the project area, 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 with environmental regulations, new discharges to the soil or groundwater, and modifications to current permits. Should any of these variables change an additional assessment of the facilities will be conducted.

For the sites with a risk rating of "Medium" or "High", Level-II assessment is required unless project design changes or updated contamination and/or hazardous material information indicates that the site no longer poses a risk to the project. Therefore, the Project Manager (PM) and District Contamination Impact Coordinator (DCIC) will coordinate Level-II testing and/or Level-III support warranted during design. This may include determining if the FDEP/FDOT Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) applies to any sites, conducting Level II activities or recommending Level III or remedial activities, notes on the plans, design modifications and/or special provisions prior to or during construction.

Existing bridge structures were not physically evaluated or tested for hazardous materials as part of this contamination screening evaluation. However, hazardous materials including asbestos-containing materials and metal-based coatings could exist at Bridge 910001, the S.R. 70 bridge over the Kissimmee River, given the age of the original infrastructure. The Preferred Alternative proposes the removal of Bridge 910001. A pre-construction hazardous material survey will be performed at this location during final design.

6.4 Utilities and Railroads

The project's Utility Assessment Report (UAP) (February 2026) was prepared under separate cover and is located in the project file. The Utility Agency/Owners (UAOs) were determined using a variety of sources. A Sunshine 811 Design Ticket was requested and a field review was conducted. Above ground utility features were noted and verified with the utility providers and operators during the coordination process for the project. Base maps were sent to utility providers with a request to provide information on existing and planned utilities within the project area. The final source of data collection was from As-built plans along or adjacent to the study area.

Utility easements for the FPL high voltage overhead transmission line and FGT buried gas transmission are in the project limits. The FPL easement runs along the north side of S.R. 70 and the FGT line runs varies in location north and south of S.R. 70 as it crosses the corridor at four (4) locations. Utility relocation costs were estimated for the project and included in the alternatives matrix that aided in the selection of the Preferred alternative (see Table 5-2 of the Preliminary Engineering Report, included in the project file). Utility relocation is a notable cost for this project given that the FPL and FGT utilities are within easements and impacts are anticipated.

Table 9 summarizes utility type, location and name of utility company/owner.

Table 9: Existing Utility Owners

Company	Utility Type	Locations
Comcast	Fiber- Cable TV	Buried CATV under S.R. 70 near SW 144th Parkway and along north side of S.R. 70 for limited distance Overhead CATV on power poles on north side of S.R. 70 in 2 locations and crossing S.R. 70 near SW 128th Ave.
Florida Gas Transmission	Natural gas pipeline	30-inch gas pipeline within a private easement on north side of S.R. 70 outside of ROW starting at west end of project; crossing to south of S.R. 70 just west of Mose Grade Road, running on south side of S.R. 70 to just east of Rucks Dairy Road where it crosses to north side, then crosses S.R. 70 to south side west of Riverside Road, then runs along south side to east of 145st St where it crossing back to the north side

Florida Power & Light Distribution	Electric	Overhead Electric running along the north side of S.R. 70 outside the ROW on private easement with numerous S.R. 70 crossings between power poles throughout the corridor including at intersections
Florida Power & Light Transmission	Electric	Overhead Electric on north side of S.R. 70 within private easement outside the S.R. 70 ROW
Lumen/Centurylink	Fiber- Internet and Telephone	Buried Telephone/ Fiber on the south side of S.R. 70 with numerous S.R. 70 crossings throughout the corridor including at intersections

There are no railroads within the project limits.

6.5 Construction

Construction activities for the proposed project may cause minor short-term air quality, noise, water quality, traffic congestion, and visual impacts for nearby residents and the traveling public. The air quality effect will be temporary, localized, and will primarily be in the form of construction exhaust emissions and fugitive dust generated from equipment during project construction. Air pollution associated with the creation of airborne particles will be effectively controlled through the use of watering or the application of other controlled materials.

Construction of the proposed roadway improvements, with heavy equipment movement and other construction activities, is not expected to have a significant noise or vibration effect. It is anticipated that the application of the FDOT "Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction" will minimize or eliminate potential construction noise and vibration impacts. Residences within the project limits are identified in the FDOT listing of sites sensitive to construction noise and vibration. Should unanticipated noise or vibration issues arise during the construction process, the Project Engineer, in coordination with a noise specialist and the contractor, will investigate additional methods of controlling these impacts.

Federal regulations (40 CFR Part 122) prohibit point source discharges of stormwater to waters of the U.S. without a NPDES permit. Under the State of Florida's delegated authority to administer the NPDES program, construction sites that will result in greater than one (1) acre of disturbance must file for and obtain either coverage under an appropriate generic permit contained in Chapter 62-621, F.A.C. or an individual permit issued pursuant to Chapter 62-620, F.A.C. The FDEP issues these permits. A major component of the NPDES permit is the development of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). The SWPPP identifies potential sources of pollution that may reasonably be expected to affect the quality of stormwater discharges from the site and discusses good engineering practices (i.e., best management practices) that will be used to reduce the pollutants. The contractor will obtain the NPDES permit and prepare the SWPPP prior to construction. Additionally, the associated requirement to develop and implement a Stormwater Runoff Control Concept will be addressed during design.

Water quality impacts resulting from erosion and sedimentation will be controlled through the use of BMPs. All state water quality criteria will be met. Short-term construction related wetland impacts will be minimized through the use of BMPs such as the use of siltation barriers, dewatering structures, and containment devices to control turbid water discharges outside of construction limits.

Maintenance of traffic and sequence of construction will be planned and scheduled so as 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 to allow for the planning of alternate routes. Access to local properties, businesses and residences will be maintained to the extent practical through controlled construction scheduling and the implementation of the project's specific Traffic Control Plan(s). Aesthetic impacts will be temporary and could consist of the staging of construction equipment and materials.

Construction activities will be phased to maintain two lanes of traffic at all times, minimizing disruptions to motorists and adjacent properties. A portion of the roadway construction will occur on new alignment outside the existing travel lanes, such as at the beginning of the project at C.R. 721 S and in the segment between Boney Lane and NW Riverside Road. This allows construction activities in these areas to proceed without affecting current traffic operations. In areas where the new roadway will be constructed along the existing S.R. 70 alignment, traffic will remain on the existing two-lane road while the contractor builds the two future eastbound lanes. This first phase also would consist of constructing the proposed stormwater facilities and cross drain extensions outside of the existing roadway. The second phase would shift the traffic to the newly constructed asphalt to enable the reconstruction of the existing travel lanes and completion of the cross drain widening. The third phase would involve completing the median construction, the final roadway friction course, and the final pavement markings.

7. Engineering Analysis Support

The engineering analysis supporting this environmental document is contained within the Preliminary Engineering Report .

8. Permits

The following environmental permits are anticipated for this project:

Federal Permit(s)

USACE Section 10 or Section 404 Permit
USACE Section 408 Permit

Status

To be acquired
To be acquired

State Permit(s)

DEP or WMD Environmental Resource Permit (ERP)
DEP National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit
FWC Gopher Tortoise Relocation Permit
WMD Right of Way Permit

Status

To be acquired
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 Public Involvement Plan (May 2023) was prepared under separate cover and is included in the project file. This plan details the public involvement approach for the project and documents public outreach methods including a project website, newsletters, a public meeting, and a public hearing. Agencies and elected and appointed officials were included in a mailing list as well as other project stakeholders. The Comments and Coordination Report (February 2026), prepared under separate cover and included in the project file, fully documents the public and stakeholder involvement conducted for this project including meeting notifications, meeting exhibits, comments received, and comment responses.

Public involvement activities include a May 2023 project kick-off newsletter sent to residents and stakeholders. The newsletter provided information on the need for the project and information about the PD&E study process. A project website, <https://www.swflroads.com/project/450334-1>, was created to provide the public with project specific information and give the public an opportunity to make comments and ask questions about the project.

An in-person Alternatives Public Workshop was held on June 11, 2024, at Indian River State College Dixon Hendry campus in Okeechobee from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM. The meeting followed an open house format and provided an opportunity for the public to review the proposed project layout and speak one-on-one with project team members. A virtual Alternatives Public Workshop was held on June 18, 2024 starting at 6:00 PM which included a meeting introduction, project video, and a question and answer period. Attendees typed-in questions, the virtual meeting moderator read the questions, and the project team provided answers while using concept plan maps for display purposes.

The in-person meeting was attended by 11 citizens and three (3) elected/appointed officials. The elected/ appointed officials in attendance included representatives from the City of Okeechobee, Okeechobee County, and the Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office. All attendees were given the opportunity to provide written comments at the meeting or within the 14-day comment period following the meeting, ending June 25, 2024. The virtual meeting was attended by eight (8) citizens, one (1) elected/appointed official, and one (1) agency representative (legislative aide).

In addition to questions asked by the public and answered by the project team during both the in-person and virtual meetings, comments were submitted by five (5) citizens during the commenting period. Comments expressed the need for widening S.R. 70 from a capacity and safety perspective. Other comments were related to access, both for properties on the north side east of the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal bridge and along the southern portion of the project. In addition, concerns were expressed on the need for noise wall and guardrail, potential relocations, and the interest in keeping the historical designation of the Kissimmee River bridge. Public comments were discussed with FDOT staff during the June 25, 2024 public alternatives debriefing meeting. As discussed in previous sections of this report, additional evaluations and refinements of the build alternatives were completed following the Alternatives Public Workshop which fully evaluated access to adjacent properties, elevation of the proposed roadway, noise impacts, and potential relocations.

Following the Alternatives Public Workshop, the project was presented to the HRTPO with Highlands and Okeechobee County Commissioners in attendance on October 2, 2024 to explain the study process and the alternatives for the multiple ongoing S.R. 70 corridor projects in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties. During the meetings, general comments in support of the project were received. Regular project updates have been provided to the HRTPO with additional presentations and updates through the FDOT liaison. Meeting minutes and presentations are included in the Comments &

Coordination Report (February 2026) included in the project file. The following meetings included S.R. 70 project presentations or updates:

- October 2, 2024 presentation to HRTPO
- November 20, 2024 presentation to HRTPO TAC
- June 18, 2025 presentation to HRTPO
- September 10, 2025 S.R. 70 project updates to HRTPO

Date of Public Hearing: 12/16/2025

Summary of Public Hearing

The Public Hearing was advertised in the following manner:

- Email to Elected and Appointed Officials - Distributed on November 17, 2025
- Emails to Interested Parties and ETAT Members - Distributed on November 18, 2025
- Newsletter to Property Owners - Mailed on November 18, 2025
- Florida Administrative Register - Published on December 8, 2025
- FDOT Project Website - Published on November 18, 2025
- FDOT Public Notice Website - Published on November 25, 2025
- Legal Advertisement - Published in Highlands News Sun on November 26, 2025 and December 9, 2025 and Lake Okeechobee News on November 26, 2025 and December 10, 2025

An in-person public hearing was held on December 16, 2025, at the Indian River State College - Dixon Hendry Campus and a virtual public hearing was held on December 18, 2025 through the GoTo Webinar platform. The hearing began with an open house at 5:30 PM to allow the public to review displays, watch the project video, and ask questions. Project displays included an aerial plot with the project concept plans, project informational boards including a location map, floodplain map, typical section renderings, evaluation matrix, schedule and funding, Title VI information, federal and state statutes, and how to submit comments. A project handout was offered to all attendees, and the project video played on a loop in a separate room. A noise table and ROW table with FDOT staff were also set-up. The public testimony began at 6:00 PM and was moderated by the FDOT project manager. After the project introduction, the project video was played and it was explained to the public both in-person and online as to how they may submit comments.

A total of 26 citizens, one (1) elected official, two (2) appointed officials and two (2) agency representatives signed in at the in-person meeting. A total of 13 citizens, three (3) agency representatives and no (0) elected officials joined the online meeting. This provided a total of 47 people, excluding staff and other support, that attended the S.R. 70 PD&E Study Public Hearing. No persons chose to speak during the public testimony in either hearing format. Three (3) written comment forms were received at the hearing, three (3) comments were sent by email, and one (1) comment was sent through the online platform. The public comment period was open until December 31, 2025. The public hearing transcripts and public hearing certification forms are attached.

Several comments were made in support of the project, citing safety concerns with the existing roadway. No comments were received that indicated lack of support for the project. Other comments received relate to consideration of lighting at the intersections with Fulmar Terrace, Mose Grade Road and SW Rucks Dairy Road; potential driveway impacts from S.R. 70 widening; preservation of the historical designation and marker of the Kissimmee River bridge; potential impacts to wildlife crossing S.R. 70; and overall costs associated with the proposed improvements. Comments and responses are provided in the Comments and Coordination Report (February 2026), included in the project file.

10. Commitments Summary

1. The FDOT will adhere to the stipulations included in the 2026 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the FDOT and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO).
2. The most recent version of the USFWS Standard Protection Measures for the Eastern Indigo Snake will be utilized during construction.
3. The USFWS and FWC Standard Manatee Construction Conditions for In-Water Work will be utilized during construction.
4. FDOT commits to design and construction of wildlife shelves at the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal and Kissimmee River bridges per current wildlife crossing guidelines. The design details of the wildlife shelves, including evaluation of fencing/funneling and landscape features, will be further evaluated during the design phase
5. FDOT will provide a financial contribution to the Crested Caracara Conservation Fund for impacts consisting of \$100,000 for the take of caracara nest B and \$45,840 for impacts to suitable habitat within the primary zone of caracara nest C.
6. The Action Area will be resurveyed prior to construction to confirm the locations of active crested caracara nests. If the nest locations have moved or additional nests are found, consultation with the USFWS will be reinitiated.
7. To minimize the potential for disturbance to nesting crested caracara, FDOT will conduct land clearing outside the nesting season for areas that are within the primary protection zone of any documented caracara nest site. Should it be necessary to conduct land clearing during the nesting season, it cannot occur within a nest primary protection zone until monitoring has determined that chicks have fledged or the nest is abandoned.
8. If the tri-colored bat is listed by the USFWS as threatened or endangered prior to the completion of construction, FDOT commits to re-initiating consultation with USFWS to determine appropriate avoidance and minimization measures.
9. To avoid potential impacts to the Biscayne Sole Source Aquifer associated with construction of bridge foundation and/or construction dewatering, and as per the USEPA SSA letter, FDOT will implement BMPs from the FDM Chapter 251 (previously contained within Chapter 320 as referenced in the USEPA SSA letter), Stormwater Runoff Control Concept (SRCC) Development; follow FDOT Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction, Sections 6 (Control of Materials), Section 104 (Prevention, Control, And Abatement of Erosion and Water Pollution), and Section 455 (Structures Foundations); and follow the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Engineering Geology Field Manual - Chapter 20 Water Control.

11. Technical Materials

The following technical materials have been prepared to support this Environmental Document and are included in the Project File.

Conceptual Stage Relocation Plan (CSRP)
Sociocultural Data Report (SDR)
e106 Form Submitted to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Cultural Resources Assessment Survey (CRAS) Kissimmee River Bridge
Section 106 Case Study for Kissimmee River Bridge
Cultural Resources Assessment Survey (CRAS) mainline
Cultural Resources Assessment Survey (CRAS) Addendum for Preferred Ponds
Water Quality Impact Evaluation (WQIE)
Pond Siting Report (PSR)
Natural Resources Evaluation (NRE)
Location Hydraulics Report (LHR)
Contamination Screening Evaluation Report (CSER)
Noise Study Report (NSR)
Utilities Assessment Package (UAP)
Roadway Geotechnical Report - Phase I
Access Management Plan Technical Memorandum
Project Traffic Analysis Report (PTAR)
Design Traffic Technical Memorandum (DTTM)
Preliminary Engineering Report
Comments and Coordination Report
Public Involvement Plan (PIP)
Errata Sheet for Virtual Hearing 12-18-25

Attachments

Planning Consistency

Project Plan Consistency Documentation

Community Effects

NRCS-CPA-106 Form - Highlands County

NRCS-CPA-106 Form - Okeechobee County

NRCS Correspondence and Approval of CPA 106 Forms

Cultural Resources

ACHP Statement of No Involvement

SHPO Concurrence on CRAS for Kissimmee River Bridge

SHPO Concurrence on Section 106 Case Study for Kissimmee River Bridge

Final Signed MOA

SHPO Concurrence on CRAS for Mainline

Section 106 Significant Resource Map

SHPO Concurrence on CRAS Addendum

Section 4(f) Report

Natural Resources

Sole Source Aquifer concurrence

Floodplains Map

Species and Habitat Map

FWC Species Concurrence Letter

FDACS Species Concurrence Letter

Wetlands Map

SFWMD response to NRE

USFWS Species Concurrence Letter (Biological Opinion)

USACE response to NRE

Physical Resources

Noise Impacted Sites

Potential Contamination Site Map

Public Involvement

In Person Hearing 12-16-25 Transcript

Public Hearing Certification - In-Person Hearing

Public Hearing Certification - Virtual hearing

Virtual Hearing 12-18-25 Transcript

Planning Consistency Appendix

Contents:

Project Plan Consistency Documentation

Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization 2050 Cost Feasible Plan						Project Cost in Year of Expenditures (in Millions)											
						TIP Years											
Other Roads Construction & ROW for Capacity						2026-2030			2031-2035			2036-2040			2041-2050		
Jurisdiction	Facility	Description	Location	Full Project Cost (Present Day)	Funding Source	Design	ROW	CST	Design	ROW	CST	Design	ROW	CST	Design	ROW	CST
DeSoto County	CR 769 (Kings Hwy)	Widen to 4 lanes	Charlotte CL - Glenadine Ave	\$56.17	State and Federal			\$33.10									
			Glenadine Ave - Agnes Street		State and Federal					\$2.86	\$8.01						
			Agnes Street - Peace River Street		State and Federal							\$5.63	\$5.74			\$14.27	
Highlands County	Sebring Pkwy	Phase IV Sebring Roundabout	Arbuckle Creek Rd	\$4.78	State and Federal			\$4.78									
Set Aside			Congestion Management	\$10.59	State and Federal	\$5.32			\$2.00			\$3.00			\$3.49		
			Supplementary Local Roads Resurfacing \$	\$11.86	State and Federal	\$3.50			\$1.67			\$2.06			11.14		
			Transportation Alternatives	\$7.03	State and Federal	\$2.51			\$2.42			\$0.59			\$4.40		
			Transit	\$32.45	State and Federal	\$9.29			\$9.55			\$9.49			\$18.76		
Non-SIS Projects and Set-Asides Total by Time Band								\$58.50			\$26.50			\$26.51			\$52.06
						TIP Years											
SIS Construction & ROW for Capacity						2026-2030			2031-2035			2036-2040			2041-2050		
Jurisdiction	Facility	Description	Location	Full Project Cost (Present Day)	Funding Source	Design	ROW	CST	Design	ROW	CST	Design	ROW	CST	Design	ROW	CST
Hendry County	SR 29	Widen to 4 lanes	N of CR 80-A (Cowboy Way) – Hendry C/L	\$199.25	State and Federal	\$12.50	\$28.85							\$246.33			
Hendry County	SR 29	New Bridge	SR 78 – CR 74	\$48.66	State and Federal		\$4.38	\$44.28									
Highlands County	SR 70	Widen to 4 lanes	Lonesome Island Rd – CR 721	\$42.49	State and Federal							\$9.90				\$7.49	\$62.62
Highlands County	SR 70	Widen to 4 lanes	CR 29 – Lonesome Island Rd	\$29.91	State and Federal							\$7.00				\$4.36	\$44.96
Highlands County	SR 70	Widen to 4 lanes	US 27 – CR 29	\$68.62	State and Federal		\$4.19		\$1.36	\$6.80	\$74.95						
Highlands County	SR 70	Widen to 4 lanes	CR 721 – NW 128th Ave	\$63.76	State and Federal							\$14.50				\$7.57	\$98.10
Highlands County	SR 70	Widen to 4 lanes	Jefferson Ave – US 27	\$32.90	State and Federal							\$6.40				\$2.49	\$53.42
Okeechobee County	SR 710	New Roadway (4 lanes)	US 441 – L-63 Canal	\$123.42	State and Federal	\$1.53	\$13.68	\$108.21									
Okeechobee County	SR 710	Intersection Improvement	W of SE 126 Blvd – Okee/Martin C/L	\$21.68	State and Federal		\$4.87	\$16.81									
Okeechobee County	SR 710	Add Lanes and Reconstruct	W of SE 126 Blvd – Okee/Martin C/L	\$2.72	State and Federal			\$2.72									
Okeechobee County	Turnpike Mainline	Parking Improvements	Ft Drum Service Plaza	\$18.72	State and Federal	\$3.39					\$19.78						
Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) Fully Funded Total by Time band								\$245.41			\$102.89			\$284.12			\$281.01
PDC: Present Day Cost • YOE: Year of Expenditure • Design: Includes Project Development and Environment (PD&E) and Preliminary Engineering (PE) • ROW: Right-of-Way • CST: Construction • CL: County Line			Non-SIS Project Totals					\$37.88			\$10.87			\$11.37			\$14.27
			Set-Aside Totals					\$20.62			\$15.64			\$15.14			\$37.79
			SIS Project Totals					\$245.41			\$102.89			\$284.12			\$281.01
			2050 LRTP Totals					\$303.91			\$129.40			\$310.63			\$333.07

Cothorn, Kathern

Subject: RE: IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED: 450334-1 SR 70 FROM CR 721 S TO CR 599/128 AVE

From: Marybeth Soderstrom <msoderstrom@cfrpc.org>

Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2026 1:02 PM

To: Smith, Kristi <Kristi.Smith@dot.state.fl.us>

Cc: Mike McDaniel <mmcdaniel@cfrpc.org>; Richard Ranck <rranck@cfrpc.org>; Perez, Edith <Edith.Perez@dot.state.fl.us>; Gaither, Wayne <Wayne.Gaither@dot.state.fl.us>; Kosheleva, Dasha <Dasha.Kosheleva@dot.state.fl.us>

Subject: RE: IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED: 450334-1 SR 70 FROM CR 721 S TO CR 599/128 AVE

EXTERNAL SENDER: Use caution with links and attachments.

Kristi,

Yes, HRTPO supports the approach outlined below. Advancing the design phase for SR 70 from CR 721 S to CR 599/128 Ave would be consistent with the goals and priorities of the HRTPO.

HRTPO can amend the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan at the June 17, 2026 Board meeting to show design funded in the FY 2026–2030 timeframe.

Thank you,

Marybeth Soderstrom

Staff Services Director

Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization

[555 East Church Street | Bartow, FL 33830](#)

P: 863.534.7130 x 134 | C: 863.838.9762

www.heartlandregionaltpo.org | www.heartlandrides.org

From: Smith, Kristi <Kristi.Smith@dot.state.fl.us>

Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2026 9:57 AM

To: Marybeth Soderstrom <msoderstrom@cfrpc.org>

Cc: Mike McDaniel <mmcdaniel@cfrpc.org>; Richard Ranck <rranck@cfrpc.org>; Perez, Edith <Edith.Perez@dot.state.fl.us>; Gaither, Wayne <Wayne.Gaither@dot.state.fl.us>; Kosheleva, Dasha <Dasha.Kosheleva@dot.state.fl.us>

Subject: IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED: 450334-1 SR 70 FROM CR 721 S TO CR 599/128 AVE

Importance: High

Good morning, Marybeth:

District One's Corridors Department is pursuing planning consistency for project 450334-1 SR 70 FROM CR 721 S TO CR 599/128 AVE. **We respectfully request HRTPO's approval of the approach outlined below and a written response on or before May 21, 2026.**

We are pursuing alternative funding to support Phase 32. The design work will be completed under Contract CA854 (445738-2, via TWO 04) and CAM91 (450334-1). We propose to use all remaining funds within the existing contracts. Contract CAM91 is currently being utilized to complete the PD&E Study for FPID 450334-1. Upon completion of the PD&E phase, anticipated on or before June 26, 2026, the remaining contract funds will be applied to the PE (Phase 32) effort through Project Cost Redistribution to FPID 450334-1.

PE (Phase 32) will not be separately programmed in the Work Program because of this approach. No updates to the TIP or STIP are anticipated, as this effort utilizes existing contract funds and does not introduce a new programmed phase. The funding being utilized originates from FY 2019 and FY 2024 funds currently within said contracts. As such, these funds must remain within said contracts and cannot be transferred. This approach will include the use of all available Optional Services under said contracts. This approach will support achieving LDCA prior to the new stormwater rule taking effect. Advancing design would preserve flexibility for a potential alternative delivery approach in the future if needed.

We have requested the 2050 Cost Feasible Plan with the detail breakdown for this project.

For this project, **we will need correspondence from HRTPO saying they will update their L RTP to show design funded in the FY26-30 timeframe.** Right now, it shows design funded in the FY36-40 timeframe and CST in FY41-50.

We appreciate your consideration and welcome any questions or guidance you may have. Please let me know if you need additional information for your review.

Thank you,

Kristi

Best regards,

KRISTI A. SMITH, CPM, PLS
Community Liaison Manager



phone	863.519.2358
cell	863.370.5191
email	kristi.smith@dot.state.fl.us
website	Metropolitan Planning Office
address	801 N Broadway Ave, Bartow, FL 33830

Click for: [District MPO Liaison Handbook](#)

Planning Team Mission: To provide the foundation for programming and project delivery through innovative planning and effective outreach that will strategically advance the best transportation solutions at the right time.



2045

Long Range Transportation Plan

Strategic Intermodal System

In the six county Heartland region, the Regional Roadway Network is made up of primarily US and SR routes designated as part of the Strategic Intermodal system (SIS). The State of Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) programs SIS projects and available revenue for SIS funding. Because SIS projects represent virtually all of the needed transportation capacity projects identified as over capacity for 2045 in the Heartland, the Strategic Intermodal System Funding Strategy, Long Range Cost Feasible Plan 2029-2045, 2018 Edition was used to determine the cost feasible projects shown in the following section on below. Funded improvements have identified construction funding by 2045. Partially funded improvements do not have identified construction funding with the timeframe of the plan.

Strategic Intermodal System Facilities on the Regional Roadway Network

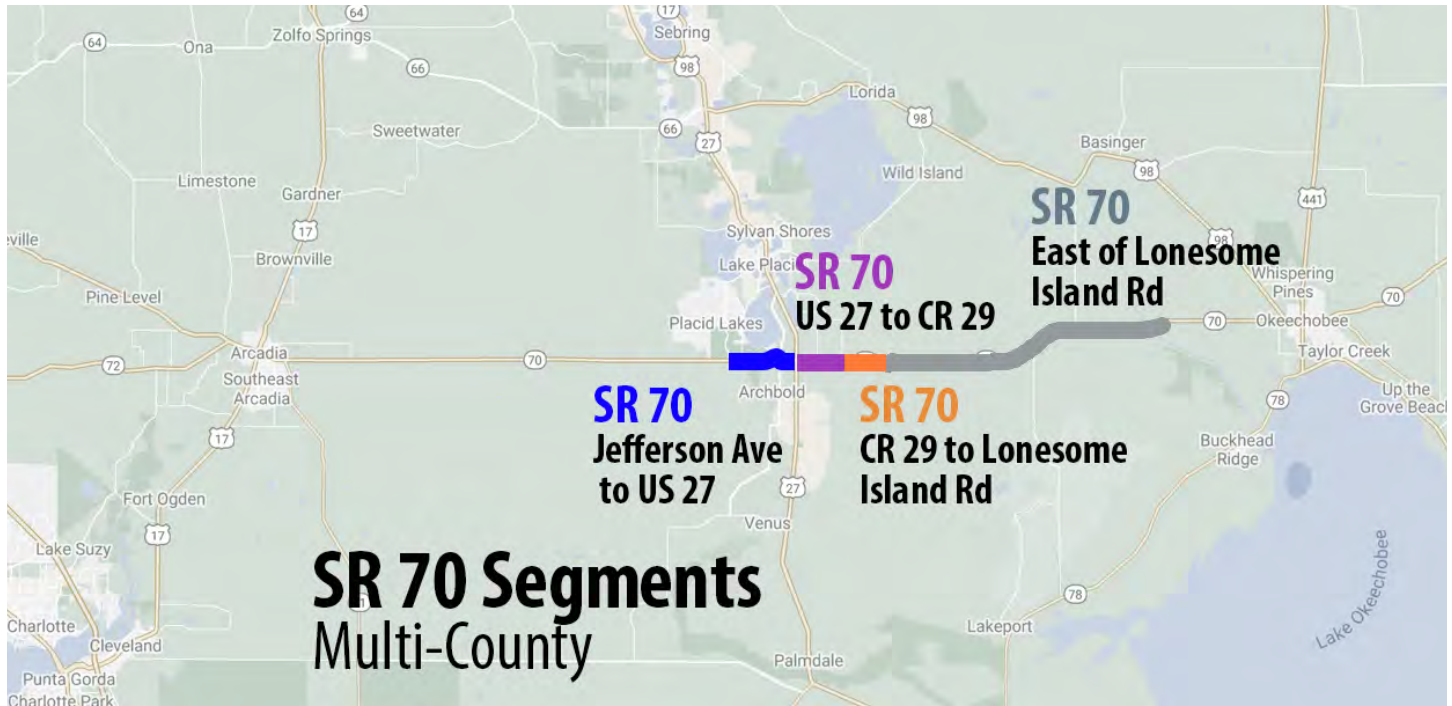
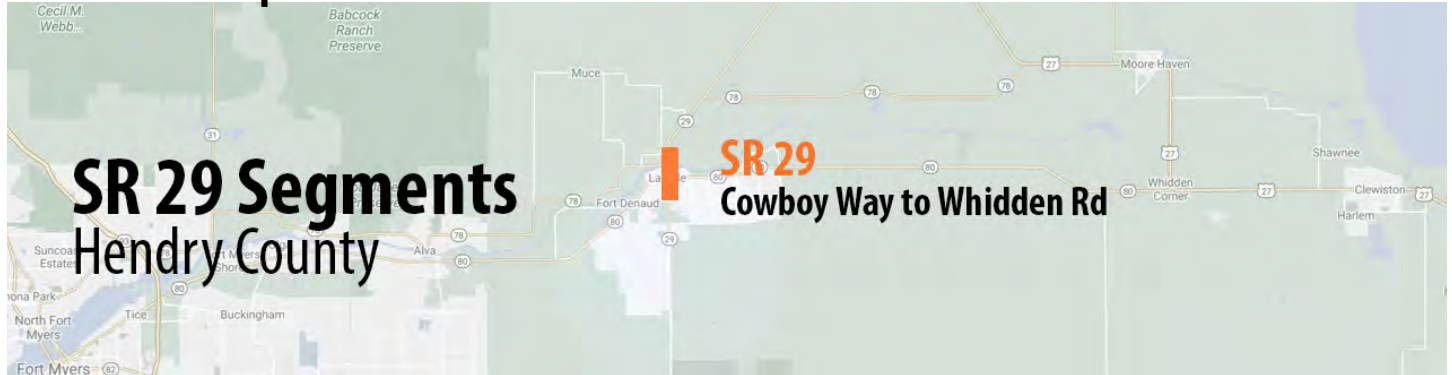
**US 17 • US 27 • SR 29 • SR 31 • SR 64 • SR 70 • SR 80 SR 82
• SR 91 (Florida's Turnpike) • US 441 • SR 710**

Funded SIS Improvements			
Facility	From	To	Description
SR 29	CR 80A (Cowboy Way)	CR 731 (Whidden Road)	Widen to 4 lanes
SR 70	Jefferson Ave	US 27	Widen to 4 lanes
SR 710	US 441	L-63 Canal	New Roadway (4 lanes)
SR 710	E. of L-63 Canal	Sherman Woods Ranches	Widen to 4 lanes
SR 710	Sherman Woods Ranches	Okeechobee / Martin County Line	Widen to 4 lanes
Partially Funded SIS Improvements Identified for PD&E and Design in the SIS Long Range Cost Feasible Plan 2029-2045			
Facility	From	To	Description
SR 70	Manatee County Line	West of Peace River (American Legion Rd)	Widen to 4 lanes
US 17	Palmetto St	SR 70/Hickory St	Highway Capacity
US 17	SR 70/Hickory St	SR 35/DeSoto Ave	Highway Capacity
SR 70	East of SR 31	Jefferson Avenue	Widen to 4 lanes
SR 64	US 17	SR 636	Widen to 4 lanes
SR 64	Old Town Creek Rd. / CR 671 / Parnell Rd.	Hardee / Highlands County Line	Widen to 4 lanes
US 27	Palm Beach / Hendry County Line	SR 80	Freight Capacity
SR 64	Hardee / Highlands County Line	US 27	Widen to 4 lanes
US 27	Glades / Highlands County Line	SR 70	Widen to 6 lanes
US 27	South of Skipper Rd.	US 98	Widen to 6 lanes
SR 70	NW 38th Terrace	US 98	Widen to 4 lanes
US 98 / US 441	18th Terrace	38th Ave.	Widen to 4 lanes
SR 91	North of SR 70 (MP 152)	North of SR 60 (MP 193)	Widen to 6 lanes

Although SIS designated roadways are typically prioritized through the Florida SIS Plan, the 2045 L RTP looks to advance improvements on SR 70 with available Other Arterials (OA) funding. The HRTPO, it's committees, and many community stakeholders have expressed that SR 70 is the highest priority in the region.

SR 70 Improvements Funded With OA Funds				
Facility	From	To	Description	Funded Phases
SR 70	US 27	CR 29	Widen to 4 lanes	PE, ROW, CST
SR 70	CR 29	Lonesome Island Rd	Widen to 4 lanes	PE, ROW, CST
SR 70	East of Lonesome Island Rd	38th Terrace	Safety Improvements and/or PD&E	Safety/PD&E

Funded SIS Improvements





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Web Application

Federal Aid Management Sabrina Aubery - Manager

STIP Project Detail and Summaries Online Report

** Repayment Phases are not included in the Totals **

Selection Criteria	
Approved STIP Financial Project:450334_ As Of:7/1/2025	Detail Related Items Shown

HIGHWAYS							
Item Number: 450334 1		Project Description: SR 70 FROM CR 721 S TO CR 599/128 AVE					*SIS*
District: 01		County: DIST/ST-WIDE		Type of Work: PD&E/EMO STUDY		Project Length: 8.570MI	
		Fiscal Year					
Phase / Responsible Agency		<2026	2026	2027	2028	2029	>2029 All Years
P D & E / MANAGED BY FDOT							
Fund Code:	ACNP-ADVANCE CONSTRUCTION NHPP	951,765					951,765
	ACSA-ADVANCE CONSTRUCTION (SA)	14,969	5,983				20,952
	DS-STATE PRIMARY HIGHWAYS & PTO	17,373					17,373
	NHPP-IM, BRDG REPL, NATNL HWY-MAP21	2,047,389					2,047,389
	SA-STP, ANY AREA	1,000					1,000
Phase: P D & E Totals		3,032,496	5,983				3,038,479
PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING / MANAGED BY FDOT							
Fund Code:	ACNP-ADVANCE CONSTRUCTION NHPP	1,000,872	128				1,001,000
	DDR-DISTRICT DEDICATED REVENUE	666					666
Phase: PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING Totals		1,001,538	128				1,001,666
Item: 450334 1 Totals		4,034,034	6,111				4,040,145
Project Totals		4,034,034	6,111				4,040,145

Grand Total	4,034,034	6,111					4,040,145
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This site is maintained by the Office of Work Program and Budget, located at 605 Suwannee Street, MS 21, Tallahassee, Florida 32399.

For additional information please e-mail questions or comments to:

Federal Aid Management

Sabrina Aubery: Sabrina.Aubery@dot.state.fl.us Or call 850-414-4449

Or

Dawn Rudolph: Dawn.Rudolph@dot.state.fl.us Or call 850-414-4465

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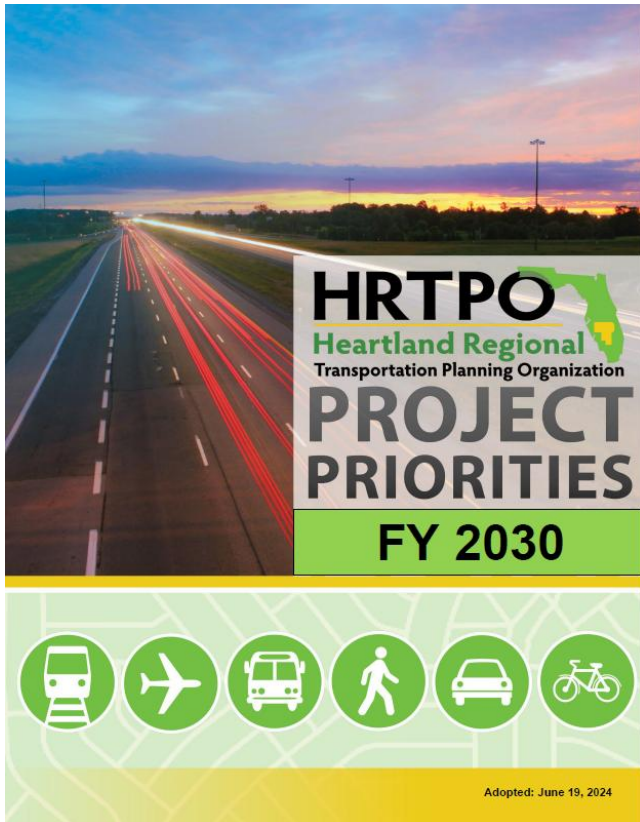
Florida Department of Transportation

Consistent, Predictable, Repeatable

Transportation Improvement Program

FISCAL YEARS 2025/26 - 2029/30

FY 2029/2030 Transportation Project Priorities



Project Selection

Each year the HRTPO is responsible for developing a list of Priority Transportation Projects and submitting the list to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for consideration during development of the Five-Year Work Program for DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, and Okeechobee Counties. Member governments of the HRTPO are requested to submit Transportation Project Applications and Priorities for Fiscal Year 2029/2030 to the HRTPO for transmittal to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for consideration of programming and funding by FDOT. The project applications are then scored based on criteria—found in Appendix A, developed by the Technical Advisory Committee and Citizens Advisory Committee, and adopted by the HRTPO Board—and ranked in order of priority. This process is conducted in accordance with federal requirements in the TPO planning process, and support FDOT’s Safety Target of zero deaths.

Consistent with federal requirements in 23 CFR 450.332 (b),(c), and Title 23, Section 134 USC, and other applicable federal and state requirements, the projects selected for the HRTPO TIP were based on a “snapshot” of the FDOT District Five-Year Work Program for Fiscal Years 2025/26 – 2029/30 dated April 10, 2024. The TIP was developed in cooperation with the state, local governments, and other transportation partners in the region including the Florida Department of Transportation, the counties of DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands and Okeechobee including municipalities.

Project Priority Statement

A list of priority projects is presented to the TPO Board for adoption and submitted to FDOT for use in developing the new fifth year of the Five- Year Work Program. All priority projects are consistent with the TPO’s adopted Long Range Transportation Plan. Adopted June 18, 2024 by the HRTPO Board, the Project Priorities for Fiscal Years 2024/25 to 2029/30 were submitted to FDOT for consideration in the FDOT Tentative Work Program. As a policy of the HRTPO, total project cost will be used as additional criteria to prioritize projects that have the same ranking. Lower cost projects will be given higher priority and higher cost projects will be given lower priority.

Projects that bring more CAPACITY						Project Development Status			
Rank	Jurisdiction	Facility	Description	From	To	Step 1 Project Development & Environment (PD&E)	Step 2 Preliminary Engineering (PE)	Step 3 Right of Way (ROW) Acquisition	Step 4 Construction (CST)
1	Highlands	US 98	2 to 4	US 27	Airport Road	✓			
			Project Segment 414511-4 US 27 to Bay Blossom Dr			✓			
2	DeSoto	Kings Highway	2 to 4	Charlotte C/L	Peace River St	✓	✓		
			Project Segment 440342-2 Charlotte C/L to SW Glenadine Ave			✓	✓	2026	2027
3	Okeechobee	SR 710 Extension	New Road	US 98	US 441				
4	Okeechobee	SR 710 Extension	New Road	SR 70	US 98				
5	DeSoto	SR 31 Extension	New Road	SR 70	US 17	✓			
As S/S facilities, these improvements are not prioritized by the HRTPO	Hendry	SR 29	2 To 4 Lanes	Cowboy Way	Whidden Rd	✓	✓	2028	
	Okeechobee	SR 710	New Road	US 441	L-63 Canal	✓	✓	2026	2029
			2 To 4 Lanes	E Of L-63 Canal	Sherman Woods Ranches	✓		>2030	
			2 To 4 Lanes	Sherman Woods Ranches	Okeechobee/ Martin CL	✓	2029-2031		
	DeSoto, Highlands & Okeechobee	SR 70	2 to 4 Lanes	DeSoto CL	Peace River	Ongoing			
				W of SR 31	Highlands C/L	Ongoing			
				Highlands C/L	Jefferson Ave	Ongoing			
				Jefferson Ave	CR 29	Ongoing	2028	2031	2031
				CR 29	Lonesome Island Rd	✓	Ongoing		
				Lonesome Island Rd	CR 721	Ongoing			
				CR 721	128 th Ave	Ongoing			
				128 th Ave	US 98	Ongoing			

Community Effects Appendix

Contents:

NRCS-CPA-106 Form - Highlands County

NRCS-CPA-106 Form - Okeechobee County

NRCS Correspondence and Approval of CPA 106 Forms

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Natural Resources Conservation Service

NRCS-CPA-106

(Rev. 1-91)

**FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING
FOR CORRIDOR TYPE PROJECTS**

PART I (To be completed by Federal Agency)		3. Date of Land Evaluation Request 9/29/25	4. Sheet 1 of 1
1. Name of Project SR 70 from CR 721S to CR 599/SW 128th Ave		5. Federal Agency Involved FDOT District One	
2. Type of Project PD&E Study (FPID 450334-1)		6. County and State Highlands County, Florida	
PART II (To be completed by NRCS)		1. Date Request Received by NRCS 10/8/25	2. Person Completing Form Josue Aceituno
3. Does the corridor contain prime, unique statewide or local important farmland? (If no, the FPPA does not apply - Do not complete additional parts of this form). YES ☒ NO ☐		4. Acres Irrigated 67,987	Average Farm Size 466
5. Major Crop(s) Citrus	6. Farmable Land in Government Jurisdiction Acres: 148,883 % 22.62	7. Amount of Farmland As Defined in FPPA Acres: 85,417 % .13	
8. Name Of Land Evaluation System Used None	9. Name of Local Site Assessment System Soil Potential Rating	10. Date Land Evaluation Returned by NRCS 11/24/25	

PART III (To be completed by Federal Agency)	Alternative Corridor For Segment <u>16</u>			
	Corridor A	Corridor B	Corridor C	Corridor D
A. Total Acres To Be Converted Directly	176.6	164.2		
B. Total Acres To Be Converted Indirectly, Or To Receive Services	0	0		
C. Total Acres In Corridor	281.3	286.5		

PART IV (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Information				
A. Total Acres Prime And Unique Farmland	218.60	224.00		
B. Total Acres Statewide And Local Important Farmland	0.00	0.00		
C. Percentage Of Farmland in County Or Local Govt. Unit To Be Converted	0.15	0.15		
D. Percentage Of Farmland in Govt. Jurisdiction With Same Or Higher Relative Value	83.90	83.90		

PART V (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Information Criterion Relative value of Farmland to Be Serviced or Converted (Scale of 0 - 100 Points)	47.00	47.00		
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PART VI (To be completed by Federal Agency) Corridor Assessment Criteria (These criteria are explained in 7 CFR 658.5(c))	Maximum Points			
1. Area in Nonurban Use	15	15	15	
2. Perimeter in Nonurban Use	10	10	10	
3. Percent Of Corridor Being Farmed	20	0	0	
4. Protection Provided By State And Local Government	20	0	0	
5. Size of Present Farm Unit Compared To Average	10	10	10	
6. Creation Of Nonfarmable Farmland	25	0	0	
7. Availability Of Farm Support Services	5	4	4	
8. On-Farm Investments	20	20	20	
9. Effects Of Conversion On Farm Support Services	25	0	0	
10. Compatibility With Existing Agricultural Use	10	0		
TOTAL CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT POINTS	160	59	59	

PART VII (To be completed by Federal Agency)				
Relative Value Of Farmland (From Part V)	100	47	47	
Total Corridor Assessment (From Part VI above or a local site assessment)	160	59	59	
TOTAL POINTS (Total of above 2 lines)	260	106	106	

1. Corridor Selected: Corridor A	2. Total Acres of Farmlands to be Converted by Project: 218.60 (prime farmland)	3. Date Of Selection: 8/11/25	4. Was A Local Site Assessment Used? YES ☐ NO ☒
--	---	---	---

5. Reason For Selection:

Corridor A (Alternative 1) provides better access management at Kissimmee River Estates, fewer residential relocations, fewer impacts to noise sensitive sites, less utility impacts, and less impact to the Kissimmee River Public Use Area.*Ryan Riffle*

1/22/2026

Signature of Person Completing this Part:

DATE

NOTE: Complete a form for each segment with more than one Alternate Corridor

CORRIDOR - TYPE SITE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The following criteria are to be used for projects that have a linear or corridor - type site configuration connecting two distant points, and crossing several different tracts of land. These include utility lines, highways, railroads, stream improvements, and flood control systems. Federal agencies are to assess the suitability of each corridor - type site or design alternative for protection as farmland along with the land evaluation information.

- (1) How much land is in nonurban use within a radius of 1.0 mile from where the project is intended?

More than 90 percent - 15 points
 90 to 20 percent - 14 to 1 point(s)
 Less than 20 percent - 0 points

- (2) How much of the perimeter of the site borders on land in nonurban use?

More than 90 percent - 10 points
 90 to 20 percent - 9 to 1 point(s)
 Less than 20 percent - 0 points

- (3) How much of the site has been farmed (managed for a scheduled harvest or timber activity) more than five of the last 10 years?

More than 90 percent - 20 points
 90 to 20 percent - 19 to 1 point(s)
 Less than 20 percent - 0 points

- (4) Is the site subject to state or unit of local government policies or programs to protect farmland or covered by private programs to protect farmland?

Site is protected - 20 points
 Site is not protected - 0 points

- (5) Is the farm unit(s) containing the site (before the project) as large as the average - size farming unit in the County ?

(Average farm sizes in each county are available from the NRCS field offices in each state. Data are from the latest available Census of Agriculture, Acreage or Farm Units in Operation with \$1,000 or more in sales.)
 As large or larger - 10 points
 Below average - deduct 1 point for each 5 percent below the average, down to 0 points if 50 percent or more below average - 9 to 0 points

- (6) If the site is chosen for the project, how much of the remaining land on the farm will become non-farmable because of interference with land patterns?

Acreage equal to more than 25 percent of acres directly converted by the project - 25 points
 Acreage equal to between 25 and 5 percent of the acres directly converted by the project - 1 to 24 point(s)
 Acreage equal to less than 5 percent of the acres directly converted by the project - 0 points

- (7) Does the site have available adequate supply of farm support services and markets, i.e., farm suppliers, equipment dealers, processing and storage facilities and farmer's markets?

All required services are available - 5 points
 Some required services are available - 4 to 1 point(s)
 No required services are available - 0 points

- (8) Does the site have substantial and well-maintained on-farm investments such as barns, other storage building, fruit trees and vines, field terraces, drainage, irrigation, waterways, or other soil and water conservation measures?

High amount of on-farm investment - 20 points
 Moderate amount of on-farm investment - 19 to 1 point(s)
 No on-farm investment - 0 points

- (9) Would the project at this site, by converting farmland to nonagricultural use, reduce the demand for farm support services so as to jeopardize the continued existence of these support services and thus, the viability of the farms remaining in the area?

Substantial reduction in demand for support services if the site is converted - 25 points
 Some reduction in demand for support services if the site is converted - 1 to 24 point(s)
 No significant reduction in demand for support services if the site is converted - 0 points

- (10) Is the kind and intensity of the proposed use of the site sufficiently incompatible with agriculture that it is likely to contribute to the eventual conversion of surrounding farmland to nonagricultural use?

Proposed project is incompatible to existing agricultural use of surrounding farmland - 10 points
 Proposed project is tolerable to existing agricultural use of surrounding farmland - 9 to 1 point(s)
 Proposed project is fully compatible with existing agricultural use of surrounding farmland - 0 points



Farmlands Map
FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: NRCS
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023

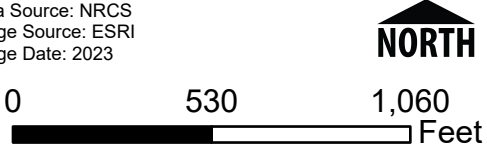


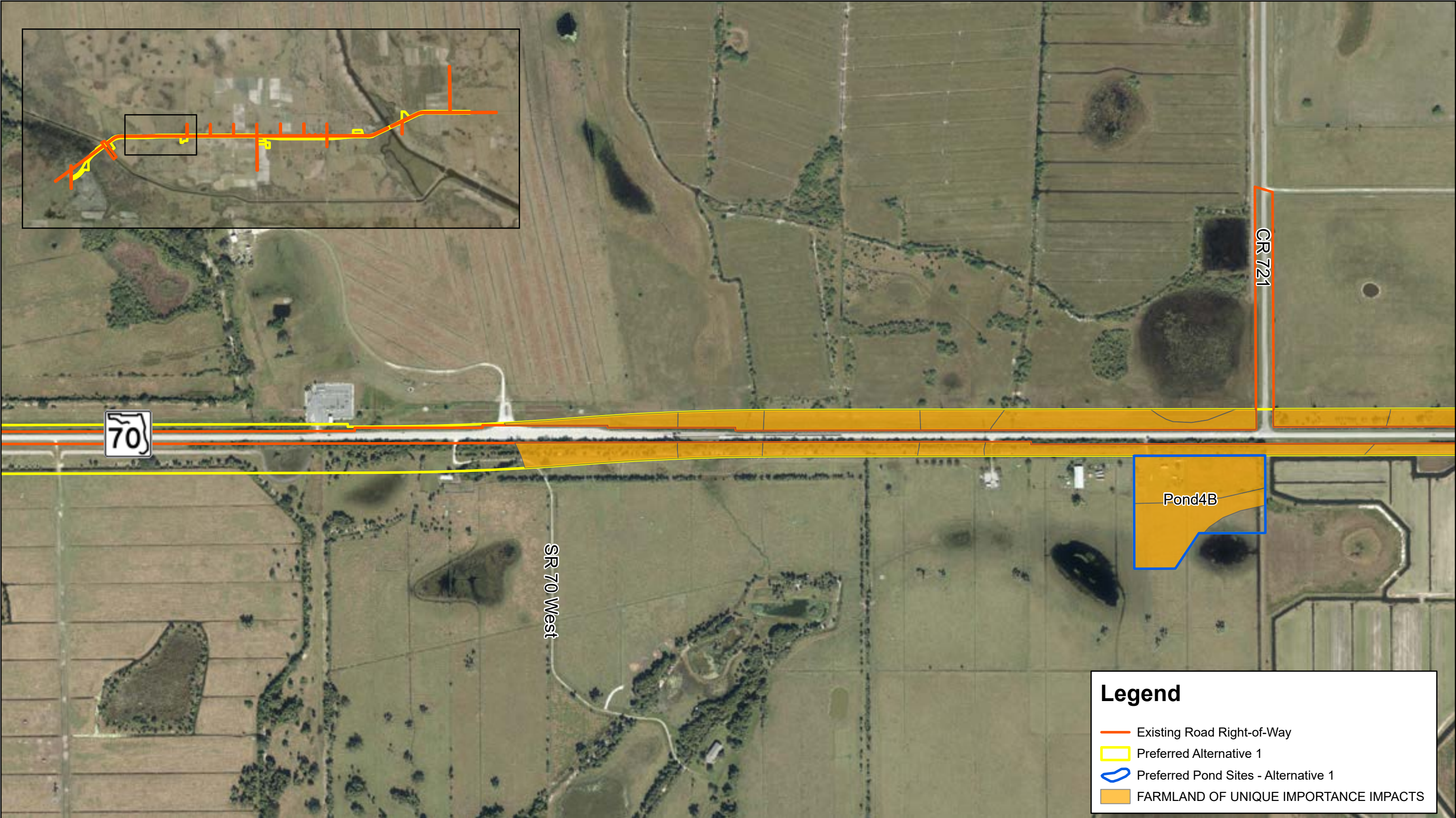


Farmlands Impact by Alternative 1 and Ponds Map
Sheet 1 of 6

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: NRCS
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023





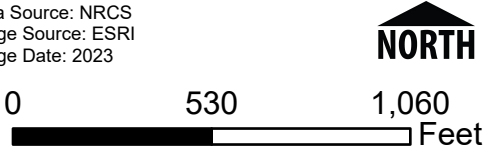
Farmlands Impact by Alternative 1 and Ponds Map
Sheet 2 of 6

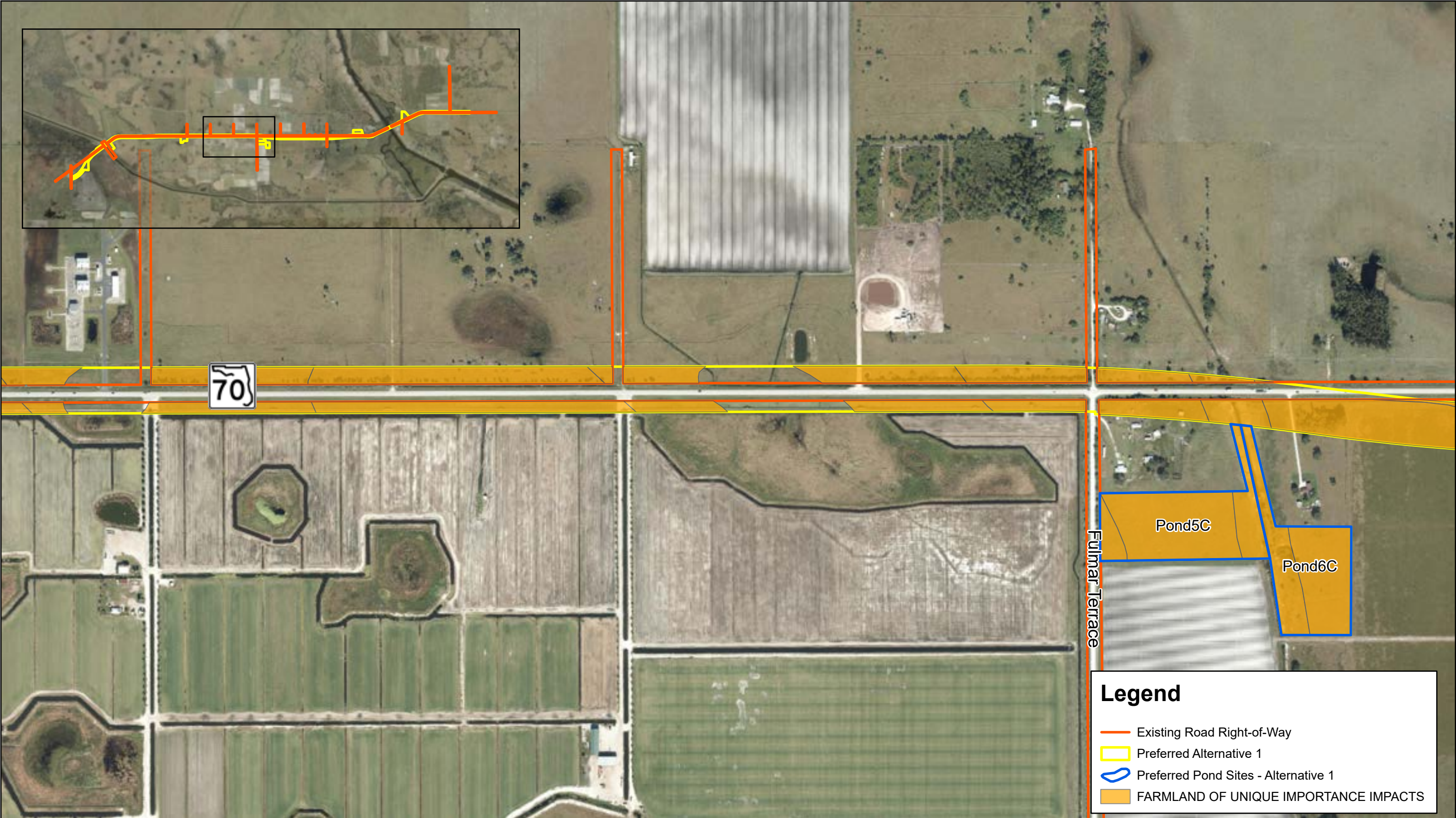
FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Legend

- Existing Road Right-of-Way
- Preferred Alternative 1
- Preferred Pond Sites - Alternative 1
- FARMLAND OF UNIQUE IMPORTANCE IMPACTS

Data Source: NRCS
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023

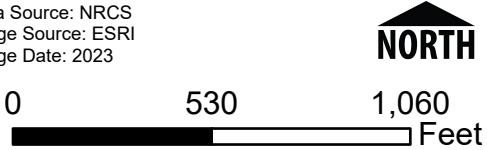


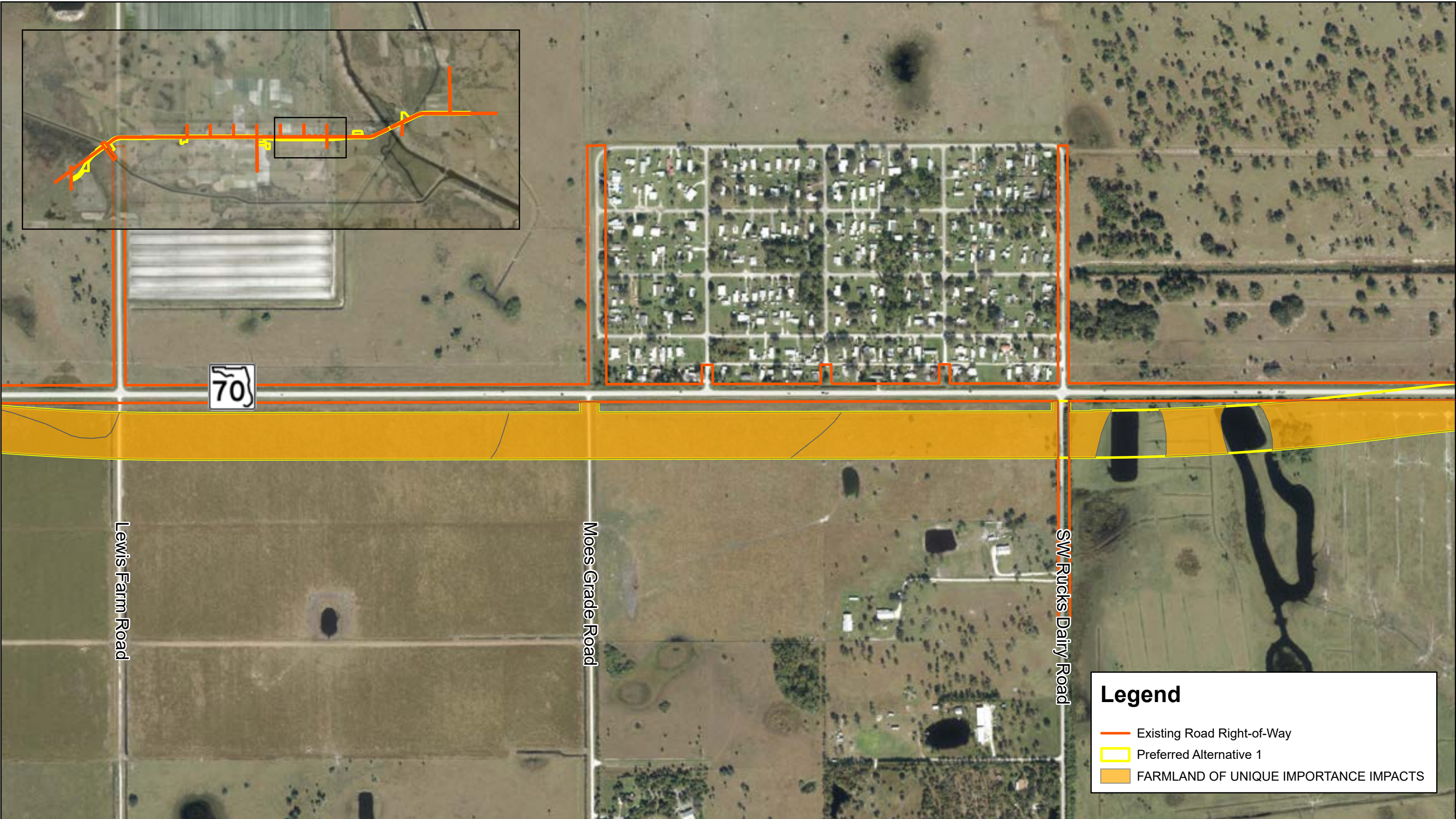


Farmlands Impact by Alternative 1 and Ponds Map
Sheet 3 of 6

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

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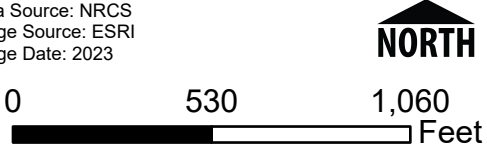




Farmlands Impact by Alternative 1 and Ponds Map
Sheet 4 of 6

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: NRCS
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023





Legend

- Existing Road Right-of-Way
- Preferred Alternative 1
- Preferred Pond Sites - Alternative 1
- FARMLAND OF UNIQUE IMPORTANCE IMPACTS

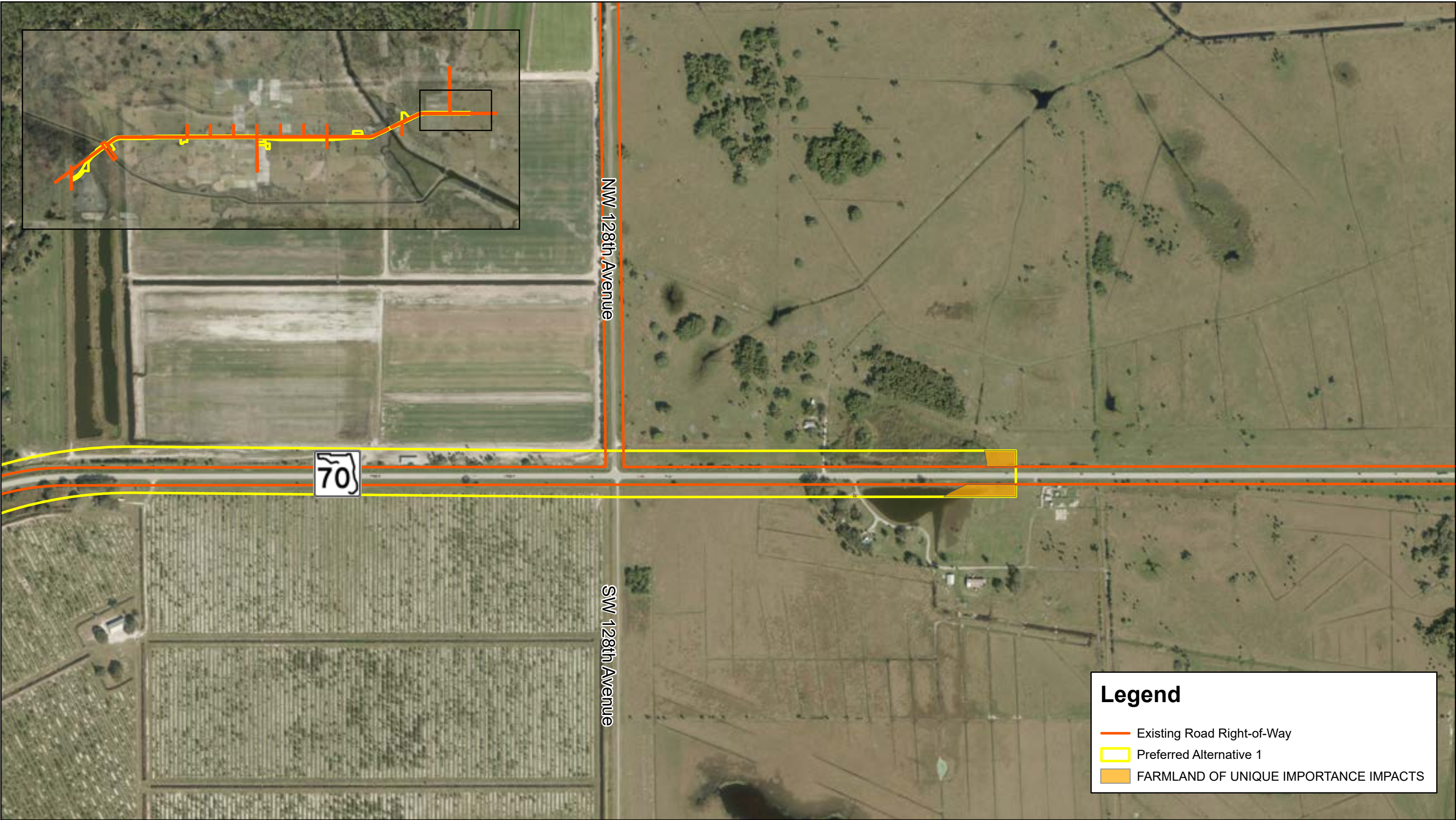
Farmlands Impact by Alternative 1 and Ponds Map
Sheet 5 of 6

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: NRCS
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023

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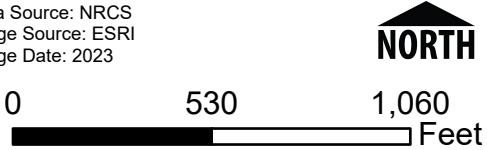
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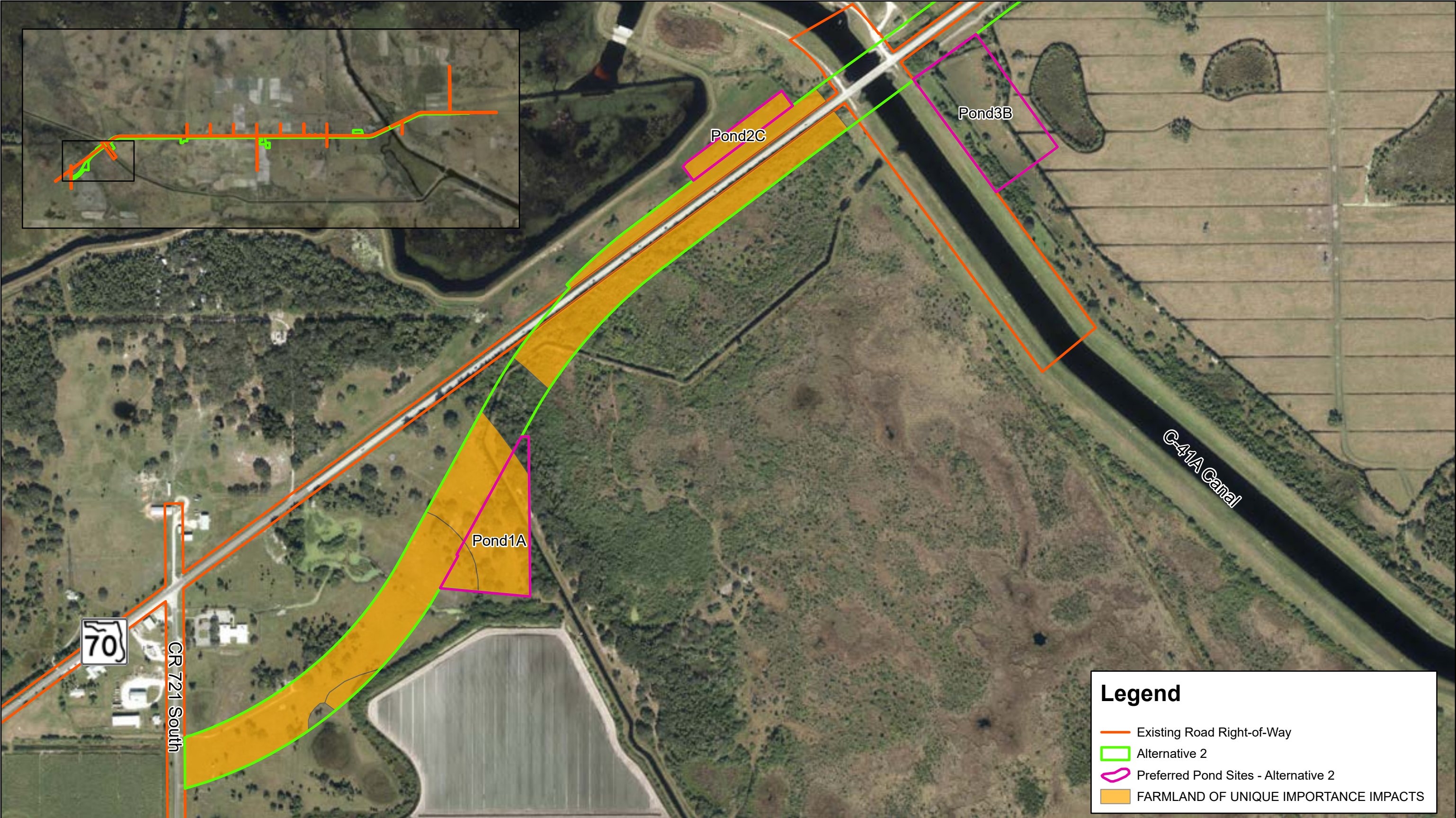


Farmlands Impact by Alternative 1 and Ponds Map
Sheet 6 of 6

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: NRCS
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023





Legend

Existing Road Right-of-Way

Alternative 2

Preferred Pond Sites - Alternative 2

FARMLAND OF UNIQUE IMPORTANCE IMPACTS

Farmlands Impact by Alternative 2 and Ponds Map
Sheet 1 of 6
FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

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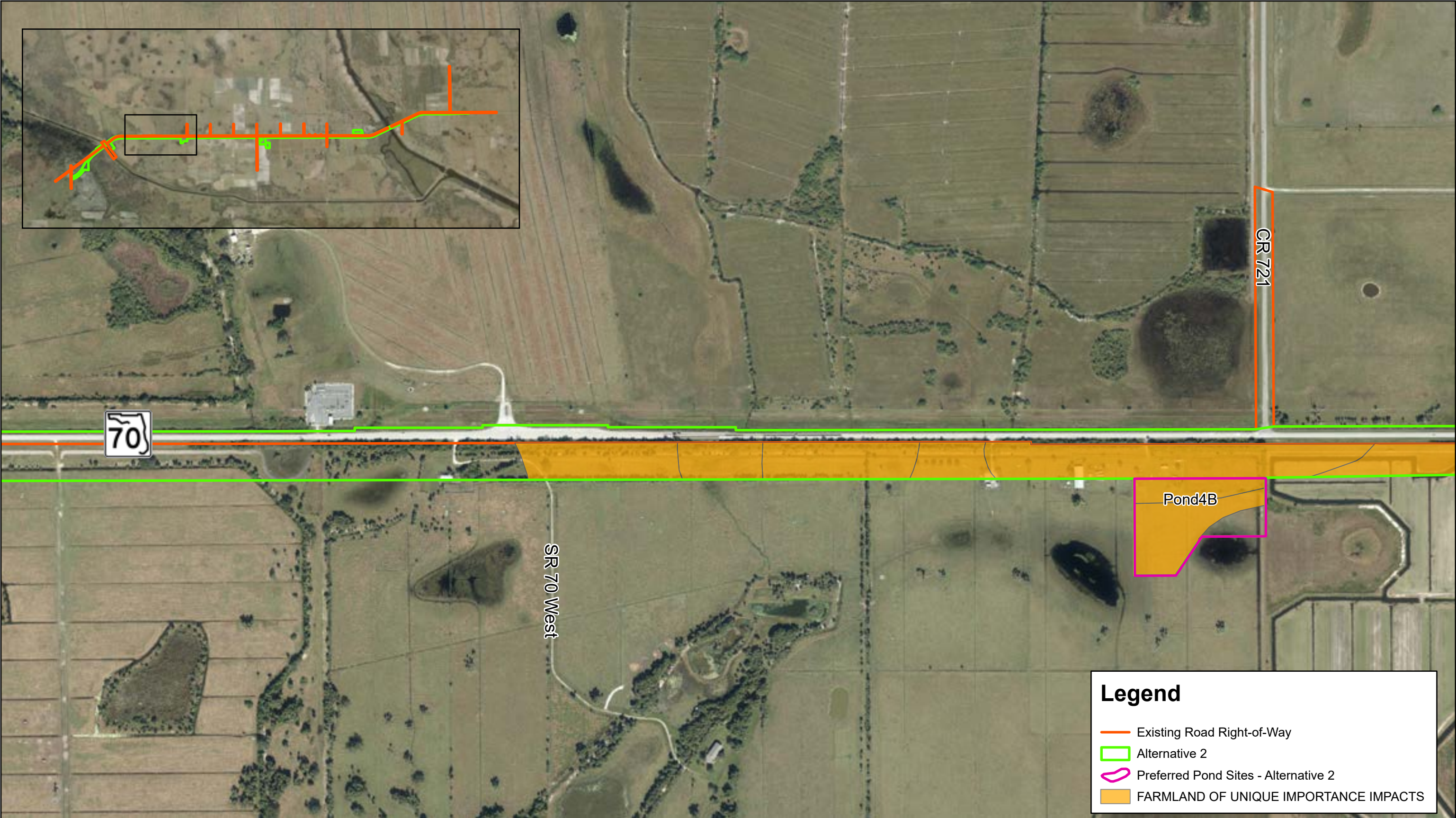
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Type 2 Categorical Exclusion

Page 67 of 316



Legend

Existing Road Right-of-Way

Alternative 2

Preferred Pond Sites - Alternative 2

FARMLAND OF UNIQUE IMPORTANCE IMPACTS



Farmlands Impact by Alternative 2 and Ponds Map
Sheet 2 of 6

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
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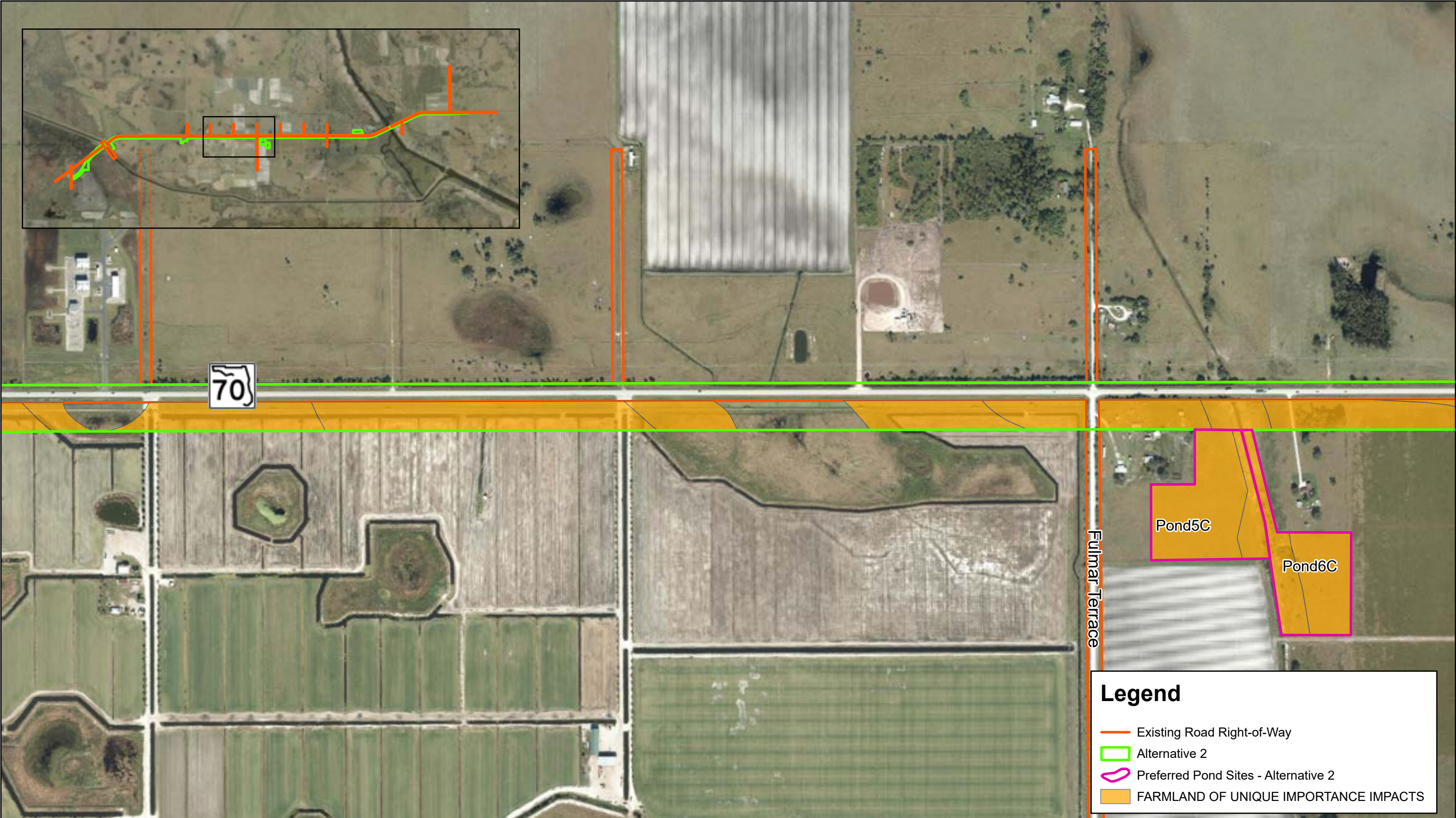
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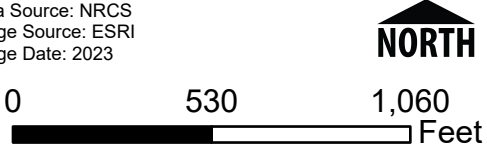
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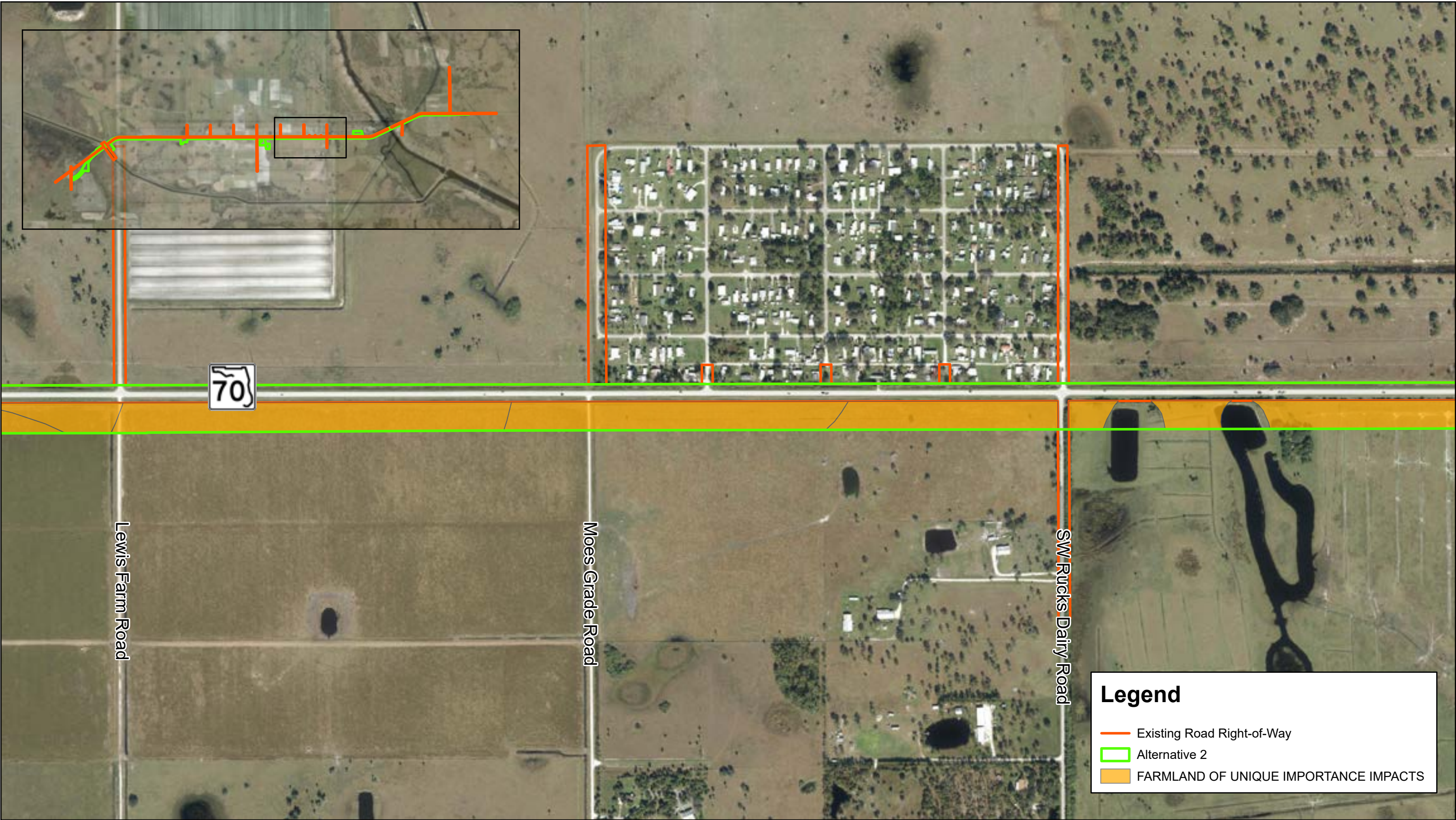


**Farmlands Impact by Alternative 2 and Ponds Map
Sheet 3 of 6**

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
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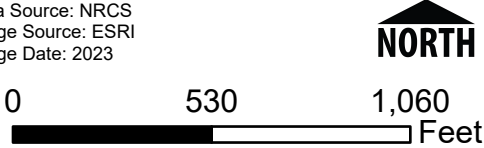


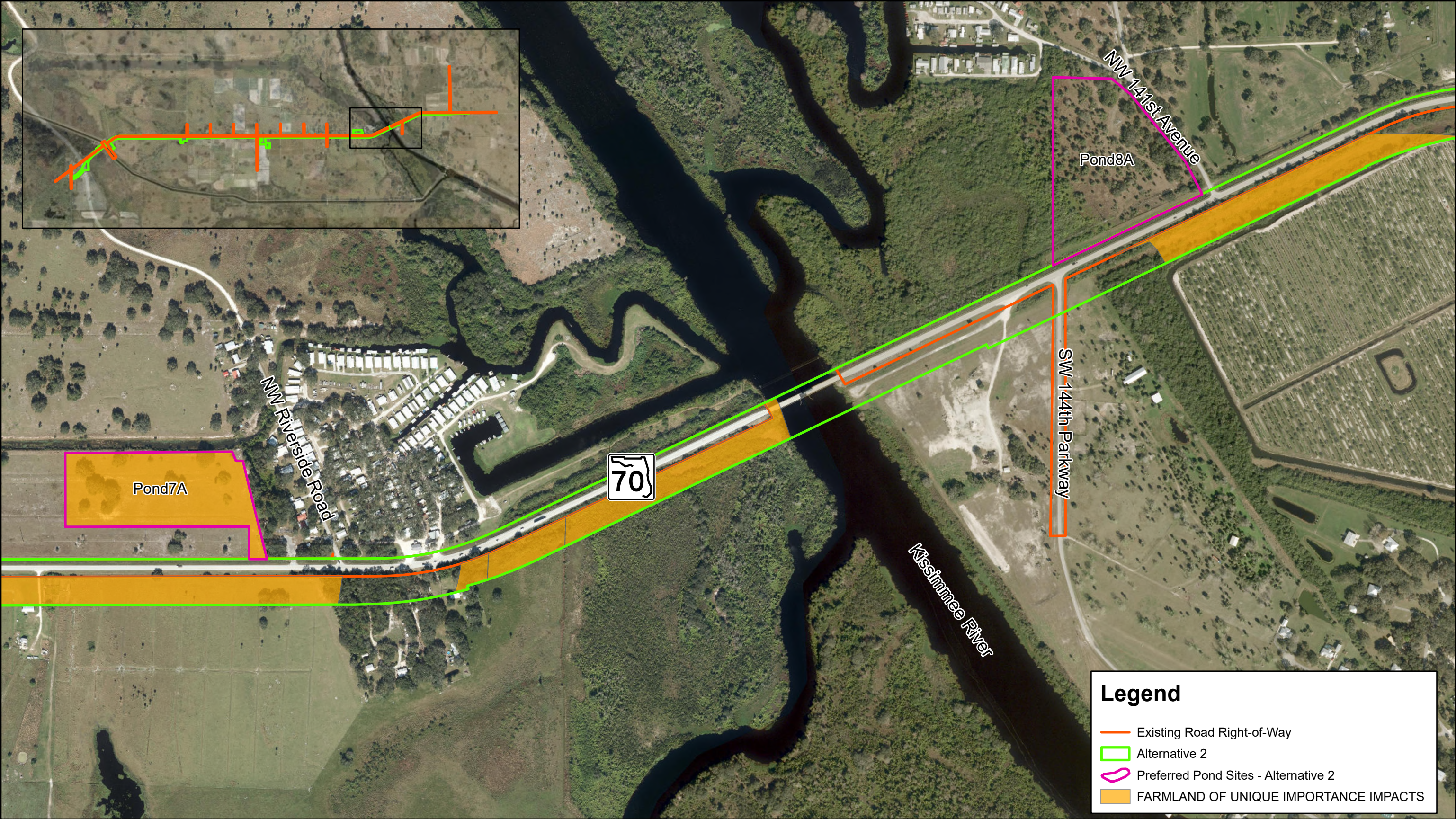


Farmlands Impact by Alternative 2 and Ponds Map
Sheet 4 of 6

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
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Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

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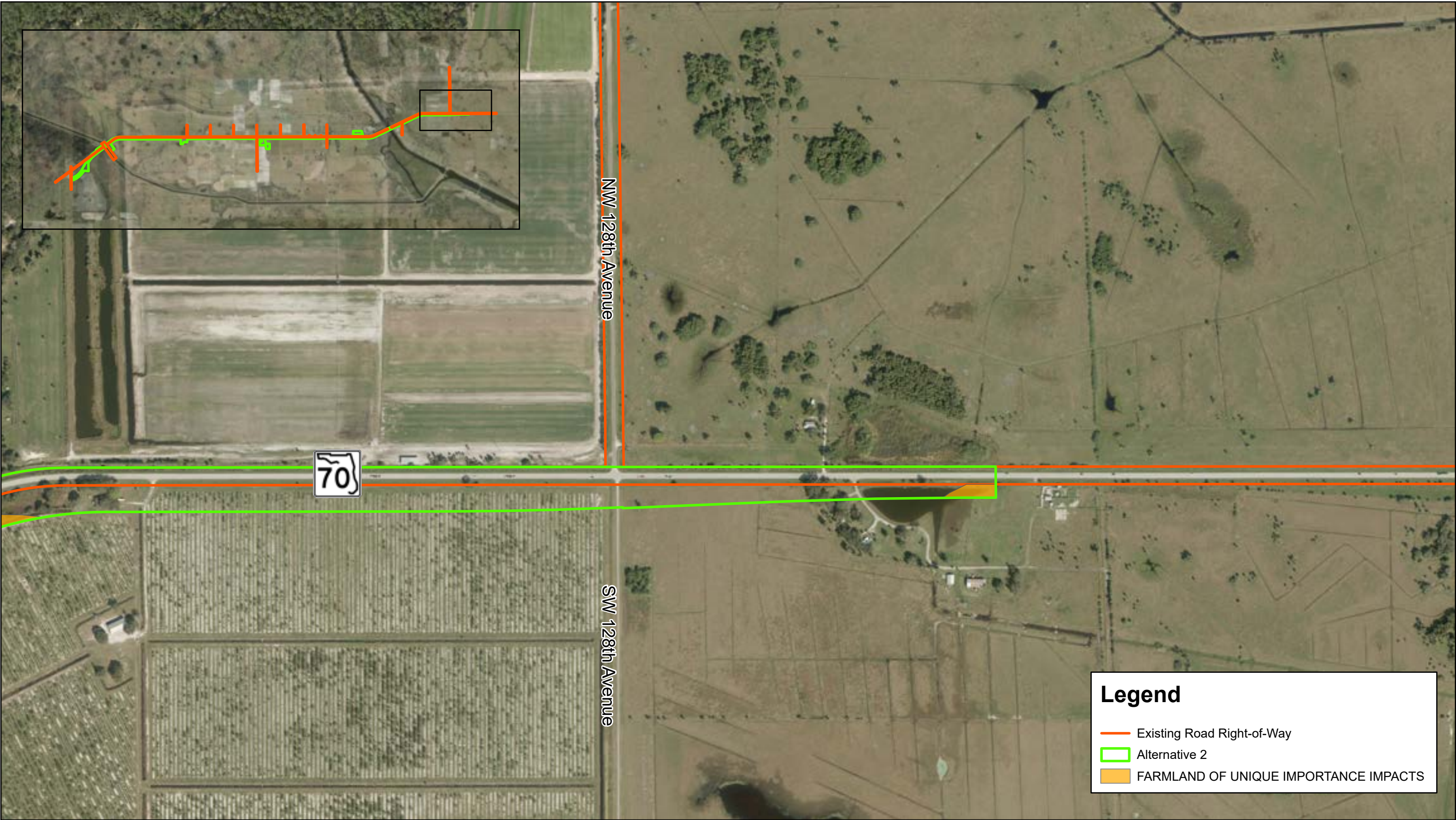
Farmlands Impact by Alternative 2 and Ponds Map
Sheet 5 of 6

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: NRCS
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023



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Farmlands Impact by Alternative 2 and Ponds Map
Sheet 6 of 6

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: NRCS
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Natural Resources Conservation Service

NRCS-CPA-106

(Rev. 1-91)

**FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING
FOR CORRIDOR TYPE PROJECTS**

PART I (To be completed by Federal Agency)		3. Date of Land Evaluation Request 9/29/25	4. Sheet 1 of 1
1. Name of Project SR 70 from CR 721S to CR 599/SW 128th Ave.		5. Federal Agency Involved FDOT District One	
2. Type of Project PD&E Study (FPID 450334-1)		6. County and State Okeechobee County, Florida	
PART II (To be completed by NRCS)		1. Date Request Received by NRCS 10/8/25	2. Person Completing Form Josue Aceituno
3. Does the corridor contain prime, unique statewide or local important farmland? (If no, the FPPA does not apply - Do not complete additional parts of this form). YES ☐ NO ☐		4. Acres Irrigated 22,329	Average Farm Size 608
5. Major Crop(s) Forage	6. Farmable Land in Government Jurisdiction Acres: 69,013 % 13.93	7. Amount of Farmland As Defined in FPPA Acres: 16,119 % .03	
8. Name Of Land Evaluation System Used None	9. Name of Local Site Assessment System Soil Potential Rating	10. Date Land Evaluation Returned by NRCS 11/24/25	

PART III (To be completed by Federal Agency)**Alternative Corridor For Segment**

	Corridor A	Corridor B	Corridor C	Corridor D
A. Total Acres To Be Converted Directly	5.9	10.1		
B. Total Acres To Be Converted Indirectly, Or To Receive Services	0	0		
C. Total Acres In Corridor	68.1	65.6		

PART IV (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Information

A. Total Acres Prime And Unique Farmland	9.8	10.1		
B. Total Acres Statewide And Local Important Farmland	0	0		
C. Percentage Of Farmland in County Or Local Govt. Unit To Be Converted	0.01	0.01		
D. Percentage Of Farmland in Govt. Jurisdiction With Same Or Higher Relative Value	61.00	61.00		

PART V (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Information Criterion Relative value of Farmland to Be Serviced or Converted (Scale of 0 - 100 Points)

	53.90	53.90		
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PART VI (To be completed by Federal Agency) Corridor Assessment Criteria (These criteria are explained in 7 CFR 658.5(c))

	Maximum Points			
1. Area in Nonurban Use	15	15	15	
2. Perimeter in Nonurban Use	10	10	10	
3. Percent Of Corridor Being Farmed	20	0	0	
4. Protection Provided By State And Local Government	20	0	0	
5. Size of Present Farm Unit Compared To Average	10	10	10	
6. Creation Of Nonfarmable Farmland	25	0	0	
7. Availability Of Farm Support Services	5	4	4	
8. On-Farm Investments	20	20	20	
9. Effects Of Conversion On Farm Support Services	25	0	0	
10. Compatibility With Existing Agricultural Use	10	0	0	
TOTAL CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT POINTS	160	59	59	

PART VII (To be completed by Federal Agency)

Relative Value Of Farmland (From Part V)	100	53.9	53.9	
Total Corridor Assessment (From Part VI above or a local site assessment)	160	59	59	
TOTAL POINTS (Total of above 2 lines)	260	112.9	112.9	

1. Corridor Selected: Corridor A	2. Total Acres of Farmlands to be Converted by Project: 9.8 (prime farmland)	3. Date Of Selection: 8/11/25	4. Was A Local Site Assessment Used? YES ☐ NO ☒
--	--	---	---

5. Reason For Selection:

Corridor A (Alternative 1) provides better access management at Kissimmee River Estates, fewer residential relocations, fewer impacts to noise sensitive sites, fewer utility impacts, and less impact to the Kissimmee River Public Use Area.



1/22/2026

Signature of Person Completing this Part:

DATE

NOTE: Complete a form for each segment with more than one Alternate Corridor

CORRIDOR - TYPE SITE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The following criteria are to be used for projects that have a linear or corridor - type site configuration connecting two distant points, and crossing several different tracts of land. These include utility lines, highways, railroads, stream improvements, and flood control systems. Federal agencies are to assess the suitability of each corridor - type site or design alternative for protection as farmland along with the land evaluation information.

- (1) How much land is in nonurban use within a radius of 1.0 mile from where the project is intended?

More than 90 percent - 15 points
 90 to 20 percent - 14 to 1 point(s)
 Less than 20 percent - 0 points

- (2) How much of the perimeter of the site borders on land in nonurban use?

More than 90 percent - 10 points
 90 to 20 percent - 9 to 1 point(s)
 Less than 20 percent - 0 points

- (3) How much of the site has been farmed (managed for a scheduled harvest or timber activity) more than five of the last 10 years?

More than 90 percent - 20 points
 90 to 20 percent - 19 to 1 point(s)
 Less than 20 percent - 0 points

- (4) Is the site subject to state or unit of local government policies or programs to protect farmland or covered by private programs to protect farmland?

Site is protected - 20 points
 Site is not protected - 0 points

- (5) Is the farm unit(s) containing the site (before the project) as large as the average - size farming unit in the County ?

(Average farm sizes in each county are available from the NRCS field offices in each state. Data are from the latest available Census of Agriculture, Acreage or Farm Units in Operation with \$1,000 or more in sales.)
 As large or larger - 10 points
 Below average - deduct 1 point for each 5 percent below the average, down to 0 points if 50 percent or more below average - 9 to 0 points

- (6) If the site is chosen for the project, how much of the remaining land on the farm will become non-farmable because of interference with land patterns?

Acreage equal to more than 25 percent of acres directly converted by the project - 25 points
 Acreage equal to between 25 and 5 percent of the acres directly converted by the project - 1 to 24 point(s)
 Acreage equal to less than 5 percent of the acres directly converted by the project - 0 points

- (7) Does the site have available adequate supply of farm support services and markets, i.e., farm suppliers, equipment dealers, processing and storage facilities and farmer's markets?

All required services are available - 5 points
 Some required services are available - 4 to 1 point(s)
 No required services are available - 0 points

- (8) Does the site have substantial and well-maintained on-farm investments such as barns, other storage building, fruit trees and vines, field terraces, drainage, irrigation, waterways, or other soil and water conservation measures?

High amount of on-farm investment - 20 points
 Moderate amount of on-farm investment - 19 to 1 point(s)
 No on-farm investment - 0 points

- (9) Would the project at this site, by converting farmland to nonagricultural use, reduce the demand for farm support services so as to jeopardize the continued existence of these support services and thus, the viability of the farms remaining in the area?

Substantial reduction in demand for support services if the site is converted - 25 points
 Some reduction in demand for support services if the site is converted - 1 to 24 point(s)
 No significant reduction in demand for support services if the site is converted - 0 points

- (10) Is the kind and intensity of the proposed use of the site sufficiently incompatible with agriculture that it is likely to contribute to the eventual conversion of surrounding farmland to nonagricultural use?

Proposed project is incompatible to existing agricultural use of surrounding farmland - 10 points
 Proposed project is tolerable to existing agricultural use of surrounding farmland - 9 to 1 point(s)
 Proposed project is fully compatible with existing agricultural use of surrounding farmland - 0 points



Farmlands Map
FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: NRCS
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023

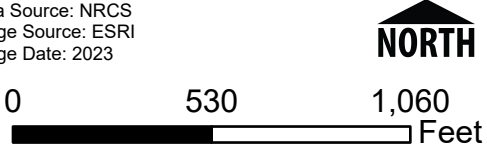


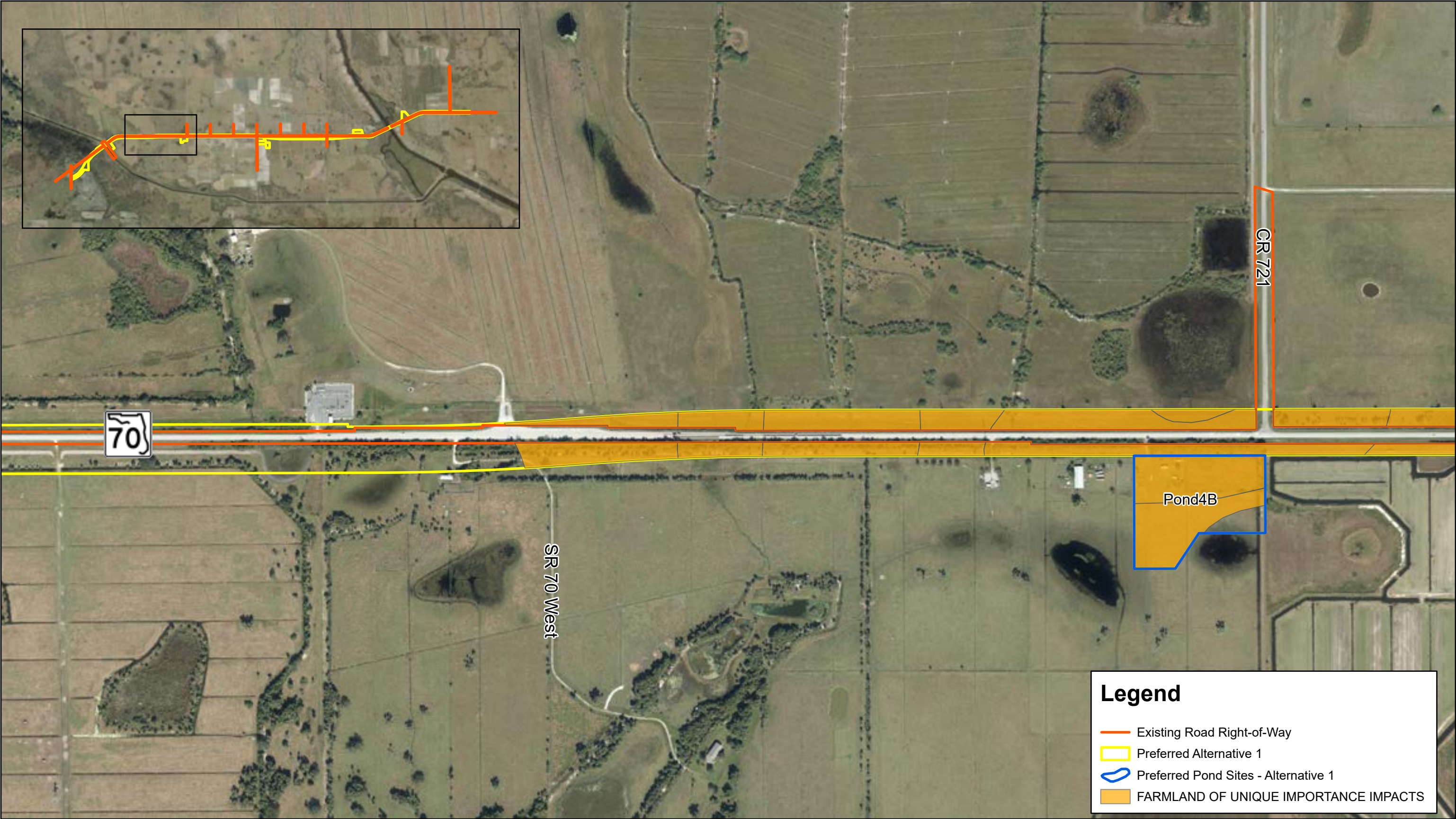


Farmlands Impact by Alternative 1 and Ponds Map
Sheet 1 of 6

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: NRCS
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023





Legend

Existing Road Right-of-Way

Preferred Alternative 1

Preferred Pond Sites - Alternative 1

FARMLAND OF UNIQUE IMPORTANCE IMPACTS



Farmlands Impact by Alternative 1 and Ponds Map
Sheet 2 of 6

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

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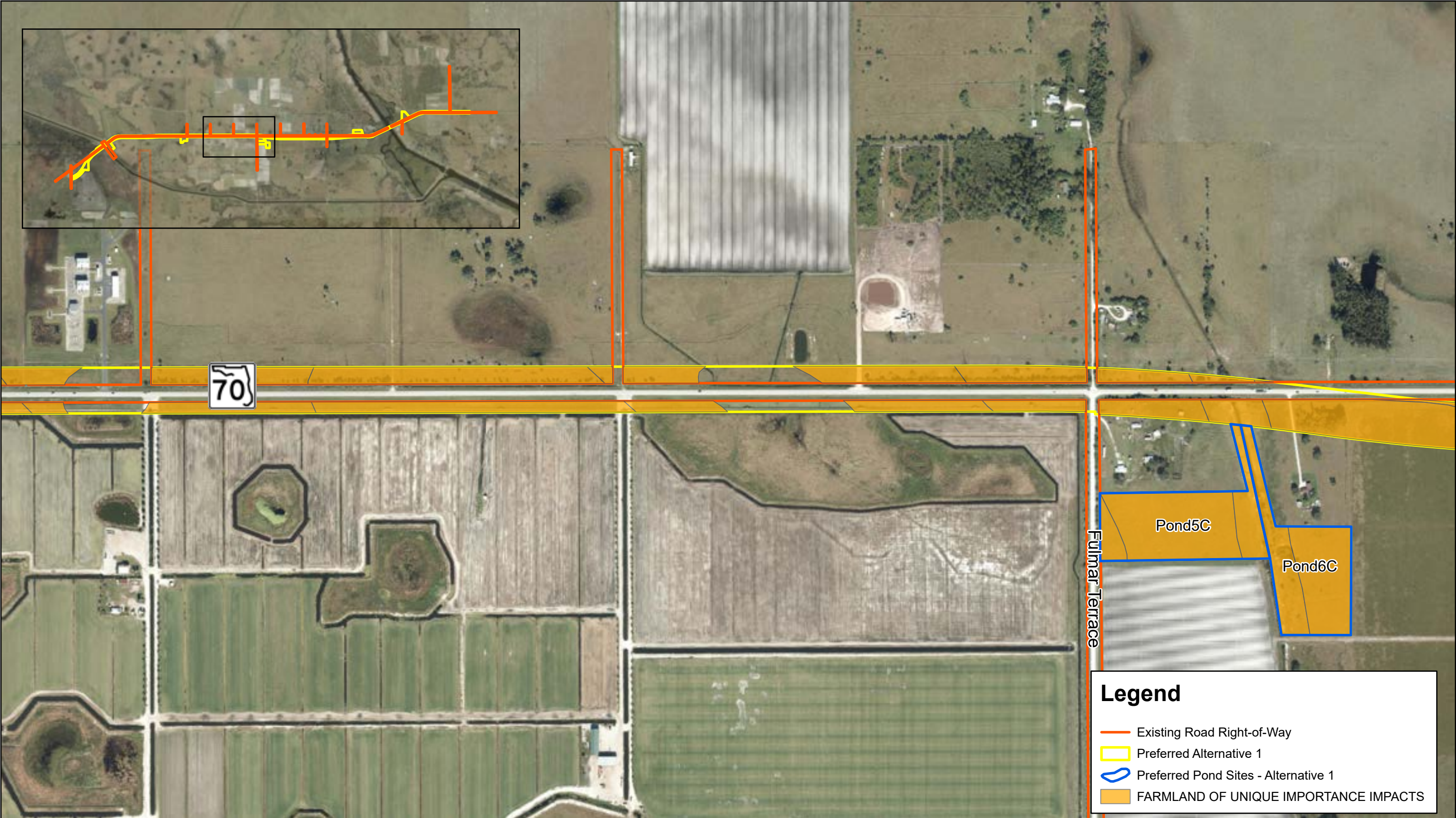
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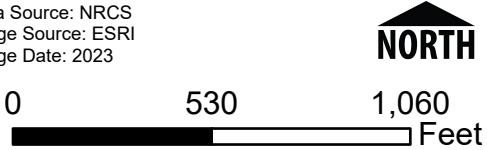
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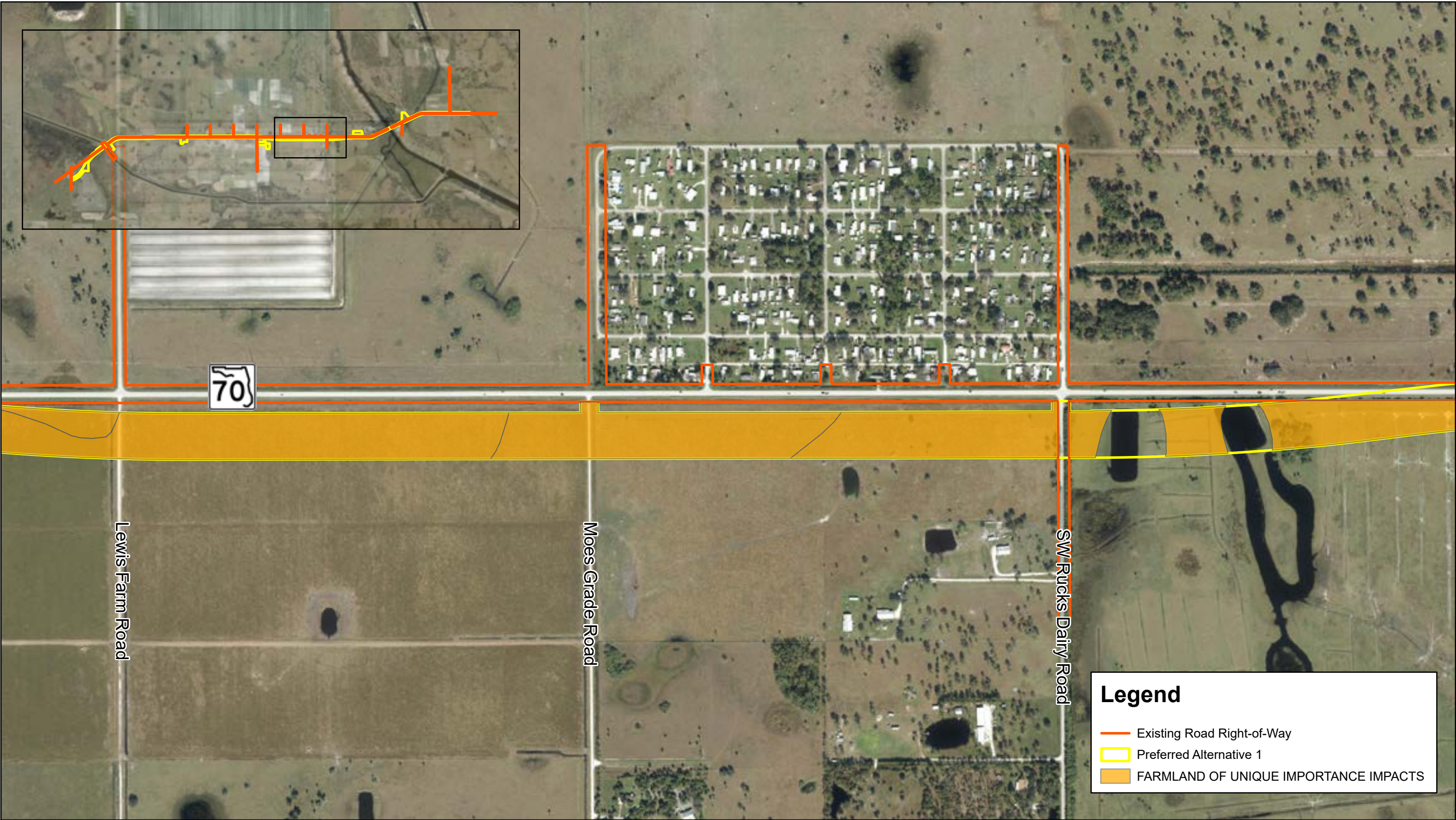


Farmlands Impact by Alternative 1 and Ponds Map
Sheet 3 of 6

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

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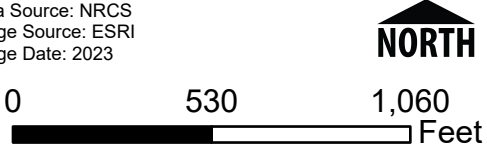




Farmlands Impact by Alternative 1 and Ponds Map
Sheet 4 of 6

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: NRCS
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023





Legend

- Existing Road Right-of-Way
- Preferred Alternative 1
- Preferred Pond Sites - Alternative 1
- FARMLAND OF UNIQUE IMPORTANCE IMPACTS



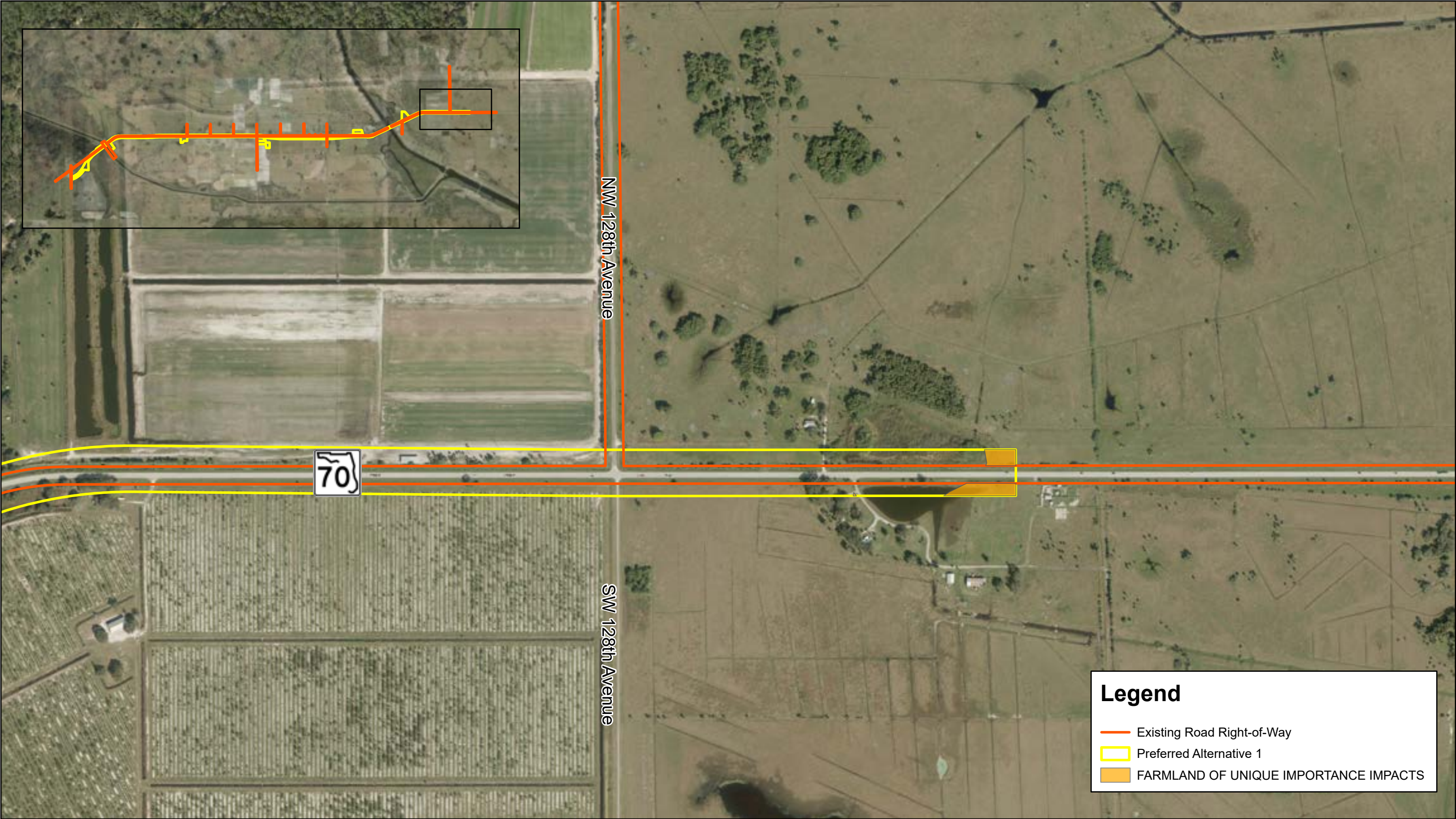
Farmlands Impact by Alternative 1 and Ponds Map
Sheet 5 of 6

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: NRCS
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023

NORTH

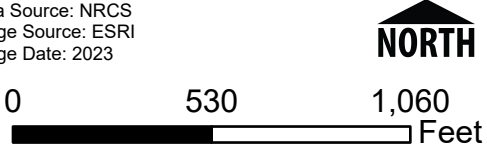
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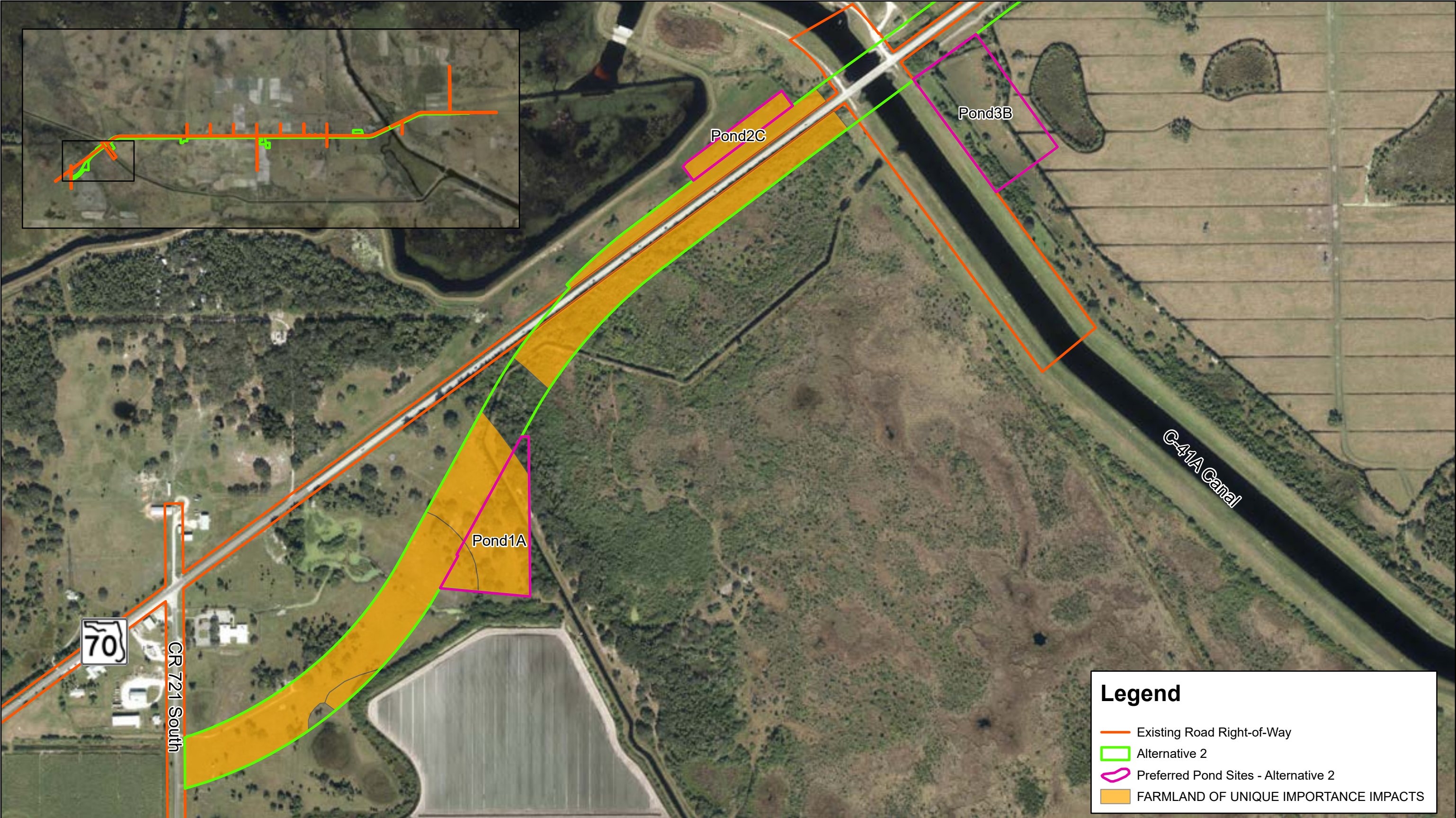


Farmlands Impact by Alternative 1 and Ponds Map
Sheet 6 of 6

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: NRCS
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023





Legend

Existing Road Right-of-Way

Alternative 2

Preferred Pond Sites - Alternative 2

FARMLAND OF UNIQUE IMPORTANCE IMPACTS

Farmlands Impact by Alternative 2 and Ponds Map
Sheet 1 of 6
FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: NRCS
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023

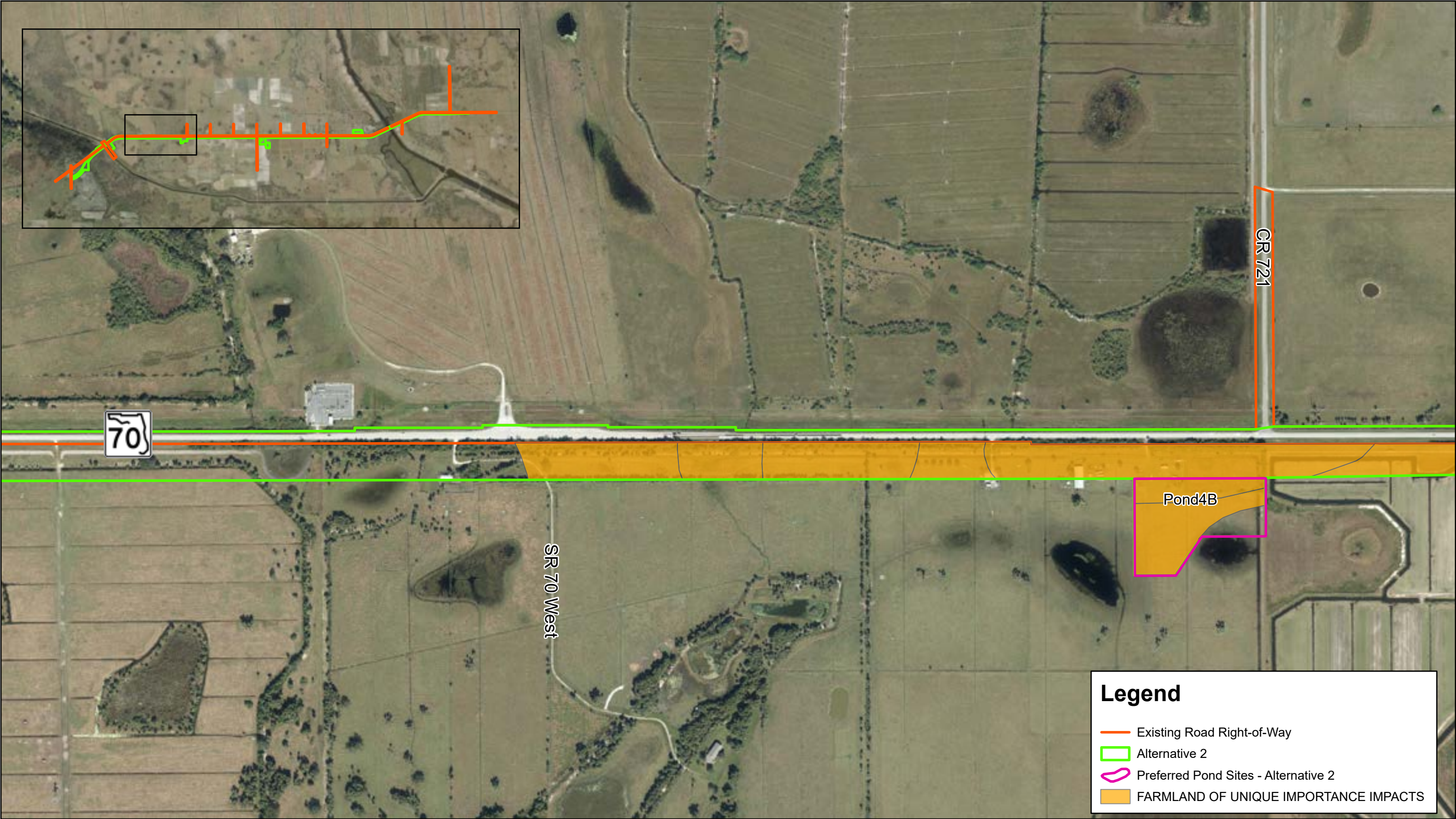
NORTH

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Feet

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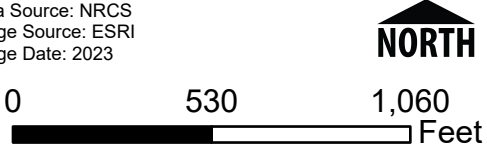
Page 82 of 316

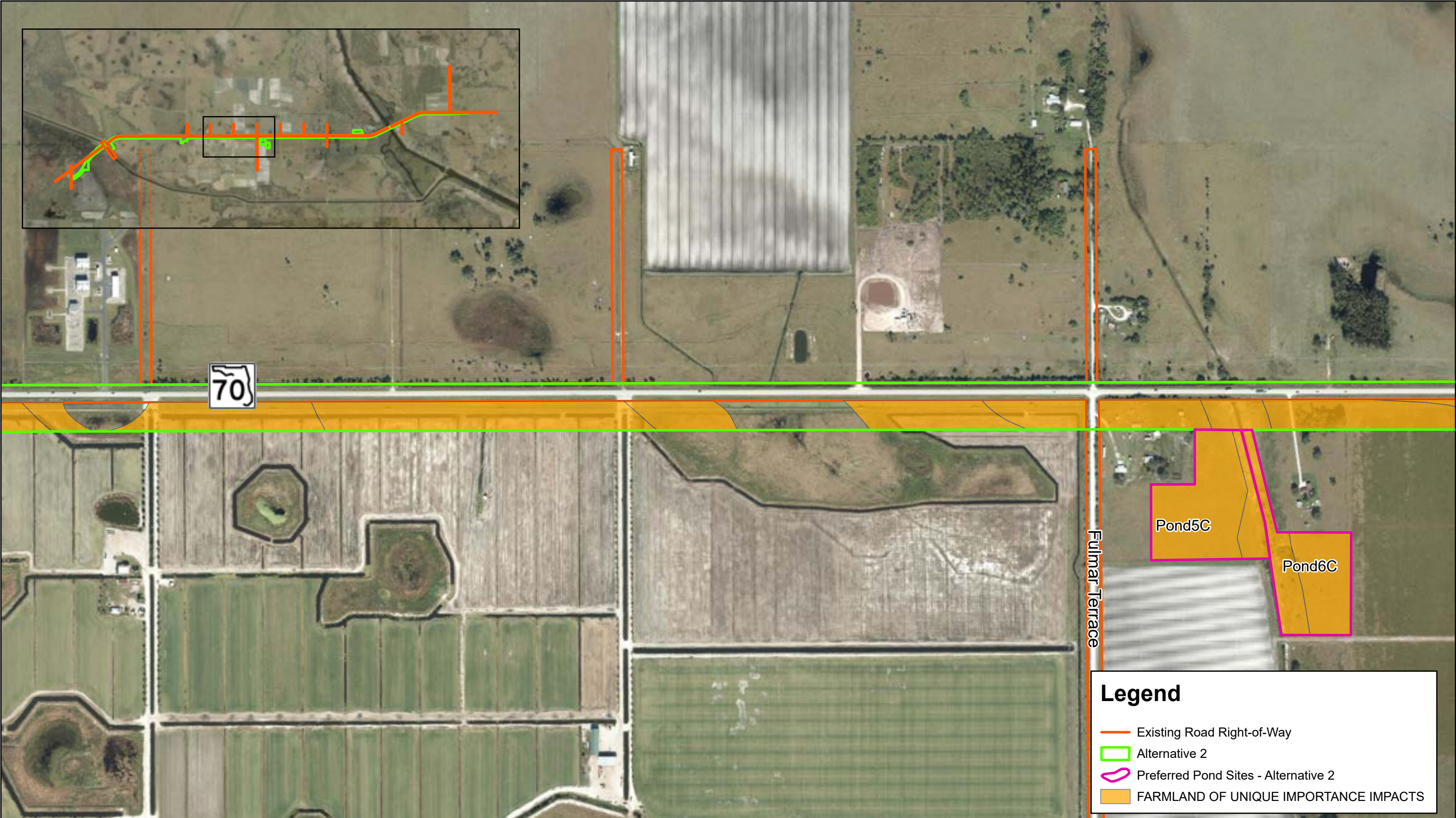


Farmlands Impact by Alternative 2 and Ponds Map
Sheet 2 of 6

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: NRCS
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023





Legend

- Existing Road Right-of-Way
- Alternative 2
- Preferred Pond Sites - Alternative 2
- FARMLAND OF UNIQUE IMPORTANCE IMPACTS



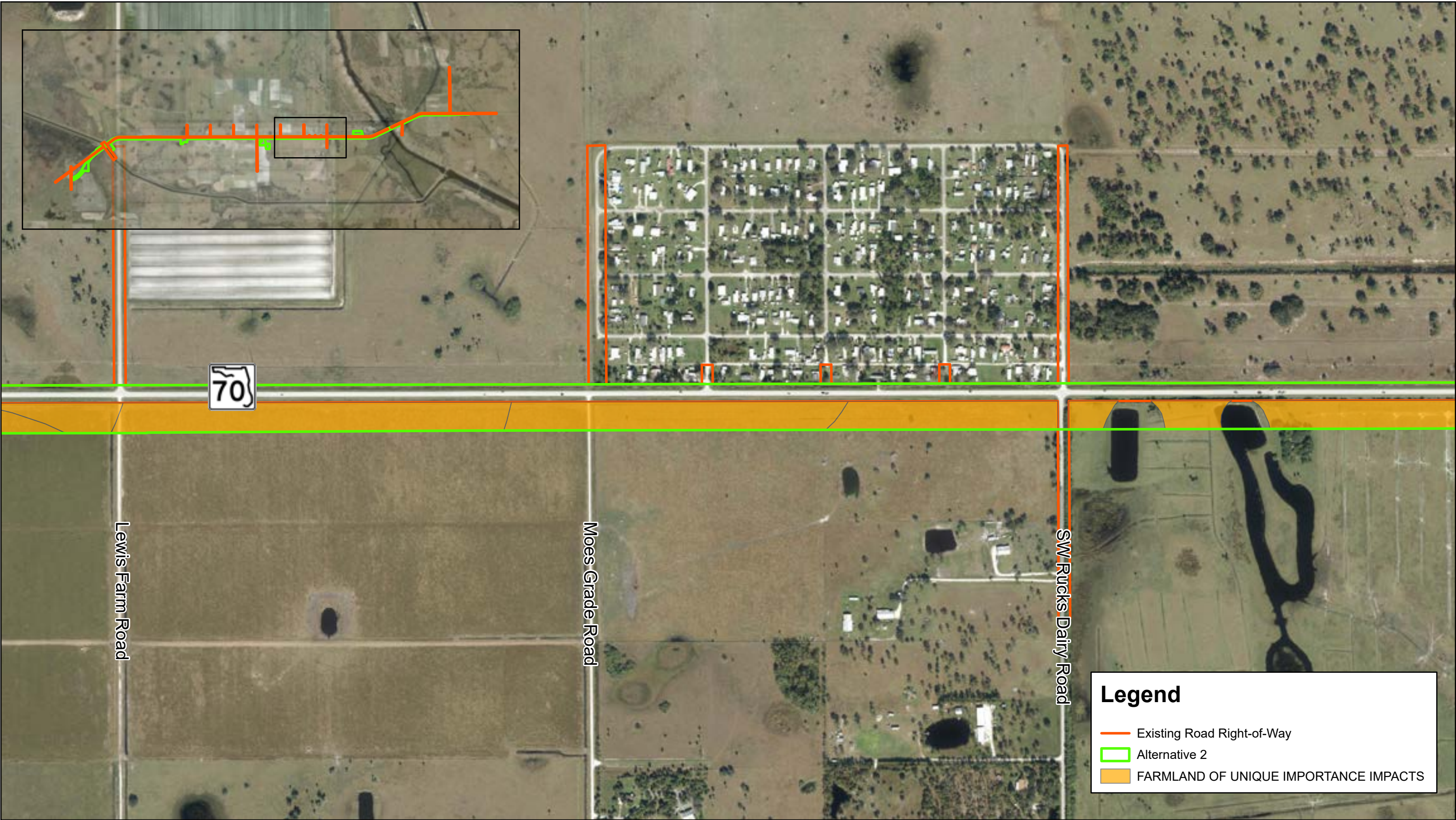
**Farmlands Impact by Alternative 2 and Ponds Map
Sheet 3 of 6**

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: NRCS
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023

NORTH

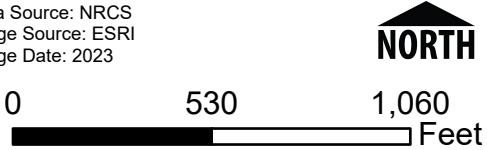
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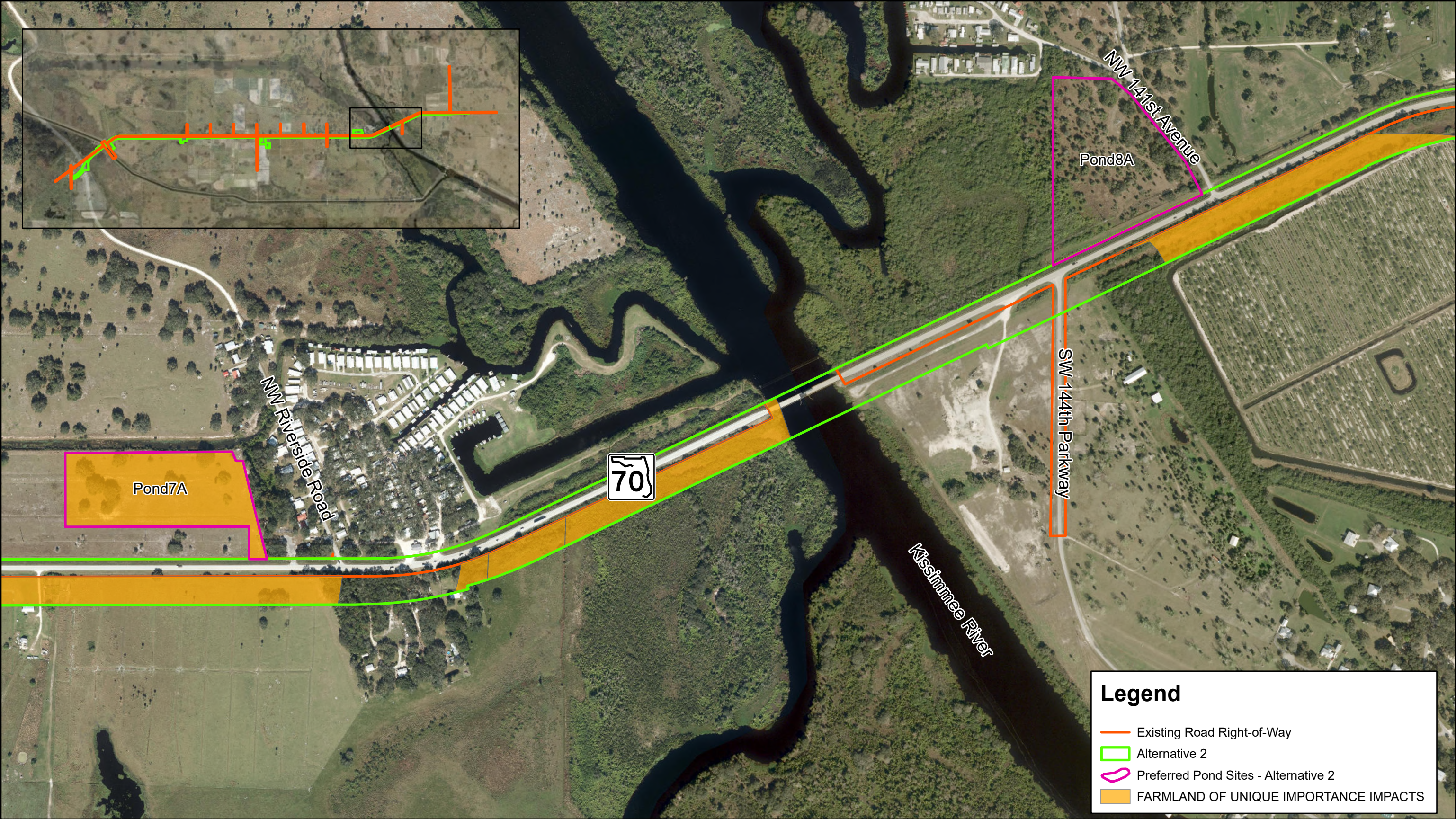


Farmlands Impact by Alternative 2 and Ponds Map
Sheet 4 of 6

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: NRCS
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023





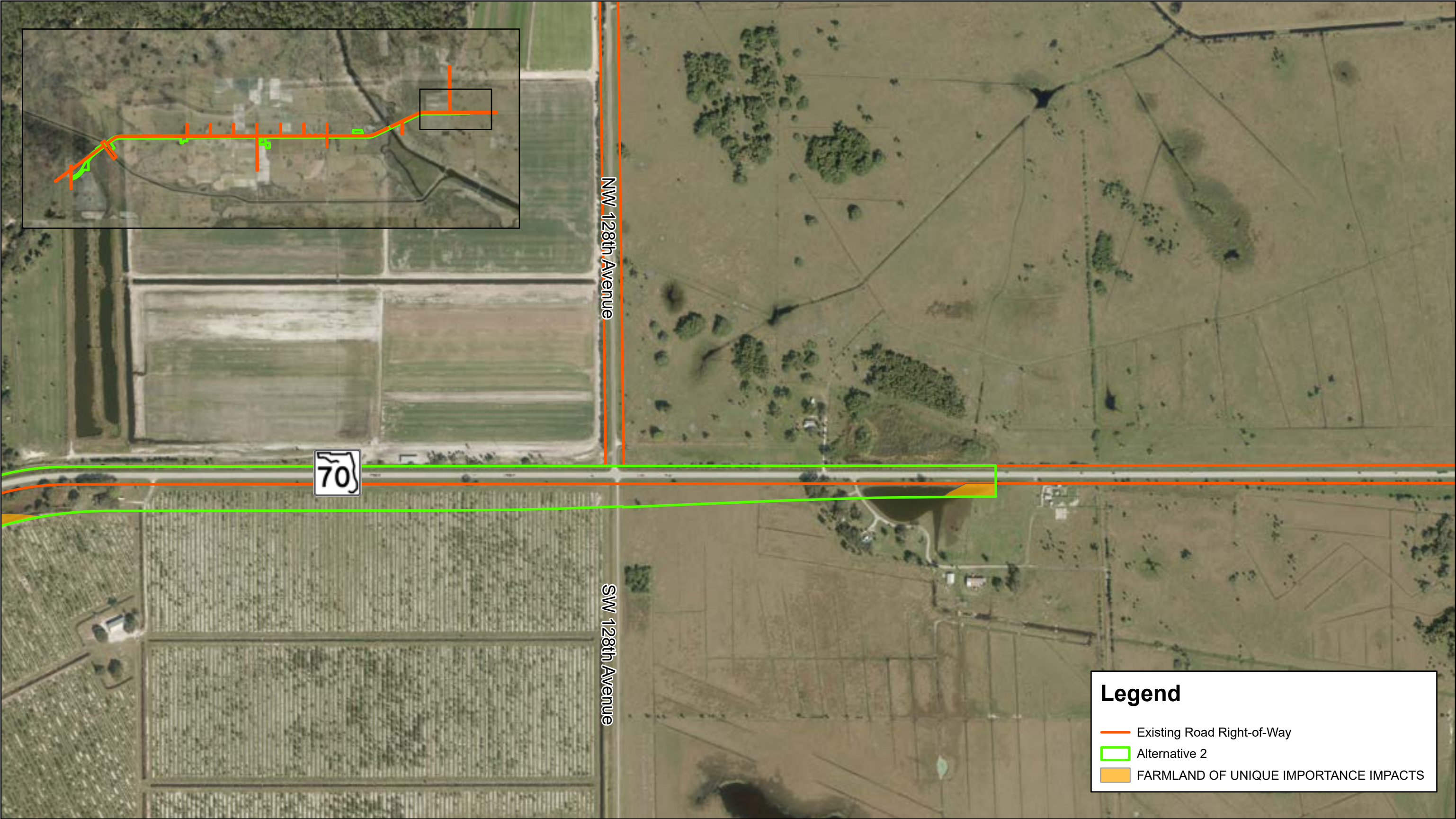
Farmlands Impact by Alternative 2 and Ponds Map
Sheet 5 of 6

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: NRCS
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023



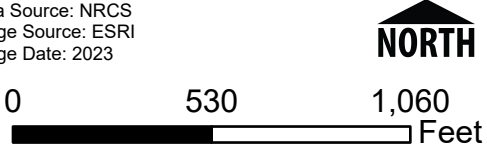
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Feet



Farmlands Impact by Alternative 2 and Ponds Map
Sheet 6 of 6

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: NRCS
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023



From: [Cothorn, Kathern](#)
To: [AceitunoDiaz, Josue - FPAC-NRCS, FL](#)
Cc: [Giuliani, Isabelle - FPAC-NRCS, FL](#); [Joyner, Melody](#); [Feagle, Autumn "Brooke"](#); [Kristin Caruso](#); [Aniruddha Gotmare](#)
Subject: RE: Final Documents for NRCS - CPA-106 Review for FPID 450334-1 SR 70 from CR 721 S to CR 599/128th Ave
Date: Tuesday, January 27, 2026 6:12:44 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[450334-1 NRCS-CPA-106NRCS-CPA-106 - Okeechobee signed.pdf](#)
[450334-1 NRCS-CPA-106NRCS-CPA-106 - Highlands signed.pdf](#)
Importance: High

Good afternoon,

Attached please find the final signed forms for your records for FDOT Project 450334-1, SR 70 from CR 721 S to CR 599/128th Avenue, located in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties. We appreciate your review of this project and consideration. Please advise if any additional information is required.

Respectfully,

Kathern Cothorn

Project Manager IV

Corridors Program Office – D1

801 North Broadway Ave., MS 1-41

Bartow, Florida 33830

☎ (863) 519-2331

✉ Kathern.cothorn@dot.state.fl.us



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Infrastructure Initiative

[Moving Florida Forward \(fdot.gov\)](http://movingfloridaforward.com)

www.fdot.gov

From: AceitunoDiaz, Josue - FPAC-NRCS, FL <Josue.AceitunoDiaz@usda.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, January 20, 2026 3:31 PM
To: Cothorn, Kathern <Kathern.Cothorn@dot.state.fl.us>
Cc: Giuliani, Isabelle - FPAC-NRCS, FL <isabelle.giuliani@usda.gov>; Joyner, Melody <Melody.Joyner@dot.state.fl.us>; Feagle, Autumn "Brooke" <Brooke.Feagle@dot.state.fl.us>
Subject: RE: Comments from NRCS - CPA-106 Review for FPID 450334-1 SR 70 from CR 721 S to CR 599/128th Ave

Hello Kathern,

I'm sorry for the confusion my inquiry to update forms may have caused.

Our part on this review is completed. I was inquiring for an update of the total acres to be converted directly section of the forms. Because I had to divide the project by county. But this does not affect our calculations for our review, thus with the "total acres to be converted directly" updated, the forms are now finalized and NRCS part for this review is completed.

If you have any more questions feel free to reach out,

Thanks

Josué Aceituno-Díaz

Resources Soil Scientist
Soils Division|Southeast Region
Bartow Field Office



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Natural Resources Conservation Service
1700 Highway 17 South, Suite #2, Bartow, FL 33830
O: (863) 800-9082
M: (863) 464-3969

From: Cothern, Kathern <Kathern.Cothern@dot.state.fl.us>

Sent: Tuesday, January 20, 2026 3:09 PM

To: AceitunoDiaz, Josue - FPAC-NRCS, FL <Josue.AceitunoDiaz@usda.gov>

Cc: Giuliani, Isabelle - FPAC-NRCS, FL <isabelle.giuliani@usda.gov>; Joyner, Melody
<Melody.Joyner@dot.state.fl.us>; Feagle, Autumn "Brooke" <Brooke.Feagle@dot.state.fl.us>

Subject: FW: Comments from NRCS - CPA-106 Review for FPID 450334-1 SR 70 from CR 721 S to CR 599/128th Ave

Importance: High

Good afternoon Josue,

I am writing to follow up on the referenced request and to respectfully inquire whether your office has had an opportunity to complete its review and provide comments. Thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter

Sincerely,
Kathern Cothern
Project Manager IV
Corridors Program Office – D1
801 North Broadway Ave., MS 1-41
Bartow, Florida 33830
☎ (863) 519-2331
✉ Kathern.cothern@dot.state.fl.us



From: Cothern, Kathern <Kathern.Cothern@dot.state.fl.us>
Sent: Tuesday, November 25, 2025 1:40 PM
To: AceitunoDiaz, Josue - FPAC-NRCS, FL <josue.aceitunodiaz@usda.gov>
Cc: Giuliani, Isabelle - FPAC-NRCS, FL <isabelle.giuliani@usda.gov>; Joyner, Melody <Melody.Joyner@dot.state.fl.us>; Feagle, Autumn "Brooke" <Brooke.Feagle@dot.state.fl.us>
Subject: FW: Comments from NRCS - CPA-106 Review for FPID 450334-1 SR 70 from CR 721 S to CR 599/128th Ave
Importance: High

Please see the updated forms for FDOT Project 450334-1, SR 70 from CR 721 S to CR 599/128th Ave, lying in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties. Part III was updated

Let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
Kathern Cothern on behalf of Melody Joyner
Project Manager IV
Corridors Program Office – D1
801 North Broadway Ave., MS 1-41
Bartow, Florida 33830
☎ (863) 519-2331
✉ Kathern.cothern@dot.state.fl.us

From: AceitunoDiaz, Josue - FPAC-NRCS, FL <Josue.AceitunoDiaz@usda.gov>
Sent: Monday, November 24, 2025 10:55:17 AM
To: Joyner, Melody <Melody.Joyner@dot.state.fl.us>
Cc: Giuliani, Isabelle - FPAC-NRCS, FL <isabelle.giuliani@usda.gov>
Subject: FW: [External Email]CPA-106 Review for FPID 450334-1 SR 70 from CR 721 S to CR 599/128th Ave

EXTERNAL SENDER: Use caution with links and attachments.

Good Morning,

This is Josue Aceituno Resources Soil Scientist for NRCS. Please see attached to the email the

NRCS Farmland Conversion Impact Rating with NRCS portion completed based on the information provided.

Unfortunately our assessments are completed by county, thus we had to separate the forms by affected Farmland per county. We would need an update of the total acres to be converted directly section of each form per county for our records. We would greatly appreciate an update on this section as soon as possible.

If you have any questions please reach out,

Best regards,

Josué Aceituno-Díaz

Resources Soil Scientist
Soils Division|Southeast Region
Bartow Field Office



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Natural Resources Conservation Service
1700 Highway 17 South, Suite #2, Bartow, FL 33830
O: (863) 800-9082
M: (863) 464-3969

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Cultural Resources Appendix

Contents:

ACHP Statement of No Involvement

SHPO Concurrence on CRAS for Kissimmee River Bridge

SHPO Concurrence on Section 106 Case Study for Kissimmee River Bridge

Final Signed MOA

SHPO Concurrence on CRAS for Mainline

Section 106 Significant Resource Map

SHPO Concurrence on CRAS Addendum

Section 4(f) Report



December 2, 2025

Katasha Gruver
Director, Office of Environmental Management
Florida Department of Transportation
605 Suwannee Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Ref: *Bridge Replacement along SR- 70 from County Road CR-721 to CR-599/128th Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, Florida
ACHP Project Number: 023901*

Dear Ms. Gruver:

On December 2, 2025, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) received the additional documentation as requested regarding the potential adverse effects of the referenced undertaking on a property or properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Based upon the information provided, we have concluded that Appendix A, Criteria for Council Involvement in Reviewing Individual Section 106 Cases, of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and its implementing regulations, "Protection of Historic Properties" (36 CFR Part 800), does not apply to this undertaking. Accordingly, we do not believe our participation in the consultation to resolve adverse effects is needed.

However, if we receive a request for participation from the Florida State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), a THPO, a consulting party, or other party, we may reconsider this decision. Should the undertaking's circumstances change, consulting parties cannot come to consensus, or you need further advisory assistance to conclude the consultation process, please contact us.

Pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.6(b)(1)(iv), you will need to file the final Section 106 agreement document (Agreement), developed in consultation with the Florida SHPO and any other consulting parties, and related documentation with the ACHP at the conclusion of the consultation process. The filing of the Agreement and supporting documentation with the ACHP is required in order to complete the requirements of Section 106 of the NHPA.

Thank you for providing us with the additional information we requested regarding this notification of adverse effect. If you have any questions or require our further assistance, please contact Kasey Miller at (202) 517-6389 or by e-mail at kmiller@achp.gov and reference the ACHP Project Number above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kasey Miller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kasey" and last name "Miller" clearly distinguishable.

Kasey Miller
Program Analyst and FHWA Liaison
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Office of Federal Agency Programs



Florida Department of Transportation

RON DESANTIS
GOVERNOR

801 N. Broadway Avenue
Bartow, FL 33830

JARED W. PERDUE, P.E.
SECRETARY

July 9, 2024

Alissa S. Lotane
Director and State Historic Preservation Officer
Florida Division of Historical Resources
Florida Department of State
R.A. Gray Building
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

Attn: Ms. Alyssa McManus, Transportation Compliance Review Program

RE: Cultural Resource Assessment Survey
Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study
State Road (SR) 70 from County Road (CR) 721
South to CR 599/128th Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, Florida
SR 70 Over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336)
Financial Project No.: 450334-1-22-01

Dear Ms. Lotane,

Enclosed please find one copy of the report titled *Cultural Resource Assessment Survey Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study State Road (SR) 70 from County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue, Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, Florida; SR 70 Over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336)*. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District One is conducting a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study to address safety conditions on SR 70 from CR 721 S to CR 599/128th Avenue. The study is approximately 8.6-miles long and proposed improvements include the widening of a two-lane facility up to a four-lane, divided facility, and/or the inclusion of operational improvements along the corridor. Travel lane widths may be widened from 10 feet (ft) to 12 ft as part of the project and multimodal facilities will also be considered along the corridor where appropriate. Additional right-of-way (ROW) is expected to accommodate the proposed improvements.

All project alternatives proposed for the SR 70 improvements will involve the replacement of the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) which has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). In order to meet the established schedule for the PD&E deliverables, a discussion was held on July 25, 2023 with representatives from ACI, Scalar, and FDOT District One to develop an approach for cultural resource compliance on the SR 70 PD&E Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (CRAS). The approach would enable the Section 106 process to move forward with consultation to resolve the adverse effect on the NRHP-eligible SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) prior to completing the CRAS for the rest of the project (mainline road realignment, ponds, etc.). The intention is to get consultation to a point where a draft Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is acceptable to all parties involved but will remain in a draft state until completion of the mainline/ponds CRAS. The draft MOA will be updated as necessary

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Ms. Lotane, SHPO
FPID No.: 450334-1-22-01
July 9, 2024
Page 2

following the mainline CRAS. In August 2023 a Cultural Resource Coordinator for District One coordinated with the Office of Environmental Management (OEM) and subsequently, with the SHPO regarding this approach and in November 2023 all parties were in agreement. As such, this CRAS is limited to the bridge replacement portion of the PD&E and a full archaeological and historic resources survey of the corridor will be conducted following the identification of corridor alternatives and will be an addendum to this CRAS.

The purpose of this CRAS was to locate and identify any historic resources within the project area of potential effect (APE) at the bridge location and to assess their significance in terms of eligibility for listing in the NRHP. For the purpose of this survey, the historical/architectural APE was limited to the footprint of construction of the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge replacement. The fieldwork was conducted in January 2024.

This CRAS was conducted to comply with the requirements set forth in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, found in 36 CFR Part 800 (Protection of Historic Properties). The study also complies with Chapter 267 of the Florida Statutes and Rule Chapter 1A-46, Florida Administrative Code and Section 267.12, Florida Statutes, Chapter 1A-32. All work was performed in accordance with Part 2, Chapter 8 of FDOT's PD&E Manual (2023 revision), FDOT's Cultural Resources Management Handbook, and the standards stipulated in the Florida Division of Historical Resources' (FDHR) *Cultural Resource Management Standards & Operations Manual, Module Three: Guidelines for Use by Historic Preservation Professionals*. The Principal Investigator for this project meets the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation* (48 FR 44716-42). This study also complies with Public Law 113-287 (Title 54 U.S.C.), which incorporates the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and the Archeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974, as amended.

Historic background research, including a review of the Florida Master Site File (FMSF) and the NRHP databases, indicated that one historic bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) was previously recorded within the APE. Due to its location on the Okeechobee-Highlands County line, the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001) has been assigned a Highlands County FMSF number (8HG01236) and an Okeechobee County FMSF number (8OB00336). The SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001) is a seven span, concrete beam and girder bridge constructed in 1966 in order to carry SR 70 over the newly channelized Kissimmee River (C-38). The peak of the bridge is equipped with a steel, removable span which accommodates the passing of larger vessels while being more cost effective than a manned, operable span. The bridge (8OB00336/8HG01236) was determined eligible for listing in the NRHP by the SHPO in 2014 under Criterion C in the area of Engineering as an example of a removable span bridge.

The historical/architectural field survey resulted in the identification of two historic resources (8HG01236/8OB00336 and 8HG01650/8OB00489) within the APE. These include the previously recorded concrete beam and girder SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) and the newly identified Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489), constructed in 1966. The SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) has not been significantly altered and appears to remain eligible for individual listing in the NRHP under Criterion C. Although the channelization of the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8OB00489) is significant within the ecological and developmental history of south and central Florida, the majority of the linear resource is located outside of the APE, and a survey of the entire 69-mile-long channelized river is beyond the scope of this project. In addition, the linear resource has not been previously recorded elsewhere in Okeechobee or Highland Counties. As such, following the guidance

Ms. Lotane, SHPO
 FPID No.: 450334-1-22-01
 July 9, 2024
 Page 3

of the *Historic Linear Resource Guide* provided by the FDHR, there is insufficient information to evaluate the 102 ft segment of the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) that is contained within the APE (FDHR 2022). Based on the results of this study, it is the opinion of the District that the proposed undertaking will have an **adverse effect** on the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) and have **no adverse effect** on the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489).

I respectfully request your concurrence with the findings of the enclosed report.

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact me at (863) 519-2625 or Jeffrey.James@dot.state.fl.us.

Sincerely,

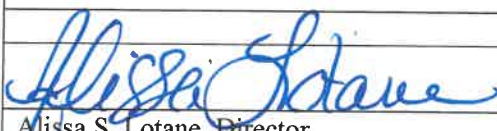
Jeffrey James
 Environmental Manager
 FDOT, District One

Enclosures: One original copy of the CRAS Report (June 2024), Four (4) FMSF forms, One Completed Survey Log, GIS Shapefiles

The Florida State Historic Preservation Officer finds the attached Cultural Resource 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 202402438. Or, the SHPO finds the attached document contains insufficient information.

In accordance with the *Programmatic Agreement Among the FHWA, the FDOT, the ACHP, and the SHPO Regarding Implementation of the Federal-Aid Highway Program in Florida* (2023 PA), and appended materials, if providing concurrence with a finding of **No Historic Properties Affected** for a whole project, or to **No Adverse Effect** on a specific historic property, SHPO shall presume that FDOT may pursue a *de minimis* use of the affected historic property in accordance with Section 4(f) as set forth within 23 C.F.R. Part 774 and its implementing authorities, as amended, and that their concurrence as the official with jurisdiction (OWJ) over the historic property is granted.

SHPO Comments:


 Alissa S. Lotane, Director
 Florida Division of Historical Resources

Date 7/17/24



Florida Department of Transportation

RON DESANTIS
GOVERNOR

605 Suwannee Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450

JARED W. PERDUE, P.E.
SECRETARY

September 5, 2025

Alissa S. Lotane
Director and State Historic Preservation Officer
Florida Division of Historical Resources
Florida Department of State
R. A. Gray Building
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

RE: Section 106 Case Study Report Submission
SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336)
SR 70 FROM CR 721 S TO CR 599/128 AVE
District 1
FM # 450334-1-22-01
DHR CRAT Number: 2024-2438D

Dear Ms. Lotane,

Dear Ms. Lotane:

Enclosed please find one copy of the report titled *Section 106 Consultation Case Study Report Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Study State Road (SR) 70 from County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, Florida*. This report presents the findings in support of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District One, proposed improvements to SR 70. The purpose of this project is to address safety conditions on SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue. The study is approximately 8.6-miles long and proposed improvements include the widening of a two-lane facility up to a four-lane, divided facility, and/or the inclusion of operational improvements along the corridor. Additional right-of-way (ROW) is expected to accommodate the proposed improvements. This is a federally funded project.

As part of the PD&E Study, two build alternatives, Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2, and a No Build Alternative are being evaluated. Both Build Alternatives for the SR 70 improvements involve the replacement of the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/ 8OB00336]) which was previously determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). In order to meet the established schedule for the PD&E deliverables, a discussion was held on July 25, 2023, with representatives from Archaeological Consultants, Inc. (ACI), Scalar, and FDOT District One to develop an approach for cultural resource compliance on the SR 70 PD&E Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (CRAS). This approach enables the Section 106 process to move forward with consultation to resolve the adverse effect on the NRHP-eligible SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) prior to completing the CRAS for the rest of the project (mainline road realignment, ponds, etc.). A full archaeological and historic resources survey of the corridor was conducted, and the results are in the April 2025 CRAS.

In June 2024, ACI conducted a CRAS that was limited to the footprint of construction of the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge replacement portion of the PD&E Study (ACI 2024). The bridge footprint was the Area of Potential Effects (APE). The purpose of the bridge CRAS was to survey and re-assess the bridge's significance in terms of eligibility for listing in the NRHP. The bridge (8OB00336/8HG01236) was determined eligible for listing in the NRHP by the SHPO in 2014 under Criterion C in the area of Engineering as an example of a removable span bridge. As a result of the 2024 CRAS, the bridge remains eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion C in the area of Engineering as an example of a removable span bridge. The SHPO concurred with the recommendations and findings on July 17, 2024 (Lotane 2024; Project File No. 2024-2438).

The objective of this *Section 106 Consultation Case Study Report* is to evaluate the potential effects of the proposed undertaking to the historic properties located within the APE as identified above. The FDOT has applied the Criteria of Adverse Effect found in 36 CFR Part 800.5 to the historic property determined eligible for listing in the NRHP located within the project APE. Because all project alternatives proposed for the SR 70 improvements will involve the replacement of the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) the proposed undertaking will have an **adverse effect** on the bridge.

According to the Public Involvement Plan, public engagement and appropriate coordination meetings with local government, and environmental permitting agencies, work sessions, and small group meetings will continue throughout the final design phase. Following the PD&E Study, mitigation measures will be required. As such, coordination among FDOT, District One, OEM, the SHPO, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), as well as the public will continue to ensure that a sensitive and appropriate mitigation treatment plan is developed. The ACHP will be notified of the adverse effect determination, and measures to resolve the adverse effect to the Kissimmee River Bridge (Bridge No. 910001) will be documented in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between FDOT, SHPO, and other affected parties, as appropriate.

This information is being provided in accordance with the provisions of 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 environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by FDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated May 26, 2022 and executed by FHWA and FDOT.

The Section 106 Consultation Case Study Report is provided for your review and comment. I respectfully request your concurrence with the findings of the enclosed report.

Based on the review summarized above, FDOT has determined that this project 450334-1-22-01 will result in **Adverse Effect** on historic properties. In accordance with Stipulation III.B. of the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (PA), this review was conducted by or under the supervision of a person(s) meeting the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards (36 C.F.R. Part 61, Appendix A and 48 FR 44716)* in the fields of History, Archaeology, and Architectural History. 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 FDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 327 and a Memorandum of

Understanding dated May 26, 2022, and executed by the FHWA and FDOT.

Sincerely,

Electronically signed by Emily Barnett **FOR** Jeffrey James on September 5, 2025

The Florida State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) reviewed the submission referenced above and finds the document contains sufficient information and concurs with the information provided for the above referenced project.	
SHPO/FDHR Comments	
	
Signed	September 22, 2025
Alissa S. Lotane, Director	
Florida Division of Historical Resources	

cc: Lindsay Rothrock, Cultural & Historical Resource Specialist
FDOT Office of Environmental Management

Submitted Documents

- [45033412201-CE2-D1-450334-1-22-01_August_2025_Sec_106_Kissimmee_River_Bridge-2025-0905.pdf](#) (Section 106 Case Study Report)
450334-1-22-01_August 2025_Sec 106 Kissimmee River Bridge

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
BETWEEN THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND
THE FLORIDA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER
REGARDING STATE ROAD 70 FROM CR 721 SOUTH TO CR 559/128TH AVENUE
HIGHLANDS & OKEECHOBEE COUNTIES, FLORIDA**

WHEREAS, Pursuant to 23 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 327 and the implementing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) executed on May 26, 2022, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has assumed Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for highway projects on the State Highway System (SHS) and Local Agency Program (LAP) projects off the SHS; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with the MOU, FDOT's assumption of FHWA's responsibilities under NEPA for highway projects includes assumption of responsibilities for compliance with 36 CFR Part 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (54 U.S.C. § 306108); and

WHEREAS, FDOT will provide federal financial assistance for State Road (SR) 70 from County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue, Federal Aid Project Number (No.) D123-018-B and Financial Project Identification No. 450334-1-22-01, which represents an undertaking in accordance with 36 CFR § 800.3(a); and

WHEREAS, FDOT has defined the Undertaking's area of potential effects (APE) as the footprint of construction and adjacent parcels 200 feet from existing ROW and 500 feet from proposed ROW, as depicted in Attachment A; and

WHEREAS, FDOT has consulted with the Florida State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) pursuant to the requirements of 36 CFR Part 800 and has determined that the Undertaking may have an adverse effect on the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336]), which is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP); and

WHEREAS, FDOT has consulted with the Okeechobee Historical Society regarding the effects of the Undertaking on historic properties; and

WHEREAS, FDOT has provided opportunities for public review and comment regarding the effects of the Undertaking on historic properties; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with 36 CFR § 800.6(a)(1) FDOT has notified the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) of the adverse effect determination with specified documentation and has invited the ACHP to comment and participate in consultation, and the ACHP has chosen not to participate pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.6(a)(1)(iii); and

NOW, THEREFORE, FDOT and the SHPO agree that the Undertaking shall be implemented in accordance with the following stipulations to take into account the effect of the Undertaking on historic properties.

STIPULATIONS

FDOT shall ensure that the following measures are carried out:

I. DOCUMENTATION OF THE SR 70 OVER KISSIMMEE RIVER BRIDGE

- A. Prior to any alteration or demolition of the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) and per guidance provided by the National Park Service (NPS), FDOT shall perform the following documentation in accordance with Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) Level III standards:
1. Drawings - Select existing drawings, where available, may be photographed with large-format negatives or photographically reproduced on Mylar in accordance with the U.S. Copyright Act, as amended. Should existing plans not be available, sketch plans depicting existing conditions shall be prepared.
 2. Photographs - Photographs with large-format negatives of context and views from all sides of the bridge and approaches; roadway and deck views, and noteworthy features and details. All negatives and prints will be processed to meet archival standards. One photograph of a principal elevation shall include a scale.
 3. Written Data - Report with narrative description of the bridge, summary of significance, and historical context. FDOT shall coordinate with SHPO prior to starting in order to develop the appropriate context scope.
- B. FDOT shall provide draft HAER documentation (non-archival format, electronic version) to the NPS (lead content reviewer) and SHPO (courtesy reviewer) for concurrent review in accordance with Stipulation VIII.
- C. FDOT shall make requested edits and provide final copies of the HAER documentation, completed in accordance with Stipulation I.A, as follows:
1. An archival copy to the NPS Southeast Regional Office for review and approval prior to salvage and demolition of the structure; per HAER guidelines; and
 2. An archival copy and an electronic copy to the Florida SHPO for inclusion in the Florida Master Site File (FMSF); and
 3. Non-archival copies and electronic copies to the Okeechobee Historical Society.
- D. The HAER documentation cannot be considered complete, and the bridge demolition cannot take place, until accepted by NPS.

II. SALVAGE OF EXISTING BRIDGE PLAQUE

- A. Prior to bridge demolition, FDOT shall salvage the existing commemorative bridge plaque, to the greatest extent possible, for use elsewhere, as identified in a proposed Salvage and Relocation Plan that will be prepared during project development, as described in Stipulation II.B.
- B. In coordination with the Okeechobee Historical Society and Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, FDOT shall prepare a Salvage and Relocation Plan to outline the process for salvaging and relocating the commemorative bridge plaque. The plan will include:
 - 1. measures to determine the feasibility of salvaging and relocating the plaque,
 - 2. the appropriateness of any proposed new locations (sites) for the plaque,
 - 3. methods for removing and storing the plaque, and,
 - 4. timeframes for completing the tasks.
- C. The proposed Salvage and Relocation Plan shall be developed and approved prior to advertising for construction. FDOT will afford the SHPO as well as the Okeechobee Historical Society and Highlands and Okeechobee Counties 30 days to review and comment on the proposed Salvage and Relocation Plan, as per Stipulation VIII.
- D. The existing commemorative bridge plaque cannot be salvaged until HAER documentation is accepted by NPS in writing as outlined in Stipulation I.

III. PUBLIC EDUCATION

- A. FDOT will assist with the development, funding, and installation of a single panel educational exhibit. The exhibit will provide a historic account of the bridge to educate the public. The text and graphics on the single panel will be prepared based on continued coordination with local interested parties and stakeholders during the project's design and construction phases. During continued coordination, FDOT will consider the appropriate location to install the exhibit which will be in proximity to the bridge location. The draft of the exhibit and location will be coordinated with the SHPO for review, as described in Stipulation VIII.
- B. FDOT will provide an electronic copy of the educational exhibit described above to appropriate local entities (such as the Okeechobee Historical Society and Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, and one or two other agencies/organizations), for installation at their discretion.

IV. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

All archaeological and historic preservation work carried out pursuant to this Agreement shall be conducted by, or under the direct supervision of, a person or persons meeting the Secretary of the

Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for Archaeology and Historic Preservation as set forth at 62 FR 33708-33723 (June 20, 1997).

V. DURATION

This Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) will expire if its terms are not carried out within ten (10) years from the date of execution or upon project acceptance, whichever comes first. Prior to expiration, the parties may agree to extend the timeframe for fulfillment of the terms by letter agreement.

VI. MOA DOCUMENTATION

- A. The FDOT shall provide a summary of actions carried out pursuant to this MOA to the signatories annually. The reporting period shall be the fiscal year from July 1st to June 30th and the summary shall describe the status of mitigation activities and, as applicable, any issues that may affect the ability of the FDOT to continue to meet the terms of this MOA, any disputes and objections received, and how they were resolved.
- B. A Notice of Fulfillment will be prepared to summarize the implementation of the MOA after all stipulations have been fulfilled. This document will be submitted to the signatories for their files within six (6) months after completion of all MOA stipulations.

VII. POST-REVIEW DISCOVERIES

- A. If properties are discovered that may be historically significant, or if unanticipated effects on historic properties are found, FDOT shall implement the Post Review Discovery Plan established in Stipulation IX of the September 27, 2023, Programmatic Agreement (PA) among the ACHP, SHPO, and FDOT (2023 PA).
- B. In the unlikely event that human skeletal remains or associated burial artifacts are uncovered within the project area during construction, all work in that area must stop. The individual in charge of the activity that leads to the discovery must notify the Project Engineer and the FDOT District One Cultural Resources Coordinator per Stipulation X of the 2023 PA. The discovery must be reported to local law enforcement and the appropriate medical examiner. The medical examiner will determine whether the State Archaeologist should be contacted per the requirements of Section 872.05, Florida Statutes, and Rule 1A-44.004, Florida Administrative Code (FAC).

VIII. REVIEW STIPULATION

FDOT shall afford the SHPO and other consulting parties, a 30-day period for review and comment following the receipt of delivery of those submittals and reviews described above. If no comments are received by FDOT at the end of these 30 days, FDOT will presume there are no objections. Any objections to the findings or plans proposed in these submittals will be addressed in accordance with Stipulation IX below.

IX. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Should any signatory to this MOA object at any time to any actions proposed or the manner in which the terms of this MOA are implemented, FDOT shall consult with such party to resolve the objection. If FDOT determines that such objection cannot be resolved, FDOT will:

- A. Forward all documentation relevant to the dispute, including FDOT's proposed resolution, to the ACHP. The ACHP shall provide FDOT with its advice on the resolution of the objection within thirty (30) days of receiving adequate documentation. Prior to reaching a final decision on the dispute, FDOT shall prepare a written response that considers any timely advice or comments regarding the dispute from the ACHP, signatories, and concurring parties, and provide them with a copy of this written response. FDOT will then proceed according to its final decision.
- B. Make a final decision on the dispute and proceed accordingly if the ACHP does not provide its advice regarding the dispute within thirty (30) days. Prior to reaching such a final decision, FDOT shall prepare a written response that considers any timely comments regarding the dispute from the signatories to the MOA, and provide them and the ACHP with a copy of the written response.
- C. Fulfill its responsibility to carry out all other actions subject to the terms of this MOA that are not the subject of the dispute remain unchanged.

X. AMENDMENTS

This MOA may be amended when such an amendment is agreed to in writing by all signatories. All signatories must signify their acceptance of the proposed changes to the MOA in writing within 30 days of their receipt. The amendment will be effective on the date a copy signed by all signatories is filed with the ACHP. In accordance with 36 CFR § 800.6(b)(7), if the ACHP was not a signatory to the original agreement and the signatories execute an amended agreement, FDOT shall file the amended agreement with the ACHP.

XI. TERMINATION

If any signatory to this MOA determines that its terms will not or cannot be carried out, that party shall immediately consult with the other signatories in an effort to amend the MOA per Stipulation X, above. If within thirty (30) days (or another time agreed to by all signatories) an amendment cannot be reached, any signatory may terminate the MOA upon written notification to the other signatories.

Once the MOA is terminated, and prior to work continuing on the Undertaking, FDOT must either (a) execute an MOA pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.6 or (b) request, take into account, and respond to the comments of the ACHP under 36 CFR § 800.7. FDOT shall notify the signatories as to the course of action it will pursue.

Execution of this MOA by FDOT and SHPO and implementation of its terms is evidence that FDOT has taken into account the effects of this undertaking on historic properties per the requirements

of Section 106 (Public Law 113-287 [Title 54 U.S.C. 306108]), and 36 CFR Part 800 (Protection of Historic Properties).

SIGNATORIES:

FLORIDA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

Signed by: Alissa Slade Lotane Date 03/04/2026 | 1:37 PM EST
224D8394B5F884B3
 Alissa Slade Lotane
 Director, Division of Historical Resources
 State Historic Preservation Officer

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

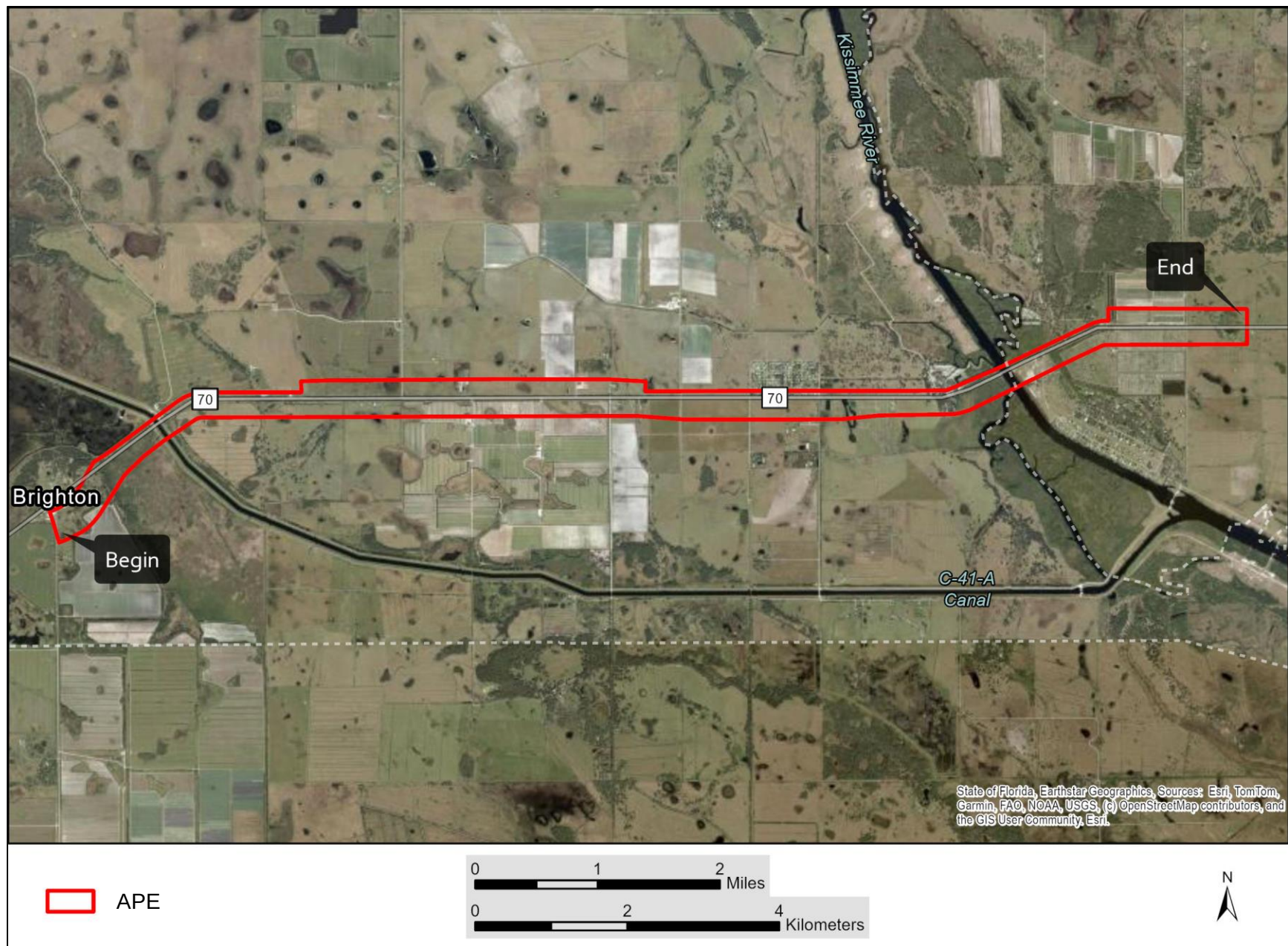
Signed by: Katasha Gruver Date 03/05/2026 | 8:10 AM EST
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 Katasha Gruver
 Director, Office of Environmental Management

CONCURRING PARTIES:

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, DISTRICT ONE

DS 99 DocuSigned by: Nicole E. Mills Date 02/18/2026 | 10:51 AM EST
E4FD32AAA641427
 Nicole E. Mills, P.E.
 Director, Transportation Development

Attachment A - Project Area of Potential Effects, Highlands & Okeechobee Counties





Florida Department of Transportation

RON DESANTIS
GOVERNOR

605 Suwannee Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450

JARED W. PERDUE, P.E.
SECRETARY

September 19, 2025

Alissa S. Lotane
Director and State Historic Preservation Officer
Florida Division of Historical Resources
Florida Department of State
R. A. Gray Building
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

RE: Section 106 Stipulation VII Submission
SR 70 FROM CR 721 S TO CR 599/128 AVE
District 1
FM # 450334-1-22-01
DHR CRAT Number: 2024-2438C

Dear Ms. Lotane,

Dear Ms. Lotane:

Enclosed please find one copy of the report titled *Cultural Resource Assessment Survey Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Study State Road (SR) 70 from County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, Florida*. This report presents the findings in support of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District One, proposed improvements to SR 70. The purpose of this project is to address safety conditions on SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue. The study is approximately 8.6-miles long and proposed improvements include the widening of a two-lane facility up to a four-lane, divided facility, and/or the inclusion of operational improvements along the corridor. Additional right-of-way (ROW) is expected to accommodate the proposed improvements. This is a federally funded project.

As part of the PD&E Study, two build alternatives, Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2, and a No Build Alternative are being evaluated. Of these, the proposed Build Alternative 1, as described above, is the only alternative that eliminates ROW impacts to residential areas along the mainline by meandering outside of the existing ROW to avoid impacts. The preferred alternative is still under review by the FDOT; therefore, this Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (CRAS) was conducted based on the worst-case scenario of the footprint of construction. As such, based on the project type and location of the proposed work, the archaeological APE was limited to the footprint of construction which includes a 50-ft buffer to allow for any potential changes to the proposed alternative and is based on the worst-case scenario. The historic/architectural APE included the footprint of construction within the 50-ft buffer as well as resources within 200-ft from existing ROW on the side where no ROW acquisition is anticipated and 500-ft from proposed new ROW where the road widening is likely to occur. This expanded APE was based on the anticipation that the preferred alternative will go outside of the existing ROW, which will mostly occur on the south side, in order to avoid residential impacts.

All work was conducted to comply with Section 106 of the *National Historic Preservation Act* of 1966 (Public Law 89-665, as amended), as implemented by 36 *CFR* 800 (*Protection of Historic Properties*, effective August 2004), as well as Chapters 267 and 373, *Florida Statutes (FS)*, and Chapter 1A-46, *Florida Administrative Code (FAC)*. All work was carried out in conformity with the Archaeological and Historical Resources Chapter of the FDOT's *PD&E Manual* (FDOT 2024), and the standards and guidelines contained in the Florida Division of Historic Resources' (FDHR) *Cultural Resource Management Standards and Operational Manual: Module 3* (FDHR 2003). The Principal Investigators meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Historic Preservation Professional Qualification Standards* (48 Federal Register [FR] 44716) for archaeology, history, architecture, architectural history, or historic architecture.

The Archaeological background research including a review of the Florida Master Site File (FMSF) and the NRHP digital databases indicated that one previously recorded site (8HG00894) is within the APE. The Brighton Sugarcane #22 Site (8HG00894) is a pre-Contact midden with a historic refuse component that is located within the APE; it has not been evaluated for NRHP eligibility by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). Historical background research indicated that three historic resources (8HG01127, 8HG01236/8OB00336, and 8HG01650/8OB00489) were previously recorded within the APE. These include two linear resources (8HG01127 and 8HG01650/8OB00489) and one bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336]). Of these, the segment of the Slough Ditch Canal (C-41A) (8HG01127) was evaluated as eligible while having insufficient information for determining NRHP eligibility for the whole resource. The Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489) and the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336]) were previously recorded in June 2024. The Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489) was evaluated as having insufficient information for determining NRHP eligibility and the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336]) was determined eligible for listing in the NRHP by the SHPO under Criterion C in the area of Engineering as an example of a removable span bridge; and received SHPO concurrence in 2024 (Lotane 2024).

As a result of the CRAS, the previously recorded Brighton Sugarcane #22 Site (8HG00894) was identified within the archaeological APE. The site is located outside of the proposed ROW and because only a small area of the site was found within the archaeological APE, there is insufficient information to make an evaluation of NRHP-eligibility. The historic/architectural field survey resulted in the identification of 46 historic resources within the historic/architectural APE. Of these, 42 were newly identified, recorded, and evaluated (8HG01683 - 8HG01712, 8HG01722/8OB00504, 8HG01723/8OB00505, 8HG01724, 8HG01725, 8HG01726, 8HG01727, 8HG01728, 8HG01729, 8OB00384, 8OB00385, 8OB00386, 8OB00503) and two newly identified segments of previously recorded linear resources (8HG01127 and 8HG01306/8OB00269) were identified and evaluated. In addition, the segment of the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489) within the APE was found to have insufficient information to make a determination of NRHP eligibility; as such, the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489) will be updated and evaluated. The Kissimmee River Bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336]) remains eligible for listing in the NRHP and was not re-evaluated or updated during this survey.

Of the 46 historic resources identified within the historic/architectural APE, 43 appear ineligible for listing in the NRHP (8HG01306/8OB00269, 8HG01683-8HG01712, 8HG01722/8OB00504, 8HG01723/8OB00505, 8HG01724, 8HG01725, 8HG01726, 8HG01727, 8HG01728, 8HG01729,

8OB00384, 8OB00385, 8OB00386, 8OB00503). The ineligible resources include 34 buildings (8HG01683-8HG01712, 8OB00384, 8OB00385, 8OB00386, 8OB00503) constructed between circa (ca.) 1945 and 1979, eight linear resources (8HG01306/8OB00269, 8HG01722/8OB00504, 8HG01723/8OB00505, 8HG01724, 8HG01725, 8HG01726, 8HG01727, 8HG01728), and one building complex resource group (8HG01729). Three resources that are or appear eligible for listing in the NRHP, the Slough Ditch Canal (C-41A) (8HG01127), the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336]), and a segment of the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489), are located within the historic/architectural APE

The FDOT has applied the Criteria of Adverse Effect found in 36 CFR Part 800.5 to the three historic resources (8HG01127, 8HG01236/8OB00336, and 8HG01650/8OB00489) that are eligible or appear eligible for listing in the NRHP and one site (8HG00894) that has insufficient information to make a determination of NRHP eligibility located within the project APE. Based on the proposed undertaking, the findings presented here indicate that the undertaking will have **No Adverse Effect** to the segments of the Slough Ditch Canal (C-41A) (8HG01127) and the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489) or the small portion of the previously recorded Brighton Sugarcane #22 Site (8HG00894). However, because all project alternatives proposed for the SR 70 improvements will involve the replacement of the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) the proposed undertaking will have an **adverse effect** on the bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336). A Case Study Report is currently being prepared to evaluate the potential effects of the proposed undertaking to the NR-eligible SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336).

This information is being provided in accordance with the provisions of 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 environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by FDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated May 26, 2022 and executed by FHWA and FDOT.

The Cultural Resource Assessment Survey is provided for your review and comment. I respectfully request your concurrence with the findings of the enclosed report.

Based on the review summarized above, FDOT has determined that this project 450334-1-22-01 will result in **Adverse Effect** on historic properties. In accordance with Stipulation III.B. of the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (PA), this review was conducted by or under the supervision of a person(s) meeting the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards (36 C.F.R. Part 61, Appendix A and 48 FR 44716)* in the fields of History, Archaeology, and Architectural History. 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 FDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated May 26, 2022, and executed by the FHWA and FDOT.

Sincerely,

Electronically signed by Emily Barnett **FOR** Jeffrey James on September 19, 2025

The Florida State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) reviewed the submission referenced above and finds the document contains sufficient information and concurs with the information provided for the above referenced project.

SHPO/FDHR Comments



September 22, 2025

Signed

Date

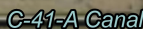
Alissa S. Lotane, Director

Florida Division of Historical Resources

cc: Lindsay Rothrock, Cultural & Historical Resource Specialist
FDOT Office of Environmental Management

Submitted Documents

- [45033412201-CE2-D1-SHPO_Files-2025-0919.zip](#) (Florida Master Site File Forms)
SHPO Files
- [45033412201-CE2-D1-450334-1-22-01_April_2025_Rev_CRAS_SR_70_PD_E_Study-2025-0917.pdf](#) (Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (CRAS) Addendum)
450334-1-22-01_April 2025 Rev_CRAS SR 70 PD&E Study

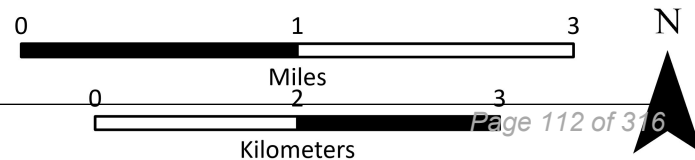


Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community, State of Florida, Vantor, Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community, Esri, USGS, State of Florida, Microsoft, Vantor, Earthstar Geographics 2023

Legend



Type 2 Categorical Exclusion





Florida Department of Transportation

RON DESANTIS
GOVERNOR

801 N. Broadway Avenue
Bartow, Florida 33830-3809

JARED W. PERDUE, P.E.
SECRETARY

December 11, 2025

Alissa S. Lotane
Director and State Historic Preservation Officer
Florida Division of Historical Resources
Florida Department of State
R. A. Gray Building
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

RE: Section 106 Stipulation VII Submission
SR 70 FROM CR 721 S TO CR 599/128 AVE
District 1
FM # 450334-1-22-01
DHR CRAT Number: 2024-2438F

Dear Ms. Lotane,

Enclosed please find one copy of the report titled *Cultural Resource Assessment Survey Addendum Preferred Pond Sites Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Study State Road (S.R.) 70 from County Road (C.R.) 721 South to C.R. 599/128th Avenue, Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, Florida*. This report presents the findings in support of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District One proposed improvements to S.R. 70. Goals of the project include maintaining east-west connectivity, improving the local and regional transportation network, and improving traffic conditions, emergency evacuation, and incident response times. The study is approximately 8.6 miles long and proposed improvements include the widening from a two-lane facility to a four-lane, divided facility. The proposed widening includes two, 12-foot (ft) travel lanes in each direction, a 40 ft median, 12 ft outside shoulders of which 5 ft will be paved, 8 ft inside shoulders of which 4 ft will be paved, and a 12 ft shared-use path on the south side of the roadway. The focus of this report is eight preferred pond sites proposed as part of the S.R. 70 drainage improvements. This is a federally funded project.

As part of the PD&E Study, Archaeological Consultants, Inc. (ACI) prepared a Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (CRAS) in 2025 for S.R. 70 from C.R. 721 South to C.R. 599/128th Avenue in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties. The objective of the CRAS was to locate and identify any archaeological sites and historic resources located within the project's Area of Potential Effects (APE) and to assess, to the extent possible, their significance as per the criteria of eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The archaeological APE was defined as the footprint of construction and included a 50 ft buffer to allow for any potential changes and was based on the worst-case scenario. As a result, evidence of site 8HG00894 (a pre-Contact midden with a historic refuse component) was found to extend into the archaeological APE but there was insufficient information to make an evaluation of NRHP-eligibility. The historical/architectural APE was defined as the footprint of construction as well as any resources within 200 ft from existing right-of-way (ROW) on the side where no ROW acquisition was anticipated and 500 ft from proposed new ROW where the road widening was likely to occur. This

expanded APE was based on the anticipation that the preferred alternative would go outside of the existing ROW, which would mostly occur on the south side, in-order-to avoid residential impacts. The historical/architectural survey resulted in the identification of 46 historic resources within the APE. Of these, 43 were determined ineligible for listing in the NRHP and three were determined eligible. The three eligible properties include the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127), the S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336]), and a segment of the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489). On September 22, 2025, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurred with the eligibility determinations (or the evaluations) (Florida Division of Historic Resources [FDHR] Project File No. 2024-2438C).

This CRAS was conducted in accordance with the requirements set forth in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, found in 36 *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)* Part 800 (Protection of Historic Properties). The studies also comply with Chapter 267 of the *Florida Statutes (FS)* and Rule Chapter 1A-46, *Florida Administrative Code (FAC)* and Section 267.12, *FS*, Chapter 1A-32. All work was performed in accordance with Part 2, Chapter 8 of the FDOT's PD&E Manual, FDOT's Cultural Resources Management Handbook, and the standards stipulated in the FDHR's *Cultural Resource Management Standards & Operations Manual, Module Three: Guidelines for Use by Historic Preservation Professionals*. The Principal Investigator for this project meets the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation* (48 FR 44716). This study also complies with Public Law 113-287 (Title 54 U.S.C.), which incorporates the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and the Archeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974, as amended.

As defined in 36 *CFR Part 800.16(d)*, the area of potential effect (APE) is the "geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly cause alterations in the character or use of historic properties, if any such properties exist." Based on the scale and nature of the activities, the archaeological APE is defined as the area contained within the footprint of each preferred pond site. The historical/architectural APE is defined as the footprint of the preferred ponds, as well as 150 ft from the edge of the preferred ponds.

As a result of the archaeological background research, no previously recorded historic or pre-Contact archaeological sites were identified within any pond site, including pond 7A which contained a potential tree island. However, nine previously recorded archaeological sites were recorded within one mile. Six of these sites (8HG00894; 8HG00896; 8HG00897; 8HG00898; 8HG01077; 8HG000895) are pre-Contact middens and/or habitations, with five (8HG00894; 8HG00895, 8HG00896; 8HG00897; 8HG00898) dated to the Late Archaic period and with two (8HG00894; 8HG00897) also having a later Twentieth Century American component. Two terrestrial sites (8HG01078; 8HG01079) also date to Twentieth Century America. One site (8OB00008) is located in Okeechobee County and is a Belle Glade period mound. All the sites have either not been evaluated by the SHPO or were determined to have insufficient information to make a determination of eligibility. In addition, a review of the ETDM revealed that the project will have substantial effects on pre-Contact and historic period archaeological sites based on comments submitted by the Florida Department of State (FDOS) that sites 8HG00894 and 8HG01077 are unique in location and will likely be of interest to Native American tribes. However, these sites need additional information for an assessment of NRHP-eligibility by the SHPO and they are located adjacent to the S.R. 70 roadway and not to any of the pond sites. Therefore, there is no concern with regard to impacts from pond site selection on these two sites. A review of relevant site locational information for environmentally similar

areas within Highlands and Okeechobee Counties and the surrounding region indicated a variable archaeological probability (low to high potential) for the occurrence of pre-Contact period archaeological sites within the APE and a low to moderate probability for historic period archaeological sites. The background research indicated that pre-Contact period sites, if present, would mostly likely be small lithic or artifact scatters. As a result of field survey, no archaeological sites were identified within the APE.

Historical background research indicated that seven historic resources (8HG01127, 8HG01306/8OB00269, 8HG01722/8OB00504, 8HG01723, 8HG01725, 8HG01727, and 8HG01728) were previously recorded within the APE. These seven linear resources were recorded and evaluated by ACI during the 2025 S.R. 70 mainline CRAS. All segments were evaluated as having insufficient information for determining NRHP eligibility for the whole resource; however, six of the seven resources (8HG01306/8OB00269, 8HG01722/8OB00504, 8HG01723, 8HG01725, 8HG01727, and 8HG01728) were evaluated as individually ineligible for listing in the NRHP and the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127) was evaluated as eligible for listing in the NRHP. The SHPO concurred with the findings in September 2025 (FDHR Project File No. 2024-2438C).

Historical/architectural field survey resulted in the identification of 11 historic resources (8HG01127, 8HG01306/8OB00269, 8HG01722/8OB00504, 8HG01723, 8HG01725, 8HG01727, 8HG01728, 8HG01751, 8HG01752, 8HG01753, and 8HG01754) within the APE. These include four newly identified historic resources (8HG01751, 8HG01752, 8HG01753, and 8HG01754) and seven extant previously recorded historic resources (8HG01127, 8HG01306/8OB00269, 8HG01722/8OB00504, 8HG01723, 8HG01725, 8HG01727, and 8HG01728). Of the seven extant previously recorded historic resources located within the preferred ponds APE, three were re-evaluated (8HG01127, 8HG01725, and 8HG01728) and the FMSF forms were updated to include new segments within the APE and the FMSF forms for the remaining four (8HG01306/8OB00269, 8HG01722/8OB00504, 8HG01723, and 8HG01727) were not updated as the resources were recorded during the mainline S.R. 70 CRAS and no changes were identified during this survey. Of the resources identified within the APE, three are located within the preferred pond sites-Lykes Drainage System (South) (8HG01725) extends through Pond 3B, Unnamed Drainage System (8HG01727) traverses through Pond 4B, and Arrow B Ranch Canal (8HG01728) runs between Ponds 5C and 6C.

The newly identified and updated historic resources within the APE include one Masonry Vernacular style building (8HG01754), constructed circa (ca.) 1970, three newly identified linear resources (8HG01751, 8HG01752, and 8HG01753), and newly identified segments of the previously recorded Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127), Lykes Drainage System (South) (8HG01725), and Arrow B Ranch Canal (8HG01728). Overall, the newly identified historic building lacks sufficient architectural features and is not a significant embodiment of a type, period, or method of construction. Background research did not reveal any historic associations with significant persons and/or events. Thus, the resource does not appear eligible for listing in the NRHP, either individually or as a part of a historic district. In addition, the three newly identified linear resources (8HG01751, 8HG01752, and 8HG01753) and two re-evaluated linear resources (8HG01725 and 8HG01728) are common examples of drainage systems found throughout South Florida that have been altered and lack unique design and engineering features; therefore, the segments within the APE do not appear to be eligible for listing in the NRHP; however, because the linear resources extend outside of the APE, there is insufficient information to determine NRHP eligibility for the linear resources as a whole.

One resource within the APE, the segment of the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127), remains eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Agriculture. The segment of the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127) within the APE was constructed ca. 1944 as a later component of the Central and Southern Florida (C&SF) Project to improve and modify the Lake Okeechobee and Lower Kissimmee River/Lake Istokpoga Basins. The resource is also associated with the development of the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal). Although the segment within the APE appears eligible for listing in the NRHP, there is insufficient information to determine NRHP eligibility for the linear resource as a whole.

Since there is one historic resource (8HG01127) that is eligible for listing in the NRHP and five historic resources (8HG01725, 8HG01728, 8HG01751, 8HG01752, and 8HG01753) that have insufficient information to make a determination of NRHP eligibility, FDOT District One has applied the Criteria of Adverse Effect (36 CFR Part 800.5).

- The segment of the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127) within the APE remains eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Agriculture. Based on the scope of work, the undertaking will include a new pond (Pond 3B) adjacent to the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal which is located approximately 113 ft southwest of the preferred pond footprint. The undertaking will not have a direct impact on the linear resource. Therefore, it is the opinion of ACI and FDOT District One that the proposed undertaking will have **no adverse effect** on Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127).
- The segment of the Lykes Drainage System (South) (8HG01725) within the APE passes through the footprint of Pond 3B. While the undertaking will result in the physical destruction, damage, or alteration to part of the Lykes Drainage System (South) (8HG01725), the segment of the linear resource within the footprint of Pond 3B is a common example of a drainage system found throughout South Florida and has no known significant historic associations. Therefore, it is the opinion of ACI and FDOT District One that the proposed undertaking will have **no adverse effect** on the Lykes Drainage System (South) (8HG01725).
- The segment of the Arrow B Ranch Canal (8HG01728) within the APE passes through the footprint of Ponds 5C and 6C. While the undertaking will result in physical destruction, damage, or alteration to part of the Arrow B Ranch Canal (8HG01728), the segment within the footprint of Ponds 5C and 6C is a common example of a drainage canal found throughout South Florida and has no known significant historic associations. Therefore, it is the opinion of ACI and FDOT District One that the proposed undertaking will have **no adverse effect** on the Arrow B Ranch Canal (8HG01728).
- The segment of the Lykes Drainage Canal (8HG01751) within the APE is located adjacent to Pond 1A. Based on the scope of work, the undertaking will include a new pond (Pond 1A) adjacent to the Lykes Drainage Canal which is located approximately 77 to 104 ft south of the preferred pond footprint. The undertaking will not have a direct impact on the linear resource. Therefore, it is the opinion of ACI and FDOT District One that the proposed undertaking will have **no adverse effect** on the Lykes Drainage Canal (8HG01751).
- The segment of the Unnamed Drainage Canal (8HG01752) within the APE is located adjacent to Pond 2C. Based on the scope of work, the undertaking will include a new pond (Pond 2C) adjacent to the Unnamed Drainage Canal which is located approximately 25 to 60 ft northeast of the preferred pond footprint. The undertaking will not have a direct impact on the linear resource. Therefore, it is the opinion of ACI and FDOT District One that the proposed undertaking will have **no adverse effect** on

the Unnamed Drainage Canal (8HG01752).

- The segment of the Kissimmee River Fishing Resort Canal (8HG01753) within the APE is located adjacent to Pond 7A. Based on the scope of work, the undertaking will include a new pond (Pond 7A) adjacent to the Kissimmee River Fishing Resort Canal which is located immediately north of the preferred pond footprint. The undertaking will not have a direct impact on the linear resource. Therefore, it is the opinion of ACI and FDOT District One that the proposed undertaking will have **no adverse effect** on the Kissimmee River Fishing Resort Canal (8HG01753).

Based on the review summarized above, FDOT has determined that this project, 450334-1-22-01, will result in a **no adverse effect to historic properties**.

In accordance with Stipulation III.B of the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (PA), this review was conducted by or under the supervision of the Principal Investigator meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards (36 CFR/Part 61, Appendix A and 48 FR 44716) in the fields of History, Archaeology, and Architectural History.

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 FDOT pursuant to 23 USC 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated May 26, 2022, and executed by the FHWA and FDOT.

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact Jeffrey W. James, District Environmental Manager, at (863) 519.2625.

Based on the review summarized above, FDOT has determined that this project 450334-1-22-01 will result in **No Adverse Effect** on historic properties. In accordance with Stipulation III.B. of the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (PA), this review was conducted by or under the supervision of a person(s) meeting the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards (36 C.F.R. Part 61, Appendix A and 48 FR 44716)* in the fields of History, Archaeology, and Architectural History. 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 FDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated May 26, 2022, and executed by the FHWA and FDOT.

Sincerely,

Electronically signed by Emily Barnett **FOR** Jeffrey James on December 11, 2025

The Florida State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) reviewed the submission referenced above and finds the document contains sufficient information and concurs with the information provided for the above referenced project.

In accordance with the *Programmatic Agreement Among the FHWA, the FDOT, the ACHP, and the SHPO Regarding Implementation of the Federal-Aid Highway Program in Florida* (2023 PA), and appended materials, if providing concurrence with a finding of **No Historic Properties Affected** for a whole project, or to **No Adverse Effect** on a specific historic property, SHPO shall presume that FDOT may pursue a *de minimis* use of the affected historic property in accordance with Section 4(f) as set forth within 23 *CFR*. 774 and its implementing authorities, as amended, and that their concurrence as the official with jurisdiction (OWJ) over the historic property is granted.

SHPO/FDHR Comments



December 22, 2025

Signed

Date

Alissa S. Lotane, Director

Florida Division of Historical Resources

cc: Lindsay Rothrock, Cultural & Historical Resource Specialist
FDOT Office of Environmental Management

Submitted Documents

- [45033412201-CE2-D1-450334-1_SR_70_CRAS_Addendum_PREFERRED_Ponds-2025-1210.pdf](#) (Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (CRAS) Addendum)
450334-1_SR 70 CRAS Addendum Preferred Ponds
- [45033412201-CE2-D1-FMSF_Forms-2025-1210.zip](#) (Florida Master Site File Forms)
FMSF Forms
- [45033412201-CE2-D1-Photos-2025-1210.zip](#) (Florida Master Site File Forms)
Photos
- [45033412201-CE2-D1-GIS_Shapefiles-2025-1210.zip](#) (Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (CRAS) Addendum)
GIS Shapefiles

Section 4(f) Resources

Florida Department of Transportation

SR 70 FROM CR 721 S TO CR 599/128 AVE

District: FDOT District 1

County: Highlands County, Okeechobee County

ETDM Number: 14491

Financial Management Number: 450334-1-22-01

Federal-Aid Project Number: D123-018-B

Project Manager: Kathern Cothorn

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 May 26, 2022 and executed by the Federal Highway Administration and FDOT. Submitted pursuant 49 U.S.C. § 303.

Table of Contents

Summary and Approval	1
Slough Ditch (C-41A) at SR 70 Boat Ramp	2
Kissimmee River Public Use Area: S-65E Impoundment	4
Okeechobee North Trail Connector	6
Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127)	8
Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489)	11
S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336])	14
Project-Level Attachments	19
Resource Attachments	21

Summary and Approval

Resource Name	Facility Type	Property Classification	Owner/Official with Jurisdiction	Recommended Outcome	OEM SME Action
Slough Ditch (C-41A) at SR 70 Boat Ramp	Boat ramp	Park/Rec Area	SFWMD	No Use	Approved 11-04-2025
Kissimmee River Public Use Area: S-65E Impoundment	Water and wildlife management area with recreational use	Park/Rec Area	SFWMD and FWC	Not Applicable	Approved 01-30-2026
Okeechobee North Trail Connector	Pedestrian trail	Park/Rec Area	Okeechobee County	No Use	Approved 11-04-2025
Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127)	Historic Canal	Historic Site	State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)	<i>de minimis</i>	Concurred 02-19-2026
Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB 00489)	Historic Canal	Historic Site	State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)	<i>de minimis</i>	Concurred 02-19-2026
S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB 00336])	Historic Bridge	Historic Site	State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)	Programmatic	Concurred 04-02-2026



June 15, 2026

Director of the Office of Environmental Management
Florida Department of Transportation

Slough Ditch (C-41A) at SR 70 Boat Ramp

Facility Type: Boat ramp

Property Classification: Park/Rec Area

Address and Coordinates:

Address: Northeast quadrant of C-41A Canal and SR 70

Latitude: 27.234615 Longitude: -81.083318

Description of Property:

This property is located north of SR 70 on the east side of the C-41A Canal. The boat ramp, located approximately 400 feet north of SR 70, is part of the overall South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)-owned property along the C-41A Canal that is used for canal maintenance. The overall size of the SFWMD property is difficult to quantify since it is a very large area including the C-41A Canal and the upland banks and stretches from Lake Okeechobee to Lake Istokpoga. The boat ramp consists of a stand-alone ramp with no other infrastructure. Given the existing fencing on the north and east sides of the ramp and parking area that appears to demarcate the boat ramp area and separate it from the adjacent private land, the boat ramp "property" is approximately 1.0 acre in size. Parking for vehicles and trailers is available on the grassy property adjacent to the ramp. The ramp is concrete with an unpaved/packed soil driveway. There are no known planned improvements to this facility and there are no fees for use.

Nearby boat ramps include the Kissimmee River Fishing Resort ramp which is privately-owned but available for public use for a small fee. The site is located just north of SR 70 and west of the Kissimmee River. This boat ramp provides access to a canal that runs parallel to SR 70 and connects to the Kissimmee River. The Platt's Bluff public boat ramp, owned by Okeechobee County, is located approximately 4 miles north of the project and provides access to natural oxbows associated with the Kissimmee River. The Slough Ditch (C-41A) at SR 70 Boat Ramp is considered a significant resource under Section 4(f) because it provides an opportunity for boat access to the canal and to upstream destinations such as Lake Istokpoga, and to downstream locations such as the Kissimmee River.

Owner/Official with Jurisdiction: SFWMD

Relationship Between the Property and the Project

The project will widen SR 70 from the existing undivided, 2-lane typical section to a divided 4-lane typical section. The existing driveway on the east side of the C-41A Canal will be retained in the post-project condition; this driveway services both the SFWMD property, the boat ramp, and the large privately-owned agricultural parcel to the east and north. While the SR 70 widening will require some right-of-way acquisition from the overall SFWMD property, this will not affect the boat ramp area.

There will not be acquisition of land from the resource on a temporary or permanent basis. There will not be any proximity impacts that rise to the level of substantial impairment. Access to the resource will be maintained at all times throughout construction.

Yes No

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

Recommended Outcome: No Use

OEM SME Approval Date: 11-04-2025

Kissimmee River Public Use Area: S-65E Impoundment

Facility Type: Water and wildlife management area with recreational use

Property Classification: Park/Rec Area

Address and Coordinates:

Address: 15468 State Road 70 W, Okeechobee, FL, 34974, USA

Latitude: 27.23662 Longitude: -80.98771

Description of Property:

The Kissimmee River (KR) S-65E Impoundment (KR S-65E) is an expanse of thick marsh at the end of the old Kissimmee River and is one of many managed areas that make up the greater Kissimmee River Public use Area (PUA) which consists of 30,864 acres of land in Glades, Highlands, Okeechobee, Osceola and Polk Counties. The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) purchased much of overall property with funding from the Save Our Rivers (SOR) program created by the Florida legislature in 1981 to allow for the state water management districts to acquire environmentally sensitive land for water management, water supply and conservation and protection of water resources. The Kissimmee River PUA was acquired for the Kissimmee River Restoration Project which was congressionally funded in 1992 with the task to restore more than 40 square miles of the river floodplain ecosystem, 20,000 acres of wetlands, and 44 miles of the historic river channel. Having completed the Kissimmee River Restoration Project in 2021, the Kissimmee River Management Area (KR MA) General Management Plan (GMP, 2025-2035 currently in Draft form at https://www.sfwmd.gov/sites/default/files/documents/KR_GMP_Draft.pdf) highlights some secondary goals of the KR MA beyond conservation to include appropriate public use consistent with their environmental sensitivity primary purpose.

The KR S-65E Impoundment is immediately adjacent to the existing S.R. 70 west of the Kissimmee River towards the southern terminus of the Kissimmee River PUA. There are no upland access points from S.R. 70 or from any other upland points in the project area, either for public access or maintenance access. The only access opportunity is by boat, either from the privately-owned Kissimmee River Fishing Resort, located on the north side of S.R. 70, or from the Platt's Bluff public boat ramp, located approximately 4 miles to the north. KR S-65E includes a primitive camp site; the exact location is unknown given lack of detailed PUA maps but is south of the Kissimmee River oxbow that cuts through the property and is a minimum of 1,600 feet south of S.R. 70. Camping is allowed in the designated camping area by Special Use License up to 8 continuous days. There is no other recreational infrastructure. Additional secondary recreational activities on this property include hunting (under various regulations managed by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)), fishing and frogging, bird watching and boating through the open river cuts and canals. The property is open year-round for day and night use and there is no associated fee. All stated recreation activities are conducted in deference to the primary purpose of the Kissimmee River PUA to "conserve and protect unique and irreplaceable lands, restore areas to their original condition as much as possible, and allow controlled multiple recreational and educational uses consistent with this purpose."

Owner/Official with Jurisdiction: SFWMD and FWC

Recommended Outcome: Not Applicable

Rationale:

The SFWMD has established that the primary purpose of the Kissimmee River (KR) Public Use Area (PUA), including S-65E Impoundment, is for water management, restoration, and conservation, and they assert that secondary to this,

controlled recreational use is permitted if consistent with the primary purpose. In accordance with the Federal Highway Administration Section 4(f) Policy Paper, "Primary purpose is related to a property's primary function and how it is intended to be managed. Incidental, secondary, occasional or dispersed activities similar to park, recreational or refuge activities do not constitute a primary purpose within the context of Section 4(f)." As such, Section 4(f) protection is Not Applicable to the KR S-65E Impoundment. In deference to the stated primary and secondary purposes of this property, however, FDOT has minimized the impacts to the area to the greatest extent practicable, totaling approximately 0.00008% of the PUA's overall total acreage, and has determined that the portion of the KR S-65E Impoundment area being impacted does not include environmentally sensitive resources significant in meeting the primary conservation goals of the PUA nor does it interfere with the secondary public recreational use/enjoyment of the overall property.

OEM SME Approval Date: 01-30-2026

Okeechobee North Trail Connector

Facility Type: Pedestrian trail

Property Classification: Park/Rec Area

Address and Coordinates:

Address: intersection of CR 599 and SR 70

Latitude: 27.24357 Longitude: -80.96109

Description of Property:

This trail is along CR 599/SW 128th Avenue on both the north and south sides of SR 70 and has several names. The trail segment from the Kissimmee River to SR 70 is called the Okeechobee North Trail to SR 70 Connector and is approximately 1.1 miles in length. North of SR 70, the name changes to Okeechobee North Trail to Kissimmee River Trail and is approximately 6.3 miles. As part of the Florida National Scenic Trail (FNST) which begins at US 41 in Big Cypress National Preserve and terminates in Fort Pickens State Park in the Pensacola area, it is also called the S-65E Lock Access Road/CR 599 and FNST Connector. It connects to the Lake Okeechobee North Trail (Paradise Run) approximately 1 mile south of the project area and to the Yates Marsh Trail/Hickory Hammock Trail approximately 5 miles to the north of the project. This is a "roadwalk" trail where pedestrians may walk on the grassy roadside shoulder. Therefore there is no definitive trail width, but there is approximately 20 feet of sodded area on each side of the roadway pavement in the vicinity of the project. The trail is not marked with signage in the vicinity of the project.

Recreational opportunities on this trail include walking, running, bicycling and hiking. There are no known planned facility enhancements to this trail. The public can access the trail at any point along SW 128th Avenue or from the SR 70 intersection at any time of day or night, however there is no designated parking for vehicles in the vicinity of the project. Aside from these trail segments previously described, there are no other existing trails within 10 miles of the project. The Okeechobee North Trail to SR 70 Connector/ Okeechobee North Trail to Kissimmee River Trail is considered a significant resource under Section 4(f) because it provides a long segment of opportunity for walking/hiking/biking in this region.

Owner/Official with Jurisdiction: Okeechobee County

Relationship Between the Property and the Project

The project will widen SR 70 from the existing undivided, 2-lane typical section to a divided 4-lane typical section. While this will result in a widening of the SR 70 crossing of the trail, it will not impede trail users from traveling north or south along the trail at the SR 70 intersection. In the post-project condition, a median opening will be constructed at this location to allow for vehicular turning movements; this median opening and sodded 40-foot wide median will be able to be used by trail users to cross SR 70. During construction, a maintenance of traffic (MOT) plan will be prepared and vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists will continue to be able to cross SR 70 in this location.

There will not be acquisition of land from the resource on a temporary or permanent basis. There will not be any proximity impacts that rise to the level of substantial impairment. Access to the resource will be maintained at all times throughout construction.

Yes No

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

Recommended Outcome: No Use

OEM SME Approval Date: 11-04-2025

Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127)

Facility Type: Historic Canal

Property Classification: Historic Site

Address and Coordinates:

Address: S.R. 70 over Slough Ditch Canal (C-41A), Highlands County, Florida

Latitude: 27.233405 Longitude: -81.082686

Description of Property:

The resource is a canal that is managed by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). In its entirety, the canal is approximately 20.1 miles long and ranges from 30 to 130 feet in width with earthen banking covered with grass. The site was constructed by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) as part of the Central and South Florida Flood Control (C&SF) Project as a means of alleviating flooding in farmlands south of Lake Istokpoga within the Lower Kissimmee River/Lake Istokpoga Basin. The site is considered the main outlet for Lake Istokpoga and discharges into the Kissimmee River Canal (C-38). The existing S.R. 70 bridge over Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (Bridge No. 090053) was built in 2000. The site is eligible for listing in the NHRP under Criterion A in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Agriculture. The State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurred with the findings on September 22, 2025.

Owner/Official with Jurisdiction: State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)

Recommended Outcome: *de minimis*

Yes No

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| ☒ | ☐ | Was there coordination with the Official(s) with Jurisdiction to identify an opportunity for a <i>de minimis</i> finding? |
| ☒ | ☐ | Was the OWJ informed by the District of FDOT's intent to pursue a <i>de minimis</i> approval option? |
| ☒ | ☐ | Was the OWJ informed in writing that their concurrence with a no adverse effect finding to the activities, features or attributes which qualify the property for protection may result in FDOT making a <i>de minimis</i> approval under Section 4(f)? |
| ☒ | ☐ | Did the OWJ concur that the proposed project, including any enhancement, mitigation and minimization of harm measures, will result in no adverse effects to the activities features or attributes of the property? |

Basis on Which the Determination was Made

The project will widen S.R. 70 from the existing undivided, 2-lane typical section to a divided 4-lane typical section with a shared-use path on the south side. The road widening over the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal will construct a new eastbound bridge south of the existing bridge (Bridge No. 090053), with two travel lanes and a shared-use path. The existing bridge right-of-way (ROW) occupancy at this location is currently 11,750 square feet (250 feet in length over the canal water by 47 feet wide bridge typical section). The roadway improvements will require additional ROW occupancy over the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal, consisting of approximately 28,830 square feet (390 feet in length [top of embankment to top of embankment] by 63 to 81 feet wide [includes the 60 foot wide bridge typical section, 21 feet of ROW occupancy between the bridges as well as approximately 63 feet for the new road and shared-use path]), to accommodate the construction of a shared-use path and new bridge south of the existing bridge. The ROW occupancy, footprint of the new bridge, and alterations to the earthen banking along the site are in keeping with the existing conditions within the project limits and the undertaking will not damage the historic site in a negative way that will diminish or destroy

the qualities and characteristics for which it is considered eligible for listing in the NRHP. The Section 106 effects determination for the proposed project resulted in no adverse effect and the OWJ concurred with this determination in a letter dated September 22, 2025. As such, the ROW occupancy will have no adverse effect on activities, features, and attributes of the site.

Public Involvement Activities:

An in-person Alternatives Public Workshop was held on June 11, 2024 and a virtual Alternatives Public Workshop was held on June 18, 2024. The meetings were advertised in the local newspaper, on the project website, in the Florida Administrative Record, and through a newsletter mailed to property owners and emailed to interested parties, agency representatives and public officials. The meeting included a project video, visual displays including roll plots of alternatives, and opportunities for the public to ask questions of the project team. The proposed bridge over the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal was depicted in the meeting exhibits. The exhibits and project video are available to the public on the project website. Following the Alternatives Public Workshop, the project was presented to the HRTPO staff and committees on October 2, 2024 to explain the study process and the alternatives for the multiple ongoing S.R. 70 corridor projects in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties.

An in-person public hearing was held at the Indian River State College - Dixon Hendry Campus on December 16, 2025 and a virtual public hearing was held online via GoToWebinar on December 18, 2025. This public hearing was advertised in compliance with all federal and state requirements. The purpose of the hearing was to present the preferred alternative and allow the public to express their views about the proposed improvements. Meeting materials were posted to the project website on November 25, 2025 in advance of the hearing and remained available through December 31, 2025; these materials were also available at the in-person meeting.

Attendees received a handout, and the project team explained the comment process. Attendees had an opportunity to view project materials, speak with project staff, and provide verbal testimony during the formal presentation and comment period. The presentation included information regarding the PD&E Study process, the preferred alternatives, a matrix, project schedule, and other project-related information.

In-person hearing attendees were able to provide verbal comments as well as leave written comments, and other comments were submitted by email, website, or mail. No comments were received about the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal.

The overall public engagement began in the spring of 2023 and continued throughout the PD&E Study. A project specific web page was established on the FDOT's District One Projects Website (swflroads.com/project/450334-1) at the beginning of the study to provide updated information about the project and upcoming activities for the duration of the study. The project schedule, newsletters, meeting exhibits, and public meeting presentation are posted on the website as part of regular updates. On August 7, 2025, a copy of the bridge CRAS was uploaded to the project website for the public to review the findings and FDOT's determination that the proposed undertaking may have an adverse effect to the NRHP-eligible bridge. The website also includes a link where visitors can provide their comments and questions and sign up for the mailing list. The website is updated periodically with current related information and will be available for the duration of the study.

All of the referenced public involvement materials including notices, letters, transcripts, public comments, and the Section 106 Case Study are located in the project file.

OEM SME Concurrence Date: 02-19-2026

Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489)

Facility Type: Historic Canal

Property Classification: Historic Site

Address and Coordinates:

Address: S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River (C-38), Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, Florida

Latitude: 27.238921 Longitude: -80.982458

Description of Property:

The site is a canal that is managed by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). In its entirety, the canal spans 69 miles from Lake Kissimmee to the north to Lake Okeechobee to the south of the project limits. The canal was channelized in 1966 and is approximately 375 feet wide with shallow earthen banking covered in vegetation. The site was channelized as part of the Central and South Florida Flood Control (C&SF) Project to help with flood control. The canal flows beneath the 1966 S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge No. 910001 (8HG01236/8OB00336) which is equipped with bridge fenders and channel markers. The site is eligible for listing in the NHRP under Criterion A in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Conservation and Criterion C in the area of Engineering. The State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurred with the findings on September 22, 2025.

Owner/Official with Jurisdiction: State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)

Recommended Outcome: *de minimis*

Yes No

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| ☒ | ☐ | Was there coordination with the Official(s) with Jurisdiction to identify an opportunity for a <i>de minimis</i> finding? |
| ☒ | ☐ | Was the OWJ informed by the District of FDOT's intent to pursue a <i>de minimis</i> approval option? |
| ☒ | ☐ | Was the OWJ informed in writing that their concurrence with a no adverse effect finding to the activities, features or attributes which qualify the property for protection may result in FDOT making a <i>de minimis</i> approval under Section 4(f)? |
| ☒ | ☐ | Did the OWJ concur that the proposed project, including any enhancement, mitigation and minimization of harm measures, will result in no adverse effects to the activities features or attributes of the property? |

Basis on Which the Determination was Made

The project will widen S.R. 70 from the existing undivided, 2-lane typical section to a divided 4-lane typical section with a shared-use path on the south side. The road widening over the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) will remove the existing S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River bridge (Bridge No. 910001) and construct a westbound and eastbound bridge with two travel lanes each. The westbound bridge will replace the existing bridge, while the eastbound bridge will be constructed to the south of the existing bridge. The existing bridge right-of-way (ROW) occupancy at this location is currently 13,020 square feet (420-foot length over the canal by 31-foot-wide bridge typical section). This will be replaced with approximately 18,060 square feet (420-foot length by 43-foot-wide bridge typical section) for the new westbound bridge and approximately 35,700 square feet (420-foot length by 85-foot wide [60-foot wide bridge typical section plus 25-foot ROW gap between the bridges in the post-construction condition]) for the new eastbound bridge.

Considering the canal is a state sovereign submerged land (SSL), an SSL easement is required for the new bridge that will be constructed outside of the existing ROW. While the roadway improvements will require the additional ROW

occupancy/easements discussed above, the undertaking will not damage the historic site in a negative way that will diminish or destroy the qualities and characteristics for which it is considered eligible for listing in the NRHP. The SSL easement, footprint of the new bridges, and alterations to the earthen banking along the site are in keeping with the existing conditions within the project limits. The Section 106 effects determination for the proposed project resulted in no adverse effect and the OWJ concurred with this determination in a letter dated September 22, 2025. As such, the SSL easement and SFWMD ROW occupancy will have no adverse effect on activities, features, and attributes of the site.

Public Involvement Activities:

An in-person Alternatives Public Workshop was held on June 11, 2024 and a virtual Alternatives Public Workshop was held on June 18, 2024. The meetings were advertised in the local newspaper, on the project website, in the Florida Administrative Record, and through a newsletter mailed to property owners and emailed to interested parties, agency representatives and public officials. The meeting included a project video, visual displays including roll plots of alternatives, and opportunities for the public to ask questions of the project team. The proposed bridge over the Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal was depicted in the meeting exhibits. The exhibits and project video are available to the public on the project website. Following the Alternatives Public Workshop, the project was presented to the HRTPO staff and committees on October 2, 2024 to explain the study process and the alternatives for the multiple ongoing S.R. 70 corridor projects in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties.

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Attendees received a handout, and the project team explained the comment process. Attendees had an opportunity to view project materials, speak with project staff, and provide verbal testimony during the formal presentation and comment period. The presentation included information regarding the PD&E Study process, the preferred alternatives, a matrix, project schedule, and other project-related information.

In-person hearing attendees were able to provide verbal comments as well as leave written comments, and other comments were submitted by email, website, or mail. No comments were received regarding the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal). One related comment was received about the S.R. 70 Kissimmee River Bridge which is described in that section.

The overall public engagement began in the spring of 2023 and continued throughout the PD&E Study. A project specific web page was established on the FDOT's District One Projects Website (swflroads.com/project/450334-1) at the beginning of the study to provide updated information about the project and upcoming activities for the duration of the study. The project schedule, newsletters, meeting exhibits, and public meeting presentation are posted on the website as part of regular updates. On August 7, 2025, a copy of the bridge CRAS was uploaded to the project website for the public to review the findings and FDOT's determination that the proposed undertaking may have an adverse effect to the NRHP-eligible bridge. The website also includes a link where visitors can provide their comments and questions and sign up for the mailing list. The website is updated periodically with current related information and will be available for the duration of the study.

All of the referenced public involvement materials including notices, letters, transcripts, public comments, and the Section 106 Case Study are located in the project file.

OEM SME Concurrence Date: 02-19-2026

S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336])

Facility Type: Historic Bridge

Property Classification: Historic Site

Address and Coordinates:

Address: S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River, Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, Florida

Latitude: 27.238921 Longitude: -80.982458

Description of Property:

The S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (Bridge No. 910001) is a seven span, concrete beam and girder bridge constructed in 1966 in order to carry S.R. 70 over the newly channelized Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal). The peak of the bridge is equipped with a steel, removable span which accommodates the passing of larger vessels while being more cost effective than a manned, operable span. The overall dimension of the bridge measures approximately 418-feet long with four approach spans that are 33-feet wide with a roadway width of approximately 24-feet, and three main spans that are 31-feet wide with a roadway width of approximately 22-feet. The approach spans are a concrete beam and girder style superstructure with a concrete deck that has been paved with asphalt, while the main span is a removable steel span. The substructure has solid, sloped abutments comprised of concrete bags. The superstructure is supported by six bents, each comprised of squared concrete headers with two squared concrete piers and footers with a horizontal strut between the piers. The site is eligible for listing in the NHRP under Criterion C in the area of Engineering as an example of a removable span bridge. The State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurred with the findings on July 17, 2024.

Owner/Official with Jurisdiction: State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)

Recommended Outcome: Programmatic (Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation and Approval for FHWA Projects that Necessitate the Use of Historic Bridges)

Describe in detail how the Section 4(f) property will be used.

The proposed S.R. 70 improvements involve removal of the existing Kissimmee River Bridge (Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336]) and construction of a new bridge following the existing S.R. 70 alignment that will carry westbound traffic over the Kissimmee River and the construction of a second bridge to the south that will carry eastbound traffic. The proposed typical section for the bridge over the Kissimmee River consists of two 12-foot travel lanes in each direction. Adjacent to the inside travel lanes are six-foot shoulders and adjacent to the outside travel lanes are 10-foot shoulders and a shared use path across the southern length of the eastbound bridge. The existing bridge will remain operational until the new bridge is constructed.

Two build alternatives, Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2, were evaluated. Both build alternatives involve the replacement of the S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336]). Alternative 1 was identified as the Preferred Alternative since it results in better access management at Kissimmee River Estates, fewer residential relocations, fewer impacts to noise sensitive sites, and less impact to public recreational lands. The alignment for Build Alternative 1 closely follows the existing roadway alignment and widens to the south. A No-Build Alternative is considered a valid alternative throughout the life of the study. The No-Build Alternative assumes no improvements to S.R. 70 within the study limits through the Design Year of 2052, limiting work in the project area to routine maintenance. Based on the 2022 Bridge Inspection Report, the existing bridge is considered satisfactory; however, due to the age of the

structure (built in 1966 [58 years]), the bridge has reached the end of its service life which is designed for the service life of 50 years. The bridge currently shows signs of deterioration of the concrete and steel span, which is in line with the age of the bridge. Routine maintenance will not correct the ongoing physical deterioration and aging of the bridge that will eventually lead to bridge failure. Furthermore, the existing bridge has substandard shoulder widths and railings, especially on the steel (movable) span. In order to meet the project purpose and need, the Kissimmee River Bridge (Bridge No. 910001) would need to be widened; however, considering the bridge type (steel span bridge), the bridge is not suitable for widening.

In 2024, repairs and rehabilitation to the bridge (cleaning and sealing the roadway, deck spall repairs, structural steel repairs, and repainting of the steel portions) were done to maintain the bridge. These repairs will allow the bridge to remain in use until a solution for replacement or additional repair is made. The repairs are anticipated to add another 10 to 15 years to the lifespan, far exceeding the intended service of the bridge to 68 to 70 years.

A rehabilitation option was considered for this project; however, rehabilitation within its historic specifications does not address the substandard design and safety concerns and does not meet the purpose and need for the project. Rehabilitation of the bridge incorporating measures to meet the purpose and need of the project would adversely affect the characteristics that make the bridge eligible for the NRHP. Avoidance and minimization options were considered as part of the PD&E Study in order to avoid impacts to the historic bridge. However, there are constraints adjacent to the existing S.R. 70 alignment in the area of the Kissimmee River bridge with the Florida Power and Light (FPL) easement to the north and the Florida Gas Transmission (FGT) easement to the south. Due to the positioning of both easements, the potential to realign S.R. 70 to avoid replacing the bridge is not a feasible option.

Based on the information above, the No Build, Rehabilitation, and Avoidance alternatives are neither feasible nor prudent. As such, the project preferred alternative will demolish and replace the Kissimmee River Bridge (Bridge No. 910001) resulting in an adverse effect to the NRHP-eligible property. SHPO concurred with the adverse effect determination on July 17, 2025 (attached). FDOT and SHPO developed an MOA addressing suitable measures to mitigate this adverse effect and the final MOA, fully signed on March 5, 2026, is attached.

Applicability

Yes No

☒ ☐ Does the project meet all of the following criteria?

1. The bridge is to be replaced or rehabilitated with Federal funds.
2. The project will require the use of a historic bridge structure which is on or is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
3. The bridge is not a National Historic Landmark.
4. FDOT has determined that the facts of the project match those set forth in the sections below labeled Alternatives, Findings, and Measures to Minimize Harm.
5. Agreement among FDOT, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), if participating, has been reached through procedures pursuant to Section 106 of the NHPA.

Alternatives and Findings

1. No Build: The No Build Alternative has been studied and does not meet the Section 4(f) prudent and feasible standard. The No Build Alternative is not recommended based on the following:

- **Structural Deficiencies:** The No Build Alternative does not correct the situation that causes the bridge to be considered structurally deficient or significantly deteriorated. These deficiencies can lead to eventual structural failure/collapse. Normal maintenance is not considered adequate to address these deficiencies.
- **Functional/Geometric Deficiencies:** The No Build Alternative does not correct the situation that causes the bridge to be considered functionally/geometrically deficient. These deficiencies can lead to safety hazards to the traveling public or place unacceptable restrictions on transport and travel.

2. Build on New Location Without Using the Old Bridge: This alternative has been studied and does not meet the Section 4(f) prudent and feasible standard. The New Location Alternative is not recommended based on the following:

- **Structural Deficiencies:** The New Location Alternative does not correct the situation that causes the bridge to be considered structurally deficient or significantly deteriorated. These deficiencies can lead to eventual structural failure/collapse. Normal maintenance is not considered adequate to address these deficiencies.
- **Functional/Geometric Deficiencies:** The New Location Alternative does not correct the situation that causes the bridge to be considered functionally/geometrically deficient. These deficiencies can lead to safety hazards to the traveling public or place unacceptable restrictions on transport and travel.

3. Rehabilitation Without Affecting the Historic Integrity of the Bridge: This alternative has been studied and does not meet the Section 4(f) prudent and feasible standard. The Rehabilitation Alternative is not recommended based on the following:

- **Structural Deficiencies:** The Rehabilitation Alternative does not correct the situation that causes the bridge to be considered structurally deficient or significantly deteriorated. These deficiencies can lead to eventual structural failure/collapse. Normal maintenance is not considered adequate to address these deficiencies.
- **Functional/Geometric Deficiencies:** The Rehabilitation Alternative does not correct the situation that causes the bridge to be considered functionally/geometrically deficient. These deficiencies can lead to safety hazards to the traveling public or place unacceptable restrictions on transport and travel.

4. Replacement: The Replacement Alternative has been studied and is determined to meet the Section 4(f) prudent and feasible standard. The Replacement Alternative is recommended based on the following:

- **Structural Deficiencies:** The Replacement Alternative corrects the situation that causes the bridge to be considered structurally deficient or significantly deteriorated.
- **Functional/Geometric Deficiencies:** The Replacement Alternative corrects the situation that causes the bridge to be considered functionally/geometrically deficient.

Measures to Minimize Harm

- ☐ For bridges that are to be rehabilitated, the historic integrity of the bridge is preserved, to the greatest extent possible, consistent with unavoidable transportation needs, safety, and load requirements;
- ☐ For bridges that are to be rehabilitated to the point that the historic integrity is affected or that are to be moved or demolished, FDOT ensures that, in accordance with the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) standards, or other suitable means developed through consultation, fully adequate records are made of the bridge;
- ☐ For bridges that are to be replaced, the existing bridge is made available for an alternative use, provided a responsible party agrees to maintain and preserve the bridge; and
- ☒ For bridges that are adversely affected, agreement among the SHPO, FDOT, and ACHP (if participating in consultation) is reached through the Section 106 process of the NHPA on measures to minimize harm and those

measures are incorporated into the project. This programmatic Section 4(f) evaluation does not apply to projects where such an agreement cannot be reached.

The proposed project meets all the applicable criteria set forth by the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Guidance on Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation and Approval for FHWA Projects Which Necessitate the Use of Historic Bridges (23 CFR Part 774). All alternatives set forth in the subject programmatic evaluation were fully analyzed and the findings made are clearly applicable to this project. There are no feasible and prudent alternatives to the use of the historic bridge, and the project includes all possible planning to minimize harm.

Public Involvement Activities:

An in-person Alternatives Public Workshop was held on June 11, 2024 and a virtual Alternatives Public Workshop was held on June 18, 2024. The meetings were advertised in the local newspaper, on the project website, in the Florida Administrative Record, and through a newsletter mailed to property owners and emailed to interested parties, agency representatives and public officials. The meeting included a project video, visual displays including roll plots of alternatives, and opportunities for the public to ask questions of the project team. The proposed bridges over the Kissimmee River and need to remove the existing bridge was depicted in the meeting exhibits. The exhibits and project video are available to the public on the project website. Following the Alternatives Public Workshop, the project was presented to the HRTPO staff and committees on October 2, 2024 to explain the study process and the alternatives for the multiple ongoing S.R. 70 corridor projects in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties.

Local historical societies, including Okeechobee County Community Services, Okeechobee Historical Society, Heritage Association of Highlands County, Inc., Highlands County Historic Preservation Commission, and Sebring Historical Society, were contacted on July 21, 2025 to inform them of the adverse effect to the bridge, the documents prepared to date (the CRAS), and documents in process (Section 106 Case Study and Memorandum of Agreement [MOA]). The entities were asked for feedback that would be considered for development of the MOA. Responses were received from the Okeechobee Historical Society and the Highlands County Historic Preservation Commission. The Highlands County Historic Preservation Commission also included the Kissimmee River Bridge replacement as an agenda item in the August 21, 2025 commission meeting which is publicly advertised. The CRAS prepared for the bridge and the Section 106 Case Study were placed on the project website upon SHPO concurrence for public access.

The Highlands County Historic Preservation Commission advised that efforts be made to preserve the legacy and historical significance of the Kissimmee River Bridge, if at all possible. The Commission stated that this could include interpretive signage or other appropriate measures to ensure that the bridge's significance continues to be recognized. The Okeechobee Historical Society requested that the bridge plaque, dedicated to Billy Bowlegs III, be salvaged and preserved and the Society requested that the plaque and any other historical artifacts be offered to the society for preservation if the plaque cannot remain at the bridge site.

An in-person public hearing was held at the Indian River State College - Dixon Hendry Campus on December 16, 2025 and a virtual public hearing was held online via GoToWebinar on December 18, 2025. This public hearing was advertised in compliance with all federal and state requirements. The purpose of the hearing was to present the preferred alternative and allow the public to express their views about the proposed improvements. Meeting materials were posted to the project website on November 25, 2025 in advance of the hearing and remained available through December 31, 2025; these materials were also available at the in-person meeting.

Attendees received a handout, and the project team explained the comment process. Attendees had an opportunity to view project materials, speak with project staff, and provide verbal testimony during the formal presentation and comment period. The presentation included information regarding the PD&E Study process, the preferred alternatives, a matrix,

project schedule, and other project-related information.

In-person hearing attendees were able to provide verbal comments as well as leave written comments, and other comments were submitted by email, website, or mail. The only comment received from the public hearing regarding cultural resources in general, and the S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge in particular, was via email from the City of Okeechobee mayor, asking if the commemorative bridge plaque could be retained for the new bridge. This was the same comment he made during the public workshop. We responded that the plaque cannot be placed on a new bridge but that the MOA addresses salvage and relocation and the possibility of it going to the Okeechobee Historical Society property.

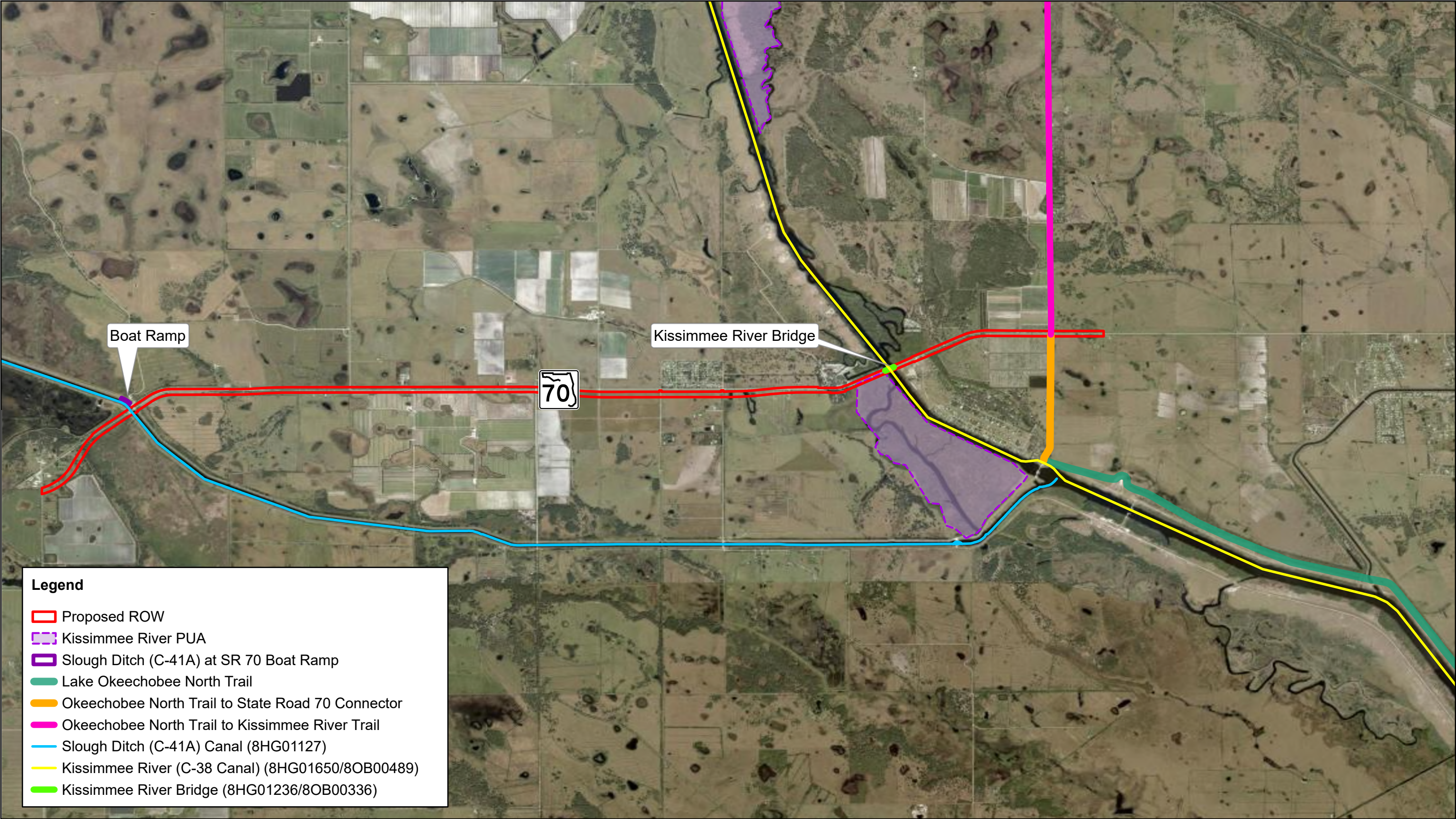
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All of the referenced public involvement materials including notices, letters, transcripts, public comments, and the Section 106 Case Study are located in the project file.

OEM SME Concurrence Date: 04-02-2026

Project-Level Attachments

Section 4(f) Sites Overview Map



- Legend**
- Proposed ROW
 - Kissimmee River PUA
 - Slough Ditch (C-41A) at SR 70 Boat Ramp
 - Lake Okeechobee North Trail
 - Okeechobee North Trail to State Road 70 Connector
 - Okeechobee North Trail to Kissimmee River Trail
 - Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127)
 - Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489)
 - Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336)



Section 4(f) Overview Map
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023

NORTH

0 1.1 2.2 Miles

Resource Attachments

Slough Ditch (C-41A) at SR 70 Boat Ramp

Slough Ditch (C-41A) at SR 70 Boat Ramp Exhibit
Slough Ditch (C-41A) at SR 70 Boat Ramp Photos
concept plan sheet_Slough Ditch boat ramp

Kissimmee River Public Use Area: S-65E Impoundment

Kissimmee River PUA Overview Map Exhibit
Kissimmee River PUA Map Exhibit
Kissimmee River Public use Area: S-65E Impoundment

Okeechobee North Trail Connector

Okeechobee North Trail Connector Overview Map Exhibit
Okeechobee North Trail Connector Map Exhibit
Okeechobee North Trail Connector Photos
concept plan sheet_trail location

Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127)

Overall Site Map
Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127) Exhibit
CRAS SHPO Concurrence

Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489)

Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG016508OB00489) Exhibit
Overall Site Map
SHPO Concurrence on CRAS for Mainline

S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336])

S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG012368OB00336) Exhibit
Kissimmee River Bridge Photos
SHPO Concurrence on CRAS for Kissimmee River Bridge
SHPO Concurrence on Section 106 Case Study for Kissimmee River Bridge
Signed MOA S.R. 70 Kissimmee River Bridge

Slough Ditch (C-41A) at SR 70 Boat Ramp

Contents:

Slough Ditch (C-41A) at SR 70 Boat Ramp Exhibit

Slough Ditch (C-41A) at SR 70 Boat Ramp Photos

concept plan sheet_Slough Ditch boat ramp



Slough Ditch (C-41A) Boat Ramp with Project Footprint
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023





Photo 1: Drone view with boat ramp property in upper right corner.



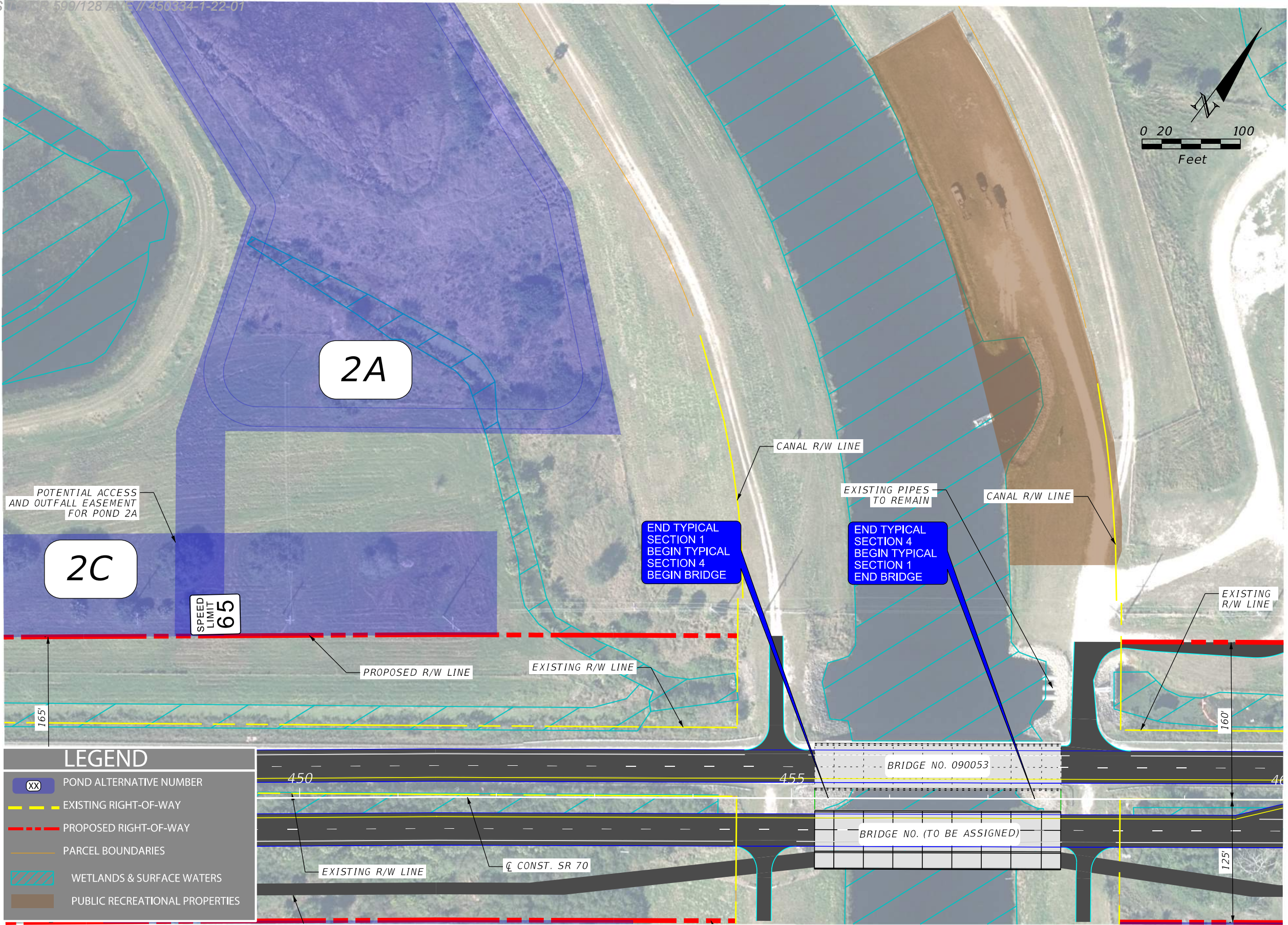
Photo 2: View facing north along driveway to boat ramp.



Photo 3: View facing north near boat ramp.



Photo 4: View facing south at boat ramp.



Spot on Gate Resource Exclusion

REVISIONS				ENGINEER OF RECORD	STATE OF FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION			SHEET NO. 1
DATE	DESCRIPTION	DATE	DESCRIPTION		ROAD NO.	COUNTY	FINANCIAL PROJECT ID	
					SR 70	HIGHLANDS OKEECHOBEE	450334-1-22-01	

NICHOLAS JOHN CLAVELO P.E.
LICENSE NUMBER: 84366
SCALAR CONSULTING GROUP, LLC.
5713 CORPORATE WAY, SUITE 200
WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA 33407

ALTERNATIVE 1
CONCEPT PLAN

THE OFFICIAL RECORD OF THIS SHEET IS THE ELECTRONIC FILE DIGITALLY SIGNED AND SEALED UNDER RULE 61G15-23.004, F.A.C.

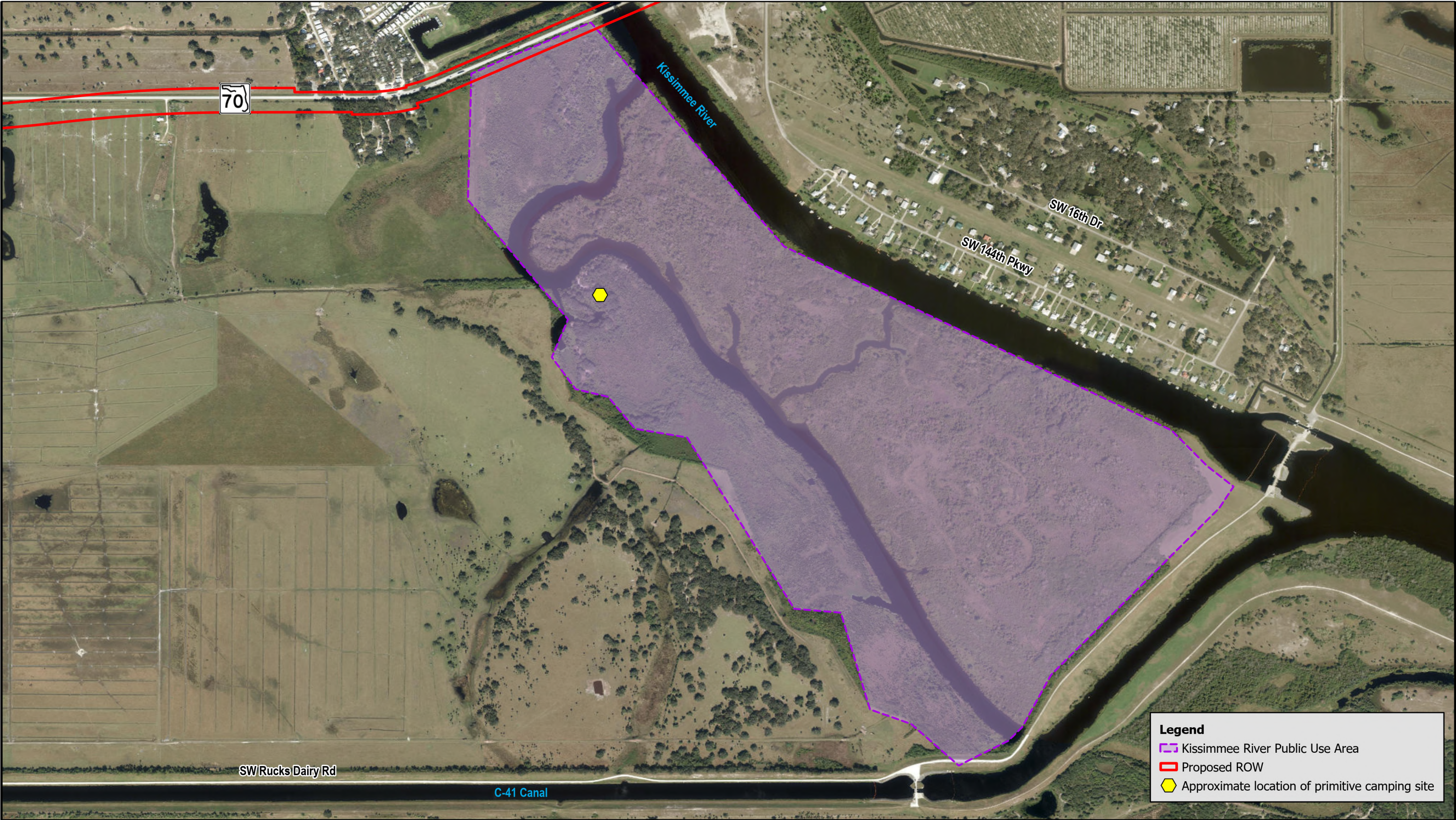
Kissimmee River Public Use Area: S-65E Impoundment

Contents:

Kissimmee River PUA Overview Map Exhibit

Kissimmee River PUA Map Exhibit

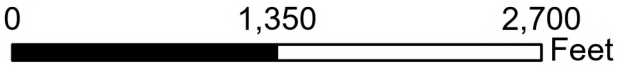
Kissimmee River Public use Area: S-65E Impoundment



Kissimmee River Public Use Area: Zone A (Portion)

SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023





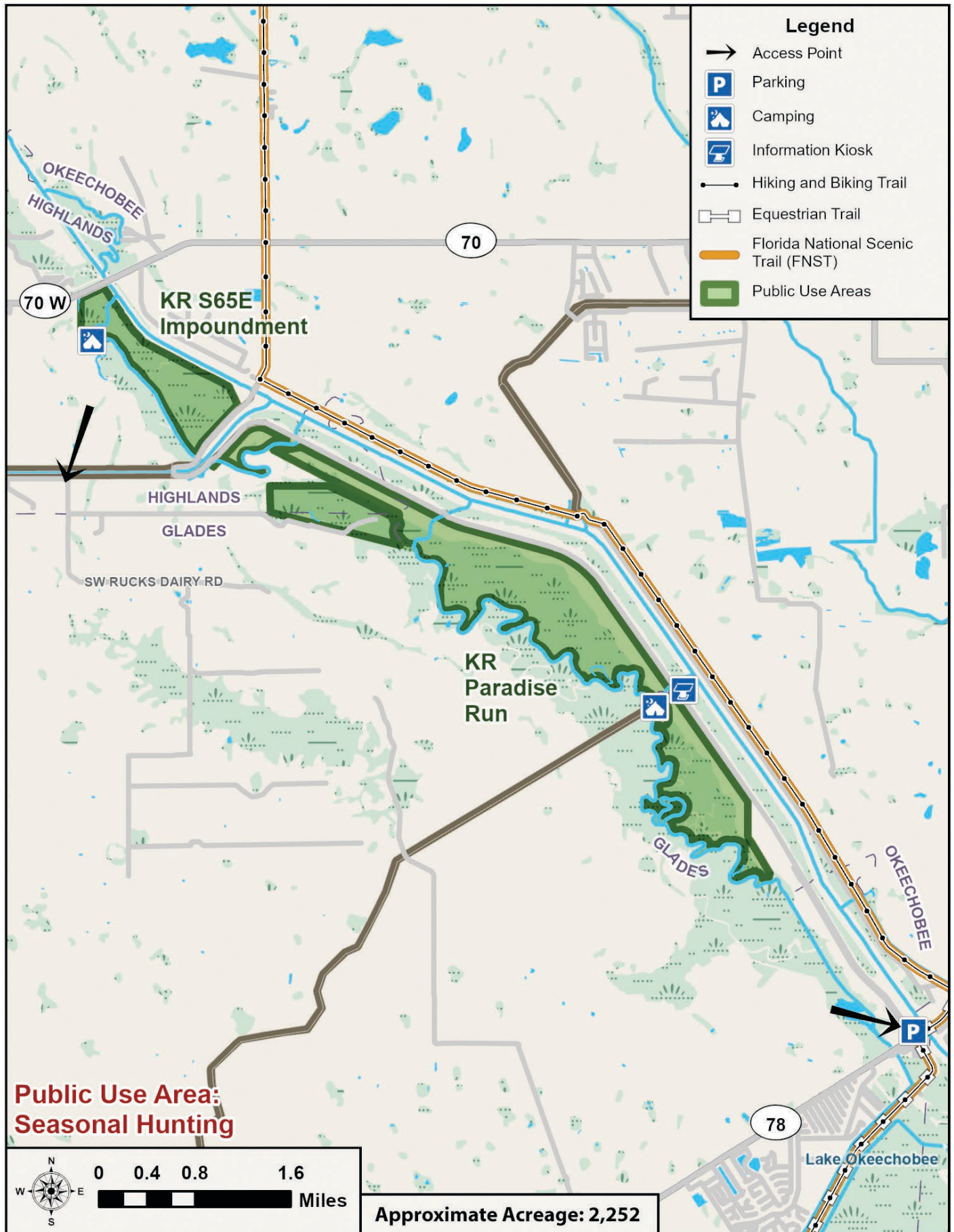
Kissimmee River Public Use Area (PUA) : Zone A (Portion) with Project Footprint

SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue
FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023

0 225 450 Feet





Okeechobee North Trail Connector

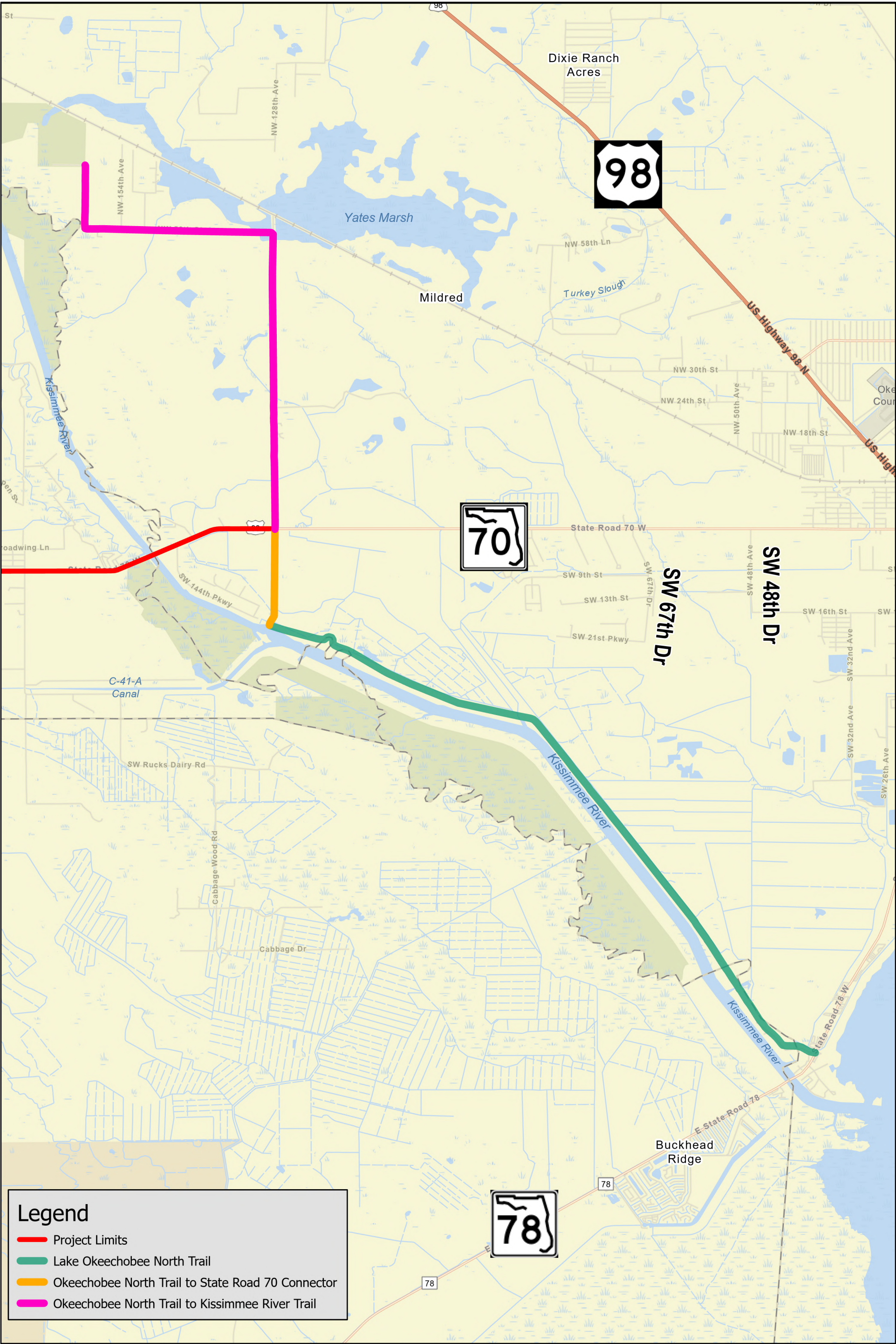
Contents:

Okeechobee North Trail Connector Overview Map Exhibit

Okeechobee North Trail Connector Map Exhibit

Okeechobee North Trail Connector Photos

concept plan sheet_trail location



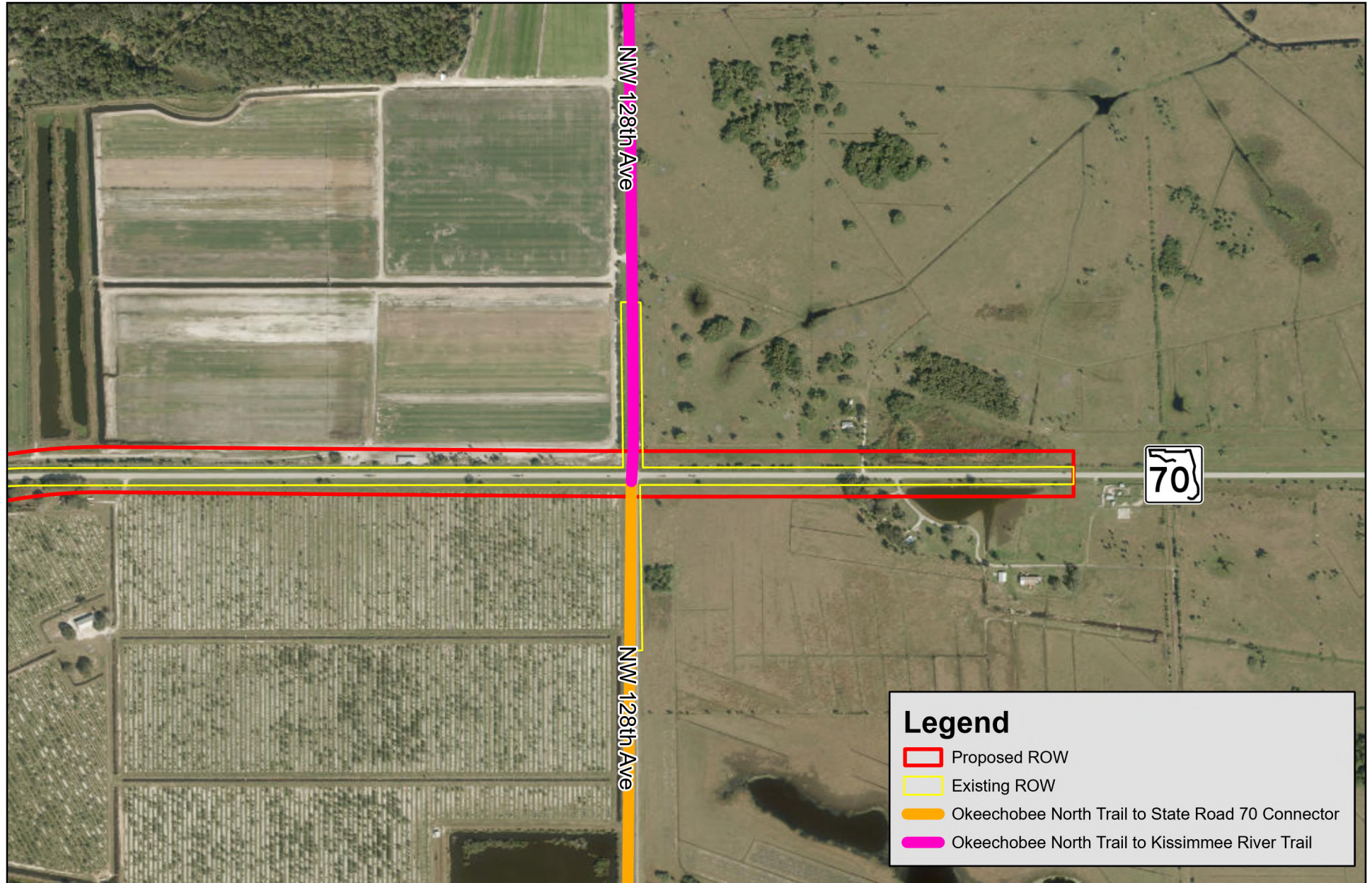
Legend

Project Limits

Lake Okeechobee North Trail

Okeechobee North Trail to State Road 70 Connector

Okeechobee North Trail to Kissimmee River Trail



Legend

- Proposed ROW
- Existing ROW
- Okeechobee North Trail to State Road 70 Connector
- Okeechobee North Trail to Kissimmee River Trail

	Okeechobee North Trail to SR 70 Connector/Okeechobee North Trail to Kissimmee River with Project Footprint SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 559/128 Avenue FPID No. 450334-1-22-01 Highlands and Okeechobee Counties	Image Source: ESRI Image Date: 2023 NORTH 0 500 1,000 Feet
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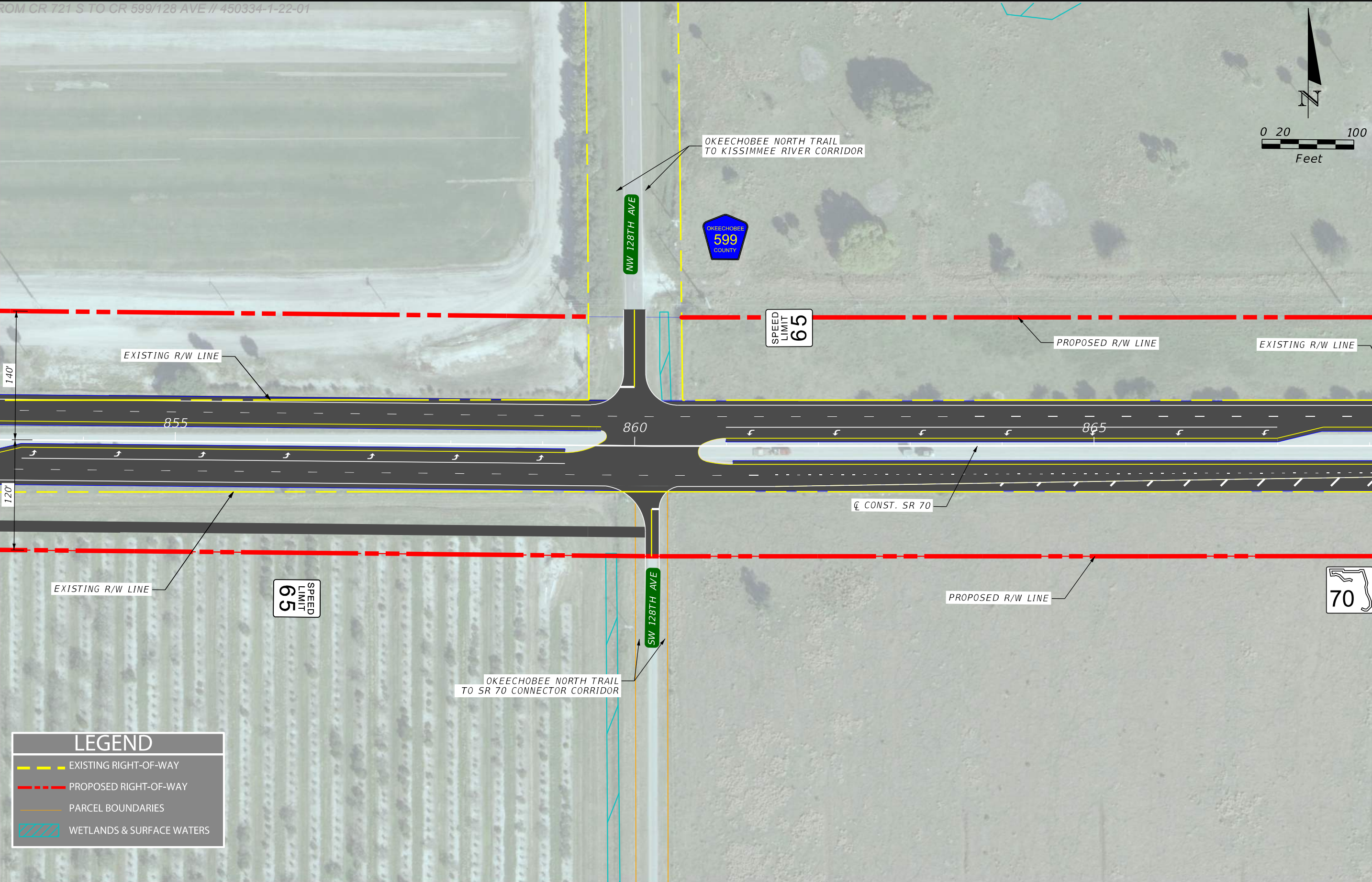
Photo 1: View facing north in center of CR 599/128th Avenue. SR 70 is up ahead.



Photo 2: View facing north along west side of CR 599/128th Avenue near SR 70 intersection.



Photo 3: View facing south from just north of SR 70.



LEGEND

EXISTING RIGHT-OF-WAY

PROPOSED RIGHT-OF-WAY

REVISIONS				ENGINEER OF RECORD	STATE OF FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION			SHEET NO.
DATE	DESCRIPTION	DATE	DESCRIPTION		ROAD NO.	COUNTY	FINANCIAL PROJECT ID	
				NICHOLAS JOHN CLAVELLO P.E. LICENSE NUMBER: 84366 SCALAR CONSULTING GROUP, LLC. 5713 CORPORATE WAY, SUITE 200 WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA 33407	SR 70	HIGHLANDS OKEECHOBEE	450334-1-22-01	4

Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127)

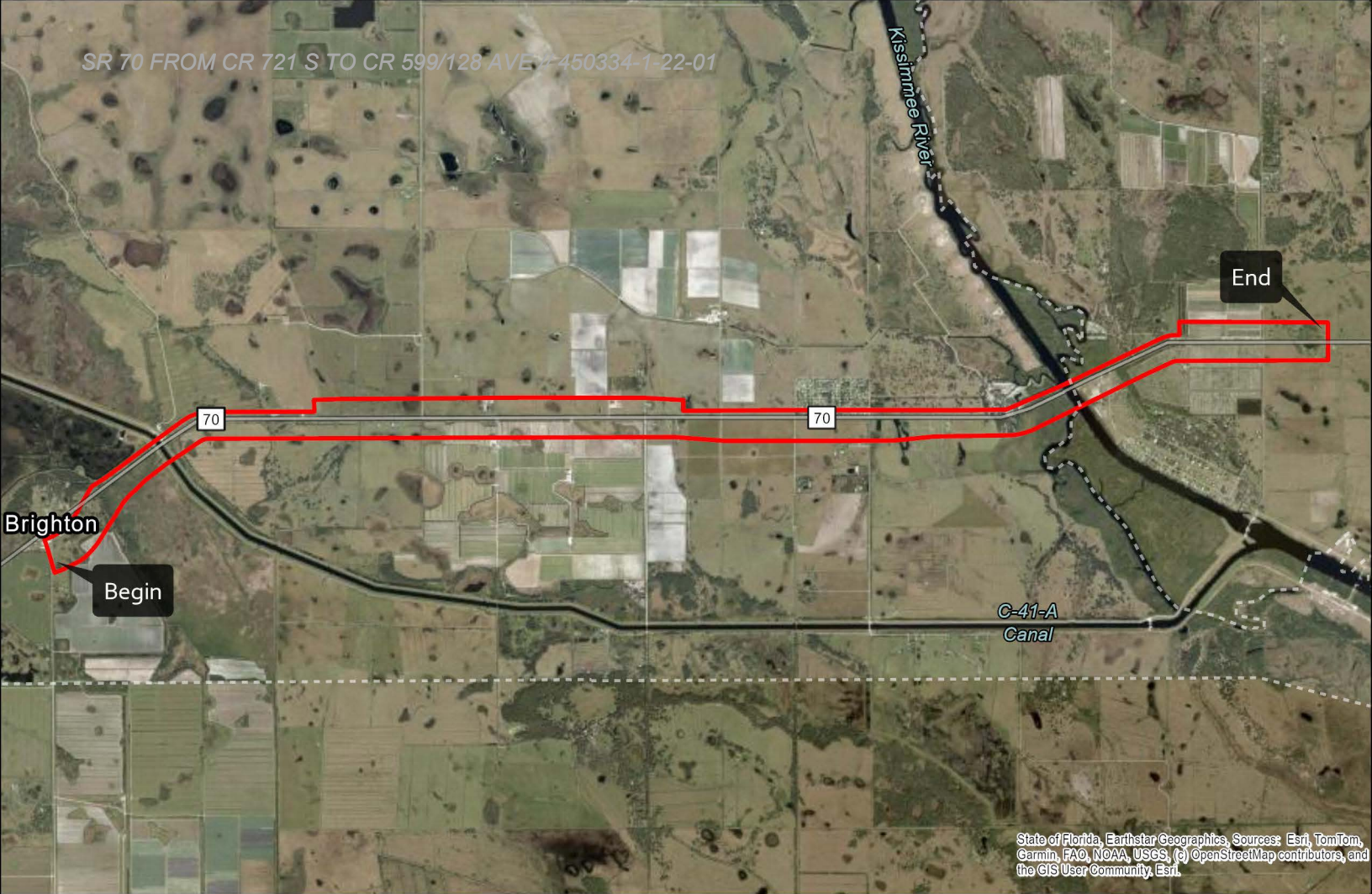
Contents:

Overall Site Map

Slough Ditch (C-41A) Canal (8HG01127) Exhibit

CRAS SHPO Concurrence

SR 70 FROM CR 721 S TO CR 599/128 AVE / 450334-1-22-01



State of Florida, Earthstar Geographics, Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community, Esri.

SR 70 FROM CR 721 S TO CR 599/128 AVE / 450334-1-22-01



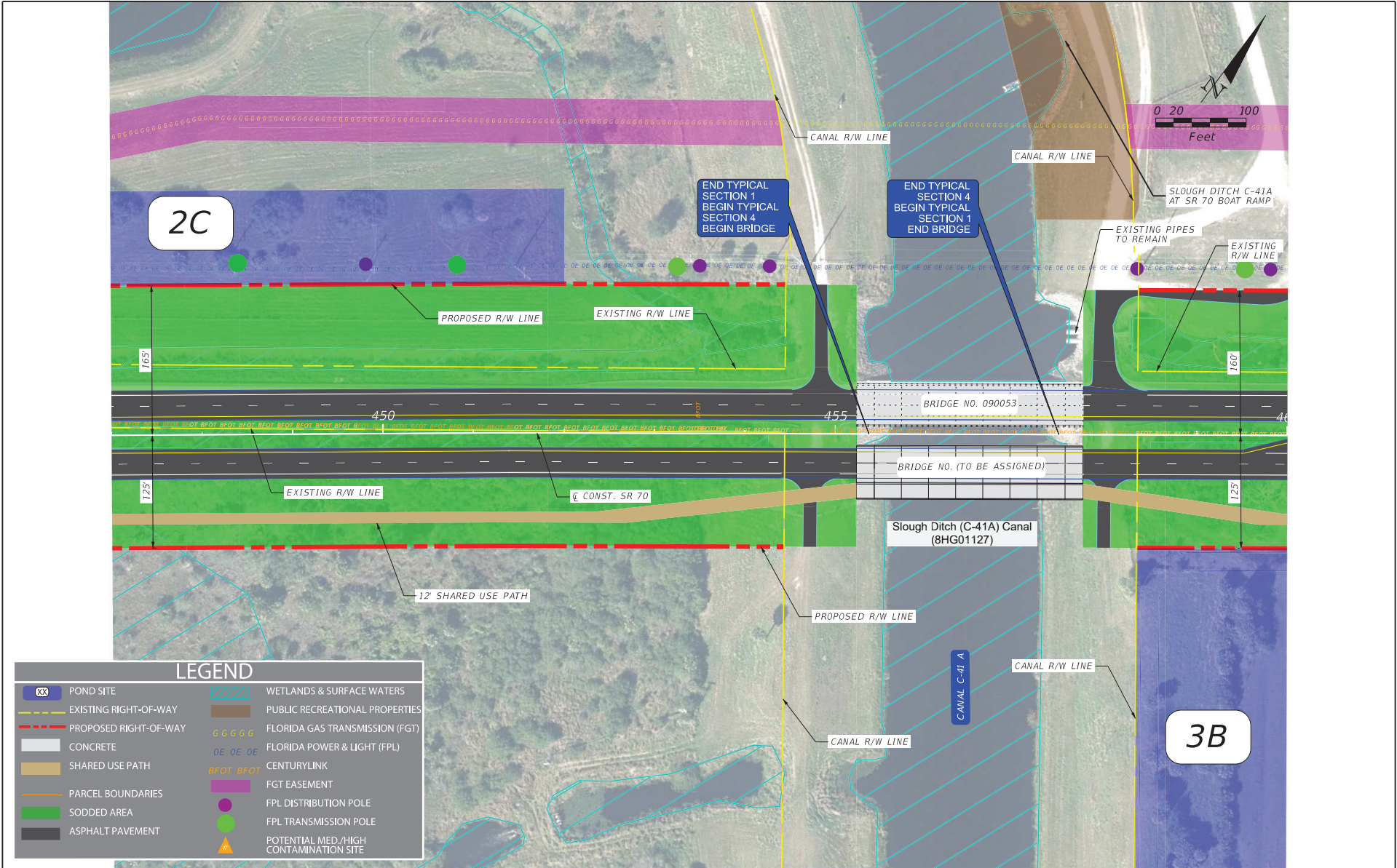
APE

0 1 2 Miles

0 2 4 Kilometers

Page 58 of 656





REVISIONS				ENGINEER OF RECORD	STATE OF FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION			ALTERNATIVE 1 CONCEPT PLAN	SHEET NO.
DATE	DESCRIPTION		DATE	DESCRIPTION					ROAD NO.
					NICHOLAS JOHN CLAVELLO P.E. LICENSE NUMBER: 84366 SCALAR CONSULTING GROUP, LLC 5713 CORPORATE WAY, SUITE 200 WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA 33407	SR 70	HIGHLANDS OKEECHOBEE		

ALTERNATIVE 1
CONCEPT PLAN

P:\FL2301000 SR 70 PD&E Study\45033412201\roadway\PLANRD01.dgn : CL10 - PLAN 5 [SHEET]
Jarechavaleta 10/6/2025 3:50:02 PM



Florida Department of Transportation

RON DESANTIS
GOVERNOR

605 Suwannee Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450

JARED W. PERDUE, P.E.
SECRETARY

September 19, 2025

Alissa S. Lotane
Director and State Historic Preservation Officer
Florida Division of Historical Resources
Florida Department of State
R. A. Gray Building
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

RE: Section 106 Stipulation VII Submission
SR 70 FROM CR 721 S TO CR 599/128 AVE
District 1
FM # 450334-1-22-01
DHR CRAT Number: 2024-2438C

Dear Ms. Lotane,

Dear Ms. Lotane:

Enclosed please find one copy of the report titled *Cultural Resource Assessment Survey Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Study State Road (SR) 70 from County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, Florida*. This report presents the findings in support of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District One, proposed improvements to SR 70. The purpose of this project is to address safety conditions on SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue. The study is approximately 8.6-miles long and proposed improvements include the widening of a two-lane facility up to a four-lane, divided facility, and/or the inclusion of operational improvements along the corridor. Additional right-of-way (ROW) is expected to accommodate the proposed improvements. This is a federally funded project.

As part of the PD&E Study, two build alternatives, Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2, and a No Build Alternative are being evaluated. Of these, the proposed Build Alternative 1, as described above, is the only alternative that eliminates ROW impacts to residential areas along the mainline by meandering outside of the existing ROW to avoid impacts. The preferred alternative is still under review by the FDOT; therefore, this Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (CRAS) was conducted based on the worst-case scenario of the footprint of construction. As such, based on the project type and location of the proposed work, the archaeological APE was limited to the footprint of construction which includes a 50-ft buffer to allow for any potential changes to the proposed alternative and is based on the worst-case scenario. The historic/architectural APE included the footprint of construction within the 50-ft buffer as well as resources within 200-ft from existing ROW on the side where no ROW acquisition is anticipated and 500-ft from proposed new ROW where the road widening is likely to occur. This expanded APE was based on the anticipation that the preferred alternative will go outside of the existing ROW, which will mostly occur on the south side, in order to avoid residential impacts.

All work was conducted to comply with Section 106 of the *National Historic Preservation Act* of 1966 (Public Law 89-665, as amended), as implemented by 36 *CFR* 800 (*Protection of Historic Properties*, effective August 2004), as well as Chapters 267 and 373, *Florida Statutes (FS)*, and Chapter 1A-46, *Florida Administrative Code (FAC)*. All work was carried out in conformity with the Archaeological and Historical Resources Chapter of the FDOT's *PD&E Manual* (FDOT 2024), and the standards and guidelines contained in the Florida Division of Historic Resources' (FDHR) *Cultural Resource Management Standards and Operational Manual: Module 3* (FDHR 2003). The Principal Investigators meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Historic Preservation Professional Qualification Standards* (48 Federal Register [FR] 44716) for archaeology, history, architecture, architectural history, or historic architecture.

The Archaeological background research including a review of the Florida Master Site File (FMSF) and the NRHP digital databases indicated that one previously recorded site (8HG00894) is within the APE. The Brighton Sugarcane #22 Site (8HG00894) is a pre-Contact midden with a historic refuse component that is located within the APE; it has not been evaluated for NRHP eligibility by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). Historical background research indicated that three historic resources (8HG01127, 8HG01236/8OB00336, and 8HG01650/8OB00489) were previously recorded within the APE. These include two linear resources (8HG01127 and 8HG01650/8OB00489) and one bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336]). Of these, the segment of the Slough Ditch Canal (C-41A) (8HG01127) was evaluated as eligible while having insufficient information for determining NRHP eligibility for the whole resource. The Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489) and the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336]) were previously recorded in June 2024. The Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489) was evaluated as having insufficient information for determining NRHP eligibility and the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336]) was determined eligible for listing in the NRHP by the SHPO under Criterion C in the area of Engineering as an example of a removable span bridge; and received SHPO concurrence in 2024 (Lotane 2024).

As a result of the CRAS, the previously recorded Brighton Sugarcane #22 Site (8HG00894) was identified within the archaeological APE. The site is located outside of the proposed ROW and because only a small area of the site was found within the archaeological APE, there is insufficient information to make an evaluation of NRHP-eligibility. The historic/architectural field survey resulted in the identification of 46 historic resources within the historic/architectural APE. Of these, 42 were newly identified, recorded, and evaluated (8HG01683 - 8HG01712, 8HG01722/8OB00504, 8HG01723/8OB00505, 8HG01724, 8HG01725, 8HG01726, 8HG01727, 8HG01728, 8HG01729, 8OB00384, 8OB00385, 8OB00386, 8OB00503) and two newly identified segments of previously recorded linear resources (8HG01127 and 8HG01306/8OB00269) were identified and evaluated. In addition, the segment of the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489) within the APE was found to have insufficient information to make a determination of NRHP eligibility; as such, the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489) will be updated and evaluated. The Kissimmee River Bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336]) remains eligible for listing in the NRHP and was not re-evaluated or updated during this survey.

Of the 46 historic resources identified within the historic/architectural APE, 43 appear ineligible for listing in the NRHP (8HG01306/8OB00269, 8HG01683-8HG01712, 8HG01722/8OB00504, 8HG01723/8OB00505, 8HG01724, 8HG01725, 8HG01726, 8HG01727, 8HG01728, 8HG01729,

8OB00384, 8OB00385, 8OB00386, 8OB00503). The ineligible resources include 34 buildings (8HG01683-8HG01712, 8OB00384, 8OB00385, 8OB00386, 8OB00503) constructed between circa (ca.) 1945 and 1979, eight linear resources (8HG01306/8OB00269, 8HG01722/8OB00504, 8HG01723/8OB00505, 8HG01724, 8HG01725, 8HG01726, 8HG01727, 8HG01728), and one building complex resource group (8HG01729). Three resources that are or appear eligible for listing in the NRHP, the Slough Ditch Canal (C-41A) (8HG01127), the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336]), and a segment of the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489), are located within the historic/architectural APE

The FDOT has applied the Criteria of Adverse Effect found in 36 CFR Part 800.5 to the three historic resources (8HG01127, 8HG01236/8OB00336, and 8HG01650/8OB00489) that are eligible or appear eligible for listing in the NRHP and one site (8HG00894) that has insufficient information to make a determination of NRHP eligibility located within the project APE. Based on the proposed undertaking, the findings presented here indicate that the undertaking will have **No Adverse Effect** to the segments of the Slough Ditch Canal (C-41A) (8HG01127) and the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489) or the small portion of the previously recorded Brighton Sugarcane #22 Site (8HG00894). However, because all project alternatives proposed for the SR 70 improvements will involve the replacement of the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) the proposed undertaking will have an **adverse effect** on the bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336). A Case Study Report is currently being prepared to evaluate the potential effects of the proposed undertaking to the NR-eligible SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336).

This information is being provided in accordance with the provisions of 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 environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by FDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated May 26, 2022 and executed by FHWA and FDOT.

The Cultural Resource Assessment Survey is provided for your review and comment. I respectfully request your concurrence with the findings of the enclosed report.

Based on the review summarized above, FDOT has determined that this project 450334-1-22-01 will result in **Adverse Effect** on historic properties. In accordance with Stipulation III.B. of the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (PA), this review was conducted by or under the supervision of a person(s) meeting the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards (36 C.F.R. Part 61, Appendix A and 48 FR 44716)* in the fields of History, Archaeology, and Architectural History. 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 FDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated May 26, 2022, and executed by the FHWA and FDOT.

Sincerely,

Electronically signed by Emily Barnett **FOR** Jeffrey James on September 19, 2025

The Florida State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) reviewed the submission referenced above and finds the document contains sufficient information and concurs with the information provided for the above referenced project.

SHPO/FDHR Comments



September 22, 2025

Signed

Date

Alissa S. Lotane, Director

Florida Division of Historical Resources

cc: Lindsay Rothrock, Cultural & Historical Resource Specialist
FDOT Office of Environmental Management

Submitted Documents

- [45033412201-CE2-D1-SHPO_Files-2025-0919.zip](#) (Florida Master Site File Forms)
SHPO Files
- [45033412201-CE2-D1-450334-1-22-01_April_2025_Rev_CRAS_SR_70_PD_E_Study-2025-0917.pdf](#) (Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (CRAS) Addendum)
450334-1-22-01_April 2025 Rev_CRAS SR 70 PD&E Study

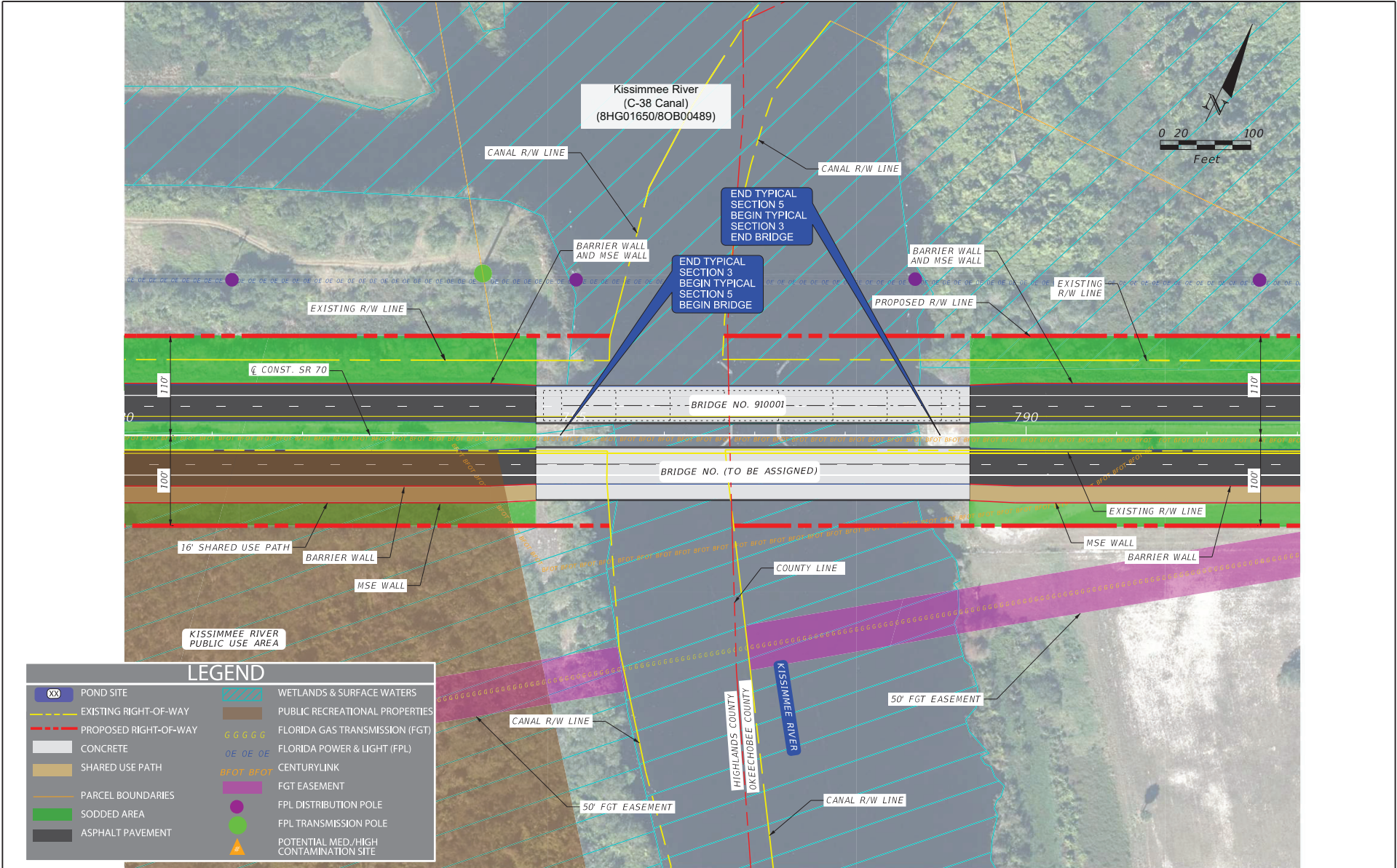
Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489)

Contents:

Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG016508OB00489) Exhibit

Overall Site Map

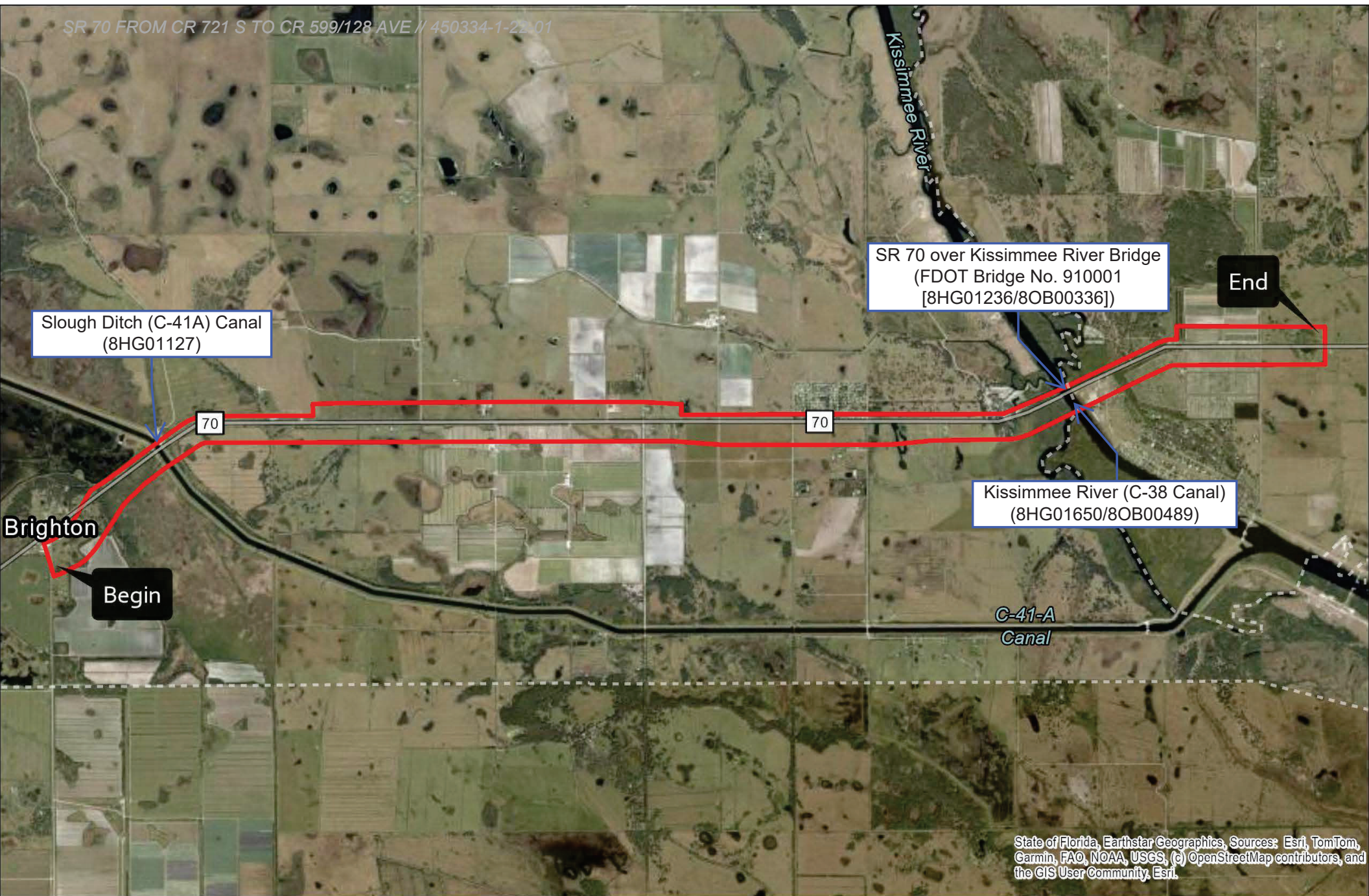
SHPO Concurrence on CRAS for Mainline



REVISIONS		ENGINEER OF RECORD		STATE OF FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION		ALTERNATIVE 1 CONCEPT PLAN	SHEET NO. 28
DATE	DESCRIPTION	DATE	DESCRIPTION	ROAD NO.	COUNTY		
			NICHOLAS JOHN CLAVELLO P.E. LICENSE NUMBER: 84366 SCALAR CONSULTING GROUP, LLC 5713 CORPORATE WAY, SUITE 200 WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA 33407	SR 70	HIGHLANDS OKEECHOBEE		
				FINANCIAL PROJECT ID 450334-1-22-01			

P:\FL23010.00 SR 70 PD&E Study\45033412201\roadway\PLANRD01.dgn - CL12 - PLAN 28 (SHEET)
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THE OFFICIAL RECORD OF THIS SHEET IS THE ELECTRONIC FILE DIGITALLY SIGNED AND SEALED UNDER RULE 61G15-23.004, F.A.C.



 APE

0 1 2 Miles

0 2 4 Kilometers





Florida Department of Transportation

RON DESANTIS
GOVERNOR

605 Suwannee Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450

JARED W. PERDUE, P.E.
SECRETARY

September 5, 2025

Alissa S. Lotane
Director and State Historic Preservation Officer
Florida Division of Historical Resources
Florida Department of State
R. A. Gray Building
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

RE: Section 106 Case Study Report Submission
SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336)
SR 70 FROM CR 721 S TO CR 599/128 AVE
District 1
FM # 450334-1-22-01
DHR CRAT Number: 2024-2438D

Dear Ms. Lotane,

Dear Ms. Lotane:

Enclosed please find one copy of the report titled *Section 106 Consultation Case Study Report Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Study State Road (SR) 70 from County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, Florida*. This report presents the findings in support of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District One, proposed improvements to SR 70. The purpose of this project is to address safety conditions on SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue. The study is approximately 8.6-miles long and proposed improvements include the widening of a two-lane facility up to a four-lane, divided facility, and/or the inclusion of operational improvements along the corridor. Additional right-of-way (ROW) is expected to accommodate the proposed improvements. This is a federally funded project.

As part of the PD&E Study, two build alternatives, Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2, and a No Build Alternative are being evaluated. Both Build Alternatives for the SR 70 improvements involve the replacement of the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/ 8OB00336]) which was previously determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). In order to meet the established schedule for the PD&E deliverables, a discussion was held on July 25, 2023, with representatives from Archaeological Consultants, Inc. (ACI), Scalar, and FDOT District One to develop an approach for cultural resource compliance on the SR 70 PD&E Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (CRAS). This approach enables the Section 106 process to move forward with consultation to resolve the adverse effect on the NRHP-eligible SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) prior to completing the CRAS for the rest of the project (mainline road realignment, ponds, etc.). A full archaeological and historic resources survey of the corridor was conducted, and the results are in the April 2025 CRAS.

In June 2024, ACI conducted a CRAS that was limited to the footprint of construction of the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge replacement portion of the PD&E Study (ACI 2024). The bridge footprint was the Area of Potential Effects (APE). The purpose of the bridge CRAS was to survey and re-assess the bridge's significance in terms of eligibility for listing in the NRHP. The bridge (8OB00336/8HG01236) was determined eligible for listing in the NRHP by the SHPO in 2014 under Criterion C in the area of Engineering as an example of a removable span bridge. As a result of the 2024 CRAS, the bridge remains eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion C in the area of Engineering as an example of a removable span bridge. The SHPO concurred with the recommendations and findings on July 17, 2024 (Lotane 2024; Project File No. 2024-2438).

The objective of this *Section 106 Consultation Case Study Report* is to evaluate the potential effects of the proposed undertaking to the historic properties located within the APE as identified above. The FDOT has applied the Criteria of Adverse Effect found in 36 CFR Part 800.5 to the historic property determined eligible for listing in the NRHP located within the project APE. Because all project alternatives proposed for the SR 70 improvements will involve the replacement of the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) the proposed undertaking will have an **adverse effect** on the bridge.

According to the Public Involvement Plan, public engagement and appropriate coordination meetings with local government, and environmental permitting agencies, work sessions, and small group meetings will continue throughout the final design phase. Following the PD&E Study, mitigation measures will be required. As such, coordination among FDOT, District One, OEM, the SHPO, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), as well as the public will continue to ensure that a sensitive and appropriate mitigation treatment plan is developed. The ACHP will be notified of the adverse effect determination, and measures to resolve the adverse effect to the Kissimmee River Bridge (Bridge No. 910001) will be documented in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between FDOT, SHPO, and other affected parties, as appropriate.

This information is being provided in accordance with the provisions of 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 environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by FDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated May 26, 2022 and executed by FHWA and FDOT.

The Section 106 Consultation Case Study Report is provided for your review and comment. I respectfully request your concurrence with the findings of the enclosed report.

Based on the review summarized above, FDOT has determined that this project 450334-1-22-01 will result in **Adverse Effect** on historic properties. In accordance with Stipulation III.B. of the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (PA), this review was conducted by or under the supervision of a person(s) meeting the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards (36 C.F.R. Part 61, Appendix A and 48 FR 44716)* in the fields of History, Archaeology, and Architectural History. 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 FDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 327 and a Memorandum of

Understanding dated May 26, 2022, and executed by the FHWA and FDOT.

Sincerely,

Electronically signed by Emily Barnett **FOR** Jeffrey James on September 5, 2025

The Florida State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) reviewed the submission referenced above and finds the document contains sufficient information and concurs with the information provided for the above referenced project.	
SHPO/FDHR Comments	
	
Signed	September 22, 2025
Alissa S. Lotane, Director	
Florida Division of Historical Resources	

cc: Lindsay Rothrock, Cultural & Historical Resource Specialist
FDOT Office of Environmental Management

Submitted Documents

- [45033412201-CE2-D1-450334-1-22-01_August_2025_Sec_106_Kissimmee_River_Bridge-2025-0905.pdf](#) (Section 106 Case Study Report)
450334-1-22-01_August 2025_Sec 106 Kissimmee River Bridge

S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336])

Contents:

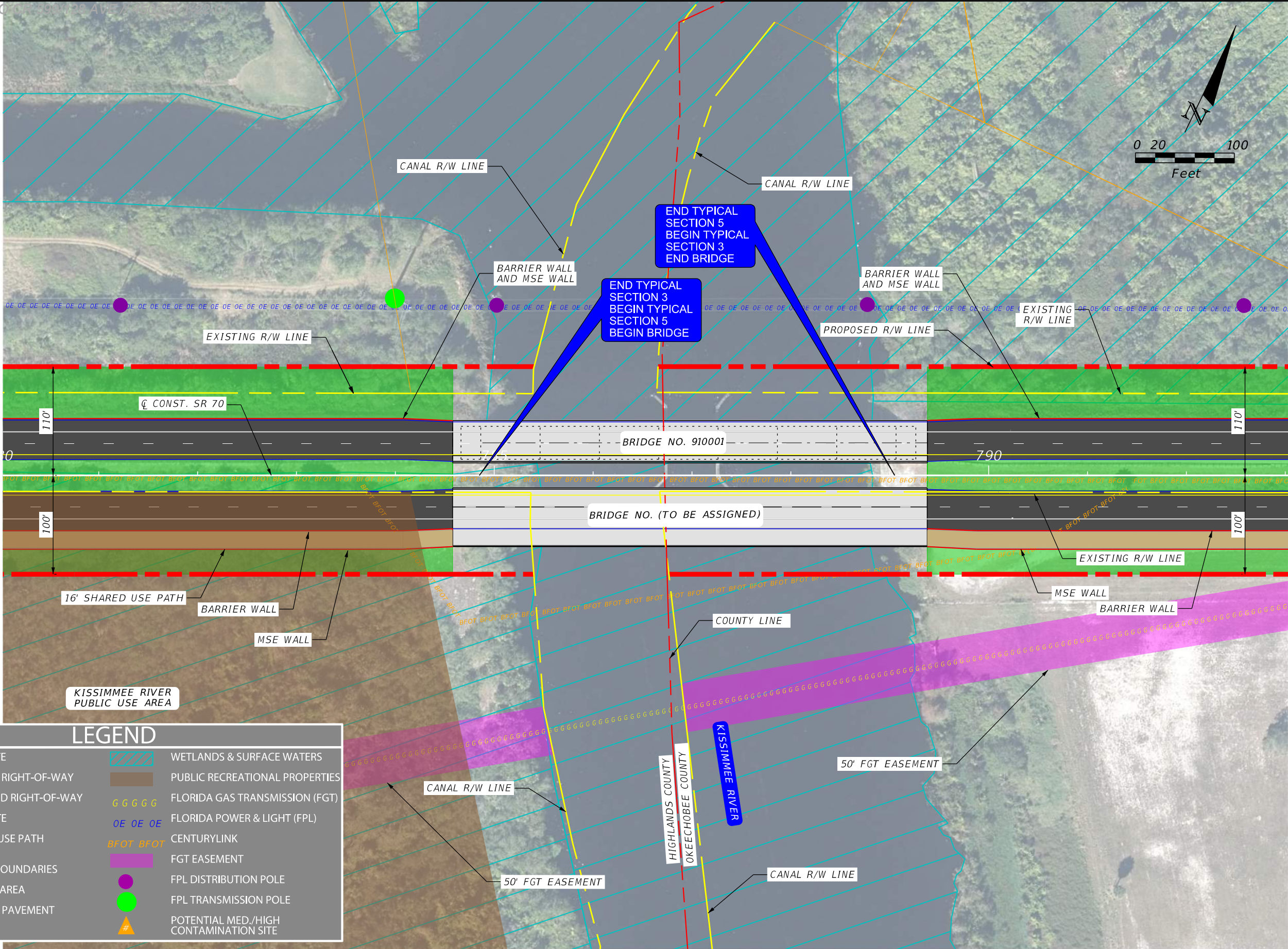
S.R. 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG012368OB00336) Exhibit

Kissimmee River Bridge Photos

SHPO Concurrence on CRAS for Kissimmee River Bridge

SHPO Concurrence on Section 106 Case Study for Kissimmee River Bridge

Signed MOA S.R. 70 Kissimmee River Bridge



LEGEND			
	POND SITE		WETLANDS & SURFACE WATERS
	EXISTING RIGHT-OF-WAY		PUBLIC RECREATIONAL PROPERTIES
	PROPOSED RIGHT-OF-WAY		FLORIDA GAS TRANSMISSION (FGT)
	CONCRETE		FLORIDA POWER & LIGHT (FPL)
	SHARED USE PATH		CENTURYLINK
	PARCEL BOUNDARIES		FGT EASEMENT
	SODDED AREA		FPL DISTRIBUTION POLE
	ASPHALT PAVEMENT		FPL TRANSMISSION POLE
			POTENTIAL MED./HIGH CONTAMINATION SITE

REVISIONS				ENGINEER OF RECORD	STATE OF FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION			ALTERNATIVE 1 CONCEPT PLAN	SHEET NO.
DATE	DESCRIPTION	DATE	DESCRIPTION	NICHOLAS JOHN CLAVELLO P.E. LICENSE NUMBER: 84366 SCALAR CONSULTING GROUP, LLC. 5713 CORPORATE WAY, SUITE 200 WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA 33407	ROAD NO.	COUNTY	FINANCIAL PROJECT ID		28
					SR 70	HIGHLANDS OKEECHOBEE	450334-1-22-01		
on 4/10/2023, Perical Exclusion									



Photo 1. SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge, Bridge No. 910001 (8HG01236/8OB00336), looking east. Note the removable steel span.



Photo 2. SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge, Bridge No. 910001 (8HG01236/8OB00336), looking northwest.



Florida Department of Transportation

RON DESANTIS
GOVERNOR

801 N. Broadway Avenue
Bartow, FL 33830

JARED W. PERDUE, P.E.
SECRETARY

July 9, 2024

Alissa S. Lotane
Director and State Historic Preservation Officer
Florida Division of Historical Resources
Florida Department of State
R.A. Gray Building
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

Attn: Ms. Alyssa McManus, Transportation Compliance Review Program

RE: Cultural Resource Assessment Survey
Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study
State Road (SR) 70 from County Road (CR) 721
South to CR 599/128th Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, Florida
SR 70 Over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336)
Financial Project No.: 450334-1-22-01

Dear Ms. Lotane,

Enclosed please find one copy of the report titled *Cultural Resource Assessment Survey Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study State Road (SR) 70 from County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue, Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, Florida; SR 70 Over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336)*. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District One is conducting a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study to address safety conditions on SR 70 from CR 721 S to CR 599/128th Avenue. The study is approximately 8.6-miles long and proposed improvements include the widening of a two-lane facility up to a four-lane, divided facility, and/or the inclusion of operational improvements along the corridor. Travel lane widths may be widened from 10 feet (ft) to 12 ft as part of the project and multimodal facilities will also be considered along the corridor where appropriate. Additional right-of-way (ROW) is expected to accommodate the proposed improvements.

All project alternatives proposed for the SR 70 improvements will involve the replacement of the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) which has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). In order to meet the established schedule for the PD&E deliverables, a discussion was held on July 25, 2023 with representatives from ACI, Scalar, and FDOT District One to develop an approach for cultural resource compliance on the SR 70 PD&E Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (CRAS). The approach would enable the Section 106 process to move forward with consultation to resolve the adverse effect on the NRHP-eligible SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) prior to completing the CRAS for the rest of the project (mainline road realignment, ponds, etc.). The intention is to get consultation to a point where a draft Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is acceptable to all parties involved but will remain in a draft state until completion of the mainline/ponds CRAS. The draft MOA will be updated as necessary

www.fdot.gov

Ms. Lotane, SHPO
 FPID No.: 450334-1-22-01
 July 9, 2024
 Page 2

following the mainline CRAS. In August 2023 a Cultural Resource Coordinator for District One coordinated with the Office of Environmental Management (OEM) and subsequently, with the SHPO regarding this approach and in November 2023 all parties were in agreement. As such, this CRAS is limited to the bridge replacement portion of the PD&E and a full archaeological and historic resources survey of the corridor will be conducted following the identification of corridor alternatives and will be an addendum to this CRAS.

The purpose of this CRAS was to locate and identify any historic resources within the project area of potential effect (APE) at the bridge location and to assess their significance in terms of eligibility for listing in the NRHP. For the purpose of this survey, the historical/architectural APE was limited to the footprint of construction of the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge replacement. The fieldwork was conducted in January 2024.

This CRAS was conducted to comply with the requirements set forth in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, found in 36 CFR Part 800 (Protection of Historic Properties). The study also complies with Chapter 267 of the Florida Statutes and Rule Chapter 1A-46, Florida Administrative Code and Section 267.12, Florida Statutes, Chapter 1A-32. All work was performed in accordance with Part 2, Chapter 8 of FDOT's PD&E Manual (2023 revision), FDOT's Cultural Resources Management Handbook, and the standards stipulated in the Florida Division of Historical Resources' (FDHR) *Cultural Resource Management Standards & Operations Manual, Module Three: Guidelines for Use by Historic Preservation Professionals*. The Principal Investigator for this project meets the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation* (48 FR 44716-42). This study also complies with Public Law 113-287 (Title 54 U.S.C.), which incorporates the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and the Archeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974, as amended.

Historic background research, including a review of the Florida Master Site File (FMSF) and the NRHP databases, indicated that one historic bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) was previously recorded within the APE. Due to its location on the Okeechobee-Highlands County line, the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001) has been assigned a Highlands County FMSF number (8HG01236) and an Okeechobee County FMSF number (8OB00336). The SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (FDOT Bridge No. 910001) is a seven span, concrete beam and girder bridge constructed in 1966 in order to carry SR 70 over the newly channelized Kissimmee River (C-38). The peak of the bridge is equipped with a steel, removable span which accommodates the passing of larger vessels while being more cost effective than a manned, operable span. The bridge (8OB00336/8HG01236) was determined eligible for listing in the NRHP by the SHPO in 2014 under Criterion C in the area of Engineering as an example of a removable span bridge.

The historical/architectural field survey resulted in the identification of two historic resources (8HG01236/8OB00336 and 8HG01650/8OB00489) within the APE. These include the previously recorded concrete beam and girder SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) and the newly identified Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489), constructed in 1966. The SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) has not been significantly altered and appears to remain eligible for individual listing in the NRHP under Criterion C. Although the channelization of the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8OB00489) is significant within the ecological and developmental history of south and central Florida, the majority of the linear resource is located outside of the APE, and a survey of the entire 69-mile-long channelized river is beyond the scope of this project. In addition, the linear resource has not been previously recorded elsewhere in Okeechobee or Highland Counties. As such, following the guidance

Ms. Lotane, SHPO
 FPID No.: 450334-1-22-01
 July 9, 2024
 Page 3

of the *Historic Linear Resource Guide* provided by the FDHR, there is insufficient information to evaluate the 102 ft segment of the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) that is contained within the APE (FDHR 2022). Based on the results of this study, it is the opinion of the District that the proposed undertaking will have an **adverse effect** on the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) and have **no adverse effect** on the Kissimmee River (C-38 Canal) (8HG01650/8OB00489).

I respectfully request your concurrence with the findings of the enclosed report.

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact me at (863) 519-2625 or Jeffrey.James@dot.state.fl.us.

Sincerely,

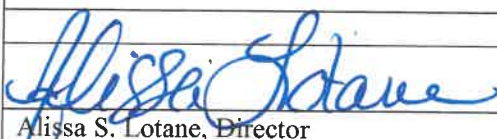
Jeffrey James
 Environmental Manager
 FDOT, District One

Enclosures: One original copy of the CRAS Report (June 2024), Four (4) FMSF forms, One Completed Survey Log, GIS Shapefiles

The Florida State Historic Preservation Officer finds the attached Cultural Resource 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 202402438. Or, the SHPO finds the attached document contains insufficient information.

In accordance with the *Programmatic Agreement Among the FHWA, the FDOT, the ACHP, and the SHPO Regarding Implementation of the Federal-Aid Highway Program in Florida* (2023 PA), and appended materials, if providing concurrence with a finding of **No Historic Properties Affected** for a whole project, or to **No Adverse Effect** on a specific historic property, SHPO shall presume that FDOT may pursue a *de minimis* use of the affected historic property in accordance with Section 4(f) as set forth within 23 C.F.R. Part 774 and its implementing authorities, as amended, and that their concurrence as the official with jurisdiction (OWJ) over the historic property is granted.

SHPO Comments:



Alissa S. Lotane, Director
 Florida Division of Historical Resources

Date 7/17/24



Florida Department of Transportation

RON DESANTIS
GOVERNOR

605 Suwannee Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450

JARED W. PERDUE, P.E.
SECRETARY

September 5, 2025

Alissa S. Lotane
Director and State Historic Preservation Officer
Florida Division of Historical Resources
Florida Department of State
R. A. Gray Building
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

RE: Section 106 Case Study Report Submission
SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336)
SR 70 FROM CR 721 S TO CR 599/128 AVE
District 1
FM # 450334-1-22-01
DHR CRAT Number: 2024-2438D

Dear Ms. Lotane,

Dear Ms. Lotane:

Enclosed please find one copy of the report titled *Section 106 Consultation Case Study Report Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Study State Road (SR) 70 from County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, Florida*. This report presents the findings in support of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District One, proposed improvements to SR 70. The purpose of this project is to address safety conditions on SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue. The study is approximately 8.6-miles long and proposed improvements include the widening of a two-lane facility up to a four-lane, divided facility, and/or the inclusion of operational improvements along the corridor. Additional right-of-way (ROW) is expected to accommodate the proposed improvements. This is a federally funded project.

As part of the PD&E Study, two build alternatives, Build Alternative 1 and Build Alternative 2, and a No Build Alternative are being evaluated. Both Build Alternatives for the SR 70 improvements involve the replacement of the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/ 8OB00336]) which was previously determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). In order to meet the established schedule for the PD&E deliverables, a discussion was held on July 25, 2023, with representatives from Archaeological Consultants, Inc. (ACI), Scalar, and FDOT District One to develop an approach for cultural resource compliance on the SR 70 PD&E Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (CRAS). This approach enables the Section 106 process to move forward with consultation to resolve the adverse effect on the NRHP-eligible SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) prior to completing the CRAS for the rest of the project (mainline road realignment, ponds, etc.). A full archaeological and historic resources survey of the corridor was conducted, and the results are in the April 2025 CRAS.

In June 2024, ACI conducted a CRAS that was limited to the footprint of construction of the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge replacement portion of the PD&E Study (ACI 2024). The bridge footprint was the Area of Potential Effects (APE). The purpose of the bridge CRAS was to survey and re-assess the bridge's significance in terms of eligibility for listing in the NRHP. The bridge (8OB00336/8HG01236) was determined eligible for listing in the NRHP by the SHPO in 2014 under Criterion C in the area of Engineering as an example of a removable span bridge. As a result of the 2024 CRAS, the bridge remains eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion C in the area of Engineering as an example of a removable span bridge. The SHPO concurred with the recommendations and findings on July 17, 2024 (Lotane 2024; Project File No. 2024-2438).

The objective of this *Section 106 Consultation Case Study Report* is to evaluate the potential effects of the proposed undertaking to the historic properties located within the APE as identified above. The FDOT has applied the Criteria of Adverse Effect found in 36 CFR Part 800.5 to the historic property determined eligible for listing in the NRHP located within the project APE. Because all project alternatives proposed for the SR 70 improvements will involve the replacement of the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) the proposed undertaking will have an **adverse effect** on the bridge.

According to the Public Involvement Plan, public engagement and appropriate coordination meetings with local government, and environmental permitting agencies, work sessions, and small group meetings will continue throughout the final design phase. Following the PD&E Study, mitigation measures will be required. As such, coordination among FDOT, District One, OEM, the SHPO, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), as well as the public will continue to ensure that a sensitive and appropriate mitigation treatment plan is developed. The ACHP will be notified of the adverse effect determination, and measures to resolve the adverse effect to the Kissimmee River Bridge (Bridge No. 910001) will be documented in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between FDOT, SHPO, and other affected parties, as appropriate.

This information is being provided in accordance with the provisions of 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 environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by FDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated May 26, 2022 and executed by FHWA and FDOT.

The Section 106 Consultation Case Study Report is provided for your review and comment. I respectfully request your concurrence with the findings of the enclosed report.

Based on the review summarized above, FDOT has determined that this project 450334-1-22-01 will result in **Adverse Effect** on historic properties. In accordance with Stipulation III.B. of the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (PA), this review was conducted by or under the supervision of a person(s) meeting the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards (36 C.F.R. Part 61, Appendix A and 48 FR 44716)* in the fields of History, Archaeology, and Architectural History. 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 FDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 327 and a Memorandum of

Understanding dated May 26, 2022, and executed by the FHWA and FDOT.

Sincerely,

Electronically signed by Emily Barnett **FOR** Jeffrey James on September 5, 2025

The Florida State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) reviewed the submission referenced above and finds the document contains sufficient information and concurs with the information provided for the above referenced project.	
SHPO/FDHR Comments	
	
Signed	September 22, 2025
Alissa S. Lotane, Director	
Florida Division of Historical Resources	

cc: Lindsay Rothrock, Cultural & Historical Resource Specialist
FDOT Office of Environmental Management

Submitted Documents

- [45033412201-CE2-D1-450334-1-22-01_August_2025_Sec_106_Kissimmee_River_Bridge-2025-0905.pdf](#) (Section 106 Case Study Report)
450334-1-22-01_August 2025_Sec 106 Kissimmee River Bridge

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
BETWEEN THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND
THE FLORIDA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER
REGARDING STATE ROAD 70 FROM CR 721 SOUTH TO CR 559/128TH AVENUE
HIGHLANDS & OKEECHOBEE COUNTIES, FLORIDA**

WHEREAS, Pursuant to 23 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 327 and the implementing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) executed on May 26, 2022, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has assumed Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for highway projects on the State Highway System (SHS) and Local Agency Program (LAP) projects off the SHS; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with the MOU, FDOT's assumption of FHWA's responsibilities under NEPA for highway projects includes assumption of responsibilities for compliance with 36 CFR Part 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (54 U.S.C. § 306108); and

WHEREAS, FDOT will provide federal financial assistance for State Road (SR) 70 from County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue, Federal Aid Project Number (No.) D123-018-B and Financial Project Identification No. 450334-1-22-01, which represents an undertaking in accordance with 36 CFR § 800.3(a); and

WHEREAS, FDOT has defined the Undertaking's area of potential effects (APE) as the footprint of construction and adjacent parcels 200 feet from existing ROW and 500 feet from proposed ROW, as depicted in Attachment A; and

WHEREAS, FDOT has consulted with the Florida State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) pursuant to the requirements of 36 CFR Part 800 and has determined that the Undertaking may have an adverse effect on the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (Bridge No. 910001 [8HG01236/8OB00336]), which is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP); and

WHEREAS, FDOT has consulted with the Okeechobee Historical Society regarding the effects of the Undertaking on historic properties; and

WHEREAS, FDOT has provided opportunities for public review and comment regarding the effects of the Undertaking on historic properties; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with 36 CFR § 800.6(a)(1) FDOT has notified the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) of the adverse effect determination with specified documentation and has invited the ACHP to comment and participate in consultation, and the ACHP has chosen not to participate pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.6(a)(1)(iii); and

NOW, THEREFORE, FDOT and the SHPO agree that the Undertaking shall be implemented in accordance with the following stipulations to take into account the effect of the Undertaking on historic properties.

STIPULATIONS

FDOT shall ensure that the following measures are carried out:

I. DOCUMENTATION OF THE SR 70 OVER KISSIMMEE RIVER BRIDGE

- A. Prior to any alteration or demolition of the SR 70 over Kissimmee River Bridge (8HG01236/8OB00336) and per guidance provided by the National Park Service (NPS), FDOT shall perform the following documentation in accordance with Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) Level III standards:
1. Drawings - Select existing drawings, where available, may be photographed with large-format negatives or photographically reproduced on Mylar in accordance with the U.S. Copyright Act, as amended. Should existing plans not be available, sketch plans depicting existing conditions shall be prepared.
 2. Photographs - Photographs with large-format negatives of context and views from all sides of the bridge and approaches; roadway and deck views, and noteworthy features and details. All negatives and prints will be processed to meet archival standards. One photograph of a principal elevation shall include a scale.
 3. Written Data - Report with narrative description of the bridge, summary of significance, and historical context. FDOT shall coordinate with SHPO prior to starting in order to develop the appropriate context scope.
- B. FDOT shall provide draft HAER documentation (non-archival format, electronic version) to the NPS (lead content reviewer) and SHPO (courtesy reviewer) for concurrent review in accordance with Stipulation VIII.
- C. FDOT shall make requested edits and provide final copies of the HAER documentation, completed in accordance with Stipulation I.A, as follows:
1. An archival copy to the NPS Southeast Regional Office for review and approval prior to salvage and demolition of the structure; per HAER guidelines; and
 2. An archival copy and an electronic copy to the Florida SHPO for inclusion in the Florida Master Site File (FMSF); and
 3. Non-archival copies and electronic copies to the Okeechobee Historical Society.
- D. The HAER documentation cannot be considered complete, and the bridge demolition cannot take place, until accepted by NPS.

II. SALVAGE OF EXISTING BRIDGE PLAQUE

- A. Prior to bridge demolition, FDOT shall salvage the existing commemorative bridge plaque, to the greatest extent possible, for use elsewhere, as identified in a proposed Salvage and Relocation Plan that will be prepared during project development, as described in Stipulation II.B.
- B. In coordination with the Okeechobee Historical Society and Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, FDOT shall prepare a Salvage and Relocation Plan to outline the process for salvaging and relocating the commemorative bridge plaque. The plan will include:
 - 1. measures to determine the feasibility of salvaging and relocating the plaque,
 - 2. the appropriateness of any proposed new locations (sites) for the plaque,
 - 3. methods for removing and storing the plaque, and,
 - 4. timeframes for completing the tasks.
- C. The proposed Salvage and Relocation Plan shall be developed and approved prior to advertising for construction. FDOT will afford the SHPO as well as the Okeechobee Historical Society and Highlands and Okeechobee Counties 30 days to review and comment on the proposed Salvage and Relocation Plan, as per Stipulation VIII.
- D. The existing commemorative bridge plaque cannot be salvaged until HAER documentation is accepted by NPS in writing as outlined in Stipulation I.

III. PUBLIC EDUCATION

- A. FDOT will assist with the development, funding, and installation of a single panel educational exhibit. The exhibit will provide a historic account of the bridge to educate the public. The text and graphics on the single panel will be prepared based on continued coordination with local interested parties and stakeholders during the project's design and construction phases. During continued coordination, FDOT will consider the appropriate location to install the exhibit which will be in proximity to the bridge location. The draft of the exhibit and location will be coordinated with the SHPO for review, as described in Stipulation VIII.
- B. FDOT will provide an electronic copy of the educational exhibit described above to appropriate local entities (such as the Okeechobee Historical Society and Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, and one or two other agencies/organizations), for installation at their discretion.

IV. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

All archaeological and historic preservation work carried out pursuant to this Agreement shall be conducted by, or under the direct supervision of, a person or persons meeting the Secretary of the

Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for Archaeology and Historic Preservation as set forth at 62 FR 33708-33723 (June 20, 1997).

V. DURATION

This Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) will expire if its terms are not carried out within ten (10) years from the date of execution or upon project acceptance, whichever comes first. Prior to expiration, the parties may agree to extend the timeframe for fulfillment of the terms by letter agreement.

VI. MOA DOCUMENTATION

- A. The FDOT shall provide a summary of actions carried out pursuant to this MOA to the signatories annually. The reporting period shall be the fiscal year from July 1st to June 30th and the summary shall describe the status of mitigation activities and, as applicable, any issues that may affect the ability of the FDOT to continue to meet the terms of this MOA, any disputes and objections received, and how they were resolved.
- B. A Notice of Fulfillment will be prepared to summarize the implementation of the MOA after all stipulations have been fulfilled. This document will be submitted to the signatories for their files within six (6) months after completion of all MOA stipulations.

VII. POST-REVIEW DISCOVERIES

- A. If properties are discovered that may be historically significant, or if unanticipated effects on historic properties are found, FDOT shall implement the Post Review Discovery Plan established in Stipulation IX of the September 27, 2023, Programmatic Agreement (PA) among the ACHP, SHPO, and FDOT (2023 PA).
- B. In the unlikely event that human skeletal remains or associated burial artifacts are uncovered within the project area during construction, all work in that area must stop. The individual in charge of the activity that leads to the discovery must notify the Project Engineer and the FDOT District One Cultural Resources Coordinator per Stipulation X of the 2023 PA. The discovery must be reported to local law enforcement and the appropriate medical examiner. The medical examiner will determine whether the State Archaeologist should be contacted per the requirements of Section 872.05, Florida Statutes, and Rule 1A-44.004, Florida Administrative Code (FAC).

VIII. REVIEW STIPULATION

FDOT shall afford the SHPO and other consulting parties, a 30-day period for review and comment following the receipt of delivery of those submittals and reviews described above. If no comments are received by FDOT at the end of these 30 days, FDOT will presume there are no objections. Any objections to the findings or plans proposed in these submittals will be addressed in accordance with Stipulation IX below.

IX. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Should any signatory to this MOA object at any time to any actions proposed or the manner in which the terms of this MOA are implemented, FDOT shall consult with such party to resolve the objection. If FDOT determines that such objection cannot be resolved, FDOT will:

- A. Forward all documentation relevant to the dispute, including FDOT's proposed resolution, to the ACHP. The ACHP shall provide FDOT with its advice on the resolution of the objection within thirty (30) days of receiving adequate documentation. Prior to reaching a final decision on the dispute, FDOT shall prepare a written response that considers any timely advice or comments regarding the dispute from the ACHP, signatories, and concurring parties, and provide them with a copy of this written response. FDOT will then proceed according to its final decision.
- B. Make a final decision on the dispute and proceed accordingly if the ACHP does not provide its advice regarding the dispute within thirty (30) days. Prior to reaching such a final decision, FDOT shall prepare a written response that considers any timely comments regarding the dispute from the signatories to the MOA, and provide them and the ACHP with a copy of the written response.
- C. Fulfill its responsibility to carry out all other actions subject to the terms of this MOA that are not the subject of the dispute remain unchanged.

X. AMENDMENTS

This MOA may be amended when such an amendment is agreed to in writing by all signatories. All signatories must signify their acceptance of the proposed changes to the MOA in writing within 30 days of their receipt. The amendment will be effective on the date a copy signed by all signatories is filed with the ACHP. In accordance with 36 CFR § 800.6(b)(7), if the ACHP was not a signatory to the original agreement and the signatories execute an amended agreement, FDOT shall file the amended agreement with the ACHP.

XI. TERMINATION

If any signatory to this MOA determines that its terms will not or cannot be carried out, that party shall immediately consult with the other signatories in an effort to amend the MOA per Stipulation X, above. If within thirty (30) days (or another time agreed to by all signatories) an amendment cannot be reached, any signatory may terminate the MOA upon written notification to the other signatories.

Once the MOA is terminated, and prior to work continuing on the Undertaking, FDOT must either (a) execute an MOA pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.6 or (b) request, take into account, and respond to the comments of the ACHP under 36 CFR § 800.7. FDOT shall notify the signatories as to the course of action it will pursue.

Execution of this MOA by FDOT and SHPO and implementation of its terms is evidence that FDOT has taken into account the effects of this undertaking on historic properties per the requirements

of Section 106 (Public Law 113-287 [Title 54 U.S.C. 306108]), and 36 CFR Part 800 (Protection of Historic Properties).

SIGNATORIES:

FLORIDA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

Signed by: Alissa Slade Lotane Date 03/04/2026 | 1:37 PM EST
Alissa Slade Lotane
Director, Division of Historical Resources
State Historic Preservation Officer

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

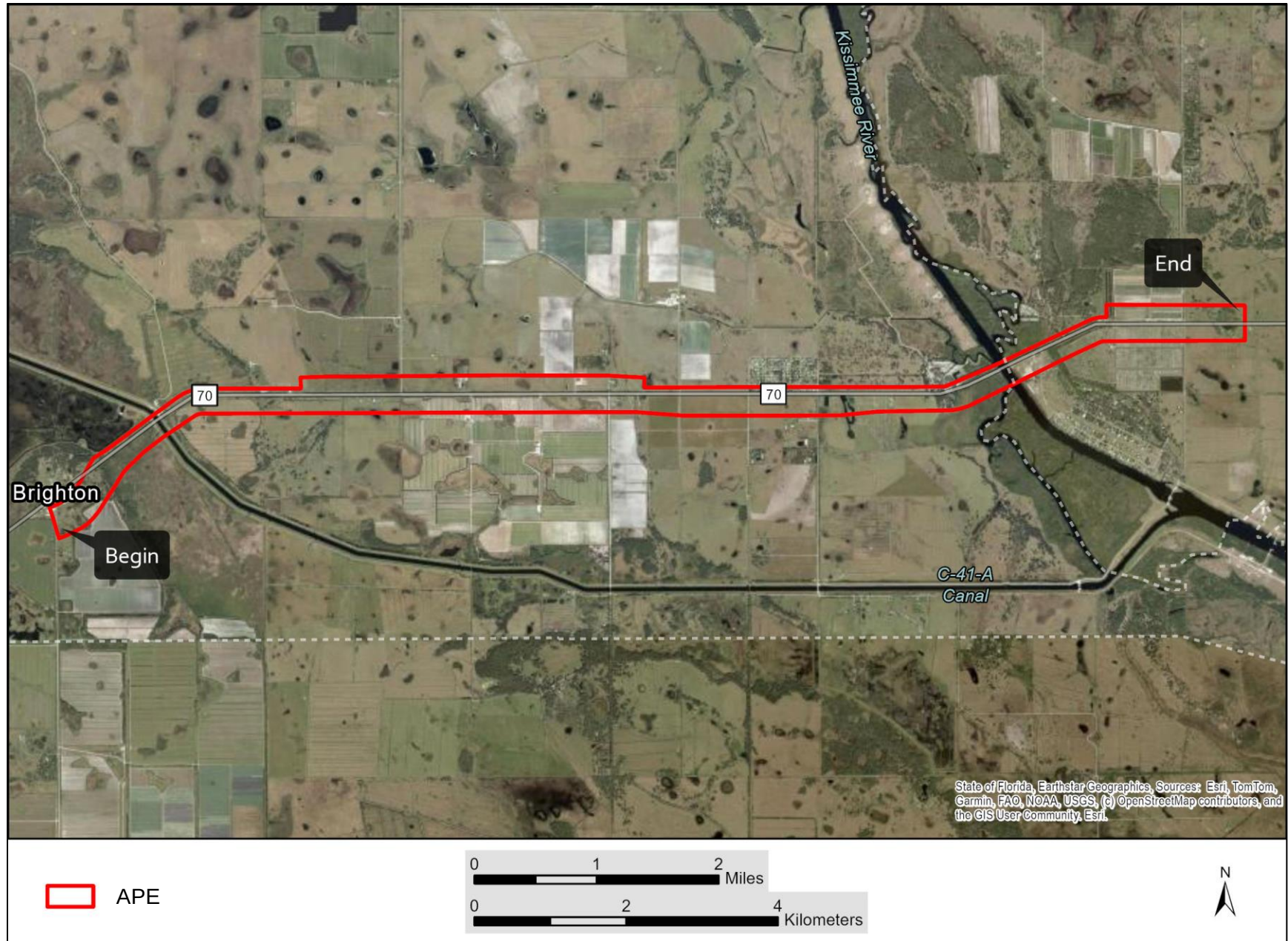
Signed by: Katasha Gruver Date 03/05/2026 | 8:10 AM EST
Katasha Gruver
Director, Office of Environmental Management

CONCURRING PARTIES:

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, DISTRICT ONE

DS 99 DocuSigned by: Nicole Mills Date 02/18/2026 | 10:51 AM EST
Nicole E. Mills, P.E.
Director, Transportation Development

Attachment A - Project Area of Potential Effects, Highlands & Okeechobee Counties



Natural Resources Appendix

Contents:

Sole Source Aquifer concurrence

Floodplains Map

Species and Habitat Map

FWC Species Concurrence Letter

FDACS Species Concurrence Letter

Wetlands Map

SFWMD response to NRE

USFWS Species Concurrence Letter (Biological Opinion)

USACE response to NRE

**REGION 4**

ATLANTA, GA 30303

February 4, 2026

Ms. Kristin Caruso
Environmental Practice Lead, Senior Scientist
Scalar Consulting Group, LLC
12620 Telecom Drive
Temple Terrace, FL 33637

Subject: Sole Source Aquifer Review/Concurrence State Road (SR) 70 Project Development and Environment (PD&E) study – From County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, FPID 450334-1, Florida.

Dear Ms. Caruso:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4 received the Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) request on August 27, 2025 supplemented with additional information on January 27, 2026, to review the above referenced project pursuant to Section 1424(e) of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), [42 U.S.C. § 300h-3](#). The objective of the EPA's review is to determine if the project lies within the boundaries, including recharge and streamflow source zones, of an EPA designated Sole Source Aquifer (SSA), and to determine if the project poses potential adverse health or environmental impacts. A SSA is the sole or principal water source for a designated area.

The State Road (SR) 70 Project Development and Environment (PD&E) project involves widening of SR 70 from a two-lane to a four-lane divided roadway from County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue, including a shared use path and stormwater management facilities in the counties. The project has been determined to lie inside the designated boundaries of the Biscayne Sole Source Aquifer and based on the information provided, may have a significant impact on the aquifer system when the Project's roadways are constructed and/or construction dewatering is undertaken. However, with proper implementation of best management practices (BMPs), these potential impacts can be adequately reduced or properly mitigated. To that effect, when constructing road, the FDOT must adhere to the list of BMPs provided as items 1 and 2 below. The dewatering operation BMPs are listed in item 3 below:

1. FDOT Design Manual Chapter 320 Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP)
2. FDOT Standard Specification for Road and Bridge Construction,
 - a. Section 6 – Control of Materials
 - b. Section 104 – Prevention, Control, And Abatement of Erosion and Water Pollution

c. Section 455 – Structures Foundations

3. U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Engineering Geology Field Manual – Chapter 20 Water Control.

<https://www.usbr.gov/tsc/techreferences/mands/geologyfieldmanual-vol2/Chapter20.pdf>

Furthermore, all debris from any demolition of the existing structures must be properly contained and removed from the site prior to construction of the new structure. If applicable, all county flood plain management plans and public notification processes must be followed. During construction, it is the EPA's understanding and expectation that those responsible for the project will strictly adhere to all Federal, State, and local government permits, ordinances, planning designs, construction codes, operation, maintenance, and engineering requirements, and any contaminant mitigation recommendations outlined by federal and state agency reviews. All best management practices for erosion and sedimentation control must also be followed, and State and local environmental offices must be contacted to address proper drainage and storm water designs. Additionally, the project manager should contact State and local environmental officials to obtain a copy of any local Wellhead Protection Plans. The following website provides information regarding the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Source Water Assessment and Protection Program.

<http://www.dep.state.fl.us/swapp/Default.html>.

The EPA finds that, if the conditions outlined above are adhered to, this Project should have no significant impact on the aquifer system. Please note that this "no significant impact" finding has been determined based on compliance with the requirements outlined above and, on the information provided. Further, this finding only relates to Section 1424(e) of the SDWA, [42 U.S.C. § 300h-3](#). If there are any significant changes to the project, the EPA Region 4 office should be notified for further review. Other regulatory groups within the EPA responsible for administering other programs may, at their own discretion and under separate cover, provide additional comments.

Thank you for your concern about the environmental impacts of this project. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Jayeeta Chakraborty at 404-562-8845 or Chakraborty.Jayeeta@epa.gov or Mr. Larry Cole at 404-562-9474 or Cole.Larry@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

KHURRAM

RAFI

Khurram Rafi, Manager
Groundwater and GIS Section
Safe Drinking Water Branch
Water Division
U.S. EPA, Region 4

Digitally signed by
KHURRAM RAFI
Date: 2026.02.04 08:55:41
-05'00'

Cc: Brooke Feagle, Project Manager, FDOT, brooke.feagle@dot.state.fl.us
Kathern Cothorn, Project Manager, FDOT, kathern.cothorn@dot.state.fl.us



EPA Region 4 Sole Source Aquifer Project Review Form – Section B: Determination of Potential Project Impacts to the Sole Source Aquifer

Welcome to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 4's Sole Source Aquifer (SSA) project review form. The EPA SSA Protection Program is authorized by section 1424(e) of the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C. 201, 300 et. Seq., and 21 U.S.C. 349). Under the SSA Protection Program, EPA reviews proposed projects that will both: 1) be located within the SSA project review area and; 2) receive federal financial assistance. The review area may include the area overlying the SSA, its recharge zone, and source areas of streams that flow into the SSA's recharge zone. The EPA's review is intended to determine any possible contamination to the SSA from submitted projects. Your accurate submission of information will help us determine any possible contamination.

Please complete this form in its entirety and as well as the two-part submission process. Keep the email received at the end of submission process for your records. This email will serve as the official record of the decision and may be required by the federal agency funding your project. Thank you.

ATTENTION

The answers to the following questions must be submitted via email to the EPA Region 4 to complete this project's review. Please submit your answers to R4-SSA@epa.gov.

Date: August 27, 2025

Project Name: State Road (SR) 70 Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study
From County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue

Sole Source Aquifer Name: Biscayne Aquifer (Florida)

Dear Kristin Caruso:

Based on the information you have provided the **State Road (SR) 70 Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study From County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue project requires** a Sole Source Aquifer (SSA) review under Section 1424(e) of the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-523, 42 U.S.C. § 300 et. seq). Your responses to the below questions will assist the EPA's SSA Program in evaluating whether the proposed project has the potential to contaminate a SSA through a recharge zone. EPA may request additional information as necessary. Please email your answers to R4-SSA@epa.gov.

1. Provide Project Information:

- a. Contact person
- b. Contact email address
- c. Contact mailing address
- d. Contact phone number
- e. Name of the project
- f. Project address or geographical coordinates.

2. Confirm an SSA project review is needed.

a. Is any portion of the project or the property(ies) involved located within a designated SSA project review area? A searchable interactive map of designated SSA project review areas is available at <https://www.epa.gov/dwssa>

<<https://epa.gov/dwssa>>. **If the answer to this question is no, EPA does not need to review the project under the SSA program.**

b. If the project is located in a SSA, please provide the name of the Aquifer.

c. What Federal funding source is being sought or proposed? **If no Federal financial assistance is sought or proposed, EPA does not need to review the project under the SSA program.**

3. Provide the location of the project, a map, and the name of the SSA(s) within which the project is located. Descriptions and/or maps with the information below would be helpful if available and applicable.

a. What is known about local hydrogeology in the project review area (e.g., soil types, depth to groundwater, groundwater flow direction)?

b. Are there any known wells in the project review area (including groundwater wells; shallow injection wells; and oil, geothermal, and mineral exploration wells) and how close are they to the project?

c. Are there any wetlands within the project review area? If applicable, describe any discharge to, loss of, or creation of wetlands by the project.

4. Provide project description, including, but not limited to, answers to the applicable questions below.
 - a. Will the project result in any increase of impervious surface (e.g., concrete, asphalt)? If so, what is the area (e.g., square feet or acres)?
 - b. What is the depth of excavation?
 - c. Will any wells be installed or modified as part of the project (of any use type, including groundwater wells' shallow injection wells; and oil, geothermal, and mineral exploration wells)? For new/proposed wells, indicate depth of wells, depth of casing, casing diameter, and, for water wells, the anticipated average and maximum water demand from the wells during normal operation (gallons per minute).
 - d. Are there any deep pilings or foundations (e.g., greater than 10 feet below land surface) that will be installed, modified, or disturbed during the project? If yes include construction procedures and diagrams of these deep pilings or foundations.
5. Describe storm water management for the project area.
 - a. Will the project require the use of shallow injection wells (i.e., dry wells, French drains, sumps, and drainfields)? **If the answer to this question is yes, please provide EPA with an explanation as to why these shallow injection wells are required.**
 - b. How will storm water be managed on this site during construction and after the project is complete, including treatment if applicable?
6. Describe chemical use and storage associated with the project.
 - a. Will quantities of hazardous chemicals or petroleum above routine household quantities be used or stored in the project review area?
 - b. Are there any aboveground storage tanks or underground storage tanks present or to be installed? Fuel tanks are often involved in projects that include generators and/or pump stations. If applicable, include details of such tanks, including spill containment and spill response plans.

7. Describe waste management related to the project, including, but not limited to, answers to the applicable questions below.
 - a. Will any liquid or solid waste be generated during construction (e.g., construction/drilling fluids, excavation dewatering fluids, or demolition debris)? If so, how will it be managed?
 - b. How will liquid or solid waste be managed after project completion, other than routine quantities of household wastes to a permitted sanitary landfill or publicly-owned treatment works (e.g., describe any on-site treatment/disposal, industrial wastewater, or other waste generation)? If applicable, provide details about any individual disposal systems such as cesspools, septic tanks with leach fields or seepage areas, pit toilets, or privately-owned sewerage systems, including those owned by a homeowners' association.
 - c. Are there any known brownfield or hazardous waste sites in close proximity to the project review area (e.g., sites listed on the EPA National Priorities List [i.e., Superfund sites], state-designated brownfield or clean-up sites)? Do any such contaminated sites have underground contamination plumes, monitoring wells, or soil contamination that may be disturbed by the project? Include details such as the name(s) and location(s) of the brownfield or hazardous waste site(s).
 - d. For agricultural projects involving animals, how will animal wastes be managed?
 - e. For burial of flocks or disposal of animals, what Best Management Practices ("BMPs") are planned to protect the SSA from contamination?
8. Provide any other available information (examples below) that could be helpful in determining if this project may potentially create a significant hazard to public health through contamination of a SSA.
 - a. Are BMPs planned to address any possible risks or concerns? If so, which BMPs will be used?
 - b. Does the project include any improvements that may be beneficial to any SSA, such as improvements to the publicly-owned treatment works?
9. Are any previous environmental assessments available regarding the project or project area? If yes, please provide a copy of any/all assessments.

< Previous Page

Next Page >

Last updated on August 25, 2025

EPA Sole Source Aquifer Online Form

Section A: Project Description

Name of Applicant: Florida Department of Transportation

Contact Information

Contact person: Kristin Caruso
Contact Email Address: kcaruso@scalarinc.net
Contact Mailing Address: 12620 Telecom Drive, Temple Terrace, FL 33637
Contact Phone Number: 813-205-2084

Please enter the name of the project: State Road (SR) 70 Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study From County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue

Enter the federal agency and/or authority through which you are receiving the federal financial assistance: FHWA

Please select the Sole Source Aquifer in which your project is located: Biscayne Aquifer (Florida)

Please enter the project address (physical location – Street, City, State, ZIP) and geographic coordinates if available: The project beginning point is in unincorporated Highlands County in zip code 34974, and the project end point is in unincorporated Okeechobee County in zip code 34974. Geographic Coordinates for Approximate Center of Project: Latitude 27.235575 Degrees N and Longitude -81.036616 Degrees W

Is your project receiving any federal financial assistance, through a grant, contract, loan guarantee, or otherwise? Yes

Enter the federal agency and/or authority through which you are receiving the federal financial assistance: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The project is completing a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study to meet requirements of NEPA to qualify for and receive federal financial assistance from FHWA.

Is the project address completely or partially located within a SSA or a SSA's recharge zone? Yes

Section B: Determination of Potential Project Impacts to the Sole Source Aquifer

Please select the Sole Source Aquifer in which your project is located: Biscayne Aquifer

- Please provide a brief description of the project:** Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is conducting a Project Development and Environment

(PD&E) Study to evaluate roadway widening of SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue from an existing two-lane undivided roadway to a four-lane divided roadway. The project includes a shared use path on the south side of the proposed roadway. Stormwater management facilities are also proposed for the project.

2. **Is the project new construction, acquisition, or rehabilitation of residential housing that involves no more than four dwelling units?** No
3. **Is the project construction of (or addition to) residential, commercial, industrial projects, public facilities or land developments that will be served by a municipally or publicly owned and operated sewage treatment plant which is operating within the capacity for which it was designed and is not subject to any local, state or federally imposed moratorium?** No
4. **Is the project rehabilitation or modernization of a residential structure or of commercial, industrial, or publicly owned buildings that are served by a municipally or publicly owned sanitary sewer system operating in compliance with its authorized permits?** No
5. **Is the project funding for public services, planning activities, technical assistance, training, or payment, repayment, or reimbursement of either loans or interest?** No
6. **Is the project repairing and/or modernizing existing Public Water Supply infrastructure, except for the installation of new infrastructure?** No
7. **Is the project repair or reconstruction of streets, sidewalks, or curbs?** Yes
8. **Does the project involve domestic waste not connected to a public sanitary sewer system?** No
9. **Does the project include the construction or rehabilitation of residential, commercial, or industrial projects, public facilities, or land developments whose sanitation facilities will consist of individual sewage disposal systems such as cesspools, septic tanks with leach fields or seepage areas, pit toilets, or privately-owned sewerage systems, including those owned by a homeowners' association?** No
10. **Does the project include any project or activity for an existing or proposed facility that manufactures, stores, transports, spreads, or disposes of toxic, noxious, or hazardous chemicals, or radioactive materials, including pesticides, petroleum, and/or fertilizers?** No
11. **Does the project include the acquisition, disposition, rehabilitation, or new construction of any facility or operation which disposes of its wastewater into**

dry wells or retention ponds, or through any method other than conveyance to a treatment plant? No

- 12. Does the project include the acquisition, disposition, rehabilitation, or new construction of storm water drainage facilities modifications to existing wetlands, or modifications or new construction of shallow injection wells (i.e., dry wells, French drains, sumps, and drain fields)? Yes**
- 13. Does the project include the acquisition, disposition, rehabilitation or new construction of a site intended for or used as a landfill or other waste storage, transfer, disposal, or treatment facility? No**
- 14. Are there any deep pilings or foundations (e.g., greater than 10 feet below land surface) that will be installed, modified, or disturbed during the project? Yes.**
- 15. Will any construction activity penetrate the Sole Source Aquifer? No**
- 16. Does the project involve agricultural activities or related operations employed in the production, raising, processing, and/or marketing of crops or livestock? No**
- 17. Does the project involve storage or handling of hazardous or toxic materials or petroleum products, including, but not limited to, aboveground or underground storage tanks, and oil and gas pipelines (other than service lateral extensions for 4 or fewer residential units, or service lateral extensions where trenching and excavation is no deeper than 10 feet below ground surface)? No**
- 18. Is a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required for the project? No.**
- 19. Has any federal, state, or local authority determined that the project could be a potential source of contamination to a SSA and/or a SSA's recharge zone? No**
- 20. Has a review conducted by a federal, state, or local authority, or a private entity, identified any potential environmental impacts related to this project? No**

The EPA Sole Source Aquifer Program may request additional information if impacts to the aquifer are questionable after this information is submitted for review.

If extra information is required by EPA

1. Provide Project Information:

- a. Contact person:** Kristin Caruso
- b. Contact email address:** kcaruso@scalarinc.net
- c. Contact mailing address:** 12620 Telecom Drive, Temple Terrace, FL 33637
- d. Contact phone number:** 813-205-2084
- Name of the project:** State Road (SR) 70 Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study - From County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue
- e. Project address or geographical coordinates:** The project beginning point is in unincorporated Highlands County in zip code 34974, and the project end point is in unincorporated Okeechobee County in zip code 34974. Geographic Coordinates for Approximate Center of Project: Latitude 27.235575 Degrees N and Longitude -81.036616 Degrees W

2. Confirm an SSA project review is needed.

- a. Is any portion of the project or the property(ies) involved located within a designated SSA project review area? A searchable interactive map of designated SSA project review areas is available at <https://www.epa.gov/dwssa>. If the answer to this question is no, EPA does not need to review the project under the SSA program.** Yes
- b. If the project is located in a SSA, please provide the name of the Aquifer.** Biscayne Aquifer
- c. What Federal funding source is being sought or proposed? If no Federal financial assistance is sought or proposed, EPA does not need to review the project under the SSA program.** Federal Highway Administration (FHWA); the project is completing a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study to meet requirements of NEPA and to qualify for and receive federal financial assistance from FHWA.

3. Provide the location of the project, a map, and the name of the SSA(s) within which the project is located. Descriptions and/or maps with the information below would be helpful if available and applicable.

- a. What is known about local hydrogeology in the project review area (e.g., soil types, depth to groundwater, groundwater flow direction)?** A project location map is provided (Figure 1). The depth to groundwater was measured at depths of 2 to 6 feet below existing grades when

encountered during soil sampling. The groundwater was not encountered within some of the borings performed. Groundwater flow is believed to flow south within the Biscayne Aquifer. For soil types: The Soil Survey of Highlands County classifies soils within the project area as Felda fine sand (13), Valkaria fine sand (16), Basinger fine sand (12), Immokalee sand (8), Tequesta muck (26), Duette sand (4), Placida fine sand (7), Myakka fine sand (10), Felda fine sand (13), Gator muck (23), Pineda sand (24), and Arents (32). Furthermore, the Soil Survey of Okeechobee County classifies soils within the project area as Basinger fine sand (2), Basinger and Placida soils (3), Immokalee fine sand (11), Udorthents (12), Manatee, Floridana, and Tequesta soils (13), Myakka fine sand (14), and Wabasso fine sand (25). Refer to the attached soils map, Figure 2.

- b. Are there any known wells in the project review area (including groundwater wells; shallow injection wells; and oil, geothermal, and mineral exploration wells) and how close are they to the project?**
Yes, see Table 1 and Figure 3.
- c. Are there any wetlands within the project review area? If applicable, describe any discharge to, loss of, or creation of wetlands by the project.** Yes, freshwater herbaceous and forested wetlands are located along the project limits. Direct wetland impacts (fill) are anticipated due to the proposed roadway improvements. Offsite wetland mitigation is anticipated to be obtained during a future project phase; no onsite wetland creation is proposed. No direct discharge of untreated stormwater will occur to wetlands. Stormwater runoff from the roadway will be treated in the project's proposed stormwater management facilities which will meet SFWMD water quality and quantity requirements.

- 4. Provide project description, including, but not limited to, answers to the applicable questions below.**
 - a. Will the project result in any increase of impervious surface (e.g., concrete, asphalt)? If so, what is the area (e.g., square feet or acres)?**
Yes, the overall roadway project impervious area is 93.5 acres, with an increase of 64.6 acres of impervious area from current condition.
 - b. What is the depth of excavation?** At this phase of the project, the excavation depths are unknown. For roadway and pond construction, depths of 10 feet are anticipated.
 - c. Will any wells be installed or modified as part of the project (of any use type, including groundwater wells, shallow injection wells; and oil, geothermal, and mineral exploration wells)? For new/proposed wells, indicate depth of wells, depth of casing, casing diameter, and, for water wells, the anticipated average and maximum water demand from the wells during normal operation (gallons per minute).** No wells are anticipated to be installed as part of the project. However, existing wells in conflict with the project would be capped.
 - d. Are there any deep pilings or foundations (e.g., greater than 10 feet below land surface) that will be installed, modified, or disturbed**

during the project? If yes include construction procedures and diagrams of these deep pilings or foundations.

Proposed bridge piles are approximately 50 - 70 feet, however the exact depth is currently unknown. According to best available data from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), the project area is in a Biscayne Aquifer Recharge Zone and will not interfere with the Biscayne aquifer itself. The potentiometric surface for the upper Floridan aquifer is approximately +50 feet, NGVD 29 in the project area, but the confining layer is greater than 100 feet. Standard penetration test (SPT) borings were recommended to be completed to determine if it is present and at what depth within the project corridor. During final design, detailed geotechnical surveys including SPT borings will be conducted. At this time, there are no engineering plans available, this will occur at a later project phase.

To avoid potential impacts to the Biscayne Sole Source Aquifer associated with construction of bridge foundation and/or construction dewatering, FDOT will implement the following Best Management Practices: FDOT Design Manual Chapter 251 Stormwater Runoff Control Concept (SRCC); FDOT Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction, Section 6 - Control of Materials, Section 104 - Prevention Control, And Abatement of Erosion and Water Pollution, and Section 455 - Structures Foundations; and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Engineering Geology Field Manual - Chapter 20 Water Control.

<https://www.usbr.gov/tsc/techreferences/mands/geologyfieldmanual-vol2/Chapter20.pdf>.

5. Describe storm water management for the project area.

- a. **Will the project require the use of shallow injection wells (i.e., dry wells, French drains, sumps, and drainfields)? If the answer to this question is yes, please provide EPA with an explanation as to why these shallow injection wells are required.** No. The project does not include use of shallow injection wells.

- b. **How will storm water be managed on this site during construction and after the project is complete, including treatment if applicable?**

During construction, the contractor will install silt fence, turbidity barriers and turbidity curtains along with complying with its anticipated National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction Generic Permit and NPDES permit conditions. After construction, stormwater will be managed by utilizing the project's permitted stormwater management facilities. These stormwater management facilities will comply with the FDOT Drainage Manual, FDOT Design Manual, and the SFWMD Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) Applicant's Handbook Volume II. FDOT will provide long term maintenance for the project's stormwater management facilities in compliance with the anticipated SFWMD ERP Permit Conditions.

-

6. Describe chemical use and storage associated with the project.
 - a. Will quantities of hazardous chemicals or petroleum above routine household quantities be used or stored in the project review area? No
 - b. Are there any aboveground storage tanks or underground storage tanks present or to be installed? Fuel tanks are often involved in projects that include generators and/or pump stations. If applicable, include details of such tanks, including spill containment and spill response plans. No storage tanks are anticipated to be installed for construction of this project. Existing underground storage tanks are present within the project area and described in the supporting documentation section.

7. Describe waste management related to the project, including, but not limited to, answers to the applicable questions below.
 - a. Will any liquid or solid waste be generated during construction (e.g., construction/drilling fluids, excavation dewatering fluids, or demolition debris)? If so, how will it be managed? During construction, any liquid or solid waste generated will be disposed of in accordance with FDOT's Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction. Also, during construction, disposal of liquid or solid waste will comply with federal and state regulations.
 - b. How will liquid or solid waste be managed after project completion, other than routine quantities of household wastes to a permitted sanitary landfill or publicly-owned treatment works (e.g., describe any on-site treatment/disposal, industrial wastewater, or other waste generation)? If applicable, provide details about any individual disposal systems such as cesspools, septic tanks with leach fields or seepage areas, pit toilets, or privately-owned sewerage systems, including those owned by a homeowners' association. No liquid or solid waste will be generated after completion of project construction activities.
 - c. Are there any known brownfield or hazardous waste sites in close proximity to the project review area (e.g., sites listed on the EPA National Priorities List [i.e., Superfund sites], state-designated brownfield or clean-up sites)? Do any such contaminated sites have underground contamination plumes, monitoring wells, or soil contamination that may be disturbed by the project? Include details such as the name(s) and location(s) of the brownfield or hazardous waste site(s). There are no brownfields or hazardous waste sites within or in close proximity to the project area.
 - d. For agricultural projects involving animals, how will animal wastes be managed? Not applicable. The project is not an agricultural project.
 - e. For burial of flocks or disposal of animals, what Best Management Practices ("BMPs") are planned to protect the SSA from contamination? Not applicable. The project is not an agricultural project.

- 8. Provide any other available information (examples below) that could be helpful in determining if this project may potentially create a significant hazard to public health through contamination of a SSA.**
- a. Are BMPs planned to address any possible risks or concerns? If so, which BMPs will be used?** Yes. During construction, the contractor will install silt fence, turbidity barriers and turbidity curtains along with complying with the project's anticipated NPDES Construction Generic Permit and NPDES permit conditions. In addition, FDOT will implement the following Best Management Practices: FDOT Design Manual Chapter 251 Stormwater Runoff Control Concept (SRCC); FDOT Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction, Section 6 - Control of Materials, Section 104 - Prevention Control, And Abatement of Erosion and Water Pollution, and Section 455 - Structures Foundations; and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Engineering Geology Field Manual - Chapter 20 Water Control.
<https://www.usbr.gov/tsc/techreferences/mands/geologyfieldmanual-vol2/Chapter20.pdf>.
 - b. Does the project include any improvements that may be beneficial to any SSA, such as improvements to the publicly-owned treatment works?** Yes, currently there is no stormwater management system for the existing SR 70 2-lane roadway. The project's roadway improvements include stormwater management facilities that will collect stormwater runoff and provide treatment pursuant to SFWMD regulations.
- 9. Are any previous environmental assessments available regarding the project or project area? If yes, please provide a copy of any/all assessments.** No. We are not aware of any previous environmental assessments available regarding the project or project area.

Supporting Documentation

Table 1. Documented Wells in Project Area

Well ID	SFWMD Permit No.	Distance from SR 70 centerline	Water Use Classification	Source
288675	22-00392-W	290 ft	Irrigation	Intermediate Aquifer System
45536	22-00019-W	250 ft	Livestock; Freeze Protection	Floridan Aquifer System
138382	28-00146-W	65 ft	Livestock	Upper Floridan Aquifer
224565	28-00557-W	390 ft	Livestock	Surficial Aquifer System
223376	28-00546-W	170 ft	Irrigation	Floridan Aquifer System
10689	28-00096-W	100 ft	Irrigation	Unspecified
229046		95 ft	Livestock	Floridan Aquifer System
105668	47-00215-W	85 ft	Irrigation	Floridan Aquifer System
16937		125 ft	Freeze Protection	Floridan Aquifer System
AAH9367	N/A	120 ft	Community Water System	Unspecified
AAD3241	N/A	80 ft	Community Water System	Unspecified
AAD3242	N/A	230 ft	Non-Community Public Water System	Unspecified
AAM0742	N/A	490 ft	Private Water Well	Unspecified
AAM0743	N/A	340 ft	Private Water Well	Unspecified
AAM0738	N/A	20 ft	Private Water Well	Unspecified
AAM0737	N/A	20 ft	Private Water Well	Unspecified

Information taken from the Contamination Screening Evaluation Report prepared for this project to support Question 6b:

Facility Name	Facility Address	Facility ID	Distance from R/W	Distance from Proposed Pond Parcel	Facility Type	Risk Rating
Arrow B Ranch	150 Fulmar Terrace	9602537	0 feet	0	UST, AST, LUST	Low

A total of four (4) storage tanks have been registered to this site. Two (2) 550-gallon USTs, one (1) containing gasoline and the other diesel, were installed at an unknown date and removed from the site in the early 1980s. Two (2) 550-gallon ASTs, one (1) containing gasoline and the other diesel, were installed and removed at unknown dates before 1996. In a 1996 Limited Contamination Assessment Report (LCAR), it is stated that excessively contaminated soil was identified at the east side of the UST farm and at the northern AST. Additionally, groundwater collected from two (2) temporary wells identified multiple dissolved volatile compounds above National Attenuation Default Concentrations (NADCs) at both tank areas, as well as exceedances of Groundwater and Surface Water Cleanup Target Levels (GCTLs) for naphthalene's and lead at the UST and AST area. Petroleum removal began at the site in 2014. In an annual Natural Attenuation Monitoring (NAM) Report submitted in April of 2021, No Further Action (NFA) was recommended for the site. This recommendation was accepted in June of 2021 by the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) on behalf of FDEP.

Current Regulatory Status: Currently, there are no petroleum storage tanks registered to this site. No further contamination or compliance issues have been reported since the completion of cleanup in May 2025. A field review of the site completed on August 15th, 2023, confirmed that the site is currently in operation as agricultural land. The field visit did not identify any potential sources or signs of possible contamination that may indicate more assessments, interviews, or investigations are needed at this time. Based on a review of all reasonably available data, an onsite inspection, and the distance to the project, this facility is rated as Low Risk.

Facility Name	Facility Address	Facility ID	Distance from R/W	Distance from Proposed Pond Parcel	Facility Type	Risk Rating
Kissimmee River Fishing Resort	15601 Hwy 70 W	5280155, 8512513, ERP_310351, FLA014390	0 feet	300	UST, LUST	Medium

This site is an active recreational vehicle (RV) park that includes a convenience store and gasoline station. It is associated with four facility IDs: 5280155, 8512513, ERP_310351, and FLA014390. Facility IDs 5280155 and FLA014390 relate to wastewater treatment for the onsite potable water system, which has documented issues with disinfectant byproducts, heavy metals, and other contaminants. Facility IDs 8512513 and ERP_310351 pertain to storage tank contamination.

Current Regulatory Status: There is currently one (1) UST registered to this site. The site is undergoing cleanup activities for groundwater contamination caused by a leak of gasoline in 2017. The current remediation schedule extends into 2026. A field review of the site completed on August 15th, 2023, confirmed that there is currently an active gas station at this site. The field visit did not identify any potential sources or signs of possible contamination that may indicate more assessments, interviews, or investigations are needed at this time. Based on a review of all reasonably available data, an onsite inspection, and the distance to the project, this facility is rated as Medium Risk.

Facility Name	Facility Address	Facility ID	Distance from R/W	Distance from Proposed Pond Parcel	Facility Type	Risk Rating
Gloria Farms Inc	Platts Bluff Road	8735273	0 feet	0	UST	No

Two (2) 4,000-gallon USTs were installed at this site in 1973: one (1) used to store vehicular diesel and the other leaded gasoline. Both tanks were removed from the site in 1991. No compliance or contamination issues have been reported for this site, and there are currently no storage tanks registered to the site.

Current Regulatory Status: Currently, there are no storage tanks registered to this site. A field review of the site completed on August 15th, 2023, confirmed the site is currently used residentially and for agriculture. The field visit did not identify any potential sources or signs of possible contamination that may indicate more assessments, interviews, or investigations are needed at this time. Based on a review of all reasonably available data, an onsite inspection, and the distance to the project, this facility is rated as No Risk.

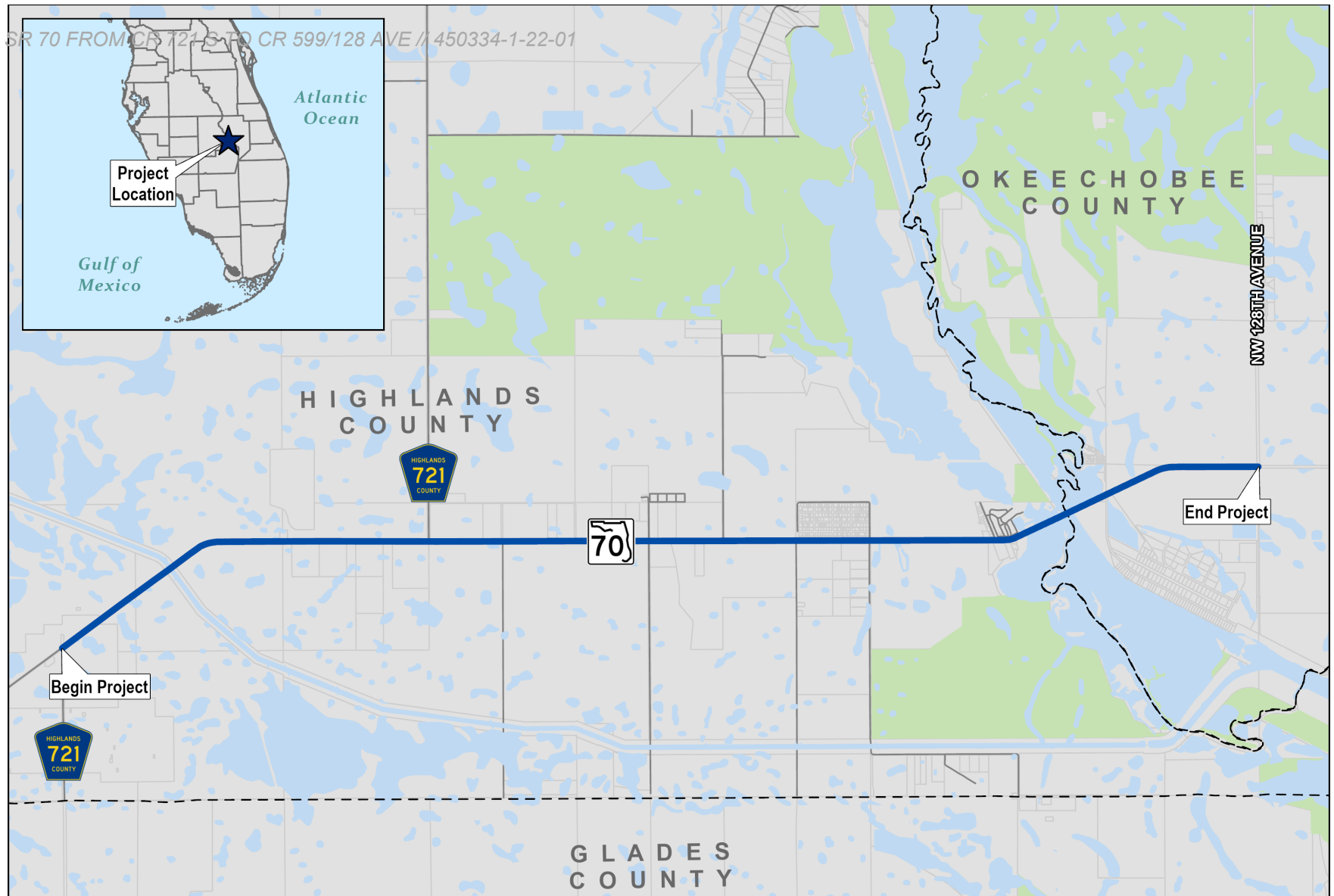


Figure 1. Project Location Map

FPID No. 450334-1
 SR 70 From CR 721 S to CR 599/18th Avenue
 Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: ESRI
 Imagery Date: 2015



0 5,000 10,000 Feet



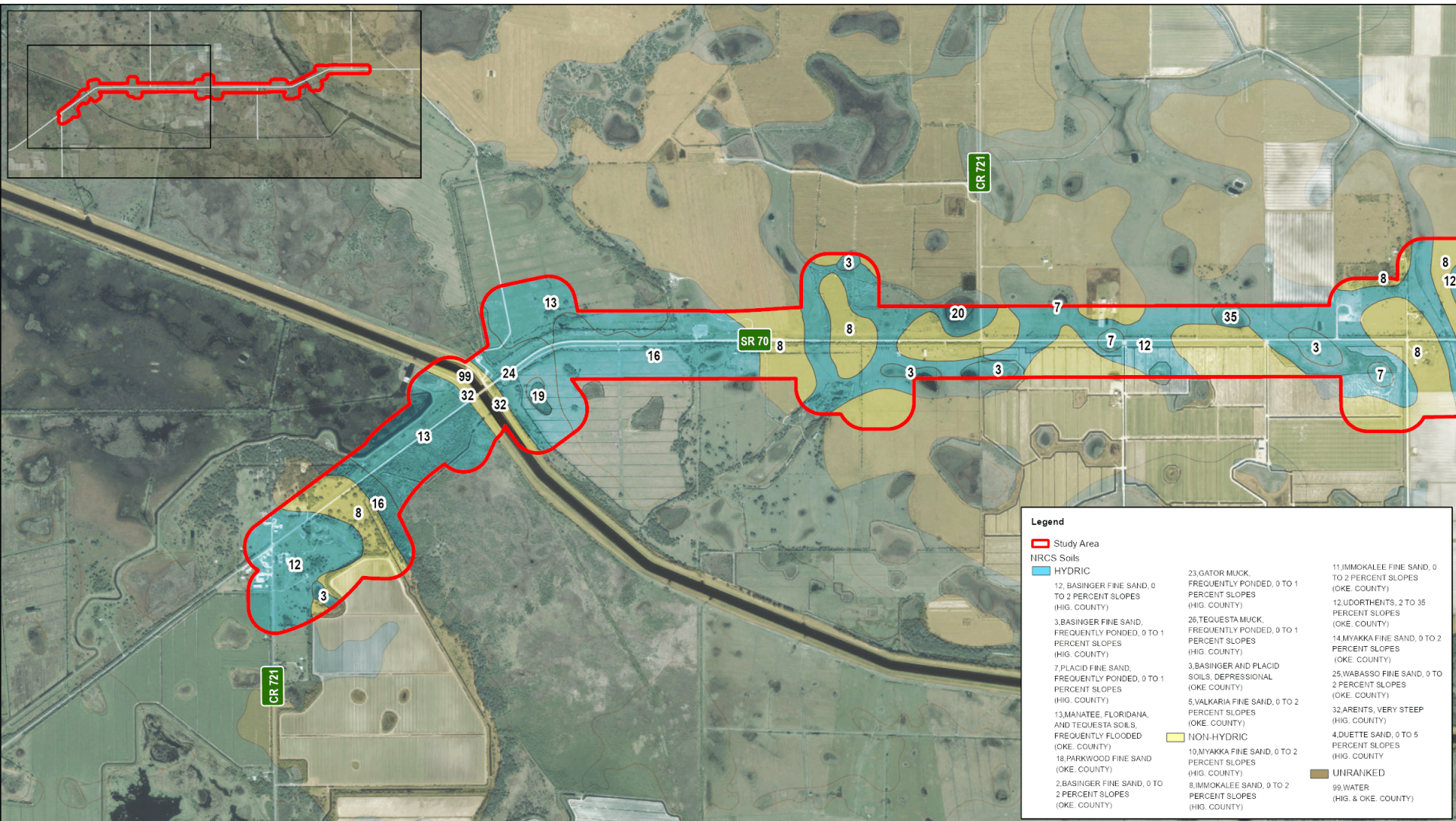


Figure 2 NRCS Soils Map
Sheet 1 of 2

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: NRCS USDA
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023

0 2,450 4,900 Feet



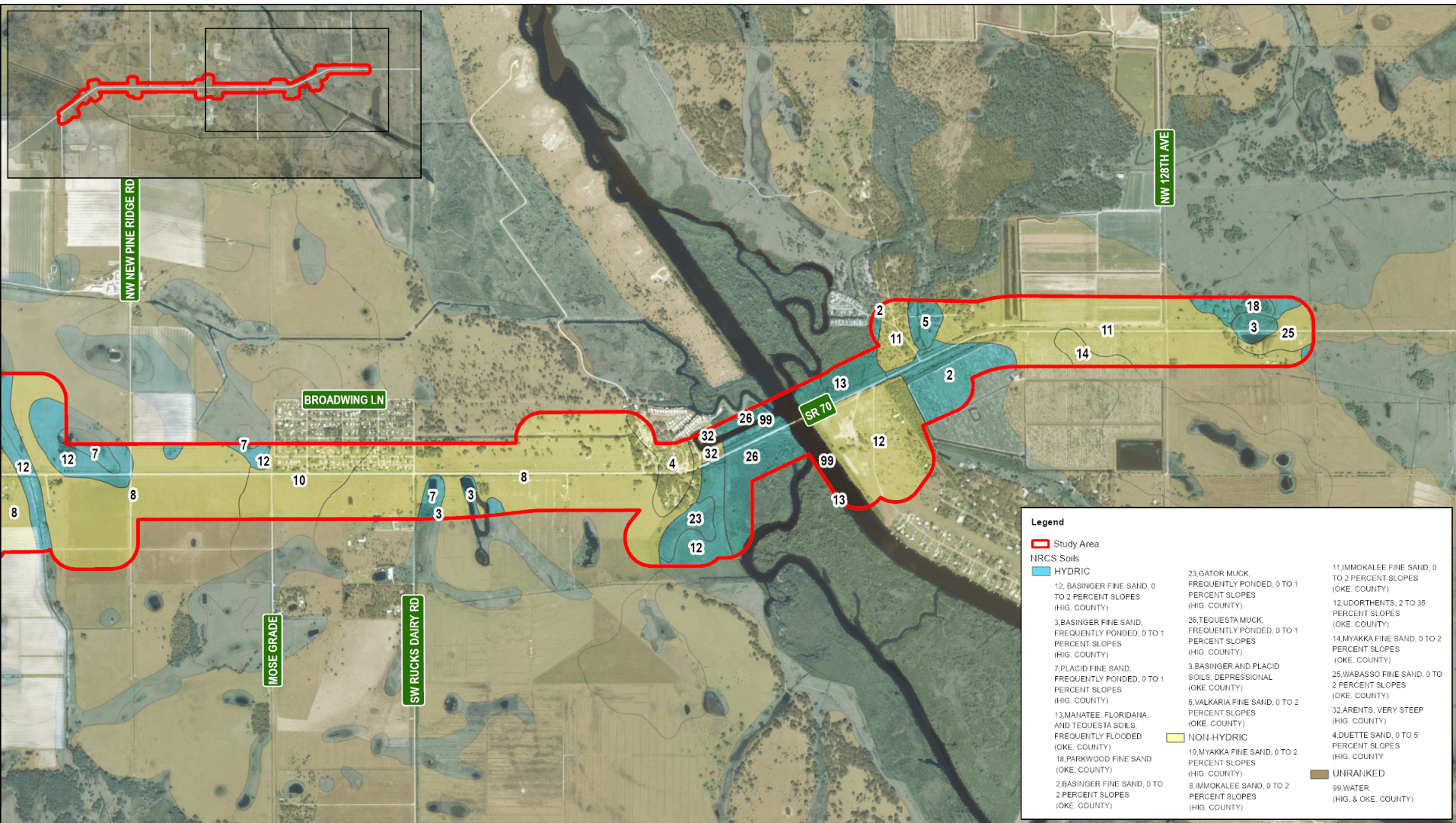


Figure 2 NRCS Soils Map
Sheet 2 of 2

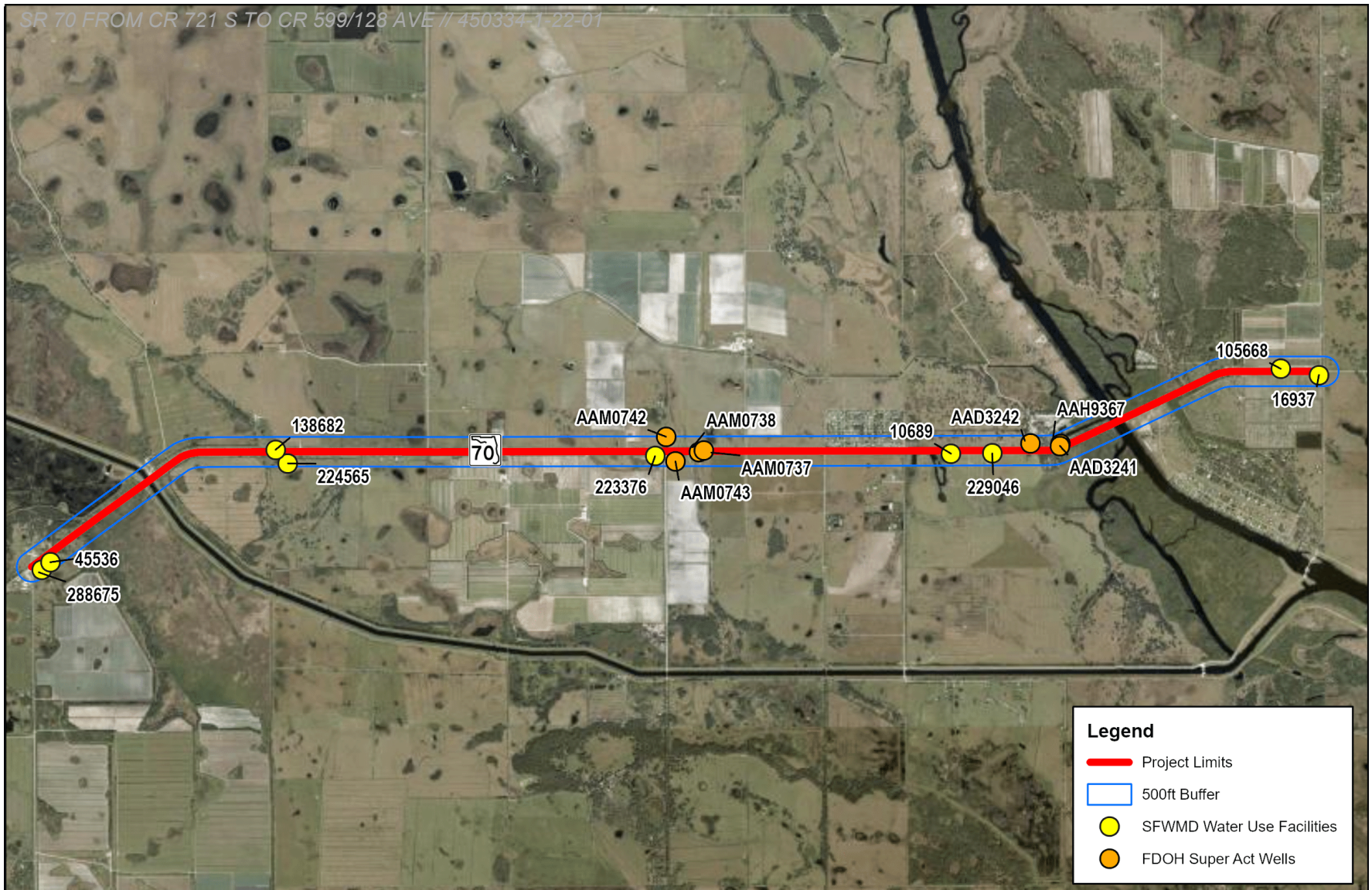
FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties



Data Source: NRCS USDA
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023

0 2,450 4,900 Feet





Legend

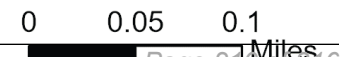
- Project Limits
- 500ft Buffer
- SFWMD Water Use Facilities
- FDOH Super Act Wells



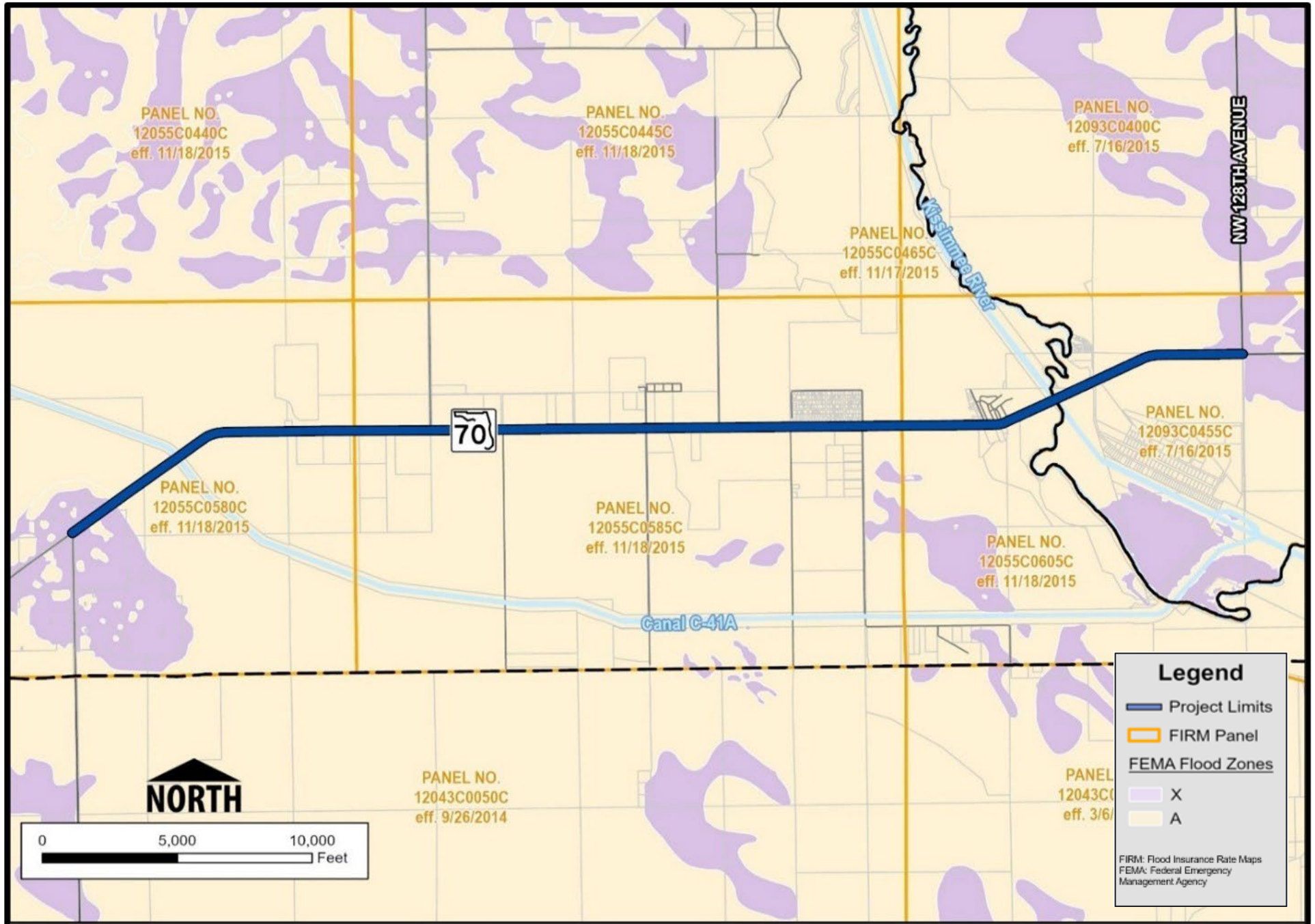
Figure 3: Well Locations

FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
 SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue
 Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: SFWMD
 Image Source: ESRI
 Image Date: 2023



FLOODPLAINS MAP



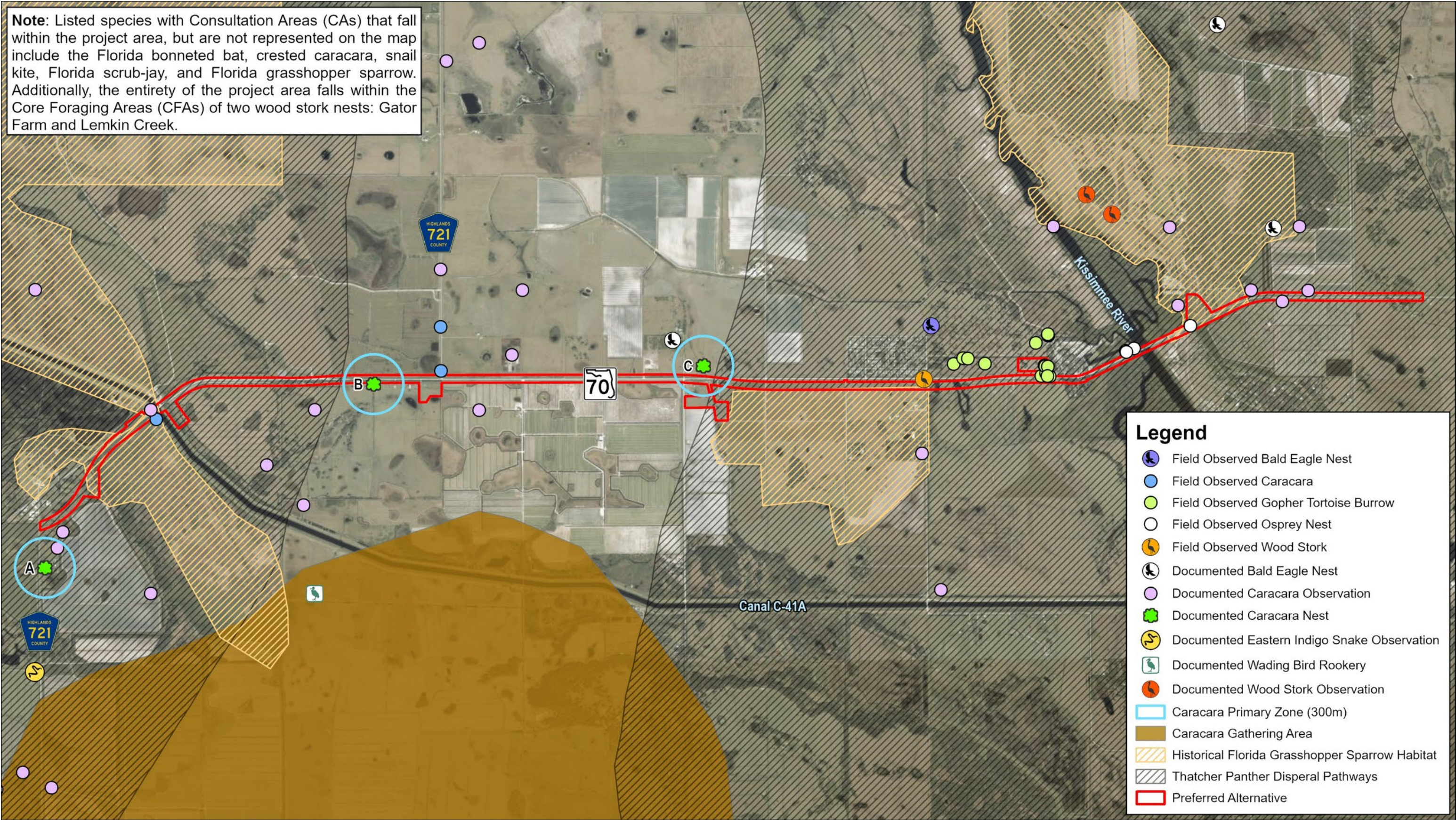
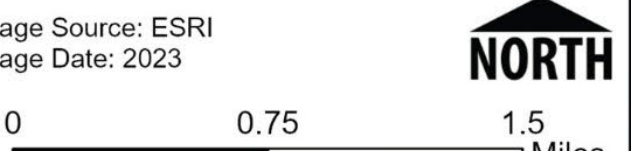


Figure 7. Listed and Protected Species Map
FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023



From: [Cothern, Kathern](#)
To: [Caruso, Kristin](#); [Aniruddha Gotmare](#)
Cc: [Feagle, Autumn "Brooke"](#); [Feagle, Brooke](#); [Lauk, Joe](#)
Subject: FW: Document Review Confirmation for 450334-1 NRE for SR 70
Date: Tuesday, December 30, 2025 12:17:43 PM

Let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
Kathern Cothern
Project Manager IV
Corridors Program Office – D1
801 North Broadway Ave., MS 1-41
Bartow, Florida 33830
☎ (863) 519-2331
✉ Kathern.cothern@dot.state.fl.us

From: admin@fla-etat.org <admin@fla-etat.org>
Sent: Tuesday, December 30, 2025 11:34 AM
To: DiGruttolo, Laura <Laura.digruttolo@myfwc.com>
Cc: Cothern, Kathern <Kathern.Cothern@dot.state.fl.us>; Joyner, Melody <Melody.Joyner@dot.state.fl.us>; brooke.feagle@atkinsrealis.com; Cothern, Kathern <Kathern.Cothern@dot.state.fl.us>; ConservationPlanningServices@MyFWC.com
Subject: Document Review Confirmation for 450334-1 NRE for SR 70

EXTERNAL SENDER: Use caution with links and attachments.

A review was received for the following:

Event: Natural Resource Evaluation Review for 450334-1, SR 70 from CR 721 South to 128th Ave
Document: 450334-1 NRE for SR 70
Submitted By: Laura DiGruttolo
Global: Yes
Attachment: <https://www.fl-a-etat.org/est/servlet/blobViewer?blobID=47810>
Comments:

FWC staff have no additional comments to offer.



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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Rodney Barreto
Chairman
Coral Gables

Steven Hudson
Vice Chairman
Fort Lauderdale

Preston Farrior
Tampa

Gary Lester
Oxford

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Executive Director
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Assistant Executive Director

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Chief Conservation Officer

Jessica Crawford
Chief of Staff

Division of Habitat and
Species Conservation
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Director

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800 955-8770 (V)

MyFWC.com

December 30, 2025

Kathern Cothorn
Florida Department of Transportation District 1
801 North Broadway Avenue
Bartow, Florida 33830
Kathern.Cothorn@dot.state.fl.us

Re: SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue Natural Resource Evaluation,
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Dear Ms. Cothorn:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) staff reviewed the above-referenced Natural Resources Evaluation (NRE) report in accordance with FWC's authorities under Chapter 379, Florida Statutes, and Chapter 68A-27, Florida Administrative Code.

The Florida Department of Transportation District 1 is conducting a Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Study (ETDM 14491) to evaluate the proposed widening of State Road (SR) 70 from County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, a distance of approximately 8.6 miles. The project proposes widening the existing two-lane road to a four-lane, divided road with 12-foot-wide travel lanes, paved shoulders and turn lanes, and adding a 12-foot shared use path along the south side of SR 70. The NRE report indicates that additional right-of-way will be needed to construct this project.

The NRE report was prepared as part of the PD&E study to document and summarize the wetlands, surface waters, protected species, critical habitat, and essential fish habitat within the project's corridor; evaluate potential impacts associated with the proposed project; provide effect determinations for protected species; identify mitigation needs, and coordinate with federal and state regulatory and resource agencies. FWC staff agrees with the effect determinations and supports the project implementation measures and commitments for protected species. Further coordination could be required during future species-specific surveys and project permitting.

For specific technical questions regarding the content of this letter, please contact Kristee Booth at (850) 363-6298 or Kristee.Booth@MyFWC.com. All other inquiries may be directed to ConservationPlanningServices@MyFWC.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Laura DiGruttolo".

Laura DiGruttolo
Land Use Planning Supervisor
Office of Conservation Planning Services

ld/kb
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR599/128th Avenue NRE_64432_12992025

From: [Joyner, Melody](#)
To: [Caruso, Kristin](#); [Aniruddha Gotmare](#)
Cc: [Cothorn, Kathern](#); [Feagle, Brooke](#)
Subject: FW: Document Review Confirmation for 450334-1 NRE for SR 70
Date: Monday, December 22, 2025 12:43:38 PM

FYI

Thank you,

Melody Joyner, CPM
Corridors Program Development Manager
Florida Department of Transportation - District One
Mail Station 1-41
Office: 863-519-2822
Cell: 863-800-6267

From: admin@fla-etat.org <admin@fla-etat.org>
Sent: Monday, December 22, 2025 11:52 AM
To: Mark.Kiser@fdacs.gov
Cc: Cothorn, Kathern <Kathern.Cothorn@dot.state.fl.us>; Joyner, Melody <Melody.Joyner@dot.state.fl.us>; brooke.feagle@atkinsrealis.com; Cothorn, Kathern <Kathern.Cothorn@dot.state.fl.us>; william.kiser@fdacs.gov
Subject: Document Review Confirmation for 450334-1 NRE for SR 70

EXTERNAL SENDER: Use caution with links and attachments.

A review was received for the following:

Event: Natural Resource Evaluation Review for 450334-1, SR 70 from CR 721 South to 128th Ave
Document: 450334-1 NRE for SR 70
Submitted By: Mark Kiser
Global: Yes
Comments:

FDACS/Florida Forest Service staff has reviewed the Natural Resources Evaluation and finds it to be satisfactory. The FFS commends the use of surveys for listed species and commitments (section 7.5 of NRE) to protect listed fauna, and the use of mitigation to offset impacts to wetlands.

Best management practices, including containment booms and silt fencing, should be used to protect wetlands and significant surface waters from contaminants, erosion, and other construction impacts. If any listed plants are present, they should be protected to the degree possible, or translocated to a suitable alternative site by an organization such as the Florida Native Plant Society. Caution should be exercised around invasive plants so as not to cause further spread; decontaminating equipment and machinery, and revegetating disturbed areas with plants native to the area to prevent the spread of non-native plants is recommended.

FFS/FDACS concurs with the proposed effect determinations for state and federal listed plant species, supports the project implementation measures and commitments described in section 7.5 of the NRE to protect wildlife, and recommends all BMPs be followed to protect surrounding wetlands and water quality. FFS / FDACS staff are willing to assist with listed plant relocation efforts if needed.

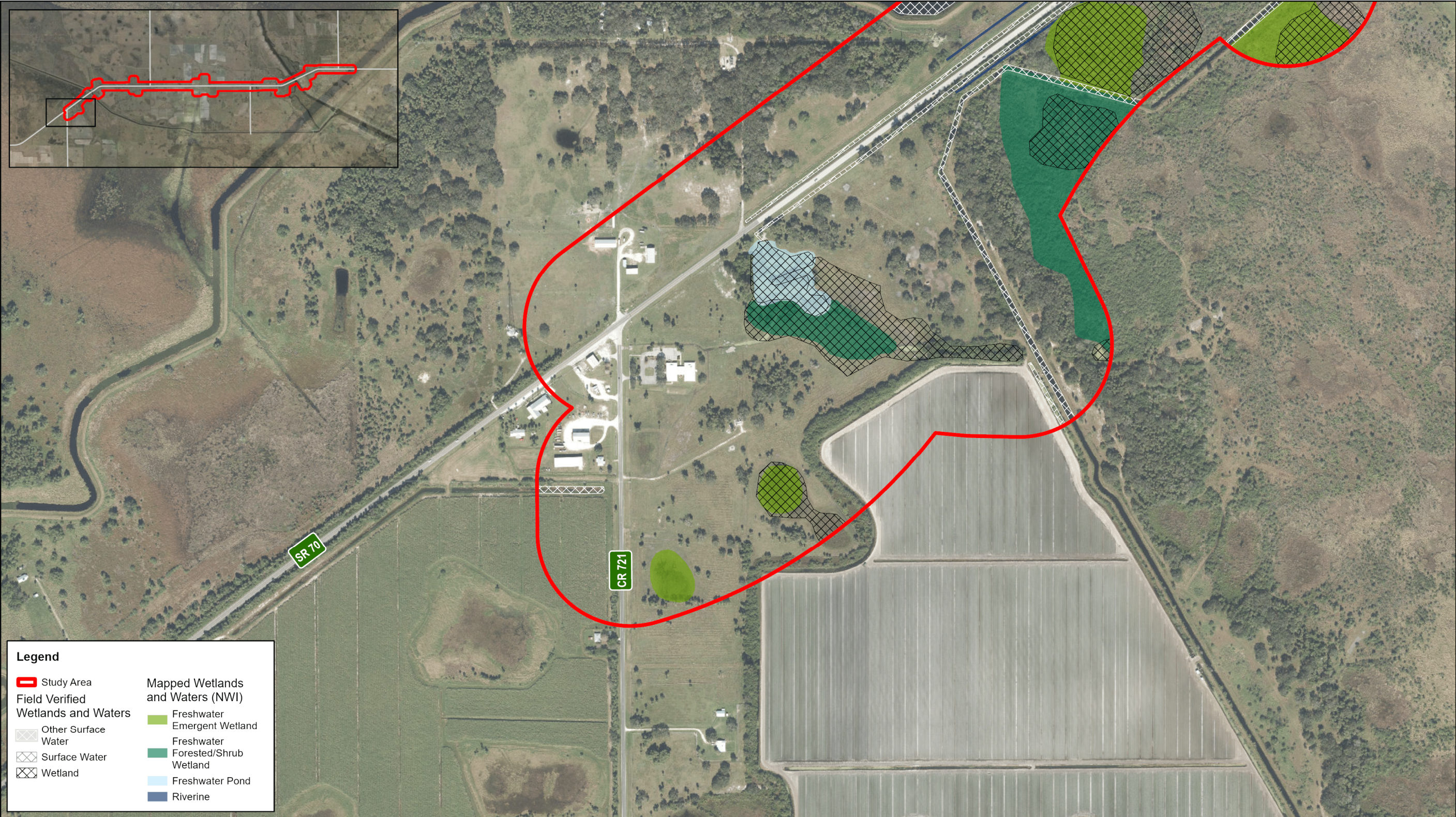
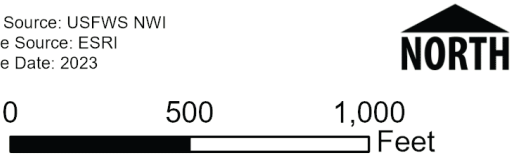


Figure 6. National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and Field-Verified Wetlands and Waters Map
Sheet 1 of 8
FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: USFWS NWI
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023



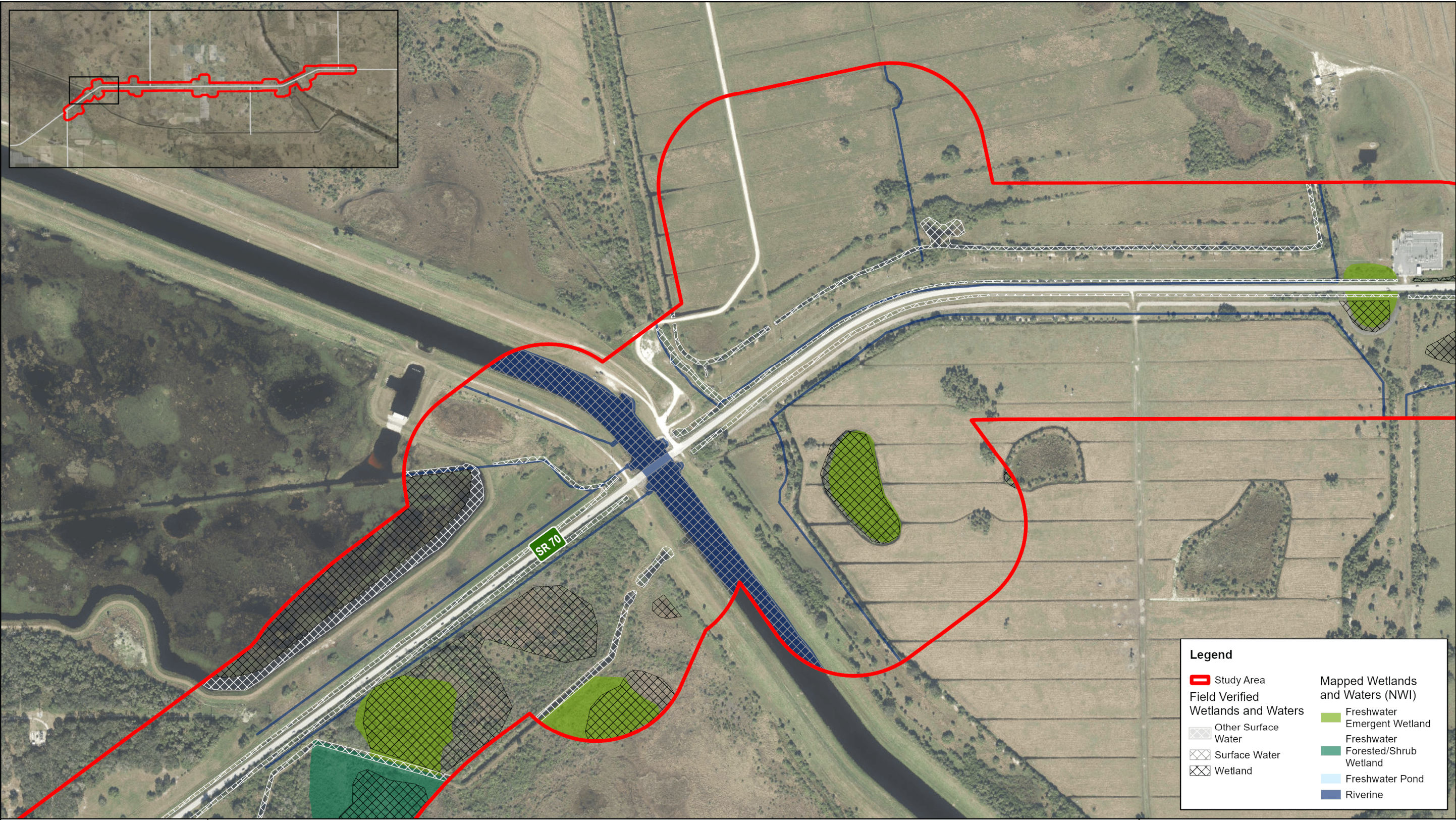


Figure 6. National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and Field-Verified Wetlands and Waters Map
Sheet 2 of 8
FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: USFWS NWI
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023

0 500 1,000
Feet



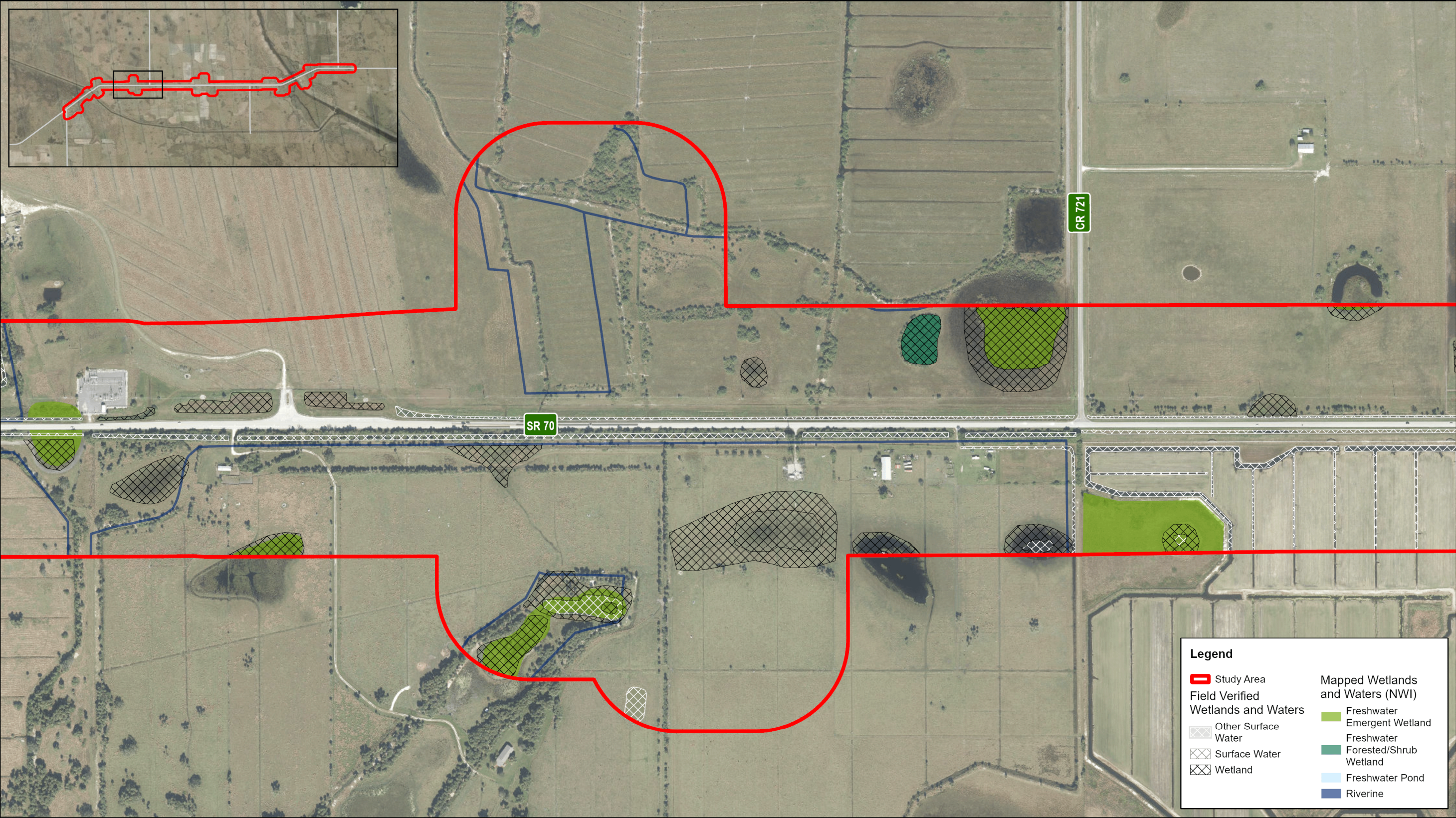
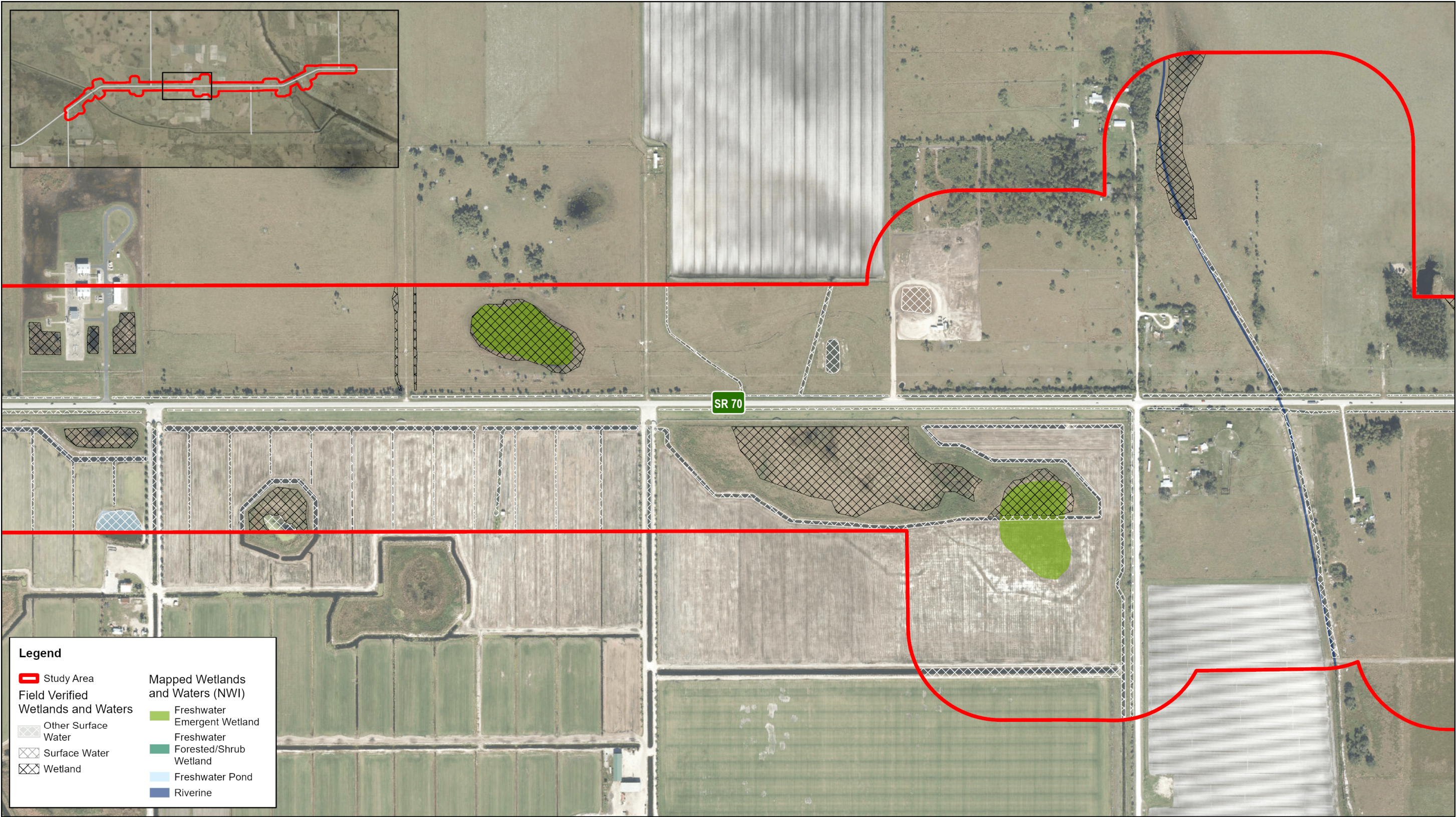


Figure 6. National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and Field-Verified Wetlands and Waters Map
Sheet 3 of 8
FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: USFWS NWI
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023





Legend

Study Area

Field Verified Wetlands and Waters

Other Surface Water

Surface Water

Wetland

Mapped Wetlands and Waters (NWI)

Freshwater Emergent Wetland

Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland

Freshwater Pond

Riverine



Figure 6. National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and Field-Verified Wetlands and Waters Map
Sheet 4 of 8
FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: USFWS NWI
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023

NORTH

0 500 1,000

Feet

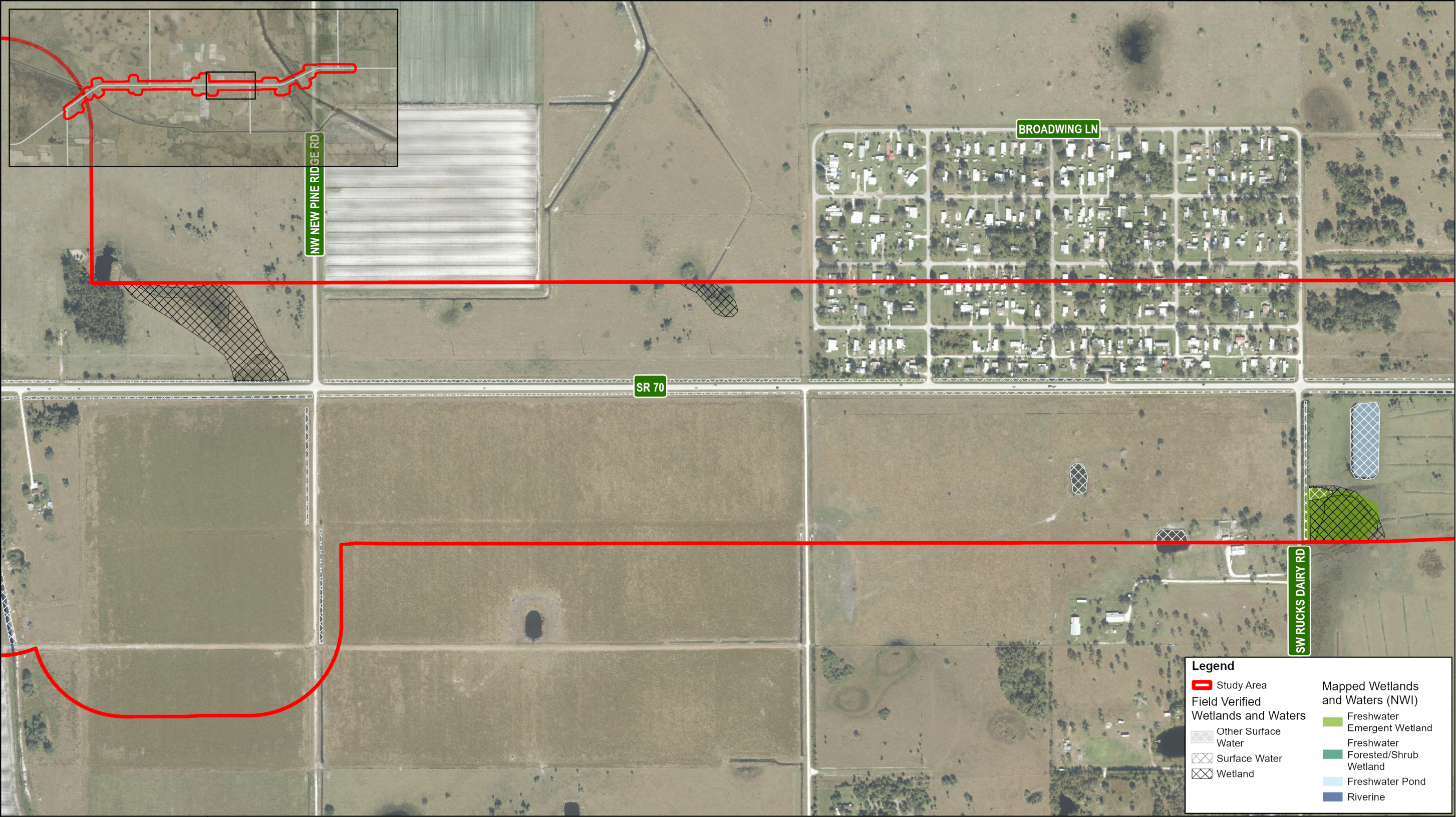
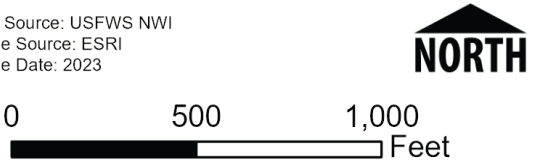


Figure 6. National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and Field-Verified Wetlands and Waters Map
Sheet 5 of 8
FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: USFWS NWI
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023



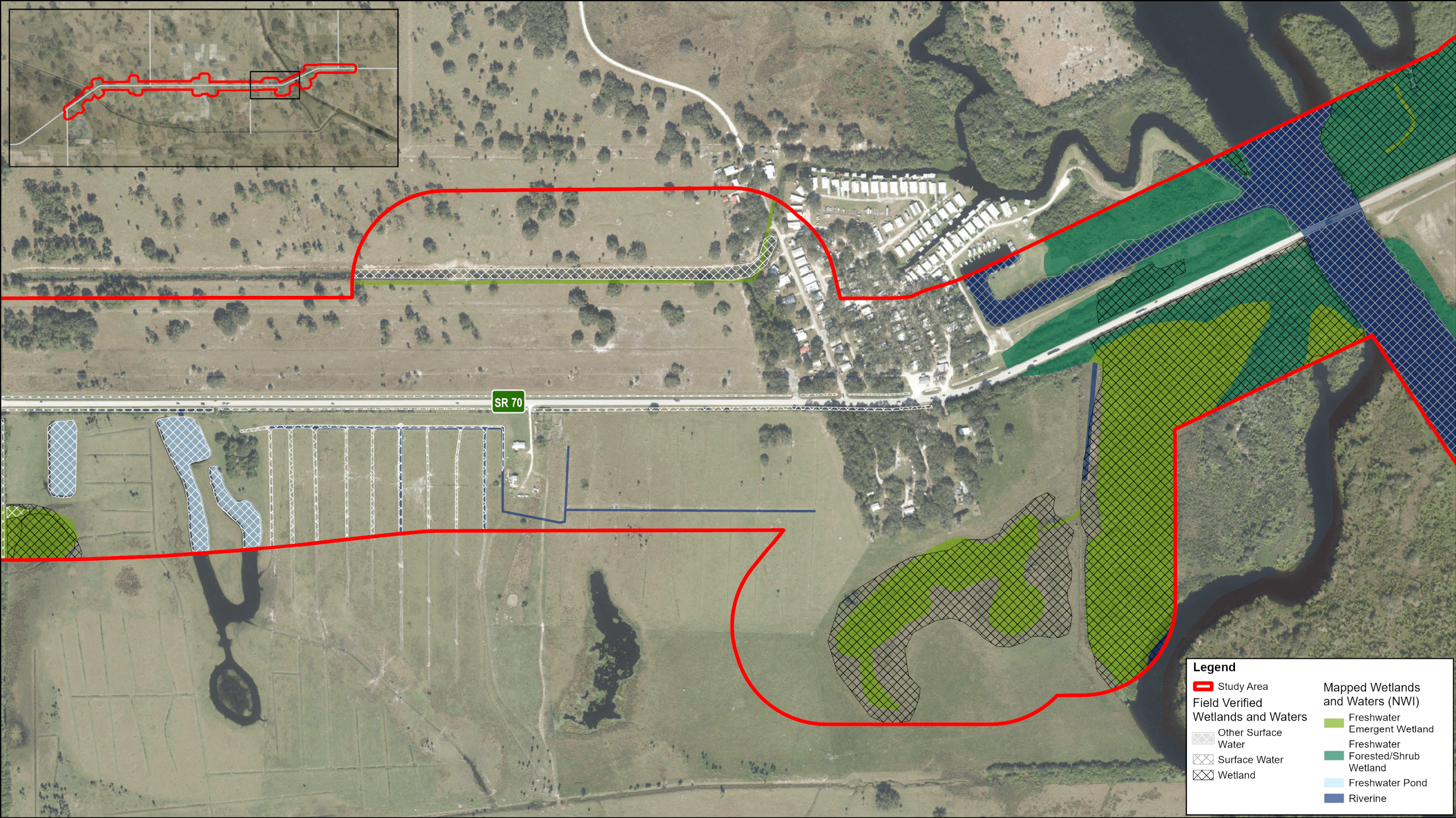
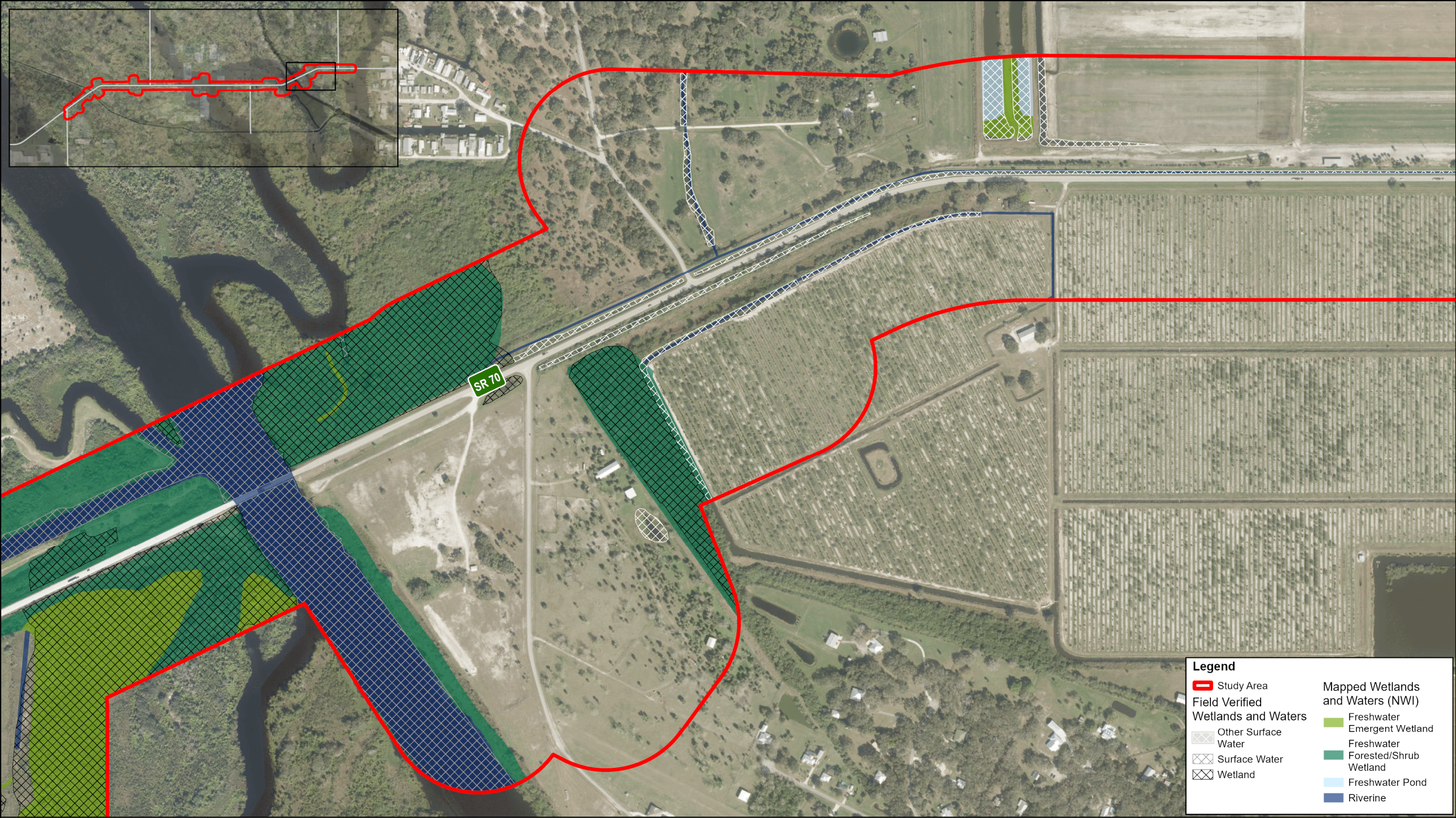


Figure 6. National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and Field-Verified Wetlands and Waters Map
Sheet 6 of 8
FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: USFWS NWI
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023





Legend

Study Area	Freshwater Emergent Wetland
Field Verified Wetlands and Waters	Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland
Other Surface Water	Freshwater Pond
Surface Water	Riverine
Wetland	

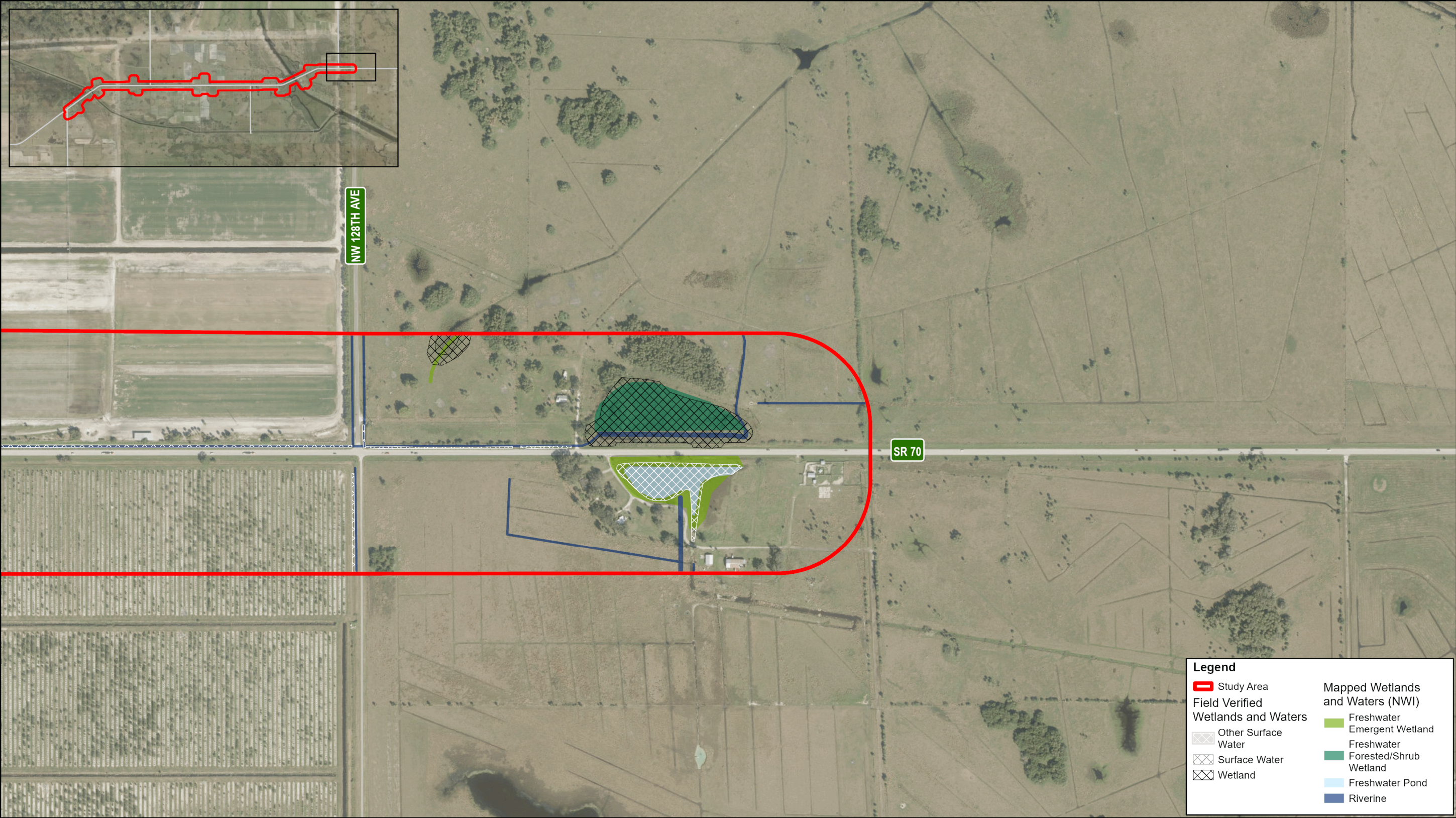


Figure 6. National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and Field-Verified Wetlands and Waters Map
Sheet 7 of 8
FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: USFWS NWI
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023

NORTH

0 500 1,000 Feet



Legend

Study Area

Field Verified Wetlands and Waters

Other Surface Water

Surface Water

Wetland

Mapped Wetlands and Waters (NWI)

Freshwater Emergent Wetland

Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland

Freshwater Pond

Riverine



Figure 6. National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and Field-Verified Wetlands and Waters Map
Sheet 8 of 8
FPID No. 450334-1-22-01
SR 70 from CR 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Data Source: USFWS NWI
Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023

NORTH

0 500 1,000

Feet

From: [Joyner, Melody](#)
To: [Caruso, Kristin](#); [Aniruddha Gotmare](#)
Cc: [Feagle, Brooke](#); [Cothorn, Kathern](#)
Subject: FW: Document Review Confirmation for 450334-1 NRE for SR 70
Date: Thursday, December 4, 2025 10:56:26 AM

Please see comments below.

Thank you,

Melody Joyner, CPM
Corridors Program Development Manager
Florida Department of Transportation - District One
Mail Station 1-41
Office: 863-519-2822
Cell: 863-800-6267

From: admin@fla-etat.org <admin@fla-etat.org>
Sent: Thursday, December 4, 2025 10:22 AM
To: bconmy@sfwmd.gov
Cc: Cothorn, Kathern <Kathern.Cothorn@dot.state.fl.us>; Joyner, Melody <Melody.Joyner@dot.state.fl.us>; brooke.feagle@atkinsrealis.com; Cothorn, Kathern <Kathern.Cothorn@dot.state.fl.us>
Subject: Document Review Confirmation for 450334-1 NRE for SR 70

EXTERNAL SENDER: Use caution with links and attachments.

A review was received for the following:

Event: Natural Resource Evaluation Review for 450334-1, SR 70 from CR 721 South to 128th Ave
Document: 450334-1 NRE for SR 70
Submitted By: Barbara Conmy
Global: Yes
Comments:

NRE Report - SR 70 PD&E Study - SFWMD Comments:

The Natural Resource Evaluation (NRE) report indicates that secondary impacts totaling 4.47 acres (with a calculated functional loss of 0.31 functional units) was determined based on a distance of 25'. Please be advised that the 25' buffer distance is discussed in the

Environmental Resource Permit Applicant's Handbook Vol. I for work in uplands. When there is work in wetlands, secondary impacts may extend further than 25' and additional Uniform Mitigation Assessment Method (UMAM) assessments beyond the 25' may be required to document any further secondary impacts or lack thereof.

Page 7 of the NRE report describes Florida Land Use Cover and Forms Classification System (FLUCFCS) 6190 as Exotic Wetland Hardwoods. Pursuant to the UMAM rule chapter, Chapter 62-345, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), the appropriate FLUCFCS to use should be based on the underlying native community type, rather than exotic or nuisance vegetation. The presence of that vegetation would instead be factored into the UMAM scores.

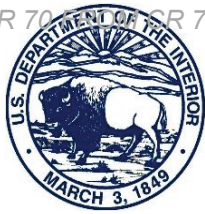
Page 20 of the NRE report indicates that the Kissimmee River is sovereignty submerged lands. Therefore, any proposed work over the River may require sovereignty submerged lands authorization in the form of a public easement or modification of any existing easement. That authorization would be processed as part of the Environmental Resource Permit application by the South Florida Water Management District (District).

Page 37 - 38 of the NRE report discusses making a financial contribution of \$145,840 to the Crested Caracara Conservation Fund for impacts to the primary protection buffer. Please note that the District may not be able to authorize payment of monies as mitigation unless it can be documented that the monies will be used for a specific purpose or project that benefits the crested caracara. Otherwise, proposed mitigation needs to offset the specific functions that will be lost as a result of the project.

As acknowledged on Page 57 of the NRE report, the UMAM assessments and scores will need to be reviewed and verified by District staff once a site visit can be conducted following receipt of the ERP application.

The NRE report does not address proposed pond siting and design in terms of potential water quality, water quantity and/or gradient impacts on adjacent wetlands. These topics will need to be addressed as part of the ERP application submittal.

The ERP application submittal should include a more detailed discussion of what practicable design measures have been considered and incorporated into the project to address elimination and reduction of wetland and other surface water impacts and to demonstrate compliance with Section 10.2.1, AH Vol. I.



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Florida Ecological Services Field Office



March 26, 2026

Katlin Kuhn-Hendricks
Project Delivery Coordinator
Office of Environmental Management
Florida Department of Transportation
605 Suwannee Street, MS-37
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Service Consultation Code: 2026-0058744
Date Received: December 1, 2025
Consultation Initiation Date: December 1, 2025
Project: SR 70 from CR 721S to SR
599/128th Avenue
County: Highlands/Okeechobee

Dear Ms. Kuhn-Hendricks:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has received the Florida's Department of Transportation (FDOT) (Applicant) request for consultation dated December 1, 2025, for the widening of State Road (SR) 70 from County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue (Project). This document transmits the Service's biological opinion based on our review of the proposed Project located in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, Florida, and its effects on the threatened Audubon's crested caracara (*Caracara plancus audubonii*; caracara). It also includes and summarizes our concurrences for the FDOT determinations for the endangered Florida panther (*Puma concolor coryi*), eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon couperii*), and West Indian manatee (*Trichechus manatus*). This document is submitted in accordance with section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act) (87 Stat. 884; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

This Biological Opinion is based on information provided in the FDOT Natural Resources Evaluation (NRE) Report dated November 2025, correspondence, meetings, emails, field surveys, and other sources of information. A complete record of this consultation is on file at the Florida Ecological Services Office (FESO) in Jacksonville, Florida.

Consultation history

- January 4 through April 28, 2023 - FDOT conducted wildlife pedestrian surveys in the project area.
- November 2025 – FDOT completed the Natural Resources Evaluation Report for the Project.
- December 1, 2025 – Formal consultation initiated.
- March 26, 2026 – Biological Opinion completed.

CONCURRENCES

The FDOT has determined that the Project (as described in the section of the Biological Opinion entitled **DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION** provided below) may affect but is not likely to adversely affect following Federally listed species: eastern indigo snake, Florida panther and the West Indian manatee. The FDOT has requested the Service's concurrence for these determinations.

Eastern indigo snake

The eastern indigo snake may occur within the Action Area due to the presence of suitable upland habitats and the proximity of wetlands and agricultural lands that may provide foraging opportunities. However, the project corridor is primarily composed of previously disturbed roadside areas, improved pasture, and maintained right-of-way.

Project activities will occur largely within the existing roadway corridor and previously disturbed areas. The Service's *Standard Protection Measures (SPMs) for the Eastern Indigo Snake* (Service 2021a) will be implemented during construction. These measures include education of construction personnel, inspection of excavations, and safe relocation procedures should an indigo snake be encountered.

Because implementation of the SPMs will minimize the likelihood of injury or mortality and because the project will occur primarily within previously disturbed habitats, any potential effects to the eastern indigo snake are expected to be insignificant or discountable. Therefore, the Service concurs with the determination that the proposed action **may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect** the eastern indigo snake.

Florida Panther

The Florida panther is federally listed as endangered and occurs throughout portions of south Florida. The project corridor is located within Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, where suitable panther habitat may occur in the form of pasture, wetlands, agricultural lands, and drainage canals that provide cover and support prey species. Panthers are highly mobile and occupy extremely large home ranges that may exceed tens of thousands of acres.

Although suitable habitat occurs within the broader Action Area, the proposed project primarily involves widening of an existing roadway corridor and associated bridge improvements. Construction activities will occur largely within the existing right-of-way and adjacent disturbed areas. The project will not introduce a new roadway through previously undisturbed habitat and therefore will not create a new barrier to panther movement.

Temporary construction activities may result in localized noise, human activity, and vegetation clearing. Panthers are expected to avoid areas of active construction and utilize suitable habitat in surrounding areas. Due to the species' large home range and mobility, temporary disturbance within a limited portion of the corridor is not expected to result in injury, mortality, or displacement at the population level.

Wildlife shelves incorporated into the bridge design at aquatic crossings will maintain or improve terrestrial passage beneath the roadway relative to existing conditions, thereby reducing potential barrier effects for wildlife movement along riparian corridors.

Because the project represents the widening of an existing roadway corridor, involves limited habitat modification relative to the available landscape, and incorporates design features that maintain wildlife passage opportunities, any potential effects to the Florida panther are expected to be insignificant or discountable. Therefore, the Service concurs with the determination that the proposed action **may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect** the Florida panther.

West Indian Manatee

The West Indian manatee is federally listed as threatened and occurs in freshwater and marine systems throughout Florida. The project includes bridge improvements over the Kissimmee River and the C-41A Canal, both of which may provide suitable habitat for manatees.

Construction activities associated with bridge improvements may include temporary in-water work and the operation of construction equipment near aquatic habitats. However, such activities will be temporary and localized. Standard manatee protection measures, including adherence to the Service's *Standard Manatee Conditions for In-Water Work*, will be implemented during construction. These measures include the use of trained observers, reduced vessel speeds, and immediate cessation of in-water work if a manatee enters the work area.

The project will not permanently alter the hydrology or navigability of the Kissimmee River or the C-41A Canal and will not result in the loss of suitable manatee habitat. Once construction is completed, the bridges and associated infrastructure will continue to allow unrestricted movement of manatees through the river and canal systems.

Because potential interactions between construction activities and manatees will be minimized through implementation of standard protection measures and because the project will not result in permanent habitat loss or barriers to movement, any potential effects to the West Indian manatee are expected to be insignificant or discountable. Therefore, the Service concurs with the determination that the proposed action **may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect** the West Indian manatee.

BIOLOGICAL OPINION

This Biological Opinion provides the Service's opinion as to whether the proposed Project is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the caracara (50 CFR § 402.02). There is no designated critical habitat for these species onsite; therefore, this Biological Opinion will not address destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE JEOPARDY DETERMINATIONS

Jeopardy determination

Section 7(a)(2) of the Act requires that Federal agencies ensure that any action they authorize, fund, or carry out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species.

“Jeopardize the continued existence of” means to engage in an action that reasonably would be expected, directly or indirectly, to reduce appreciably the likelihood of both the survival and recovery of a listed species in the wild by reducing the reproduction, numbers, or distribution of that species (50 CFR § 402.02).

The jeopardy analysis in this Biological Opinion relies on four components: (1) the Status of the Species, which describes the range-wide condition of the species, the factors responsible for that condition, and its survival and recovery needs; (2) the Environmental Baseline, which analyzes the condition of the species in the action area, the factors responsible for that condition, and the relationship of the action area to the survival and recovery of the species; (3) the Effects of the Action, which determine the direct and indirect impacts of the proposed Federal action and the effects of any interrelated or interdependent activities on the species; and (4) the Cumulative Effects, which evaluate the effects of future, non-federal activities in the action area on the species.

In accordance with policy and regulation, the jeopardy determination is made by evaluating the effects of the proposed federal action in the context of the current status of the species, taking into account any cumulative effects, to determine if implementation of the proposed action is likely to cause an appreciable reduction in the likelihood of both the survival and recovery of the species in the wild.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed project extends approximately 8.6 miles along SR 70 in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties. The Preferred Alternative includes widening the existing two-lane rural roadway to a four-lane divided facility with a 260-foot typical section consisting of two 12-foot travel lanes in each direction, a 40-foot median, 12-foot shoulders, and a 12-foot shared-use path. The project includes replacement of the Kissimmee River bridge, addition of a second bridge at the C-41A Canal, and construction of new stormwater management facilities (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Project Location Map

Minimization and conservation measures

In order to avoid and minimize impacts to listed species and their associated habitats, the Applicant will implement the following measures:

1. Adhere to the *Service's Standard Protection Measures (SPMs) for the Eastern Indigo Snake* (Service 2021a).
2. In any year, prior to conducting any clearing activities within 4,920 feet (1,500 meters) of any previously documented or newly discovered caracara nest site, the Applicant shall conduct a survey during the caracara nesting season (January 1 through April 30) to determine if the documented or discovered nest is active and if other caracara nests are present. The survey area shall include potential nesting and foraging habitat located in land adjacent to the Project site that is under the Applicant's right-of-way or neighboring areas where access is allowed.
3. To minimize the potential for disturbance to nesting caracaras, the Applicant shall conduct land-clearing activities outside the nesting season for areas that occur within the primary zone (984 feet or 300 meters) of any documented caracara nest site. Should it be necessary to conduct land-clearing activities during the nesting season, land-clearing within 984 feet (300 meters) of any nest identified during the survey referenced above will not occur until monitoring has determined that the nest has been abandoned or that the chicks within the

nest have fledged and left the nest site. Once the nest is empty, clearing of that primary zone and nest tree can proceed.

4. The Applicant will provide a financial contribution of \$145,840 to the Crested Caracara Conservation Fund for impacts to the primary zone for the nest adjacent to the project action area.
5. The Applicant will create wildlife shelves at the two project bridge locations in the Action area.
6. The Applicant will implement the *Standard Manatee Conditions for In-Water Work* during construction.

Action area

The Action Area is defined as all areas to be affected directly or indirectly by the action and not merely the immediate area involved in the action. For this Project, the Service considers the action area as all lands within the footprint of the Project, and all lands within 25 miles of the Project footprint. The 25-mile buffer around the Project footprint is designed to encompass mean dispersal distance of sub-adult male panthers, which was reported by Maehr et al. (2002) to be 23.2 miles and by Comiskey et al. (2002) to be 24.9 miles. The 25-mile buffer distance encompasses the dispersal distance of both male and female panthers because male panther dispersal distances are known to exceed those reported for female panthers (Comiskey et al. 2002; Maehr et al. 2002). The size of the Action Area for this consultation is consistent with action areas defined in our recent biological opinions for the panther, and it accounts for the large movements and home ranges of panthers as well as sufficiently consider cumulative effects and impacts to panther baseline conditions. While the Action Area is a 25-mile buffer around the Project footprint, the Service evaluated potential effects to species other than panthers in the action area and found potential effects to be insignificant or discountable. As such, effects to species other than panthers are not expected to extend beyond the Project boundaries.

STATUS OF THE SPECIES

Please see Enclosures for the Status of the Species for the Audubon's crested caracara.

Summary of threats to the species

Audubon's crested caracara

The modification and destruction of native wet and dry prairie, pasture lands and isolated wetlands in south Florida were a primary consideration in listing caracara. The conversion of prairie and pasture to citrus grove, sugarcane, and residential/commercial development alters habitat making it unusable by caracara. Based on the 2021 National Land Cover Database, approximately 8,151,711.16 acres of suitable habitat remain within the range of the caracara, with approximately 2,008,073 acres in conservation (Figure 2). Suitable habitat was identified by, among other factors, the surrounding landcover of known caracara nests. Alteration or filling of wetlands destroys important foraging habitat. Lack of habitat management, including prescribed fire, can result in habitat degradation to the point where it is no longer suitable for

occupancy or foraging. The ongoing threats relevant to this Project would be the additional conversion/reduction of habitat. The proposed Project would reduce the amount of suitable habitat within the overall range of caracara in Florida and also the territory of the documented nesting pair observed in the Action area. The Project's adverse effects to the caracara will be discussed in the remainder of this Biological Opinion.

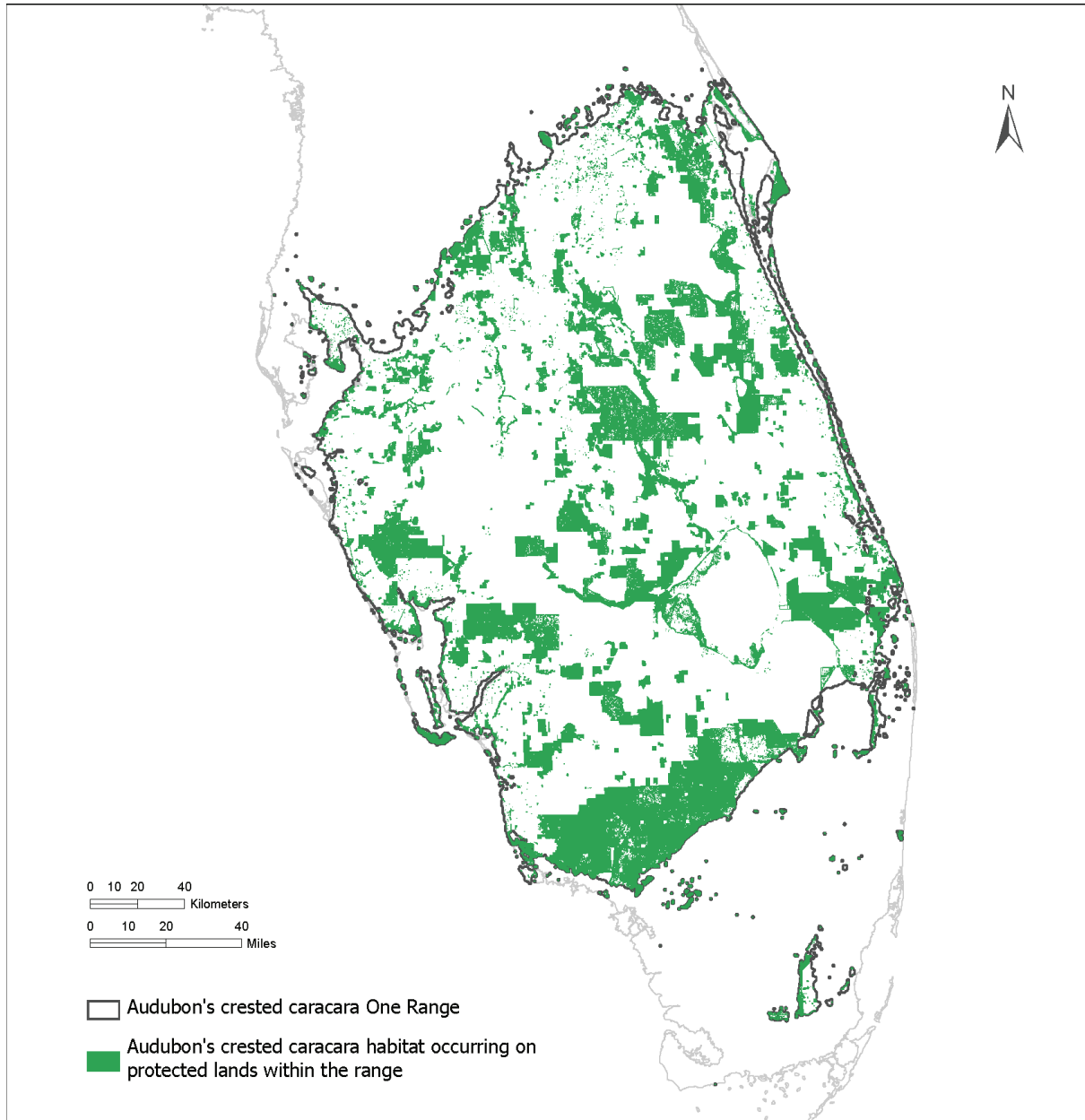


Figure 2: Protected caracara habitat within the species' range, composed of cultivated crops, pasture, hay, developed open space, and woody wetland.

ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE

Environmental baseline refers to the condition of the listed species or its designated critical habitat in the action area, without the consequences to the listed species or designated critical

habitat caused by the proposed action. The environmental baseline includes the past and present impacts of all Federal, State, or private actions and other human activities in the action area, the anticipated impacts of all proposed Federal projects in the action area that have already undergone formal or early section 7 consultation, and the impact of State or private actions which are contemporaneous with the consultation in process. The impacts to listed species or designated critical habitat from Federal agency activities or existing Federal agency facilities that are not within the agency's discretion to modify are part of the environmental baseline.

Status of the species within the action area

Audubon's caracara

The Project lies within the consultation area for Audubon's crested caracara (caracara) and is located outside of any caracara gathering area. A caracara survey was conducted on the Project site in 2023, documenting two nest onsite. A total of 61.35 acres of suitable caracara habitat is located within the Action area. Two nests are located within the center portion of the project, of which, approximately 18.55 acres will be impacted by the project. Caracara are routinely observed in the area and the Project site will be monitored for nesting activity as described in the *Minimization and conservation measures* section above. Because the Service's survey protocol is designed to determine caracara presence and nesting activity only, the shape and size of any of the previously documented pairs' territory is unknown. Caracara home ranges are known to vary from approximately 1,000 ac to approximately 5,000 ac, with an average home range of approximately 3,000 ac (Morrison 2001). Using the average territory size of 3,000 ac, the Service expects that the Project site could support the partial territory of a caracara pair. Suitable foraging habitat remains extensive within the broader landscape surrounding the Action area. While the project footprint will permanently convert approximately 42 acres of habitat, this acreage represents a small portion of the available pasture and agricultural lands within the counties where the species occurs.

Factors affecting the species environment within the action area

The crested caracara population within Highlands and Okeechobee Counties persists in a landscape dominated by pasture and agricultural land uses. The Action Area contains suitable foraging habitat but does not constitute a discrete, high-density nesting colony or a large conservation block essential to range wide recovery. The primary threats to the species in this region remain continued urban conversion of pasturelands and loss of nesting substrates.

Based on available information, the status of the crested caracara within the Action Area reflects a locally occupied agricultural landscape that remains broadly representative of habitats used by the species throughout its Florida range. The environmental baseline includes existing roadway infrastructure and agricultural disturbance to which the species has demonstrated behavioral tolerance.

Climate Change

Our analyses under the Act include consideration of observed or likely environmental effects related to ongoing and projected changes in climate. As defined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), “climate” refers to average weather, typically measured in terms of the mean and variability of temperature, precipitation, or other relevant properties over time; thus, “climate change” refers to a change in such a measure which persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer, due to natural conditions (*e.g.*, solar cycles) or human-caused changes in the composition of the atmosphere or in land use (IPCC 2013, p. 1450). Because observed and projected changes in climate at regional and local levels vary from global average conditions, rather than using global scale projections, we use “downscaled” projections when they are available. In our analysis, we use our expert judgment to weigh the best scientific and commercial data available in our consideration of relevant aspects of climate change and related effects. Based on the observed trends in the climate record gathered from thousands of temperature and precipitation recording stations around the world and changes observed in physical and biological systems, the scientific community is certain that the earth’s climate is changing and a warming trend in the climate is occurring (USGS 2019).

Florida is vulnerable to pulse events and sea level rise as well as to changes in rainfall and temperatures expected due to changes in environmental trends. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) (2017) model simulations using the more recent Coupled Model Intercomparison Project Phase 5 (CMIP5) predicts changes in precipitation seasonally for South Florida with increases in dry season rainfall up to 20 percent and decreases in wet season rainfall up to 30 percent. The change in timing of rainfall will likely stress ecosystems and cause changes in vegetation types. Increased rainfall associated with climate change could reduce the ability to effectively use prescribed burning to manage habitat in optimal conditions for panthers and their prey, bat roost trees, and caracara foraging areas. Increased rainfall could also reduce the amount of area suitable for caracara, panther denning, and bat roosting by increasing the area covered with standing water or the duration of inundation of seasonally wet areas. A decrease in precipitation or prolonged drought could affect food availability for these species and ultimately affect their productivity and survivorship.

It is difficult to estimate, with any degree of precision, which species will be affected by climate change or exactly how they will be affected. The Service will use Strategic Habitat Conservation planning, an adaptive science-driven process that begins with explicit trust resource population objectives, as the framework for adjusting our management strategies in response to climate change (Service 2006).

EFFECTS OF THE ACTION

Effects of the action are all consequences to listed species or critical habitat that are caused by the proposed action, including the consequences of other activities that are caused by the proposed action but that are not part of the action. A consequence is caused by the proposed action if it would not occur but for the proposed action and it is reasonably certain to occur. Effects of the action may occur later in time and may include consequences occurring outside the immediate area involved in the action. (50 CFR 402.02).

Audubon's crested caracara

The SR 70 widening project will result in permanent conversion of approximately 42.0 acres of habitat within the project footprint, including improved pasture, agricultural lands, wetlands, and associated roadside areas. Portions of these land cover types provide suitable foraging habitat for the crested caracara. The permanent conversion of habitat will reduce the total amount of available foraging habitat within the immediate corridor. Caracaras maintain large territories that commonly encompass thousands of acres of pasture and agricultural lands. The acreage directly affected by the project represents a small proportion of any single territory and an even smaller proportion of available habitat within Highlands and Okeechobee Counties. The project does not eliminate entire breeding territories nor remove large contiguous blocks of occupied habitat. Nesting substrates such as mature cabbage palms and other suitable trees will be evaluated during final design and construction planning to avoid or minimize removal where practicable.

In addition to habitat loss, we anticipate the noise and activity from personnel and vehicles during site preparation and construction would disturb foraging or nesting caracara, potentially leading birds to change their behavior and abandon a foraging or nesting area. The degree of disturbance is related to the distance of these activities from the nest, as well as the nesting pair's tolerance to human activities. Adverse effects could range from abandoning a nesting attempt, if construction is close to the nest during breeding season, to general avoidance of the area for foraging. The avoidance and minimization measure of maintaining a 984-foot exclusion buffer around an active nest is expected to reduce this risk of abandoning a nest attempt; however, avoidance of the Project site for foraging could still adversely affect the breeding pair through lowering the adult fitness and/or reproductive success of a nest (via lower adult fitness or decreased food availability for young). Because we expect the caracara that use the Action area to also utilize suitable habitat offsite, we anticipate that these caracaras may be less disturbed by localized noise, equipment, and human activity as they are expected to comfortably use the remaining portion of their territory. Furthermore, most of the suitable caracara habitats onsite will be ultimately converted to roadway eliminating suitability for use by caracara. Therefore, the effect of disturbance is expected to be superseded by the habitat loss described above.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

The Service defines "cumulative effects" considered in this Biological Opinion as the effects of future State, Tribal, local, or private actions (*i.e.*, non-Federal actions) reasonably certain to occur in the action area. Our definition of cumulative effects does not include future Federal actions unrelated to the proposed action because these actions require separate consultation pursuant to section 7 of the Act. The Project footprint encompasses the entire Action area and there are no known additional actions planned within the action area. Therefore, cumulative effects are not anticipated to occur in the action area.

CONCLUSION

After reviewing the current status of the caracara, the environmental baseline for the Action Area, the effects of the proposed action, and the cumulative effects for all species, it is the Service's biological and conference opinion that the SR 70 widening project, as proposed, is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the caracara. We have reached this conclusion because:

Audubon's crested caracara

1. Disturbance from site preparation and construction activities is anticipated to cause caracara to permanently shift their territory; however, as the construction is not expected to comprise an entire caracara territory, these caracaras are likely to use suitable habitat offsite. In addition, construction is temporary, therefore we expect the caracara to acclimate and resume normal behavior following the first year of construction. A reduction in breeding success during this time is expected to occur, but abandonment of this territory by caracara is not anticipated.
2. The permanent habitat conversion associated with the project is limited in acreage (42.0 acres) relative to the availability of suitable habitat within Highlands and Okeechobee Counties and within the broader range of each species. The project widens an existing roadway corridor rather than introducing a new linear barrier across intact habitat, thereby limiting the degree of additional fragmentation within the Action Area.
3. The acreage of suitable foraging habitat affected represents a small portion of any individual breeding territory and minor fraction of available habitat regionally. Temporary construction disturbance may result in localized behavioral responses; however, such effects are expected to be short-term and not population level in scope.

INCIDENTAL TAKE STATEMENT

Section 9 of the Act and Federal regulation pursuant to section 4(d) of the Act prohibit the take of endangered and threatened species, respectively, without special exemption. Take is defined as to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct. Harm is further defined by the Service to include significant habitat modification or degradation that results in death or injury to listed species by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns, including breeding, feeding, or sheltering. Harass is defined by the Service as intentional or negligent actions that create the likelihood of injury to listed species to such an extent as to significantly disrupt normal behavior patterns which include, but are not limited to, breeding, feeding, or sheltering. Incidental take is defined as take that is incidental to, and not the purpose of, the carrying out of an otherwise lawful activity. Under the terms of section 7(b)(4) and section 7(o)(2), taking that is incidental to, and not intended

as part of the agency action, is not considered to be prohibited taking under the Act provided such taking is in compliance with the terms and conditions of this incidental take statement.

The terms and conditions described below are nondiscretionary and must be undertaken by the FDOT so they become binding conditions of any grant or permit issued to the Applicants, as appropriate, for the exemption in section 7(o)(2) to apply. The FDOT has a continuing duty to regulate the activity covered by this incidental take statement. If the FDOT 1) fails to assume and implement the terms and conditions or 2) fails to require the FDOT to adhere to the terms and conditions of the incidental take statement through enforceable terms that are added to the permit or grant document, the protective coverage of section 7(o)(2) may lapse. In order to monitor the impact of incidental take, the FDOT and the applicant must report the progress of the action and its impact on the species to the Service as specified in the Incidental Take Statement [50 CFR § 402.14(i)(3)].

AMOUNT OR EXTENT OF TAKE ANTICIPATED

Audubon's crested caracara

The Service has reviewed the biological information for caracara, information presented by the Applicant, and other available information relevant to this action. Because Audubon's crested caracaras are highly mobile and individuals cannot be reliably counted within the Action Area, the Service uses the loss of suitable habitat within the primary protection zone of an active nest as a surrogate to quantify incidental take. The SR 70 project will result in the conversion of approximately 18.55 acres of suitable caracara habitat within the 300-meter primary protection zone of a documented nest, and approximately 30.71 acres of the project footprint occurs within that primary protection zone.

Incidental take of the Audubon's crested caracara is therefore anticipated in the form of habitat modification and disturbance associated with construction activities occurring within the primary protection zone of the nest.

EFFECT OF THE TAKE

In the accompanying Biological Opinion, the Service determined that this level of expected take is not likely to result in jeopardy to the caracara. Critical habitat has not been designated for these species and will not be affected.

REASONABLE AND PRUDENT MEASURES

Reasonable and prudent measures refer to those actions the Director considers necessary or appropriate to minimize the impact of the incidental take on the species. When providing an incidental take statement, the Service is required to give reasonable and prudent measures it considers necessary or appropriate to minimize the take along with terms and conditions that must be complied with, to implement the reasonable and prudent measures. Because the Conservation Measures included as part of the proposed action serve to minimize and mitigate potential adverse effects to the listed species that may be present within the Action Area, no

additional reasonable and prudent measure(s) are necessary and appropriate to minimize effects of the project on the species covered in this Biological Opinion.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

In order to be exempt from the prohibitions of section 9 of the Act, the FDOT must comply with the following terms and conditions, which carry out the reasonable and prudent measures, described above and outline required reporting/monitoring requirements. These terms and conditions are non-discretionary.

As described in the Minimization and Conservation Measures and Description of the Proposed Action, the FDOT shall ensure and demonstrate that each measure is implemented at the time it occurs. Annual reporting and funding assurances shall be transmitted to the Service as described.

MONITORING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Pursuant to 50 CFR § 402.14(i)(3), the FDOT must provide adequate monitoring and reporting to determine if the amount or extent of take is approached or exceeded. In addition to the species specific survey and monitoring described in the *Minimization and conservation measures* section above, the FDOT shall provide a report notifying the Service as to the acreage of each habitat or land cover type cleared within the Project footprint annually. Reports should be sent to FW4FLESRegs@fws.gov and the ECOSphere Project Code must be included in the email subject line.

DISPOSITION OF DEAD OR INJURED SPECIMENS

Upon locating a dead, injured, or sick threatened or endangered species, initial notification must be made to the nearest Service Law Enforcement Office: 20501 Independence Blvd., Groveland, Florida 34736; 352-429-1037, as well as the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Wildlife Alert number; 888-404-3922. Secondary notification should be made to the biologist identified below at FW4FLESRegs@fws.gov. Care should be taken in handling sick or injured specimens to ensure effective treatment and in the handling of dead specimens to preserve biological material in the best possible state for later analysis as to the cause of death. In conjunction with the care of sick or injured specimens, or preservation of biological materials from a dead animal, the finder has the responsibility to carry out instructions provided by Law Enforcement to ensure that evidence intrinsic to the specimen is not unnecessarily disturbed.

CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Section 7(a)(1) of the Act directs Federal agencies to utilize their authorities to further the purposes of the Act by carrying out conservation programs for the benefit of endangered and threatened species. Conservation recommendations are discretionary agency activities to minimize or avoid adverse effects of a proposed action on listed species or critical habitat, to help implement recovery plans, or to develop information. The Service is not proposing any conservation recommendations currently.

REINITIATION NOTICE

This concludes formal consultation on the action(s) outlined in the Project consultation request. As written in 50 CFR § 402.16, reinitiation of consultation is required and shall be requested by the Federal agency, where discretionary Federal involvement or control over the action has been retained or is authorized by law and if: 1) the amount or extent of incidental take is exceeded 2) new information reveals effects of the FDOT action that may affect listed species or critical habitat in a manner or to an extent not considered in this opinion; 3) the FDOT action is subsequently modified in a manner that causes an effect to the listed species or critical habitat not considered in this opinion; or 4) a new species is listed or critical habitat designated that may be affected by the action. In instances where the amount or extent of incidental take is exceeded, any operations causing such take must cease until reinitiation is complete.

Thank you for your cooperation and effort in protecting federally listed species and fish and wildlife resources. If you have any questions regarding this project, please contact Zakia Williams at zakia_williams@fws.gov or 904-404-2452.

Sincerely,

**MARK
CANTRELL**

Digitally signed by MARK
CANTRELL
Date: 2026.04.14 08:27:29
-05'00'

For

Jose Rivera
Acting Manager, Division of Environmental
Review
Florida Ecological Services Office

Enclosures

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Enclosure A

Caracara Status of the Species

Enclosure B
Florida bonneted bat Status of the Species

Enclosure C
Florida Panther Status of the Species

Enclosure D
Panther Habitat Calculator

From: [Cothern, Kathern](#)
To: [Kristin Caruso](#); [Aniruddha Gotmare](#)
Cc: [Joyner, Melody](#); [Feagle, Brooke](#); [Feagle, Autumn "Brooke"](#)
Subject: FW: Document Review Confirmation for 450334-1 NRE for SR 70
Date: Tuesday, December 30, 2025 6:00:51 PM
Importance: High

Comments from USACE below.

Sincerely,
Kathern Cothern
Project Manager IV
Corridors Program Office – D1
801 North Broadway Ave., MS 1-41
Bartow, Florida 33830
☎ (863) 519-2331
✉ Kathern.cothern@dot.state.fl.us

From: admin@fla-etat.org <admin@fla-etat.org>
Sent: Tuesday, December 30, 2025 5:27 PM
To: Heather.m.mason@usace.army.mil
Cc: Cothern, Kathern <Kathern.Cothern@dot.state.fl.us>; Joyner, Melody <Melody.Joyner@dot.state.fl.us>; brooke.feagle@atkinsrealis.com; Cothern, Kathern <Kathern.Cothern@dot.state.fl.us>
Subject: Document Review Confirmation for 450334-1 NRE for SR 70

EXTERNAL SENDER: Use caution with links and attachments.

A review was received for the following:

Event: Natural Resource Evaluation Review for 450334-1, SR 70 from CR 721 South to 128th Ave
Document: 450334-1 NRE for SR 70
Submitted By: Heather Mason
Global: Yes
Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this NRE. The Corps has the following comments:

1. Throughout - Other Surface Waters (OSW) is a state-only term. Please also use federally-compatible terminology in the document and project drawings. For convenience, the terms can be combined - for example, OSW/ditch, OSW/tributary, OSW/pond, SW/C-38 Canal, etc.

2. There is no need to provide UMAM scores for unvegetated open-water areas, such as the open-water areas of the ponds, canals, and ditches. If there are wetlands adjacent to those features or if the feature qualifies as a wetland, those should be assessed as wetland impacts.
3. Section 1.1.2, purpose and need. Please provide more details in the purpose and need section. Helpful information would include things like findings of traffic or safety studies, population growth projections, level of service (LOS) determinations, and updated safety or design standards that demonstrate the need for the proposed project.
4. Please provide more information about what specific measures were taken to avoid and minimize impacts to aquatic resources (wetlands and non-wetland waters).
5. If the project will require an individual Corps permit, please include an alternatives analysis that addresses both NEPA requirements and the requirements of the 404(b)(1) Guidelines.

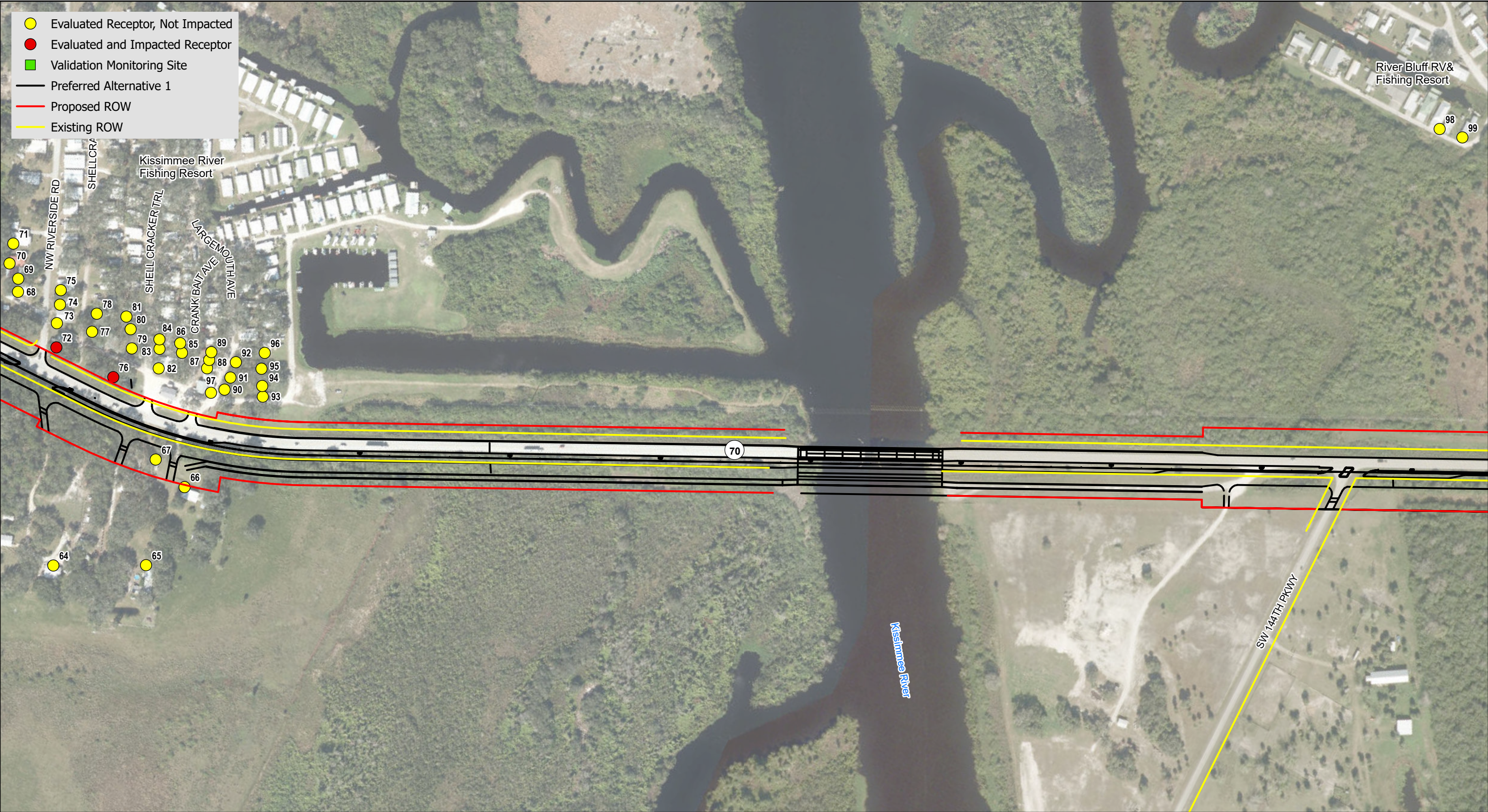
Physical Resources Appendix

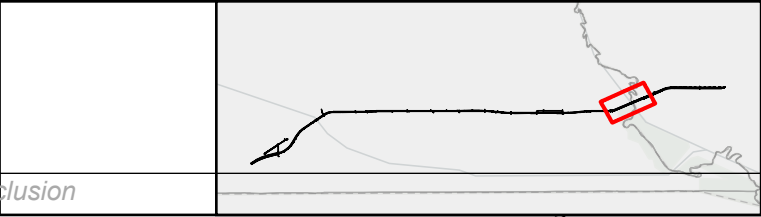
Contents:

Noise Impacted Sites

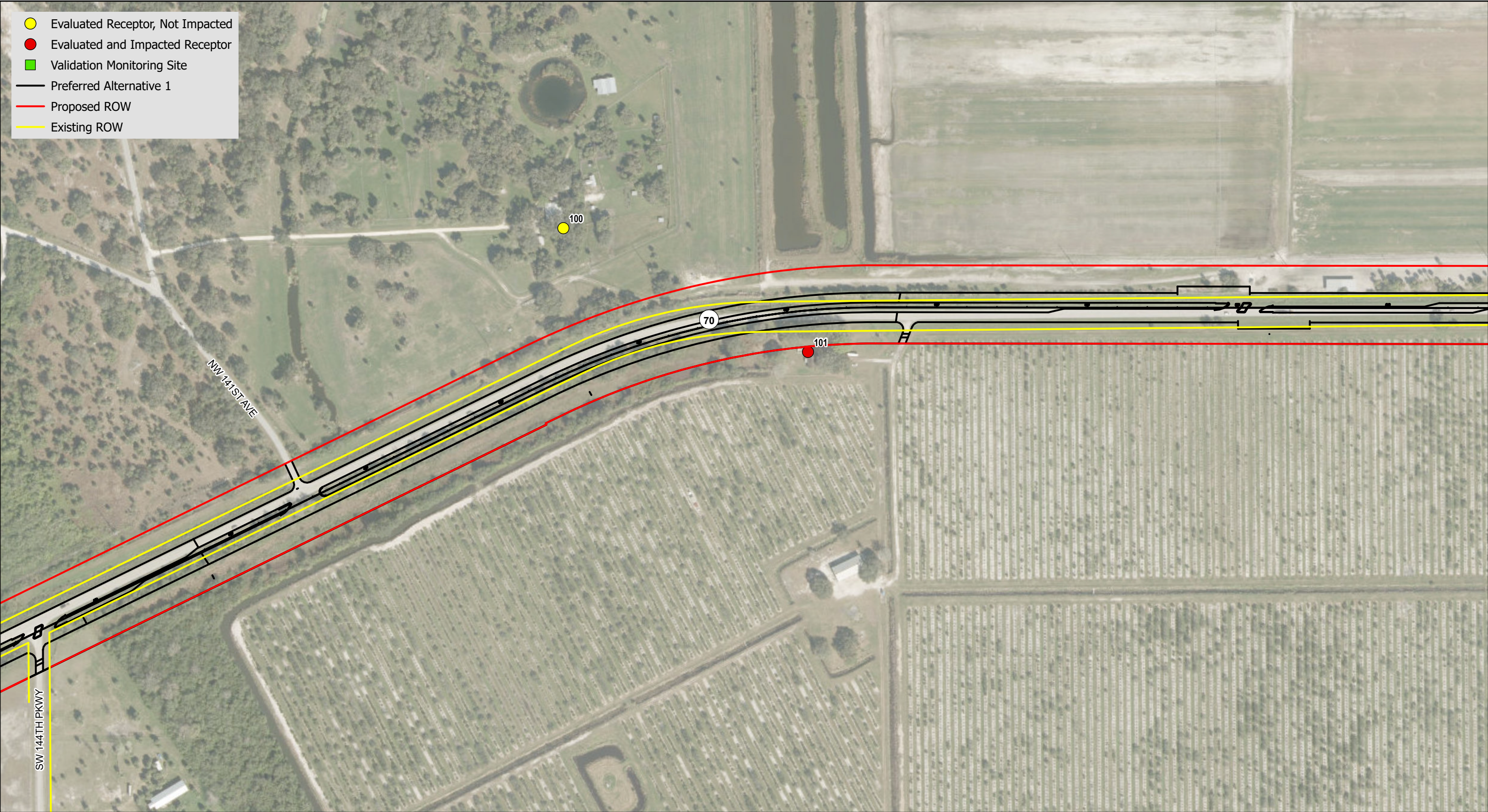
Potential Contamination Site Map

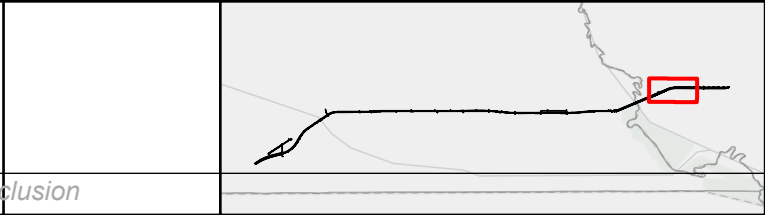




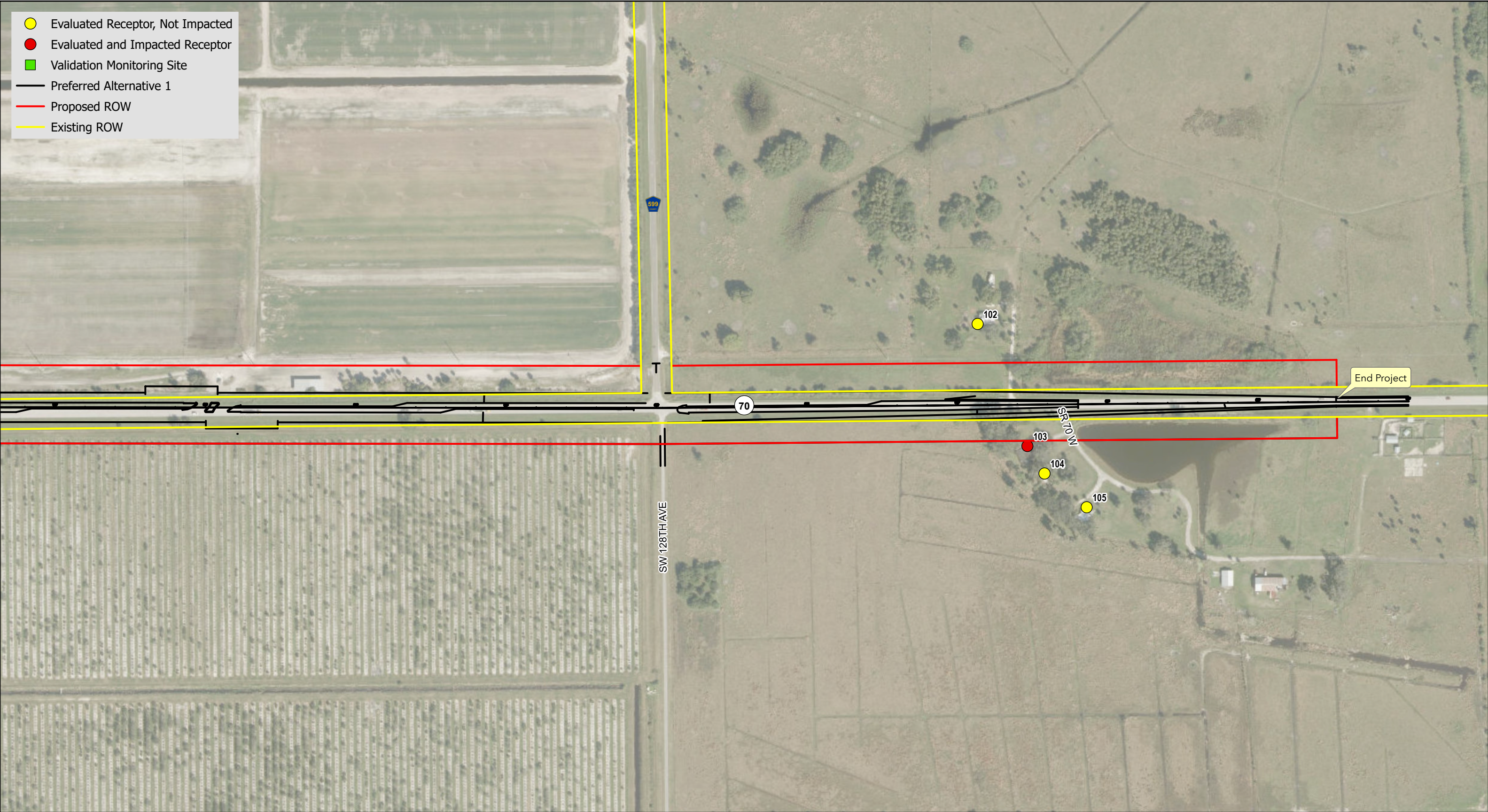
 All data within this map are supplied as is, without warranty. This product has not been prepared for legal, engineering, or survey purposes. Users of this information should consult the appropriate data source for more information.		Noise Impacted Sites FPID #: 450334-1-22-01 State Road (SR) 70 PD&E Study from County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, Florida 0 0.5 1 Miles	Data Source: ESA, ESRI  Page 251 of 316
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- Evaluated Receptor, Not Impacted
- Evaluated and Impacted Receptor
- Validation Monitoring Site
- Preferred Alternative 1
- Proposed ROW
- Existing ROW



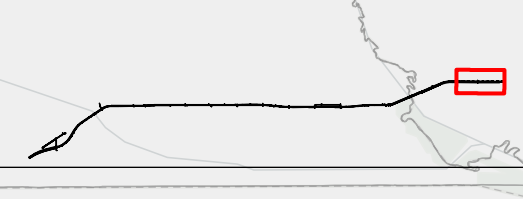
 All data within this map are supplied as is, without warranty. This product has not been prepared to scale, engineering, or survey purposes. Users of this information should consult the project data source for additional information.		Appendix C - Project Aerials FPID #: 450334-1-22-01 State Road (SR) 70 PD&E Study from County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, Florida 0 0.5 1 Miles	Data Source: ESA, ESRI  Page 252 of 316
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- Evaluated Receptor, Not Impacted
- Evaluated and Impacted Receptor
- Validation Monitoring Site
- Preferred Alternative 1
- Proposed ROW
- Existing ROW



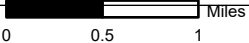


All data within this map are supplied as is, without warranty. This product has not been prepared to scale, engineering, or surveying purposes. It is intended for informational purposes only. Consult the project data source for more information.



Noise Impacted Sites

FPID #: 450334-1-22-01
State Road (SR) 70 PD&E Study from County Road (CR) 721 South to CR 599/128th Avenue
Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, Florida



Data Source: ESA, ESRI



NORTH

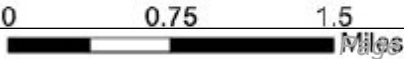
Page 253 of 316



Type 2 Categorical Exclusion

Contamination Site Map

Image Source: ESRI
Image Date: 2023/2024



Public Involvement Appendix

Contents:

In Person Hearing 12-16-25 Transcript

Public Hearing Certification - In-Person Hearing

Public Hearing Certification - Virtual hearing

Virtual Hearing 12-18-25 Transcript

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
PUBLIC HEARING

STATE ROAD (S.R.) 70 PD&E STUDY

Public Hearing took place before the Florida Department of Transportation, at Indian River State College, Dixon Hendry Campus, 2229 Northwest 9th Avenue, Okeechobee, Florida 34972, on Tuesday the 16th day of December 2025, commencing at the hour of 6:00 p.m., and being a Hearing.

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ATTENDEES:

Kathern Cothorn, Project Manager
Marybeth Van't Hul, Scalar Consulting Group, Inc.

1 (Thereupon, the following proceedings were had:)

2 MS. COTHERN: Good evening. The Florida
3 Department of Transportation welcomes you to the
4 public hearing for the Project Development and
5 Environment, or PDE study, for State Road 70 from
6 County Road 721 South to County Road 599, also
7 known as 128th Avenue, in the Highlands County and
8 Okeechobee County.

9 My name is Kathern Cothern. I am the project
10 manager. Here with me tonight are FDOT
11 representatives and the members of the consultant
12 project team to answer your questions. We would
13 like to thank any elected officials for your
14 attendance and participation in this hearing. We
15 encourage you to sign in with your name and the
16 office you represent for the project record.

17 Tonight we will show a project video which
18 will explain the project in detail. The following
19 video will be a ten-minute -- following the video
20 will be a ten-minute intermission where you can
21 speak directly with the project team.

22 Finally, we will open the formal comment
23 period where you will have the opportunity to
24 provide statements at the microphone, or you may
25 provide your comments directly to the court

1 reporter, or in writing.

2 The purpose of tonight's hearing is to present
3 the proposed improvements and share all analysis
4 conducted to date. It also serves as an official
5 forum for the public to express their opinions
6 regarding the proposed improvements. We hold a
7 public hearing so that you -- so that we can hear
8 your views and comments. It is important that you
9 express your views at this stage of the project
10 when the flexibility still exists to incorporate
11 those views into the study documents. Final
12 decisions are made using these documents.

13 Now I will read the following information for
14 the record. This is the public hearing for the
15 State Road 70 from County Road 721 South to County
16 Road 599, also known as 128th Avenue, in Highlands
17 and Okeechobee Counties, Florida. Financial
18 project ID no. 450334-1-22-01. This project is
19 described as PD&E study to address the need for
20 improved traffic safety conditions, continued
21 maintenance of the important east-west connection,
22 and to accommodate increasing activity along the
23 project corridor.

24 This public hearing is being conducted by the
25 Florida Department of Transportation with

1 Tallahassee as the approving authority. It is
2 being held at the Indian River State College, Dixon
3 Hendry Campus, 2229 Northwest 9th Avenue,
4 Okeechobee, Florida 34972, on Tuesday, December
5 16th, at 6:00 p.m.

6 The hearing is being conducted in accordance
7 with all state and federal laws, as well as the
8 Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Title
9 VI of the Civil Acts Right of 1964, and related
10 statutes. It is also being conducted to meet all
11 applicable executive orders. For listing of these
12 regulations, please see the hearing display boards
13 here tonight or on the project webpage.

14 If anyone here feels they have been
15 discriminated against, they may complete one of the
16 forms located at the sign-in table and mail the
17 completed form to the address listed on the display
18 board. This information is also available online.

19 At this time, we will play the project video.

20 (Project video was played.)

21 MS. COTHERN: In a moment, we will have a ten-
22 minute intermission. If you would like to make a
23 verbal comment after the intermission, fill out a
24 speaker card and give it to anyone with a nametag.
25 If you do not wish to speak at the microphone, you

1 may provide your comments in writing at the comment
2 table or directly to the court reporter. Anyone
3 wishing to submit written statements or other
4 exhibits in place of or in addition to verbal
5 statements may do so.

6 You have until December 31st, 2025 to postmark
7 or submit comments to become part of the official
8 hearing transcript. Please see your handout, the
9 display boards, or the project webpage for contact
10 and mailing information.

11 We will now break for intermission. This is
12 your opportunity to ask questions, discuss the
13 project with the project team. We will not be
14 responding to questions during the formal
15 testimony.

16 If you have additional questions following the
17 hearing tonight, you may reach out to me by email
18 or phone. My contact information is on your
19 handout and the project webpage.

20 The time now is 6:35. We will resume at 6:45.

21 (Off the record.)

22 MS. COTHERN: Ladies and gentlemen, we'll now
23 begin the public testimony portion of the hearing.
24 We welcome your spoken or written comments that
25 will help us make this important decision. And all

1 are comments are weighed equally.

2 As a reminder, if you have additional
3 questions following tonight's hearing, please feel
4 free to reach out to me. You will -- we will not
5 be responding to questions or comments at this
6 time. Our focus tonight is recording your verbal
7 comments. However, we will post a summary of the
8 comments received on the project webpage
9 approximately 30 days following the close of the
10 comment period.

11 Is there anyone in attendance who has not
12 spoken but would like to at this time?

13 Once again, written statements and exhibits in
14 place of or in addition to verbal statements will
15 be accepted and recorded as part of this hearing if
16 received or postmarked by December 31st, 2025.

17 After the comment period closes, the project team
18 will compile all comments and, together with the
19 engineering and environmental work that has been
20 done, make a final recommendation that will be
21 submitted to the FDOT Office of Environmental
22 Management for approval.

23 If approved, we will publish the results of
24 the study in the Highlands News-Sun and Lake
25 Okeechobee News and post the approval on the

1 project webpage.

2 All hearing materials, such as the project
3 video and information graphics have been available
4 to the public online since December 9th, 2025.
5 Additionally, project engineering and environmental
6 documents have been available for review since
7 December -- since November 25th, 2025 at the FDOT
8 District 1 Heartland Operation Center, 4722
9 Kenilworth Boulevard, Sebring, Florida 33870, and
10 the Okeechobee Public Library, 206 Southwest 16th
11 Street, Okeechobee, Florida 34974, as well as on
12 the project webpage.

13 The verbatim transcript of this hearing's
14 proceedings, together with all written statements
15 or exhibits received, and all studies, displays and
16 information material presented with this hearing
17 will be part of the project decision-making process
18 and will be available for public review upon
19 request at the FDOT District 1 Headquarters in
20 Bartow.

21 Thank you for attending the public hearing and
22 for providing your input into this project. It is
23 now 6:49. I hereby officially close the public
24 hearing for State Road 70 from County Road 721
25 South to County Road 599, also known as 128th

1 Avenue, in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties,
2 Florida.

3 Thank you again, and have a good evening.

4 (Hearing concluded at 6:49 p.m.)

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1 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

2 STATE OF FLORIDA

3 COUNTY OF OKEECHOBEE

4

5 I, Monica Goldmann, Court Reporter, certify
6 that I was authorized to and did report the hearing of
7 In Re: Florida Department of Transportation State Road
8 (S.R.) 70 PD&E Study; and that the transcript is a true
9 and correct record of my notes.

10 I further certify that I am not a relative,
11 employee, attorney, or counsel of any of the parties,
12 nor am I a relative or employee of any of the parties'
13 attorneys or counsel connected with the action, nor am I
14 financially interested in the action.

15 Dated this 14th day of January 2026.

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Monica Goldmann

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Monica Goldmann, Court Reporter

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1	4722 8:8	Acts 5:9	break 6:11
1 8:8, 19	5	addition 6:4 7:14	C
128th 3:7 4:16 8:25	599 3:6 4:16 8:25	additional 6:16 7:2	Campus 5:3
16th 5:5 8:10	6	Additionally 8:5	card 5:24
1964 5:9	6:00 5:5	address 4:19 5:17	Center 8:8
1990 5:8	6:35 6:20	Americans 5:8	Civil 5:9
2	6:45 6:20	analysis 4:3	close 7:9 8:23
2025 6:6 7:16 8:4, 7	6:49 8:23 9:4	applicable 5:11	closes 7:17
206 8:10	7	approval 7:22, 25	College 5:2
2229 5:3	70 3:5 4:15 8:24	approved 7:23	comment 3:22 5:23 6:1 7:10, 17
25th 8:7	721 3:6 4:15 8:24	approving 5:1	comments 3:25 4:8 6:1, 7, 24 7:1, 5, 7, 8, 18
3	9	approximately 7:9	compile 7:18
30 7:9	9th 5:3 8:4	attendance 3:14 7:11	complete 5:15
31st 6:6 7:16	A	attending 8:21	completed 5:17
33870 8:9	accepted 7:15	authority 5:1	concluded 9:4
34972 5:4	accommodate 4:22	Avenue 3:7 4:16 5:3 9:1	conditions 4:20
34974 8:11	accordance 5:6	B	conducted 4:4, 24 5:6, 10
4	Act 5:8	Bartow 8:20	connection 4:21
450334-1-22-01 4:18	activity 4:22	board 5:18	consultant 3:11
		boards 5:12 6:9	contact 6:9, 18
		Boulevard 8:9	

continued 4:20 corridor 4:23 Cothern 3:2,9 5:21 6:22 Counties 4:17 9:1 County 3:6,7,8 4:15 8:24,25 court 3:25 6:2	display 5:12,17 6:9 displays 8:15 District 8:8,19 Dixon 5:2 documents 4:11,12 8:6	F FDOT 3:10 7:21 8:7,19 federal 5:7 feel 7:3 feels 5:14 fill 5:23 final 4:11 7:20 Finally 3:22 Financial 4:17 flexibility 4:10 Florida 3:2 4:17,25 5:4 8:9,11 9:2 focus 7:6 form 5:17 formal 3:22 6:14 forms 5:16 forum 4:5 free 7:4	good 3:2 9:3 graphics 8:3
D date 4:4 days 7:9 December 5:4 6:6 7:16 8:4,7 decision 6:25 decision-making 8:17 decisions 4:12 Department 3:3 4:25 detail 3:18 Development 3:4 directly 3:21,25 6:2 Disabilities 5:8 discriminated 5:15 discuss 6:12	E east-west 4:21 elected 3:13 email 6:17 encourage 3:15 engineering 7:19 8:5 Environment 3:5 environmental 7:19,21 8:5 equally 7:1 evening 3:2 9:3 executive 5:11 exhibits 6:4 7:13 8:15 exists 4:10 explain 3:18 express 4:5,9	G gentlemen 6:22 give 5:24	H handout 6:8,19 Headquarters 8:19 hear 4:7 hearing 3:4,14 4:2, 7,14,24 5:6, 12 6:8,17,23 7:3,15 8:2, 16,21,24 9:4 hearing's 8:13 Heartland 8:8 held 5:2 Hendry 5:3 Highlands 3:7 4:16 7:24 9:1 hold 4:6
			I ID 4:18 important 4:8,21 6:25 improved 4:20 improvements 4:3,6 incorporate 4:10

increasing 4:22 Indian 5:2 information 4:13 5:18 6:10,18 8:3, 16 input 8:22 intermission 3:20 5:22,23 6:11 K Kathern 3:9 Kenilworth 8:9 L Ladies 6:22 Lake 7:24 laws 5:7 Library 8:10 listed 5:17 listing 5:11 located 5:16 M made 4:12 mail 5:16 mailing 6:10	maintenance 4:21 make 5:22 6:25 7:20 Management 7:22 manager 3:10 material 8:16 materials 8:2 meet all 5:10 members 3:11 microphone 3:24 5:25 minute 5:22 moment 5:21 N nametag 5:24 News 7:25 News-sun 7:24 Northwest 5:3 November 8:7 O office 3:16 7:21 official 4:4 6:7 officially 8:23	officials 3:13 Okeechobee 3:8 4:17 5:4 7:25 8:10,11 9:1 online 5:18 8:4 open 3:22 Operation 8:8 opinions 4:5 opportunity 3:23 6:12 orders 5:11 P p.m. 5:5 9:4 part 6:7 7:15 8:17 participation 3:14 PD&E 4:19 PDE 3:5 period 3:23 7:10,17 phone 6:18 place 6:4 7:14 play 5:19 played 5:20 portion 6:23 post 7:7,25	postmark 6:6 postmarked 7:16 present 4:2 presented 8:16 proceedings 3:1 8:14 process 8:17 project 3:4,9,12,16, 17,18,21 4:9,18,23 5:13,19,20 6:9,13,19 7:8,17 8:1, 2,5,12,17,22 proposed 4:3,6 provide 3:24,25 6:1 providing 8:22 public 3:4 4:5,7, 14,24 6:23 8:4,10,18, 21,23 publish 7:23 purpose 4:2 Q questions 3:12 6:12, 14,16 7:3,5 R reach 6:17 7:4
---	--	--	--

read 4:13	4:20	7:7	video 3:17,19
received 7:8,16 8:15	Sebring 8:9	T	5:19,20 8:3
recommendation 7:20	serves 4:4	table 5:16 6:2	views 4:8,9,11
record 3:16 4:14 6:21	share 4:3	Tallahassee 5:1	W
recorded 7:15	show 3:17	team 3:12,21 6:13 7:17	webpage 5:13 6:9,19 7:8 8:1,12
recording 7:6	sign 3:15	ten- 5:21	weighed 7:1
regulations 5:12	sign-in 5:16	ten-minute 3:19,20	welcomes 3:3
related 5:9	South 3:6 4:15 8:25	testimony 6:15,23	wishing 6:3
reminder 7:2	Southwest 8:10	time 5:19 6:20 7:6,12	work 7:19
reporter 4:1 6:2	speak 3:21 5:25	Title 5:8	writing 4:1 6:1
represent 3:16	speaker 5:24	tonight 3:10,17 5:13 6:17 7:6	written 6:3,24 7:13 8:14
representatives 3:11	spoken 6:24 7:12	tonight's 4:2 7:3	
request 8:19	stage 4:9	traffic 4:20	
responding 6:14 7:5	state 3:5 4:15 5:2,7 8:24	transcript 6:8 8:13	
results 7:23	statements 3:24 6:3,5 7:13,14 8:14	Transportation 3:3 4:25	
resume 6:20	statutes 5:10	Tuesday 5:4	
review 8:6,18	Street 8:11	V	
River 5:2	studies 8:15		
Road 3:5,6 4:15, 16 8:24,25	study 3:5 4:11,19 7:24	verbal 5:23 6:4 7:6,14	
S	submit 6:3,7	verbatim 8:13	
	submitted 7:21	VI 5:9	
safety	summary		

PUBLIC HEARING CERTIFICATION

SR 70 FROM CR 721 S TO CR 599/128 AVE

Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study

from CR 721 (South) to CR 559/128th Ave.

FDOT District 1, Florida

Financial Management No.: 450334-1-22-01

I certify that a public hearing was conducted on 12/16/2025, beginning at 06:00 PM for the above project. A transcript was made and the document attached is a full, true, and complete transcript of what was said at the hearing.

Kathern Cothorn

(Name)

February 10, 2026

Date

Project Manager

(Title of FDOT Representative)



Electronically signed within SWEPT
on February 10, 2026 9:22:10 AM EST
(electronic signature on file)

Link to Public Hearing Transcript

1 - [45033412201-CE2-D1-In_Person_Hearing_12-16-25_Transcript-2026-0114.pdf](#)

PUBLIC HEARING CERTIFICATION

SR 70 FROM CR 721 S TO CR 599/128 AVE

Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study

from CR 721 (South) to CR 559/128th Ave.

FDOT District 1, Florida

Financial Management No.: 450334-1-22-01

I certify that a public hearing was conducted on 12/18/2025, beginning at 06:00 PM for the above project. A transcript was made and the document attached is a full, true, and complete transcript of what was said at the hearing.

Kathern Cothorn

(Name)

February 12, 2026

Date

SWEPT Project Manager

(Title of FDOT Representative)



Electronically signed within SWEPT
on February 12, 2026 2:41:07 PM EST
(electronic signature on file)

Link to Public Hearing Transcript

1 - [45033412201-CE2-D1-Online_Public_Hearing_CORRECTED_121825-2026-0211.pdf](#)

ONLINE PUBLIC HEARING

DATE TAKEN: December 18, 2025

TIME: 6:00 p.m. - 6:47 p.m.

(Based on Time Zone from Notice)

WITNESS APPEARED BY: Via Video Teleconference

Reported By:
Amy Ma, AAERT No. 2679
Notary Public for the State of CALIFORNIA

1 APPEARANCES

2

3 On behalf of Florida Department of Transportation:
4 Kathern Cothorn, Project Manager
5 33830
6 801 North Broadway Avenue
7 Bartow, Florida 33830
8 Kathern.Cothorn@dot.state.fl.us
9 APPEARED VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE

7

ALSO PRESENT:

8 Dara Jarvis
9 Marybeth Van't Hul
Appeared Via Video Teleconference.

10 (OTHERS AS MAY APPEAR IN THE TRANSCRIPT.)

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INDEX TO EXAMINATION

CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER	28
CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIPTIONIST	29

P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. COTHERN: Good evening. The Florida Department of Transportation welcomes you to the public hearing for the Project Development and Environment, or PD&E study, for State Road 70 from County Road 721 South to County Road 599, also known as 128th Avenue in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties.

My name is Kathern Cothern. I am the project manager. Here with me tonight are FDOT representatives and the members of the consultant project team to answer your questions. We would like to thank any elec- -- elected officials for your attendance and participation in this hearing.

Tonight, we will show a project video which will explain the project in detail. Following the video, will be a ten-minute intermission on where you can speak directly with the project team. Finally, we will open the formal comment period where you will have an opportunity to provide statements or you may provide your comments in writing.

The purpose of -- for -- of tonight's hearing is to present the pres- -- proposed improvements and share all analysis con- -- conducted to date. It also serves as an official forum for the public to express their opinions regarding the proposed improvements. We hold a public hearing so that we can hear your views and comments. It is important that you express your views at this stage of the project when the flexibility still exists to incorporate those views into the

1 study documents. Final decisions are made using these
2 documents.

3 Now we will read the following information for the
4 record. This is the public hearing for State Road 70 from
5 County Road 721 South to County Road 599, also now known as
6 128th Avenue in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, Florida
7 Financial Project ID Number 450334-1-22-01. This project is
8 described as a PD&E study to address the need for improved
9 traffic safety conditions, continued maintenance of the
10 important East-West connection, and to accommodate increasing
11 freight activity along the project corridor.

12 This public hearing is being conducted by the Florida
13 Department of Transportation with Tallahassee as the approving
14 authority. It is being held online on the GoToWebinar platform
15 on Thursday, December 18th at six p.m. The hearing is being
16 conducted in accordance with all state and federal laws, as well
17 as the Americans With Disability Act of 1990, and Title 6 of the
18 Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes. It is also being
19 conducted to meet all applicable executive orders. For a
20 listing of these regulations, please, see the hearing display
21 boards found in the handout section of the GoToWebinar control
22 panel and on the project web page.

23 If anyone here feels they have been discriminated
24 against, they may complete one of the forms found in the handout
25 section and mail the completed form to the address listed on the

1 screen. This information is also available online.

2 At this time, we will play the project video.

3 (Video played.)

4 Welcome to the Florida Department of Transportation's
5 public hearing for the State Road 70 project development and
6 environment or PD&E study. We appreciate your attendance and
7 participation.

8 This public hearing is being conducted to give the
9 public the opportunity to review and provide comments on the
10 proposed preferred alternative and associated affects on the
11 social, economic, cultural, natural and physical environment.

12 The purpose of this PD&E study is to evaluate
13 engineering and environmental data and to document information
14 that will aid FDOT, District 1, and the FDOT Office of
15 Environmental Management, or OEM, in determining the type,
16 preliminary design and location of the proposed improvements.

17 The study begins at County Road 721 South in Highlands
18 County, and extends approximately 8.6 miles to County Road 599
19 or 128th Avenue in Okeechobee County. The Department proposes
20 to widen State Road 70 to a four-lane divided roadway with the
21 addition of paved shoulders, turn lanes and a shared use path.

22 The need for the proposed improvements to State Road
23 70 include improving traffic safety conditions, emergency
24 evacuation and incident response times. The crash rate for this
25 section of State Road 70 is 1.56, which is notably higher than

1 the Highlands County crash rate of 0.898 and Okeechobee County
2 crash rate of 0.717 for similar facilities. The substandard
3 lane and shoulder widths and proximity of guardrails, roadside
4 swales and fence posts restrict the ability of drivers to avoid
5 hazards. Due to the roadway's current configuration, there is
6 limited space for an emergency service vehicle to pass to
7 respond to a situation during periods of congestion or to
8 accommodate a disabled vehicle to prevent it from obstructing
9 traffic flow.

10 State Road 70 is part of the emergency evacuation
11 route network designated by the Florida Division of Emergency
12 Management, or FDEM, as well as the network established by
13 Highlands and Okeechobee Counties. This roadway is critical in
14 facilitating traffic during emergency evacuation periods as it
15 connects to other arterials and highways of the state evacuation
16 route Network. The FDEM notes that State Road 70 has some of
17 the longest lasting vehicle cues in the Central Florida region
18 contributing to prolonged clearance times. The project is
19 anticipated to address deficiencies of the roadway which may
20 reduce crashes including fatalities and lead to enhanced
21 emergency evacuation capabilities and incident response times.

22 Additional needs for the proposed improvements include
23 maintaining the important East-West connection and accommodating
24 increasing freight activity along the project corridor. State
25 Road 70 is part of Florida's strategic intermodal system, or

1 SIS, Highway Network and part of the national highway system.
2 With the nearest available parallel East-West facilities being
3 located nearly ten miles or more to the north and south, State
4 Road 70 is integral to facilitating East-West travel within the
5 regional transportation network of Florida's Heartland.
6 Improvements to State Road 70 are long-term priorities in
7 Highlands and Okeechobee Counties to facilitate the future
8 growth of freight traffic in the region.

9 Additionally, the Heartland Regional Transportation
10 Planning organization, HRTPO, its committees and community
11 stakeholders have identified State Road 70 as the highest
12 priority transportation facility in the region in need of
13 improvements due to concerns pertaining to safety, freight
14 mobility and economic growth.

15 At this time, subsequent project phases consisting of
16 design, right-of-way and construction are unfunded and therefore
17 not included in the FDOT five-year work program in fiscal years
18 2026 to 2030. However, the project is listed in the FDOT SIS
19 cost feasible plan, 2035 to 2050, as cost feasible.
20 Additionally, the HRTPO Transportation Improvement Program for
21 fiscal years 2025 and 2026 to 2029 and 2030 identifies the
22 project in the fiscal year 2029/2030 transportation project
23 priorities list.

24 Within the project limits, State Road 70 is currently
25 a two-lane undivided roadway with ten-foot travel lanes and

1 eight-foot shoulders, four feet of which are paved. The roadway
2 currently lies within 100 feet of existing right-of-way and in
3 some areas, 70 feet of right-of-way or property FDOT already
4 owns. Guardrail is present on at least one side of the roadway
5 for the majority of the corridor. Stormwater runoff has
6 collected in roadside ditches. Additionally, there are no
7 designated bicycle lanes or sidewalks present on either side of
8 the roadway. The posted speed limit along the project corridor
9 is 60 miles per hour.

10 There are two bridges within the project limits, one
11 over Slough Ditch, or C-41A Canal, and one over the Kissimmee
12 River, or C-38 Canal. The existing bridge over C-41A Canal has
13 two 12-foot travel lanes and ten-foot paved shoulders. The
14 existing bridge over the Kissimmee River has two 12-foot travel
15 lanes and two-foot shoulders. Neither bridge has bicycle lanes
16 or sidewalks present on either side.

17 Throughout this PD&E study process, FDOT has looked at
18 many different concepts to widen the existing two lanes of State
19 Road 70 to four lanes through Highlands and Okeechobee Counties.
20 After environmental and engineering analyses and public and
21 agency comments, many of these alternatives were eliminated.
22 The last public meeting was an alternatives public information
23 meeting held on June 11, 2024. At that meeting, we asked for
24 your input on proposed improvements. Some of the feedback
25 received included need for turn lanes; adequate widths for truck

1 turning radii; access management; evaluation of noise walls and
2 guardrails; proposed roadway elevation at the Kissimmee River
3 Fishing Resort and overall support for the four-lane widening to
4 address safety and traffic capacity.

5 Based on your comments and additional environmental
6 and Engineering analyses, a preferred alternative was selected
7 for State Road 70. The preferred alternative for State Road 70
8 results in a rural typical section with an open roadway drainage
9 system, meaning the use of ditches for the four-lane
10 construction. The typical section includes two 12-foot travel
11 lanes in each direction, a 40-foot median with eight-foot inside
12 shoulders of which four feet are paved, 12-foot outside
13 shoulders of which five feet are paved and a 12-foot shared use
14 path on the south side of State Road 70 adjacent to the
15 eastbound travel lanes. The average width needed for the
16 right-of-way is 260 feet, but varies throughout the alignment
17 from 210 feet to 290 feet. The proposed right-of-way need is
18 primarily on the south side of State Road 70. The target
19 designed and posted speed are 65 miles per hour.

20 The alignment for the preferred alternative closely
21 follows the existing roadway alignment and widens to the south.
22 There are two locations where the proposed facility shifts away
23 from the existing alignment. This includes the beginning of the
24 project at County Road 721 South where the alignment is on the
25 south side of the existing State Road 70 to avoid impacts to the

1 businesses, utilities and church in the area, and between Boney
2 Lane and Northwest Riverside Road where the alignment is also on
3 the south side to avoid impacts to Kissimmee River Estates.

4 The existing two-lane Kissimmee River Bridge is
5 functionally obsolete and will be demolished and two new bridge
6 structures, one in each direction will be constructed. The
7 existing bridge over the C-41A Canal that currently carries two
8 lanes of traffic will be maintained and will carry westbound
9 traffic in the future condition. A new two-lane bridge will be
10 constructed on the south side of the existing bridge and will
11 carry the eastbound traffic.

12 Additionally, a new stormwater management system will
13 be constructed. The roadway stormwater runoff will be collected
14 and conveyed in roadside ditches on the outside of the travel
15 lanes to stormwater management facilities that will be
16 constructed along the corridor. Off-site and on-site stormwater
17 runoff will be handled separately. Therefore, the typical
18 section includes a second ditch on the north west bound side of
19 the roadway to collect and convey off-site stormwater flow.

20 Throughout this study, a no-build alternative is also
21 considered. The no-build alternative assumes that no
22 improvements are made to State Road 70 through the year 2052
23 except for routine maintenance. There are advantages and
24 disadvantages to the no-build alternative. Advantages of the
25 no-build alternative include no associated design construction

1 or right-of-way acquisition costs, no impacts to the traveling
2 public due to construction and no impacts to the natural and
3 human environments.

4 Disadvantages include inconsistency with the purpose
5 and need for the project or with local transportation plans;
6 increased potential for crashes due to congestion and
7 intersections; increased evacuation and emergency vehicle
8 response times; lack of improved multimodal accommodations for
9 bicycles and pedestrians; increased traffic congestion along the
10 corridor; and increased vehicle emission pollutants due to
11 higher levels of traffic congestion. The no-build alternative
12 remains a valid option and will continue to be evaluated until
13 the completion of this study.

14 FDOT evaluated environmental and socio-economic
15 factors relating to proposed widening improvements in accordance
16 with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 as amended
17 and other Federal requirements. The evaluation considered the
18 effects of widening State Road 70 on protected species and
19 habitats; wetlands and floodplains; water quality; stormwater
20 management and permitting; air quality; social, cultural and
21 economic effects; contamination; archaeological and historical
22 resources; recreational sites; noise; land use; construction
23 effects; and farm lands.

24 Protected species and habitats are allowed special
25 protection under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 as amended

1 and Florida Statutes. FDOT assessed species within the project
2 limits and through ongoing coordination with the U.S. Fish and
3 Wildlife Service, has determined that the proposed project may
4 affect but is not likely to adversely affect the existence of
5 certain federally listed threatened or endangered species. The
6 animal species include the eastern indigo snake; wood stork;
7 West Indian manatee, Florida panther.

8 In addition, the project will have no adverse effect
9 anticipated on the following State listed threatened or
10 endangered species: Gopher tortoise; Florida pine snake;
11 Florida sandhill crane; Florida burrowing owl; little blue
12 heron; tri-colored heron; Southeastern American Kestrel; giant
13 wild pine; cardinal wild pine; pine lily; yellow fringeless
14 orchid; celestial lily, cutthroat grass; piedmont joint grass.

15 The project lies within the consultation area of
16 Audubon's crested caracara. The preferred alternative proposes
17 direct impacts to one nest and direct impacts to suitable
18 habitat within the primary protection zone of a second nest.
19 With these proposed impacts, FDOT made a determination of may
20 affect likely to adversely affect for this species. Project
21 commitments consisting of species conservation measures and a
22 financial contribution to the Crested Caracara Conservation Fund
23 for these impacts are proposed. Consultation with U.S. Fish and
24 Wildlife Service regarding the final status of the species is
25 ongoing.

1 If the preferred alternative is approved by the Office
2 of Environmental Management, FDOT District 1 will continue to
3 work closely with environmental agencies in future phases, such
4 as design and construction to meet all environmental permitting
5 requirements.

6 FDOT evaluated wetlands within the project limits in
7 accordance with Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands.
8 The proposed improvements will directly affect approximately
9 13.88 acres of wetlands, 2.60 acres of surface waters and 25.22
10 acres of other surface waters. Approximately 4.47 acres of
11 secondary impacts are anticipated to wetlands. The Department
12 will take all practical measures to minimize harms to these
13 areas. The Department will mitigate wetland impacts resulting
14 from this project's construction to meet requirements of Florida
15 Statutes and the United States Code.

16 The project has been evaluated for potential
17 floodplain involvement in accordance with Executive Order
18 111988, Floodplain Management. There is no significant change
19 in flood risk as a result of the proposed widening and minimal
20 impacts are expected to the 100-year, floodplain. Additionally,
21 there is no significant change in the potential for interruption
22 or termination of emergency services or emergency evacuation
23 routes due to flooding. A water quality impact evaluation was
24 performed. The proposed stormwater management facilities will
25 be designed in accordance with the current requirements of the

1 South Florida Water Management District.

2 Results of the contamination screening show that there
3 are nine potential contamination sites with potential for
4 hazardous material or petroleum impacts. Of these nine sites,
5 three are ranked no-risk, three were ranked low risk, two were
6 ranked medium risk and one was ranked high-risk. For the sites
7 that are ranked low for contamination, no further action is
8 required at this time. For the sites with a risk ranking of
9 high or medium, the FDOT project manager and the district
10 contamination impact coordinator will coordinate on further
11 actions during the design phase that must be taken to address
12 contamination issues. Before construction, specifically trained
13 crews will address contamination in these areas as required.
14 Locations of these sites are shown in the concept plans on
15 display tonight.

16 The project is located in an area which is designated
17 attainment for all of the National Ambient Air Quality standards
18 under the criteria provided in the Clean Air Act. Therefore,
19 the Clean Air Act conformity requirements do not apply to this
20 project and no significant impact is expected on air quality.
21 This project is expected to improve traffic flow by adding
22 capacity to relieve congestion, which should reduce operational
23 greenhouse gas emissions. Minimal, short-term air quality
24 effects may be caused from construction of the proposed
25 improvements such as dust from Earth work or unpaved roads and

1 smoke from open burning. The FDOT will adhere to all State and
2 local regulations and to the standard specifications for road
3 and bridge construction.

4 The study team evaluated effects of traffic noise
5 associated with the proposed improvements consistent with
6 requirements outlined in Title 23, Code of Federal Regulations,
7 Part 772: Procedures for Abatement of Highway Traffic Noise and
8 Construction Noise and with the PD&E Manual, Part 2 Chapter 18.
9 Noise-sensitive sites along the project corridor may hear
10 traffic noise levels that approach or exceed noise abatement
11 criteria established by the Federal Highway Administration. The
12 team has considered noise abatement measures, including traffic
13 system management; alignment modifications; property
14 acquisition; land use controls; and noise barriers at four
15 locations.

16 While traffic noise abatement was considered as part
17 of the project, no feasible and reasonable measures were
18 identified, that can be implemented to abate traffic noise at
19 the four locations along the project corridor. If you'd like
20 more information regarding traffic noise, please, speak with one
21 of our noise specialists here tonight.

22 The project team examined the project area for
23 publicly owned properties that may be affected under Section
24 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966.
25 Potentially protected recreational Section 4(f) resources along

1 the project corridor include the boat ramp located at the C-41A
2 Canal, the Okeechobee North Trail Connector and the Kissimmee
3 River Public use area. The boat ramp and the Okeechobee North
4 Trail Connector meet the conditions of a no Section 4(f) use
5 since the project has no permanent acquisition of land from
6 these section 4(f) properties, no temporary occupancies of land
7 that are adverse in terms of the statute's preservation purpose
8 and no proximity impacts, which significantly impair the
9 protected functions of the properties.

10 The preferred alternative will require permit use of
11 approximately 2.48 acres from the boundary of the Kissimmee
12 River Public use area. Other properties protected under Section
13 4(f) include the C-41A Canal and the channelized feature of the
14 Kissimmee River. These are historic sites eligible for listing
15 in the National Register of Historic Places. The proposed
16 project bridges will be constructed over these canals.

17 Based upon the overall minor level of impact and
18 implementation of proposed mitigative actions to address
19 potential impacts, the project will not adversely affect the
20 activities, features and attributes of the Kissimmee River
21 Public use area, the Slough Ditch or C-41A Canal and the
22 Kissimmee River, or C-38 Canal in meeting its intended Section
23 4(f) purpose. As such, FDOT is pursuing a Section 4(f) de
24 minimis finding for the potential impacts to these resources.
25 This information is available for review tonight. The hearing

1 provides the opportunity for public comment on the project use
2 of these resources.

3 A cultural resource assessment survey was conducted in
4 accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966
5 and Florida Statutes. Archaeologists and historians identified
6 one archaeological site and 46 historical resources in the
7 project area. Two resources are individually eligible for
8 listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the Slough
9 Ditch, C-41A Canal, and Kissimmee River, C-38 Canal. FDOT
10 determined that the proposed improvements will have no adverse
11 effect to these resources. One archaeological site was found to
12 have insufficient information to make an evaluation of National
13 Register of Historic Places applicability and FDOT determined
14 that the proposed improvements will have no adverse effect to
15 this resource. The State Historic Preservation Officer provided
16 concurrence on September 22, 2025.

17 FDOT determined that the proposed improvements will
18 have an adverse effect on the State Road 70 over Kissimmee River
19 Bridge. The SHPO provided concurrence on July 17, 2024. A
20 Section 106 case study was prepared and the State Historic
21 Preservation Officer provided concurrence on September 22, 2025.
22 Proposed mitigation strategies under consideration were
23 discussed with the State Historic Preservation Officer on
24 September 25, 2025 and are in the draft memorandum of agreement
25 between the FDOT and the State Historic Preservation Officer.

1 These include the salvage of the existing bridge plaque and
2 relocation to a new location, an education exhibit to be placed
3 in close proximity to the bridge location and a Historic
4 American Engineering Record Document.

5 Your input is sought concerning the project's adverse
6 effect to the resource and proposed mitigation. The information
7 is available for review tonight. The FDOT is also seeking a
8 programmatic Section 4(f) evaluation and approval for the
9 Kissimmee River Bridge. The hearing provides the opportunity
10 for public comment on the project's effect on this resource.

11 The preferred alternative is consistent with the
12 Highlands County and Okeechobee County Comprehensive Plans and
13 Future Land Use Maps. The project area will continue to support
14 agricultural along with conservation land uses and rural
15 estates. The project will maintain existing access to
16 surrounding agricultural uses and will result in only moderate
17 conversion of frontage areas to the expanded roadway. Minimal
18 construction effects are expected.

19 One of the unavoidable consequences on a project such
20 as this is the necessary relocation of residences or businesses.
21 On this project, we anticipate the relocation of two residences.
22 All right-of-way acquisition will be conducted in accordance
23 with Florida Statute Section 339.09 and the uniform Relocation
24 Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970,
25 commonly known as the Uniform Act.

1 If you are required to make any type of move as a
2 result of a Department of Transportation project, you can expect
3 to be treated in a fair and helpful manner and in compliance
4 with the Uniform Relocation Assistance Act. If a move is
5 required, you will be contacted by an appraiser who will inspect
6 your property. We encourage you to be present during the
7 inspection and provide information about the value of your
8 property.

9 You may also be eligible for relocation advisory
10 services and payment benefits. If you are being moved and you
11 are unsatisfied with the Department's determination of your
12 eligibility for payment or the amount of that payment, you may
13 appeal that determination. You will promptly be furnished
14 necessary forms, and notified of the procedures to be followed
15 in making that appeal.

16 A special word of caution. If you move before you
17 receive notification of the relocation benefits that you might
18 be entitled to, your benefits may be jeopardized. The
19 relocation specialists who are supervising this program are here
20 tonight. They will be happy to answer your questions and we'll
21 also furnish you with copies of relocation assistance brochures.

22 In accordance with Rule 14-97 of the Florida
23 Administrative Code, the proposed improvements will include a
24 median to control the movements or access of turning traffic.
25 These changes are presented in compliance with Section 335.199

1 Florida Statutes, Transportation Projects Modifying Access to
2 Adjacent Property. Proposed median openings are shown on the
3 concept plan on display tonight and available on the project
4 website <https://www.swfroads.com/project/450334-1>.

5 An evaluation matrix showing a detailed comparison of
6 the preferred alternative and the no-build alternative is
7 provided in the project handout in is also on display here this
8 evening. The matrix shows potential effects to the social,
9 cultural, natural and physical environments and identifies
10 preliminary costs.

11 The estimated costs to widen State Road 70 from County
12 Road 721 South to County Road 599, 128th Avenue, include 18.6
13 million dollars for final design, 1.4 million dollars for
14 mitigation and 14 million dollars for right-of-way acquisition
15 for roadway and stormwater management areas. The total
16 estimated construction cost for the project is 124 million
17 dollars. The cost for utility relocation is 77.3 million
18 dollars. And construction engineering and inspection is
19 estimated at 18.6 million dollars. The Department's preliminary
20 estimate of total project cost is 253.9 million dollars.

21 At this time, FDOT's adopted five-year work program
22 does not include funding for subsequent project phases
23 consisting of design, right-of-way and construction. The
24 Department anticipates completion of this PD&E study by summer
25 2026. The study schedule is on display this evening.

1 We encourage you to review project information tonight
2 and provide us your feedback. There are multiple ways to
3 provide comment, during the live in-person event by completing a
4 speaker card and handing it to anyone with a name tag during the
5 upcoming intermission, providing your comment to the court
6 reporter by mail to the address shown on the screen or by email,
7 or through the project website. All comments carry equal weight
8 and should be submitted or postmarked by Wednesday, December 31,
9 2025 to become a part of the formal hearing record.

10 All hearing materials presented tonight are available
11 to the public on the project web page and will remain posted for
12 your review. The technical documents are also available for
13 review in person at the Okeechobee Public Library located at 206
14 Southwest 16th Street, Okeechobee, Florida 34974, Tuesday
15 through Saturday, ten a.m. to six p.m. Phone number
16 (863) 376-3336. And the FDOT Heartland Operations Center
17 located at 4722 Kenilworth Boulevard, Sebring, Florida 33970.
18 Monday through Friday eight a.m. to five p.m. Phone number
19 (863) 471-4848 until Wednesday, December 31, 2025. Please call
20 in advance to confirm holiday hours.

21 If you'd like to review these materials at the
22 District 1 office, please make an appointment by contacting
23 FDOT's project manager, Kathern Cothorn, using the contact
24 information included in your handout. You may also visit the
25 project website at swflroads.com/project/450334-14 for the

1 latest study information, schedule and upcoming events

2 This PD&E study is being conducted and completed
3 according to the requirements of the National Environmental
4 Policy Act and other related federal and state laws, rules and
5 regulations which will qualify future phases of this project for
6 federal funding. And this hearing was advertised consistent
7 with those requirements. Please see the statute display board
8 for all other applicable requirements.

9 This hearing is also conducted in accordance with the
10 Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and with Title 6 of the
11 Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes. Anyone who feels
12 he or she has been discriminated against with regard to race
13 color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability or family
14 status, may complete one of the forms located at the sign-in
15 table and mail the completed form to the address listed on the
16 poster board.

17 And finally, an FDOT safety moment. Drinking and
18 driving don't mix. Drive sober or get pulled over. FDOT thanks
19 you for making safety a continued priority.

20 Thank you for your interest and participation in this
21 State Road 70 Project Development and Environment study public
22 hearing and for taking the time to join us this evening.

23 (Video stopped.)

24 MS. COTHERN: In a moment, we will have a ten-minute
25 intermission. If you would like to make a verbal comment after

1 the intermission, please type your name and address in the
2 question pane on the control panel. Anyone wishing to submit
3 written statements or other exhibits in place or in addition to
4 verbal statements may do so. Comments received or postmarked by
5 December 31, 2025 will become part of the official hearing
6 transcript. Please see the project handout, the display boards
7 or the project web page for contact and mailing information.

8 During intermission, you will have another opportunity
9 to ask questions and discuss the project with the project team.
10 We will not be responding to questions during formal testimony.
11 If you have additional questions following the hearing tonight,
12 you may reach out to me by email or phone. My contact
13 information is on the project handout and on the project
14 webpage.

15 MS. VAN'T HUL: Before online attendees break for
16 intermission, I want to go over again how you can make a formal
17 verbal comment online. We will use the question pane on the
18 control panel to request to speak. On the screen, you should
19 see where to click to find the questions pane. And here is how
20 it looks on a tablet and mobile phone. If you would like to
21 make a verbal comment during the formal testimony portion,
22 please, type your name and your address in the box. When we
23 call on you to speak, please unmute yourself and provide your
24 comment or question.

25 We will now go ahead with the intermission. The time

1 is now 6:33 p.m. We will resume at 6:43 p.m.

2 (Off the record at 6:33 p.m.)

3 (On the record at 6:42 p.m.)

4 MS. COTHERN: Ladies and gentlemen, we will now begin
5 the public testimony portion of the hearing. We welcome your
6 spoken or written comments that will help us make this important
7 decision, and all comments are weighted equally.

8 As a reminder, if you have additional questions
9 following tonight's hearing, feel free to reach out to me.

10 We will not be responding to questions or comments.
11 At this time, our focus tonight is recording your verbal
12 comments. However, we will post a summary of the comments
13 received on the project webpage approximately 30 days following
14 the close of the comment period. Please limit your comment to
15 three minutes. The online moderator will signal you.

16 We will call upon those attending online when you have
17 a minute left and they will signal again when your time is up.

18 (The Moderator paused.)

19 MS. VAN'T HUL: Now we will call upon those attending
20 online who have signed up to speak. Is there anyone else
21 attending online who has not spoken, but would like to speak?

22 (The Moderator paused. No online attendees spoke.)

23 MS. VAN'T HUL: Kathy (phonetic), I will turn it back
24 to you to close out the hearing.

25 MS. COTHERN: Once again, written statements and

1 exhibits in place of or in addition to verbal statements will be
2 accepted and recorded as part of this hearing if received or
3 postmarked by December 31, 2025. After the comment period
4 closes, the project team will compile all comments and together
5 with engineering and environmental work that has been done make
6 a final recommendation that will be submitted to the FDOT Office
7 of Environmental Management for approval.

8 If approved, we will publish the results of the study
9 in the Highlands News Sun and the Lake Okeechobee News and post
10 the approval on the project webpage. All hearing materials,
11 such as the project video and information graphics have been
12 available to the public online since December 9, 2025.

13 MS. COTHERN: Additionally, project engineering and
14 environmental documents have been available for review since
15 November 25, 2025 at the FDOT District 1 Heartland Operation
16 Center, 4722 Kenilworth Boulevard, Sebring, Florida 33870 and
17 the Okeechobee Public Library, 206 Southwest 16th Street,
18 Okeechobee, Florida 34974 as well as on the project webpage.

19 The verbatim transcript of this hearing's proceedings
20 together with all written statements or exhibits received and
21 all studies, displays and informational material presented with
22 this hearing will be part of the project decision-making process
23 and will be available for public review upon request at the FDOT
24 District 1 headquarters in Bartow.

25 Thank you for attending the online public hearing and

1 for providing your input into this project. It is now 6:47.
2 I hereby officially close the online public hearing for State
3 Road 70 from County Road 721 South to County Road 599 also known
4 as 128th Avenue in Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, Florida.
5 Thank you again and have a good evening.

6 (Remote proceedings concluded at 6:47 p.m.)
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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF CALIFORNIA)
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES)

I, Amy Ma, AAERT No. 2679, Digital Reporter, State of CALIFORNIA, do hereby certify that I was authorized to and did electronically report the foregoing remote proceedings via video teleconference and that the electronic recording of the proceedings was provided for transcription.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative, employee, or attorney, or counsel of any of the parties, nor am I a relative or employee of any of the parties' attorneys or counsel connected with the action, nor am I financially interested in the action.

DATED this 5th day of January, 2026.



Amy Ma, AAERT No. 2679
U.S. Legal Support, Inc.

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIPTIONIST

I, Brandy Winow, do hereby certify that I transcribed the electronic recording produced by Amy Ma, AAERT No. 2679, of the foregoing proceedings; and that the foregoing transcript is a true transcript of said electronic recording.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative, employee, attorney, or counsel of any of the parties, nor am I a relative or employee of any of the parties' attorneys or counsel connected with the action, nor am I financially interested in the action.

DATED this 5th day of January, 2026.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Brandy A. Winow", is written over a horizontal line.

Brandy Winow

ONLINE PUBLIC HEARING

TRANSCRIBER'S CERTIFICATE ON CORRECTIONS
TO THE ONLINE PUBLIC HEARING WHICH TOOK PLACE ON
December 18, 2025

Under penalties of perjury, I declare that I, Brandy Winow, have
reviewed the transcript audio and found the following errors:

ADDITIONAL CORRECTIONS REQUESTED PER CLIENT.

DATED this 11th day of February 2026.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Brandy A. Winow", is written over a horizontal line.

Brandy Winow, TRANSCRIPTIONIST

0 0.717 7:2 0.898 7:1 1 1 6:14 14:2 22:22 1.4 21:13 1.56 6:25 100 9:2 100-year 14:20 106 18:20 11 9:23 111988 14:18 11990 14:7 12-foot 9:13,14 10:10,12,13 124 21:16 128th 4:6 5:6 6:19 21:12 13.88 14:9 14 21:14 14-97 20:22 16th 22:14	17 18:19 18 16:8 18.6 21:12,19 18th 5:15 1964 5:18 23:11 1966 16:24 18:4 1969 12:16 1970 19:24 1973 12:25 1990 5:17 23:10 2 2 16:8 2.48 17:11 2.60 14:9 2024 9:23 18:19 2025 8:21 18:16, 21,24 22:9, 19 24:5 2026 8:18,21 21:25 2029 8:21 2029/2030 8:22 2030 8:18,21 2035 8:19	2050 8:19 2052 11:22 206 22:13 210 10:17 22 18:16,21 23 16:6 25 18:24 25.22 14:9 253.9 21:20 260 10:16 290 10:17 3 30 25:13 31 22:8,19 24:5 335.199 20:25 339.09 19:23 33970 22:17 34974 22:14 4 4 (f) 16:24,25 17:4,6,13,23 19:8 4.47 14:10	40-foot 10:11 450334-1-22-01 5:7 46 18:6 4722 22:17 5 599 4:5 5:5 6:18 21:12 6 6 5:17 23:10 60 9:9 65 10:19 6:33 25:1,2 6:42 25:3 6:43 25:1 7 70 4:5 5:4 6:5, 20,23,25 7:10,16,25 8:4,6,11,24 9:3,19 10:7, 14,18,25 11:22 12:18 18:18 21:11 23:21 721 4:5 5:5 6:17 10:24 21:12
--	---	--	---

77.3 21:17	17:11	adopted 21:21	alternative 6:10 10:6,7,
772 16:7	Act 5:17,18	advance 22:20	20 11:20,21,
	12:16,25	advantages 11:23,24	24,25 12:11
	15:18,19	adverse 13:8 17:7	13:16 14:1
8	16:24 18:4	18:10,14,18	17:10 19:11
	19:24,25	19:5	21:6
8.6 6:18	20:4 23:4,	adversely 13:4,20	alternatives 9:21,22
863 376-3336 22:16	10,11	17:19	Ambient 15:17
863 471-4848 22:19	action 15:7	advertised 23:6	amended 12:16,25
	actions 15:11 17:18	advisory 20:9	American 13:12 19:4
	activities 17:20	affect 13:4,20 14:8	Americans 5:17 23:10
A	activity 5:11 7:24	affected 16:23	amount 20:12
a.m. 22:15,18	adding 15:21	affects 6:10	analyses 9:20 10:6
abate 16:18	addition 6:21 13:8	age 23:13	analysis 4:20
abatement 16:7,10,12,	24:3	agencies 14:3	animal 13:6
16	additional 7:22 10:5	agency 9:21	answer 4:9 20:20
ability 7:4	24:11 25:8	agreement 18:24	anticipate 19:21
access 10:1 19:15	Additionally 8:9,20 9:6	agricultural 19:14,16	anticipated 7:19 13:9
20:24 21:1	11:12 14:20	ahead 24:25	14:11
accommodate 5:10 7:8	address 5:8,25 7:19	aid 6:14	anticipates 21:24
accommodating 7:23	10:4 15:11,	air 12:20 15:17,	anyone 5:23 22:4
accommodation s 12:8	13 17:18	18,19,20,23	23:11 24:2
accordance 5:16 12:15	22:6 23:15	alignment 10:16,20,21,	25:20
14:7,17,25	24:1,22	23,24 11:2	appeal 20:13,15
18:4 19:22	adequate 9:25	allowed 12:24	applicability 18:13
20:22 23:9	adhere 16:1		applicable 5:19 23:8
acquisition 12:1 16:14	adjacent 10:14 21:2		apply 15:19
17:5 19:22,	Administratio n 16:11		
24 21:14	Administrativ e 20:23		
acres 14:9,10			

appointment 22:22 appraiser 20:5 appreciate 6:6 approach 16:10 approval 19:8 approved 14:1 approving 5:13 approximately 6:18 14:8,10 17:11 25:13 archaeologica l 12:21 18:6, 11 Archaeologist s 18:5 area 11:1 13:15 15:16 16:22 17:3,12,21 18:7 19:13 areas 9:3 14:13 15:13 19:17 21:15 arterials 7:15 asked 9:23 assessed 13:1 assessment 18:3 assistance 19:24 20:4, 21 associated 6:10 11:25 16:5	assumes 11:21 attainment 15:17 attendance 4:10 6:6 attendees 24:15 25:22 attending 25:16,19,21 attributes 17:20 Audubon's 13:16 authority 5:14 available 6:1 8:2 17:25 19:7 21:3 22:10, 12 Avenue 4:6 5:6 6:19 21:12 average 10:15 avoid 7:4 10:25 11:3 B back 25:23 barriers 16:14 Based 10:5 17:17 begin 25:4 beginning 10:23 begins 6:17 benefits 20:10,17,18	bicycle 9:7,15 bicycles 12:9 blue 13:11 board 23:7,16 boards 5:21 24:6 boat 17:1,3 Boney 11:1 Boulevard 22:17 bound 11:18 boundary 17:11 box 24:22 break 24:15 bridge 9:12,14,15 11:4,5,7,9, 10 16:3 18:19 19:1, 3,9 bridges 9:10 17:16 brochures 20:21 burning 16:1 burrowing 13:11 businesses 11:1 19:20 C C-38 9:12 17:22 18:9	C-41A 9:11,12 11:7 17:1,13,21 18:9 call 22:19 24:23 25:16,19 Canal 9:11,12 11:7 17:2,13,21, 22 18:9 canals 17:16 capabilities 7:21 capacity 10:4 15:22 caracara 13:16,22 card 22:4 cardinal 13:13 carries 11:7 carry 11:8,11 22:7 case 18:20 caused 15:24 caution 20:16 celestial 13:14 Center 22:16 Central 7:17 certain 13:5 change 14:18,21 changes 20:25 channelized 17:13
---	---	--	---

Chapter 16:8	complete 5:24 23:14	consequences 19:19	contribution 13:22
church 11:1	completed 5:25 23:2,15	conservation 13:21,22 19:14	control 5:21 20:24 24:2,18
Civil 5:18 23:11	completing 22:3	consideration 18:22	controls 16:14
Clean 15:18,19	completion 12:13 21:24	considered 11:21 12:17 16:12,16	conversion 19:17
clearance 7:18	compliance 20:3,25	consistent 16:5 19:11 23:6	convey 11:19
click 24:19	Comprehensive 19:12	consisting 8:15 13:21 21:23	conveyed 11:14
close 19:3 25:14, 24	con- 4:20	constructed 11:6,10,13, 16 17:16	coordinate 15:10
closely 10:20 14:3	concept 15:14 21:3	construction 8:16 10:10 11:25 12:2, 22 14:4,14 15:12,24 16:3,8 19:18 21:16,18,23	coordination 13:2
Code 14:15 16:6 20:23	concepts 9:18	consultant 4:9	coordinator 15:10
collect 11:19	concerns 8:13	consultation 13:15,23	copies 20:21
collected 9:6 11:13	concurrence 18:16,19,21	contact 22:23 24:7, 12	corridor 5:11 7:24 9:5,8 11:16 12:10 16:9, 19 17:1
color 23:13	condition 11:9	contacted 20:5	cost 8:19 21:16, 17,20
comment 4:15 18:1 19:10 22:3,5 23:25 24:17, 21,24 25:14	conditions 5:9 6:23 17:4	contacting 22:22	costs 12:1 21:10, 11
comments 4:17,23 6:9 9:21 10:5 22:7 24:4 25:6,7,10,12	conducted 4:20 5:12, 16,19 6:8 18:3 19:22 23:2,9	contaminated 12:21 15:2, 3,7,10,12,13	Cothern 4:2,7 22:23 23:24 25:4, 25
commitments 13:21	configuration 7:5	continue 12:12 14:2 19:13	Counties 4:6 5:6 7:13 8:7 9:19
committees 8:10	confirm 22:20	continued 5:9 23:19	County 4:5 5:5 6:17,18,19 7:1 10:24 19:12 21:11, 12
commonly 19:25	conformity 15:19	contributing 7:18	court 22:5
community 8:10	congestion 7:7 12:6,9, 11 15:22		
comparison 21:5	connection 5:10 7:23		
	Connector 17:2,4		
	connects 7:15		

crane 13:11 crash 6:24 7:1,2 crashes 7:20 12:6 crested 13:16,22 crews 15:13 criteria 15:18 16:11 critical 7:13 cues 7:17 cultural 6:11 12:20 18:3 21:9 current 7:5 14:25 cutthroat 13:14	Department 4:2 5:13 6:4,19 14:11,13 16:24 20:2 21:24 Department's 20:11 21:19 described 5:8 design 6:16 8:16 11:25 14:4 15:11 21:13, 23 designated 7:11 9:7 15:16 designed 10:19 14:25 detail 4:13 detailed 21:5 determination 13:19 20:11, 13 determined 13:3 18:10, 13,17 determining 6:15 development 4:4 6:5 23:21 different 9:18 direct 13:17 direction 10:11 11:6 directly 4:14 14:8 Disabilities 23:10 disability 5:17 23:13	disabled 7:8 disadvantages 11:24 12:4 discriminated 5:23 23:12 discuss 24:9 discussed 18:23 display 5:20 15:15 21:3,7,25 23:7 24:6 district 6:14 14:2 15:1,9 22:22 ditch 9:11 11:18 17:21 18:9 ditches 9:6 10:9 11:14 divided 6:20 Division 7:11 document 6:13 19:4 documents 5:1,2 22:12 dollars 21:13,14,17, 18,19,20 draft 18:24 drainage 10:8 Drinking 23:17 Drive 23:18 drivers 7:4 driving 23:18	due 7:5 8:13 12:2,6,10 14:23 dust 15:25
E			
Earth 15:25 East-west 5:10 7:23 8:2,4 eastbound 10:15 11:11 eastern 13:6 economic 6:11 8:14 12:21 education 19:2 effect 13:8 18:11, 14,18 19:6, 10 effects 12:18,21,23 15:24 16:4 19:18 21:8 eight 22:18 eight-foot 9:1 10:11 either 9:7,16 elec- 4:10 elected 4:10 elevation 10:2 eligibility 20:12 eligible 17:14 18:7			

20:9 eliminated 9:21 email 22:6 24:12 emergency 6:23 7:6,10, 11,14,21 12:7 14:22 emission 12:10 emissions 15:23 encourage 20:6 22:1 endangered 12:25 13:5, 10 engineering 6:13 9:20 10:6 19:4 21:18 enhanced 7:20 entitled 20:18 environment 4:4 6:6,11 23:21 environmental 6:13,15 9:20 10:5 12:14, 16 14:2,3,4 23:3 environments 12:3 21:9 equal 22:7 equally 25:7 established 7:12 16:11 estates 11:3 19:15 estimate 21:20	estimated 21:11,16,19 evacuation 6:24 7:10, 14,15,21 12:7 14:22 evaluate 6:12 evaluated 12:12,14 14:6,16 16:4 evaluation 10:1 12:17 14:23 18:12 19:8 21:5 evening 4:2 21:8,25 23:22 event 22:3 events 23:1 examined 16:22 exceed 16:10 executive 5:19 14:7,17 exhibit 19:2 exhibits 24:3 existence 13:4 existing 9:2,12,14,18 10:21,23,25 11:4,7,10 19:1,15 exists 4:25 expanded 19:17 expect 20:2 expected 14:20 15:20,	21 19:18 explain 4:13 express 4:21,24 extends 6:18 F facilitate 8:7 facilitating 7:14 8:4 facilities 7:2 8:2 11:15 14:24 facility 8:12 10:22 factors 12:15 fair 20:3 family 23:13 farm 12:23 fatalities 7:20 FDEM 7:12,16 FDOT 4:8 6:14 8:17,18 9:3, 17 12:14 13:1,19 14:2,6 15:9 16:1 17:23 18:9,13,17, 25 19:7 22:16 23:17, 18 FDOT's 21:21 22:23 feasible 8:19 16:17	feature 17:13 features 17:20 federal 5:16 12:17 16:6,11 23:4,6 federally 13:5 feedback 9:24 22:2 feel 25:9 feels 5:23 23:11 feet 9:1,2,3 10:12,13,16, 17 fence 7:4 final 5:1 13:24 21:13 finally 4:15 23:17 financial 5:7 13:22 find 24:19 finding 17:24 fiscal 8:17,21,22 Fish 13:2,23 Fishing 10:3 five 10:13 22:18 five-year 8:17 21:21 flexibility 4:25 flood 14:19
--	---	--	--

flooding 14:23	free 25:9	greenhouse 15:23	helpful 20:3
floodplain 14:17,18,20	freight 5:11 7:24	growth 8:8,14	heron 13:12
floodplains 12:19	8:8,13	Guardrail 9:4	high 15:9
Florida 4:2 5:6,12	Friday 22:18	guardrails 7:3 10:2	high-risk 15:6
6:4 7:11,17	fringeless 13:13		higher 6:25 12:11
13:1,7,10,11	frontage 19:17	H	highest 8:11
14:14 15:1	functionally 11:5	habitat 13:18	Highlands 4:6 5:6 6:17
18:5 19:23	functions 17:9	habitats 12:19,24	7:1,13 8:7
20:22 21:1	Fund 13:22	handing 22:4	9:19 19:12
22:14,17	funding 21:22 23:6	handled 11:17	highway 8:1 16:7,11
Florida's 7:25 8:5	furnish 20:21	handout 5:21,24 21:7	highways 7:15
flow 7:9 11:19	furnished 20:13	22:24 24:6, 13	historians 18:5
15:21	future 8:7 11:9	happy 20:20	historic 17:14,15
focus 25:11	14:3 19:13	harms 14:12	18:4,8,13, 15,20,23,25
followed 20:14	23:5	hazardous 15:4	19:3
following 4:13 5:3	G	hazards 7:5	historical 12:21 18:6
13:9 24:11		hear 4:23 16:9	hold 4:22
25:9,13		hearing 4:3,11,18,22	holiday 22:20
follows 10:21		5:4,12,15,20	hour 9:9 10:19
form 5:25 23:15	gas 15:23	6:5,8 17:25	hours 22:20
formal 4:15 22:9	gentlemen 25:4	19:9 22:9,10	HRTPO 8:10,20
24:10,16,21	giant 13:12	23:6,9,22	https://www.
forms 5:24 20:14	give 6:8	24:5,11	swfroads.com/
23:14	Good 4:2	25:5,9,24	project/
forum 4:21	Gopher 13:10	Heartland 8:5,9 22:16	450334-1.
found 5:21,24	Gotowebinar 5:14,21	held 5:14 9:23	21:4
18:11	grass 13:14	help 25:6	HUL 24:15 25:19, 23
four 9:1,19 10:12			
16:14,19			
four-lane 6:20 10:3,9			

human 12:3 I ID 5:7 identified 8:11 16:18 18:5 identifies 8:21 21:9 impact 14:23 15:10, 20 17:17 impacts 10:25 11:3 12:1,2 13:17,19,23 14:11,13,20 15:4 17:8, 19,24 impair 17:8 implementatio n 17:18 implemented 16:18 important 4:23 5:10 7:23 25:6 improve 15:21 improved 5:8 12:8 Improvement 8:20 improvements 4:19,22 6:16,22 7:22 8:6,13 9:24 11:22 12:15 14:8 15:25 16:5 18:10, 14,17 20:23	improving 6:23 in-person 22:3 incident 6:24 7:21 include 6:23 7:22 11:25 12:4 13:6 17:1,13 19:1 20:23 21:12,22 included 8:17 9:25 22:24 includes 10:10,23 11:18 including 7:20 16:12 inconsistency 12:4 incorporate 4:25 increased 12:6,7,9,10 increasing 5:10 7:24 Indian 13:7 indigo 13:6 individually 18:7 information 5:3 6:1,13 9:22 16:20 17:25 18:12 19:6 20:7 22:1,24 23:1 24:7,13 input 9:24 19:5 inside 10:11 inspect 20:5	inspection 20:7 21:18 insufficient 18:12 integral 8:4 intended 17:22 interest 23:20 intermission 4:14 22:5 23:25 24:1, 8,16,25 intermodal 7:25 interruption 14:21 intersections 12:7 involvement 14:17 issues 15:12 J jeopardized 20:18 join 23:22 joint 13:14 July 18:19 June 9:23 K Kathern 4:7 22:23 Kathy 25:23 Kenilworth 22:17	Kestrel 13:12 Kissimmee 9:11,14 10:2 11:3,4 17:2, 11,14,20,22 18:9,18 19:9 known 4:6 5:5 19:25 L lack 12:8 Ladies 25:4 land 12:22 16:14 17:5,6 19:13,14 lands 12:23 lane 7:3 11:2 lanes 6:21 8:25 9:7,13,15, 18,19,25 10:11,15 11:8,15 lasting 7:17 latest 23:1 laws 5:16 23:4 lead 7:20 left 25:17 level 17:17 levels 12:11 16:10 Library 22:13
--	--	--	--

lies 9:2 13:15		material 15:4	mitigate 14:13
lily 13:13,14	M	materials 22:10,21	mitigation 18:22 19:6
limit 9:8 25:14	made 5:1 11:22	matrix 21:5,8	21:14
limited 7:6	mail 5:25 22:6	meaning 10:9	mitigative 17:18
limits 8:24 9:10	23:15	measures 13:21 14:12	mix 23:18
13:2 14:6	mailing 24:7	16:12,17	mobile 24:20
list 8:23	maintain 19:15	median 10:11 20:24	mobility 8:14
listed 5:25 8:18	maintained 11:8	21:2	moderate 19:16
13:5,9 23:15	maintaining 7:23	medium 15:6,9	moderator 25:15,18,22
listing 5:20 17:14	maintenance 5:9 11:23	meet 14:14 17:4	modifications 16:13
18:8	majority 9:5	meet all 5:19 14:4	Modifying 21:1
little 13:11	make 18:12 20:1	meeting 9:22,23	moment 23:17,24
live 22:3	22:22 23:25	17:22	Monday 22:18
local 12:5 16:2	24:16,21	members 4:8	move 20:1,4,16
located 8:3 15:16	25:6	memorandum 18:24	moved 20:10
17:1 22:13,	making 20:15 23:19	miles 6:18 8:3 9:9	movements 20:24
17 23:14	management 6:15 7:12	10:19	multimodal 12:8
location 6:16 19:2,3	10:1 11:12,	million 21:13,14,16,	multiple 22:2
locations 10:22 15:14	15 12:20	17,19,20	
16:15,19	14:2,18,24	minimal 14:19 15:23	N
long-term 8:6	15:1 16:13	19:17	name 4:7 22:4
longest 7:17	21:15	minimis 17:24	24:1,22
looked 9:17	manager 4:7 15:9	minimize 14:12	national 8:1 12:16
looks 24:20	22:23	minor 17:17	15:17 17:15
low 15:5,7	manatee 13:7	minute 25:17	18:4,8,12
	manner 20:3	minutes 25:15	23:3,13
	Manual 16:8		
	Maps 19:13		

natural 6:11 12:2 21:9	notified 20:14	online 5:14 6:1	5:15 22:15, 18 25:1,2,3
nearest 8:2	number 5:7 22:15,18	24:15,17	page 5:22 22:11 24:7
necessary 19:20 20:14	O	25:15,16,20, 21,22	pane 24:2,17,19
need 5:8 6:22 8:12 9:25 10:17 12:5	obsolete 11:5	open 4:15 10:8 16:1	panel 5:22 24:2,18
needed 10:15	obstructing 7:8	openings 21:2	panther 13:7
needs 7:22	occupancies 17:6	operational 15:22	parallel 8:2
nest 13:17,18	OEM 6:15	Operations 22:16	part 7:10,25 8:1 16:7,8,16 22:9 24:5
network 7:11,12,16 8:1,5	off-site 11:16,19	opinions 4:21	participation 4:11 6:7 23:20
nine 15:3,4	office 6:14 14:1 22:22	opportunity 4:16 6:9 18:1 19:9 24:8	pass 7:6
no-build 11:20,21,24, 25 12:11 21:6	Officer 18:15,21,23, 25	option 12:12	path 6:21 10:14
no-risk 15:5	official 4:21 24:5	orchid 13:14	paused 25:18,22
noise 10:1 12:22 16:4,7,8,10, 12,14,16,18, 20,21	officials 4:10	Order 14:7,17	paved 6:21 9:1,13 10:12,13
Noise-sensitive 16:9	Okeechobee 4:6 5:6 6:19 7:1,13 8:7 9:19 17:2,3 19:12 22:13, 14	orders 5:19	payment 20:10,12
north 8:3 11:18 17:2,3	on-site 11:16	organization 8:10	PD&E 4:4 5:8 6:6, 12 9:17 16:8 21:24 23:2
Northwest 11:2	Once 25:25	origin 23:13	pedestrians 12:9
notably 6:25	one 5:24 9:4,10, 11 11:6 13:17 15:6 16:20 18:6, 11 19:19 23:14	outlined 16:6	performed 14:24
notes 7:16	ongoing 13:2,25	outside 10:12 11:14	period 4:15 25:14
notification 20:17		owned 16:23	periods 7:7,14
		owns 9:4	permanent 17:5
		P	permit 17:10
		p.m.	

permitting 12:20 14:4	23:7 24:1,6, 22,23 25:14	preservation 17:7 18:4, 15,21,23,25	10
person 22:13	Policies 19:24	prevent 7:8	Projects 21:1
pertaining 8:13	Policy 12:16 23:4	primarily 10:18	prolonged 7:18
petroleum 15:4	pollutants 12:10	primary 13:18	promptly 20:13
phase 15:11	portion 24:21 25:5	priorities 8:6,23	properties 16:23 17:6, 9,12
phases 8:15 14:3 21:22 23:5	post 25:12	priority 8:12 23:19	property 9:3 16:13 19:24 20:6,8 21:2
phone 22:15,18 24:12,20	posted 9:8 10:19 22:11	procedures 16:7 20:14	proposed 4:19,22 6:10,16,22 7:22 9:24 10:2,17,22 12:15 13:3, 19,23 14:8, 19,24 15:24 16:5 17:15, 18 18:10,14, 17,22 19:6 20:23 21:2
phonetic 25:23	poster 23:16	process 9:17	proposes 6:19 13:16
physical 6:11 21:9	postmarked 22:8 24:4	program 8:17,20 20:19 21:21	protected 12:18,24 16:25 17:9, 12
piedmont 13:14	posts 7:4	programmatic 19:8	protection 12:25 13:18 14:7
pine 13:10,13	potential 12:6 14:16, 21 15:3 17:19,24 21:8	project 4:4,7,9,12, 13,15,24 5:7,11,22 6:2,5 7:18, 24 8:15,18, 22,24 9:8,10 10:24 12:5 13:1,3,8,15, 20 14:6,16 15:9,16,20, 21 16:9,17, 19,22 17:1, 5,16,19 18:1,7 19:13,15,19, 21 20:2 21:3,7,16, 20,22 22:1, 7,11,23,25 23:5,21 24:6,7,9,13 25:13	provide 4:16,17 6:9 20:7 22:2,3 24:23
place 24:3	Potentially 16:25	project's 14:14 19:5,	provided 15:18 18:15, 19,21 21:7
Places 17:15 18:8, 13	practical 14:12		provides 18:1 19:9
plan 8:19 21:3	preferred 6:10 10:6,7, 20 13:16 14:1 17:10 19:11 21:6		providing 22:5
Planning 8:10	preliminary 6:16 21:10, 19		
plans 12:5 15:14 19:12	prepared 18:20		
plaque 19:1	pres- 4:19		
platform 5:14	present 4:19 9:4,7, 16 20:6		
play 6:2	presented 20:25 22:10		
played 6:3			
please 5:20 16:20 22:19,22			

proximity 7:3 17:8 19:3 public 4:3,21,22 5:4,12 6:5, 8,9 9:20,22 12:2 17:3, 12,21 18:1 19:10 22:11, 13 23:21 25:5 publicly 16:23 pulled 23:18 purpose 4:18 6:12 12:4 17:7,23 pursuing 17:23 Q qualify 23:5 quality 12:19,20 14:23 15:17, 20,23 question 24:2,17,24 questions 4:9 20:20 24:9,10,11, 19 25:8,10 R race 23:12 radii 10:1 ramp 17:1,3 ranked 15:5,6,7	ranking 15:8 rate 6:24 7:1,2 reach 24:12 25:9 read 5:3 Real 19:24 reasonable 16:17 receive 20:17 received 9:25 24:4 25:13 record 5:4 19:4 22:9 25:2,3 recording 25:11 recreational 12:22 16:25 reduce 7:20 15:22 regard 23:12 regarding 4:22 13:24 16:20 region 7:17 8:8,12 regional 8:5,9 Register 17:15 18:8, 13 regulations 5:20 16:2,6 23:5 related 5:18 23:4,11 relating 12:15 relieve 15:22	religion 23:13 relocation 19:2,20,21, 23 20:4,9, 17,19,21 21:17 remain 22:11 remains 12:12 reminder 25:8 reporter 22:6 representativ es 4:8 request 24:18 require 17:10 required 15:8,13 20:1,5 requirements 12:17 14:5, 14,25 15:19 16:6 23:3,7, 8 residences 19:20,21 Resort 10:3 resource 18:3,15 19:6,10 resources 12:22 16:25 17:24 18:2, 6,7,11 respond 7:7 responding 24:10 25:10 response 6:24 7:21	12:8 restrict 7:4 result 14:19 19:16 20:2 resulting 14:13 results 10:8 15:2 resume 25:1 review 6:9 17:25 19:7 22:1, 12,13,21 right-of-way 8:16 9:2,3 10:16,17 12:1 19:22 21:14,23 Rights 5:18 23:11 risk 14:19 15:5, 6,8 River 9:12,14 10:2 11:3,4 17:3, 12,14,20,22 18:9,18 19:9 Riverside 11:2 road 4:5 5:4,5 6:5,17,18, 20,22,25 7:10,16,25 8:4,6,11,24 9:19 10:7, 14,18,24,25 11:2,22 12:18 16:2 18:18 21:11, 12 23:21 roads 15:25
---	--	--	---

roadside 7:3 9:6 11:14 roadway 6:20 7:13,19 8:25 9:1,4,8 10:2,8,21 11:13,19 19:17 21:15 roadway's 7:5 route 7:11,16 routes 14:23 routine 11:23 Rule 20:22 rules 23:4 runoff 9:5 11:13,17 rural 10:8 19:14 s safety 5:9 6:23 8:13 10:4 23:17,19 salvage 19:1 sandhill 13:11 Saturday 22:15 schedule 21:25 23:1 screen 6:1 22:6 24:18 screening 15:2 Sebring 22:17	second 11:18 13:18 secondary 14:11 section 5:21,25 6:25 10:8,10 11:18 16:23, 25 17:4,6, 12,22,23 18:20 19:8, 23 20:25 see 5:20 23:7 24:6,19 seeking 19:7 selected 10:6 separately 11:17 September 18:16,21,24 serves 4:20 service 7:6 13:3,24 services 14:22 20:10 sex 23:13 share 4:19 shared 6:21 10:13 shifts 10:22 short-term 15:23 shoulder 7:3 shoulders 6:21 9:1,13, 15 10:12,13 show 4:12 15:2	showing 21:5 shown 15:14 21:2 22:6 shows 21:8 SHPO 18:19 side 9:4,7,16 10:14,18,25 11:3,10,18 sidewalks 9:7,16 sign-in 23:14 signal 25:15,17 signed 25:20 significant 14:18,21 15:20 significantly 17:8 similar 7:2 SIS 8:1,18 site 18:6,11 sites 12:22 15:3, 4,6,8,14 16:9 17:14 situation 7:7 Slough 9:11 17:21 18:8 smoke 16:1 snake 13:6,10 sober 23:18	social 6:11 12:20 21:8 socio-economic 12:14 sought 19:5 south 4:5 5:5 6:17 8:3 10:14, 18,21,24,25 11:3,10 15:1 21:12 Southeastern 13:12 Southwest 22:14 space 7:6 speak 4:14 16:20 24:18,23 25:20,21 speaker 22:4 special 12:24 20:16 specialists 16:21 20:19 species 12:18,24,25 13:1,5,6,10, 20,21,24 specifically 15:12 specification s 16:2 speed 9:8 10:19 spoke 25:22 spoken 25:6,21 stage 4:24
---	--	---	---

stakeholders 8:11	Street 22:14		three 15:5 25:15
standard 16:2	structures 11:6	T	Thursday 5:15
standards 15:17	study 4:4 5:1,8 6:6,12,17 9:17 11:20 12:13 16:4 18:20 21:24, 25 23:1,2,21	table 23:15	time 6:2 8:15 15:8 21:21 23:22 24:25 25:11,17
state 4:4 5:4,16 6:5,20,22,25 7:10,15,16, 24 8:3,6,11, 24 9:18 10:7,14,18, 25 11:22 12:18 13:9 16:1 18:15, 18,20,23,25 21:11 23:4, 21	submit 24:2	tag 22:4	times 6:24 7:18,21 12:8
statements 4:16 24:3,4 25:25	submitted 22:8	take 14:12	Title 5:17 16:6 23:10
States 14:15	subsequent 8:15 21:22	taken 15:11	tonight 4:8,12 15:15 16:21 17:25 19:7 20:20 21:3 22:1,10 24:11 25:11
status 13:24 23:14	substandard 7:2	taking 23:22	tonight's 4:18 25:9
statute 19:23 23:7	suitable 13:17	Tallahassee 5:13	tortoise 13:10
statute's 17:7	summary 25:12	target 10:18	total 21:15,20
statutes 5:18 13:1 14:15 18:5 21:1 23:11	summer 21:24	team 4:9,15 16:4, 12,22 24:9	traffic 5:9 6:23 7:9,14 8:8 10:4 11:8,9, 11 12:9,11 15:21 16:4, 7,10,12,16, 18,20 20:24
stopped 23:23	supervising 20:19	technical 22:12	Trail 17:2,4
stork 13:6	support 10:3 19:13	temporary 17:6	trained 15:12
stormwater 9:5 11:12, 13,15,16,19 12:19 14:24 21:15	surface 14:9,10	ten 8:3 22:15	transcript 24:6
strategic 7:25	surrounding 19:16	ten-foot 8:25 9:13	transportatio n 4:3 5:13 8:5,9,12,20, 22 12:5 16:24 20:2
strategies 18:22	survey 18:3	ten-minute 4:14 23:24	
	swales 7:4	termination 14:22	
	swflroads. com/project/ 450334-14 22:25	terms 17:7	
	system 7:25 8:1 10:9 11:12 16:13	testimony 24:10,21 25:5	
		thank 4:10 23:20	
		thanks 23:18	
		threatened 13:5,9	

21:1 Transportatio n's 6:4 travel 8:4,25 9:13, 14 10:10,15 11:14 traveling 12:1 treated 20:3 tri-colored 13:12 truck 9:25 Tuesday 22:14 turn 6:21 9:25 25:23 turning 10:1 20:24 two 9:10,13,14, 18 10:10,22 11:5,7 15:5 18:7 19:21 two-foot 9:15 two-lane 8:25 11:4,9 type 6:15 20:1 24:1,22 typical 10:8,10 11:17	unfunded 8:16 uniform 19:23,25 20:4 United 14:15 unmute 24:23 unpaved 15:25 unsatisfied 20:11 upcoming 22:5 23:1 utilities 11:1 utility 21:17	W walls 10:1 want 24:16 water 12:19 14:23 15:1 waters 14:9,10 ways 22:2 web 5:22 22:11 24:7 webpage 24:14 25:13 website 21:4 22:7,25 Wednesday 22:8,19 weight 22:7 weighted 25:7 welcomes 4:3 west 11:18 13:7 westbound 11:8 wetland 14:13 wetlands 12:19 14:6, 7,9,11 widen 6:20 9:18 21:11 widening 10:3 12:15, 18 14:19 widens 10:21	width 10:15 widths 7:3 9:25 wild 13:13 Wildlife 13:3,24 wishing 24:2 wood 13:6 word 20:16 work 8:17 14:3 15:25 21:21 writing 4:17 written 24:3 25:6,25
	V		Y
	valid 12:12 value 20:7 VAN'T 24:15 25:19, 23 varies 10:16 vehicle 7:6,8,17 12:7,10 verbal 23:25 24:4, 17,21 25:11 video 4:12,13 6:2, 3 23:23 views 4:23,24,25 visit 22:24		
U			Z
U.S. 13:2,23 unavoidable 19:19 undivided 8:25			zone 13:18