

*Board of County Commissioners*

# Acquisition of Environmentally Sensitive Lands

January 26, 2021



# Agenda

- Purpose
- Green PLACE Program Overview
- Acquisition Corridors
- Acquisition and Funding Strategies
- Next Steps
- Summary



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# Purpose

- Provide an overview of the process for the acquisition of additional environmentally sensitive lands





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# Green PLACE Program Overview

- The vision of the Green PLACE Program is to preserve environmentally sensitive lands that foster a community that is ecologically, economically and socially resilient







# Green PLACE Program Overview

## Public Benefits

- Protect wildlife habitats
- Protect surface and groundwater resources
- Foster a resilient community
- Foster sustainable growth
- Foster economic diversity
- Foster a healthy community





# Green PLACE Program Overview

## Support for Environmental Sensitive Lands Acquisition

- Transition Team Report
- Sustainable Operations and Resilience Action Plan
- Sustainable Orange County Plan
- 2045 MetroPlan Orlando Transportation Plan







# Green PLACE Program Overview

- Initiated in 1990s
- 23,000 acres acquired
- Purchases funded by:
  - Public Service Tax
  - Conservation Trust Fund
  - Property and Sales Taxes
  - Grants
  - Partnerships
  - Donations





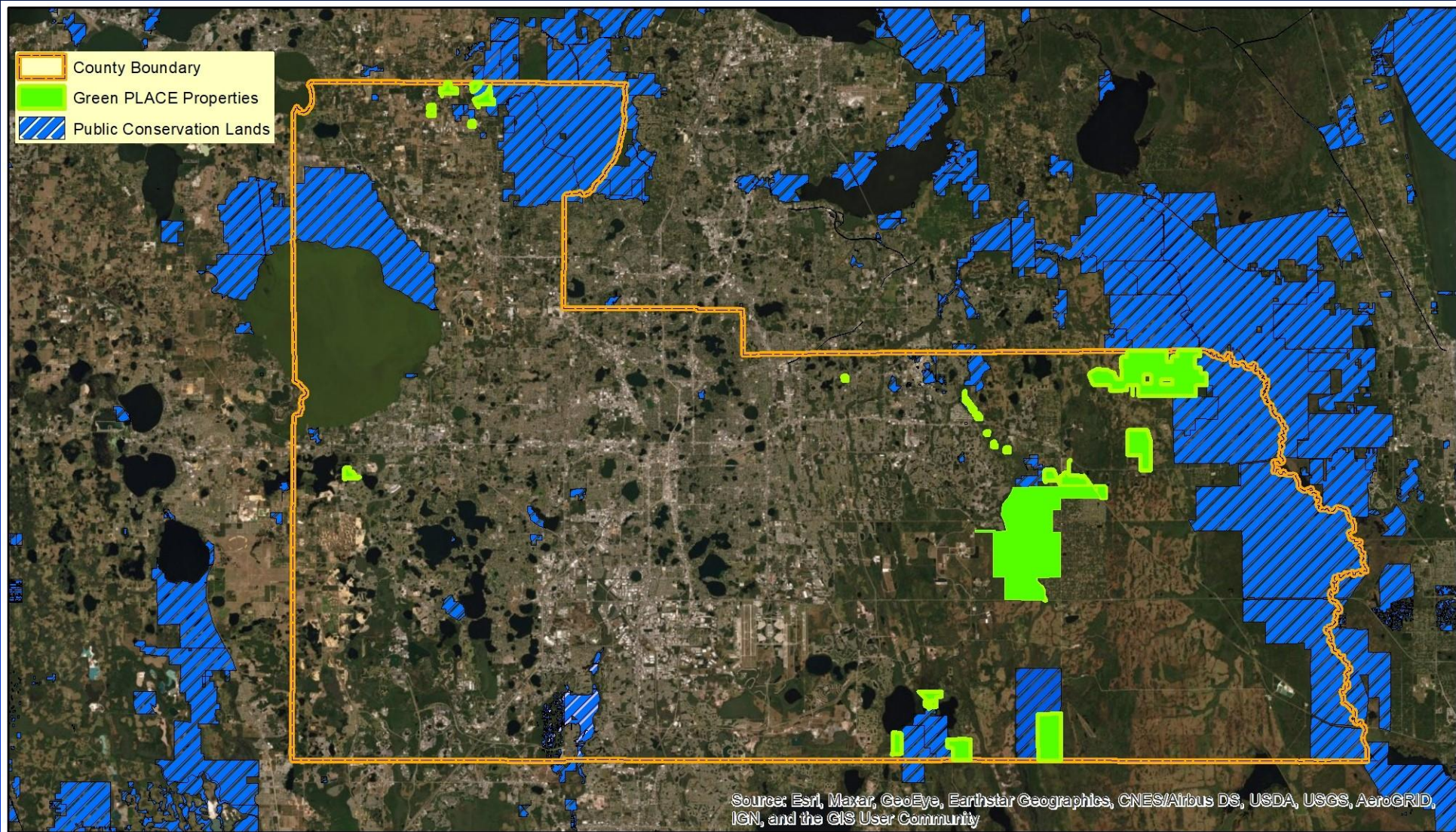
# Green PLACE Program Overview

- **14 properties open for nature-based recreation (18,342 acres)**
  - Lake Lucie Conservation Area (166 acres)
  - Johns Lake Conservation Area (138 acres)
  - Savage Christmas Creek Preserve ( 904 acres)
  - Eagles Roost (242 acres)
- **Nature-based recreation activities and amenities**
  - Hiking
  - Horseback Riding
  - Wildlife Viewing
  - Fishing
  - Kayaking





# Green PLACE Program Overview

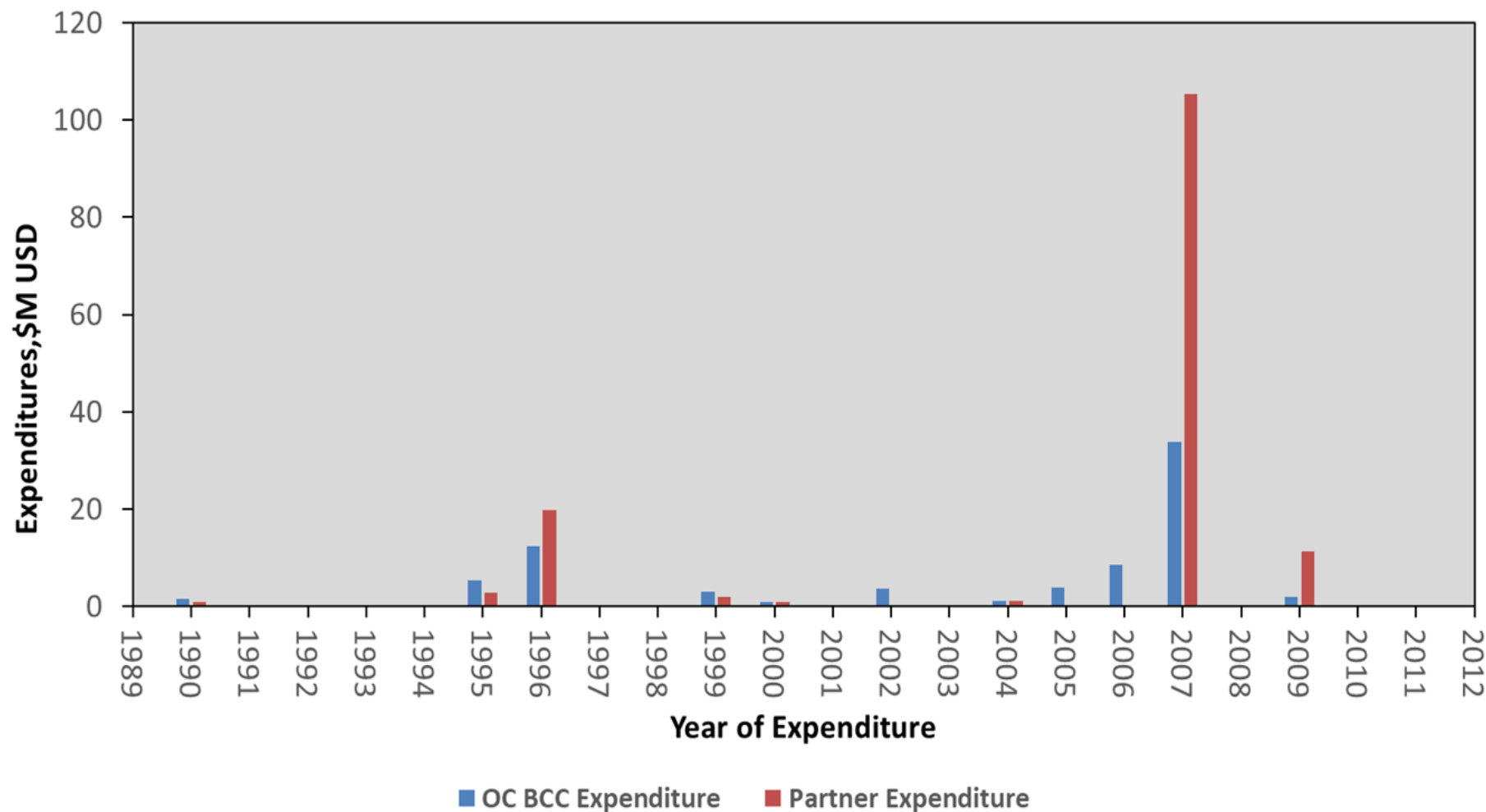






# Green PLACE Program Overview

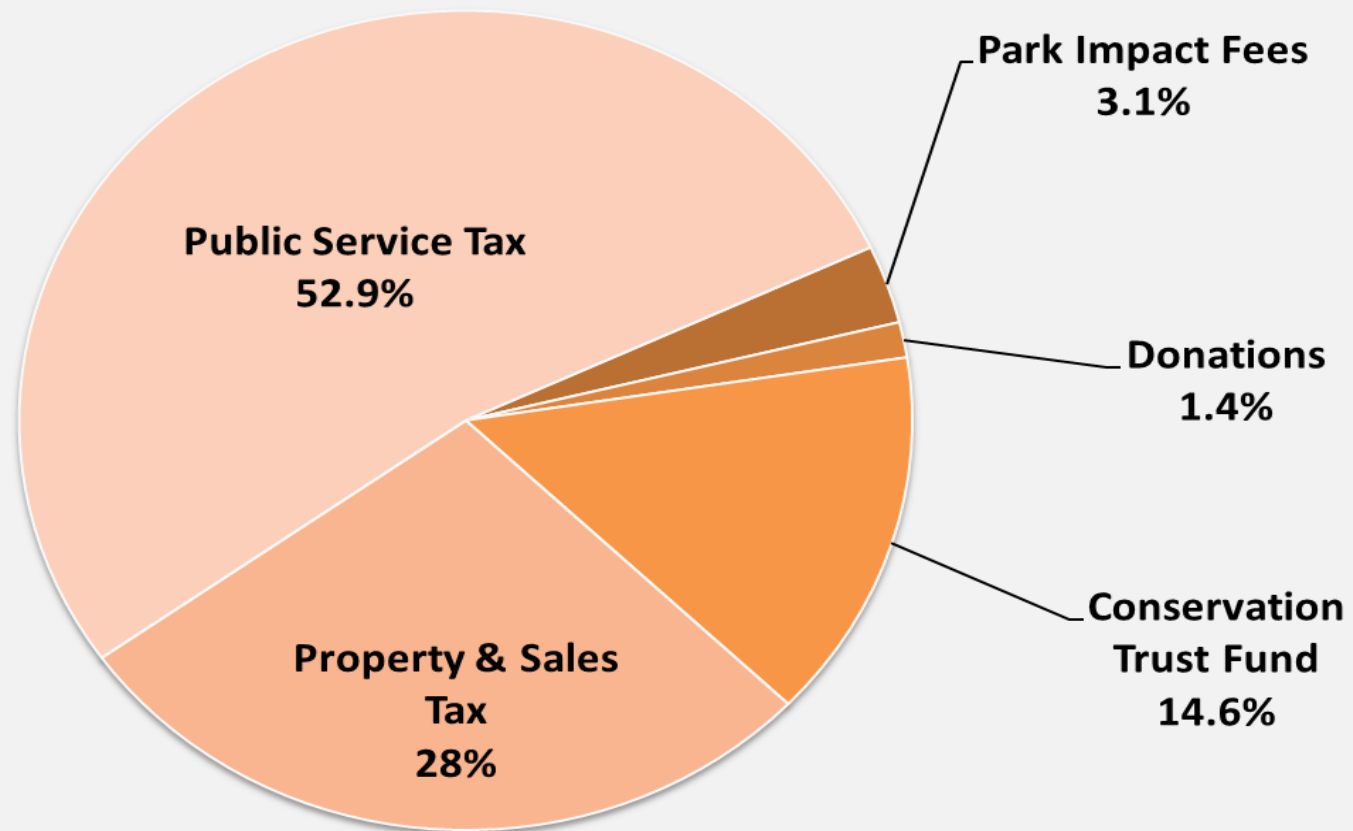
Green PLACE Lands Purchases,  
Expenditure by Source





# Green PLACE Program Overview

**Resources for Land Acquisition  
Green PLACE (1990-2018)**







# Green PLACE Program Overview

Category	Metric
Number of Acres Acquired to Date	~23,000
Largest Acquisition (Acres)	8,427
Cost Range (2005-2009)(\$/Acres)	\$5k - \$45k
Properties Open for Nature-Based Recreation	14
Donated Acreage	338



# Green PLACE Program Overview

## Land Management Operation & Maintenance

- Orange County owns 23,000 acres
- Actively manages 4,620 acres:
  - Prescribed Fire
  - Invasive Species Control
  - Mowing
  - Forestry Management
  - Average Annual Cost: \$82/acre
- Remaining acreage is managed by our partners





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# Acquisition Corridors

- Goal: Double the current preservation land inventory by 2030 (+23,000 acres)





# Acquisition Corridors

- **Potential Acquisition Corridors previously developed through:**
  - **Scientific Support**
    - 2008 Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) Study
    - 2013 FNAI Study Update
  - **Citizen Involvement**
    - County's Conservation and Recreation Land Report/1990
    - Green PLACE Advisory Board







# Acquisition Corridors

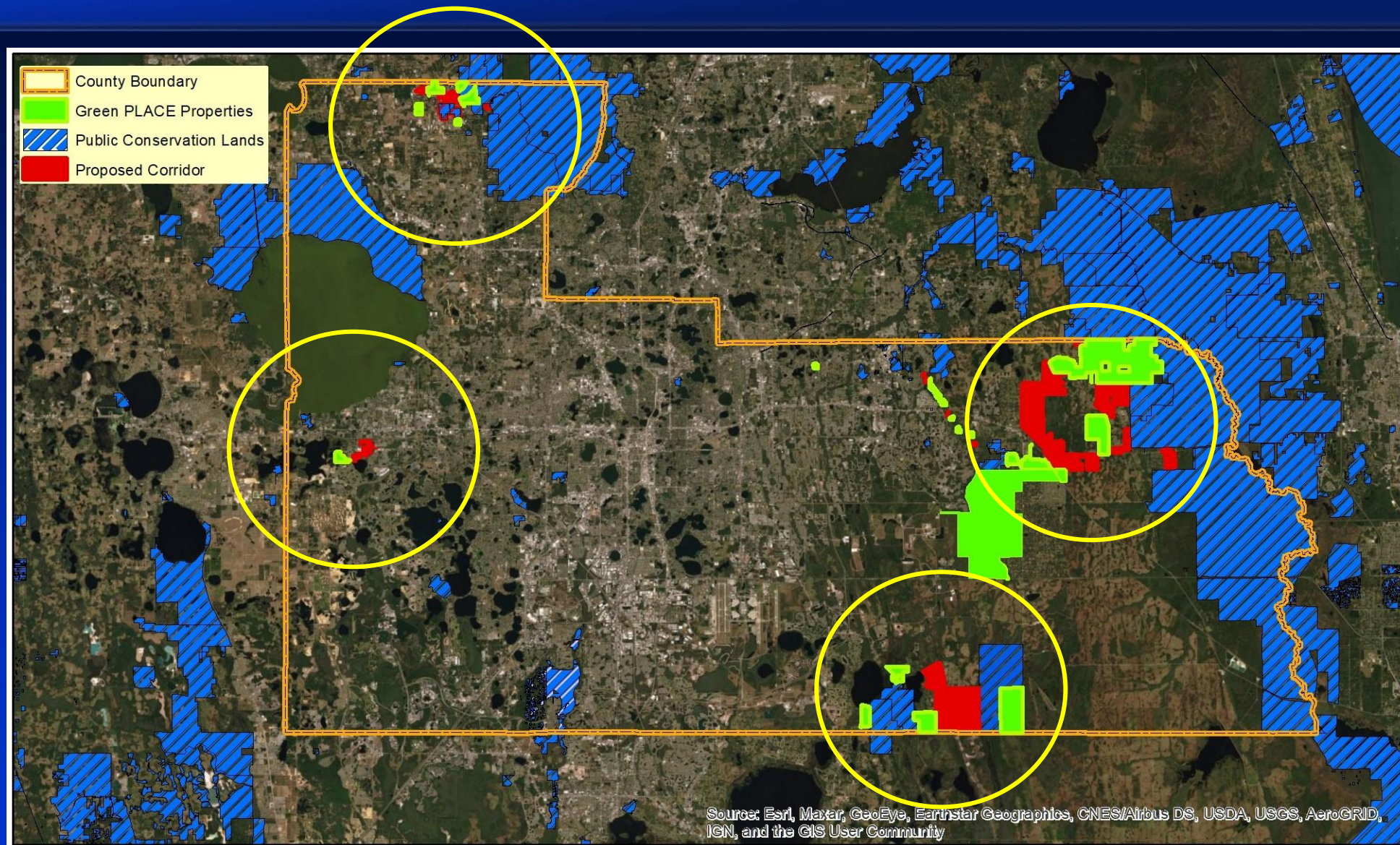
- **Evaluation Criteria for new ESL found in Orange County Administrative Regulation 11.07.01(C)**
- **Benefit to public**
  - Rarity
  - Diversity of ecosystems and plant and animal species
  - Presence of imperiled species
  - Contiguity to other preserved lands
  - Manageability
  - Availability of funding
  - Threats of degrading event







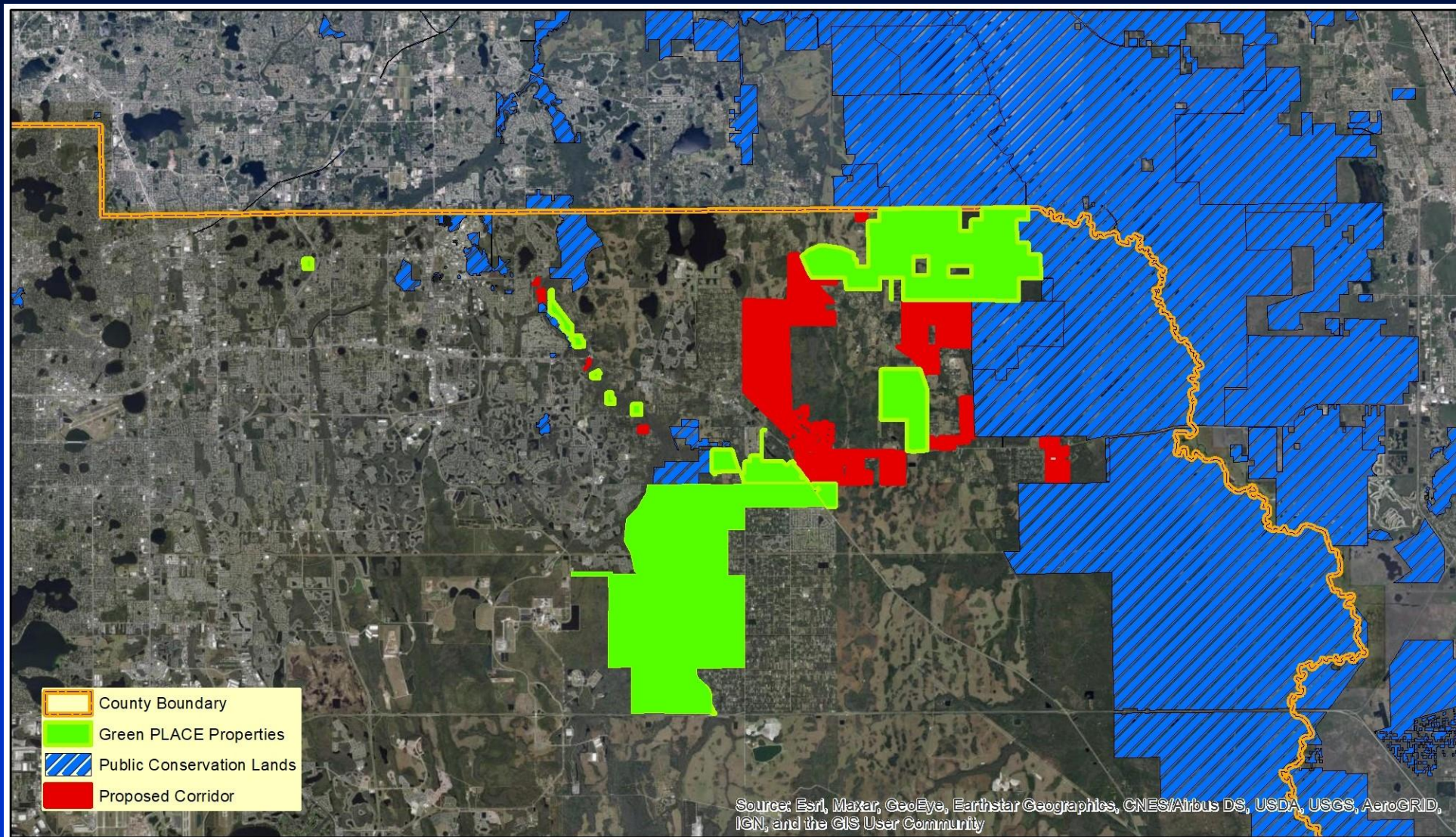
# Acquisition Corridors







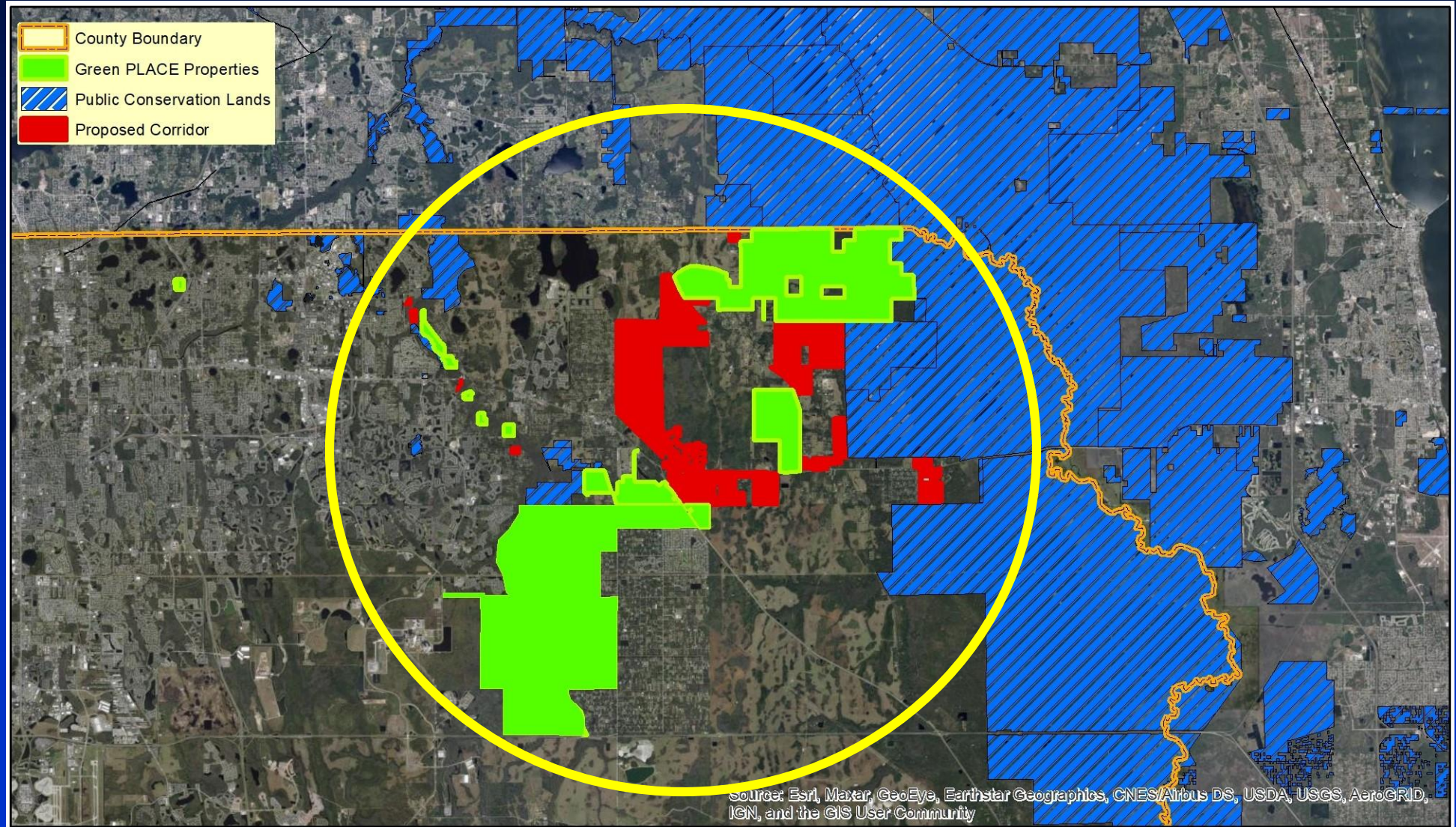
# Acquisition Corridors







# Acquisition Corridors







# Acquisition Corridors

## ■ St. Johns River/Econlockhatchee River Corridor

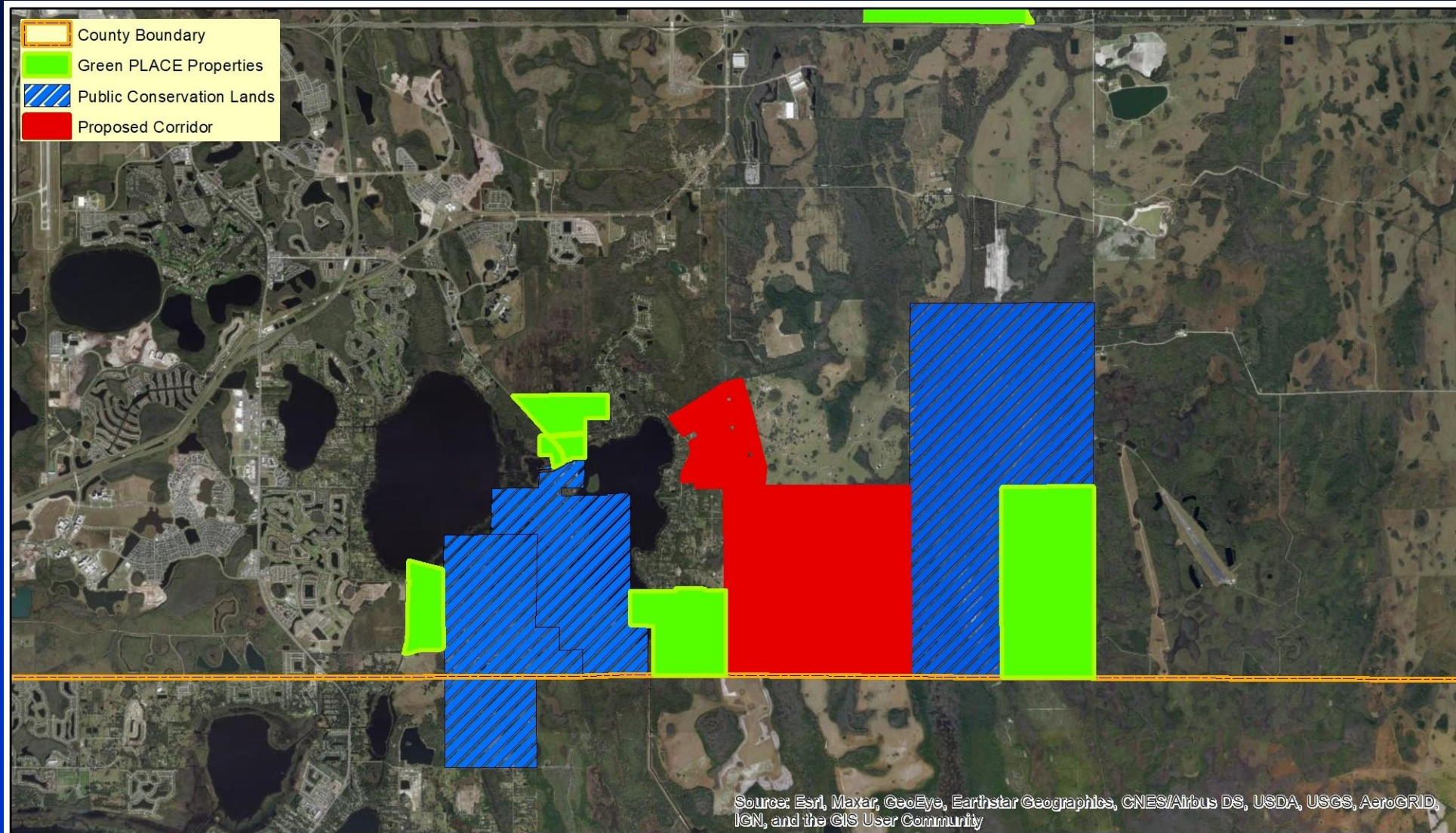
- Parcels: 1,272
- Owners: 780
- Acreage: 19,551
- Orange County Property Appraisers (OCPA) Assessed Value:
  - \$76.8M
- Real Estate Management (REM) Estimate:
  - \$332.6M







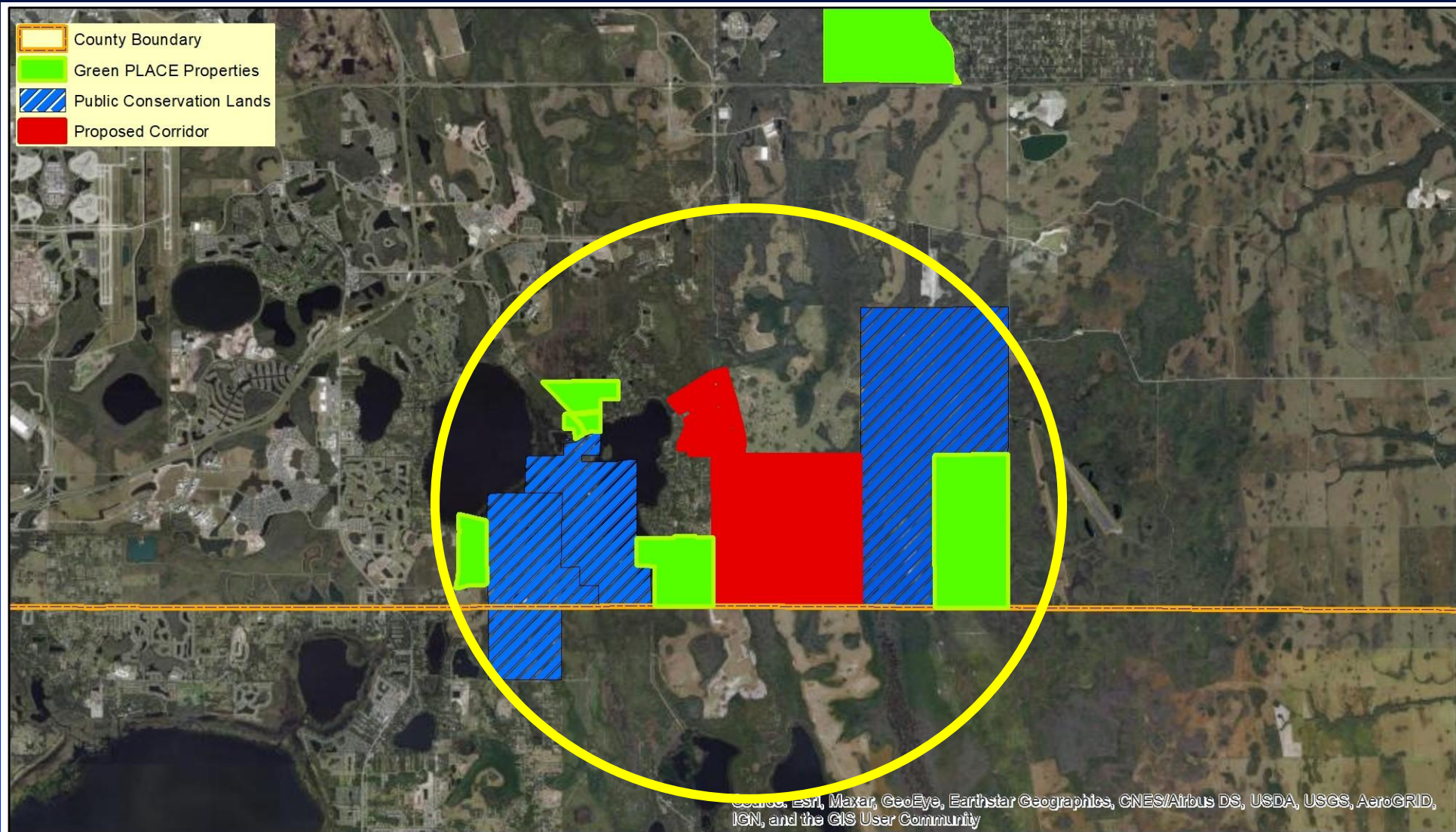
# Acquisition Corridors







# Acquisition Corridors







# Acquisition Corridors

## ▪ Lake Hart Basin

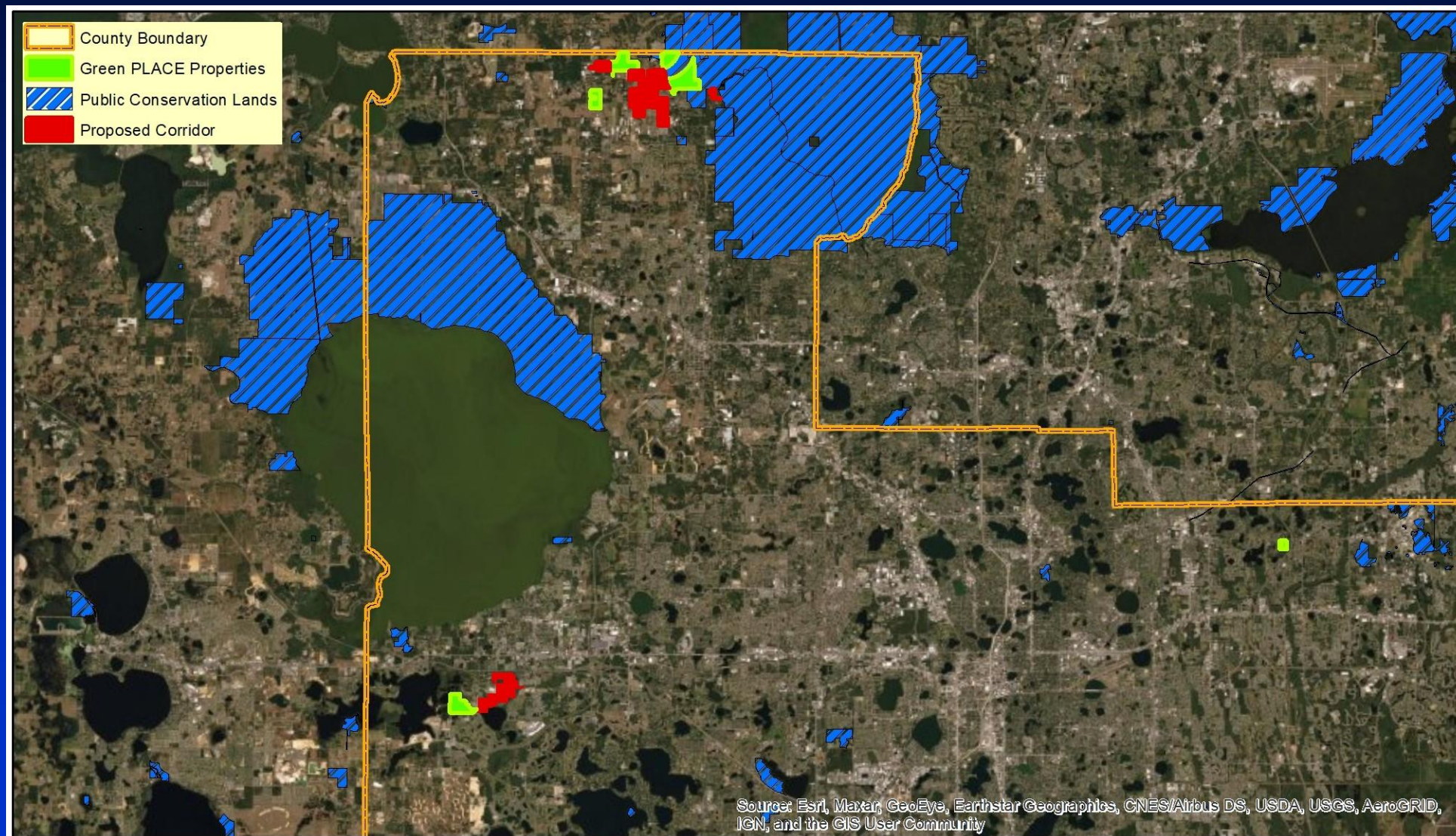
- Parcels: 3
- Owners: 3
- Acreage: 3,081
- OCPA Assessed Value: \$27M
- REM Estimated Value: \$41M







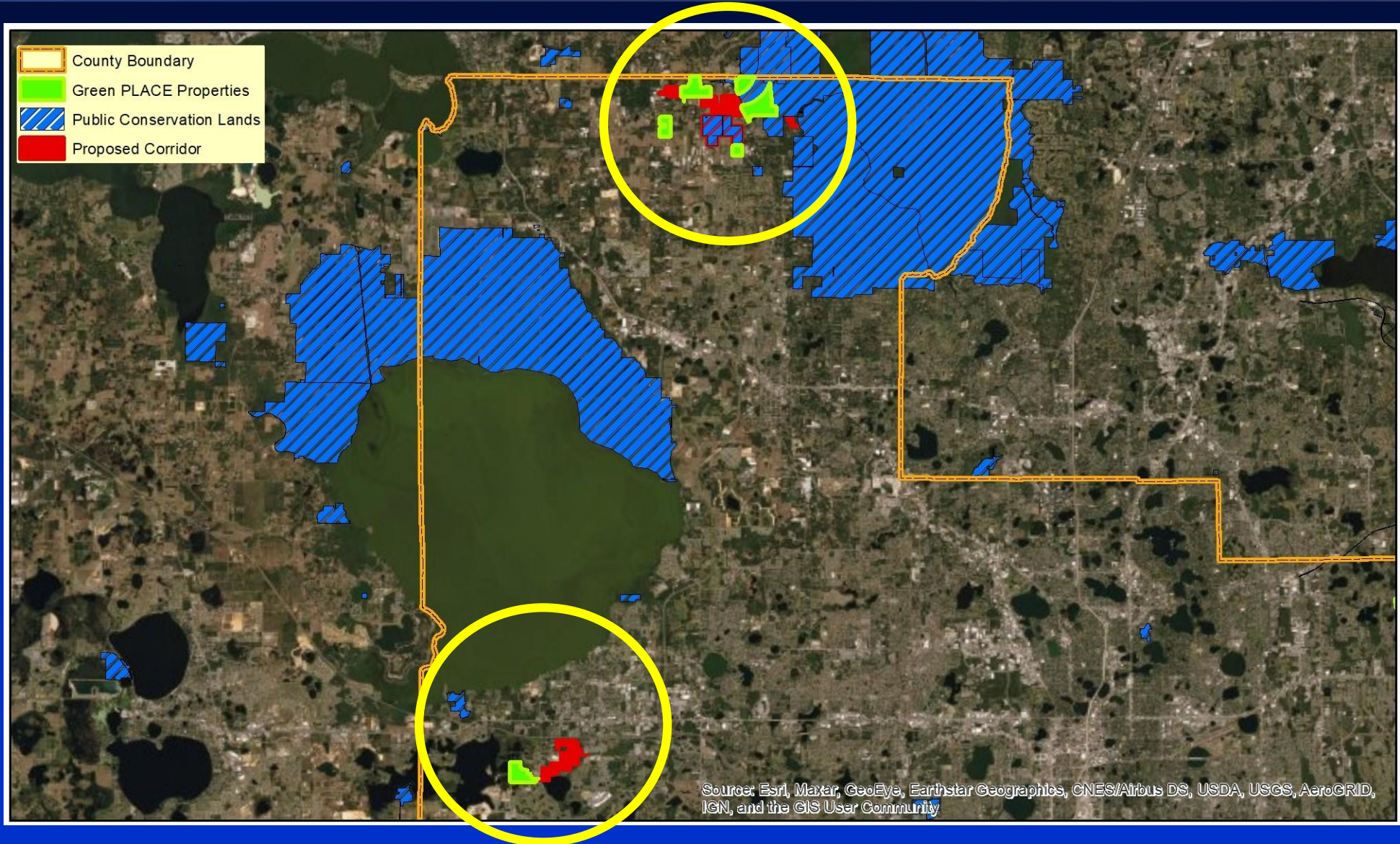
# Acquisition Corridors







# Acquisition Corridors







# Acquisition Corridors

## ■ Wekiva River Basin and Johns Lake

- Parcels: 29
- Owners: 22
- Acreage: 1,051
- OCPA Assessed Value: \$34.4M
- REM Estimated Value: \$71.3M





# Acquisition Corridors

- **Summary (all 4 corridors)**

- **Parcels: 1,304**
- **Owners: 808**
- **Acreage: 23,665**
- **OCPA Assessed Value: \$138M**
- **REM Estimated Value: \$445M**





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# Acquisition and Funding Strategy

- Funding sources and acquisition mechanisms
  - General Fund, Sales Tax, PST
  - Sale of TM/Econ Mitigation  
Phase IV Credits (Conservation Trust Fund)
  - Mitigation Agreements
  - Donations
  - Public/private partnerships
  - Other
    - Millage / Referendum







# Acquisition and Funding Strategy

- **Challenges**
  - Decreasing available land
  - Increasing land costs
  - Shifts in funding partner priorities
- **Lost acquisition opportunities**
  - Barbour Farms (524 acres)





# Acquisition and Funding Strategy

## ■ Four-Pronged Approach:

- Bonding
- Mitigation Credits
- Tax Deed Sales
- Partnerships







# Acquisition and Funding Strategy

- **Strategy #1 – Bonding**
- **\$100M bond issuance \***
  - Payback of \$7 M/year (20 year term, Interest Rate of 4%)
  - Sales Tax as a funding source for payback
- **Acquisition funding would purchase ~5,200 acres**
- **Board to consider funding to support bonding for land acquisition**

\* Source: OMB





# Acquisition and Funding Strategy

- **Strategy #2 – Mitigation Credits (TM/Econ Bank Phase IV)**
  - Administrative Regulation 11.07.02 increases the flexibility in credit price negotiations
  - Current annual sales: \$500k to \$1M
  - Increase the number of credit sales by enhancing marketing efforts
    - Potential annual revenues of \$1M to \$2M
    - Total potential revenues \$50M







# Acquisition and Funding Strategy

- **Strategy #3 – Tax deed sales**
  - \$150k per year in EPD budget
  - Example: Orange Acres un-platted subdivision





# Acquisition and Funding Strategy

## ■ Strategy #4 – Continue to Develop Partnerships

### –Regional Land Acquisition Strategy

- State
- Adjacent Counties
- Municipalities
- Faith-Based Organizations

### –Land Trusts

- The Nature Conservancy
- Trust For Public Lands
- The Conservation Fund







# Acquisition and Funding Strategy

- **Prioritize parcels with available funding**
- **Reestablish Green PLACE Advisory Board with the following scope:**
  - Evaluate and prioritize new parcels
  - Recommend names for Board approval
  - Evaluate Green PLACE uses
  - Review potential amenities
  - Provide transparency to the process





# Acquisition and Funding Strategy

## ■ Process for acquisition

1. Identify property
2. Send “Willing Seller” letter
3. Conduct detailed ecological evaluation
4. Appraisals
5. Negotiation
6. Contract for Purchase
7. Board approval
8. Due diligence phase
9. Close







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## Next Steps

- **Return to the Board to:**
  - OMB will finalize funding commitment
  - Amend Administrative Regulation 11.07.01 (process and criteria for ESL acquisition)
  - Reestablish Green PLACE Advisory Board
- **Work with REM to identify and negotiate acquisitions of priority parcels**
- **Continue CIP funding for nature-based recreational amenities and smaller scale acquisitions**





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# Summary

- Orange County has partnered and acquired ESL to the public's benefit
- Acquisition corridors have been established
- Estimated cost of acquiring additional 23,000 acres is \$445M
- Board to consider funding to support bonding for land acquisition
- EPD staff is ready to begin the process of acquiring ESL

