

Board of County Commissioners

Shingle Creek and St. Johns River Basins Technical Studies

Work Session
April 8, 2025

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 **Agenda** 2

- Purpose
- Background
- Study Approach
- Findings
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Summary
- Next Steps



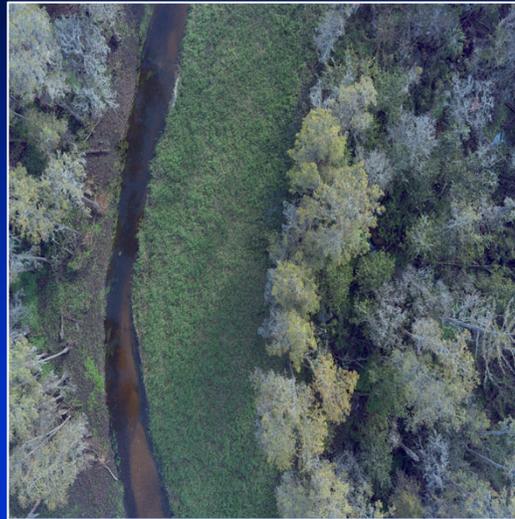
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Purpose

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- **Present results of Technical Studies**
 - Shingle Creek Study Area
 - St. Johns River Study Area
- **Objective**
 - Consider whether Study Areas require additional protections
 - Plan for smart, sustainable growth while protecting vulnerable resources



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Agenda

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Background

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- **2021** – Orange County began a comprehensive review of its wetland permitting processes and standards
 - Consulting firm hired to develop a "State of the Wetlands" study
- **2022** – Additionally, the District 1 Commissioner submitted a Commissioner's report requesting a comprehensive work session on the Shingle Creek Basin detailing the history of the area, land ownership, water quality and quantity data, drainage protocols, and potential protective measures
 - Consider adding supporting policies in Vision 2050 for basin protections

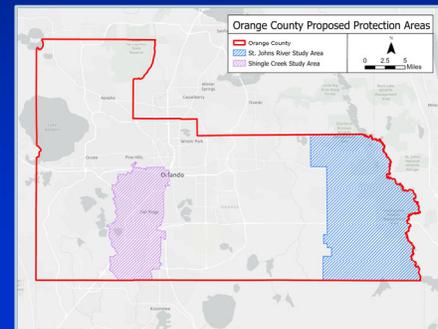
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Background

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- **2023** – State of the Wetlands study was the scientific basis supporting the recent updates to Chapter 15 - Article X. Wetland Conservation Areas
- Study identified loss of wetland acreage over time
- Identified vulnerable remaining areas
 - St. Johns River
 - Shingle Creek
 - Cypress Creek
 - Groundwater vulnerable wetlands in SW Orange County



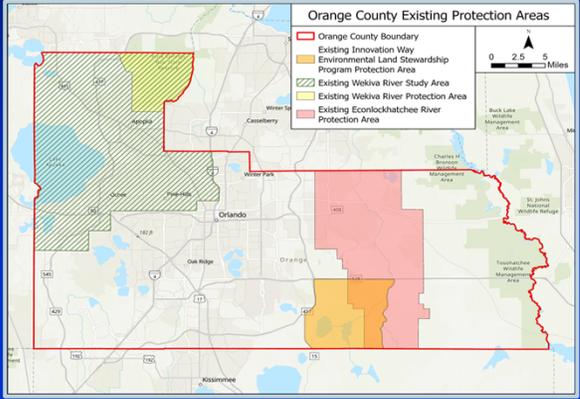
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Background

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- **Current Special Protection Areas in Orange County**
 - 1991: Econlockhatchee River Protection Area
 - 1991: Wekiva River Protection Area
 - 2004: Wekiva Study Area
 - 2010: Innovation Way Environmental Land Stewardship Program (ELSP)
- **Benefits of Protection Areas**
 - Biodiversity support
 - Natural disaster mitigation
 - Reduction of infrastructure costs
 - Ecotourism



The map shows the boundaries of Orange County and various protection areas. The Econlockhatchee River Protection Area is shown in red, the Wekiva River Protection Area in yellow, the Wekiva Study Area in green, and the ELSP area in orange. Major roads like I-4, I-75, and SR 17 are visible.

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Background

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- **Promote sustainable growth without restricting development**
- **Example regulations within existing SPAs**
 - Additional review during permitting process
 - Some language ‘promotes’ regulations in lieu of ‘requiring’ them
- **Any new SPAs should build off “lessons learned”**

ECON	WEKIVA	ELSP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River Corridor Protection Zone • T/E species survey • Additional stormwater criteria • Rare upland habitat preservation • Cultural resources protection • Native landscaping required • Limits vegetation clearance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low intensity land use only • T/E species survey • Additional stormwater criteria • Rare upland habitat preservation • Cultural resources protection • Native landscaping • Limits veg clearance • Groundwater degradation prohibited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waterwise landscaping + fire protection • Wildlife corridor protection • No fill in 100-YR Econ floodplain • Non-native landscaping prohibited near preservation areas

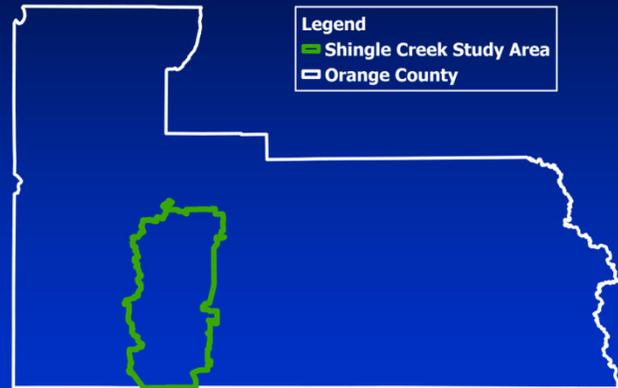
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Background – Shingle Creek Study Area

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- Boundary is the Shingle Creek Hydrologic Basin within Orange County
- 4,520 acres of undeveloped land
 - Nearly 60% is publicly owned
- 20% increase in impervious area since 1985
- Flooding concerns within and south of boundary
- Remaining interconnected habitat in southern portion of basin



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Background – St. Johns River Study Area

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- Boundary aligns with St. Johns River Hydrologic Basin within Orange County
- 20% of County land area, < 1% population
- Fed-designated American Heritage River
- SJRWMD-designated Priority Waterbody
- 96% of the Study Area is Priority 1 Wildlife Corridor
- Vulnerable Wet Prairies concentrated in Study Area – 39% loss in OC since 1990
- Growing flood concerns from recent storms



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Agenda

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- Purpose
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- **Study Approach**
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Study Approach

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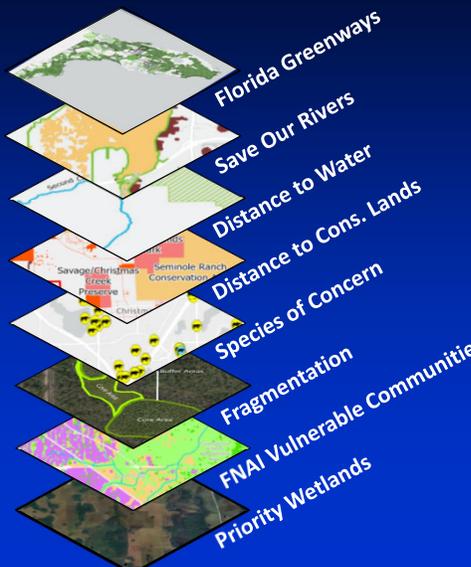
- Historical Trends of Natural Resources
- Ecological Significance
 - Terrestrial habitats
 - Wetland and aquatic communities
 - Biodiversity
 - Species of concern
- Water Resources
 - Hydrologic changes
 - Water quality
 - Flood inundation
 - Stormwater regulations
- Future Trends



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Study Approach



The diagram illustrates the 'Study Approach' as a stack of seven spatial input layers. From top to bottom, the layers are: Florida Greenways, Save Our Rivers, Distance to Water, Distance to Cons. Lands, Species of Concern, Fragmentation, and FNAI Vulnerable Communities. A final layer, Priority Wetlands, is shown at the bottom. To the right, a map titled 'SPLASH Model B - Wildlife Theme' displays the output of the model, with a legend indicating 'SPLASH Model Rankings' ranging from 0 (red) to 100 (green).

- Scientific justification for boundary refinement
- Incorporated numerous regionally relevant spatial input layers
- SPLASH Model: Special Protection of Landscapes and Significant Habitats Model

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Agenda



The image shows an aerial view of a vast wetland landscape with a complex network of water channels and green marshland.

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SHINGLE CREEK SA - REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

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- Unique geomorphology
- Used historically by Jororo Tribe
- Headwaters of the Everglades
- Recognized as significant resource in 1985 by Save Our Rivers Program

Province/District	Color
Barrier Island Sequence District	Light Blue
Everglades District	Red
Lakes District	Orange
Ocala Karst District	Green
Peace River District	Purple
Wekiva Plateau Province	Light Orange
Osceola Plain Province	Light Green
Green Swamp Province	Dark Green
Mount Dora Ridge Province	Orange
Orlando Ridge Province	Light Orange
Tavares Lakes Province	Light Orange
Lake Wales Ridge Complex Province	Light Orange

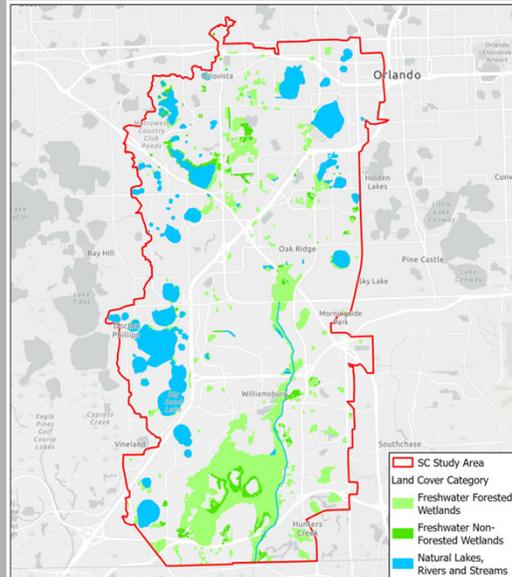
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SHINGLE CREEK SA - NATURAL COMMUNITIES

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Wetland Community Category	Cover (acres)	Cover (percent)
Non-Forested Wetlands	5,079	54%
Forested Wetlands	511	5.5%
Natural Lakes and Streams	3,796	40.5%
Total	9,386	100%

- 51% Non-Forested Wetlands are outside of Conservation Lands
- 97% of Natural Lakes and Streams are outside of Conservation Lands



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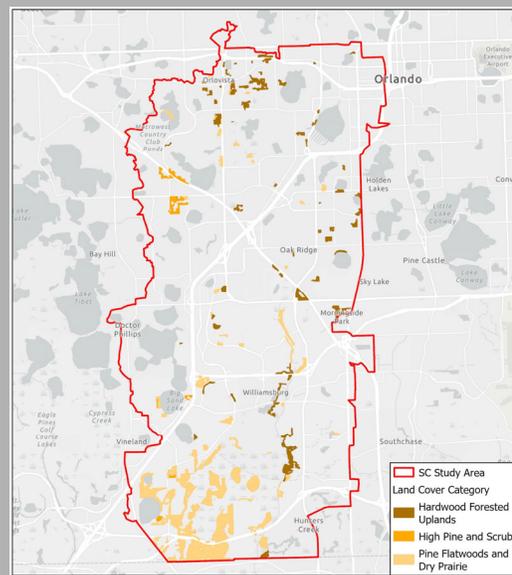
SHINGLE CREEK SA - NATURAL COMMUNITIES

18

Upland Community Category	Cover (acres)	Cover (percent)
Hardwood Forested Uplands	523	21%
High Pine and Scrub	124	5%
Pine Flatwoods and Dry Prairie	1,853	74%
Total	2,500	100%

- 78% Pine Flatwoods are outside of Conservation Lands

Consider Upland Habitat Protections



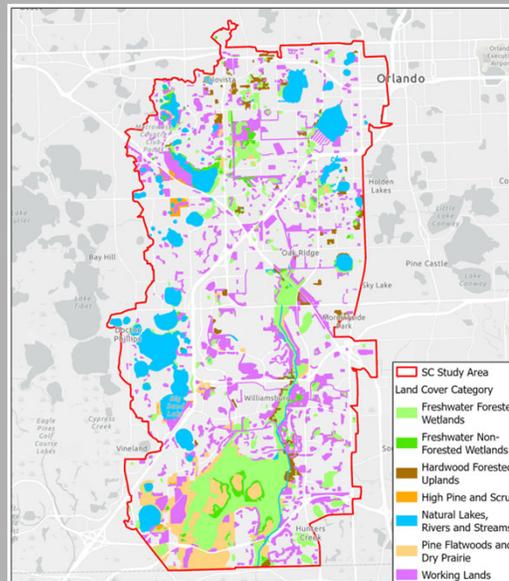
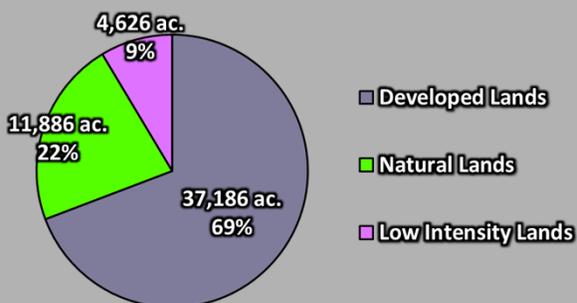
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SHINGLE CREEK SA - NATURAL COMMUNITIES

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Low Intensity Land Use Examples

- Stormwater Ponds
- Utility Corridors
- Artificial Waterways
- Sports Fields
- Infiltration Basins



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SHINGLE CREEK SA – WETLANDS AND AQUATIC



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Non-Forested Wetlands	Forested Wetlands	Natural Rivers, Lakes, and Streams
Basin Marsh	Basin Swamp	Sinkhole Lake
Depression Marsh*	Bay Swamp*	Floating and Emergent Aquatic Vegetation
Wet Prairie*	Dome Swamp*	Shingle Creek
	Floodplain Swamp	
	Hydric Hammock*	
	Wet Flatwoods	

*Vulnerable According to Chapter 15 Article X

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SHINGLE CREEK SA - TERRESTRIAL 21

Hardwood Forested Wetlands

- Mesic Hammock*
- Xeric Hammock*

High Pine and Scrub

Scrub*

Pine Flatwoods and Dry Prairie

- Mesic Flatwoods
- Scrubby Flatwoods*

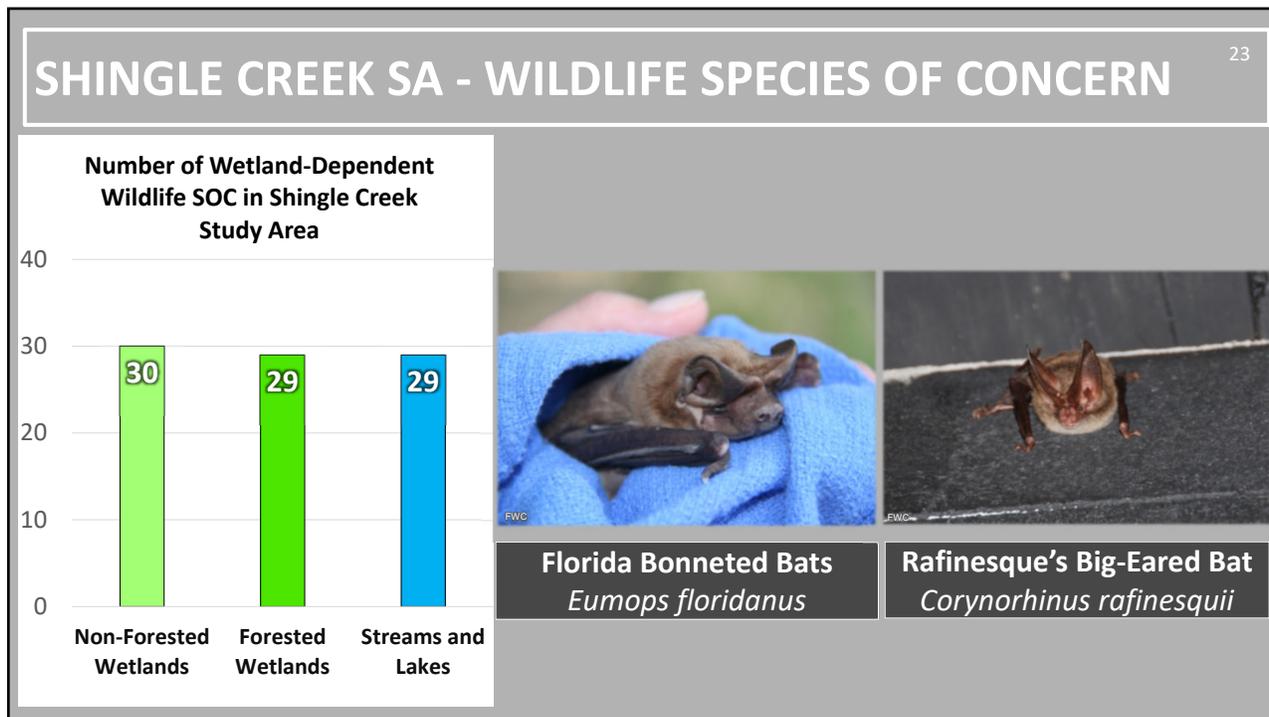
*Vulnerable according to Existing SPAs

21

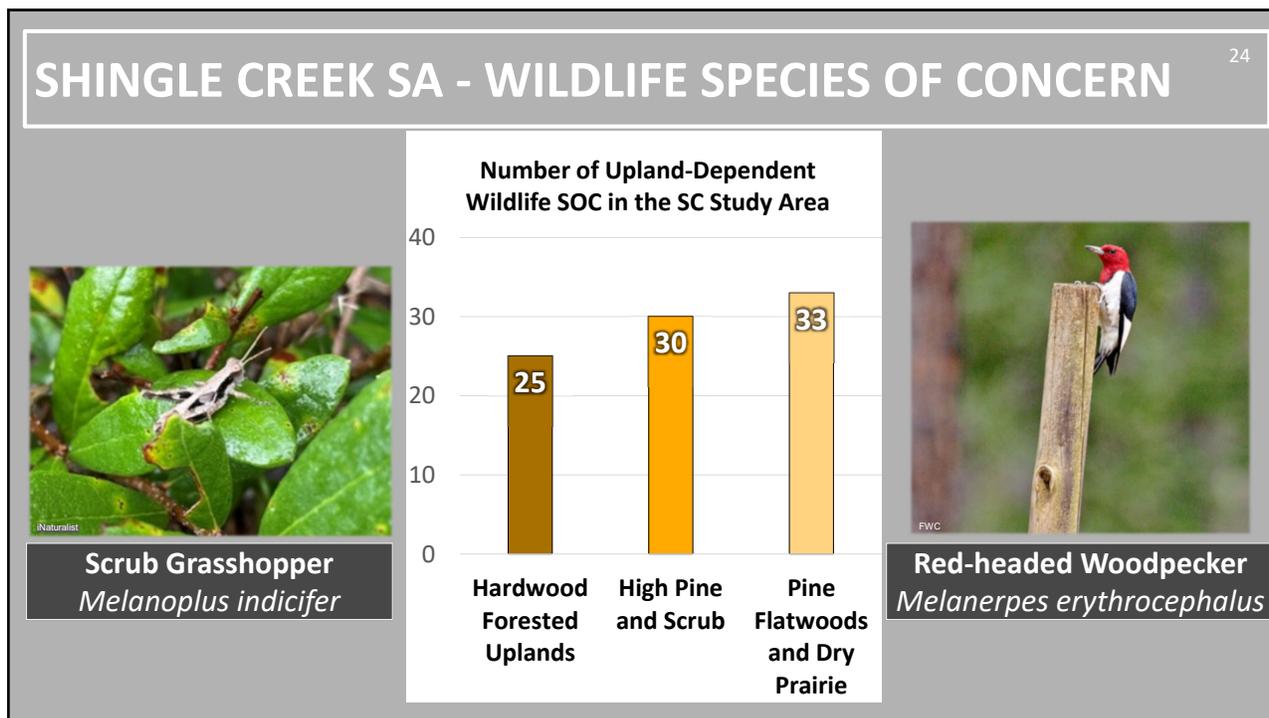
SHINGLE CREEK SA - WILDLIFE SPECIES OF CONCERN 22

Class	Number of Species	Number of Species with each Conservation Status					
		FE	FT	ST	SGCN	BCC	Other
Amphibians	2	-	-	1	2	-	-
Birds	42	1	5	8	38	14	1
Insects	3	-	1	-	1	-	1
Mammals	9	2	-	-	8	-	2
Reptiles	8	-	3	3	6	-	1
TOTAL	64	3	9	12	53	14	5

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SHINGLE CREEK SA - WILDLIFE SPECIES OF CONCERN 25



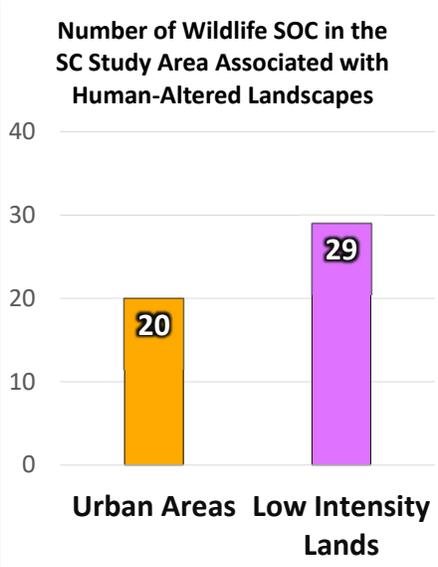
Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*) and Wading Birds



Monarch butterfly *Danaus plexippus*

Consider Benefits of Native Landscaping

Number of Wildlife SOC in the SC Study Area Associated with Human-Altered Landscapes



Land Type	Number of Wildlife SOC
Urban Areas	20
Low Intensity Lands	29

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SHINGLE CREEK SA - PLANT SPECIES OF CONCERN 26

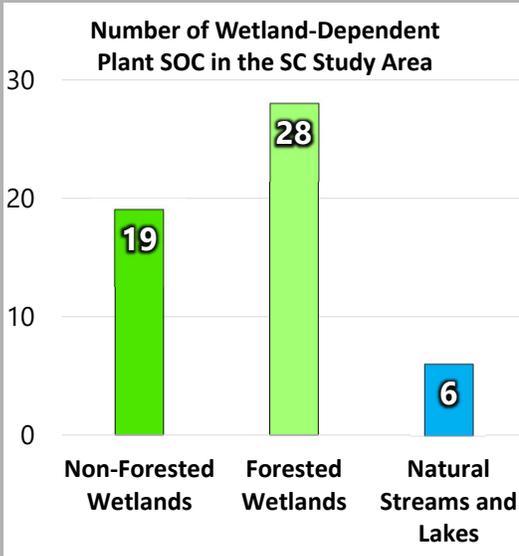


Hooded Pitcher Plant *Sarracenia minor*



Yellow Fringed Orchid *Plantanthera ciliaris*

Number of Wetland-Dependent Plant SOC in the SC Study Area

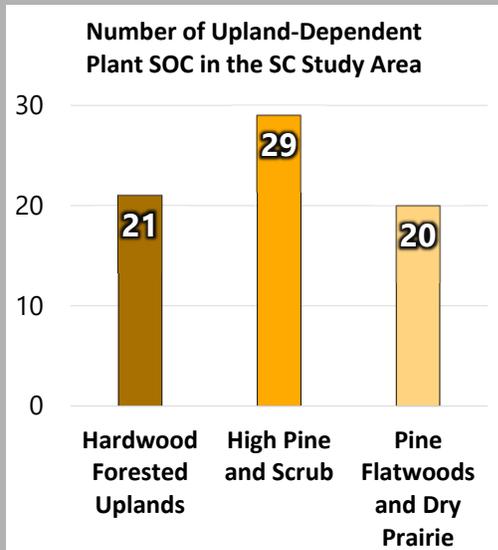


Wetland Type	Number of Plant SOC
Non-Forested Wetlands	19
Forested Wetlands	28
Natural Streams and Lakes	6

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SHINGLE CREEK SA - PLANT SPECIES OF CONCERN

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Scrub Lupine
Lupinus aridorum



Scrub Palm
Prunus geniculata

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SHINGLE CREEK SA - SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES

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Bats



8 species occur, Northern range of the FL Bonneted Bat

Gopher Tortoise



13% of historic suitable soil cover remains undeveloped

Scrub



Imperiled habitat, home to many endemic species

Pine Flatwoods



Fire dependent community

Consider Pre-Development Wildlife Surveys

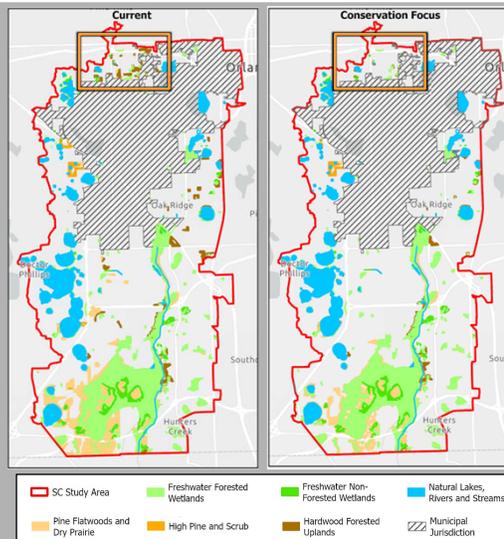
Consider Setbacks from Managed Lands

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SHINGLE CREEK SA – POTENTIAL FUTURE HABITAT LOSS

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	Conservation Focus (Article X)	Development Focus (future land use)
Wetlands		
Forested Wetlands	0%	34%
Non-Forested Wetlands	0%	51%
Aquatic	0%	0%
Total Wetlands	0%	22%
Uplands		
Hardwood Forested Uplands	54%	66%
High Pine and Scrub	33%	42%
Pine Flatwoods and Dry Prairie	51%	64%
Total Uplands	50%	63%
Grand Total	12%	32%

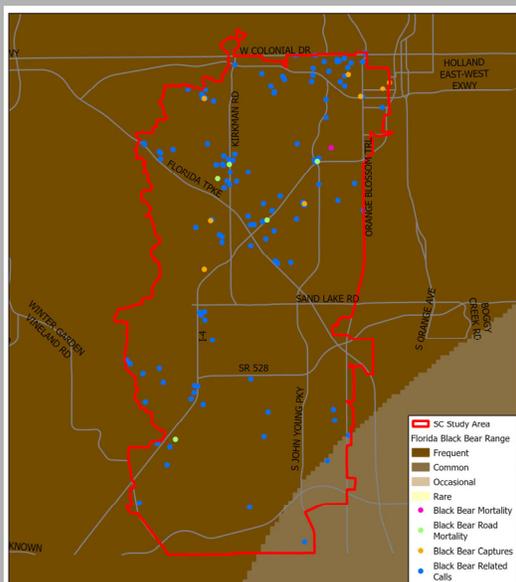


Consider Rare Upland Habitat Protections

29

SHINGLE CREEK SA - HUMAN BEAR INTERACTIONS

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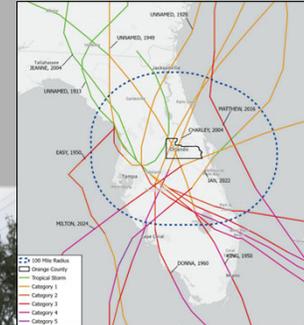


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SHINGLE CREEK SA - CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

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- Increased Storm Threats
 - Inland flooding
- Urban Heat Island (UHI)
- Mismatch of lifecycles and resource availability



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SHINGLE CREEK SA - KEY TAKEAWAYS

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- ✓ Identified as Regional Biodiversity Hotspot (FWC, 1994)
- ✓ Home to approximately 135 wildlife and plant species of concern
- ✓ Approximately 94% of historic uplands have been lost to development, including scrub habitat
- ✓ Future land use projections indicate loss of 50-63% of remaining uplands



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TERRESTRIAL + WILDLIFE RESOURCES

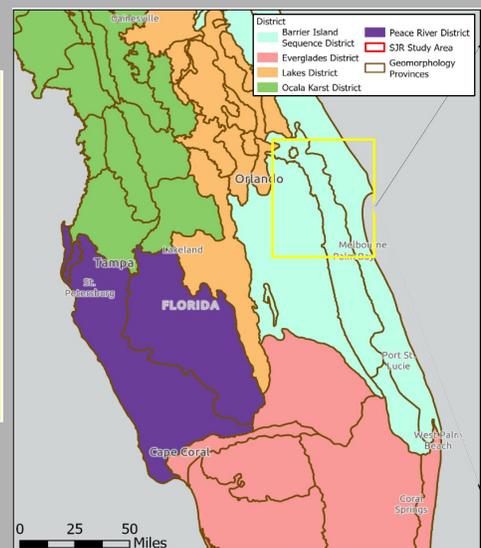
ST. JOHNS RIVER STUDY AREA

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ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

- Most wetland-rich landscape north of Everglades
- American Heritage River
- Used historically by Mayaca Tribe
- Broad estuarine lagoon system turned into freshwater floodplain

Consider Pre-Development Archaeological and Cultural Resources Surveys



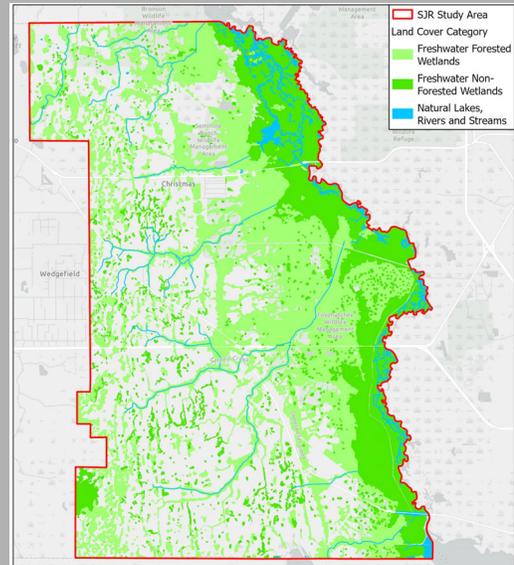
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ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - NATURAL COMMUNITIES

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Wetland Community Category	Cover (acres)	Cover (percent)
Non-Forested Wetlands	19,662	33.7%
Forested Wetlands	36,541	62.7%
Natural Lakes and Streams	2,079	3.6%
Total	58,282	100%

- 85% of Non-Forested Wetlands are within Conservation Lands
- 44% of Forested Wetlands are outside of Conservation Lands



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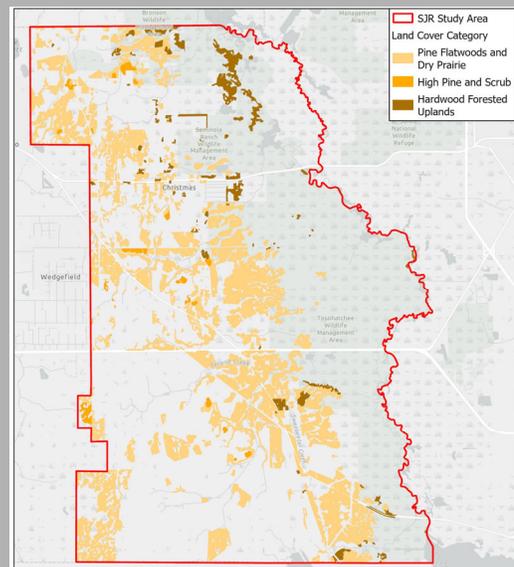
ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - NATURAL COMMUNITIES

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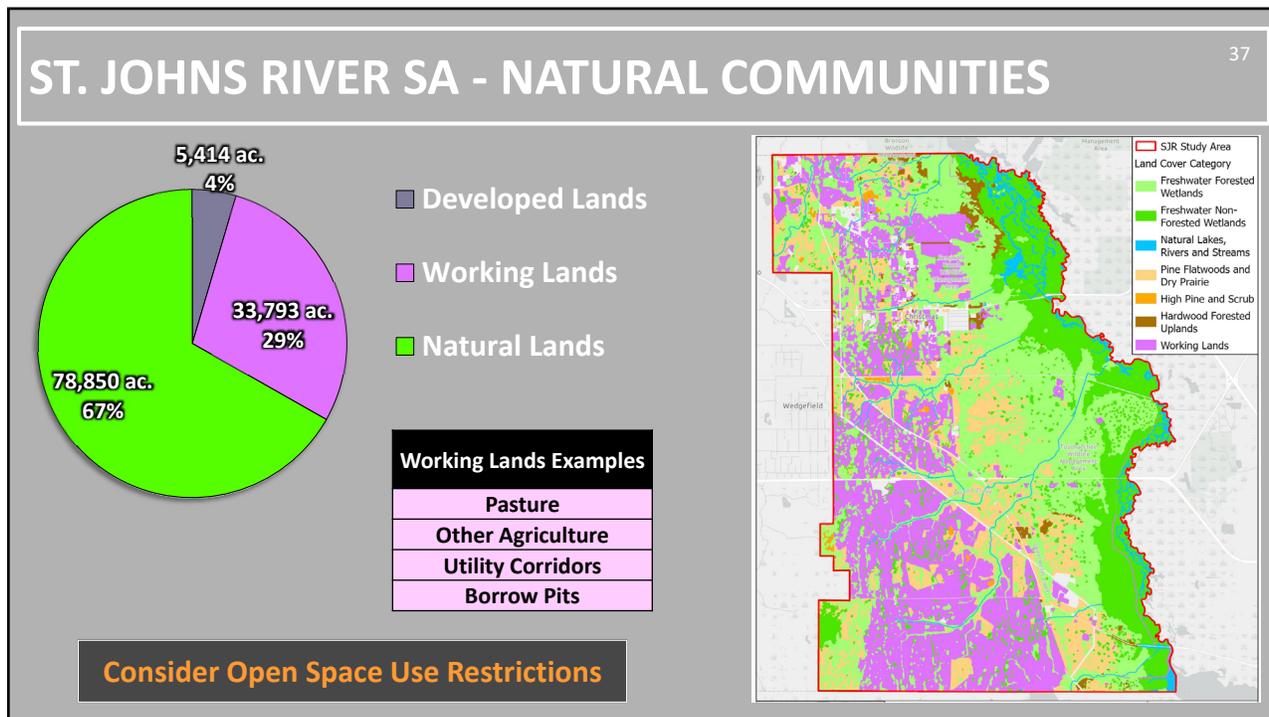
Upland Community Category	Cover (acres)	Cover (percent)
Hardwood Forested Uplands	1,594	7.8%
High Pine and Scrub	457	2.2%
Pine Flatwoods and Dry Prairie	18,517	90%
Total	20,568	100%

- 73% of Pine Flatwoods are Outside of Conservation Lands
- 70% of all Natural Upland Communities are Outside of Conservation Lands

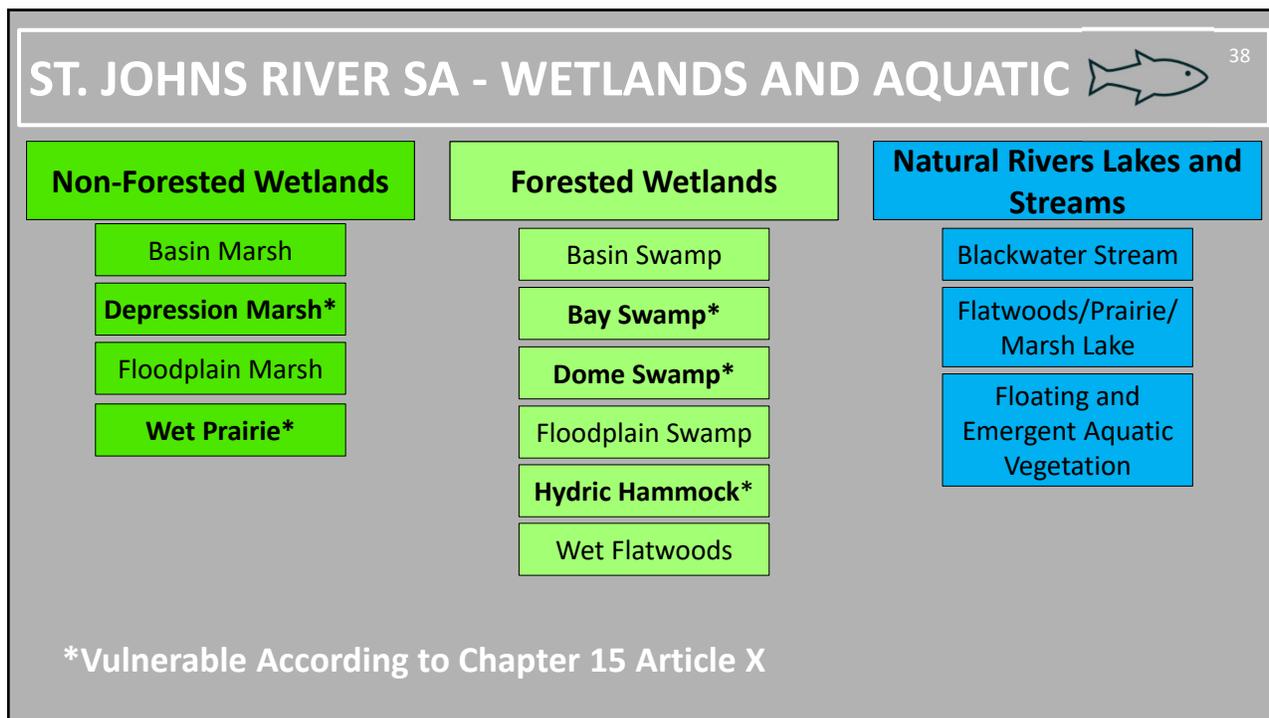
**Consider Pre-Development FNAI
Natural Communities Mapping**



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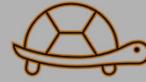


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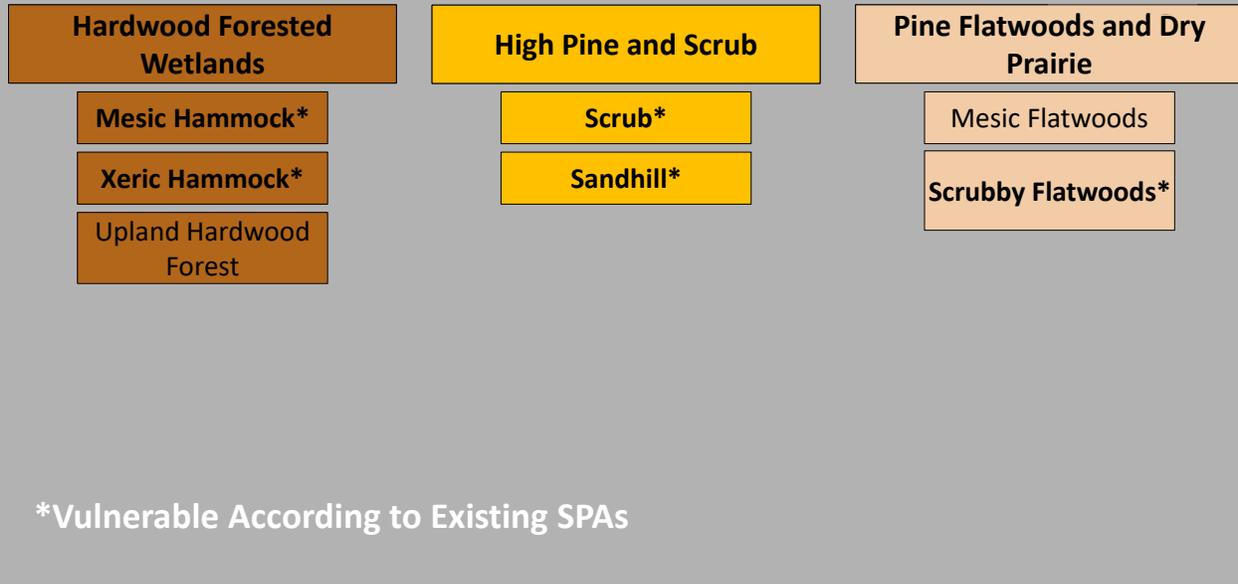


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ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - NATURAL COMMUNITIES



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ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - WILDLIFE SPECIES OF CONCERN

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Class	Number of Species	Number of Species with each Conservation Status					
		FE	FT	ST	SGCN	BCC	Other
Amphibians	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Birds	54	1	5	9	48	22	1
Insects	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Mammals	10	2	-	-	9	-	2
Reptiles	5	-	2	2	3	-	1
TOTAL	71	3	7	11	61	22	5

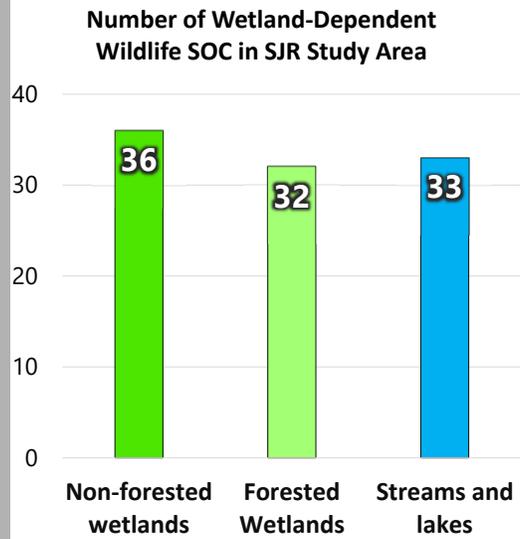
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ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - WILDLIFE SPECIES OF CONCERN

41



Florida Black Bear
Ursus americanus floridanus

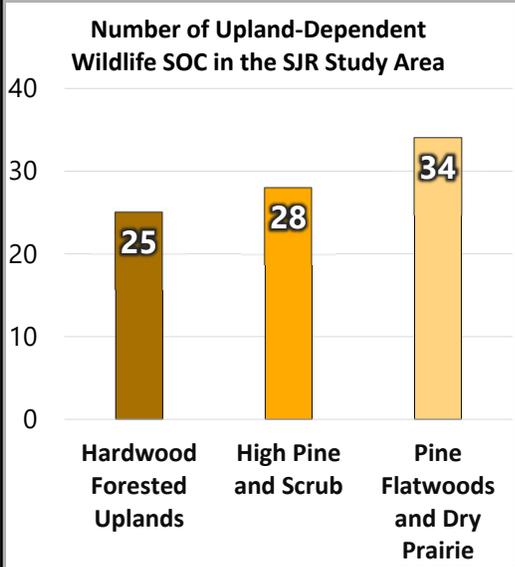


Worthington's Marsh Wren
Cistothorus palustris

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ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - WILDLIFE SPECIES OF CONCERN

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Gopher Tortoise
Gopherus polyphemus



Eastern Indigo Snake
Drymarchon couperi

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ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - WILDLIFE SPECIES OF CONCERN 43

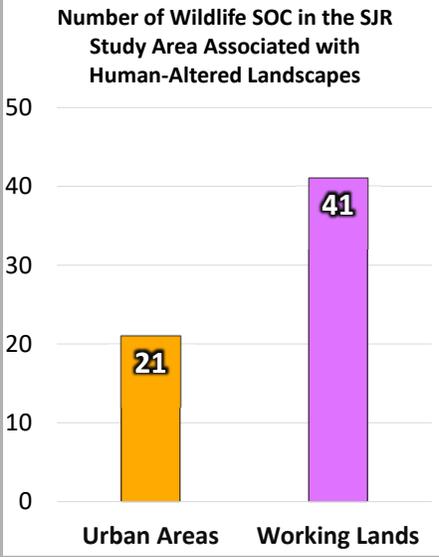


Sandhill Crane
Grus canadensis



Florida Panther
Puma concolor coryi

Number of Wildlife SOC in the SJR Study Area Associated with Human-Altered Landscapes



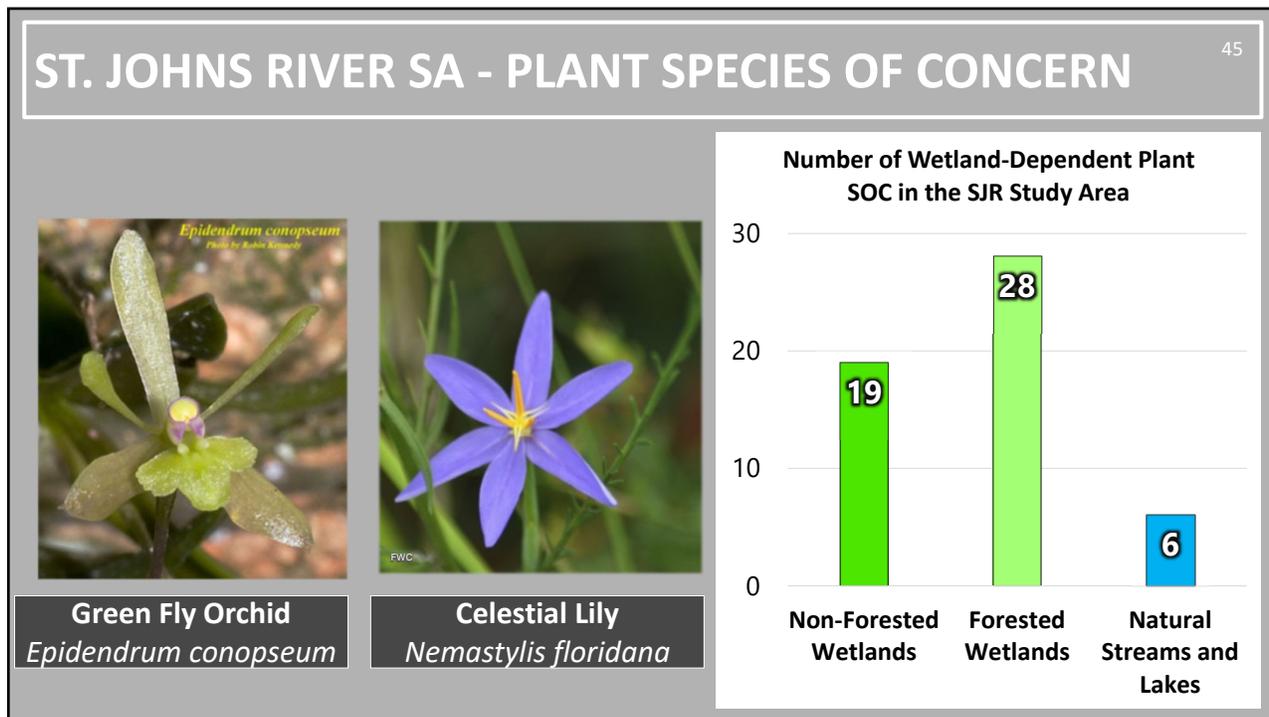
Land Type	Number of Wildlife SOC
Urban Areas	21
Working Lands	41

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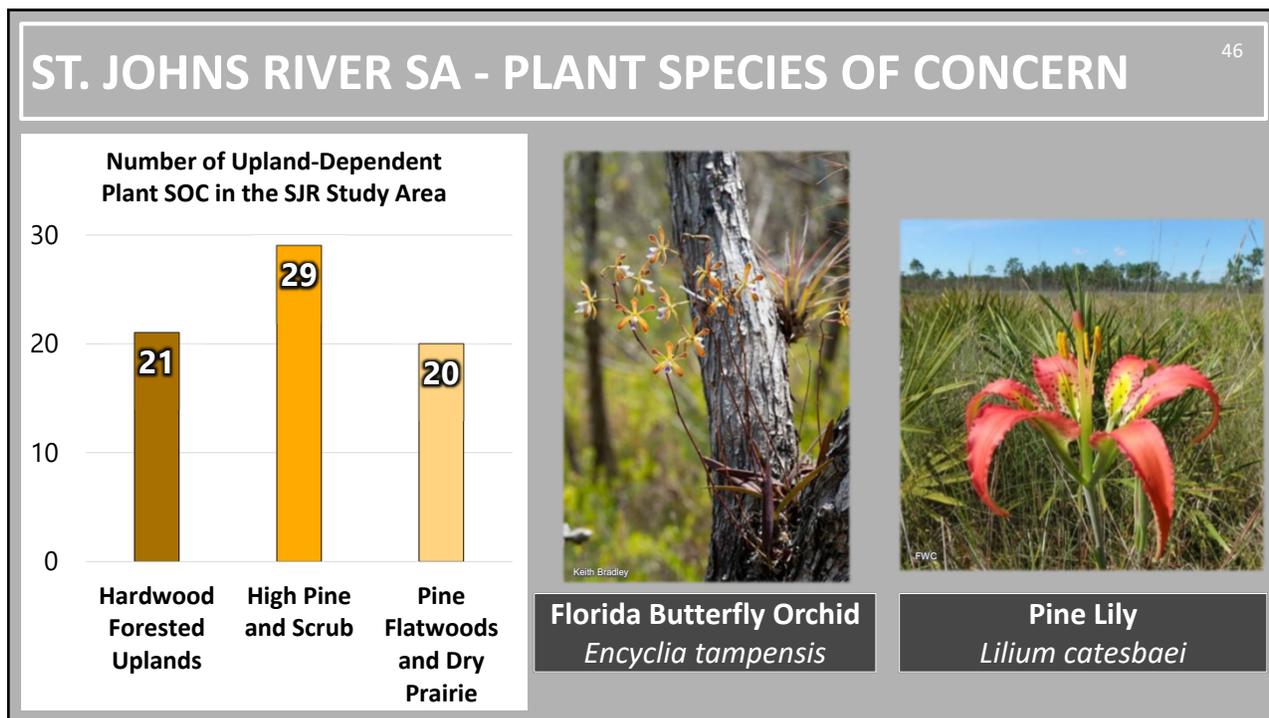
ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - PLANT SPECIES OF CONCERN 44

Class	Number of Species	Number of Species with each Conservation Status					
		FE	FT	SE	ST	SGCN	Other
Ferns	6	-	-	4	-	4	6
Bromeliads	3	-	-	2	1	3	2
Dogbanes	5	-	-	3	1	5	3
Grasses	5	-	-	2	1	3	5
Orchids	14	-	-	2	10	10	8
Other	38	8	3	14	13	35	31
Angiosperms							
TOTAL	71	8	3	27	26	60	55

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ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - NATURAL COMMUNITIES

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Sandhill



Imperiled habitat, 80 acres remain in SJR Study Area

Hydric Hammock



Recognized as one of most significant occurrences in FL

Isolated Marshes/Wet Prairie



Vital habitat for numerous wildlife

Working Lands



Mimic natural communities, wildlife have adapted

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ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - SPECIES OF CONCERN

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Florida Panther



Over 96% Study Area is a Priority 1 Wildlife Corridor

Crested Flycatcher

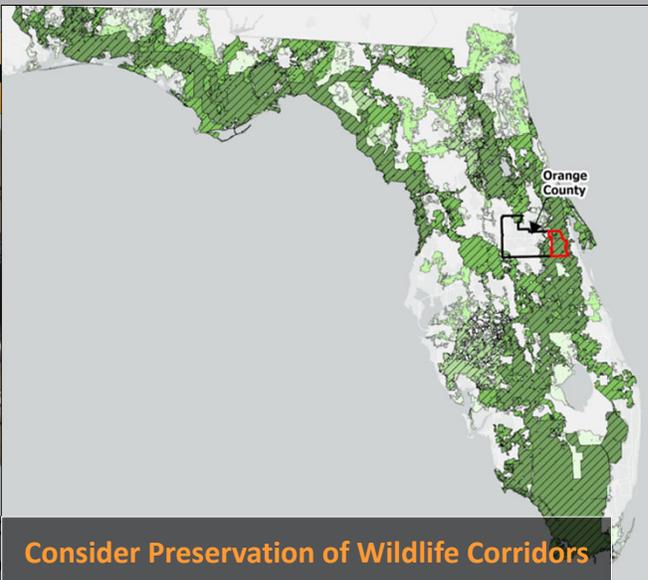


Pasture been important

Orchids



Species of native orchids occur in Orange County



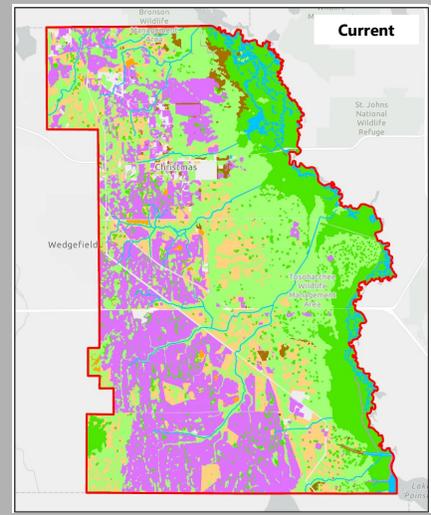
Consider Preservation of Wildlife Corridors

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ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - POTENTIAL FUTURE HABITAT LOSS

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Habitat Type	Percent Loss
Wetlands	
Forested Wetlands	0%
Non-Forested Wetlands	0%
Aquatic	0%
Total Wetlands	0%
Uplands	
Hardwood Forested Uplands	1%
High Pine and Scrub	20%
Pine Flatwoods and Dry Prairie	1%
Total Uplands	1%
Other Significant Wildlife Habitat	
Working Lands	72%
Total Other	72%
Grand Total	22%



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ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

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- **Sea Level Rise**
 - Marsh migration
 - Impact on Species of Concern

- **Species migration to suitable habitats**

May experience some potential backwater effects resulting from downstream SLR



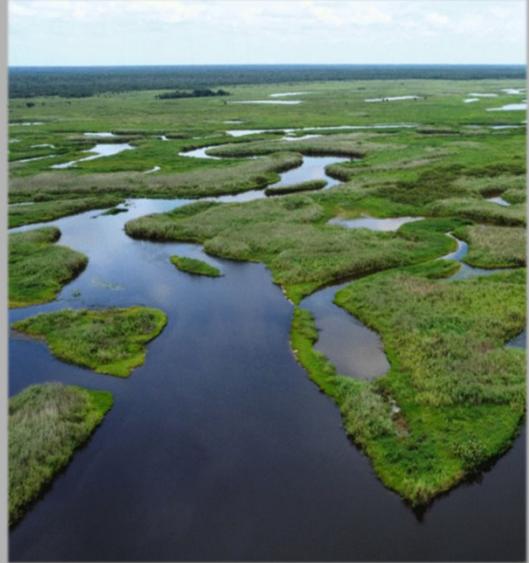
Consider Expanded Buffers Around Natural Communities

50

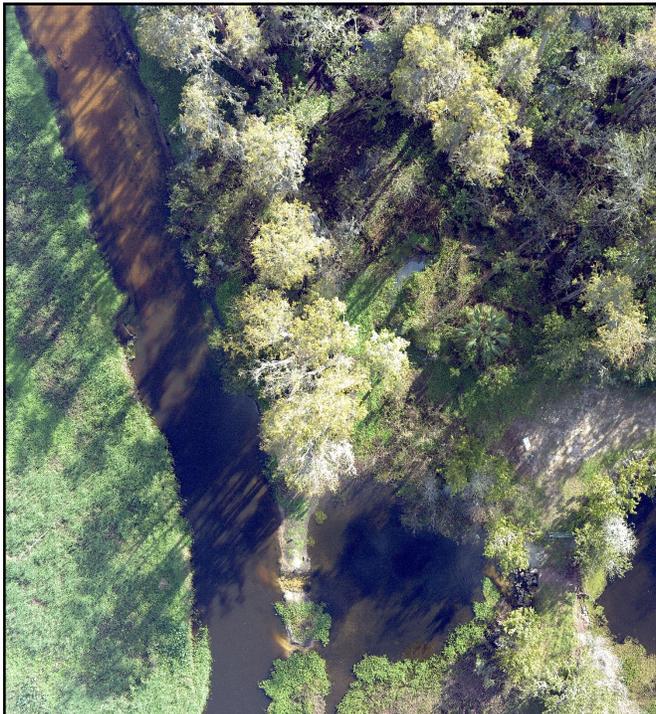
ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - KEY TAKEAWAYS

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- ✓ Over 96% of Study Area is a Priority 1 Wildlife Corridor
- ✓ Home to over 140 plant and wildlife species of concern
- ✓ Contains County's largest remaining wet prairie habitat
- ✓ Florida's most wetland-dominated watershed north of the Everglades
- ✓ Working lands provide valuable wildlife habitat and connectivity



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WATER RESOURCES

SHINGLE CREEK STUDY AREA

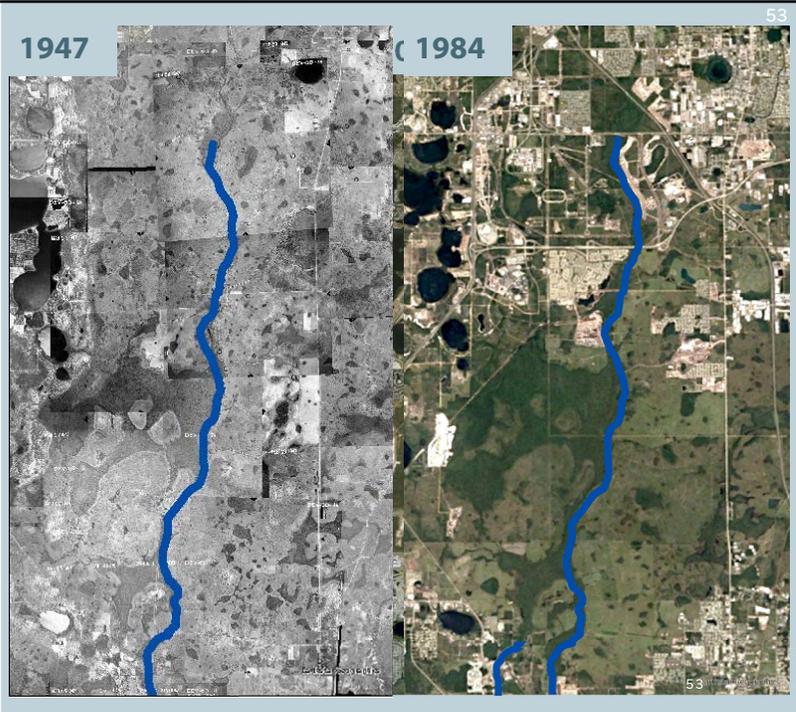
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HYDROLOGIC CHANGES SHINGLE CREEK SA

- Channelized in 1920's
- As development continued, more canals and stormwater ponds connected to the creek for drainage
- Today, Shingle Creek serves as a major flood water conveyance system for the Upper Kissimmee Watershed



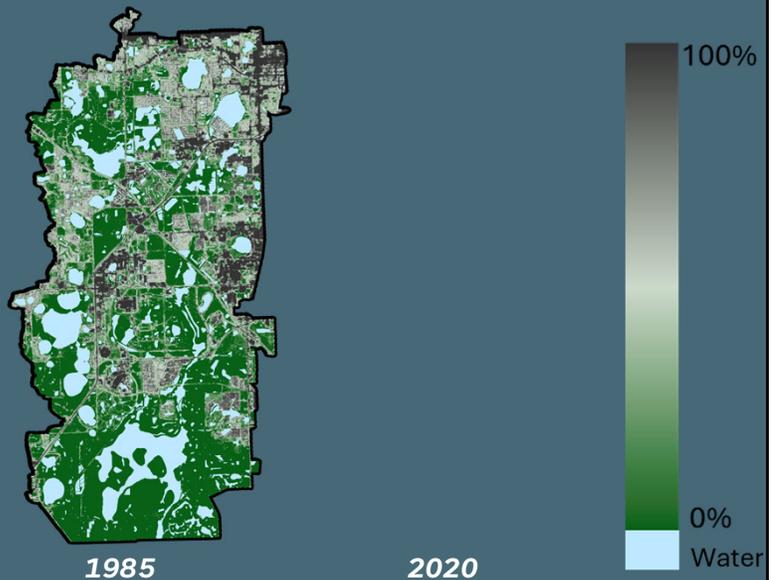
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SHINGLE CREEK SA - HYDROLOGIC CHANGES

- ↑ *Development*
- ↑ *Imperviousness*
 - 1985 – 19%
 - 2020 – 40%
- ↓ *Infiltration*
- ↓ *Groundwater Recharge*
- ↑ *Surface Runoff/Discharge*

Implications

- *Water quality*
- *Wetland health*
- *Greater Everglades*
- *Flooding*

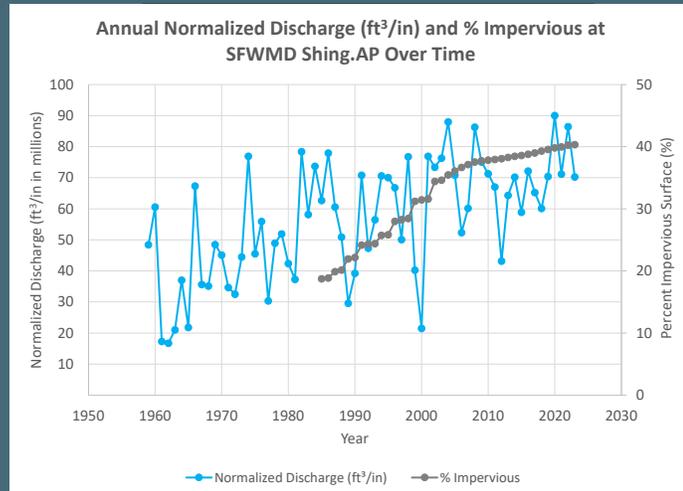


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SHINGLE CREEK SA - HYDROLOGIC CHANGES

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- Historic flow data
 - **1% increase in impervious = 1% increase in discharge**
- Future development
 - Increases in impervious area will result in higher discharge
- Downstream challenges
 - Discharge limited basin
 - **Largest** contributor to Lake Toho
 - Lake Toho impairment
 - Excess nutrients
 - Invasive plants
 - Mercury



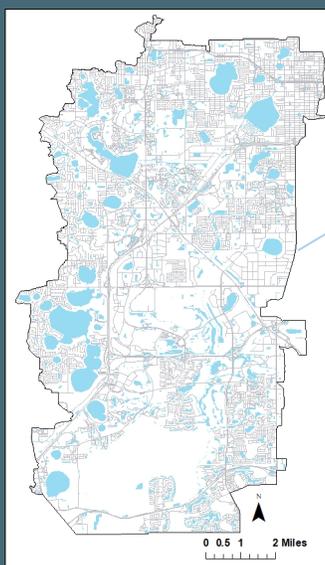
Consider Managing Overall Imperviousness within the Basin

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SHINGLE CREEK SA - WATER QUALITY

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- Shingle Creek Watershed
 - 80 sq miles w/in Orange County
 - 71 named lakes / ponds
 - 9 canals
- Headwaters of Florida Everglades
 - **5% of Lake O inflows**
 - Heavily urbanized
 - Downstream impairments
 - Downstream flooding
- Part of Lake O BMAP
 - \$140 million in projects funded (STAR 2023)

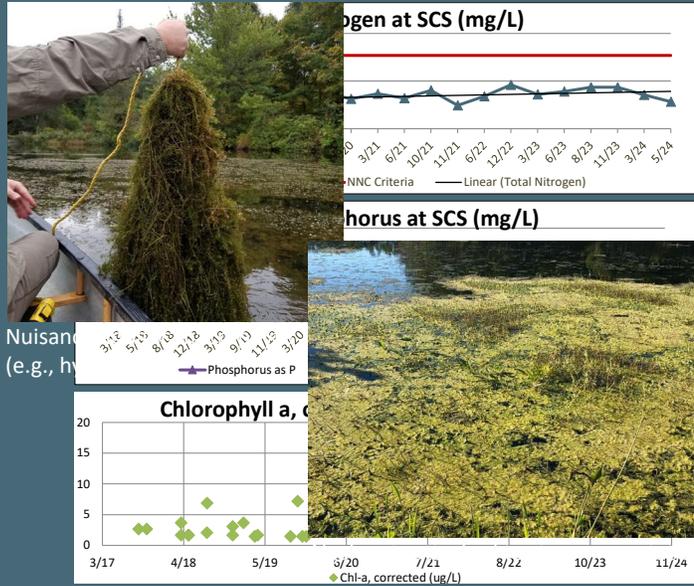


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SHINGLE CREEK SA - WATER QUALITY

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- Shingle Creek
 - Nutrients (macrophytes)
 - ↑ trends for Chlorophyll-a + TN
- Shingle Creek Headwaters
 - Nutrients (Algal Mats)
- 4 waterbodies with TMDLs
 - Nutrients, Bacteria, DO
- 1 Primary BMAP
 - Lake Okeechobee



Consider Additional Stormwater Regulations

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SHINGLE CREEK SA - FLOOD INUNDATION

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- Vulnerability Assessment Model
- Significant floodplain within undeveloped area
- FEMA Flood Zones (2009) don't reflect recent development
- Flood Level of Service deficiencies in Upper Kissimmee (SFWMMD)



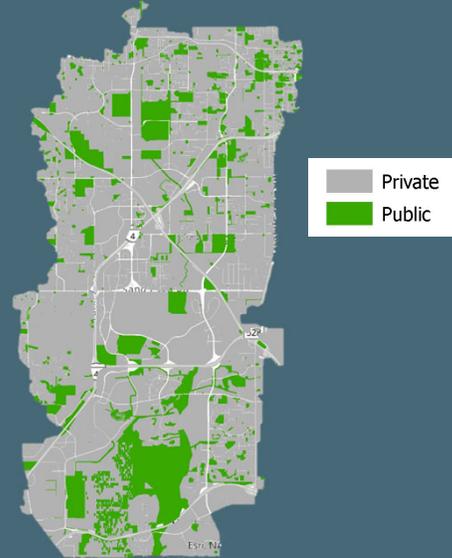
Continue revising FEMA SFHAs + Incentivize Low Impact Development

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SHINGLE CREEK SA - KEY TAKEAWAYS

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- ✓ Increases in impervious area will lead to stresses on water resources
 - Can be offset by smart planning that increases densities + open space
- ✓ Continued development may lead to downstream challenges
 - Increased surface runoff
 - Water volume increases to Lake Toho
 - Water quality concerns
- ✓ Special development protections will promote sustainable growth and prevent further water resource degradation



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WATER RESOURCES

ST. JOHNS RIVER STUDY AREA

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ST. JOHNS RIVER SA

- Florida's longest river
- Minimal land use changes
 - 42% publicly-owned
 - Low-intensity land use
 - Undisturbed habitat
- Vision 2050 plans include predominantly rural use
- Development pressures in Central FL may push into rural areas

1985
2024

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ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - FLOOD INUNDATION

- Vulnerability Assessment model
- FEMA Flood Zones (2009) do not fully represent flood risk
- Potentially 10,000 acres of additional flood inundation extent
- Implications for floodplain compensation

Consider revising FEMA SFHAs

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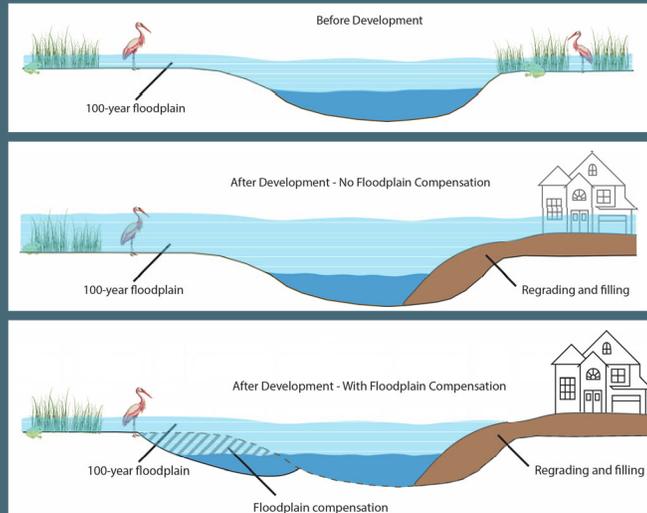
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ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - FLOOD INUNDATION

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- ‘Cup for cup’ compensation
- County currently accepts floodplain compensation in connected SFHAs
- Potential loss of valuable flood storage
- Potential increase of flood risk to surrounding properties

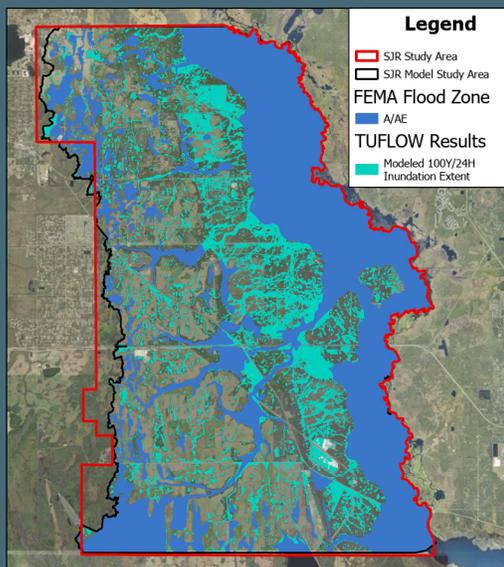
Consider mapping County-determined floodplains



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ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - FLOOD INUNDATION

64



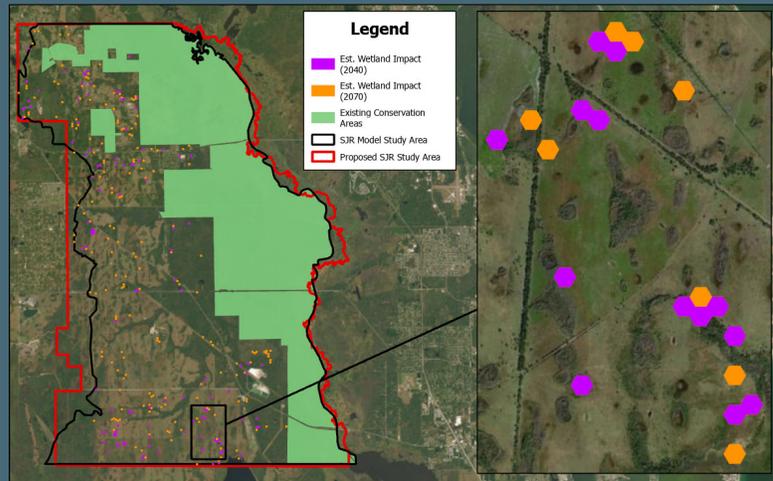
Consider requiring floodplain compensation in identified areas

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ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - FLOOD INUNDATION

65

- Future flood inundation
 - 1990 – 2020 wetland impact patterns (4% loss)
 - Filled predicted wetland impact areas
- Predicted 2% future wetland loss
- Future wetland impacts:
 - 1 acre of impacts
 - ↑ 0.6 acres flood extent
 - ↓ 0.9 ac-ft flood storage

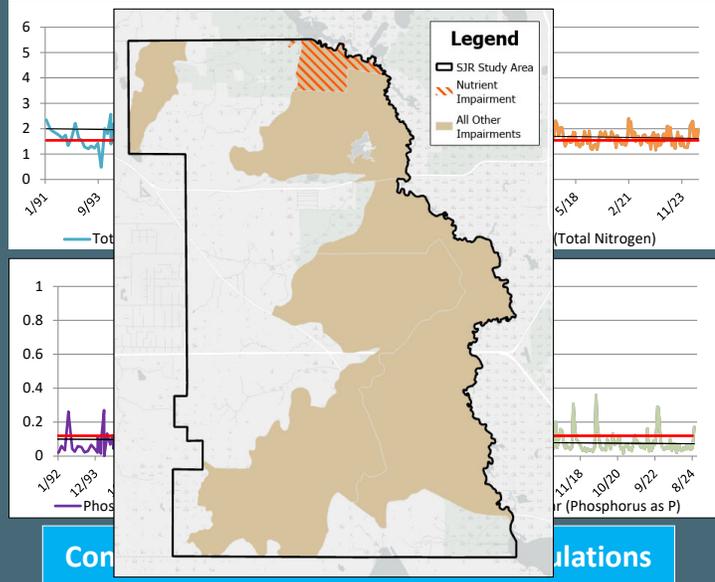


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ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - WATER QUALITY

66

- SJR Impairments:
 - Nutrients (macrophytes)
 - Northeast corner
 - Fecal coliform, iron, silver
 - Majority of SJR within Study Area
- FDEP Numeric Nutrient Criteria
 - Exceeded TN and TP
 - Long term – decreasing trends
 - Last 10 years – no trends
 - SJRWMD shows increasing TP and decreasing TN 10YR trend
- Downstream waterbodies impaired for nutrients

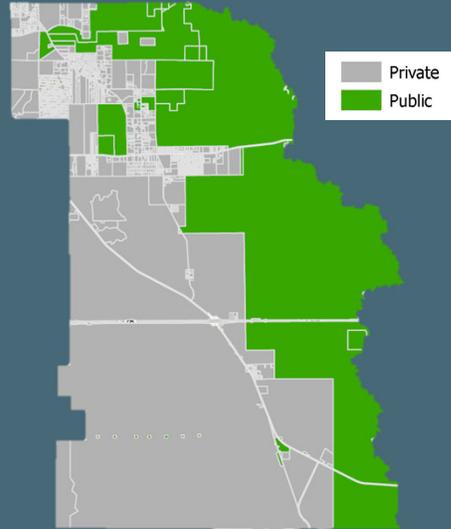


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ST. JOHNS RIVER SA - KEY TAKEAWAYS

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- ✓ Prepare for future development through tailored regulations
 - Flood inundation extent
 - Development in 'At-Risk' wetlands
- ✓ Likely more Special Flood Hazard Areas exist than currently known
- ✓ 1 acre of wetland impacts =
 - +0.6-acre of inundation extent
 - 0.9-acre-ft of storage capacity
- ✓ Ensure improving water quality trends within the river continue



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Agenda

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- Purpose
- Background
- Study Approach
- Findings
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Summary
- Next Steps



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Stakeholder Engagement

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▪ Stakeholder network

- General Public
- Property Owners
- Development Community
- Advisory Boards
- NGOs
- County website portal



- Opportunity to listen and hear priorities and needs of local community members
- Discuss proposed protections and options moving forward

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Stakeholder Engagement

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▪ Discuss Wetlands and Wildlife Protection Aspects

Topics for consideration:

- ✓ Increased buffer widths
- ✓ Setbacks from managed lands
- ✓ Rare upland habitat protections
- ✓ Open space use restrictions
- ✓ Preservation of wildlife corridors
- ✓ Pre-development wildlife and natural community surveys
- ✓ Pre-development cultural/archaeological resource surveys

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Stakeholder Engagement

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▪ Discuss Water Resources Protection Aspects

Topics for consideration:

- ✓ Manage overall imperviousness within the basins
- ✓ Develop additional stormwater regulatory standards specific to basin
- ✓ Incentivize Low Impact Development
- ✓ Revise FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area + Flood Insurance Rate Maps
- ✓ Map County-determined floodplains
- ✓ Require floodplain compensation in identified areas based on modeling
- ✓ Consider benefits of water conservation/native landscaping

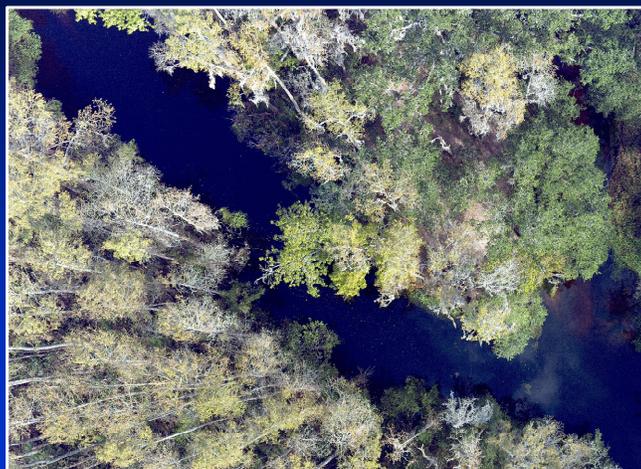
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Agenda

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Summary

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- Valuable natural resources are found within both Study Areas
- Each Study Area is unique in its culture and history
- A variety of issues have been identified within the Study Reports warranting consideration
- Consideration of special development protections will require significant stakeholder engagement
- SPAs help plan for and guide smart, sustainable growth
- Comprehensive Plan (Vision 2050) language identifying Special Basins must be approved prior to SPA consideration

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Agenda

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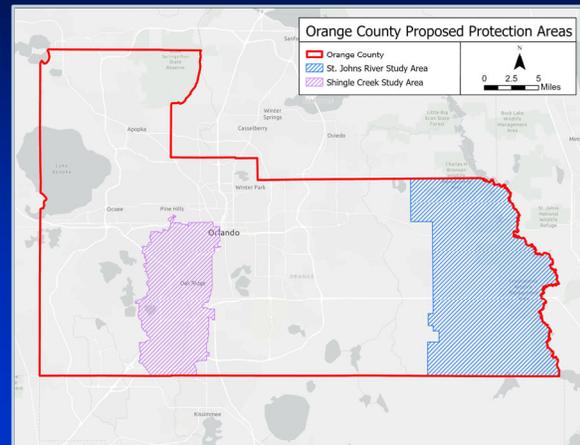
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Next Steps

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- **Spring 2025**
 - Draft Technical Studies released
 - **April 8th BCC Work Session**
 - Begin stakeholder engagement
- **Summer/Fall 2025**
 - Develop Regulatory Standards
 - Business Impact Evaluation
 - BCC Work Session
- **Winter 2025**
 - Finalize regulatory standards
 - Adoption Hearings



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