

8. FLORIDA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR SUCCESSIONS & NEXT STEPS



Kristen Novak, Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation



Uniting Central and Southwest Florida to Protect Water and Wildlife

PURPOSE



This presentation will provide background and updates on the Florida Wildlife Corridor state environmental lands conservation efforts, including what local governments can do to help support this being a continued tool and option for landowners in order to protect wetlands, floodplains, and other exceptional natural resources.

CCMP Connection:



This relates to Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat Protection Priority Action 2: Encourage and support the permanent conservation of environmentally sensitive lands and critical habitat areas through land acquisition and conservation easements held in perpetuity for habitat resilience and migration.



Uniting Central and Southwest Florida to Protect Water and Wildlife

Florida Wildlife Corridor Successes & Next Steps

Kristen Novas
Conservation Director

CHNEP Management Committee Meeting
September 4, 2026

Florida
**WILDLIFE
CORRIDOR**
Foundation



Photo by Carlton Ward Jr.

- **Where are we?**
The Corridor & Conservation Progress
- **Why it matters?**
Conservation Benefits for our Communities
- **What can we do?**
The Role of Local Governments





Where are we?

**The Florida Wildlife Corridor &
Conservation Progress**

The Florida Wildlife Corridor is an 18-million-acre footprint of connected lands and waters

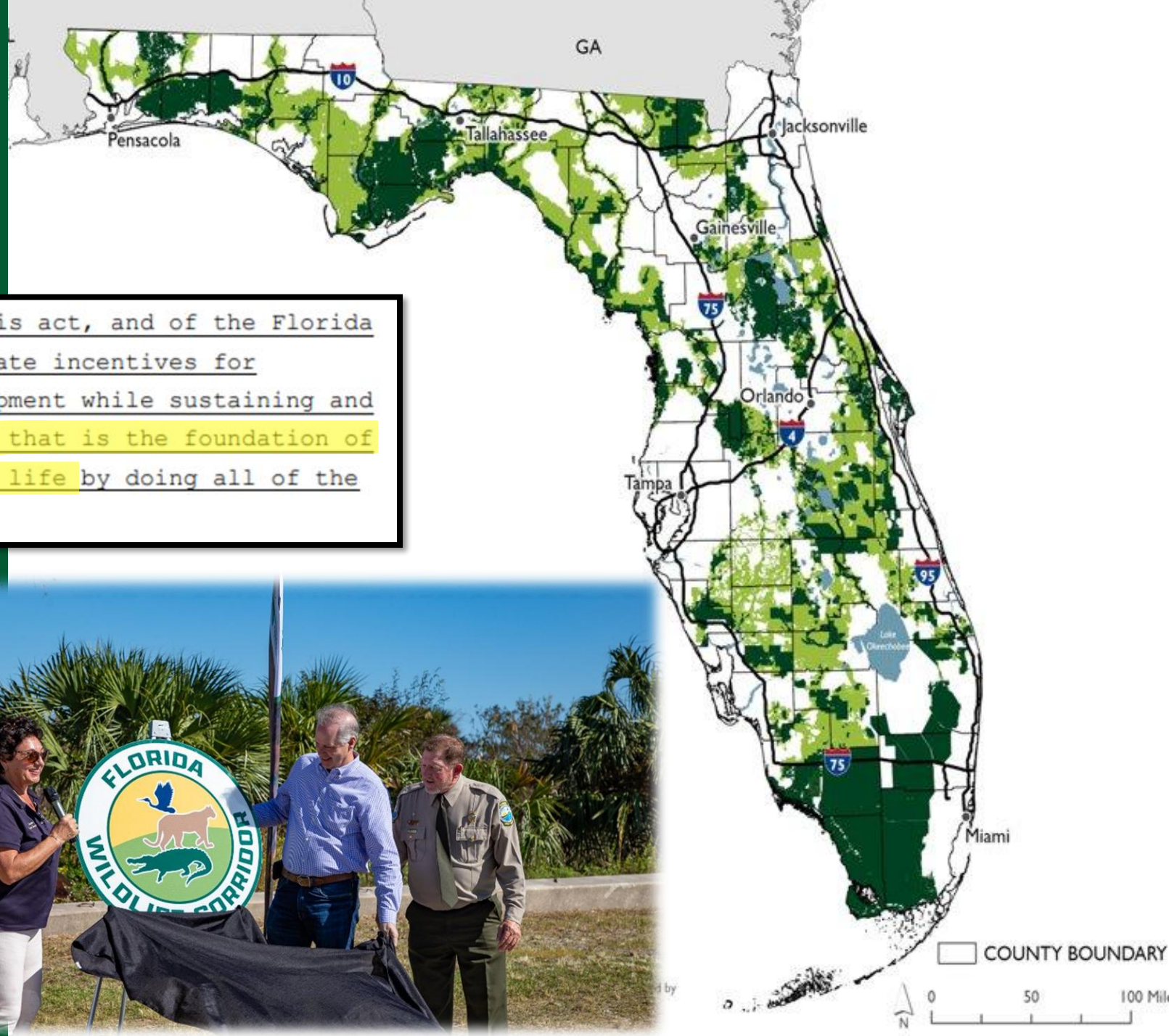
- 10 million acres conserved
- 8 million acres opportunity

Best opportunity to safeguard a biodiverse and sustainable wild Florida for future generations



Map painting by Michael Reagan

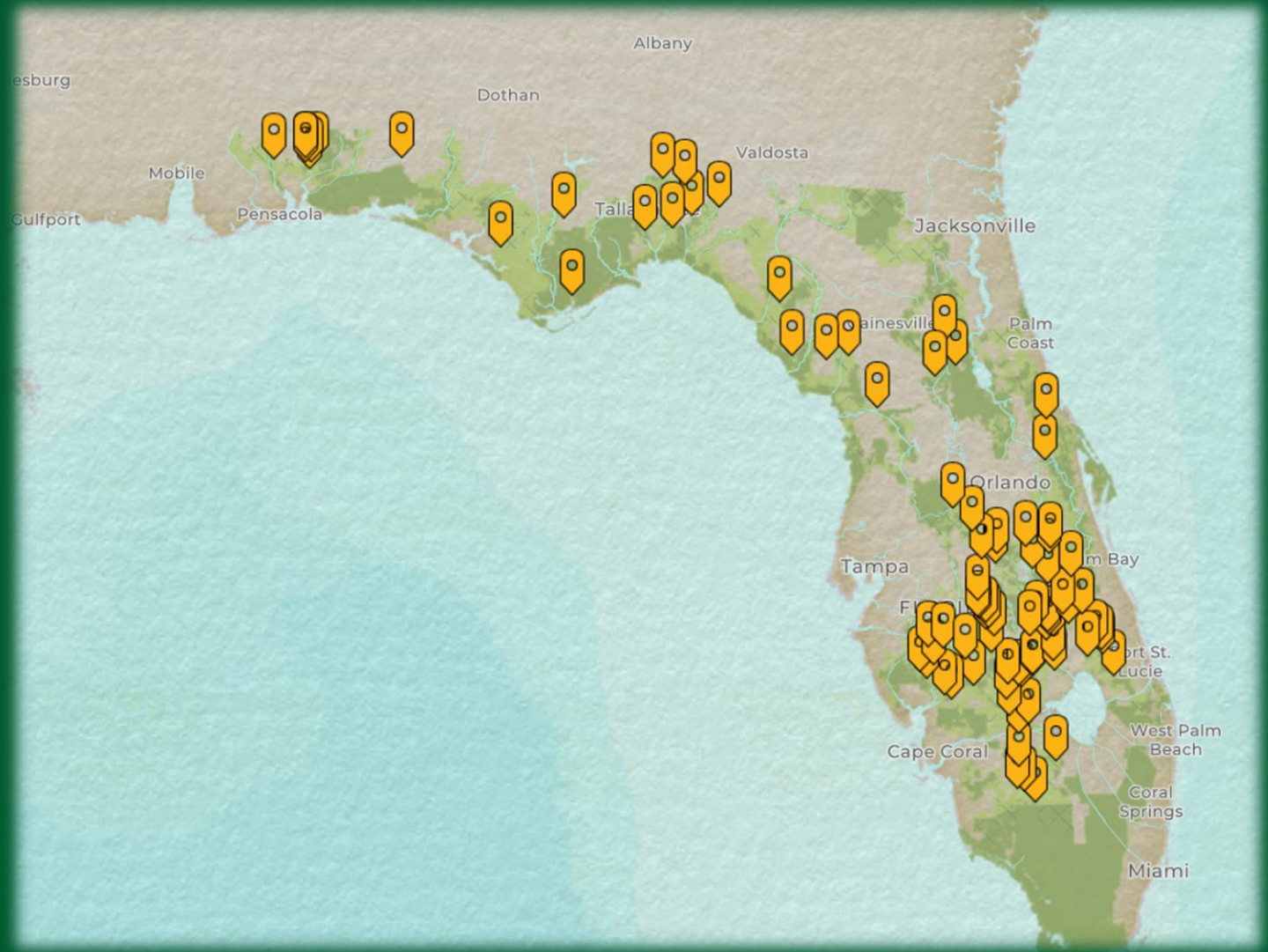
Florida Wildlife Corridor Act - 2021



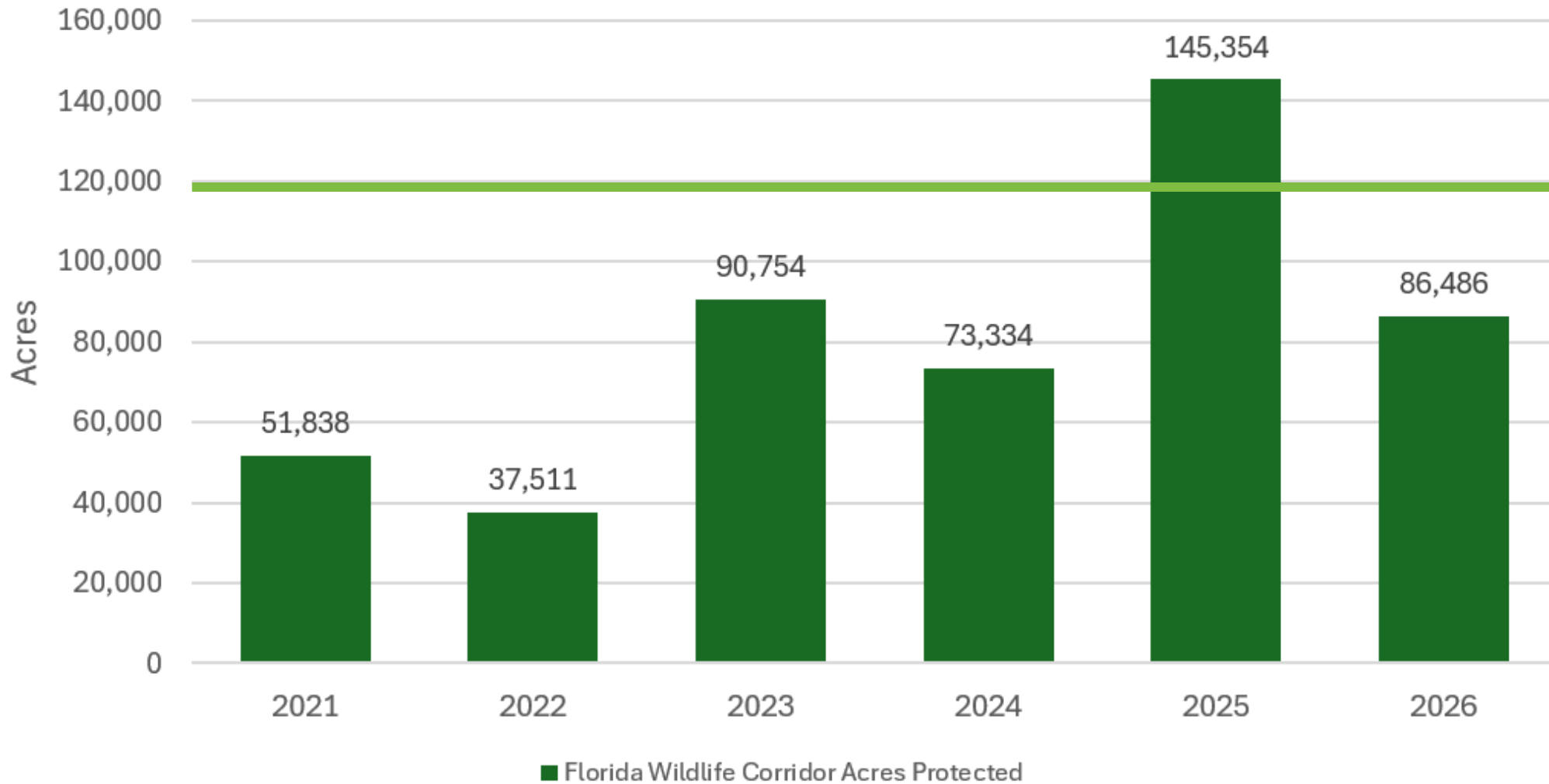
39 (3) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this act, and of the Florida
40 wildlife corridor itself, is to create incentives for
41 conservation and sustainable development while sustaining and
42 conserving the green infrastructure that is the foundation of
43 this state's economy and quality of life by doing all of the
44 following:



**485K+ Corridor
acres protected
across 90+
properties since
passage of
Florida Wildlife
Corridor Act!**



Corridor Acres Protected (2021-2026)

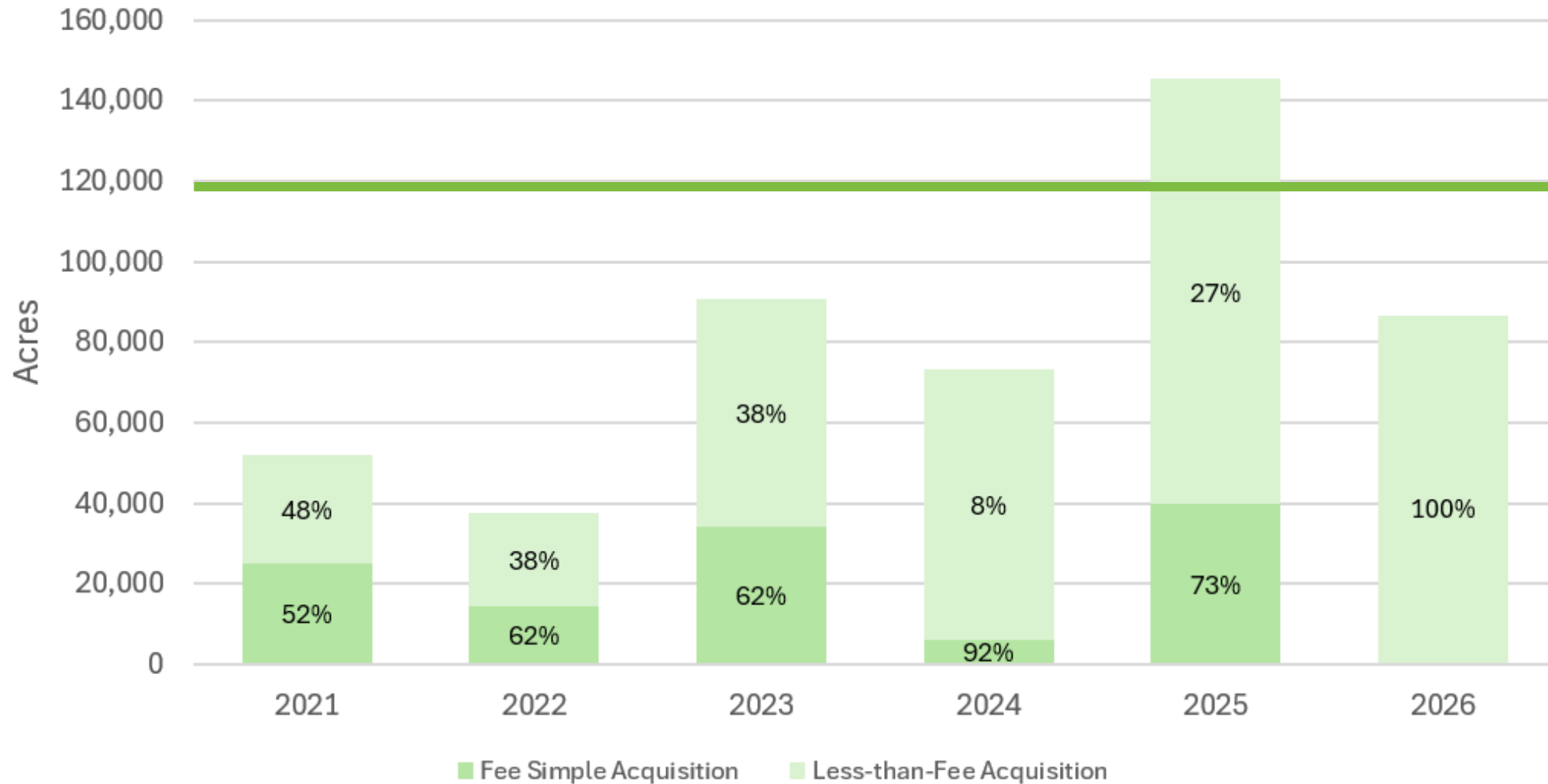


Goal = 120K
acres per year

* Source: FNAI data dashboard

Note: 2021 includes acres acquired during the full calendar year (passage of Act was July 2021); 2026 is through 8/11/26

Corridor Acres Protected (2021-2026)



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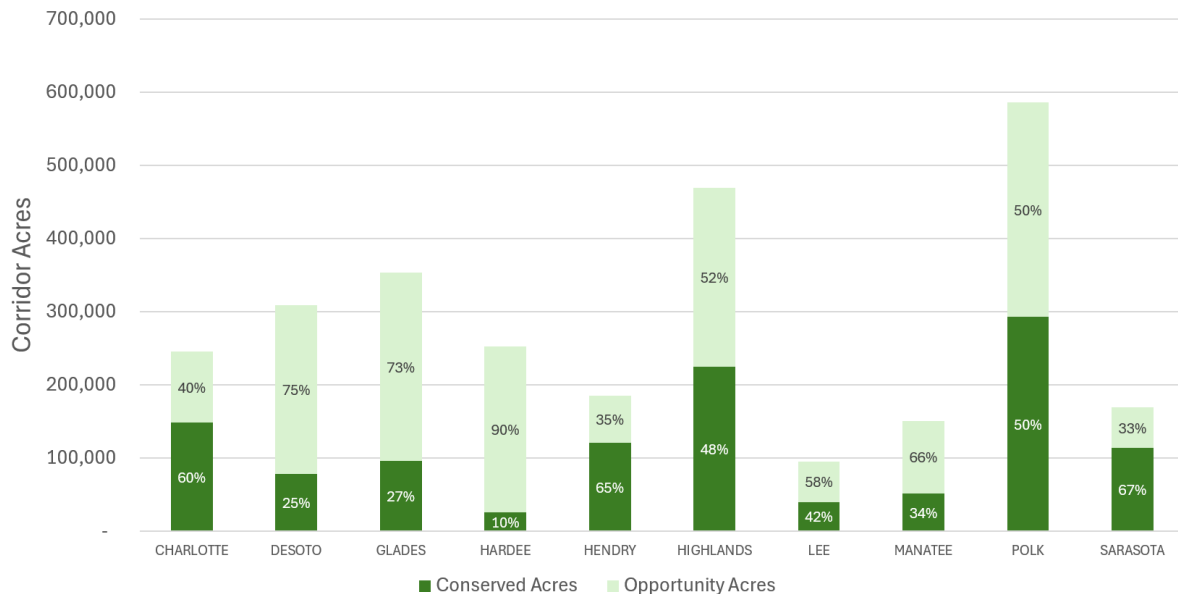
How does CHNEP fit in?

3.6M acres total across 10 counties

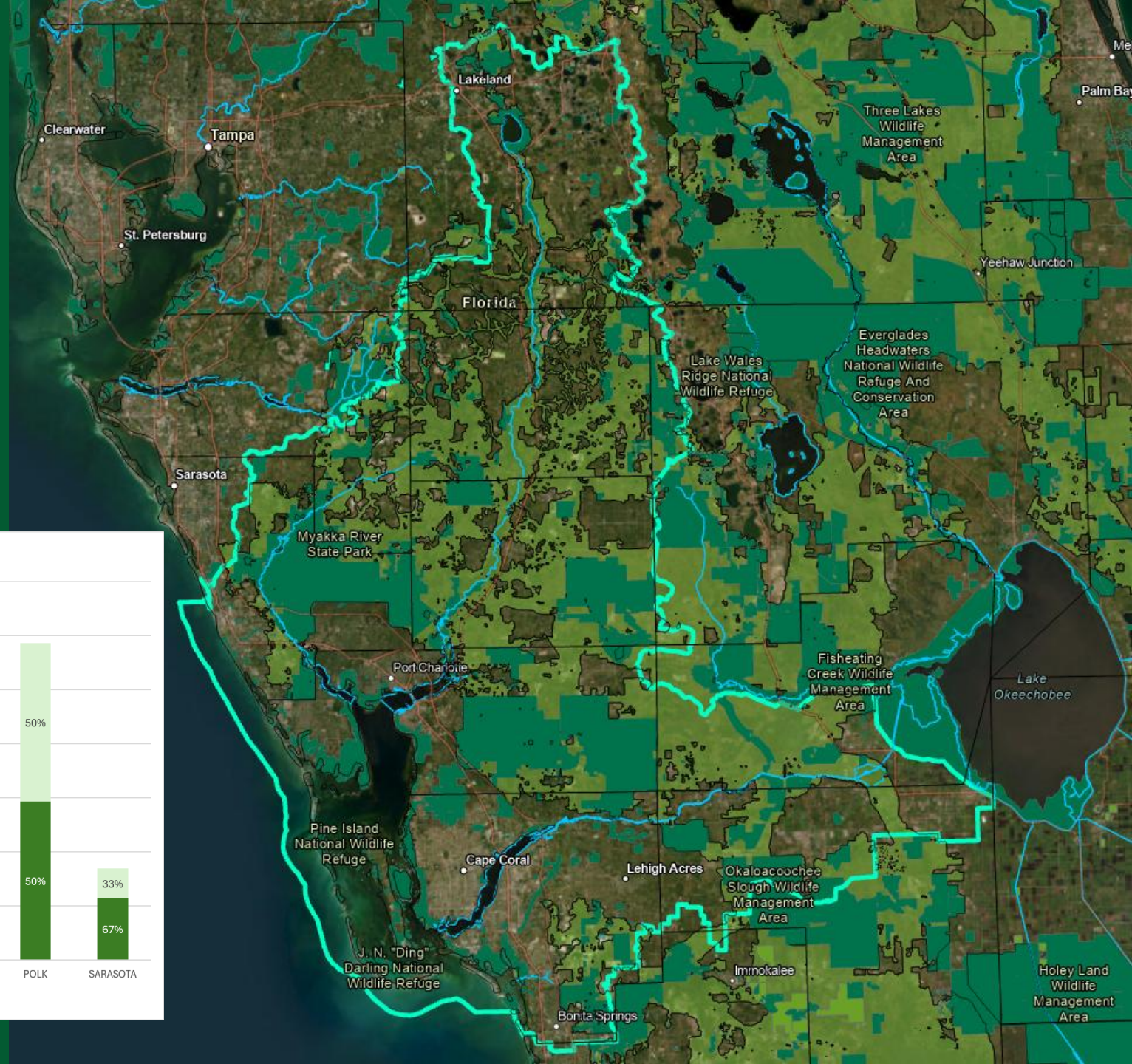
1.6M acres in Corridor

- 565K acres Conserved
- 1.1M acres Opportunity

of Corridor Acres in CHNEP Counties*



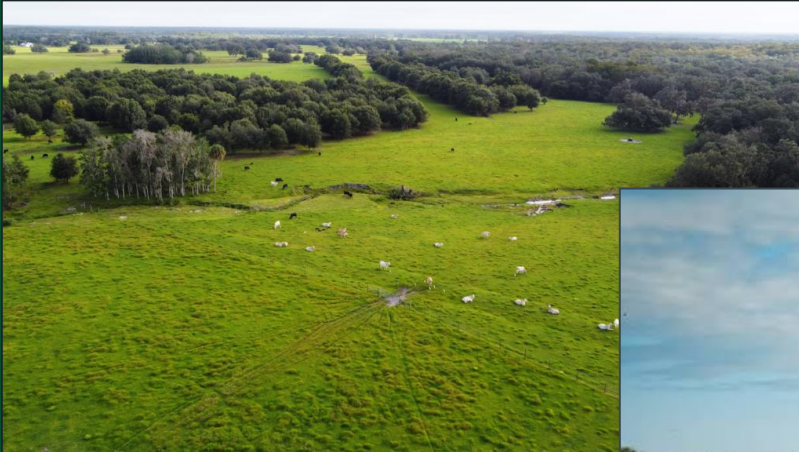
*not clipped to CHNEP boundary



Recent CHNEP Corridor Acquisitions

14 properties acquired 2025/2026

- 18K acres
- All but one CEs thru FDACS
- \$71M





Why it matters?

**Conservation Benefits for our
Communities**



CARLTON WARD

Networks of connected and protected areas are inherently more resilient than individual, isolated patches.

THE FLORIDA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR

Water Resources

The Corridor connects
waters including:

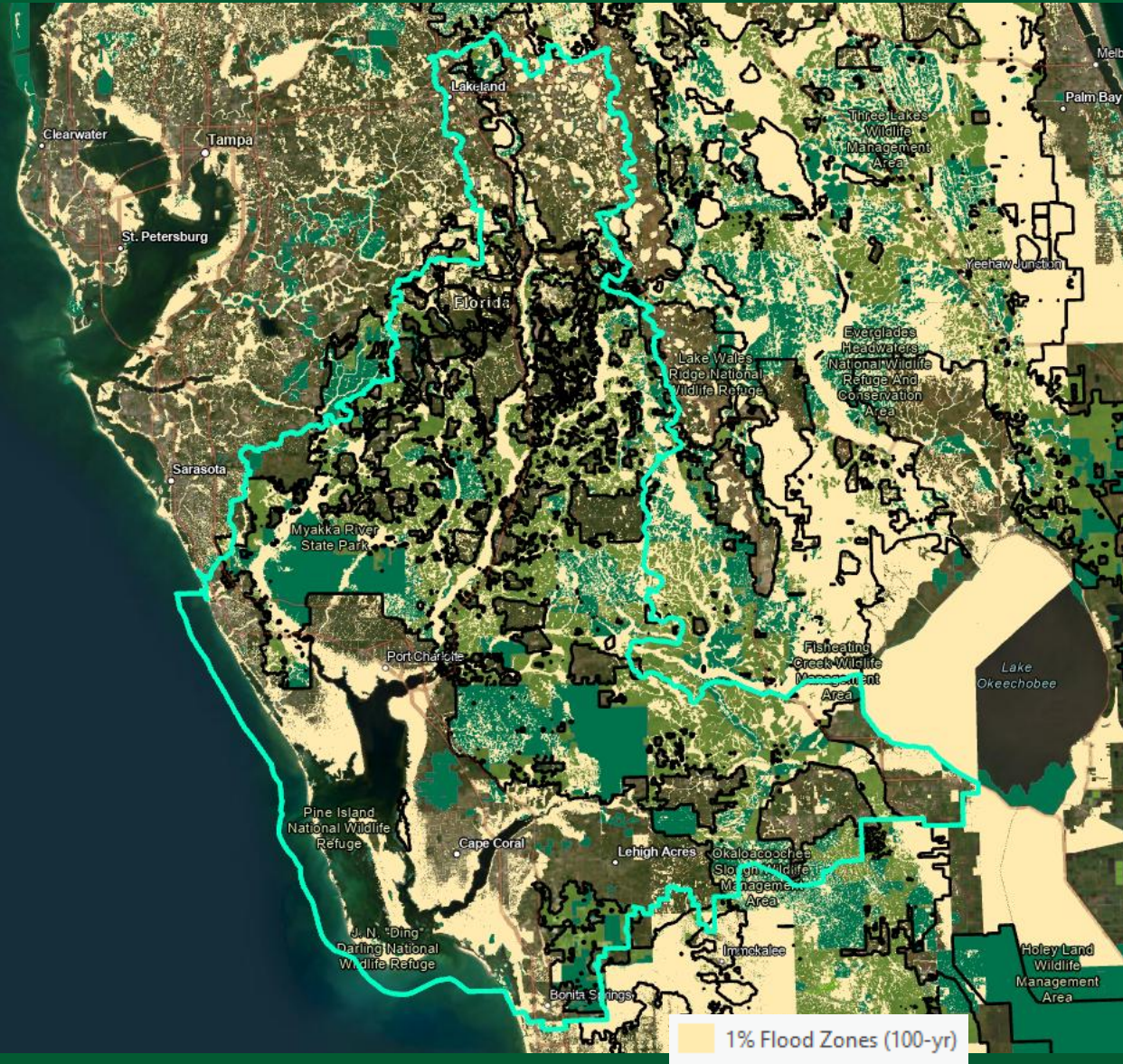
182 First- and Second-
Magnitude Springs

1,300 Named Rivers and
Streams

8M acres of Wetlands



Flood Zones & BMAPs



THE FLORIDA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR

Recreation & Quality of Life

The Corridor connects
lands including:

75 State Parks

32 State Forests

7 National Parks/Preserves/Forests

1100 miles Florida National
Scenic Trail



THE FLORIDA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR

Working Lands & Rural Character

The Corridor supports at least **114,000 jobs** and provides **\$30 billion** in annual revenue

It supports rural economies and food security



THE FLORIDA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR

Wildlife Habitat

The Corridor is home to
over **1,700** species,
including **131** imperiled
animals

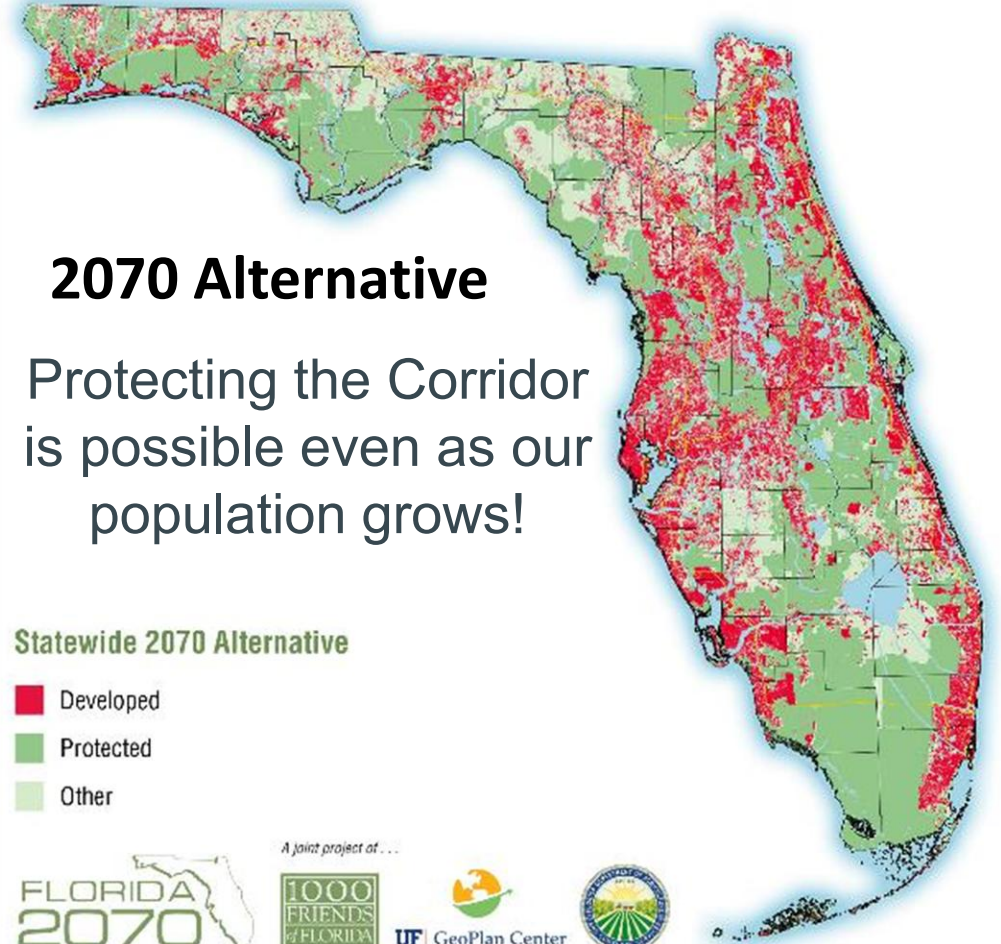


Development Pressure



33 million people by 2070

Smart Growth



2070 Alternative

Protecting the Corridor
is possible even as our
population grows!

Statewide 2070 Alternative

- Developed
- Protected
- Other

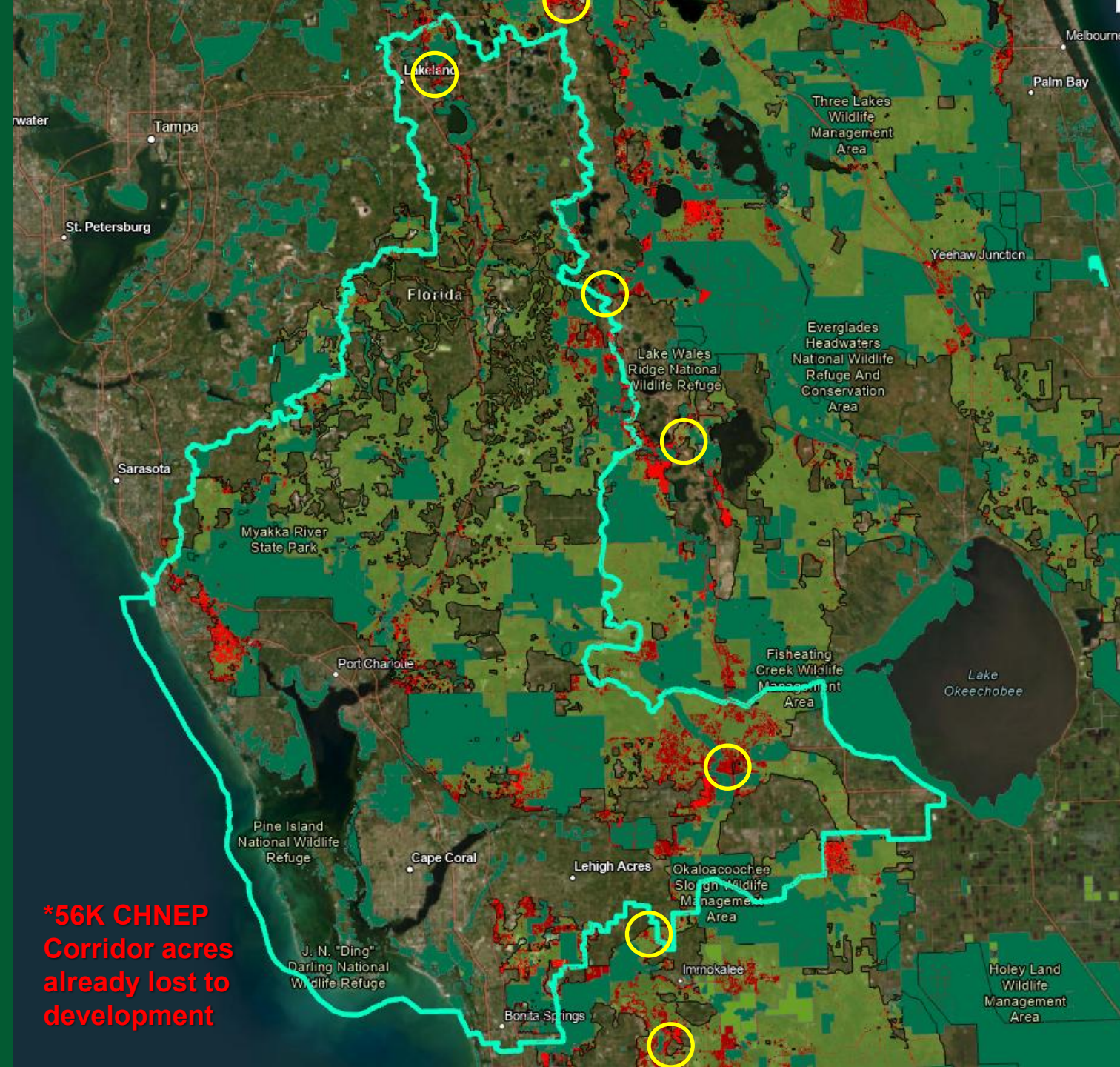
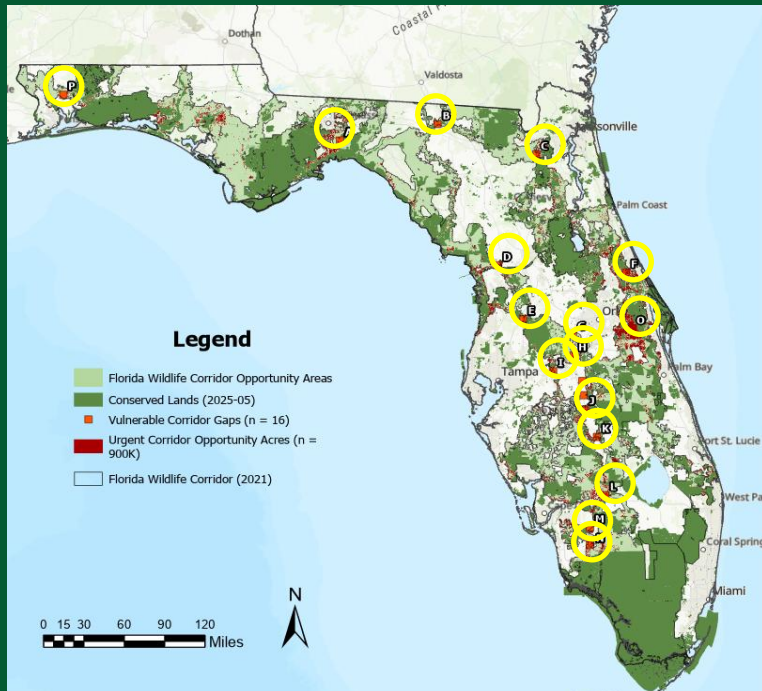


A joint project of...



Prioritizing CHNEP's 1.1M Opportunity Acres

Urgent **133K acres** *
Vulnerable
Irreplaceable Gaps



***56K CHNEP
Corridor acres
already lost to
development**



What can we do?

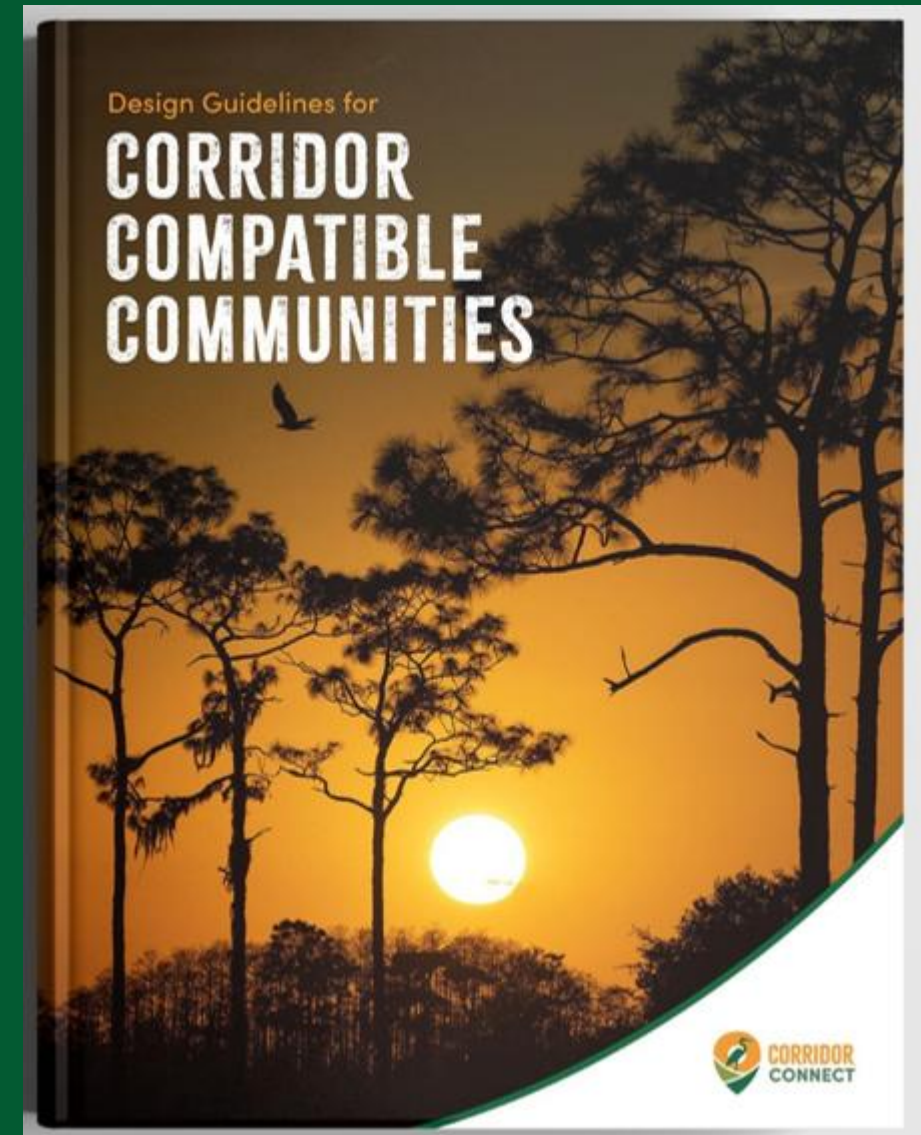
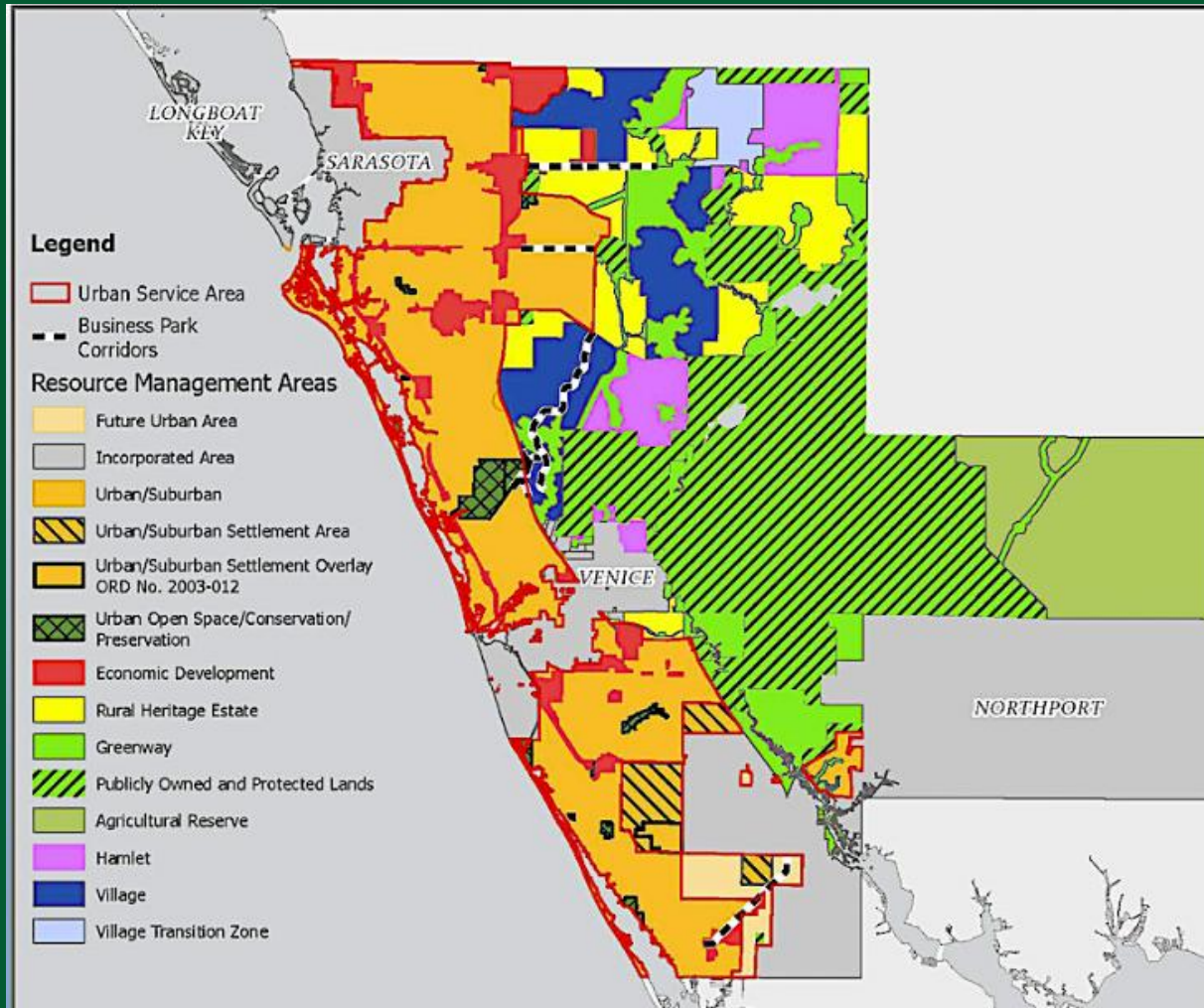
The Role of Local Governments

An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood. In the foreground, several houses with brown tiled roofs are visible, some with swimming pools in their backyards. A dense line of green trees separates the houses from a large, thick forest in the background. The text "1) PLAN FOR GROWTH WITH CORRIDOR IN MIND" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font across the middle of the image.

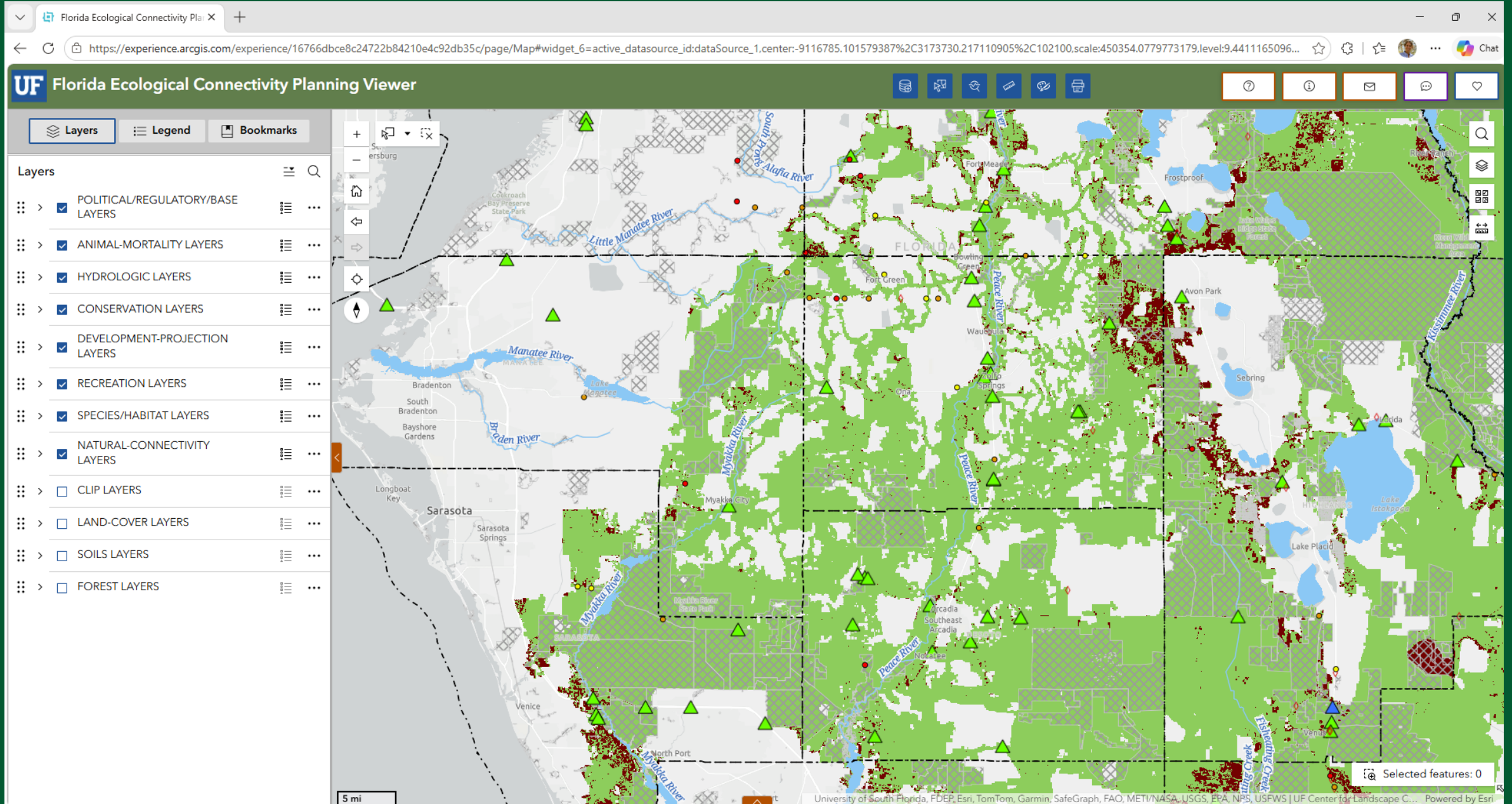
1) PLAN FOR GROWTH WITH CORRIDOR IN MIND

Planning for Growth

Urban Service Area Boundaries



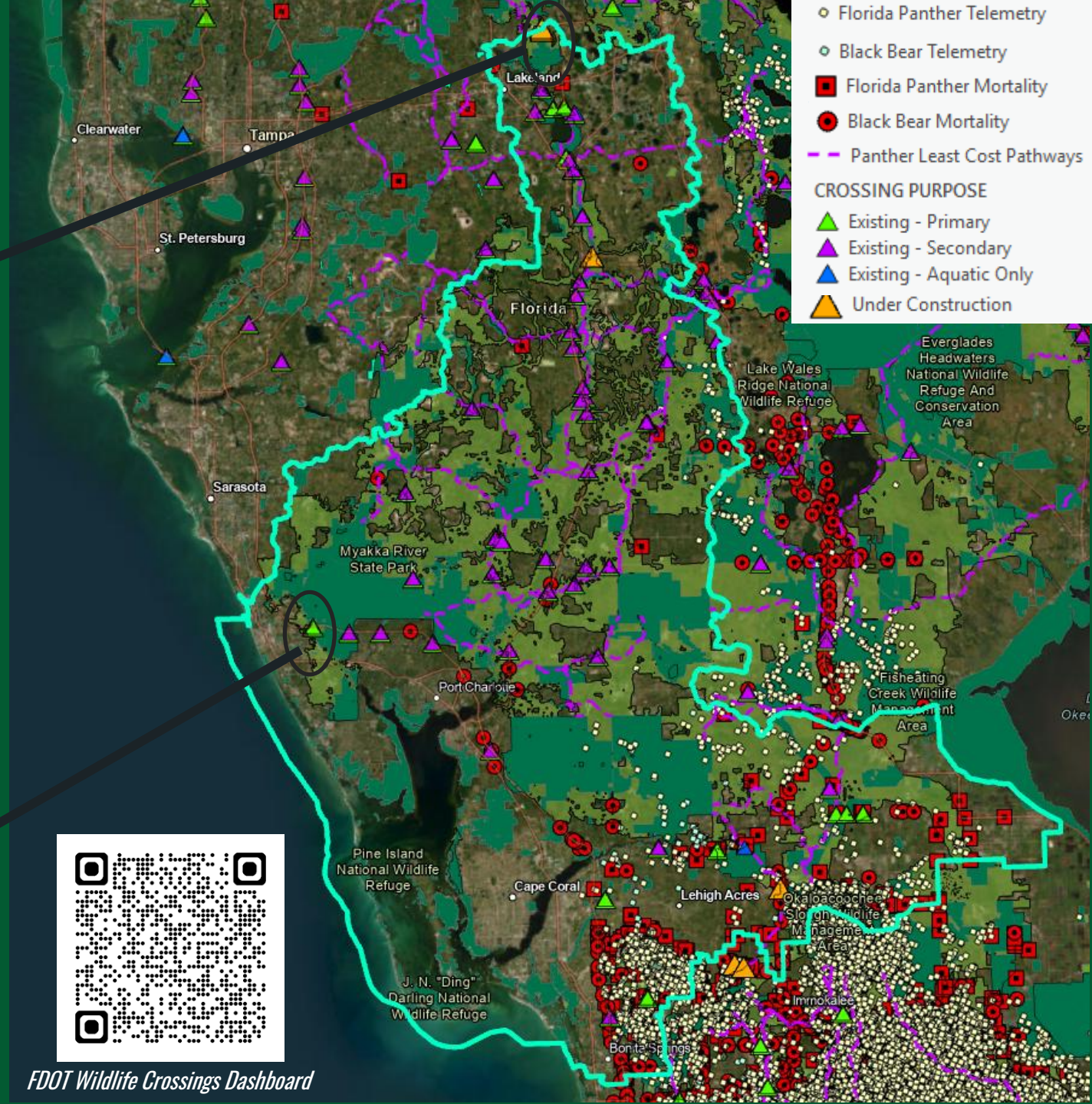
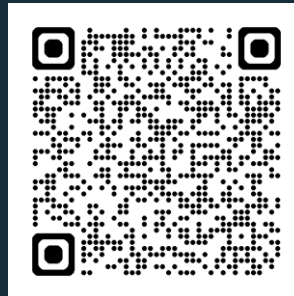
Planning with the Corridor - EcoCon



Planning with the Corridor – Wildlife Crossings



FDOT Wildlife Crossings Dashboard

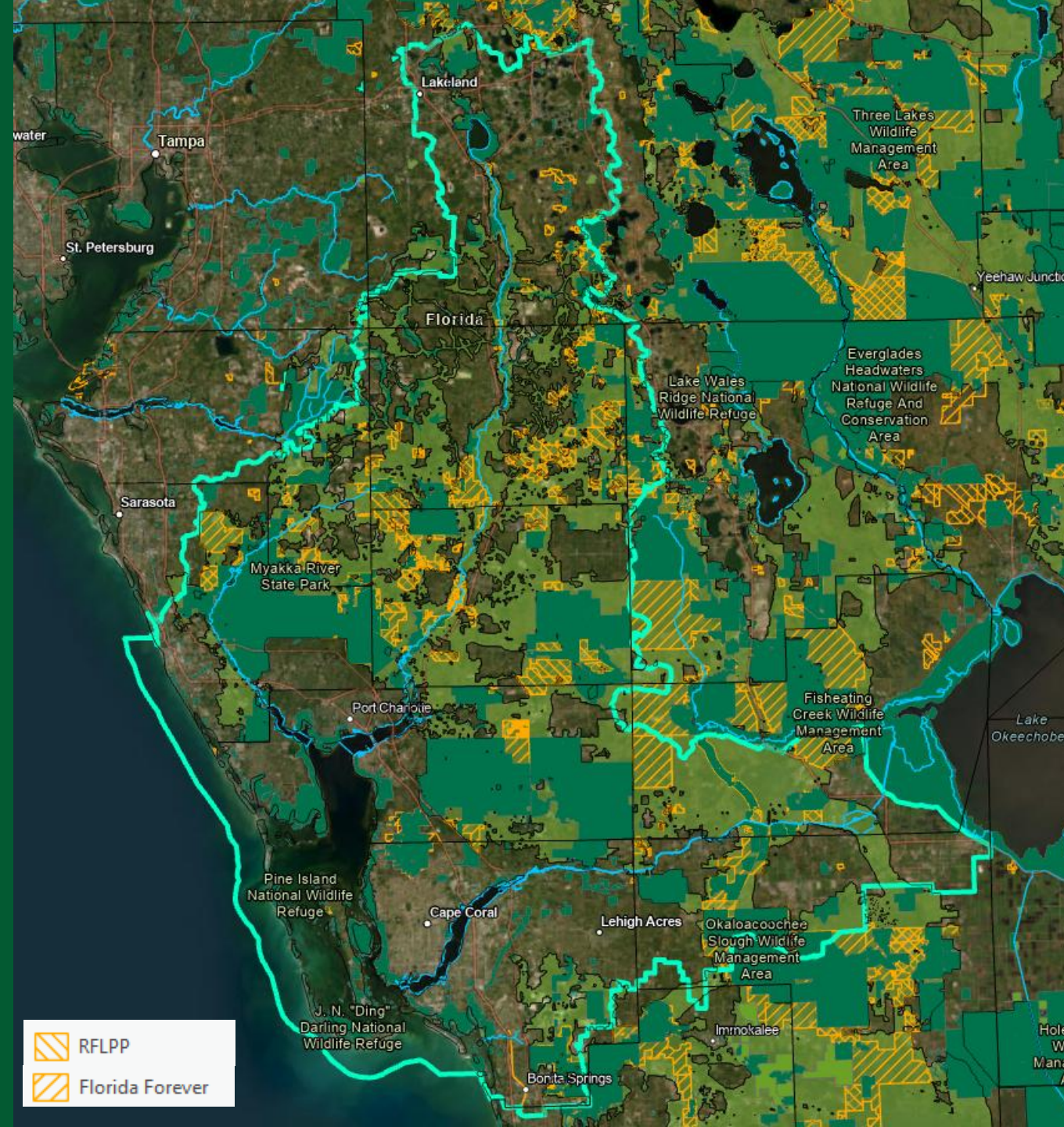
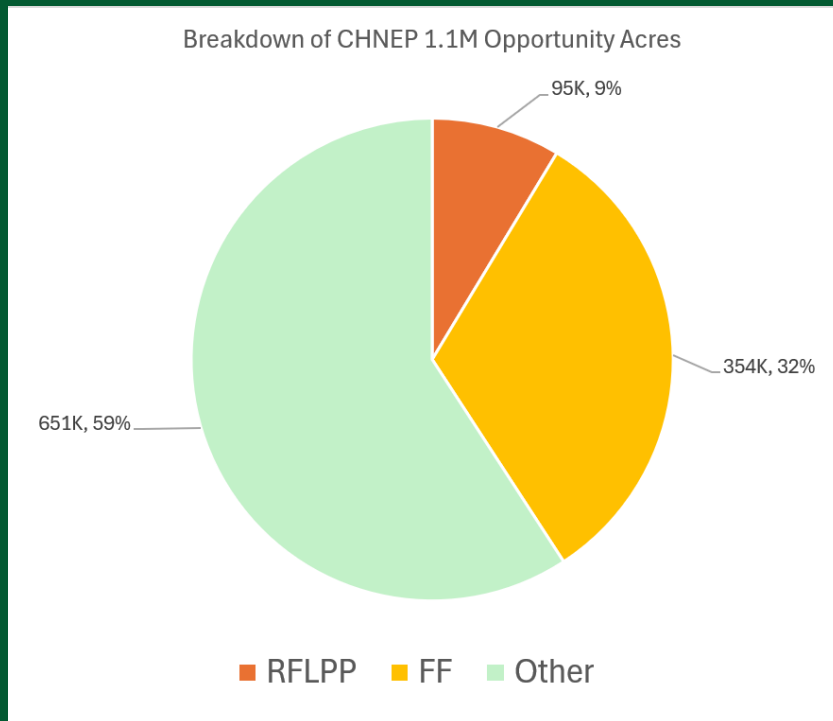


An aerial photograph showing a river with a brownish, silty flow meandering through a vast, dense green forest. The river forms several loops and curves, with sandy banks visible in some areas. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

**2) PARTNER WITH
AGENCIES TO
ACQUIRE LAND IN
THE CORRIDOR**

State Land Acquisition Program Corridor Opportunities in CHNEP

- Rural & Family Lands Protection Program (RFLPP) – 87 projects totaling 95K acres
- Florida Forever – 24 projects totaling 354K acres



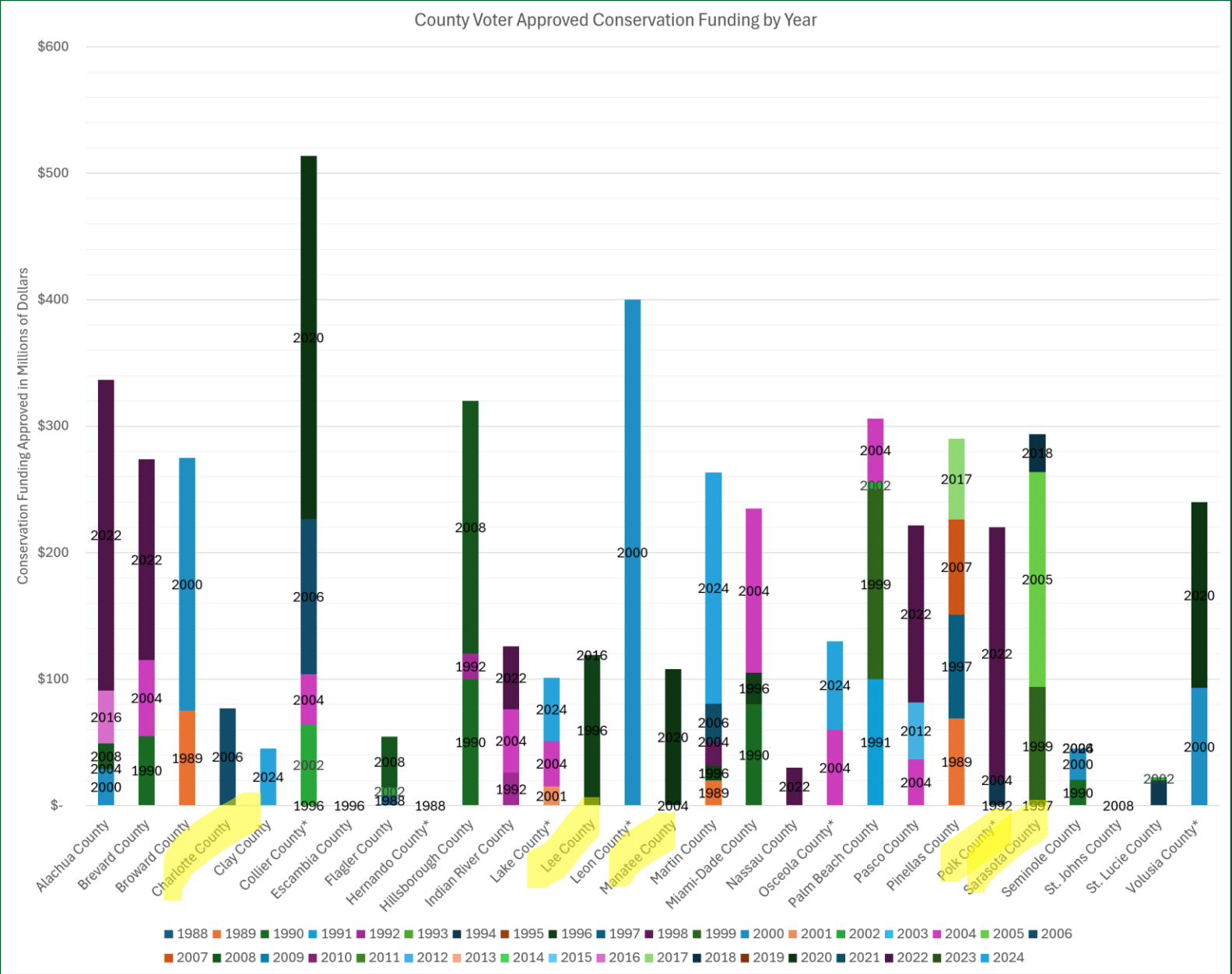
A large herd of cattle, including black, brown, and white cows, is gathered in a lush green marshy field. In the background, a calm body of water reflects the sky and the surrounding trees. A person wearing a cowboy hat and blue jeans is riding a brown horse, herding the cattle. A small dog is also visible in the grass on the right side of the image.

3) SUPPORT LOCAL LANDS PROGRAMS

Local Lands Programs

CHNEP Counties

- Charlotte*
- DeSoto
- Glades
- Hardee
- Hendry
- Highlands
- Lee
- Manatee*
- Polk
- Sarasota*



*Ballot initiatives this year – Charlotte (\$70M bond), Manatee (\$75M bond), Sarasota (\$250M bond)

Policy Watch & Implications to Conservation

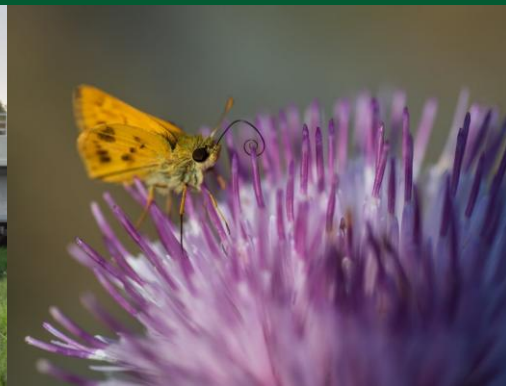
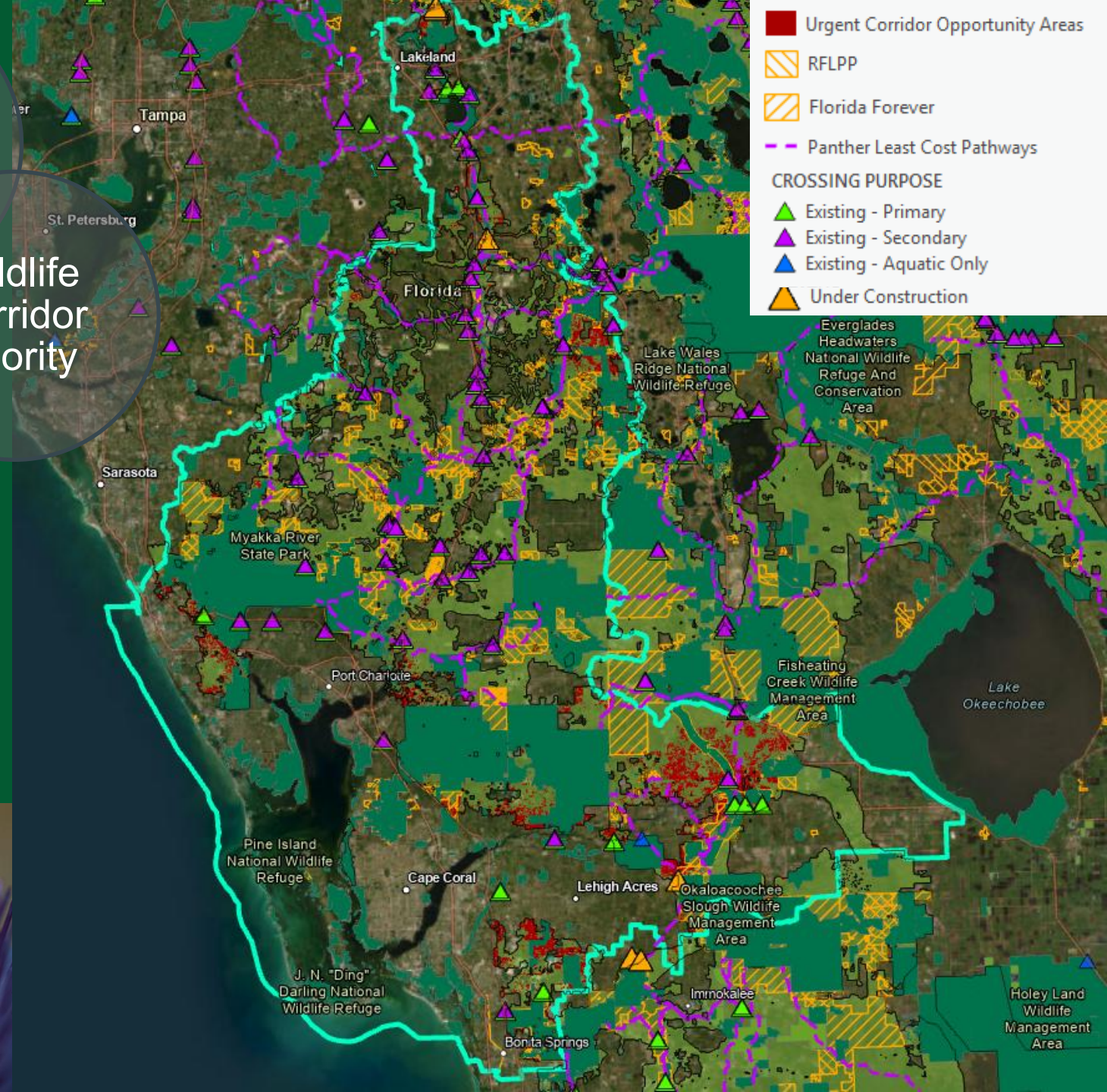
- Ballot Initiatives
- Amendment 3
- Growth Management

Next Steps

- Prioritize - Find Win-Wins
- Diversify Acquisition Funding
- Advocate for Policies & Funding that Support Conservation
- Incorporate Wildlife Corridor Shapefile (EcoCon)
- Engage Early with Infrastructure Agencies
- Stay Engaged with Us!

CHNEP
Priority

Wildlife
Corridor
Priority





CONNECT WITH US!



@FloridaWildlifeCorridor



@FloridaWildlifeCorridor



Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation



@FloridaWildlifeCorridor



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EXPLORE

CONSERVATION SOLUTIONS



FLORIDA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR FOUNDATION

Corridor Conservation Strategies: A StoryMap

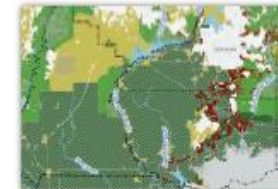
Learn how landowners can pursue conservation and income diversification.



1000 FRIENDS OF FLORIDA
& FLORIDA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR FOUNDATION

Mind the Gaps Curriculum

Corridor conservation modules geared toward local leaders, staff, and community members.



UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
CENTER FOR LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION PLANNING

Florida Ecological Connectivity (EcoCon) Planning Viewer

Explore the Corridor through multiple geospatial data layers.



FLORIDA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR FOUNDATION

Corridor Compatible Communities Design Guidelines

Learn how community location and design can support biodiversity, resilience, and connection.

These resources & more available online
FloridaWildlifeCorridor.org/resources



NO ACTION ITEM



- For information and discussion only.
- Chair will ask for questions or comments from the members.



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