

# Ridge Manor Florida Wildlife Corridor Gap

Presentation to Hernando BOCC

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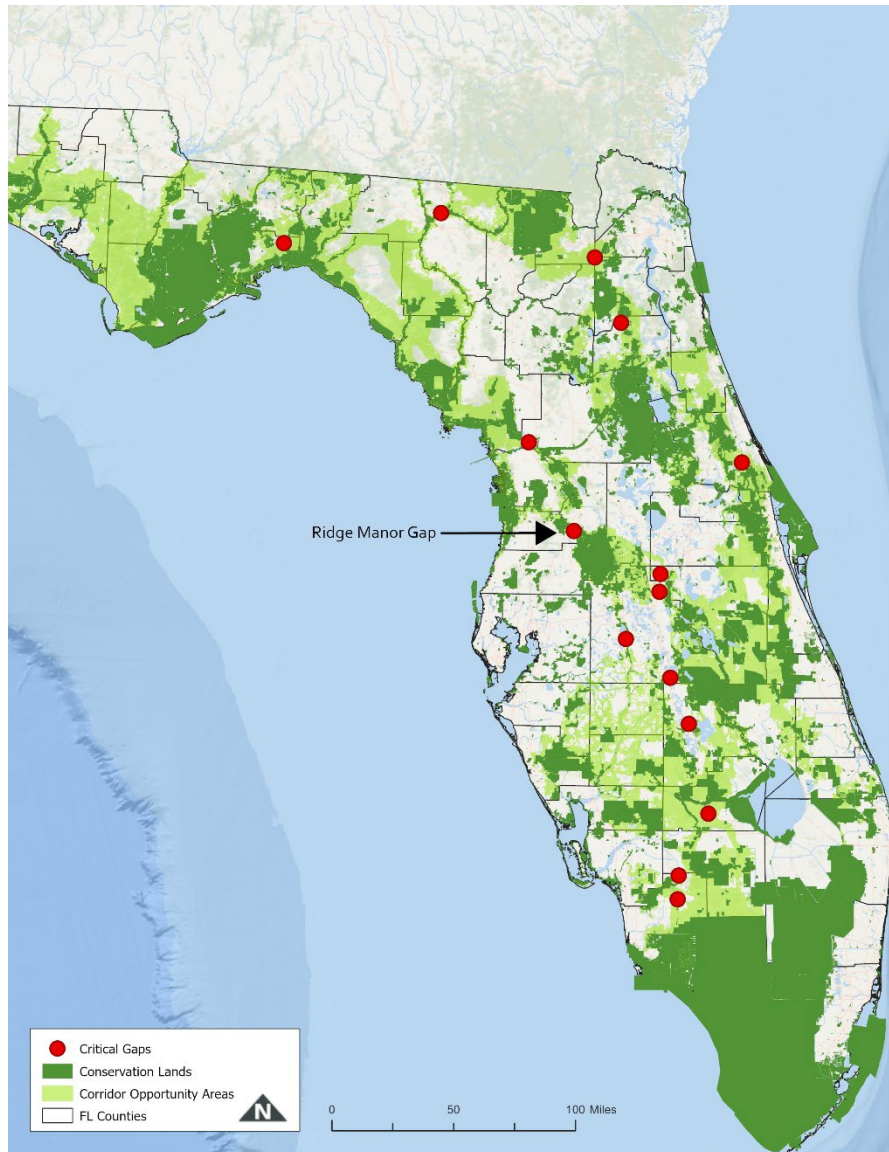
# Who is Putnam Land Conservancy?

- 501(c)(3) nonprofit land trust dedicated to conserving land and water for people and wildlife
- Works with private landowners and conservation organizations to establish wildlife corridors to protect at-risk species and their habitat, natural resources, and outdoor recreation
- PLC has preserved over 6,500 acres since established in 2006





# FL Wildlife Corridor – Statewide Perspective



- **Statewide Florida Wildlife Corridor**

- Established June 2021 by Florida Wildlife Corridor Act with unanimous bipartisan support
- 18 million acres of contiguous wilderness and working lands home to the survival of many of Florida's 131 imperiled animal species
- Protection of Corridor offers recreation opportunities, strengthens resilience, and protects water quality

- **Irreplaceable Gaps**

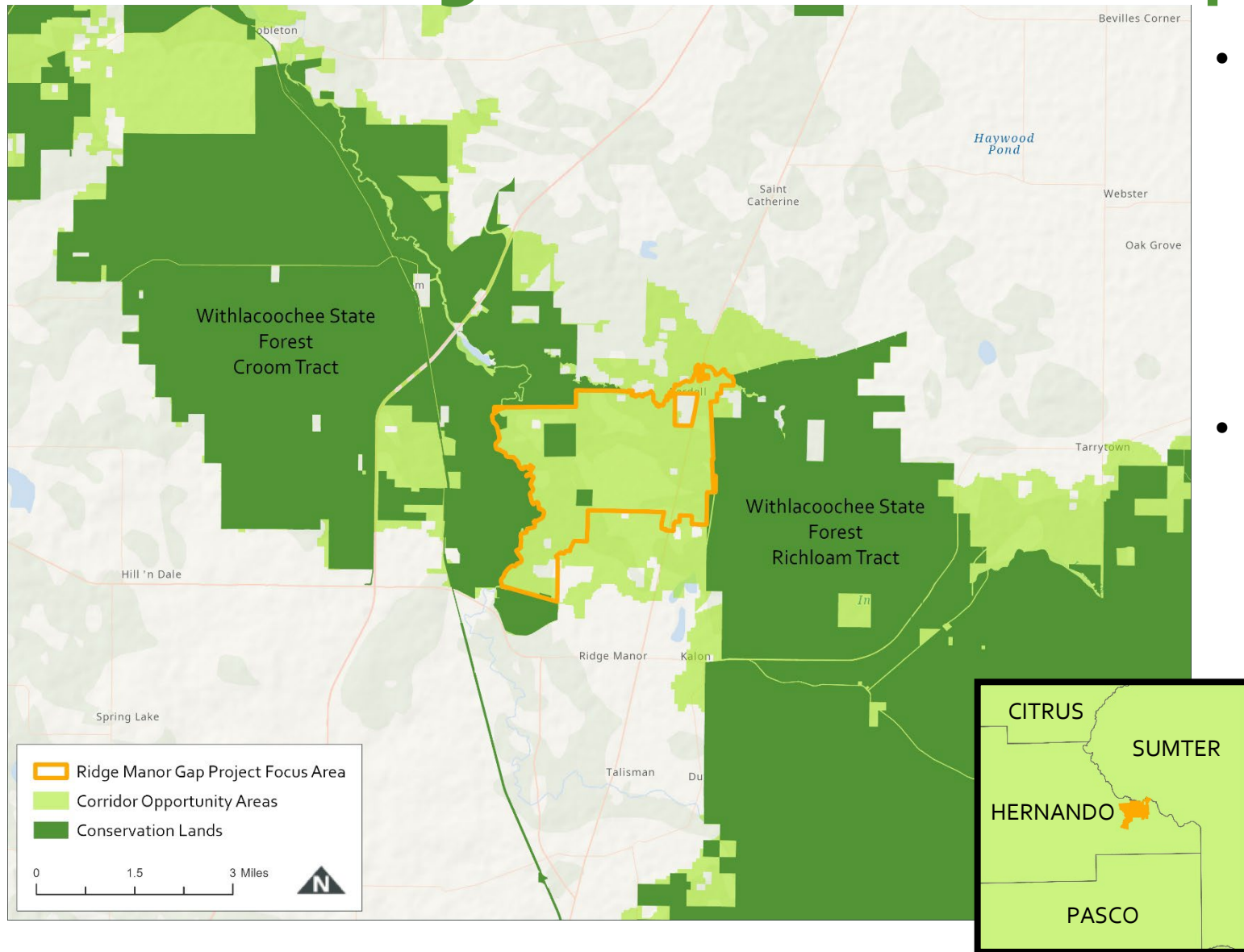
- Multiple gaps between protected areas throughout the state, as identified by Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation
- Critical, irreplaceable connections
- High conservation value and opportunity

- **Ridge Manor Gap**

- Between tracts of Withlachoochee State Forest
- Large number of small undeveloped parcels
- Growing development pressure



# Ridge Manor: Critical Gap in Corridor

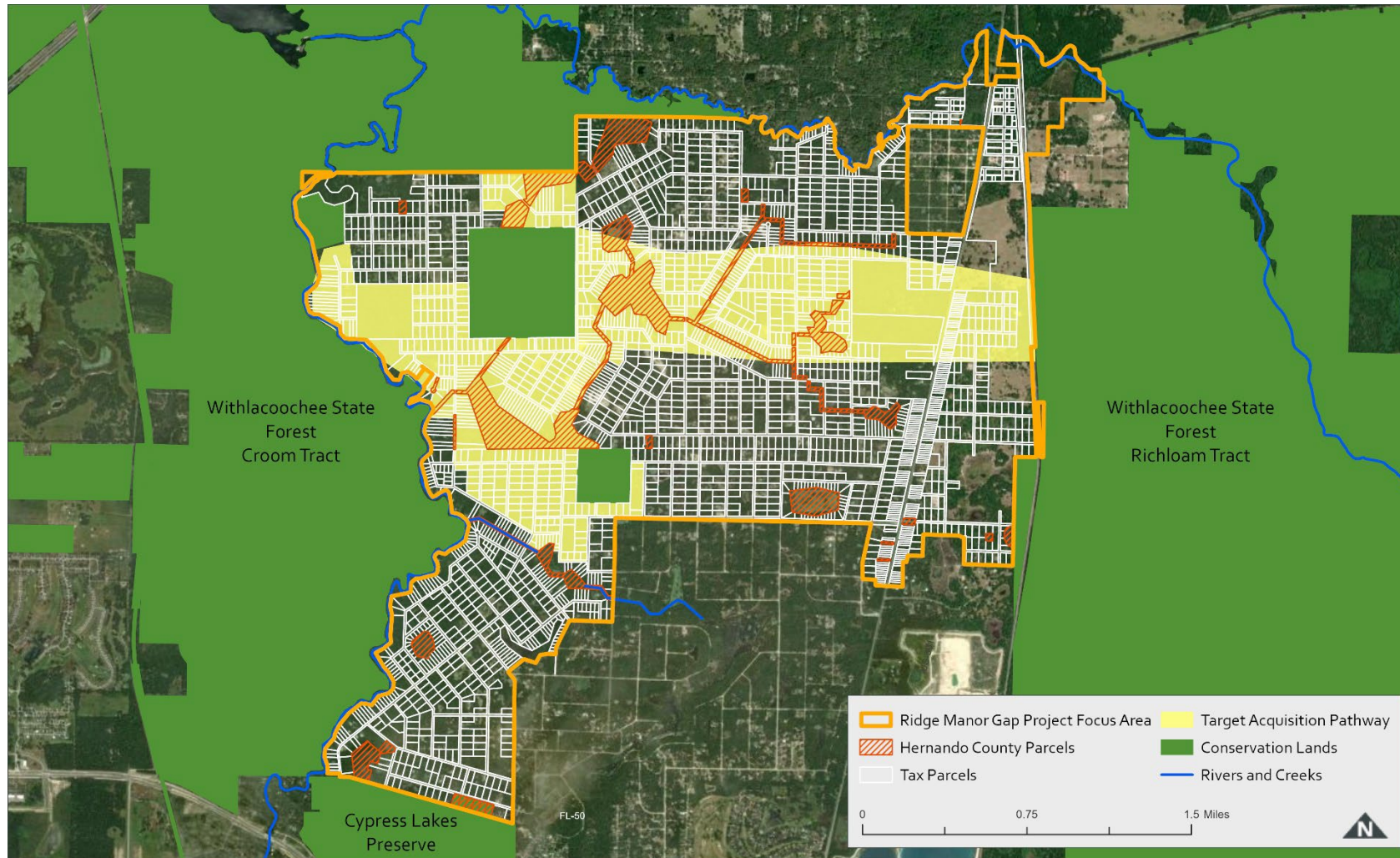


- **Irreplaceable Unprotected Gap**
  - Between Croom and Richloam tracts of Withlacoochee State Forest
  - Bottleneck essential for wildlife movement
  - Mix of County and privately-owned land
- **Project Goal**
  - Create a linear protected green corridor connecting the two portions of the Withlacoochee State Forest
  - Develop a program for working with willing sellers to purchase and protect lands within Ridge Manor to connect the Corridor





# Ridge Manor Gap Project



- Create a linear protected green corridor connecting the two portions of the Withlacoochee State Forest
- Partnership between PLC and Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation
- Rare species protection
- Flood management and water resource protection
- Focus on vacant, flood prone lots
- Purchase vacant parcels from willing sellers



Floyd's sandhill millipede





# Project Strategy

- **Two Stage Strategy**

- First, PLC identify willing sellers and purchase parcels in target areas
  - Aggregation into larger tracts
- Second, PLC transfer aggregated tracts to state for permanent protection
  - Florida Forever project application

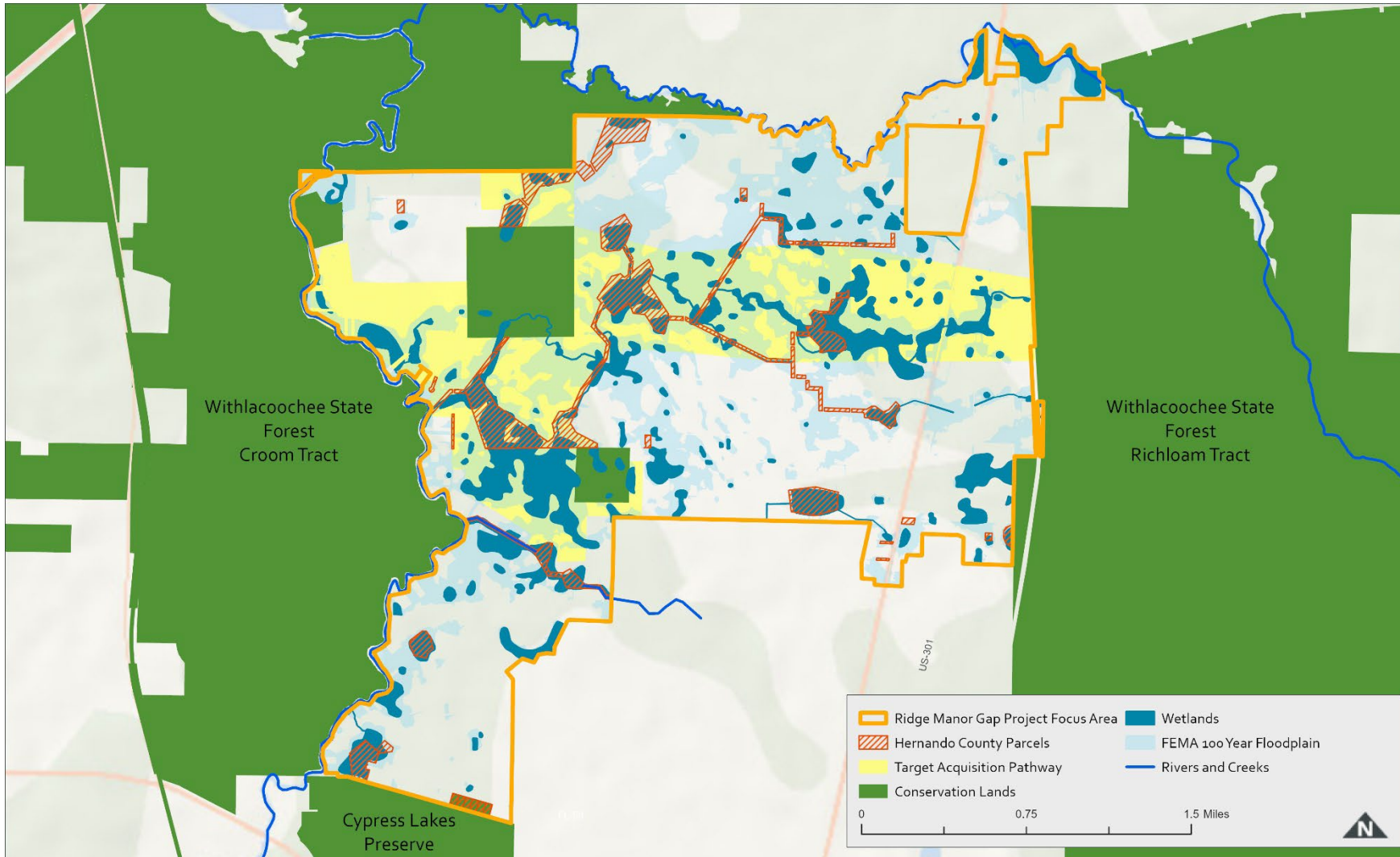
- **Florida Forever State Land Acquisition Program**

- Willing seller program
- Ridge Manor Gap project application submitted, currently under evaluation
- Once approved, lands within Ridge Manor project area will be eligible for state acquisition





# Opportunities for Hernando County



- Acquisitions could augment flood management efforts
- Prevents incompatible uses in flood prone areas
- Neighborhood amenities
  - Green space
  - Passive recreation
- Furthers goals and objectives of Hernando Comp Plan



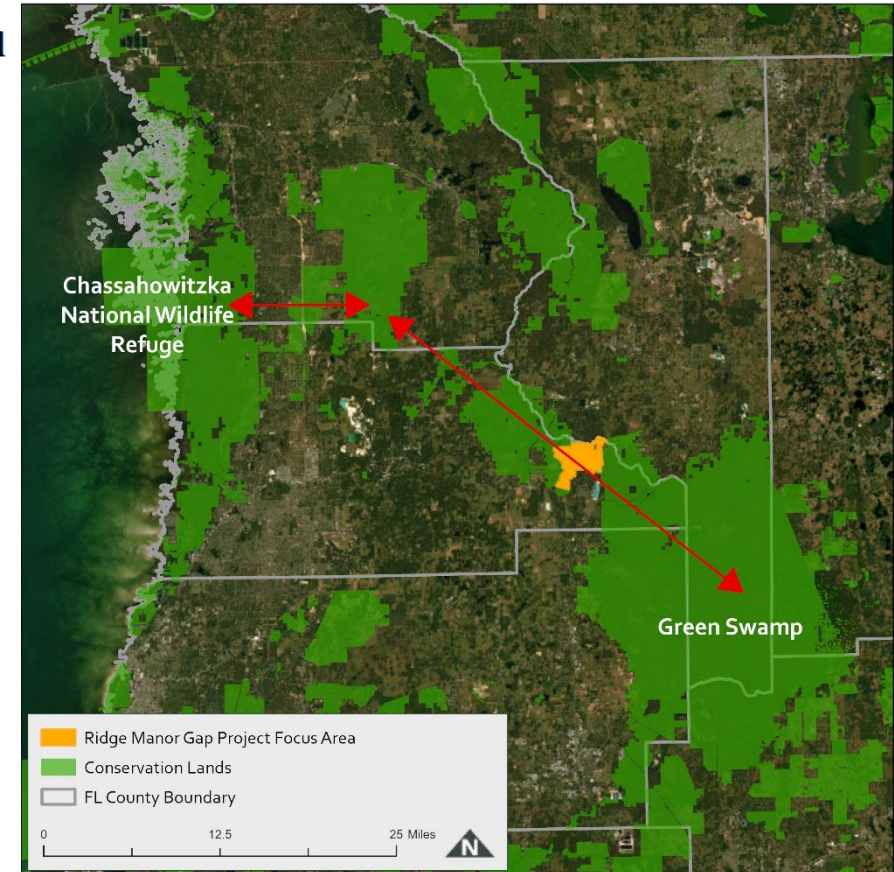
# Chapter 10, Hernando County Comprehensive Plan

## GOAL 10.01 – Protect Wildlife and Habitat

Hernando County's Growth Strategy protects the functional integrity of remaining wildlands and wildlife habitat in support of the County's rich ecological, recreational and agrarian heritage. Protection is accomplished through conservation of wildlife and natural resources of importance in Hernando County. [F.S. 163.3177(6)(d)]

**Objective 10.01A:** Hernando County shall consider during the review of development permits the importance of wildlife corridor connections from the Green Swamp to the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge in accordance with recommendations from professionally accepted sources used for State planning purposes in order to protect the functional integrity of large habitat areas in public ownership and the movement of native and protected wildlife. Mechanisms to be utilized will be considered on a site specific basis including the provision of open space, the mitigation of habitat loss, and the provision of conservation easements.

**Strategy 10.01A(3):** Encourage appropriate agencies and private organizations to assist the County in conserving and preserving natural area linkages which may function as wildlife corridors and/or recreation areas. Mechanisms to be coordinated may include conservation of agricultural lands, preservation of rural development patterns, land acquisitions, conservation easements, the transfer or purchase of development rights, development incentives, and landowner agreements.







# RIDGE MANOR GAP PROJECT

## Questions/Comments?

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