

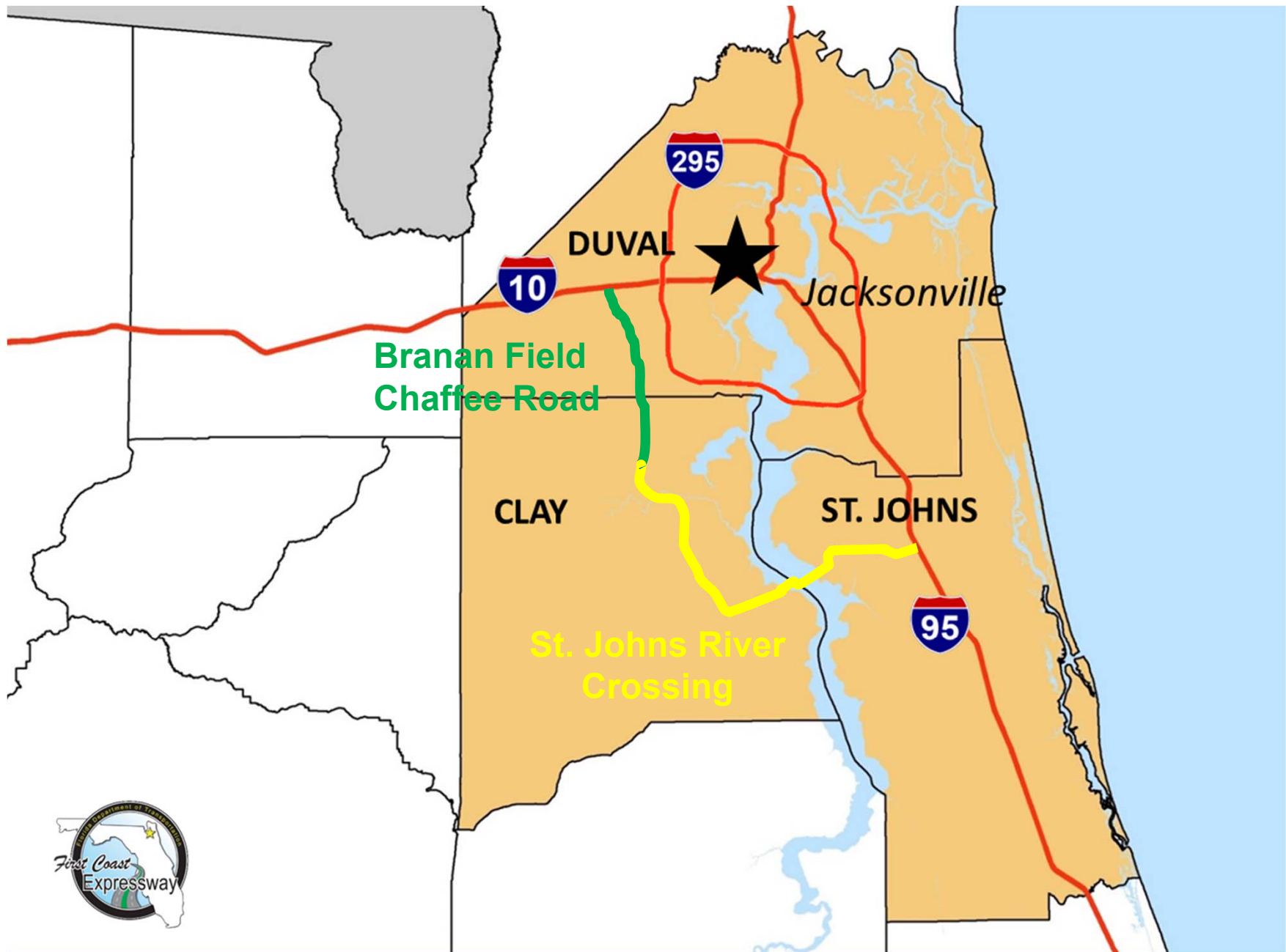


Florida Department of
TRANSPORTATION



First Coast Expressway (FPID: 208225-3 ETDM: 7920)
Eastern Indigo Snake Survey and Habitat Impact Analysis

FDOT District 2 Environmental Management Office



Tools

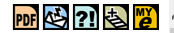
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Project Description



#7920 St Johns River Crossing

District: District 2

County: Clay, St. Johns

Planning Organization: FDOT District 2

Plan ID: Not Available

Federal Involvement: No federal involvement has been identified.

Contact Information: Name: Brandi Vittur Phone: (386) 961-7468 x7468 E-mail: Brandi.Vittur@dot.state.fl.us
Project Web Site: <http://www.sjrbridge.com/>
Project Milestone Dates: Current Project • 02/11/2015 • 12/03/2013 • 06/20/2008 • 10/10/2007 • 08/21/2006 • 08/15/2006 • 08/15/2006 • 08/14/2006 • 08/08/2006 • 08/07/2006 • 06/30/2006 • 05/01/2006

Project Milestones: Current Draft Data. Click one of the date links above to view other historical snapshots of the data.
Phase: Project Development

From: SR 21/SR 23 Interchange

To: SR 9B Extension or I-95

Financial Management No.: 208225-3-21-02

Purpose and Need

Purpose & Need

Please see the attached pdf document for the Purpose and Need. Please note that an Advanced Notification was mailed on August 29, 2005 for this project. The project is being reviewed through the Environmental Screening Tool to comply with 6002(b) of SAFETEA-LU.

Project Description

The St. Johns River Crossing Project is the missing link in the chain of Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) facilities that connect I-10 west of Jacksonville to I-95/I-295/SR 9A. The proposed corridor connects the Blanding Blvd (SR 21)/ Branam Field-Chaffee Road (SR 23) interchange in Clay County to the SR 9B Extension or I-95 in St Johns County. The proposed facility provides additional roadway capacity needed to serve future traffic demand over the St Johns River between Clay and St Johns Counties. Proposed corridor alternatives are identified as Black (Alternative# 1), Brown (Alternative# 2), Pink (Alternative# 3) and Purple (Alternative# 4) Corridors.

Summary of Public Comments

Federal Consistency Determination

This project is following the State environmental review process. Federal Consistency does not apply.

Additional Consistency Information

- Consistency with Air Quality Conformity is unknown.
- Consistent with Local Government Comp Plan.
- Consistent with MPO Goals and Objectives.

Lead Agency

Federal Highway Administration

Exempted Agencies

Agency Name	Justification	Date
Federal Transit Administration	FTA has requested to be exempt from reviewing any non-transit projects.	04/13/2011

Project Documents

Date	Type	Size	Document	Description
06/17/2008	Ancillary Project Documentation	89 KB	Updated Responses to ETAT Programming Screen Comments	Document containing updated comments and responses from ETDM Programming Screen and 2007 D2 ETAT Meeting - Counties: St Johns

This Site is maintained by the Florida Department of Transportation Office of Environmental Management. For additional information, please e-mail questions or comments to help@fla-etdm.org or call 850-414-5334.

Click to Open Map

5.2. Amphibians and Reptiles

5.2.1. Eastern indigo snake

The federally-threatened eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon corais couperi*) generally requires very large tracts of land to survive. Indigo snakes utilize a diverse range of habitats, from xeric scrub to wet prairies. They are considered commensals of the gopher tortoise, often wintering over in their burrows in the uplands, especially scrub and sandhill communities, but foraging in more mesic to hydric habitats. The eastern indigo snake is found throughout Florida, but is rare in most areas. Large expanses of pine flatwoods (FLUCFCS 4110) dominate the natural landscape in the study area and are represented in all the alternatives; additionally, conservation areas provide the necessary large tracts of natural land. All FNAI Element Occurrence data for the eastern indigo snake in the study area is restricted to managed areas not within any alternatives (Figure 6). Figure 7 depicts the “higher-potential” pine flatwood and conservation areas in the study area.

There is a high potential for the indigo snake in the study area with a moderate potential within the alternatives. Therefore, in accordance with the January 25, 2010 USFWS *Eastern Indigo Snake Programmatic Effects Determination Key* (see Appendix F), the proposed project “may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect” the Eastern indigo snake or its preferred habitat.

FDOT agrees to implement the USFWS standard protection measures for the Eastern indigo snake and an Eastern indigo snake education plan prior to and during construction (see Appendix G). In addition, FDOT is committed to the following measures:

- Surveys for gopher tortoise burrows will be conducted within two years of the construction start date;
- FDOT will utilize the USFWS Survey Protocol for the Eastern Indigo Snake *Drymarchon couperi*, in North and Central America, if applicable;
- FDOT will conduct a detailed Eastern indigo snake habitat impact analysis during the Final Design and Permitting phases in close coordination with USFWS and FWC during this process; and
- FDOT will mitigate the impacts to Eastern indigo snake habitat through the purchase and conservation of appropriate upland habitat as determined by the aforementioned analysis during the Final Design/Permitting/Right-of-Way phases.

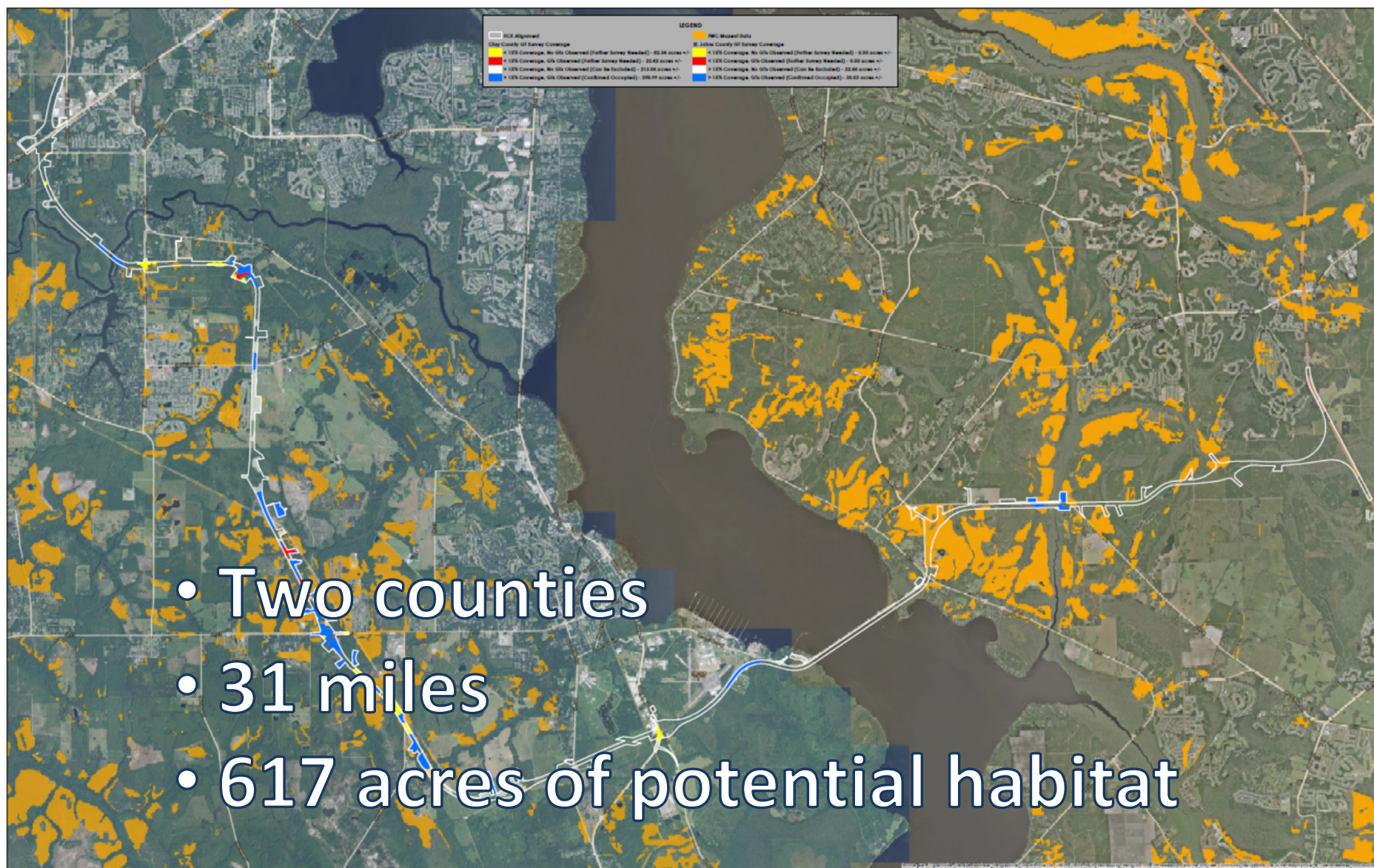
CHAPTER 5

Commitments and Recommendations

- Conduct a detailed Eastern indigo snake habitat impact analysis during the Final Design and Permitting phases in close coordination with USFWS and FWC during this process.
- Mitigate the impacts to Eastern indigo snake habitat through the purchase and conservation of appropriate upland habitat as determined by the aforementioned analysis during the Final Design/Permitting/Right-of-Way phases. Furthermore, the Department is committed to close coordination with USFWS and FWC during this process.
- Use special provisions for the protection of manatees during construction to ensure that no manatees are harmed. Trained personnel will conduct surveillance of in-water work areas during construction. Erosion and turbidity control measures will be installed and maintained around in-water work area.
- Follow the Standard Manatee Protection Construction Conditions for In-Water Work (FWC 2009) for the Florida manatee during implementation of the project, and TSPs will be incorporated into the contractor's bid documents.
- Develop and utilize a manatee watch plan specific to this project during the Permitting phase, at which time the USFWS will be provided the opportunity to provide input and approval.
- Implement water quality improvement initiatives as an additional mitigation option for impacts to submerged aquatic vegetation. A draft plan is contained in Appendix D of the *Endangered Species Biological Assessment*.
- Restore near-shore areas upon the removal of the existing Shands Bridge.
- Should the striped newt or gopher tortoise be listed prior to the time construction commences, an effects determination will be made in coordination with USFWS. Furthermore, compliance with all applicable state and Federal regulations, guidelines, survey protocol, etc., will be adhered to.
- Where the proposed project will alter wetlands, wetland compensation will include a temporal-lag factor to account for time required for successful mitigation with type-for-type mitigation and comparable hydroperiod, to compensate for potential adverse effects to the wood stork foraging area.
- Design and construct the proposed project to provide wildlife passage across the project corridor to reduce habitat fragmentation, prevent genetic isolation, and limit direct mortality on the roadway. Wildlife passage will be accomplished by designing appropriate bridge lengths, culvert locations, signage, and construc-



- Two counties
- 31 miles
- 617 acres of potential habitat



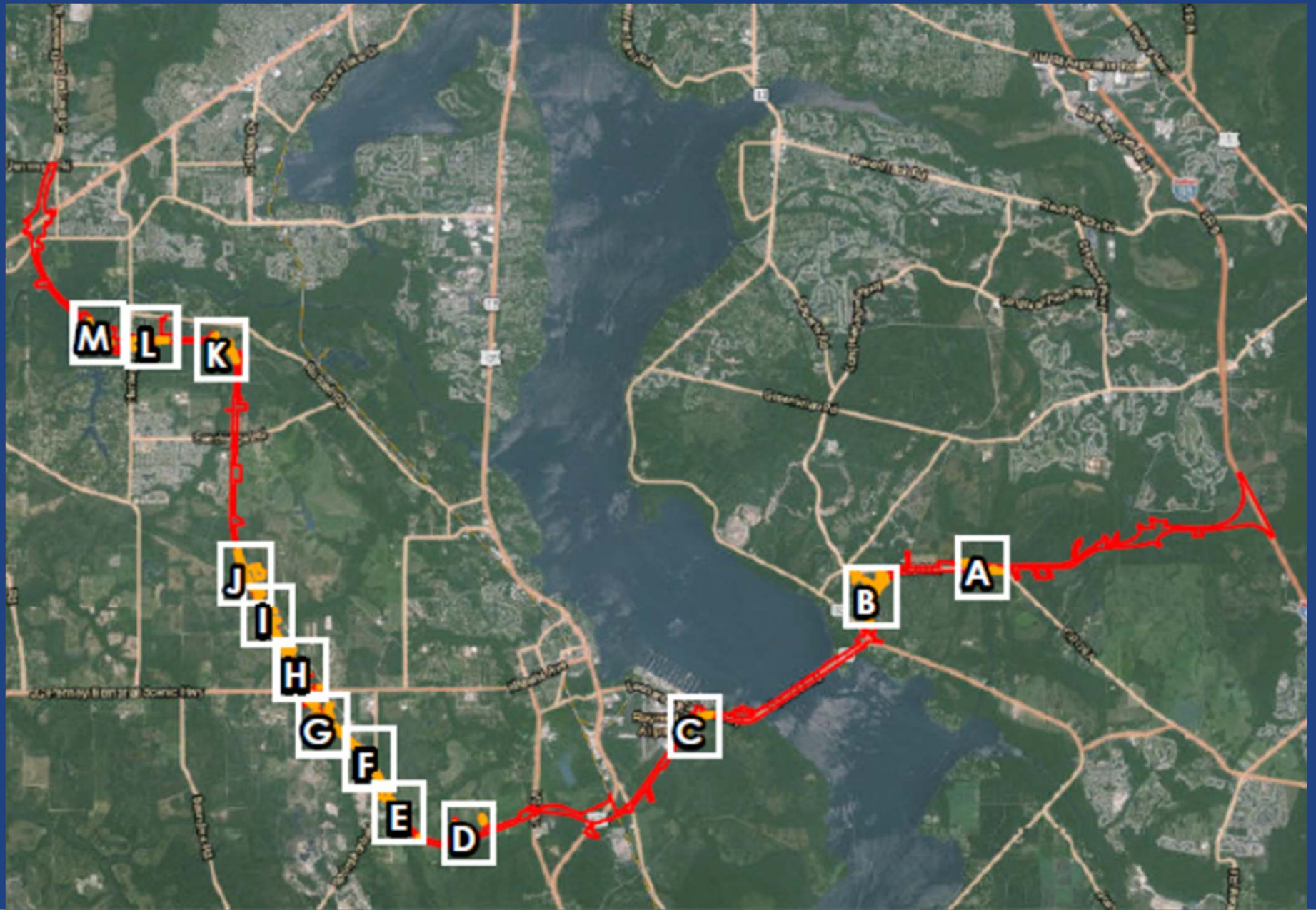




PACKLEADER



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- 
- Two dogs
 - Two handlers
 - Two biologists

504.79 acres



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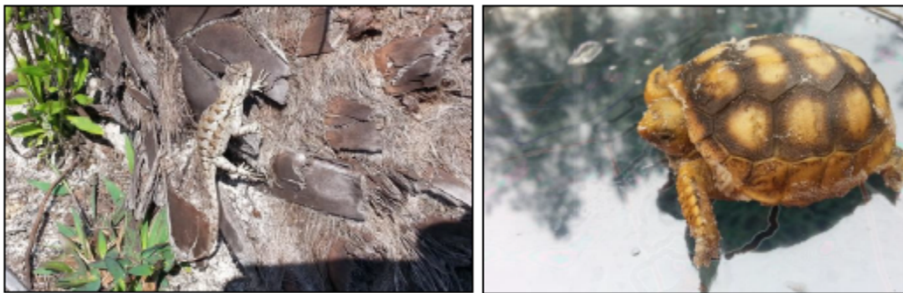








Photograph 9, left. Sexton beetles feeding on the remains of a nine-banded armadillo.
Photograph 10, right. Neonate slimy salamander.



Photograph 11, left. Fence lizard.
Photograph 12, right. Juvenile gopher tortoise.

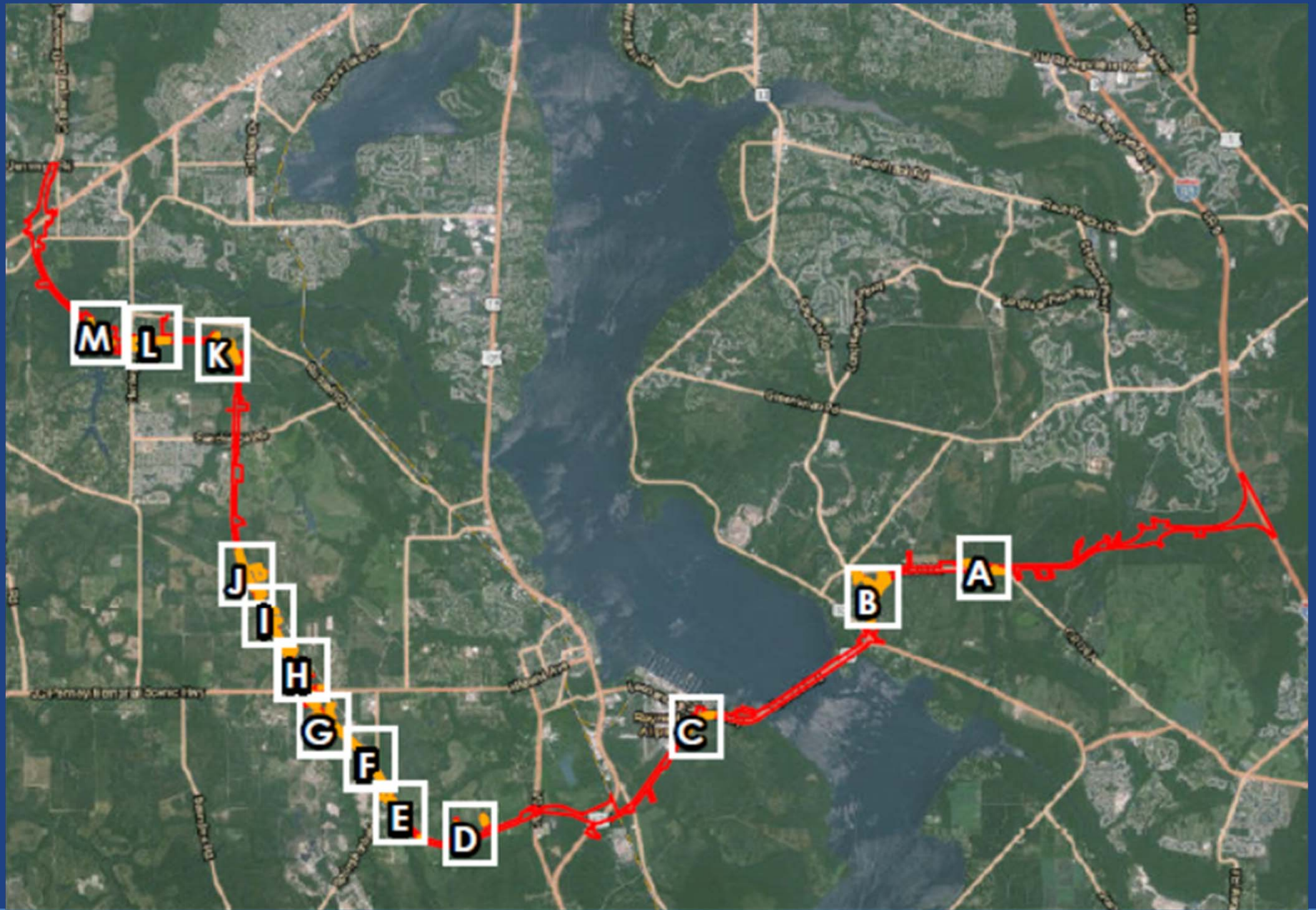


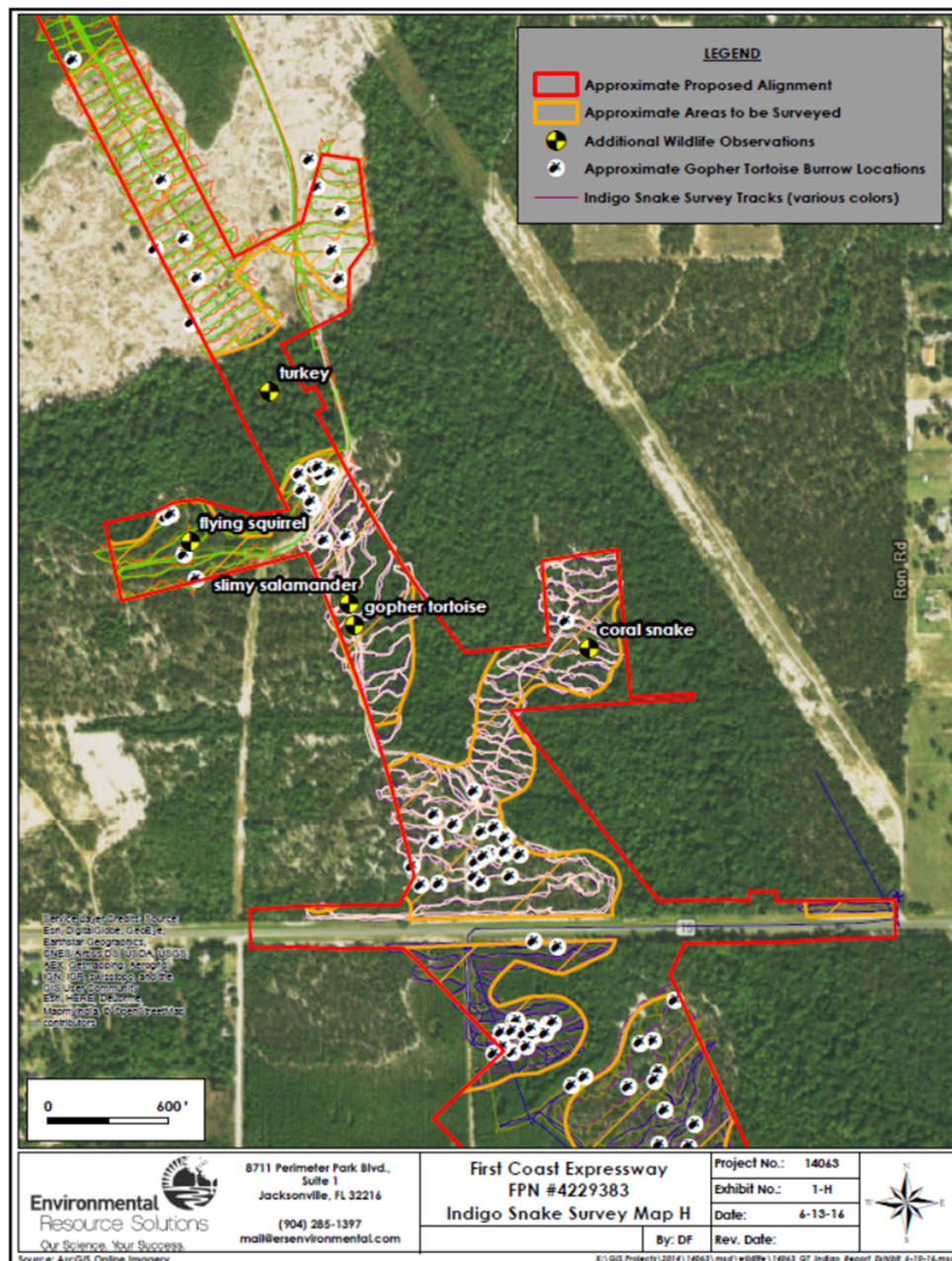
Photograph 13, left. Juvenile dusky pygmy rattlesnake.
Photograph 14, right. White-tailed deer fawn.

Table 1. Wildlife species observed in the FCX corridor during the indigo snake survey, March – April 2016.

Species	Common Name	Observation	Method of Detection
<i>Cicindela</i> sp.	Tiger beetle	Observed in logged area	Observed by biologist
<i>Phanaeus vindex</i>	Rainbow scarab	Observed on sand substrate	Observed by biologist
<i>Nicrophorus</i> sp.	Sexton Beetle	Several observed feeding	Observed by biologist
<i>Plethodon grobmani</i>	Slimy Salamander	Two living specimens found under separate logs	Found by biologist
<i>Sceloporus undulatus</i>	Eastern Fence Lizard	Visual	Observed by biologist
<i>Coluber constrictor priapus</i>	Black Racer	Two individuals observed in separate areas	Observed by biologist
<i>Coluber constrictor priapus</i>	Southern Black Racer	Two shed skins found in separate areas	Found by biologist
<i>Micrurus fulvius</i>	Coral Snake	Two individuals in separate areas	Observed by biologist
<i>Pantherophis alleghaniensis</i>	Yellow Rat Snake	Shed skin pieces	Dog found but did not "indicate"
<i>Crotalus adamanteus</i>	Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake	Shed skin	Dog found but did not "indicate"
<i>Sistrurus milaris barbouri</i>	Dusky Pygmy Rattlesnake	Juvenile found	Found by biologist
<i>Gopherus polyphemus</i>	Gopher tortoise	Juvenile found	Found by biologist
<i>Gopherus polyphemus</i>	Gopher Tortoise	Burrows, tracks, and scat	Observed by biologist
<i>Dasypus novemcinctus</i>	Nine-banded Armadillo	Burrows observed in many locations	Observed by biologist
<i>Dasypus novemcinctus</i>	Nine-banded Armadillo	Skeletal remains	Observed by biologist
<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>	Turkey	Visual and auditory	Observed by biologist
<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>	Turkey	Feathers	Found by biologist
<i>Colinus virginianus</i>	Bobwhite	Visual and auditory	Flushed by dog
<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	White-tailed Deer	Fawn found	Found by biologist
<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	White-tailed Deer	Shed antlers	Found by biologist
<i>Sciurus niger shermani</i>	Sherman's Fox Squirrel	Visual	Observed by biologist
<i>Glaucomys volans</i>	Southern Flying Squirrel	Visual	Dog found but did not "indicate"









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- A photograph of a brown dog, possibly a pit bull mix, wearing a red collar, sniffing the ground in a grassy field. The dog is positioned on the right side of the frame, facing left. The ground is sandy and covered with sparse vegetation. The background consists of tall grass and some low-lying plants.
- Two dogs
 - Two handlers
 - Two biologists
 - A whole slew of agency folks
 - 505+ acres surveyed
 - No eastern indigo snakes

