

CONSERVATION ELEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Conservation Element is to provide for the conservation, use and protection of the County's natural resources.

GOAL 5A: MAINTAIN, PROTECT, AND ENHANCE NATURAL RESOURCES THROUGH APPROPRIATE MANAGEMENT.

OBJECTIVE 5.1: Protect ambient air quality.

Policy 5.1.1: Gadsden County shall work with DEP and the Environmental Protection Agency to eliminate unlawful sources of air pollution.

Policy 5.1.2: Clean air protection shall be fostered by promoting sustainable land development practices.

Policy 5.1.3: Sustainable and efficient transportation practices, such as the promotion of transit opportunities, shall be encouraged to mitigate air pollution.

OBJECTIVE 5.2: Provide for the conservation, appropriate use and protection of those lands deemed as environmentally sensitive.

Policy 5.2.1: Wetlands and lands designated as Special Flood Hazard Areas and/or floodplains by the Federal Emergency Management Agency are locally designated as environmentally sensitive lands and shall be afforded maximum protection with applicable planning controls.

Policy 5.2.2: All required federal and state permits and approvals submitted to the County in relation to an issued development order must be submitted prior to commencement of any on-site development, to include land clearing.

Policy 5.2.3: All required federal and state permits and approvals submitted to the County in relation to an issued development order must be found consistent with said development order. If the federal or state permit or approval is inconsistent with the approved final development order, then the applicant shall apply for an amendment to the approved development order to be in accordance with said federal or state permit and all applicable local policies and regulations.

Policy 5.2.4: The clearing of vegetation, with exception to bona fide agriculture or Silviculture uses, shall be prohibited prior to issuance of a development order. Exceptions shall include hand clearing of underbrush and removal of trees three (3) inches in diameter or less at a measurement taken 54 inches from ground level.

Policy 5.2.5: The County shall protect native vegetative communities from destruction by development activities through the development review process unless such destruction is authorized pursuant to the applicable state and federal permitting process.

Policy 5.2.6: Standards to protect native vegetation may include but are not necessarily limited to: adequate buffer zones and site preservation techniques. The County shall coordinate with the Northwest Florida Water Management District and other appropriate agencies to promote the removal of non-native and invasive species, and reinstate native and natural vegetation.

Policy 5.2.7: The County shall cooperate with adjacent counties and municipalities to conserve, appropriately use and protect unique vegetative communities by participating in intergovernmental coordination committees to establish joint management procedures for protection of natural resources.

Policy 5.2.8: The County shall provide maximum protection to those lands classified as “Conservation” on the Future Land Use Map through additional criteria as specified in the Gadsden County Land Development Regulations.

Policy 5.2.9: The County shall promote acquisition of appropriate parcels of land through the Florida Communities Trust Florida Forever Program or the Trust for Public Lands and/or other programs as may be appropriate to develop state/county partnerships to protect environmentally sensitive lands, to protect Endangered, Threatened, or Species of Greatest Conservation Need and their habitats, protect scenic water corridors and their shoreline ecosystems, and provide enhanced public access to outdoor recreational opportunities and open space.

Policy 5.2.10: Slope forests shall be afforded the highest protection possible. Slope forests are well-developed, closed canopy forests of upland hardwoods on steep slopes, bluffs, and in sheltered ravines within the Apalachicola River drainage area, generally within thirty-five (35) kilometers along the eastern side of the Apalachicola River, as defined by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory, Guide to Natural Communities of Florida, or otherwise scientifically designated.

Policy 5.2.11: For planning and management purposes, the County shall reference the Gadsden County Soil Survey, as published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service during the comprehensive planning and development review process.

Policy 5.2.12: Development shall be restricted from areas inside of designated flood ways.

OBJECTIVE 5.3: Conserve and protect the quality and quantity of local water bodies and their sources.

Policy 5.3.1: Wetlands are locally designated as environmentally sensitive and shall be afforded maximum protection with applicable planning controls.

Policy 5.3.2: Development shall be required to maintain a fifty (50) foot minimum natural setback around all FDEP and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers jurisdictional wetlands with exception to utility and transportation networks and water dependent uses such as docks and platforms.

Policy 5.3.3: The location of septic tanks and drain fields shall be prohibited within one-hundred (100) feet of all jurisdictional wetlands.

Policy 5.3.4: Any amendment to the Future Land Use Map shall consider the impact to the functionality of adjacent and on-site wetlands. The protection and conservation of wetlands by the direction of incompatible land uses away from wetlands shall occur in combination with other principles, guidelines, standards, and regulations in this Plan and the Land Development Code.

Policy 5.3.5: Seawalls shall be avoided along lakes, rivers and streams except where no reasonable alternative exists for the development of the upland portion of the parcel.

Policy 5.3.6: Any Outstanding Florida Water or Class I surface water, designated by 62-302.700(9) and 62-302.400(16)(b) of the Florida Administrative Code, respectively, shall be afforded extra protections in the Land Development Code (Map 5.1).

Policy 5.3.7: To protect ground and surface water, the County shall, through the development review process, require that post-development run-off rates and pollutant loads do not exceed predevelopment conditions.

Policy 5.3.8: As part of the development review process, the County shall require the maintenance of the quantity and quality of surface water runoff into fresh water bodies by prohibiting any development which may diminish or degrade the quality and quantity of surface water runoff within the County through minimum setbacks and/or buffering.

Policy 5.3.9: The County shall regulate development within 100-year floodplains to maintain the flood-carrying and flood storage capacities of the floodways and flood plains and reduce the risk of property damage and loss of life.

Policy 5.3.10: Any filling or grade changes made shall not cause erosion, inhibit the flow of flood waters, or contribute to additional flood heights.

Policy 5.3.11: Development shall not occur which will adversely affect aquifer recharge rates in areas designated as “more vulnerable” by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection through its Florida Aquifer Vulnerability Assessment model.

Policy 5.3.12: The County shall comply with the resource management plans of the Northwest Florida Water Management District for the emergency conservation of water sources by establishing water conservation measures. Such measures may consist of but not be limited to the following:

- (a) The use of low water use plumbing fixtures.
- (b) The reuse of water for irrigation of crops in agricultural operation.
- (c) The use of odd-even watering days.

Policy 5.3.13: Promote water reuse and reclamation, where appropriate, for landscape, golf courses, farm irrigation, and industrial use applications.

Policy 5.3.14: Prescribe water wise “Florida Friendly Landscaping” guidelines for new non-residential development, and encourage the same for residential development.

Policy 5.3.15: In accordance with the Florida Standard Building Code and the Northwest Florida Water Management District, Gadsden County shall require irrigation rain sensors or soil moisture sensors with automatic cut-offs on all new irrigation systems.

Policy 5.3.16: Gadsden County shall discourage the use of potable water for landscape irrigation.

Policy 5.3.17: Procedures to remove or control intrusive submerged, emergent or floating vegetation shall be limited to that necessary to provide reasonable access, and provides the standard of aquatic weed control as defined by the appropriate agencies. Any use of chemical herbicides for such purposes shall ensure that water quality and ecological integrity are not degraded. Restoration of natural aquatic vegetation will be used in conjunction with shoreline restoration in all future conservation and outdoor recreation developments bordering the County’s rivers, streams and lakes.

Policy 5.3.18: Gadsden County shall require compliance with Florida regulations in Chapters 68F-20 and 18-20, F.A.C. regarding removal of shoreline vegetation.

Policy 5.3.19: The disposal of yard or other wastes along shorelines and in wetlands is prohibited.

Policy 5.3.20: Gadsden County shall oppose any activity that causes the withdrawal of water for commercial bottling purposes.

OBJECTIVE 5.4: Protect Endangered and Threatened Species.

Policy 5.4.1: Endangered and Threatened wildlife and State-designated Threatened species, shall be those as listed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and are published in the “Florida’s Endangered and Threatened Species”.

Policy 5.4.2: Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) are species that are imperiled or at risk of becoming imperiled in the future and shall be those identified by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and are published in the “Florida’s State Wildlife Action Plan”.

Policy 5.4.3: Gadsden County shall support state and federal requirements for on-site protection and/or managed relocation for all species listed and identified as Endangered or Threatened, and conservation management of critical habitats.

Policy 5.4.4: The County shall protect Endangered and Threatened Species by requiring the following to be submitted in conjunction with any Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map amendment request to a more intense category which is more than ten (10) acres. Such assessment may be conducted with readily available information through desktop GIS and/or the most recent state agency published documentation.

- (a) Any finding that lists any Endangered or Threatened Species located on site;
- (b) Soil types on site as noted in the Soil Survey in Policy 5.2.11.
- (c) Wetlands on site as shown on the National Wetlands Inventory.

OBJECTIVE 5.5: Establish standards for Silvicultural activities.

Policy 5.5.1: Silvicultural activities shall follow the Best Management Practices outlined in the publication titled: Silviculture Best Management Practices Manual, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry, as identified in 5I-6, F.A.C.

Policy 5.5.2: In order to minimize the potential impacts to State Imperiled Species from Silviculture activities, Silviculture activities shall follow the Florida Forestry Wildlife Best Management Practices for State Imperiled Species, as published by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

GOAL 5B: PROTECT AND MANAGE MINERAL RESOURCES

OBJECTIVE 5.6: The County shall protect and manage mining and mineral resource extraction activities.

Policy 5.6.1: A copy of any mining permit or reclamation plan issued by any agency of the state for the purpose of extraction or reclamation activities shall be submitted to the Planning Division within thirty (30) days of receipt by the applicant from the state.

Policy 5.6.2: Mining in environmentally sensitive areas as defined in Policies 5.2.1 and 5.3.1 within Gadsden County which cannot be reclaimed shall be prohibited. Such ability for reclamation shall be as determined by the state permitting process.

Policy 5.6.3: Mineral resources shall be conserved, protected from encroachment by conflicting land uses, and appropriately utilized pursuant to the requirements of state and federal law.

Policy 5.6.4: Mining extraction activities shall be conducted in a manner which will minimize adverse effects to water quality, fish, wildlife, and adjacent land uses. Mining activities shall not adversely affect existing residential uses.

Policy 5.6.5: Reclamation of lands used for mineral extraction activities shall be in accordance with any issued permit by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Whenever possible, innovative and creative reclamation techniques shall be encouraged to enhance the land for future use.

Policy 5.6.6: Setback standards for mining operations and associated structures from public parks, existing residential and commercial areas and public rights-of-way shall be established in the Land Development Regulations. These setbacks shall mitigate compatibility issues with adjacent land uses through adequate separation of mining operations from existing residential and commercial areas, public parks and public rights-of-way.

Policy 5.6.7: A compatibility analysis shall be completed and submitted in conjunction with any amendment to the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map for designation to the Mining Future Land Use category. Criteria to be included in the compatibility analysis shall include, but not be limited to:

- (a) Projected impacts to adjacent existing residential dwellings, lands designated as Rural Residential, Commercial or Neighborhood Commercial on the Future Land Use Map, and parks as a result of generated noise, traffic, light, dust, and toxic and hazardous materials and litter due to the proposed operation.
- (b) Mitigation techniques to be used to off-set the impacts of the mining operation, which can include, but are not be limited to vegetated landscape buffers, setbacks, wall/fences, open space and other factors which enhance the appearance of the mining operation while providing an effective buffer between land uses.
- (c) Compatibility to contiguous existing land uses.

- (d) Impacts to public facilities and natural resources.
- (e) Need for proposed amendment.
- (f) Compatibility to this Comprehensive Plan applicable goals, objective, and policies.

Policy 5.6.8: Mining shall be permissible in wetlands and adjacent to rivers, streams, creeks and lakes in areas designated as Mining on the Future Land Use Map, subject to the following criteria:

- (a) Reclamation must be undertaken in accordance with Florida Statutes and any FDEP requirements.
- (b) Drainage systems, wetlands, and other surface waters shall function in manners which are maintained or improved from conditions existing prior to the commencement of the mining activity.
- (c) Water within all wetlands and water bodies shall be of sufficient quality to allow recreation or support fish and other wildlife.
- (d) The plans for reclamation shall incorporate measures to offset wildlife habitat lost as a result of extraction, as pursuant to the FDEP Reclamation permitting process.
- (e) Experimental and innovative reclamation techniques are encouraged.

GOAL 5C. IMPROVE MANAGEMENT OF HAZARDOUS MATERIALS AND TOXIC SUBSTANCES.

OBJECTIVE 5.7: Protect environmentally sensitive lands and waters from, and minimize human exposure to hazardous waste, toxic substances and contaminated sites.

Policy 5.7.1: The County shall apply for available state and federal funds for the establishment of hazardous waste storage/transfer facilities, as the need arises.

Policy 5.7.2: The County, as part of the development review process, shall require that all hazardous waste or toxic substance generators submit a hazardous waste management plan to the Planning Division.

Policy 5.7.3: The County shall coordinate with the municipalities through any means necessary in management programs for proper storage, recycling, collection and disposal of hazardous wastes and toxic substances.

Policy 5.7.4: To the fullest extent possible, Gadsden County shall work toward receiving funding through the Environmental Protection Agency Brownfield Assessment Grant Program to inventory, characterize, assess and conduct planning and community involvement related to Brownfield sites.

Policy 5.7.5: Planning and Community Development staff shall work with appropriate agencies and/or other County staff members to expand the County's involvement with the federal and state Brownfields programs and grants.

GOAL 5D: PROVIDE FOR SAFE POTABLE WATER

OBJECTIVE 5.8: Provide for Wellhead Protection.

Policy 5.8.1: By 2018, the County shall pursue the establishment of interlocal agreements or joint planning agreements to ensure the protection of well heads protection zones with any municipality that may have jurisdiction within said zone(s).

Policy 5.8.2: Ensure protection for all community water supply wells by coordinating with the Northwest Florida Water Management District to protect well field protection zones.

Policy 5.8.3: A radius of five-hundred (500) feet from any well head is established as an area that prohibits any storage of hazardous materials or toxic waste, any landfill, storage of agricultural chemicals, or any commercial animal facility, including but not limited to grazing pastureland.

Policy 5.8.4: A radius of two-hundred (200) feet from any well head is established as an area that prohibits any use other than single-family residential, recreation, or open spaces uses. No impervious surface is allowed within this radius except that which is attributed to a single-family use.

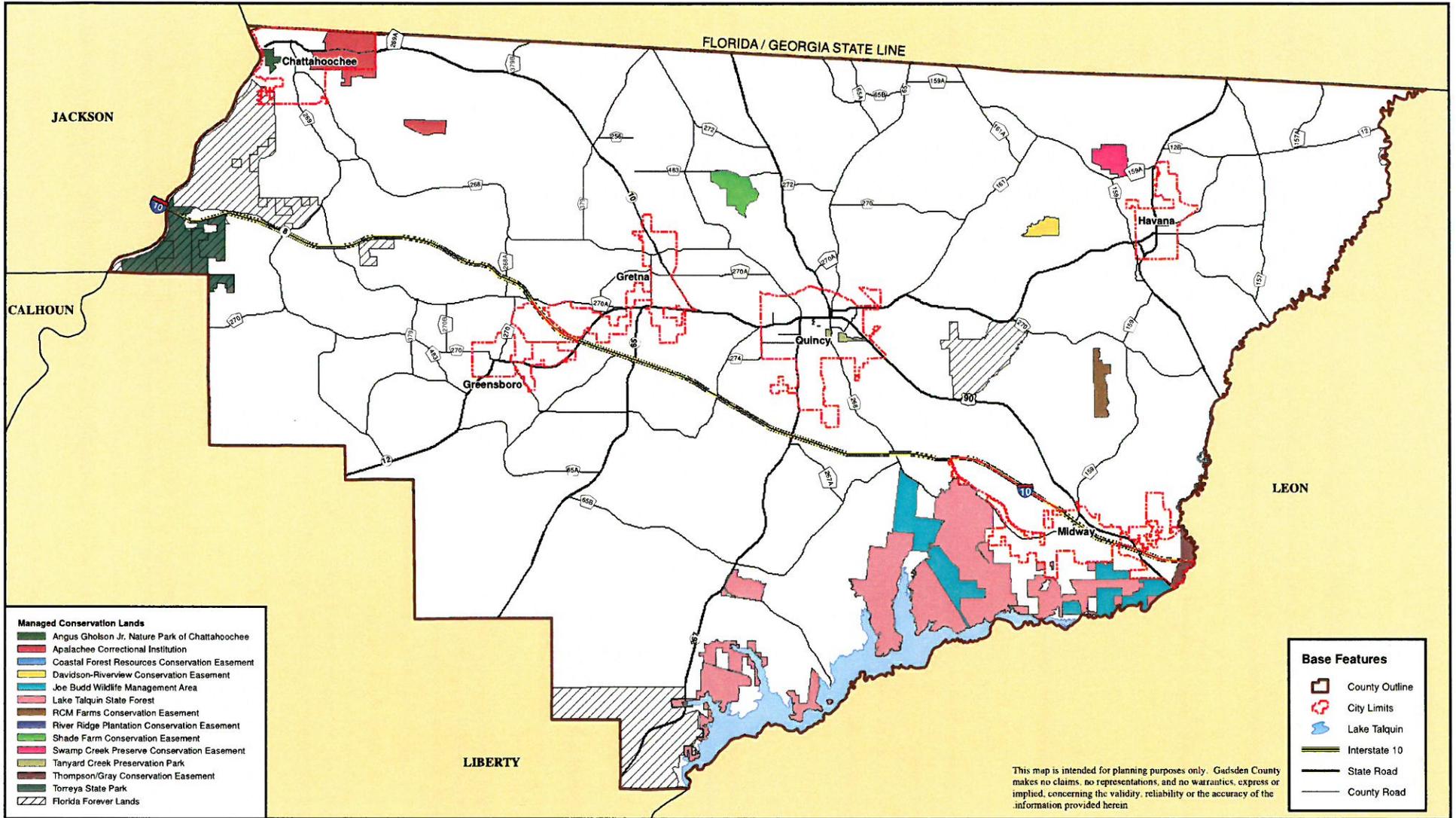
GOAL 5E: PROTECT CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES

OBJECTIVE 5.9: Maintain a development review process to promote protection of cultural and historical resources.

Policy 5.9.1: Consistent with Policy 3.7.3, the County shall continually update its files with all historic resources in the unincorporated areas as provided by the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources.

Policy 5.9.2: The County will use the State of Florida Master Site File to identify those areas where cultural, archaeological or historic resources may exist.

Policy 5.9.3: Developers of property which contains a resource listed on the Florida Master Site File must demonstrate that no listed resource shall be adversely impacted due to the development of any parcel.



- Managed Conservation Lands**
- Angus Gholson Jr. Nature Park of Chattahoochee
 - Apalachee Correctional Institution
 - Coastal Forest Resources Conservation Easement
 - Davidson-Riverview Conservation Easement
 - Joe Budd Wildlife Management Area
 - Lake Talquin State Forest
 - RCM Farms Conservation Easement
 - River Ridge Plantation Conservation Easement
 - Shade Farm Conservation Easement
 - Swamp Creek Preserve Conservation Easement
 - Tanyard Creek Preservation Park
 - Thompson/Gray Conservation Easement
 - Torreya State Park
 - Florida Forever Lands

- Base Features**
- County Outline
 - City Limits
 - Lake Talquin
 - Interstate 10
 - State Road
 - County Road

This map is intended for planning purposes only. Gadsden County makes no claims, no representations, and no warranties, express or implied, concerning the validity, reliability or the accuracy of the information provided herein.

EXHIBIT 1

MANAGED CONSERVATION LAND

DATA SOURCE: Florida Natural Areas Inventory
 Florida Conservation Lands - June, 2015
 Florida Forever Acquisitions - November 2014
 PREPARED BY: PREBLE-RISH, INC.
 S-Ray July 2015
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GADSDEN COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DATA AND ANALYSIS

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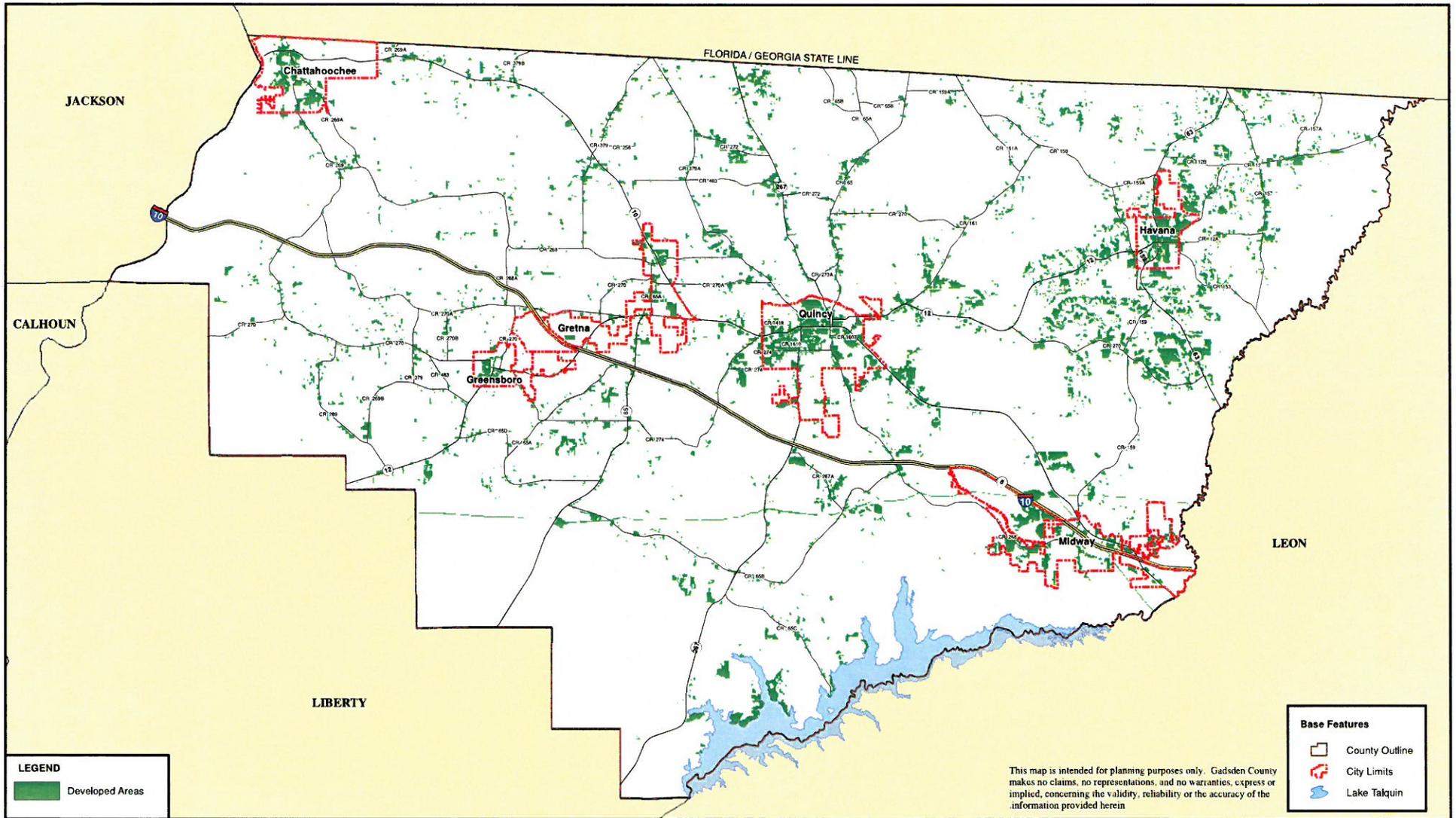


EXHIBIT 2

DATA SOURCE: Northwest Florida Water Management District
2012-2013 Land Use

PREPARED BY: PREBLE-RISH, INC.
SRay July 2015
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DEVELOPED AREAS

GADSDEN COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DATA AND ANALYSIS

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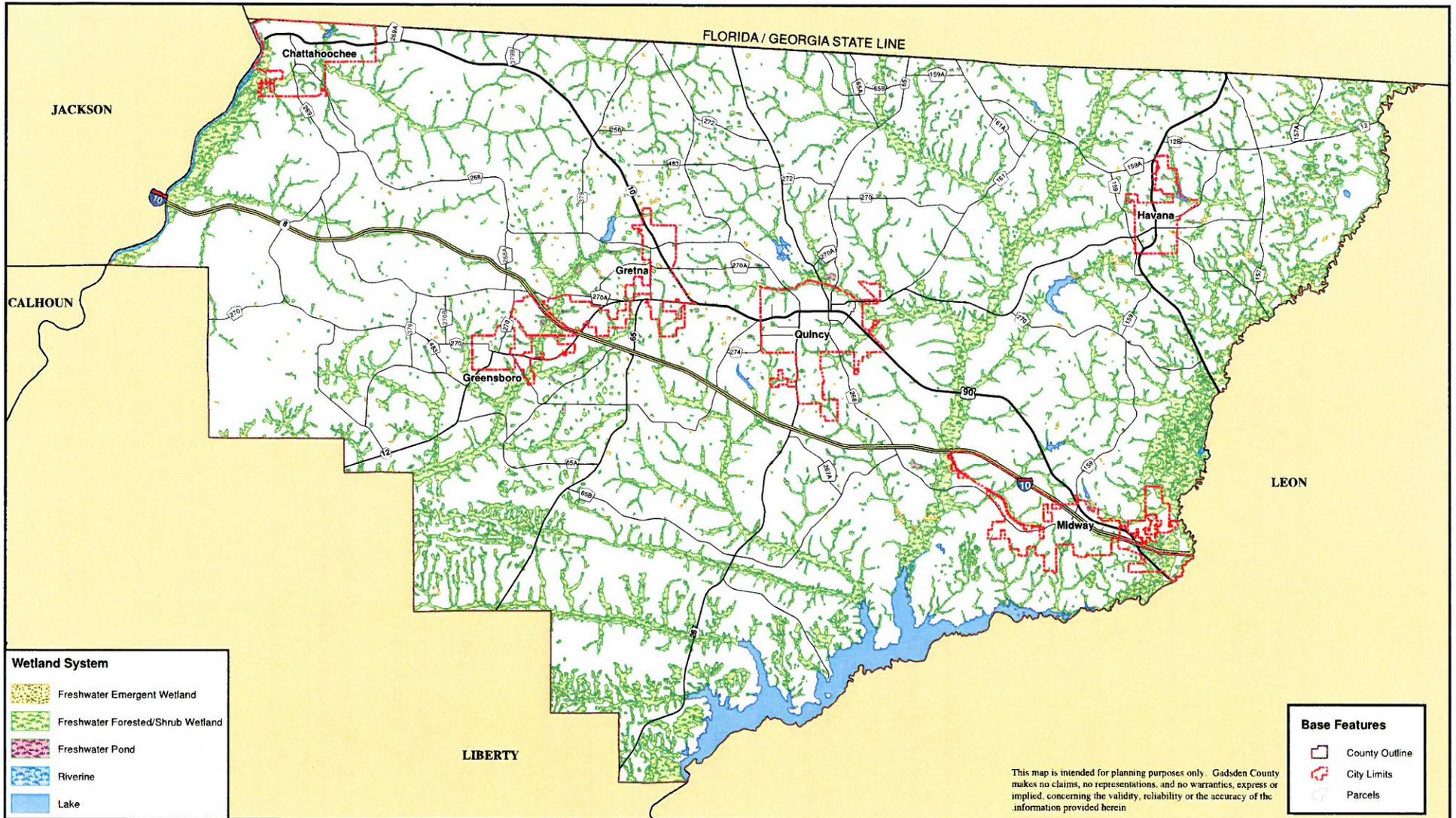


EXHIBIT 3

DATA SOURCE: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Wetlands Inventory - May, 2015

PREPARED BY: PREBLE-RISH, INC.
S-Ray July 2015
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WETLANDS MAP

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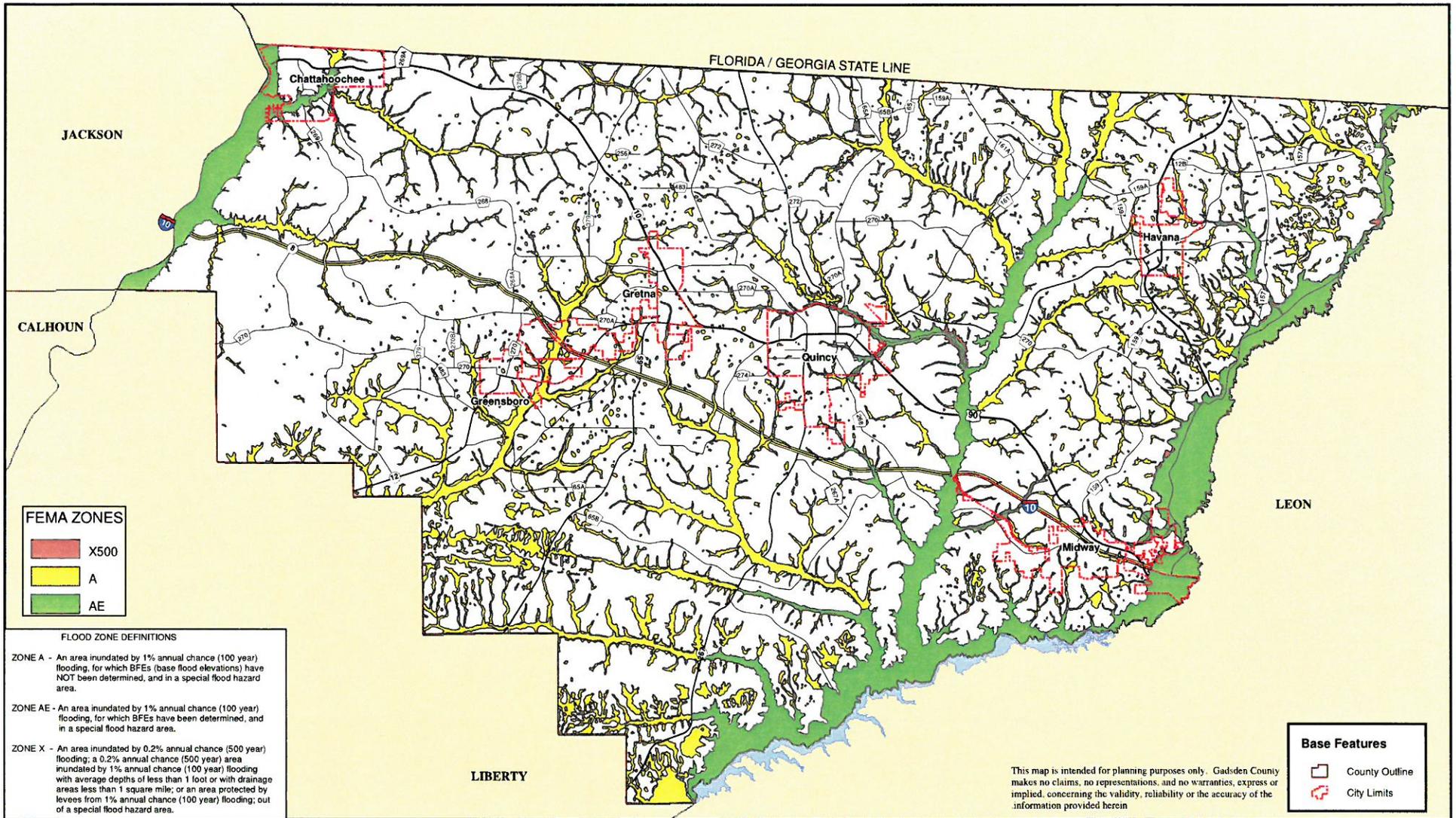


EXHIBIT 4

DATA SOURCE: Federal Emergency Management Agency
Flood Hazard Zones of the Digital Flood Insurance Map (DFIRM)
February, 2009

PREPARED BY: PREBLE-RISH, INC.
SRay July 2015
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FEMA FLOOD ZONES

GADSDEN COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DATA AND ANALYSIS



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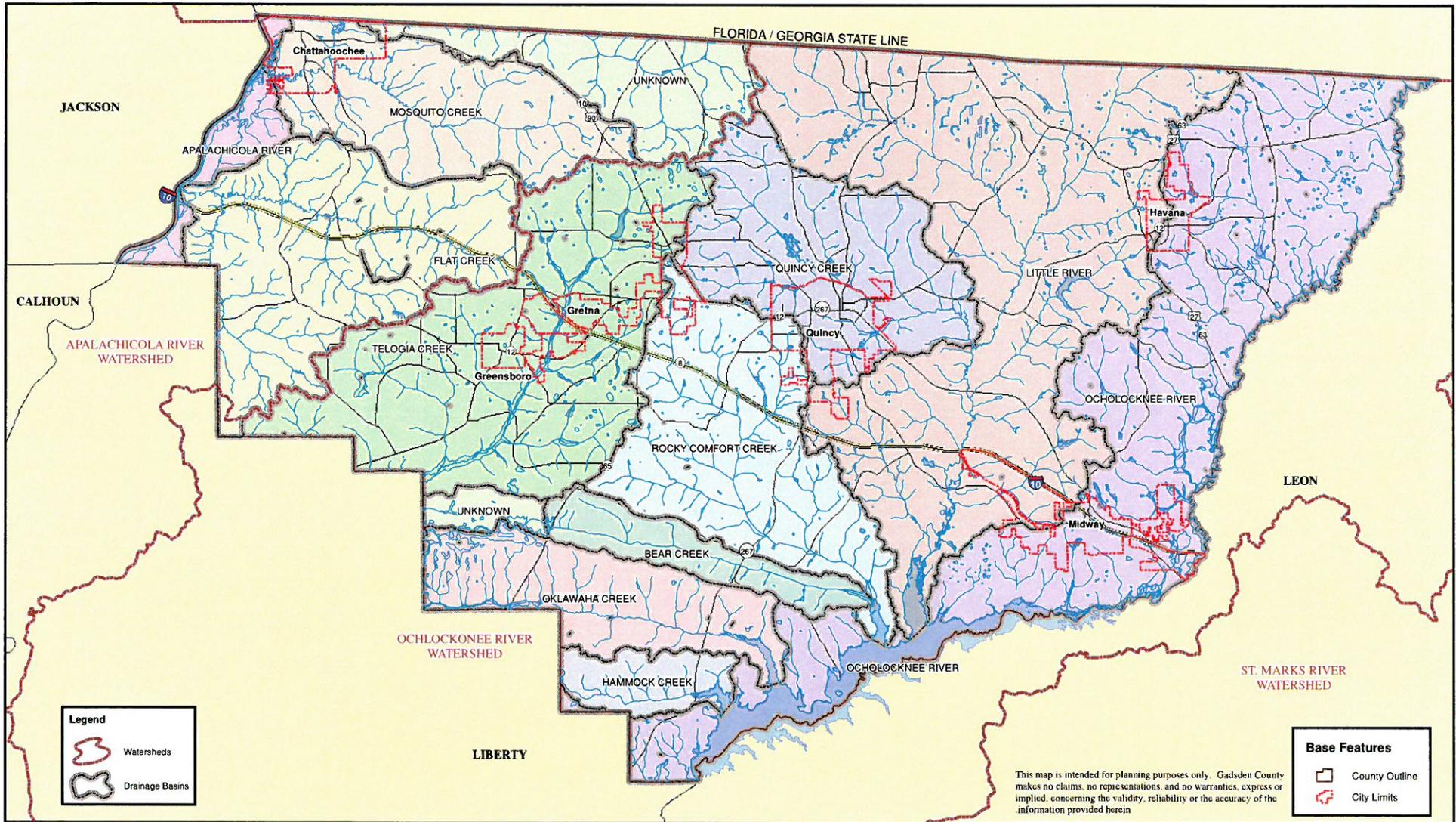


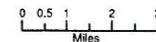
EXHIBIT 5

DATA SOURCE: Northwest Florida Water Management District

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MAJOR WATERSHEDS

GADSDEN COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DATA AND ANALYSIS



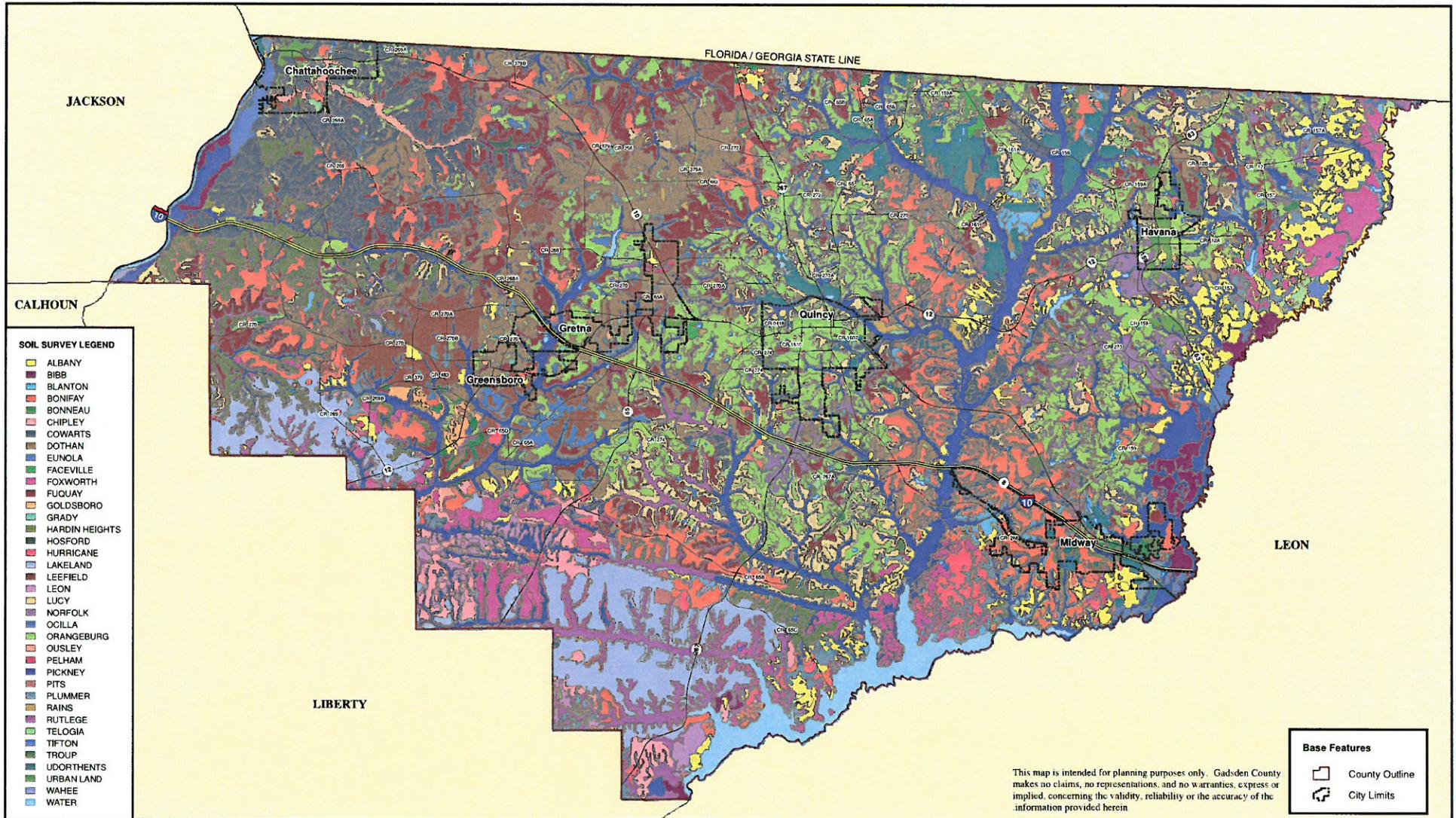


EXHIBIT 6

GENERAL SOILS ASSOCIATIONS

DATA SOURCE: USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service

PREPARED BY: PREBLE-RISH, INC.
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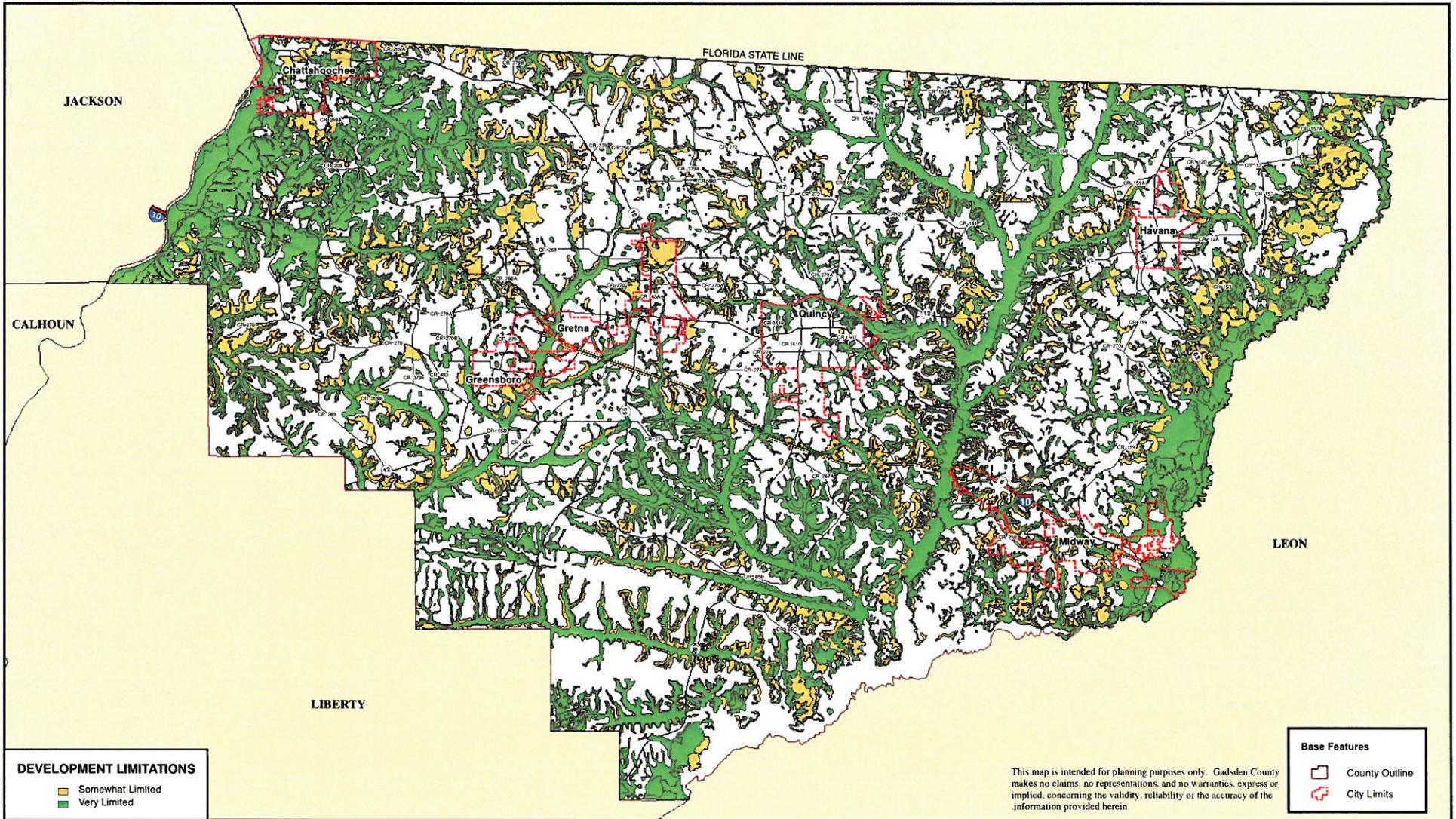


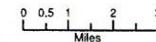
EXHIBIT 7

SOIL LIMITATIONS

DATA SOURCE: USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Services

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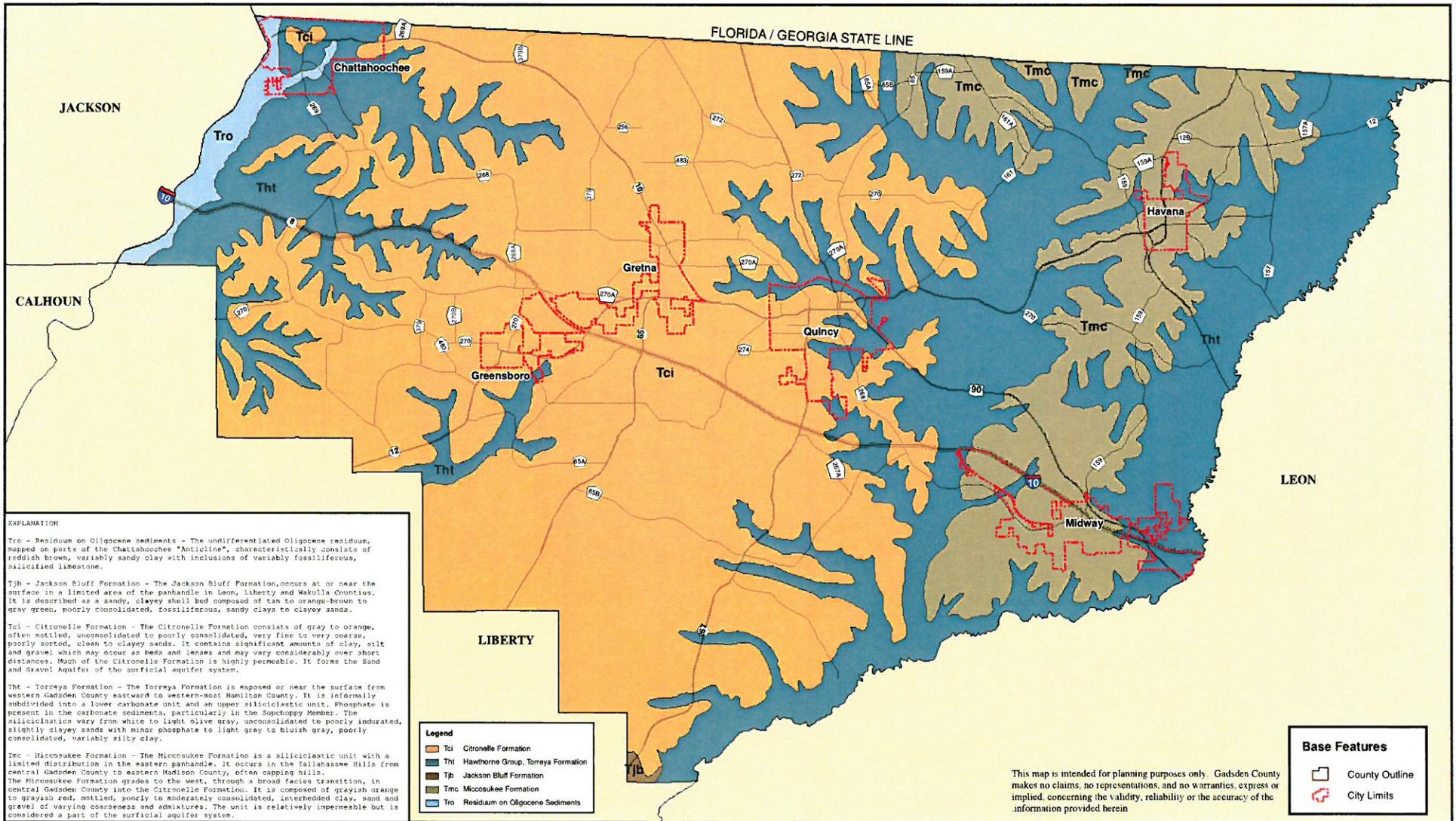


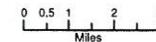
EXHIBIT 8

DATA SOURCE: U.S. Geological Survey

PREPARED BY: PREBLE-RISH, INC.
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GEOLOGICAL FORMATIONS AND MINERAL RESOURCES

GADSDEN COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DATA AND ANALYSIS



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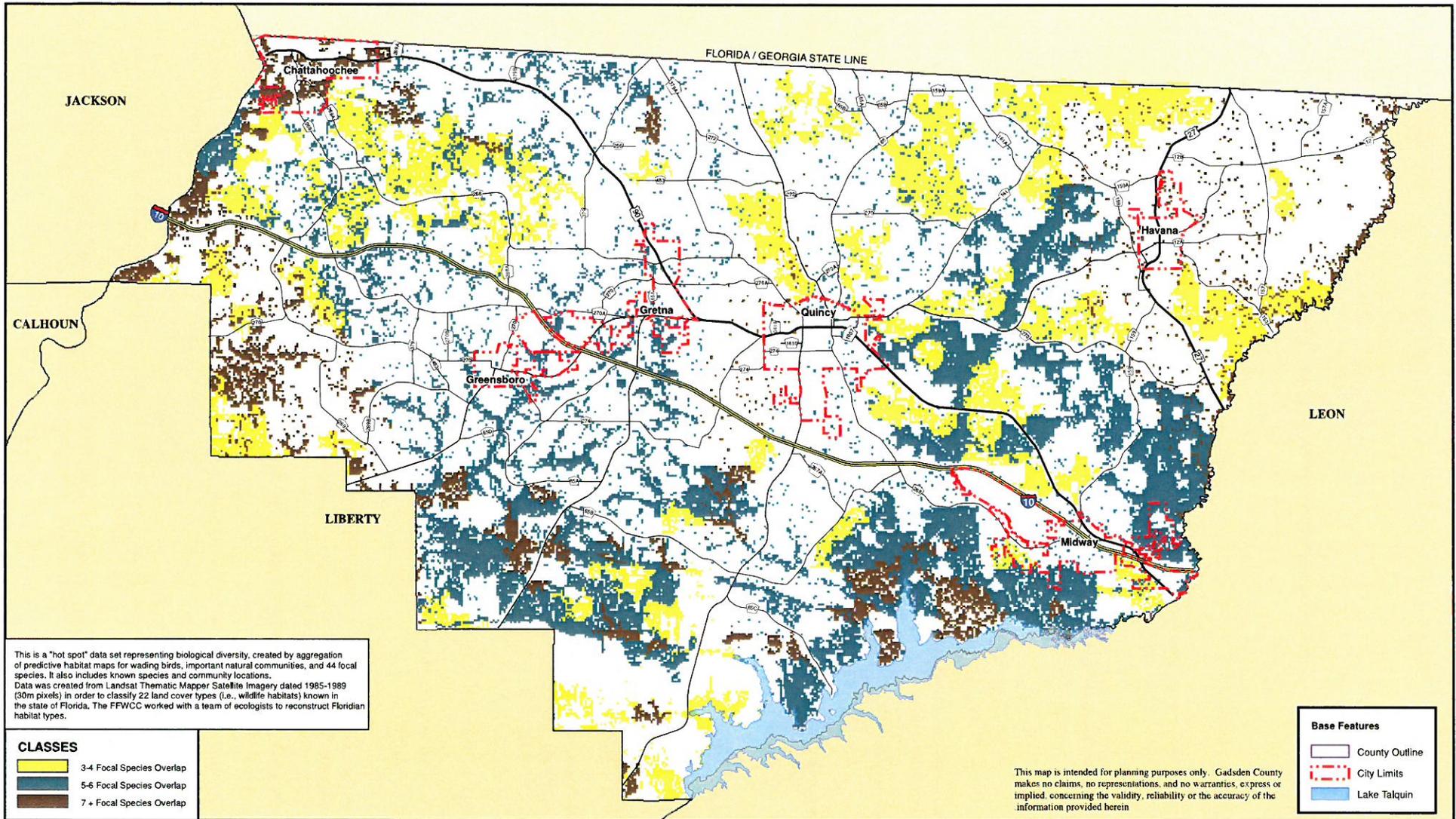


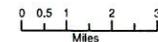
EXHIBIT 9

BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOTS

DATA SOURCE: Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission
Data derived from 1985 - 1989 Landsat Thematic Mapper Imagery.

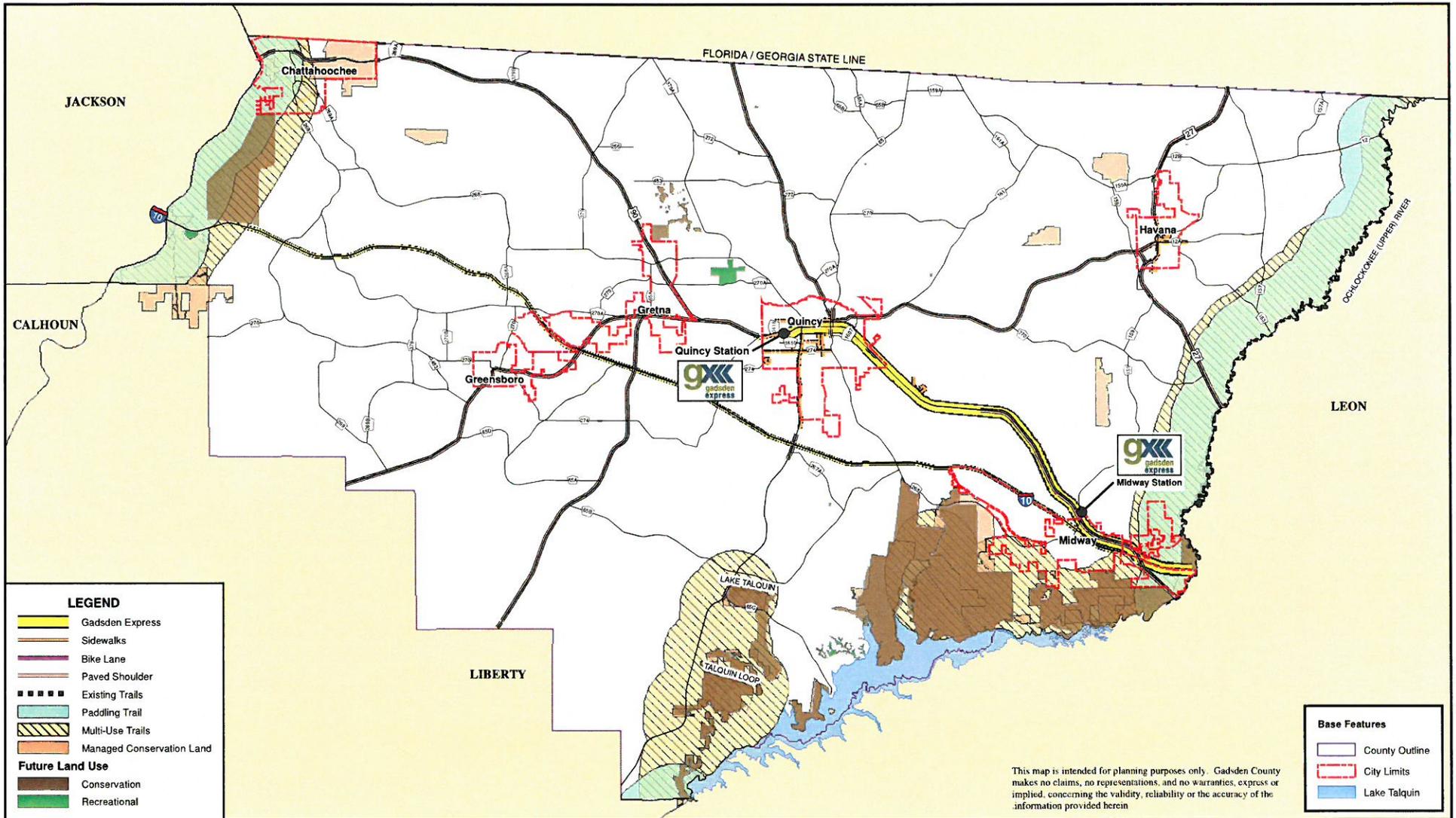
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GADSDEN COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DATA AND ANALYSIS



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LEGEND

- Gadsden Express
- Sidewalks
- Bike Lane
- Paved Shoulder
- Existing Trails
- Paddling Trail
- Multi-Use Trails
- Managed Conservation Land

Future Land Use

- Conservation
- Recreational

Base Features

- County Outline
- City Limits
- Lake Talquin

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EXHIBIT 10

ENERGY CONSERVATION FEATURES

DATA SOURCE: Gadsden County Planning & Zoning, Gadsden County GIS
 University of Florida GeoPlan Center, Big Bend Transit
 Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection Office of Greenways & Trails
 Florida Natural Areas Inventory Florida Managed Areas

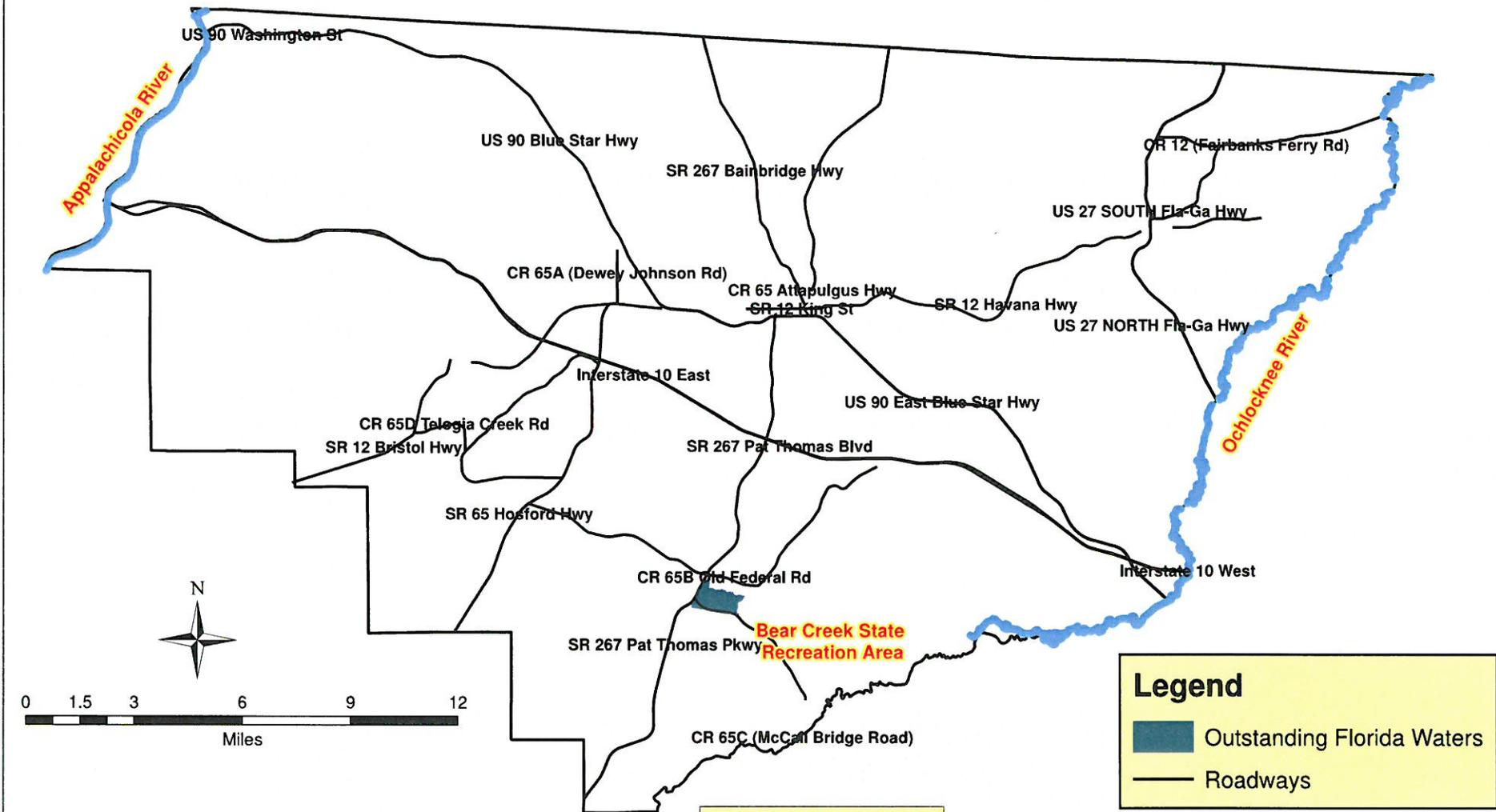
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MAP 5.1 GADSDEN COUNTY OUTSTANDING FLORIDA WATERS



DATE: September 3, 2015
SOURCE: Florida Administrative Code 62.302.400

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