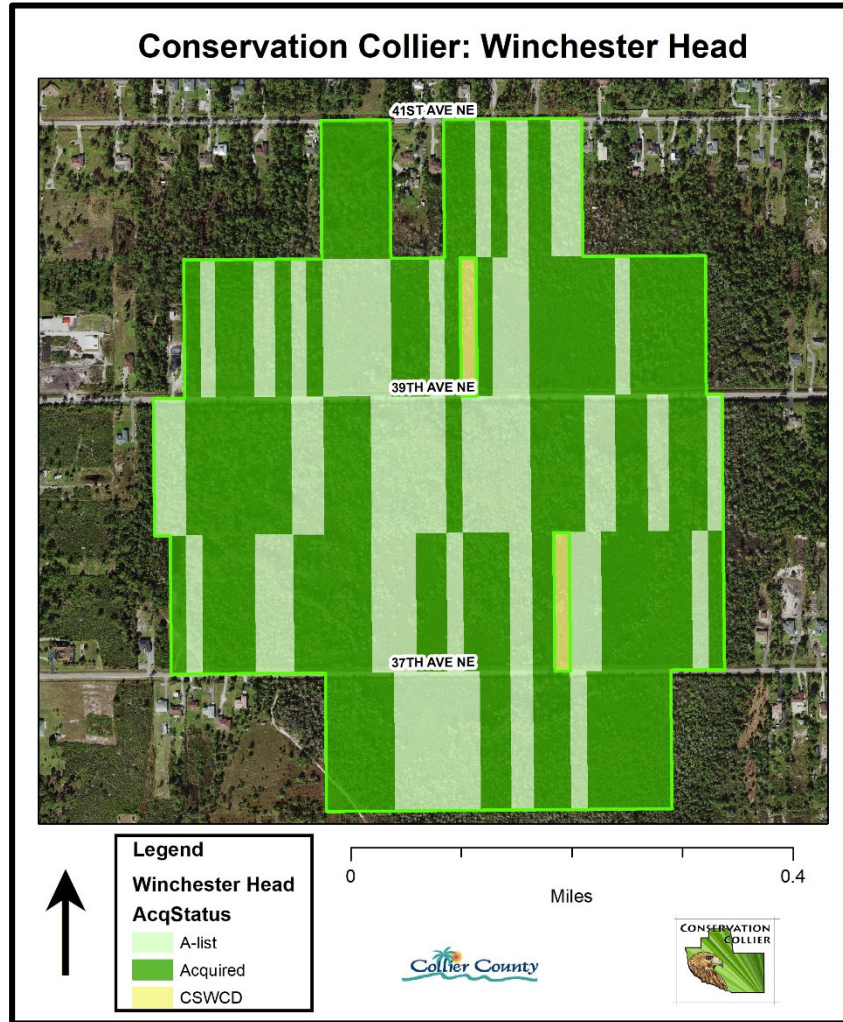


Conservation Collier Winchester Head



Extended Interim Management Plan

Fifth Extension

Prepared By:

Collier County's Conservation Collier Program

Parks & Recreation Division

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1.0 Purpose and Scope of the Interim Management Plan

Winchester Head is one of two multi-parcel projects undertaken by the Conservation Collier Program. The Winchester Head Project boundary encompasses 114 parcels totaling 157.53 acres. As of January 2023, 70 parcels or 95.8 acres (61%) have been acquired by Conservation Collier in a checkerboard fashion throughout the project area. The Collier Soil and Water Conservation District (CSWCD) owns two parcels totaling 2.28 acres within the project area. Conservation Collier conducted a market study appraisal in 2022. As of 2022, the Property Appraiser is valuing parcels within this area between \$25,000 and \$55,000 per acre depending on the size and percent cover of wetlands. That market study included two appraisers with an average value for these parcels at \$30,000 per acre.

Conservation Collier is currently continuing to pursue the acquisition of all approved parcels within Winchester Head as means to do so present themselves. Conservation Collier has begun to make offers to owners submitting applications within Winchester Head utilizing funds from offsite preservation received as part of the Land Development Code's Off-Site Native Vegetation Retention Requirements (LDC Section 3.05.07H.1.f.iii.a). Additionally, offsite preservation parcels may be donated within this area (LDC Section 3.05.07H.1.f.iii.b).

Five parcels have been acquired as offsite mitigation donations since 2013 within the project area, and one additional parcel (1.14 acres) was donated to offset Code Enforcement Liens, for a total of 7.29 acres donated

If additional properties cannot be acquired using the above means, or it becomes apparent that few properties can be acquired in this manner, Conservation Collier staff will seek to exercise a provision of the Conservation Collier ordinance (2007-65, Section 14.7 as amended) that allows for the exchange of lands within and between multi-parcel projects in accordance with the goals of the Program. The objective of any such exchanges will be to consolidate the areas owned by Collier County under the Conservation Collier program into one contiguous area. All acquired properties will be managed only for conservation, protection, and enhancement of natural resources and for public outdoor recreation that will be compatible with the conservation, protection, and enhancement of the site and its surrounding lands. Public use of the site will not be practical until more contiguous properties within Winchester Head can be acquired and a trail or boardwalk constructed, the boardwalk of which is not presently funded.

This interim management plan is intended to update the key management priorities and issues within the site and give direction for management through 2025. This document is intended to be the precursor to a final management plan, which will provide more specific aspects of site management once a contiguous block of properties can be assembled.

Key Interim Management Objectives

1. Monitor vegetation until a contiguous block in the center of the project can be acquired which will trigger more extensive vegetation management actions.
2. Treat offsite donation parcels for invasive exotic plants on an annual basis.
3. Explore opportunities for grant funding and partnerships for management.

Action Plan

- 1a. Make bi-annual site visits to monitor the spread of Category I and II invasive plant species within parcels. Once a contiguous tract of the project is acquired, begin exotic plant management within this tract; Continue monitoring the remainder of parcels.
- 1b. Treat all Category I and II invasive plant species within offsite mitigation donation parcels on an annual basis.
- 2a. Seek grant funding opportunities for the removal of exotic flora.

2.0 Management Authority and Responsibilities

The Conservation Collier Program, part of the Collier County Parks & Recreation Division since October 2012, will be solely responsible for managing the Winchester Head parcels, but will also seek to obtain grants and form partnerships for management activities.

3.0 Interim Site Plan

3.1 Location and Site Description

The Winchester Head Parcels are located east of Everglades Blvd. North, between 41st Ave NE and 35th Ave NE in Sections 8 & 17, Township 48 and Range 28 in Golden Gate Estates, Units 62 and 65 within Collier County, Florida. The southernmost parcels are located south of 37th Ave NE but do not extend to 35th Ave NE (Exhibits 1-5). The approximate center of the project is located at 26°18'9.67"N and 81°32'19.58"W. Winchester Head is comprised of Mixed Wetland Hardwoods (FLUCCS 617), Cypress (FLUCCS 621), Cypress, Pine, Cabbage Palm (FLUCCS 624) and Freshwater Marsh (FLUCCS 641). Compared to the higher elevations of the lands surrounding Winchester Head, from 18 to 24 feet above sea level, the natural depression of this cypress area (Exhibit 6) at 15-17 feet below sea level, combined with the presence of hydric, poorly drained soils allows for water to collect and slowly percolate into the ground. Thus, Winchester Head is ideal for obligate and facultative wetland plant and animal species.

Conservation Collier's Winchester Head multi-parcel project is within the North Golden Gate Estates (NGGE) Flowway Restoration Project (Exhibit 7), which is an area of focus within the County's Watershed Management Plan (WMP). The goal of this project is to reconnect the historic flowway and redirect storm water drainage away from NGGE's canals, allowing it to move south toward North Belle Meade and naturally low county areas while allowing ground absorption along the way. As part of the WMP, a Phase I and Phase II analysis of the flowway, which includes Winchester Head, have been completed. The Phase I estimated that Winchester Head contains approximately 414.7 acre-feet of storage based on an average, water surface elevation of 16.0 feet (North American Vertical Datum of 1988). The goal of reconnecting wetland systems within the NGGE has been

incorporated into development of the County's Watershed Management Plan, approved by the Board of County Commissioners in December 2011. The WMP includes structural projects and policy initiatives, both of which would affect the Winchester Head area. Structural projects include adding culverts and other water management structures. Policy initiatives include a potential Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) process and a Watershed Mitigation Program. The TDR process provides an equitable method of protecting and conserving the most valuable environmental lands, including large, connected wetland systems and significant areas of habitat for listed species of fish, plants, and wildlife, while allowing owners of such lands to recoup lost value and development potential through an economically viable process of transferring the development rights in such lands to other, more suitable lands. At present, no specific projects have been authorized. If Conservation Collier were to acquire and restore parcels within Winchester Head, this would serve WMP goals. However, the choice of projects determined for Winchester Head and north of Winchester Head within the flowway could affect how Conservation Collier approaches management. Structural projects could increase the volume of water stored within the WH project boundaries and thus alter proposed management actions, while a proposed TDR program could assist Conservation Collier in acquiring more parcels and getting more contiguous area under management. The WMP is addressed in this plan to provide a comprehensive view of the area and its importance.

3.2 Signage

Signs denoting parcels as Conservation Land will be installed as contiguous parcels of 20 acres or more are acquired.

3.3 Easements, Concessions or Leases

There are sixty-foot (60') platted right-of-way and utility easements dedicated to Collier County, along 41st Ave. NE, 39th Ave NE, and 37th Ave NE. No other easements, concessions or leases currently exist within Winchester Head. No other easements, concessions or leases are proposed for the future, and would not be permitted unless they further conservation objectives, such as a conservation easement.

3.4 Structures

No structures are present on the parcels at this time.

3.5 Surrounding and Adjacent Land Uses

Several single-family Golden Gate Estates zoned parcels – many of which have yet to be developed, surround Winchester Head. Everglades Blvd. North is west of the properties and the Faka Union canal is located to the east of the properties.

4.0 Interim Management Objectives

4.1 Natural Resource Protection

Existing Vegetation:

The following list identifies native plants observed during site visits: Swamp fern (*Blechnum serrulatum*), false nettle (*Boehmeria cylindrica*), arrowhead (*Sagittaria spp.*), sawgrass (*Cladium jamaicense*), royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*), pickerelweed

(*Pontederia cordata*), cattail (*Typha* spp), buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), willow (*Salix* spp.) and numerous species of native wetland grasses.

Unique Natural Features:

Winchester Head is comprised entirely of depressional cypress and marsh wetlands and therefore, provides habitat for wetland dependent species. Evidence onsite and data from the Southwest Florida Amphibian Monitoring Network ¹ indicate that Winchester Head is used by wetland dependent species. Although it contributes only minimally to aquifer recharge, the area is a depressional feature in the landscape that holds water during the rainy season, enhancing water quality and offering flood protection to adjacent lands.

Possible Listed Species:

The observed habitat and location would support the presence of the following listed species: American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*), wood stork (*Mycteria americana*), limpkin (*Aramus guarana*) and white ibis (*Eudocimus albus*). The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has documented Florida black bears (*Ursus americanus floridanus*) along the edges of the property.

4.2 Site Security

At present, no known security issues exist within Winchester Head. Because Collier County currently owns 70 of the parcels, only some of which are contiguous, fencing will not be considered until a larger percentage of the parcels in the project area are acquired.

4.3 Exotic Vegetation Removal and Maintenance Plan

Exotic vegetation removal at Winchester Head Preserve is currently targeted across 47 acres of the 95.8 acre preserve. Yearly treatment acreage has continually increased since acquisition, targeting the most infested parcels first. After the initial treatment of a parcel, the cost for subsequent treatments decreases, allowing for the treatment of additional parcels across the preserve. Exotic plant infestation across treated and non-treated parcels will continue to be monitored by Conservation Collier staff yearly, and subsequent treatment plans may be adjusted dependent on parcel infestation level and budgetary constraints.

Problematic exotic species currently treated at Winchester Head Preserve are old world climbing fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*), Japanese climbing fern (*Lygodium japonicum*), Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*), melaleuca (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*), and Peruvian primrose willow (*Ludwigia peruviana*). All infested areas within Winchester Head are treated during the dry season. All six parcels acquired through offsite mitigation donations came with management funds; these parcels have been treated on an annual basis since acquisition.

¹ The Southwest Florida Amphibian Monitoring Network represents a diverse group of citizen volunteers organized for the purpose of monitoring amphibians (mostly frogs) in southwest Florida Website: <http://www.frogwatch.net/>

4.4 Cultural, Historical and Archeological Resource Protection

Winchester Head is not within an area of historical and archaeological probability, and no historical or archaeological sites appear to be present in the property. The County will notify the Division of Historical Resources immediately if evidence is found to suggest any archaeological or historic resources are present within the Winchester Head project. If such properties are identified on-site, staff shall cordon off the area, and a professional survey and assessment shall be instituted. The archaeologist shall prepare a report outlining results of the assessments and issue recommendations to County staff about management of any sites discovered, per provisions of the Collier County Land Development Code Section 2.2.25. This report shall be sent to the Division of Historical Resources. The County shall cooperate fully with direction from the Division of Historical Resources on the protection and management of archaeological and historical resources. The management of these resources will comply with the provisions of Chapter 267, Florida Statutes, specifically Sections 267.061 2 (a) and (b).

The collection of artifacts or the disturbance of archaeological and historic sites within Winchester Head will be prohibited unless prior authorization has been obtained from the Collier County Board of County Commissioners and the Department of State, Division of Historical Resources.

4.5 Public Access

Public access will not be addressed until a larger percentage of contiguous parcels within Winchester Head are acquired or parcels are consolidated, and a Final Management Plan is prepared.

4.6 Site Monitoring Plan

Monitoring of the site shall consist of a walk-through by staff at bi-annual intervals. Any treatment and retreatment of exotic vegetation is dependent on the amount of contiguous acreage acquired. Conservation Collier shall be responsible for this treatment with tasks contracted out as deemed necessary. Prior to any land management activities, photo monitoring points will also be established at strategic locations within the project area to monitor vegetation communities.

4.7 Partnerships

The South Florida Water Management District Big Cypress Basin may have interest in partnership and will be approached to determine interest. Conservation Collier will work closely with the Growth Management Division as the Watershed Management Plan projects come to fruition.

5.0 Exhibits

EXHIBIT 1: Location Map

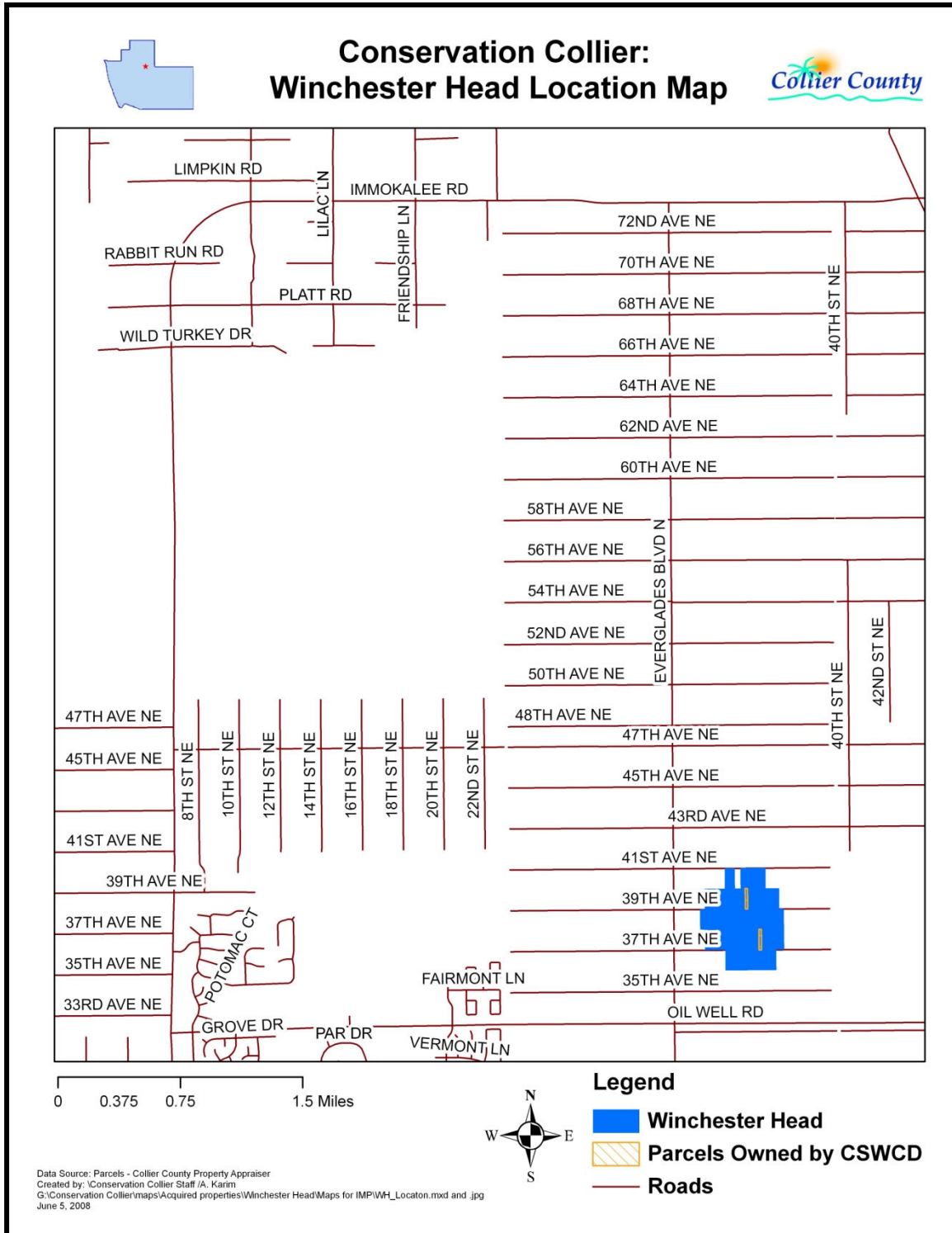


EXHIBIT 2: Aerial Map

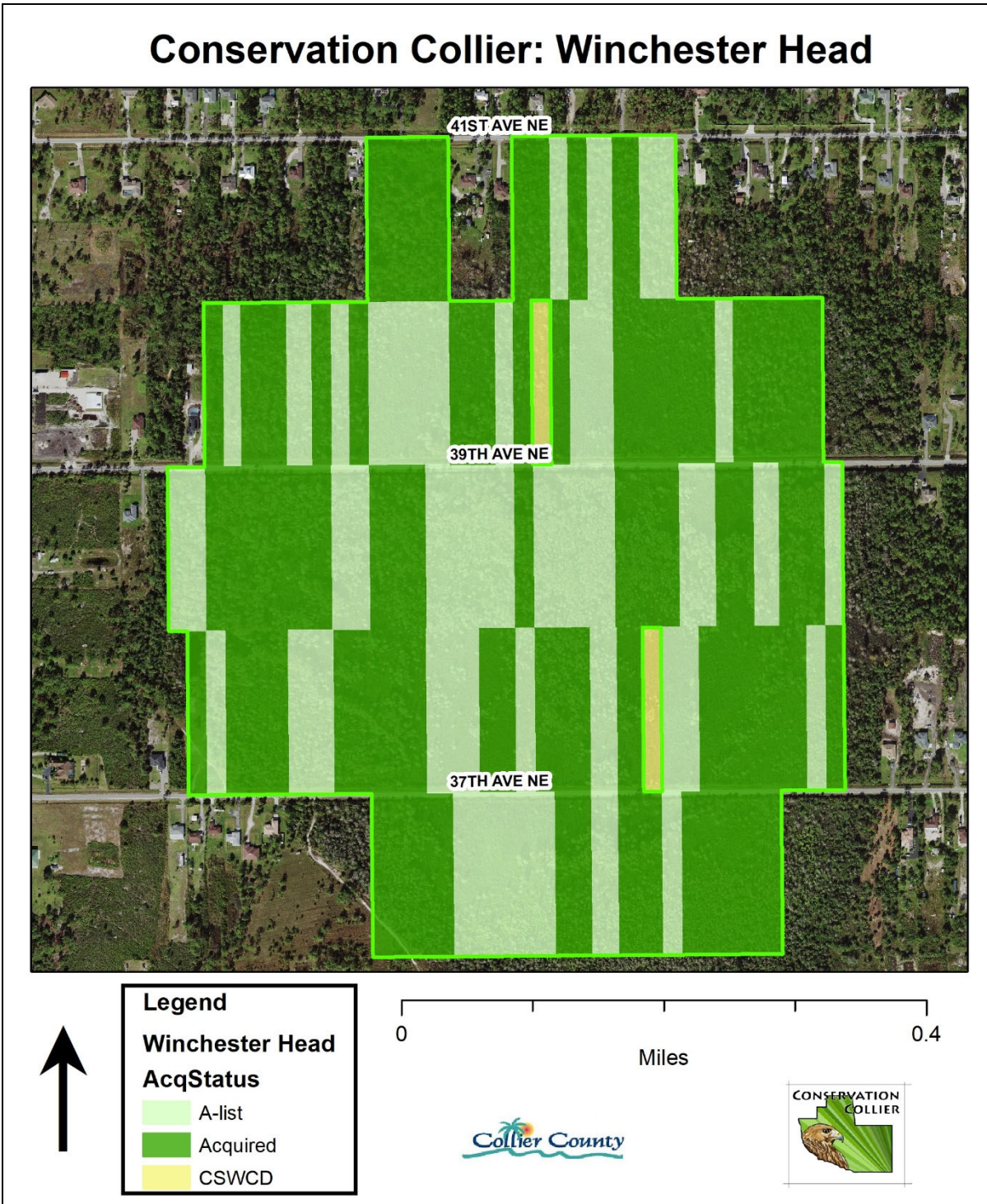


EXHIBIT 3: Winchester Head Boundary and Golden Gates Estates Tract Numbers

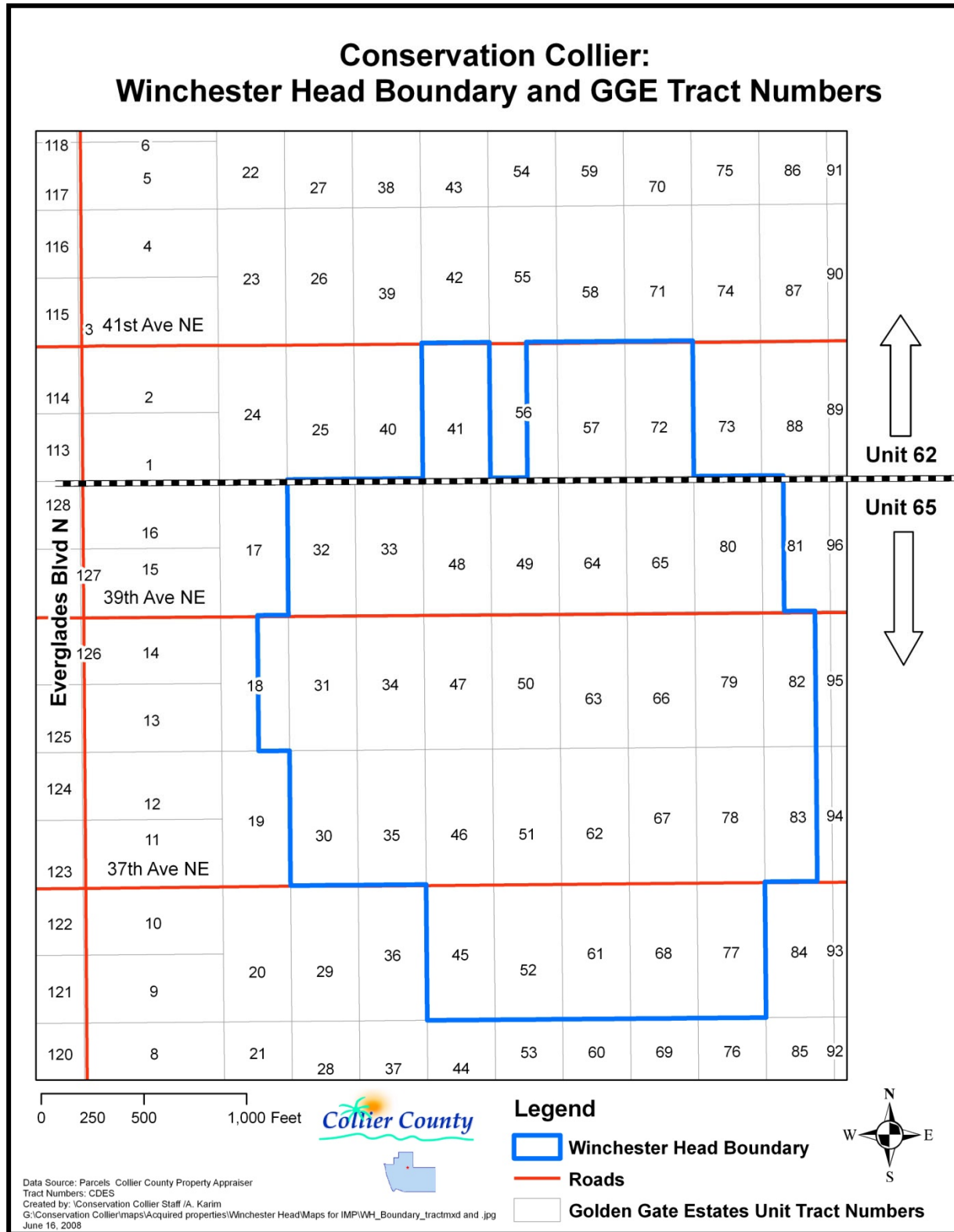


EXHIBIT 4: Golden Gates Estates Unit 62 Plat Map

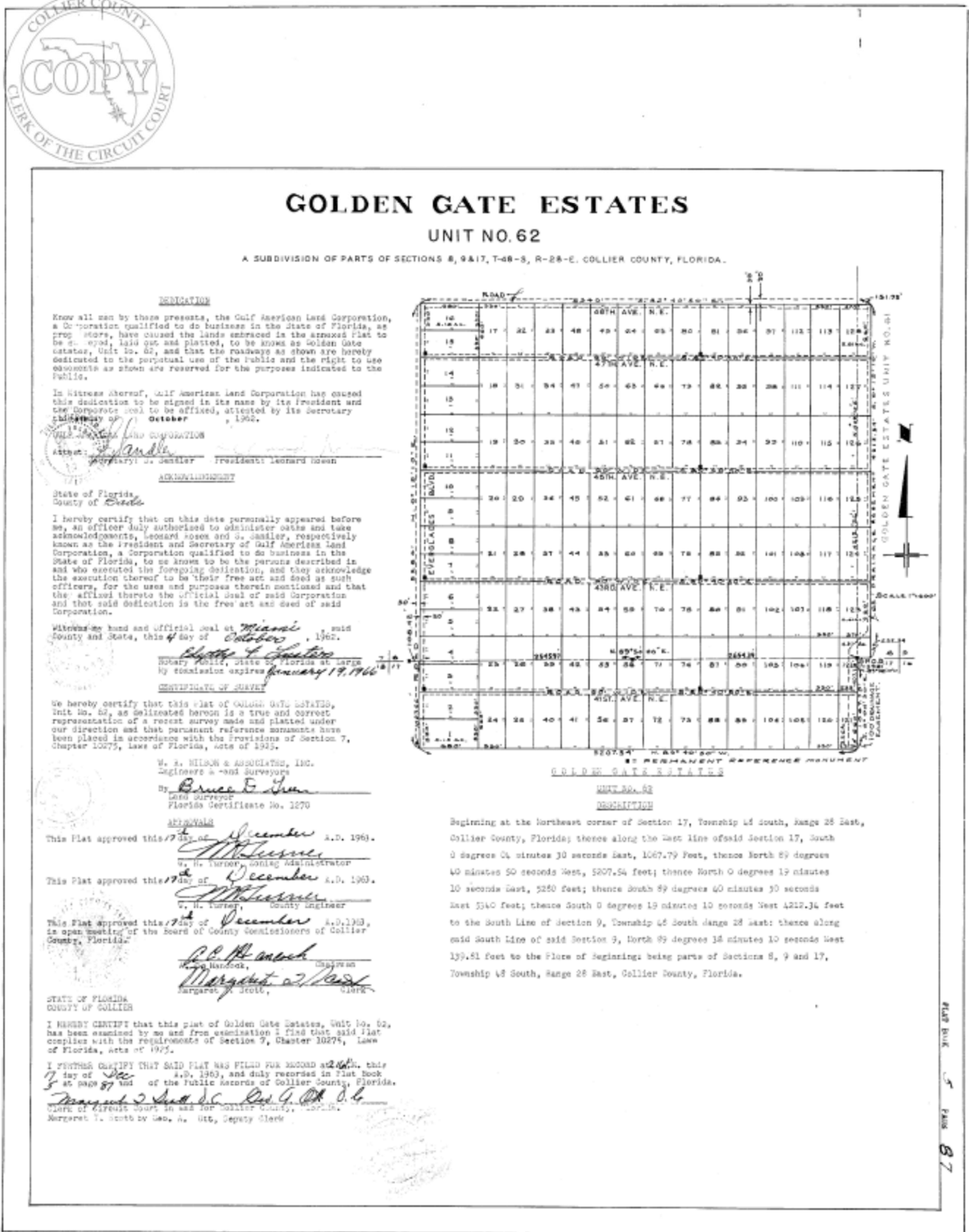


EXHIBIT 5: Golden Gates Estates Unit 65 Plat Map

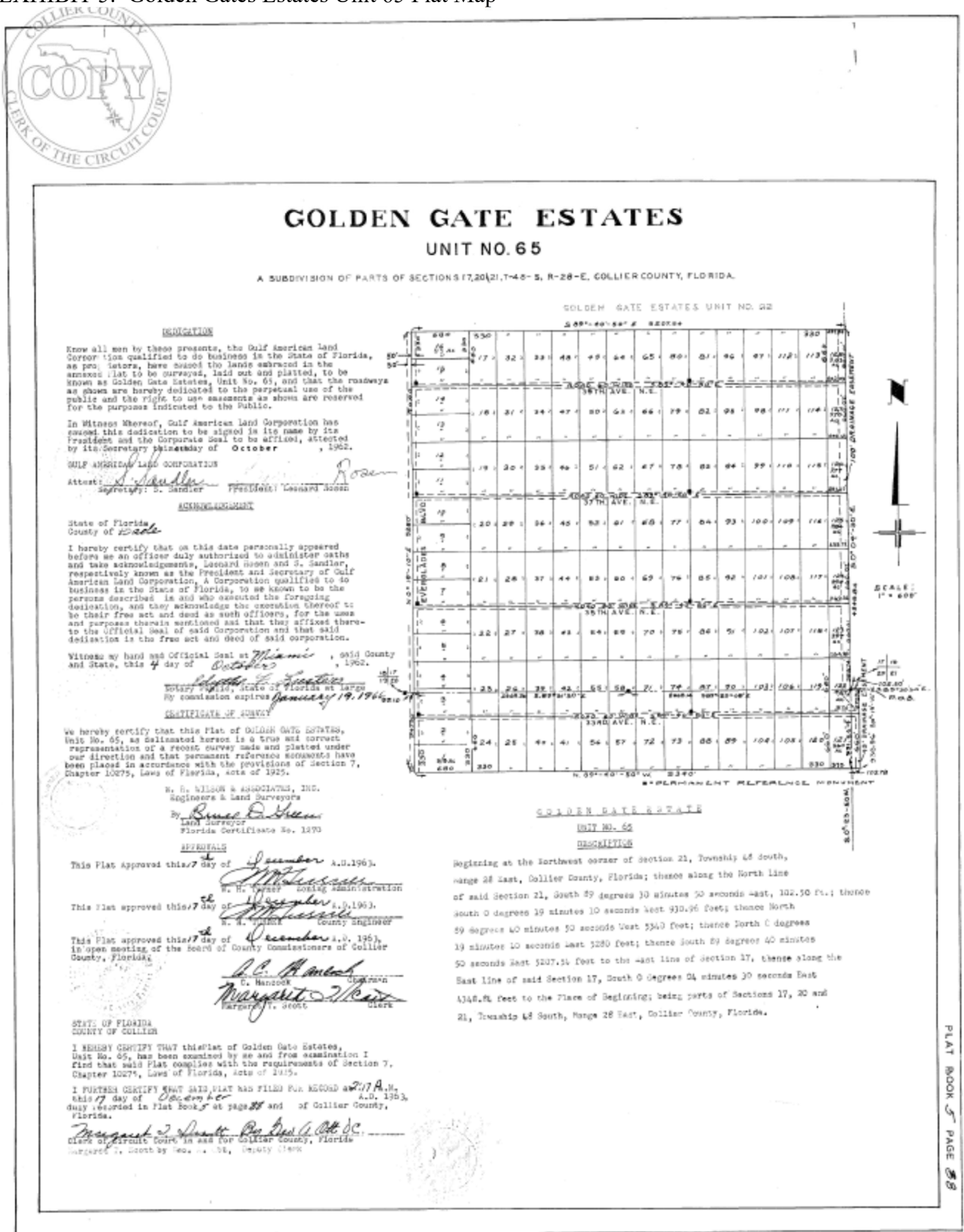


EXHIBIT 6: Winchester Head Light Detection and Ranging Map

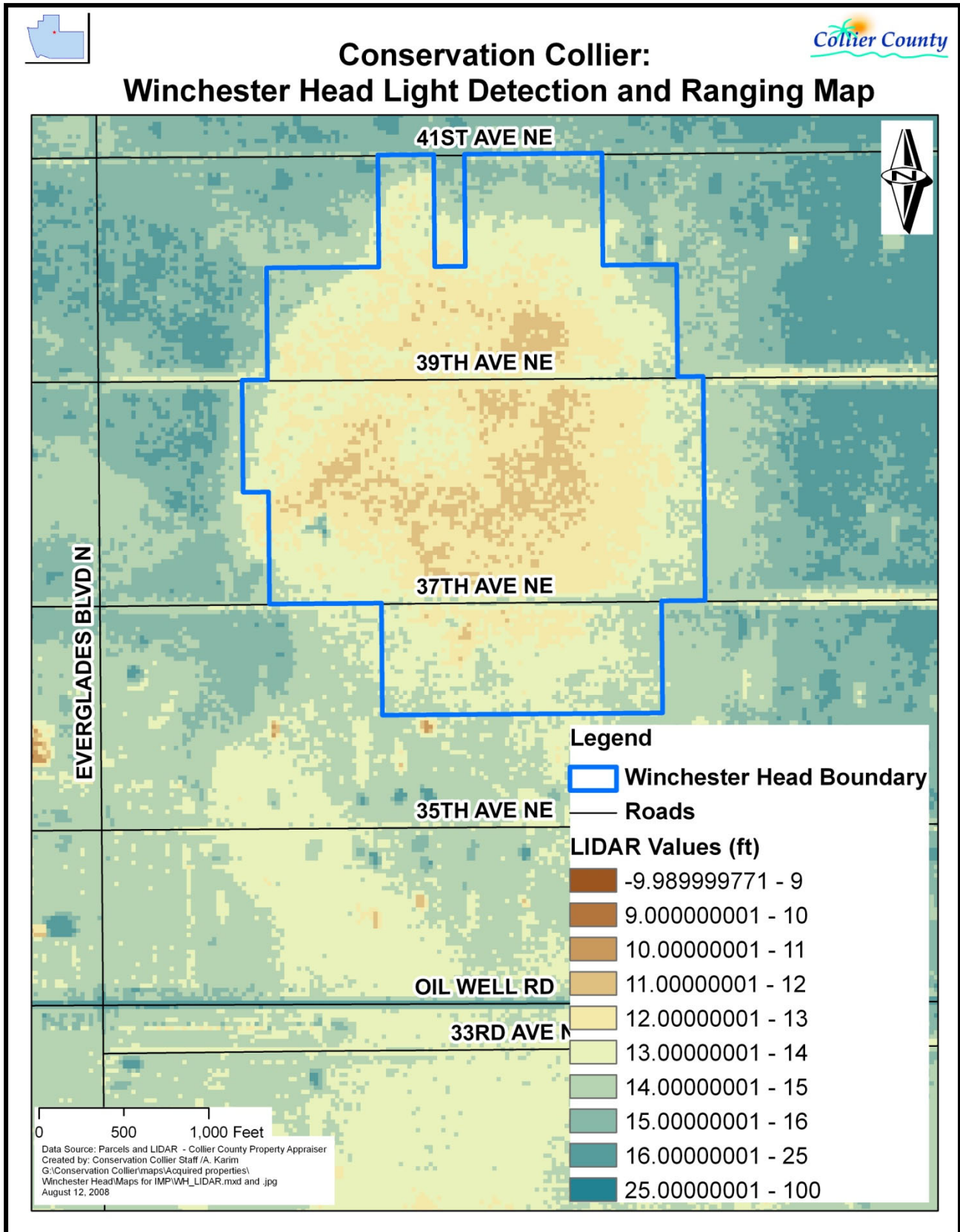


EXHIBIT 7: Location of the North Golden Gate Estates Flowway Restoration Project

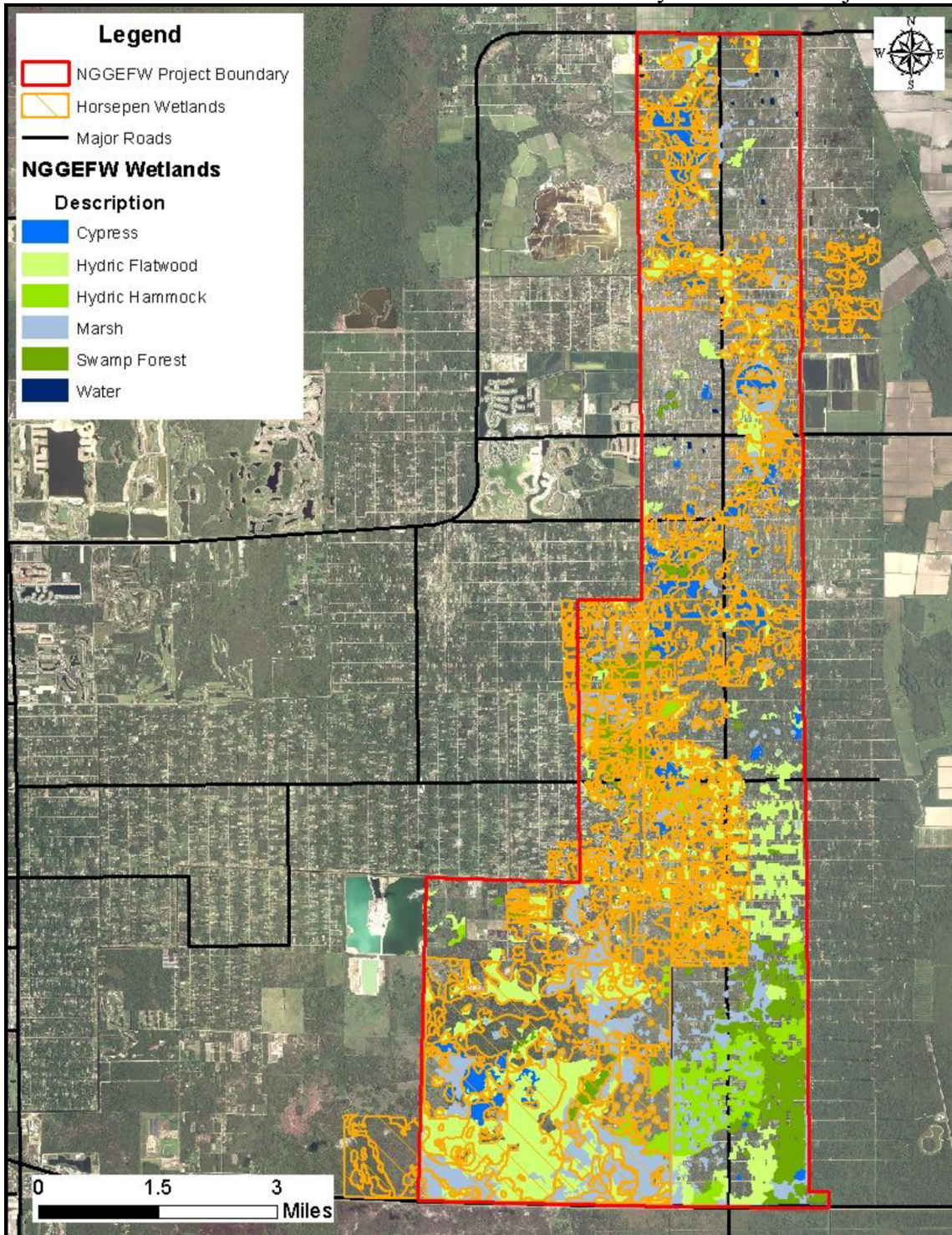


EXHIBIT 8: Estimated Cost Table

Management Element	Initial Cost	Annual Recurring Costs	Comments
Exotics Control - Over the entire project area	t.b.d	t.b.d	Exotic removal would be most cost effective when some amount of contiguous acreage can be assembled.
Exotics Control - For currently owned parcels	\$50,000	\$20,000	Exotic removal would be most cost effective when some amount of contiguous acreage could be assembled. Estimates are based on 20% exotics over currently owned scattered parcels - 80 acres
Raised boardwalk	t.b.d.	t.b.d.	Wish-list status. Current estimates run at \$550 per linear foot – not including design, permitting and construction. Grants can be sought to assist with costs in the future if funding is identified.
Trash Removal	t.b.d.	t.b.d.	Large items to be done on a lump sum contract basis with cost being site specific. Staff does not recommend providing trash barrels at this time.
Signs	\$800	n/a	4 conservation area & prohibited activities signs (\$200 each)
Total	\$50,800	\$20,000	Total estimated costs cover entire project area

EXHIBIT 9: Estimated Implementation Timeline

	Monitoring Site Visit	Seek Partnerships	Completion of final management plan (or update of interim management plan if acquired parcels are still scattered)
Jan 20	x		
April 20	x		
July 20	x		
Oct 20	x		
Jan 21	x	x	
April 21	x		
July 21	x		
Oct 21	x		
Jan 22	x		
April 22	x		
July 22	x		
Oct 22	x		
Jan 23	x		
April 23	x		
July 23	x		
Oct 23	x		
Jan 24	x		
Apr 24	x		
July 24	x		
Oct 24	x		
Jan 25	x		
April 25	x		
July 25	x		
Oct 25	x		x

February 2023

*Conservation Collier: Winchester Head Project
Extended IMP*