



MANATEE COUNTY  
FLORIDA

June 21, 2016

Christine P. Johnson, President  
Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast  
P.O. Box 902  
Osprey, FL 34229

RE: Orange Hammock Ranch Conservation

Dear Ms. Johnson:

On behalf of the Manatee County Commission, we are pleased to provide support for the permanent conservation of the entire 5,774 acre Orange Hammock Ranch property. Conserving Orange Hammock Ranch presents Sarasota County and the City of North Port with the significant opportunity to protect the quality and quantity of North Port's drinking water supply; help alleviate downstream flooding; protect irreplaceable habitat for a variety of wildlife; and provide recreational opportunities.

The Orange Hammock Ranch abuts the RV Griffin Reserve, owned by the Southwest Florida Water Management District and site of the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority water supply storage system including off-stream reservoir and ASR wells through partnership with the District. The PRMRWSA water supply system provides the bulk of the drinking water supply to DeSoto, Charlotte and Sarasota County,

The Manatee County Commission appreciates the opportunity to voice support for the collaboration of the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast and other participants on this issue.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
MANATEE COUNTY, FLORIDA

  
Vanessa Baugh,  
Chairman

C: Manatee County Commission  
Ed Hunzeker, County Administrator  
Mike Gore, Director, Utilities Department

Board of County Commissioners  
1112 Manatee Avenue West, Bradenton, FL 34205  
Website: [www.mymanatee.org](http://www.mymanatee.org) \* Phone: 941.745.3700 \* FAX: 941.745.3790

June 21, 2016 - Regular Meeting  
Agenda Item #42

Approved in Open Session 6/21/16  
Manatee County  
Board of County Commissioners

Subject

Letter of Support for Acquisition of Orange Hammock Ranch as conservation area

Briefings

Briefing Provided Upon Request

Contact and/or Presenter Information

Mark Simpson, Water Division Manager, x-5258

Action Requested

Authorization for the Chair to sign letter of support for the acquisition of the Orange Hammock Ranch property in Sarasota County for conservation and water quality improvements. The property will be acquired in a joint effort by Sarasota County, the city of North Port, The Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast, and the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Enabling/Regulating Authority

Letter of Support

Background Discussion

The Orange Hammock Property is located in southeastern Sarasota County within the limits of the City of North Port. The property is undeveloped and abuts the western boundary of the RV Griffin Reserve owned by the SWFWMD and managed by the PRMRWSA for multiple uses including Reservoir #2 and ASR Wellfield. The Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast is facilitating a collaborative process of agencies for the purchase of the property, including Sarasota County, City of North Port, and SWFWMD.

The eastern 1/3 of the Orange Hammock Property, that abuts the RV Griffin Reserve, is a natural water drainage feature that was altered in the past to improve pasture. The features could be restored and improved and used as mitigation for future water supply development on the adjacent RV Griffin property. It would also result in improved quality of the water that drains through this area and flows into the City of North Port canal system that supplements their water supply.

At the June 1, 2016, meeting of the PRMRWSA Board of Directors, Chair Constance remarked that a presentation on this endeavor was made to the Charlotte County BCC and the Board voted to send a letter of support for the project. He said he understood that similar letters of support have been sent from Sarasota County and the City of North Port. He asked that the other members (DeSoto, Manatee) take it back to their Boards for consideration of a producing letter of support to show regional support. The presentation to the PRMRWSA Board of Directors is attached.

There is no financial commitment for either Manatee County or the PRMRWSA with this show of support.

County Attorney Review

Not Reviewed (No apparent legal issues)

Explanation of Other

Reviewing Attorney

N/A

Instructions to Board Records

Transmit letter of support to Christine P. Johnson, President, Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast and provide copy to Mark Simpson, Utilities Department. **Distributed 6/23/16, RT**

Cost and Funds Source Account Number and Name

N/A

Amount and Frequency of Recurring Costs

None

Attachment: [Orange Hammock Ranch presentation 060116.pdf](#)

Attachment: [BCC letter of support for Orange Hammock Ranch draft 061516.pdf](#)

**PEACE RIVER MANASOTA REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY AUTHORITY  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
June 1, 2016**

**REGULAR AGENDA  
ITEM 5**

**Orange Hammock Ranch Conservation**

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**Presenter -**

Patrick Lehman, Executive Director

**Recommended Action -**

**Status Report.** This item is presented for informational purposes. No Board action is required.

The Orange Hammock Property is located in southeastern Sarasota County within the limits of the City of North Port. The property is undeveloped and abuts the western boundary of the RV Griffin Reserve owned by SWFWMD and managed by the Authority for multiple uses including the regional reservoir and ASR Wellfield.

The Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast is facilitating a collaborative process of agencies for the purchase of the property, including Sarasota County, City of North Port and Southwest Florida Water Management District. Staff will give a presentation to provide information to the Board for discussion and direction. Christine Johnson, President of the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast will be in attendance at the Authority's Board meeting.

**TAB A**  
**Letters of Support**

# PEACE RIVER MANASOTA REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY AUTHORITY

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HON. CHRISTOPHER G. CONSTANCE  
CHARLOTTE COUNTY

HON. ELTON A. LANGFORD  
DESOTO COUNTY

HON. JOHN R. CHAPPIE  
MANATEE COUNTY

HON. ALAN MAIO  
SARASOTA COUNTY

PATRICK J. LEHMAN, PE., EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

February 1, 2016

Christine P. Johnson, President  
Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast  
P.O. Box 902  
Osprey, Florida 34229

Re: Orange Hammock Ranch Conservation

Dear Ms. Johnson:

On behalf of the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority, we are pleased to provide our support for the permanent conservation of the entire 5,774 acre Orange Hammock Ranch property. Conserving Orange Hammock Ranch presents the opportunity to protect and enhance the region's drinking water supply while protecting irreplaceable habitat for a variety of wildlife and provide recreational opportunities.

The Orange Hammock Ranch abuts the RV Griffin Reserve owned by the Southwest Florida Water Management District and site of the Authority's water supply storage system including off-stream reservoir and aquifer storage recovery wells (ASR) through partnership with the District. The Authority's water supply system provides the bulk of drinking water supply to DeSoto, Charlotte and Sarasota Counties.

The Authority appreciates the opportunity to collaborate with the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast and other participants on this issue.

Sincerely,



Christopher G. Constance  
Chair

cc: Authority Board of Directors  
Patrick Lehman, Authority Executive Director



**SARASOTA COUNTY**  
"Dedicated to Quality Service"

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
1660 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota, FL 34236  
phone: 941-861-5344 fax: 941-861-5987

January 26, 2016

Christine P. Johnson, President  
Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast  
P.O. Box 902  
Osprey, FL 34229

**RE: Orange Hammock Ranch Conservation**

Dear Ms. Johnson:

On behalf of the Sarasota County Commission, we are pleased to provide support for the permanent conservation of the entire 5,774 acre Orange Hammock Ranch property. Conserving Orange Hammock Ranch presents Sarasota County and the City of North Port with the significant opportunity to protect the quality and quantity of North Port's drinking water supply; help alleviate downstream flooding; protect irreplaceable habitat for a variety of wildlife; and provide recreational opportunities.

Protecting Orange Hammock Ranch has been a focus of conservation for almost twenty years. In 1988, the property was one of Sarasota County's original Protection Priority Sites because of its high ecological value. The Environmentally Sensitive Land Protection Oversight Committee (ESLOC) approved the acquisition of the property on October 7, 2010.

The Sarasota County Commission appreciates the long history of collaboration with Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast and asks that you please keep us informed on this issue.

Sincerely,

Alan Maio  
Chairman

c: Sarasota County Commission  
Thomas A. Harner, County Administrator  
Lee Ann Lowery, Assistant County Administrator  
Carolyn Brown, Director, Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources

**TAB B**  
**Presentation Materials and Draft Fact Sheet**



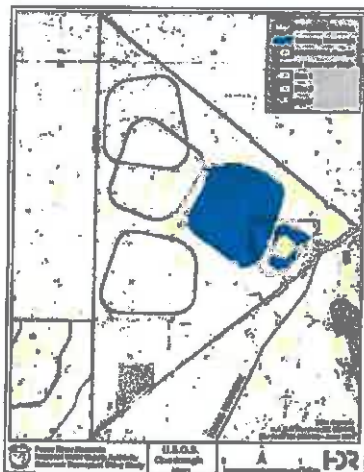


## Orange Hammock Ranch



- RV Griffin Reserve covers 9 square miles owned by SWFWMD
- Multi-use property
- Easement granted to PRMRWSA for water resource development
- Mitigation site to restore lands
- Cattle lease for grazing
- Horse trails/passive recreation
- Model Airplane club
- Authority provides all land management

## Orange Hammock Ranch



- The RV Griffin Reserve was acquired by SWFWMD for the expansion and protection of the Authority's water supply system.
- Current facilities include two reservoirs, ASR Wellfield and transmission pipelines.
- WUP provides for expansion of the ASR Wellfield on the property.
- The property can accommodate an additional reservoir in the future.

## Orange Hammock Ranch

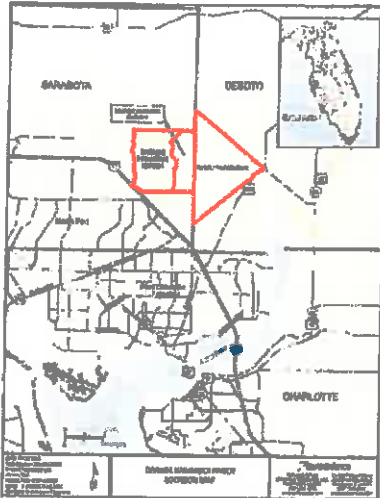


- The Orange Hammock Ranch is 5,774± acres, predominantly native tract of land within southeast Sarasota County and the City of North Port.

## Orange Hammock Ranch

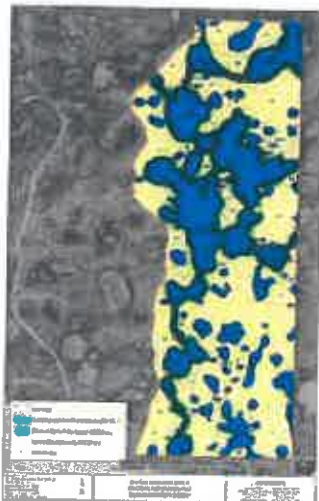


## Orange Hammock Ranch



- Orange Hammock Ranch is located immediately west of, and adjacent to, the RV Griffin Reserve.
- Surface water from Orange Hammock Ranch drains to the Snover Waterway, tributary to Myakkahatchee Creek, the City's WTP water supply source.
- Orange Hammock Slough covers approximately the eastern third of the property containing wetlands that have been altered by ditching for drainage

## Orange Hammock Ranch



- Conceptual restoration plan for Orange Hammock Slough could preserve and restore 1,976± acres, to mitigate water supply development on the RV Griffin Reserve

## Orange Hammock Ranch

### Benefits of Orange Hammock Ranch Preservation:

- Environmental buffer to the Authority's water supply infrastructure on RV Griffin Reserve;
- Protection of City of North Port surface water supply source;
- Protection of the Authority's Water Supply Storage (ASR Wellfield);
- Enhancement of City of North Port's Surface Water Supply;
- Flood Protection;
- Opportunity for environmental mitigation;
- Opportunity for hydrologic restoration;
- Improved surface water quality; and
- Wildlife habitat connectivity and recreational opportunities.



# PEACE RIVER MANASOTA REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY AUTHORITY

## Orange Hammock Ranch Conservation

### Fact Sheet



#### Authority's Regional Water Supply Infrastructure

The RV Griffin Reserve (RVG) property is owned by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and contains the primary regional water supply facilities of the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority (Authority).

Located in southwest DeSoto County, the RVG consists of approximately 5,913 acres (9 sq. miles) and was acquired by the SWFWMD in 1992 to accommodate the expansion and protection of the water supply facilities owned by the Authority. The Authority currently owns and operates two raw water supply reservoirs, an aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) wellfield and transmission pipeline facilities on the property. The Authority manages the RVG property in exchange for using the property for water supply facilities through easements granted by SWFWMD to the Authority for the entire RVG site.

The RVG is a multi-use property that in addition to water supply facilities includes mitigation sites, horse trails, cattle grazing and model airplane club facility (Exhibit A).

The Authority's water use permit (WUP) provides for expansion of the ASR Wellfield on the RVG. The recently completed Integrated Regional Water Supply Plan (April 2015) also provides for potential expansion of the reservoir system and development of brackish groundwater to optimize and expand the current water supply facilities. The RVG property can accommodate another reservoir in the future to provide additional raw water storage for the Authority. Engineering and hydrologic evaluation indicates that site conditions are suitable for construction of a future reservoir, similar in construction to the existing Reservoir No. 2 (Exhibit B). The primary constraints/considerations with respect to siting a new reservoir on the RVG are potential impacts to existing wetland habitats and floodplain areas. Siting of a new reservoir on the RVG property is feasible, provided sufficient acreage for wetland mitigation and floodplain compensation can be secured.

#### Orange Hammock Ranch

The Orange Hammock Ranch (OHR) property is 5,774± acres located within southeast Sarasota County and the City of North Port, Florida, east of I-75 (Exhibit C). The OHR property is on the Florida Forever Priority List and the SWFWMD has considered purchase of the property several times over the past two decades. Among considerations for the purchase of the OHR (e.g. natural system benefits), SWFWMD has previously cited benefits in relation to water supply, water quality, and flood protection.

Orange Hammock Ranch is a large, predominantly native tract of land abutting the DeSoto County line and adjacent to the RVG Reserve where the Authority has made significant investments in the protection of water resources and water supply infrastructure for the regional water supply system as discussed previously (Exhibit D). Regional infrastructure also includes the major transmission pipeline that traverses the OHR and supplies Sarasota County Utilities with the bulk of its drinking water supply.

### Water Resources of Orange Hammock Ranch

Surface water runoff from the OHR property drains to the Snover Waterway, a tributary to Big Slough (aka Myakkahatchee Creek), and thus represents a source of water supply to the City of North Port. The most noteworthy water resource feature within the property is Orange Hammock Slough located on the eastern third of the OHR (Exhibit C).

Many of the wetlands on OHR have been altered by regional drainage and by ditching to drain wetlands and improve forage for cattle. A conceptual restoration plan developed by Authority consultants for Orange Hammock Slough portion of the OHR property would preserve and provide opportunities for the restoration of approximately 1,976 acres of the slough directly adjacent to the RVG (Exhibit E).

Restoration of Orange Hammock Slough has the ability to provide significant water management benefits to the region by potentially increasing storage capacity for flood attenuation in the City of North Port, improving groundwater recharge, and enhancing water quality for downstream users. In addition, the restoration could significantly enhance the quality of wildlife habitat, regional connectivity of wildlife corridors, and recreational opportunities. Restoration also has the potential to provide compensatory wetland mitigation and floodplain compensation within the OHR property for the siting of a future new reservoir on the RVG.

### Benefit of Orange Hammock Ranch to Regional and Local Water Supply

In addition to being beneficial for natural systems and associated wildlife habitats, preservation of the existing OHR property presents local and regional opportunities for the protection and enhancement of existing water resources and supplies, facilitation of new potential water supplies, as well as the protection and potential enhanced flood protection within the City of North Port. The OHR property is located within the City of North Port's public water supply watershed and is in proximity to the Authority's water supply facilities on the adjacent RVG. The OHR property provides ground and surface water supply source protection and enhancement benefits for the RVG property, provides a buffer to existing reservoir and ASR operation, and could provide cost-effective mitigation credits necessary for future water supply projects including new reservoir, ASR wellfield expansion and/or brackish groundwater development on the RVG.

### Highlights of Potential Orange Hammock Ranch Acquisition

- **Environmental Buffer to the Authority's Water Supply Infrastructure.** The OHR provides a buffer for existing regional water supply facilities and operations on the RVG including the Authority's ASR and raw water storage reservoirs, protecting the region's investment.
- **Protection of City of North Port Surface Water Supply Source.** Acquisition of the OHR property provides opportunities to protect the quantity and quality of the City of North Port's surface water supply source by maintaining and potentially restoring the natural condition and flow regimes of the site. Acquisition would also decrease potential for competition from a new water user thereby also assisting in protection of the City's existing legal water use.
- **Protection of the Authority's Water Supply Storage (ASR Wellfield).** Large scale groundwater withdrawals (such as those for the previously proposed development of OHR) have the potential

to impact the ASR Wellfield on the RVG. Acquisition of OHR would ensure protection of the Authority's ASR Wellfield, and support potential expansion of the ASR Wellfield in the future.

- **Enhancement of the City of North Port's Surface Water Supply.** Purchase of the OHR could also provide opportunities to enhance the reliability of the City of North Port's surface water supply source with the potential capture and storage of surface water from the OHR during high flow periods.
- **Flood Protection.** Protection of the extensive OHR floodplain could contribute towards potential flood insurance premium discounts for the citizens of North Port through the FEMA Community Rating System credits.
- **Opportunity for Environmental Mitigation.** Restoration of the Orange Hammock Slough provides opportunity to generate cost-effective compensatory wetland mitigation credit that could offset wetland impacts associated with potential future water supply projects such as a new regional reservoir on the RVG.
- **Opportunity for Hydrologic Restoration.** Current site conditions afford considerable opportunity for improvement through appropriate hydrological restoration, enhancement of the natural communities, preservation, and long-term management.
- **Improved Surface Water Quality.** Restoration of natural and historic storage systems in the OHR lengthen the duration of inundation enhancing surficial aquifer recharge and extending water detention times. The former could improve groundwater supply sustainability and the later could improve surface water quality leaving the site.
- **Wildlife Habitat Connectivity and Recreational Opportunities.** The OHR property could provide low-cost passive use opportunities that would enhance or limit disturbance to the natural attributes of the land. The property's connectivity with other public lands provides the added benefit of continuity of a regional wildlife corridor and recreational opportunities extending through Sarasota County to the Peace River in DeSoto County (Exhibit F).

### **Summary**

Public ownership of the Orange Hammock Ranch offers benefits to both regional and local drinking water supply, protecting existing water supply infrastructure and operations, and facilitating opportunities for development of future regional water supply projects on the adjacent RV Griffin Reserve to meet future public water supply needs of the region as well as protection and enhancement of the City of North Port's drinking water supply from Myakkahatchee Creek. Acquisition of Orange Hammock Ranch would also offer other significant public and environmental benefits in the region, including wildlife habitat connectivity, recreational opportunities and enhanced flood protection.

### **Contact**

Patrick Lehman, Executive Director

[plehman@regionalwater.org](mailto:plehman@regionalwater.org)

Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority

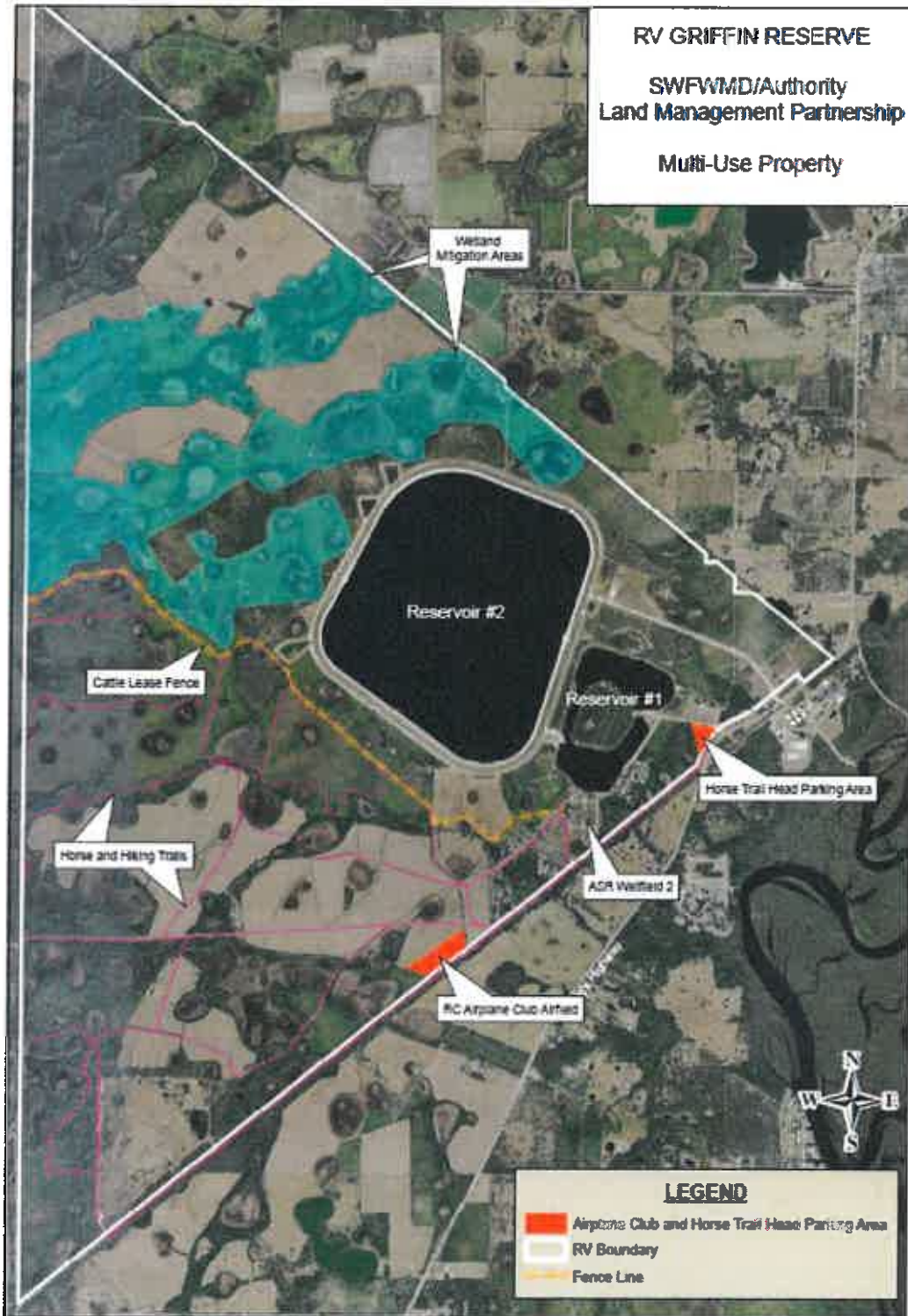
9415 Town Center Parkway

Lakewood Ranch, FL 34202

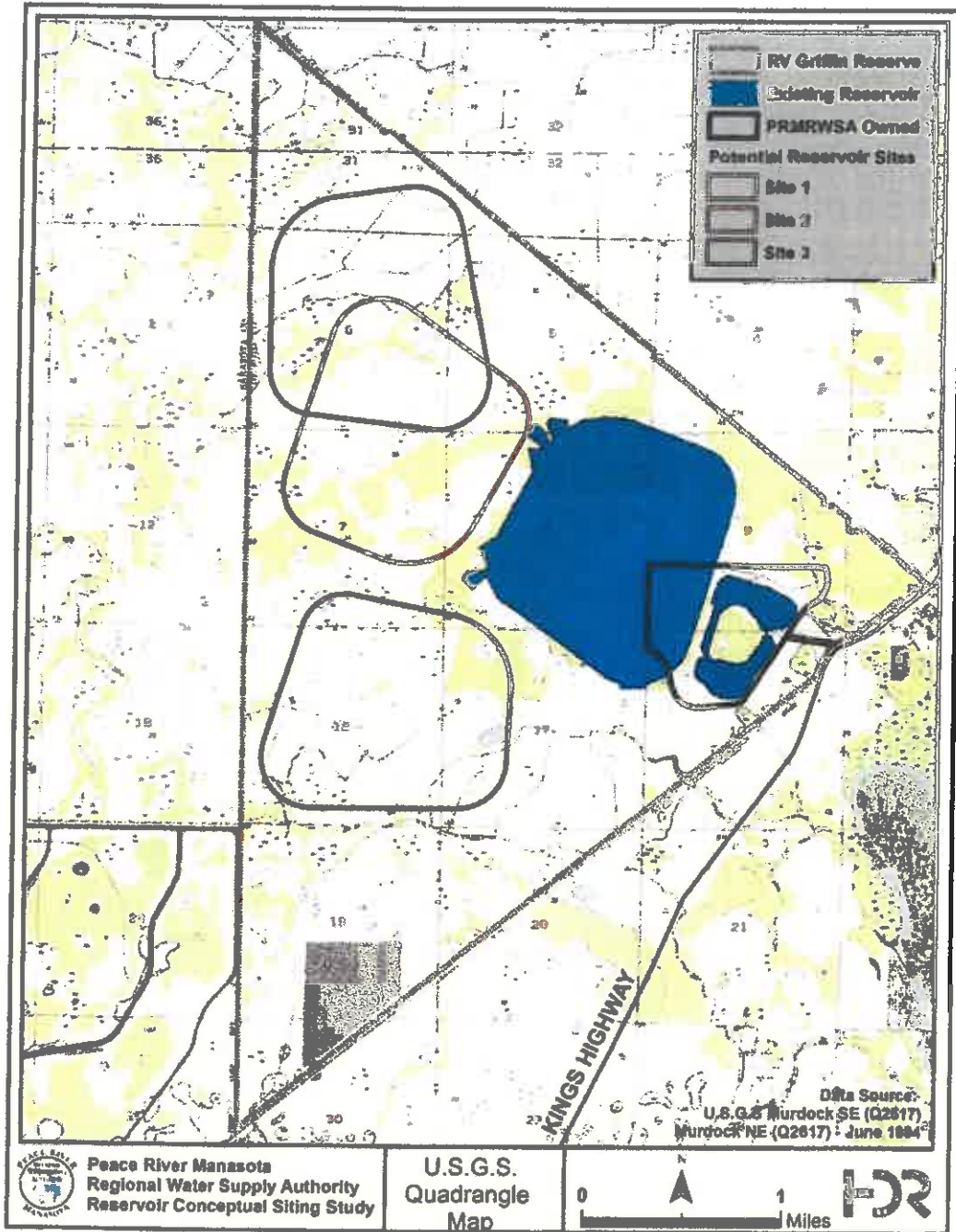
Tele: 941-316-1776



Exhibit A. RV Griffin Reserve Site Map



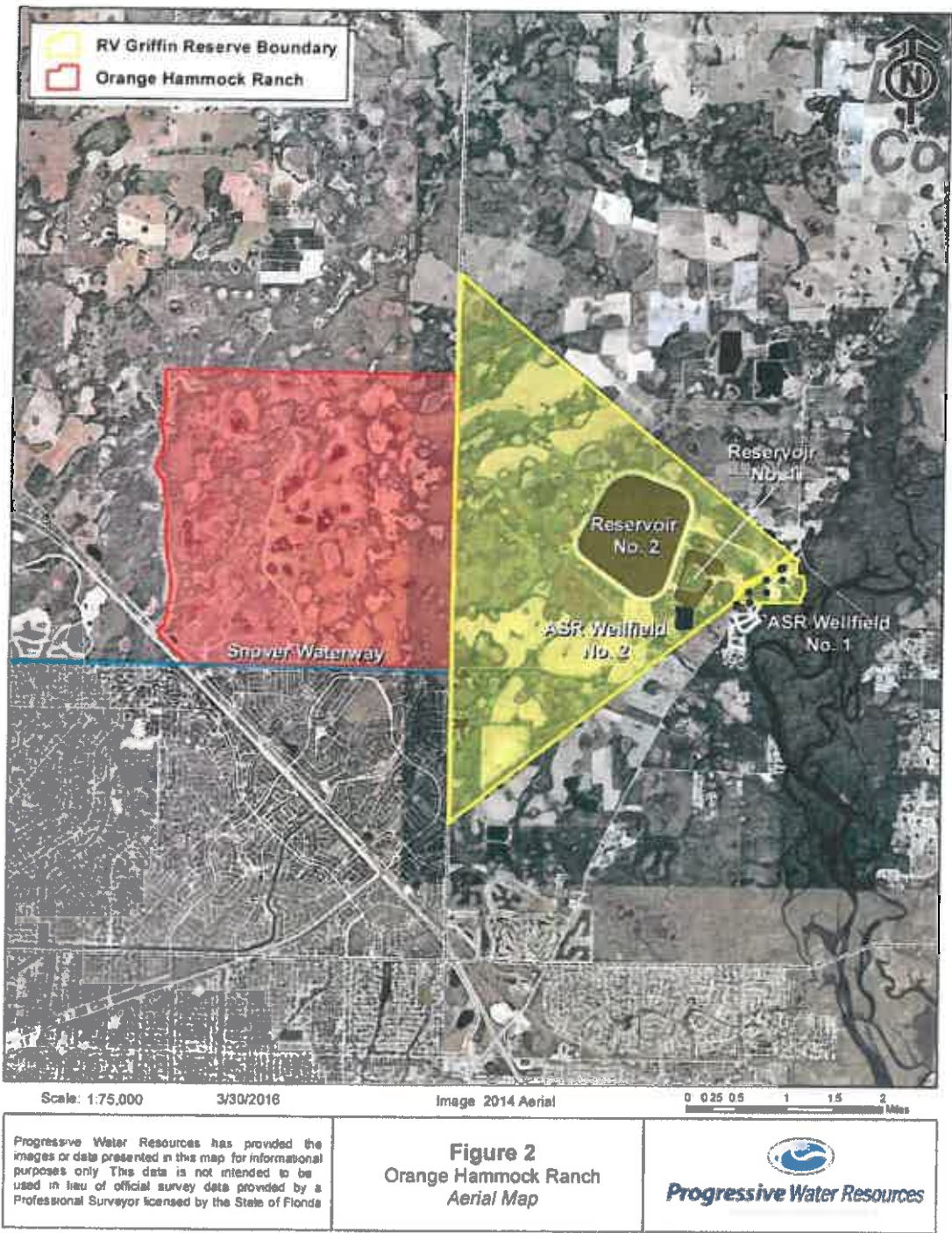
**Exhibit B. Conceptual Future Reservoir Siting on RV Griffin Reserve**



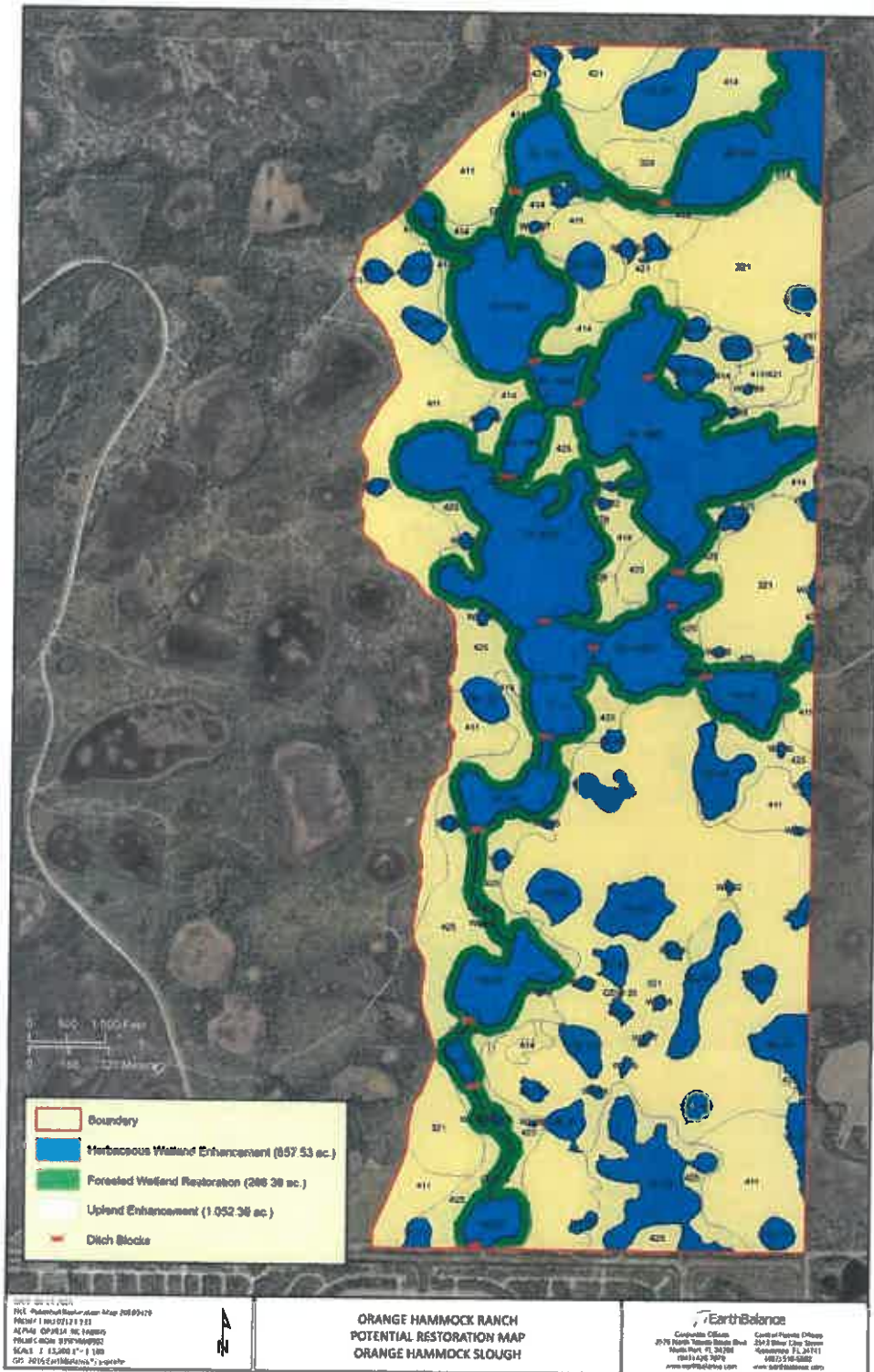
**Exhibit C. Orange Hammock Ranch Location Map**



**Exhibit D. Orange Hammock Ranch Aerial Map**



**Exhibit E. Potential Restoration Map of Orange Hammock Slough**



**Exhibit F. Regional Conservation Area Map**

