

# **PROTECTED SPECIES ASSESSMENT**

## **SONOMA PRESERVE Desoto County, Florida**

**June 2018**

**Prepared by:**



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## **INTRODUCTION**

The following assessment has been prepared to identify onsite vegetative communities and address wildlife species listed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) as endangered, threatened, or species of special concern which may be utilizing the subject property.

The subject property is located in Sections 32 and 33, Township 39S, Range 23E within Desoto County, Florida. More specifically, the property is located east of King's Highway (C.R. 769), north of Deep Creek Boulevard and west of the Peace River in southern Desoto County. Please refer to the attached Location Map.

## **SITE CONDITIONS**

Site inspections were conducted by qualified staff ecologists in June 2018. During the inspections, temperatures ranged from 75° - 90° F, winds ranged from calm to 8 mph, and skies were clear to overcast.

## **VEGETATIVE COMMUNITIES**

Field observations, in conjunction with the Desoto County Soil Survey and aerial photographs, were used to develop a map of the vegetative communities onsite. The vegetative communities were identified and classified utilizing the Florida Land Use Cover and Forms Classification System (FLUCCS). The following table displays the vegetative associations found on the subject property. A description of the communities is also included. Please refer to the attached Protected Species Assessment Map.

<b>FLUCCS ID</b>	<b>FLUCCS DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ACREAGE</b>
211	Improved Pasture	1.92
321	Palmetto Prairie	22.75
411	Pine Flatwoods	223.10
427	Live Oak	38.24
618	Shrub Wetland	14.72
630	Wetland Forested, Mixed	20.59
641	Freshwater Marsh	152.98
643	Wet Prairie	8.21
742	Borrow Area	3.19
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>485.70</b>

#### FLUCCS 211 – Improved Pasture

This upland habitat has had the majority of the native groundcover removed and is being utilized as active cattle pasture. Vegetative species present include: Bahia grass (*Paspalum notatum*), ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*), beggar's ticks (*Bidens alba*), false buttonweed (*Spermacoce sp.*), dog fennel (*Eupatorium capillifolium*), flatsedges (*Cyperus spp.*), grapevine (*Vitis rotundifolia*), bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*), flattop goldenrod (*Euthamia caroliniana*), and blackroot (*Pterocaulon pycnostachyum*).

#### FLUCCS 321 – Palmetto Prairie

This upland habitat lacks a significant canopy with only scattered slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) and live oak (*Quercus virginiana*) present. Midstory and groundcover species present include: saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*), wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*), rusty lyonia (*Lyonia ferruginea*), fetterbush (*Lyonia fruticosa*), blackroot, grapevine, greenbriar (*Smilax sp.*), wiregrass (*Aristida stricta*), blackroot, tar flower (*Bejaria racemosa*), wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*), common paw-paw (*Asimina triloba*), greenbriar (*Smilax sp.*), wiregrass (*Aristida stricta*), winged sumac (*Rhus copallinum*), beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), blackberry (*Rubus sp.*), and prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia humifusa*).

#### FLUCCS 411 – Pine Flatwoods

This upland habitat contains a canopy comprised of slash pine. Midstory and groundcover species present include: saw palmetto, blackroot, wax myrtle, gallberry (*Ilex glabra*), fetterbush, grapevine, rusty lyonia, wiregrass, greenbriar, ground blueberry (*Vaccinium myrsinites*), and runner oak (*Quercus pumila*).

#### FLUCCS 427 – Live Oak

This upland habitat contains a canopy comprised of live oak and cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*). Midstory and groundcover species present include: wax myrtle, saw palmetto, grapevine, gallberry, greenbriar, beautyberry, rusty lyonia, ground blueberry, road grass (*Eleocharis baldwinii*), carpet grass (*Digitaria sp.*), and wiregrass.

#### FLUCCS 618 – Shrub Wetland

This wetland habitat contains a dense midstory comprised of wax myrtle, buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), Carolina willow (*Salix caroliniana*), and saltbush (*Baccharis halimifolia*). Groundcover species present include: Virginia chainfern (*Woodwardia virginiana*), road grass, camphorweed (*Pluchea odorata*), smartweed (*Polygonum punctatum*), sawgrass (*Cladium jamaicense*), Asiatic coinwort (*Centella asiatica*), St. John's wort (*Hypericum fasciculatum*), buttonweed (*Diodia virginiana*), grassy arrowhead (*Sagittaria graminea*), flatsedges, and beakrushes (*Rhynchospora spp.*).

#### FLUCCS 630 – Wetland Forested, Mixed

This wetland habitat contains a canopy comprised of laurel oak (*Quercus laurifolia*), cabbage palm, water oak (*Quercus nigra*), red maple, and red bay (*Persea borbonia*). Midstory and groundcover species present include: greenbriar, creeping seedbox (*Ludwigia repens*), water hyssop (*Bacopa monnieri*), torpedo grass (*Panicum repens*), camphorweed, little blue maidencane (*Amphicarpum muhlenbergianum*), swamp fern (*Blechnum serrulatum*), and poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*).

#### FLUCCS 641 – Freshwater Marsh

This wetland habitat lacks a significant canopy. Midstory and groundcover species present include: sand cordgrass (*Spartina bakeri*), maidencane (*Panicum hemitomon*), pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*), alligator flag

(*Thalia geniculata*), duck potato (*Sagittaria lancifolia*), swamp fern, St. John's wort, creeping seedbox, water hyssop, Virginia chainfern, buttonbush, smartweed, and little blue maidencane.

#### FLUCCS 643 – Wet Prairie

This wetland habitat lacks a significant canopy. Midstory and groundcover species present include: sand cordgrass, grassy arrowhead, Virginia chainfern, rush fuirena (*Fuirena scirpoidea*), soft rush (*Juncus effuses*), bluestem (*Schizachrium sp.*), road grass, beakrushes, maidencane, little blue maidencane, yellow-eyed grass (*Xyris sp.*), and St. John's wort.

#### FLUCCS 742 – Borrow Area

This surface water habitat is primarily comprised of open water. Shoreline vegetation present includes: torpedo grass, Asiatic coinwort, water pennywort (*Hydrocotyle umbellata*), water hyssop, mermaidweed (*Proserpinaca palustris*), camphorweed, maidencane, and smartweed.

### **LISTED SPECIES SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

To provide approximately 80 percent coverage of the site, both linear and nonlinear overlapping transects were completed across the parcel per FWC guidelines. Transects were spaced approximately 30-60 feet apart depending on the visibility within the vegetative association being surveyed. Evidence of protected species was gathered through both direct observation and through observation of signs such as tracks, nests, burrows, and fecal material. If evidence of utilization by a protected species which may require permitting prior to development of the subject property was observed, an aerial photograph was marked depicting the approximate location. In addition, a search of available online resources was conducted to reveal the previously documented presence of listed species which may be utilizing the subject property. These resources included, but were not limited to, the following: FWC Eagle Nest Locator Database; FWS Panther Consultation Area Map(s); and FWS Wood Stork Colony Map(s). In the event that the site contained suitable habitat for a protected species, or if the site is within close proximity to a verified sighting or consultation area for a protected species, additional scrutiny was given during the inspection relative to that specific species.

### **LISTED SPECIES ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

Search of available online resources revealed that the subject property is located within an 18.6-mile radius designated as Core Foraging Area of several wood stork (*Mycteria americana*) nesting colonies. Each of the documented colonies appears to be greater than 2 miles from the subject property. Under current regulations, the proximity of the off-site nesting colonies is not likely to affect the future development of the subject property. However, any impacts which trigger federal review will likely lead to additional consultation relative to the species.

Search of available online resources revealed that the subject property is located within the Consultation Area of the crested caracara (*Caracara cheriway*). No evidence of nesting activity or utilization by the crested caracara was observed onsite. The crested caracara is not anticipated to be nesting within the subject property, and therefore, is not likely to affect the future development of the subject property. However, environmental regulatory agencies may require a species specific survey relative to the crested caracara prior to development of the property.

Search of available online resources revealed that the subject property is located within the Consultation Area of the Florida scrub jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*). The site lacks any habitat which would be classified as Type I, II or III scrub jay habitat. It is unlikely that the Florida scrub jay is utilizing the property and the species is unlikely to affect future development of the parcel. However, additional surveys and review relative to the species may be required prior to development of the property.

The subject parcel is located within the FWS Consultation Area of the Florida bonneted bat (*Eumops floridanus*). No evidence of utilization by the Florida bonneted bat was observed onsite during the site inspection. If future development of the subject property requires any federal authorizations or permits, consultation with the FWS may be triggered, requiring project review and approval by the FWS prior to development of the property.

The site contains upland habitats which are being utilized by the gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*). A total of 22 potentially occupied gopher tortoise burrows were observed during the survey. The approximate location of the burrows is shown on the attached Protected Species Assessment Map. A gopher tortoise relocation permit from the FWC will be required if the burrows cannot be avoided during construction.

No other protected species or evidence of protected species utilization which would require permits from the FWC or FWS were observed onsite during the site inspections.

# SECTIONS 32-33, TOWNSHIP 39S, RANGE 23E



DESOTO COUNTY, FLORIDA



LOCATION MAP

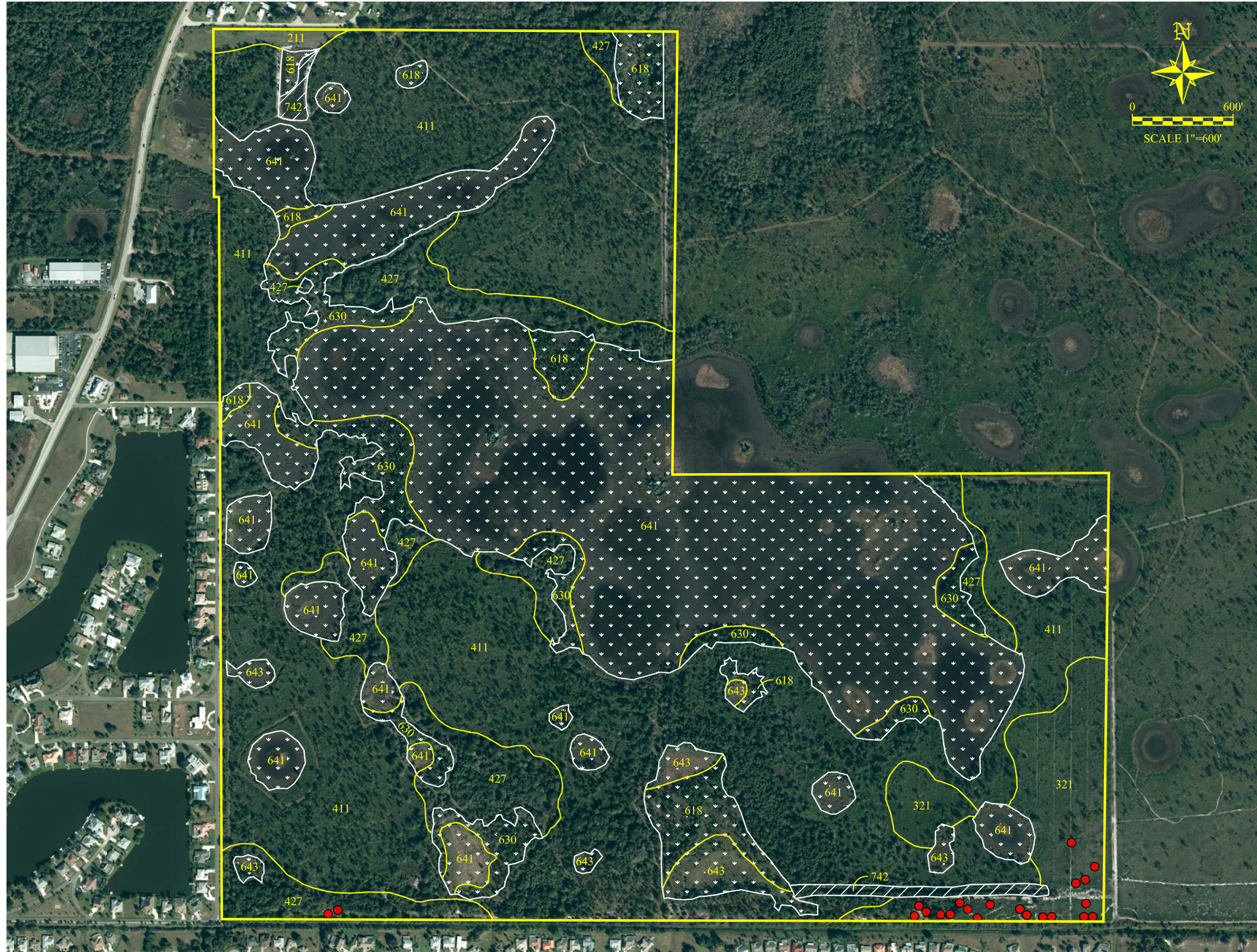
18-060 / MAY 22, 2018

## SONOMA PRESERVE

LOCATION MAP



SECTIONS 32-33, TOWNSHIP 39S, RANGE 23E



**LEGEND**

FLUCCS	DESCRIPTIONS	ACREAGE
211	IMPROVED PASTURE	1.92±
321	PALMETTO PRAIRIE	22.75±
411	PINE FLATWOODS	223.10±
427	LIVE OAK	38.24±
618	SHRUB WETLAND	14.72±
630	WETLAND FORESTED, MIXED	20.59±
641	FRESHWATER MARSH	152.98±
643	WET PRAIRIE	8.21±
742	BORROW AREA	3.19±
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>485.70±</b>

WETLAND 196.50±

OTHER SURFACE WATER 3.19±

POTENTIALLY OCCUPIED GOPHER TORTOISE BURROW ( 22 )

- NOTES:**
1. FOR PERMIT USE ONLY, NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION.
  2. PROJECT BOUNDARY IS APPROXIMATE AND WAS OBTAINED FROM DESOTO COUNTY GIS.
  3. MAPPING APPROXIMATE AND BASED ON INTERPRETATION OF 2014 AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY AT 1"=600' SCALE.
  4. THE DELINEATION OF ANY ON-SITE WETLANDS, SURFACE WATERS, AND/OR OTHER SURFACE WATERS IS PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO REVIEW/APPROVAL BY APPLICABLE REGULATORY AGENCIES.

18-060 / JUNE 19, 2018

**SONOMA PRESERVE**  
**PROTECTED SPECIES**  
**ASSESSMENT MAP**

