



Levy County 2050 Plan Update
Workshop #4 – Conservation, Coastal, Springs &
Recreation/Open Space

Community-Driven Planning for a Resilient, Thriving Future

February 3, 2026



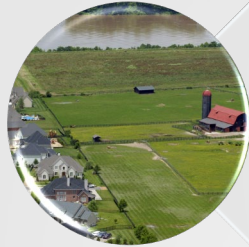
Welcome & Overview

Purpose of today's Workshop

- Top resources/places to protect
- Top strategies to prioritize
- Coastal resilience action preferences
- Recreation & access priorities + partnership ideas



The Planning Challenge



Population shifts, rural pressures,
and infrastructure needs



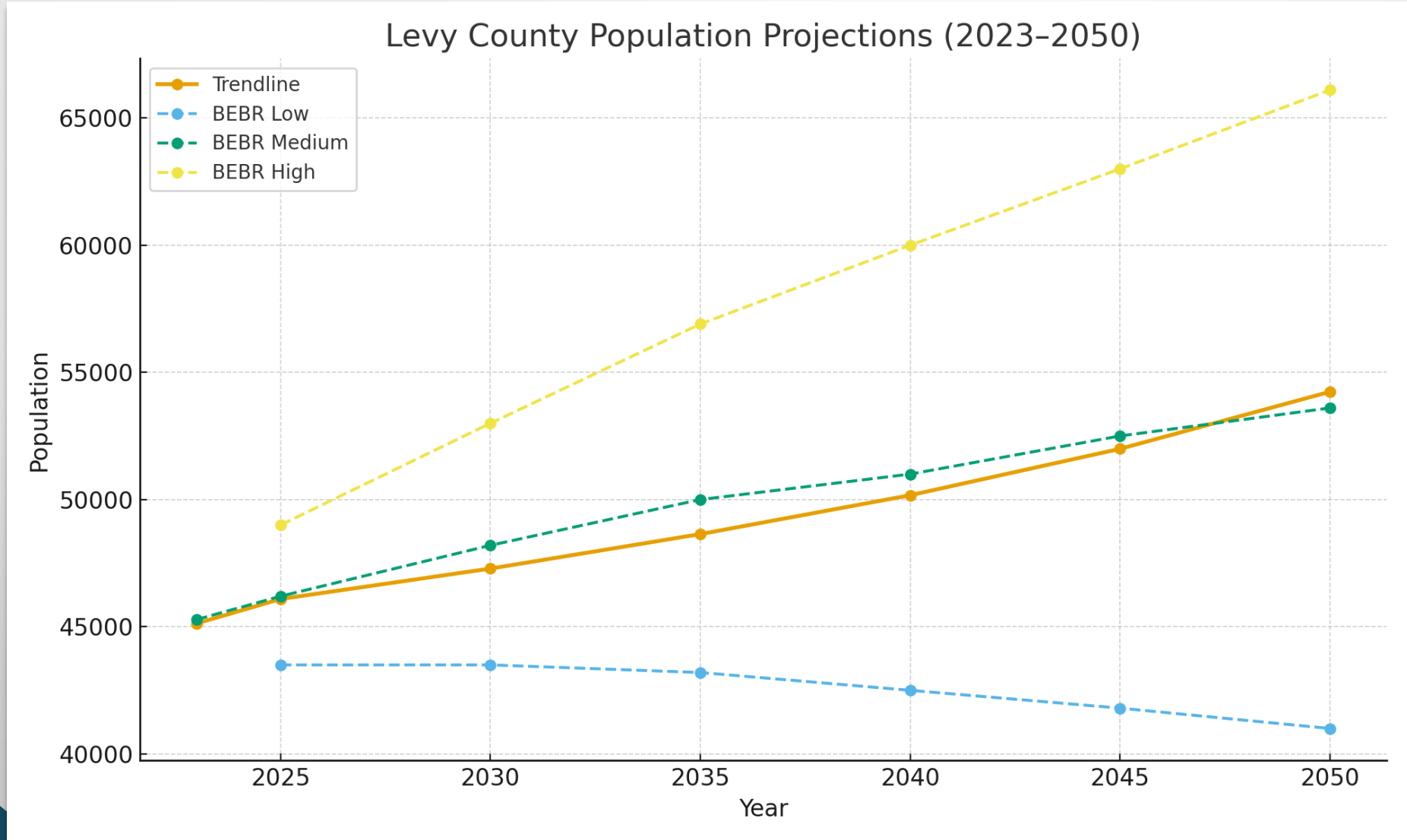
Economic resilience and
conservation balance



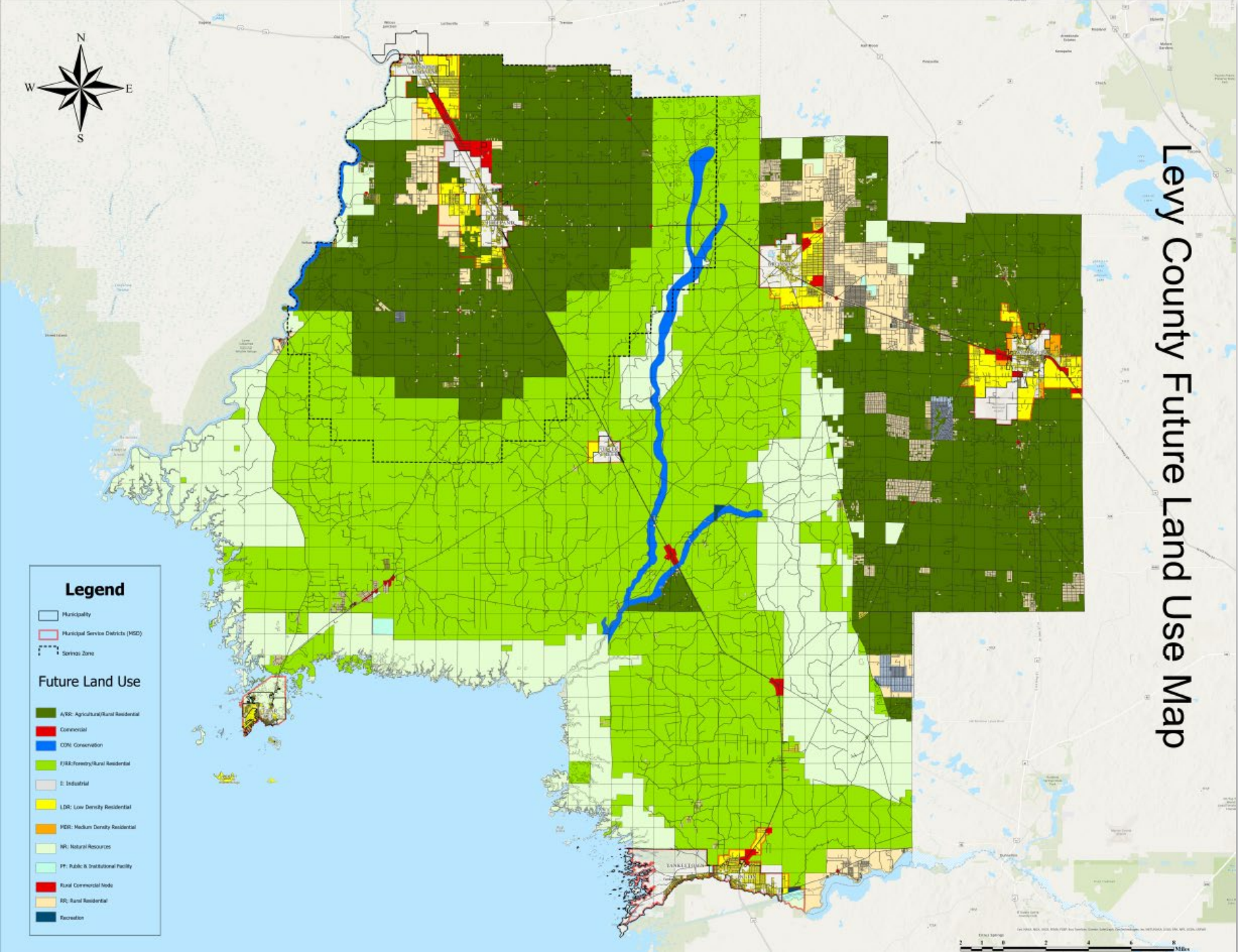
How should Levy grow without
losing what makes it special?

Population Projections

Levy's growth is steady, but pressures are increasing around the County



Levy County Future Land Use Map



Unincorporated Land Use Distribution

Future Land Use Category	Acreage	Percentage	Density (Units/Acre)
Natural Resources and Conservation (NR-CON)	123,767	18.0%	0
Forestry/Rural Residential (F/RR)	291,888	42.4%	1U/20 acres
Agricultural/Rural Residential (A/RR)	223,130	32.4%	1U/10 acres
Rural Residential (RR)	27,127	4.0%	1U/3 acres
Urban Low-Density Residential (LDR)	12,920	1.9%	1U/1 acre
Urban Medium Density Residential (MDR)	1,281	0.2%	5U/1 acre
Commercial (C)	2,226	0.32%	N/A
Industrial (I)	629.66	0.09%	N/A
Recreation (REC)	160	0.02%	0
Public & Institutional Facilities (PF)	4,364	0.64%	0



Vacant Acreage by Future Land Use Category

Future Land Use Category	Vacant Acreage	Percent Vacant
Natural Resource and Conservation (NR-CON)	122,664.21	99.11%
Forestry/Rural Residential (F/RR)	263,758.02	90.36%
Agricultural/Rural Residential (A/RR)	147,249.98	65.99%
Rural Residential (RR)	13,615.24	50.19%
Urban Low-Density Residential (LDR)	6094.87	47.17%
Urban Medium Density Residential (MDR)	624.87	48.80%
Urban High-Density Residential (HDR)	0	0
Commercial (C)	1286.48	57.81%
Industrial (I)	476.74	76.10%
Recreation (REC)	159.97	100.00%
Public & Institutional Facilities (PF)	4300.94	98.55%

What We Heard So Far (Survey Highlights)

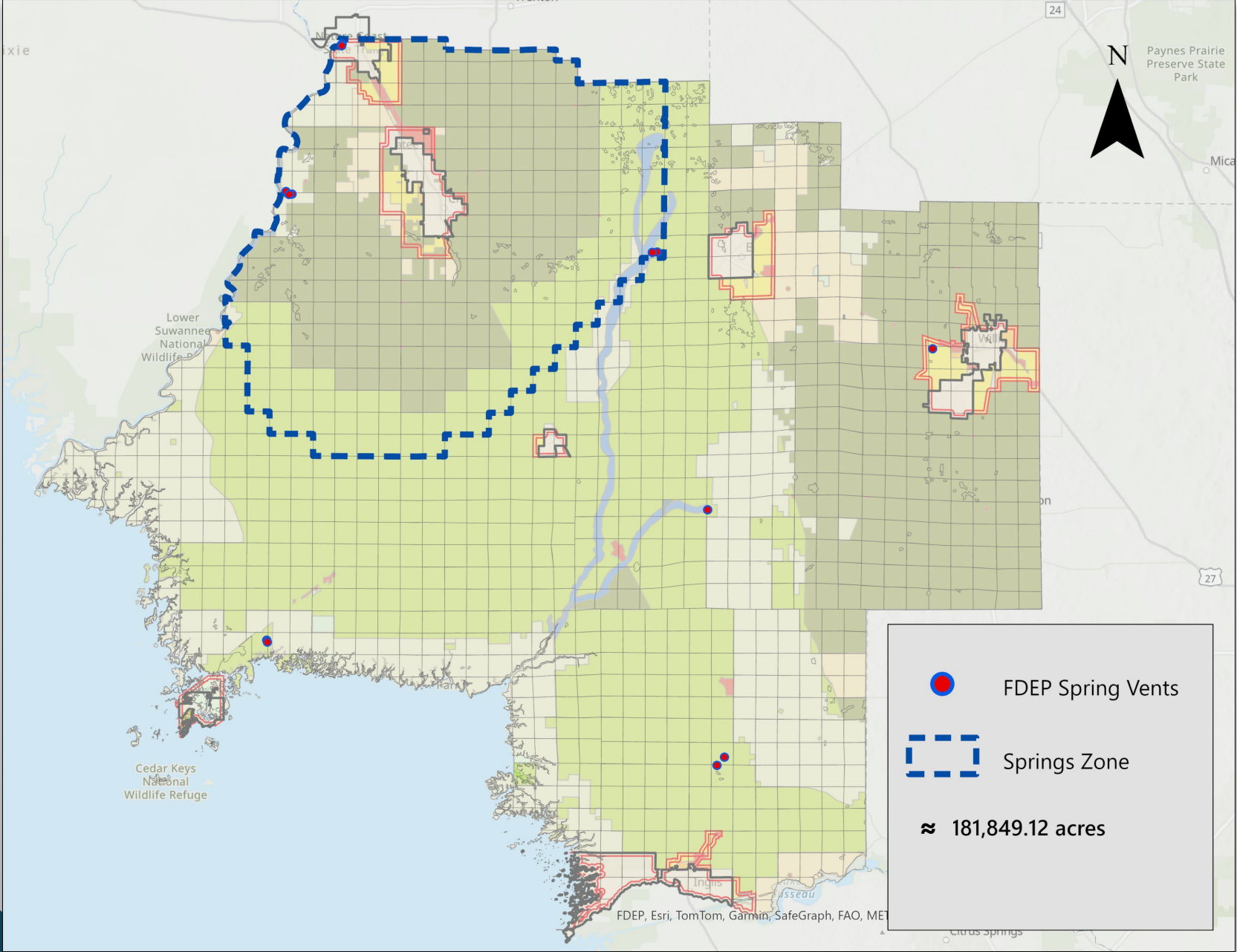
- **Community Support:** 86% of residents say protecting springs and rivers is a top priority.
- **Youth Voice:** Our students want more trails, bike routes, and safe outdoor spaces.
- **Conservation:** 78% want to see wildlife corridors conserved.

Springs Protection – A Legacy Priority

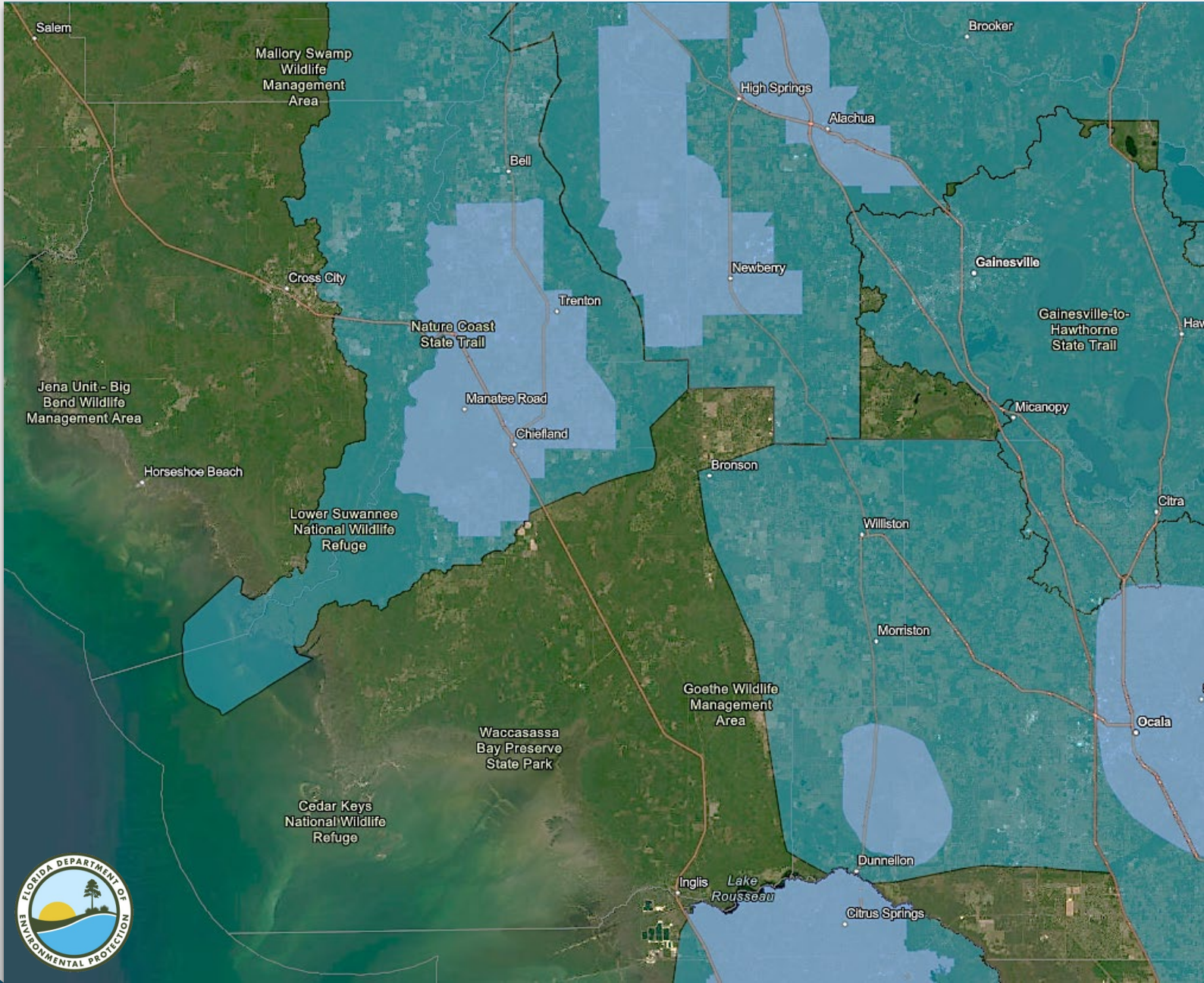
- **Key Update:** Implementation of the **Springs Protection Zone (SPZ)** for Fanning and Manatee springsheds.
- **New Standards:** 10mg/l nitrogen treatment standard for septic /wastewater.
- **Protective Setbacks:** 300ft from springs, 150ft from spring runs.
- **Buffer Widths:** A minimum 25-foot, with an average of 50-foot, natural, undisturbed vegetated buffer adjacent to karst features or surface waters



Springs Protection – A Legacy Priority



Florida State Springs Priority Focus Areas



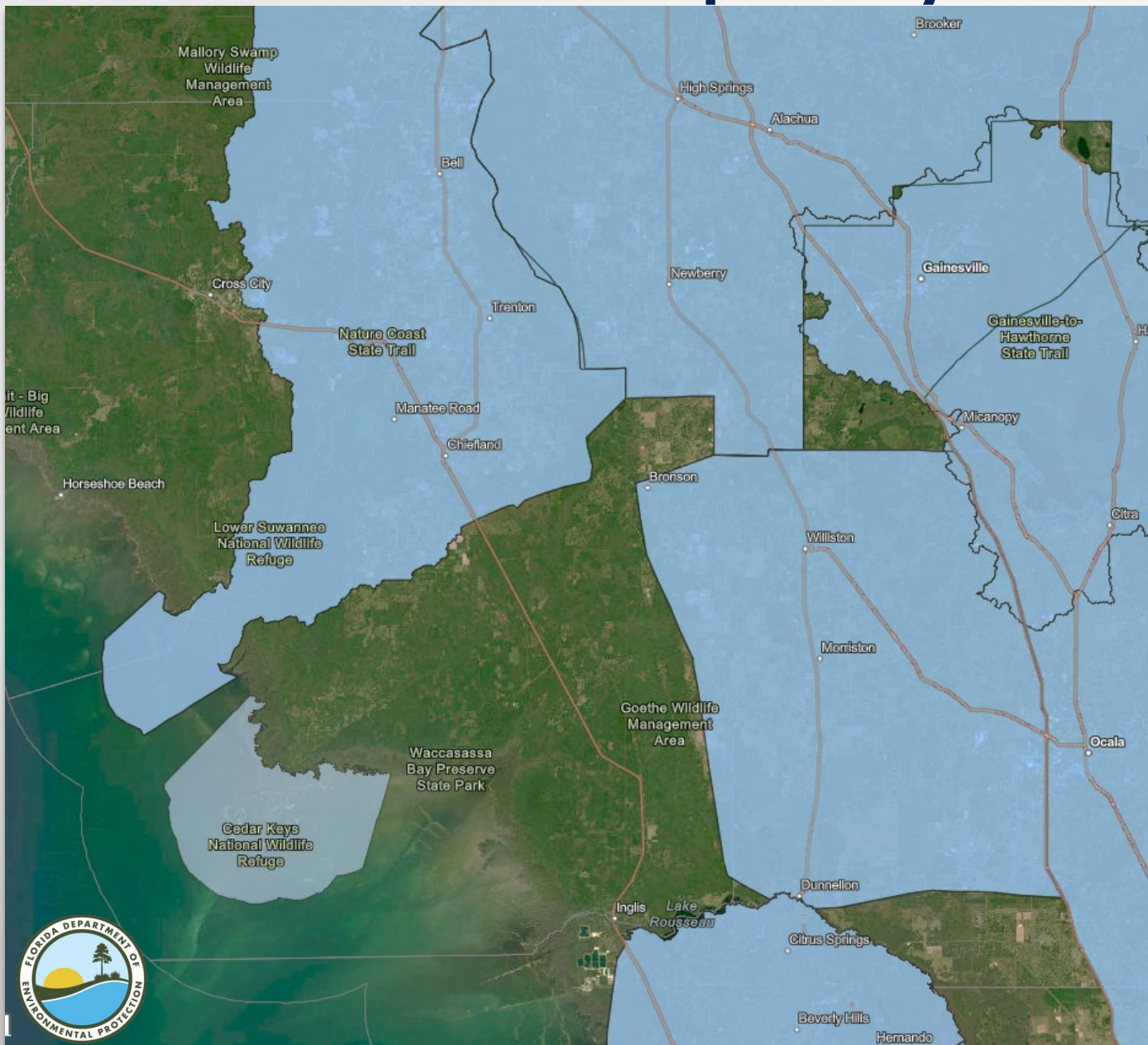
Springs Priority Focus Areas



Enhanced Nutrient Reducing Onsite Sewage Treatment and Disposal Systems

(ENR-OSTDS)

Effective July 1, 2023, HB 1379 requires that in all impacted areas, applicants for new septic systems serving lots of one acre or less must install a nitrogen-reducing system (ENR-OSTDS) instead of a conventional septic system.



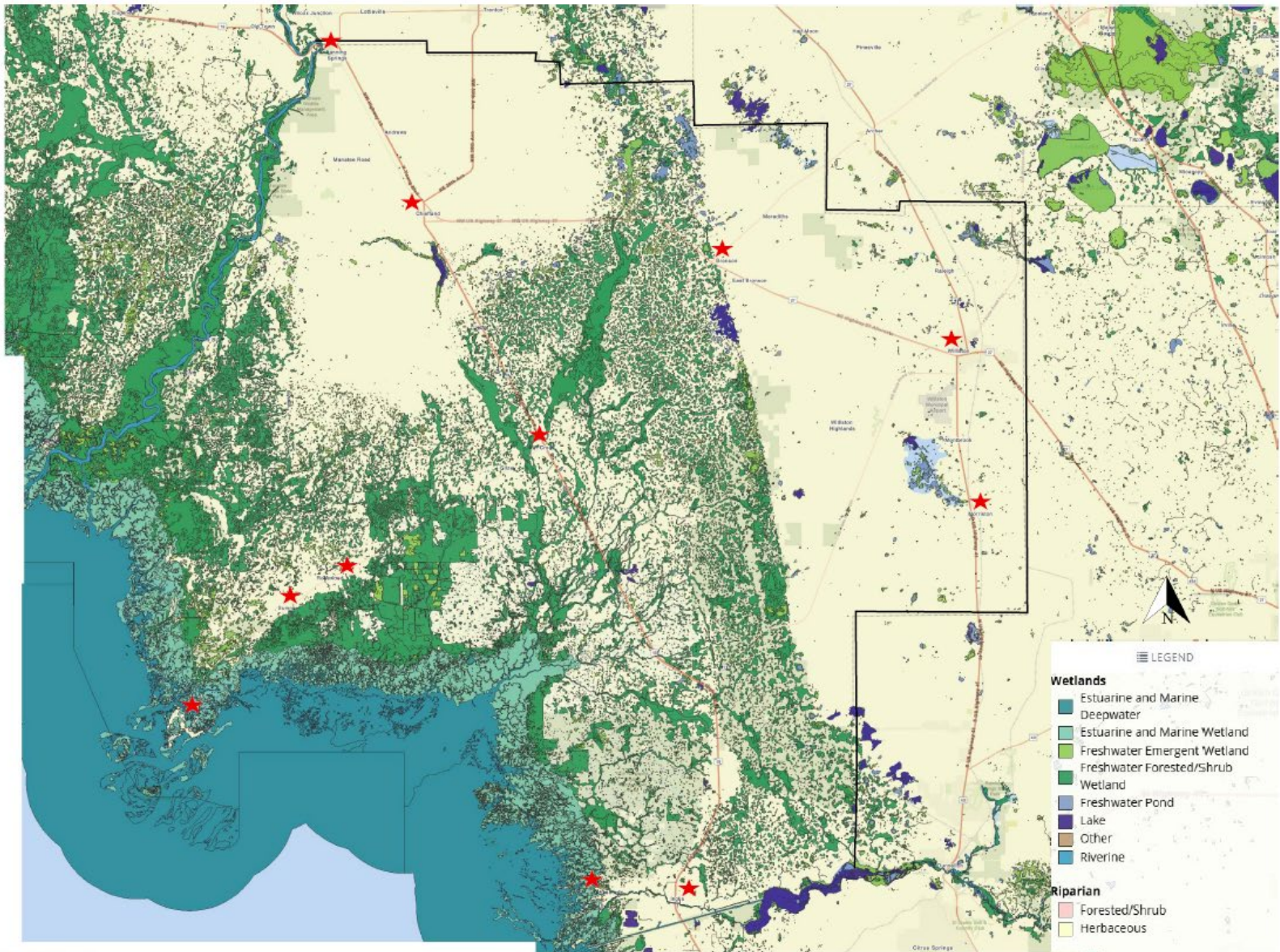
Conservation – Protecting the Rural Fabric

- **Environmentally Sensitive Lands (ESL):** Using the overlay map to direct growth away from wetlands and floodplains.
- **Mining Protections:** Add new language to the Conservation Element addressing the compatibility of mining operations with rural residential areas and establishing adequate buffer requirements.

Environmental Constraints

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: National Wetlands Inventory

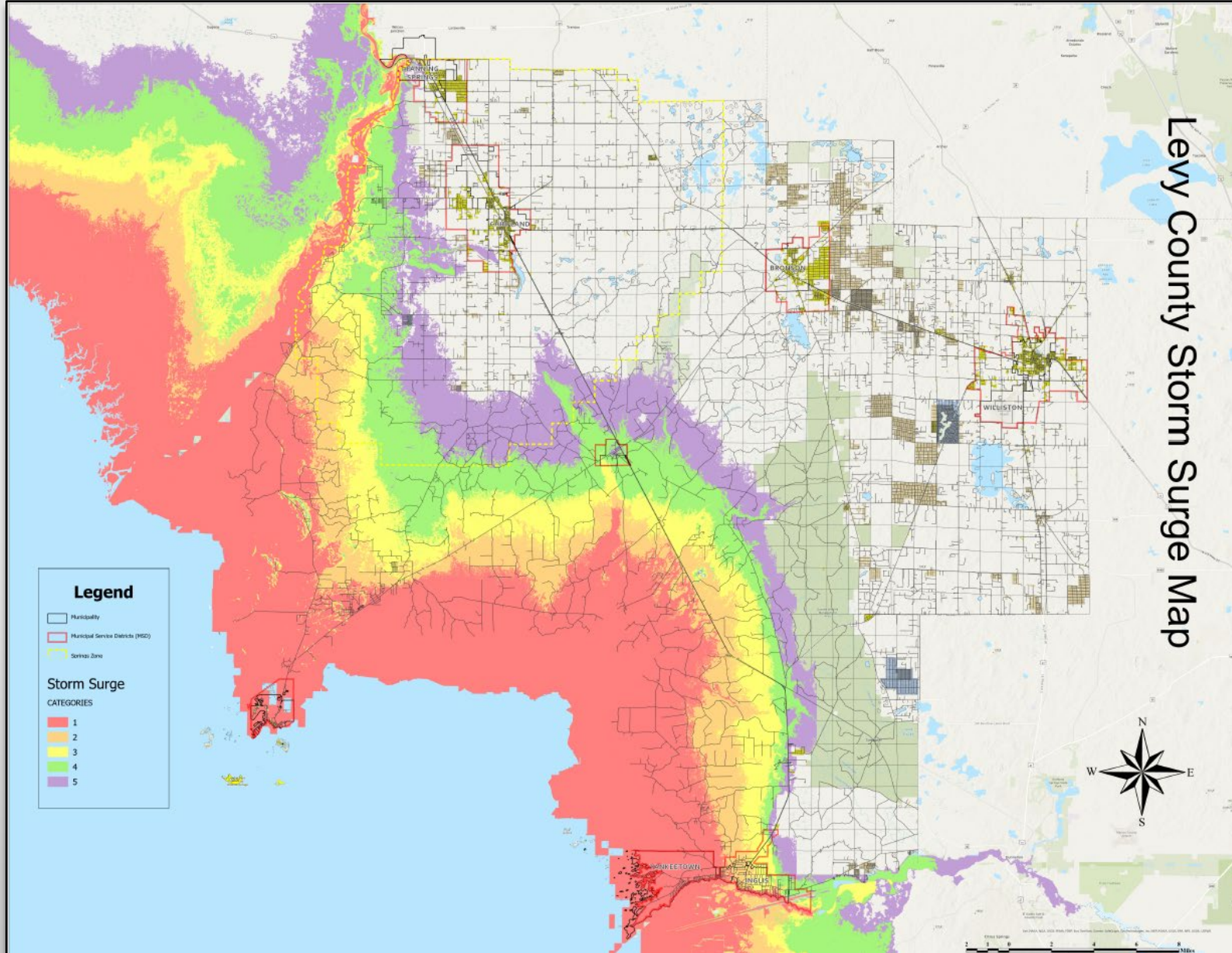
Levy County Wetlands



Coastal Management & Resilience

- **Addressing Hazards: Storm Surge**
- **Sea Level Rise:** New policies (Objective 14) for high-tide event and storm surge engineering solutions.
- **Vulnerable Areas:** Gulf Hammock, Fowler's Bluff, Rosewood, and Sumner.

Coastal Hazard Constraints



Coastal Resilience

Goal: reduce future risk while supporting existing communities

- Define and apply Coastal High Hazard Area (CHHA) consistently in land use decisions
- Limit new intensity in the highest-risk areas; avoid public subsidies for new development in CHHA
- Redevelopment standards: elevation, floodproofing, setbacks, natural infrastructure
- Post-disaster redevelopment that reduces repetitive loss and future risk
- Living shorelines + marsh restoration where feasible; protect public access and working waterfronts

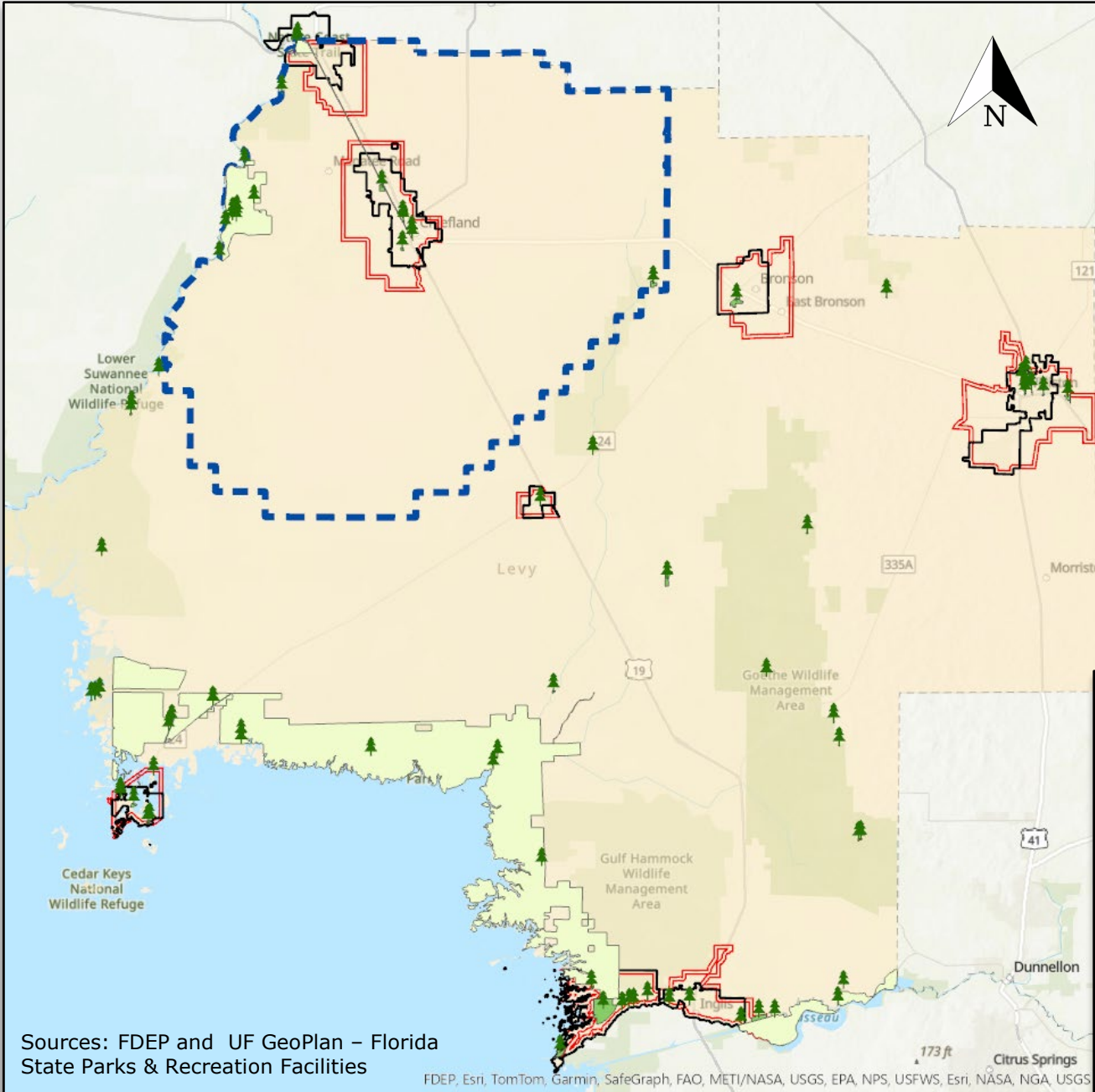
Recreation & Open Space

- This category provides for publicly or privately owned recreational sites for active or passive recreational activities, including land used for open space, recreational corridors, activities and facilities, neighborhood and community parks, golf courses, and spectator sport facilities.
- The minimum parcel size is five (5) acres. The maximum lot coverage is ten percent (10%).
- This land use is permitted within a Municipal Service District or within rural areas outside of the Municipal Service District boundary.

Source: Levy County Comprehensive Plan



Recreation & Open Space



Legend

- Municipality
- Municipal Service Districts (MSD)
- Springs Zone

Levy County Parks

- State Parks
- County, Local Parks

Sources: FDEP and UF GeoPlan – Florida State Parks & Recreation Facilities

FDEP, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USFWS, Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS



Recreation & Open Space – Meeting Community Needs

- **Park Standard:** Maintaining a commitment to 2 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents to prevent overcrowding as the County grows.
- **Neighborhood Focus:** Prioritizing "Neighborhood Parks" (minimum 5 acres) within walking or biking distance of residential areas.
- **Open Space Goal:** A high-standard target of 100 acres of open space per 1,000 residents to preserve the "rural feel" that 69% of residents identified as a top priority.
- **New Initiatives:** Supporting the Big Bend Paddling Trail - connecting the Suwannee, Wekiva, and Withlacoochee Rivers to the Gulf (Eco Tourism opportunities), and connecting schools to parks via multi-use trails.
- **Youth Survey:** More recreation options; trails, sports fields/courts, parks (including skate/BMX), and arts/creative spaces.
- **Access:** Improving public access to the Gulf and rivers.

Recreation & Open Space

- **Safe Routes to School:** Expanding sidewalks and lighting near schools to address the top safety concern identified by Levy's students.
- **The Blue & Green Network:** Creating a connected system of trails that link neighborhoods, schools, and parks to reduce dependence on cars.
- **Springs & Rivers:** 37% of residents identified Springs, River, and Gulf access improvements as the #1 investment for quality of life.
- **Public Amenities:** Investigating the feasibility of new public fishing piers and boat docks in coordination with state and federal agencies.
- **Modernizing Facilities:** Upgrading existing boat ramps (e.g., Shell Mound and Bird Creek) with better electricity, water, and observation decks.
- **Resource Protection:** Designing all recreational sites to protect manatee habitats and environmentally sensitive shoreline vegetation.

Recreation & Open Space

Smart Partnerships & Efficiency:

- **Shared Spaces:** Developing interlocal agreements with the Levy County School Board to allow public use of school recreational facilities (playgrounds and fields) after hours.
- **Collocation:** Planning new libraries, community centers, and parks in the same locations to maximize infrastructure and parking use.
- **Developer Responsibility:** Requiring larger-scale residential developments to dedicate land for on-site recreation rather than placing the burden solely on the County.
- **Preservation Incentives:** Using the "Greenbelt Law" and conservation easements to meet open space standards without requiring public purchase of all land.

Priority Resources to Protect

Example:

- Springs & spring runs
- Aquifer recharge areas
- Rivers, wetlands & floodplains
- Estuaries & coastal marshes
- Wildlife habitat & corridors
- Working forests & farmland

Strategies

Example:

- Springshed protection standards
- Conservation easements/land acquisition
- Cluster/conservation subdivisions
- Septic-to-sewer or advanced septic near springs
- Riparian buffers & living shorelines
- Protect working waterfronts & public access

Key Takeaways

- **Springs Protection Zone (SPZ):** Moving from general guidelines to a dedicated protection zone with a 10mg/l nitrogen standard for all new wastewater systems.
- **Cleaner Water:** High-performance treatment standards to stop algae growth and keep our springs blue.
- **Safer Coastlines:** Identifying risks today so we can fund infrastructure hardening and home protection tomorrow.
- **Resilience = Resources:** Formally identifying Gulf Hammock, Fowler's Bluff, Rosewood, and Sumner as vulnerable areas to secure state and federal mitigation grants.
- **Active Lifestyle:** A future of connected trails, paddling routes, and "walkable" neighborhood parks.
- **Protecting the Rural Fabric - Growth in the Right Places:** Using the ESL (Environmentally Sensitive Lands) Overlay to strictly direct higher-density growth away from floodplains and toward existing towns and encouraging infill.
- **Wildlife Corridors:** Conserving the connected forest systems that make Levy County unique in Florida.



THANK YOU

QUESTIONS?

