

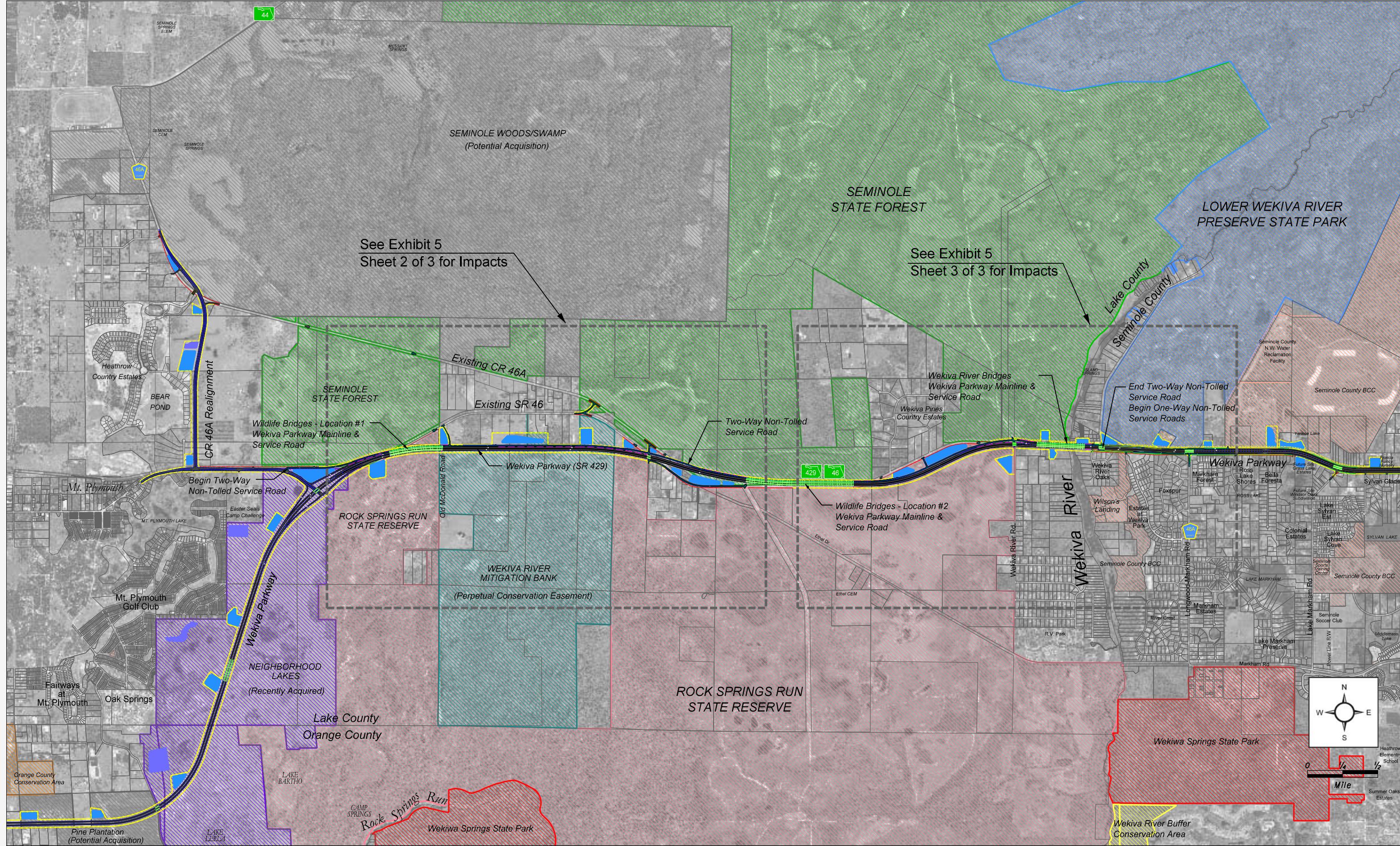
SECTION 3

Rock Springs Run State Reserve

3.1 Impacts and Findings

The Rock Springs Run State Reserve is part of the Wekiva River Basin, whose waterways and associated lands in central Florida comprise some of the most prized natural assets of the state. As outlined in this section, minimal impacts to Rock Springs Run State Reserve are anticipated with the proposed alternative; however, no adverse affects are expected. This *Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation* applies to this project because it proposes the use of minor amounts of the Rock Springs Run State Reserve and meets the FHWA's criteria for applicability and the FDOT's *PD&E Manual* Section 13-2.4.2 criteria as follows:

- 1. Operational Characteristics:** The proposed alternative is designed to improve the operational characteristics, safety, and physical condition of the existing highway facility (SR 46) on essentially the same alignment through the area where Rock Springs Run State Reserve is located (from east of Neighborhood Lakes to west of the Wekiva River).
- 2. Abutment to Public Lands:** Rock Springs Run State Reserve is a public recreational facility, conservation area and wildlife management area. The northern boundary of the Reserve is located adjacent to existing SR 46.
- 3. Impairment to Section 4(f) Resource:** The amount and location of the land used for the proposed alternative does not impair the use of the remaining Section 4(f) land, in whole or in part, for its intended purpose. Direct use impacts to Rock Springs Run State Reserve are expected to occur as a result of the proposed alternative. The proposed alignment generally impacts the northern portions of the Reserve that are contiguous with existing SR 46. Right-of-way acquisition for roadway and stormwater ponds is estimated at approximately 97 acres of the Reserve. The existing public recreational areas (hiking, biking, and canoe trails) will not be impacted by the proposed improvements. Prior to the Neighborhood Lakes acquisition, the total acreage of Rock Springs Run State Reserve was 14,011 acres. The proposed right-of-way requirement of 97 acres represents less than 0.7 percent of the total acreage of the Reserve. The impacted areas of the Wekiva River Basin State Parks, including Rock Springs Run State Reserve, are shown in **Exhibit 5**.
- 4. Proximity Impacts:** Proximity impacts, such as water runoff, visual intrusion, access and vibration, are not expected as a result of the proposed alternative. In accordance with the FHWA Memorandum dated November 12, 1985, regarding Section 4(f) Constructive Use, it is unlikely that the proposed improvements will substantially impair the function, integrity, use, access, value or setting of this resource. Noise impacts due to the proposed alternative are not anticipated to public recreational facilities, such as the campground. Stormwater treatment ponds (or flowage easements if permitted by FDEP in drainage design) are planned throughout the proposed corridor to provide treatment and to prevent the degradation of water quality due to the proposed alternative. Additionally, the primary access points to the Reserve on existing SR 46 will remain.



LEGEND

Stormwater Ponds

 Seminole State Forest

Floodplain Compensation Ponds

 Rock Springs Run State Reserve

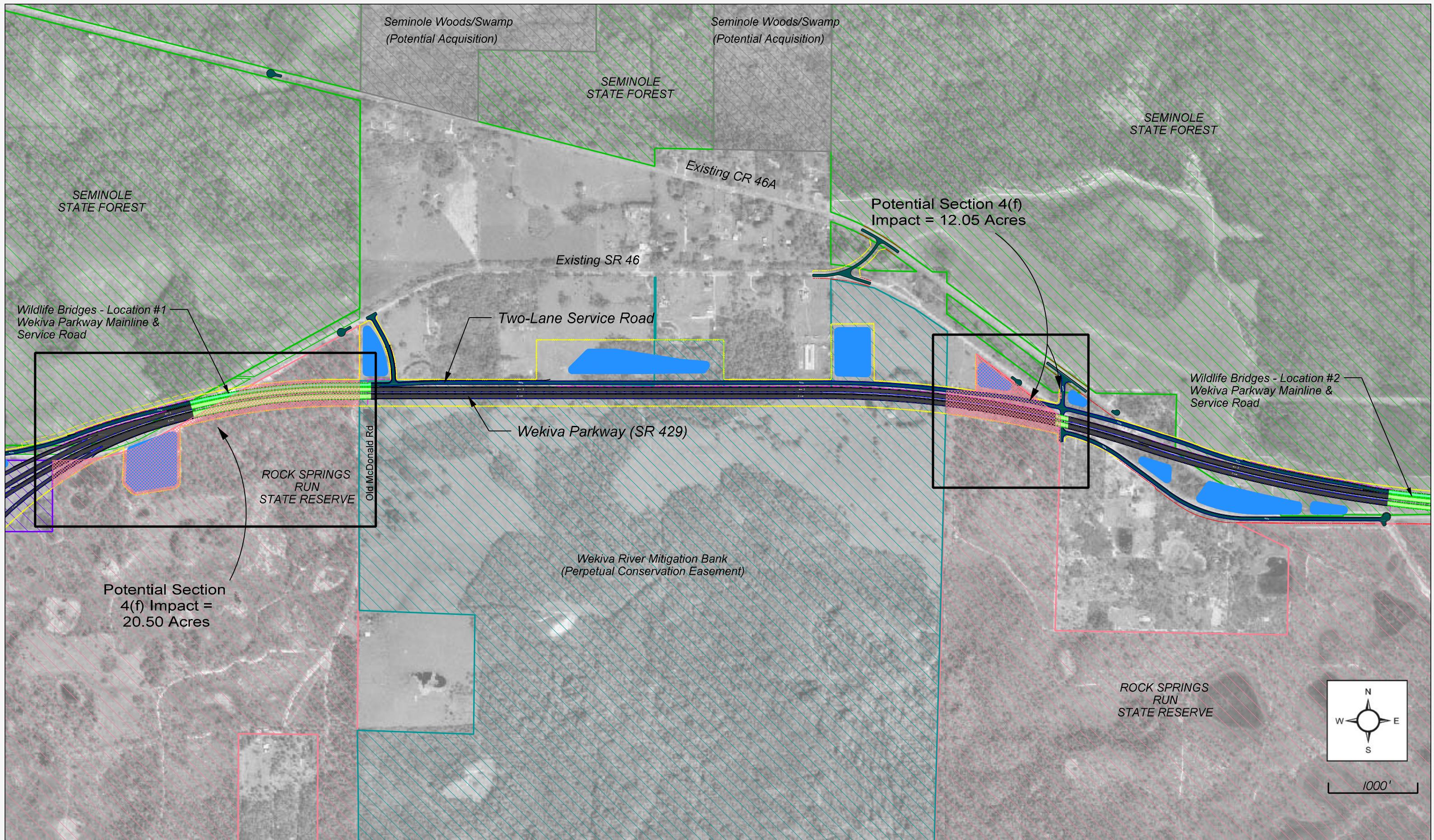
Neighborhood Lakes

Proposed Alternative R/W

— Existing RW

Exhibit 5

Sheet 1 of 3


LEGEND

■ Stormwater Ponds
■ Floodplain Compensation Ponds

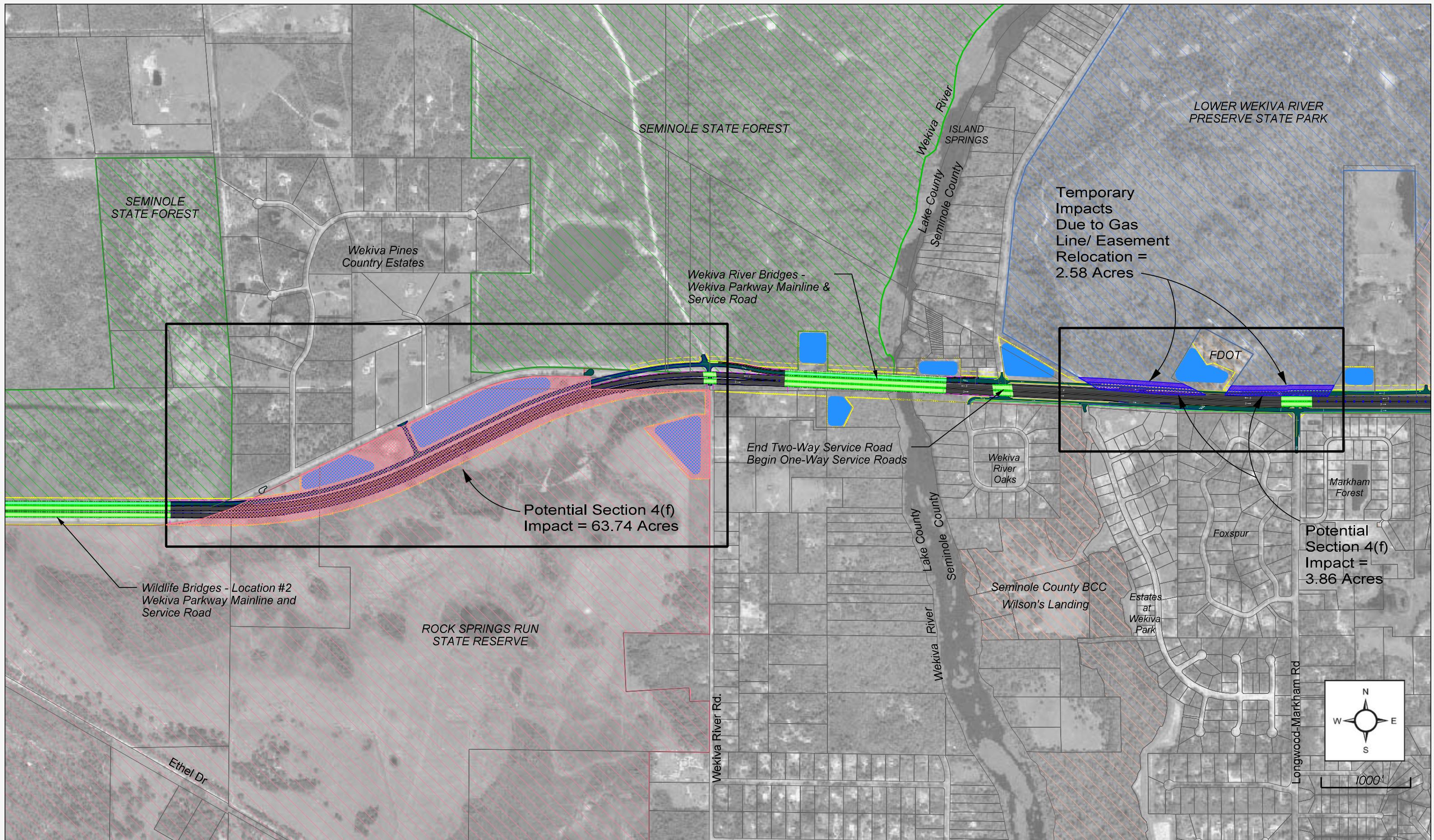
■ Seminole State Forest
■ Rock Springs Run State Reserve

■ Neighborhood Lakes

— Proposed Alternative R/W
— Existing R/W

Exhibit 5
Section 4(f) Impacts To Wekiva River Basin State Parks

Sheet 2 of 3



LEGEND

- Stormwater Ponds
- Seminole State Forest
- Floodplain Compensation Ponds

- Lower Wekiva River Preserve State Park
- Proposed Alternative R/W
- Existing R/W

Exhibit 5
Section 4(f) Impacts To Wekiva River Basin State Parks

Sheet 3 of 3

5. **Assessment of Impacts Concurrence:** FDOT sent a written request on October 29, 2007 to the FDEP, Division of Recreation and Parks land managers of the Rock Springs Run State Reserve to provide their opinion on the minimization of project impacts and proposed mitigation measures. The response letter from the Division of Recreation and Parks dated March 20, 2008 states "We appreciate your efforts to reduce the adverse effects of the project on Rock Springs Run State Reserve...." and "...it appears that the draft preliminary engineering drawings incorporate the main revisions that have been discussed in the past". On April 21, 2009, FDOT sent a written request for a concurrence letter to the Division of Recreation and Parks. A coordination meeting was conducted with FDEP senior staff in Tallahassee on August 12, 2009. However, later in 2009 the service road concept replaced the previous alternative and there was subsequent coordination with FDEP. A meeting on the service road concept was held in Tallahassee with the FDEP Deputy Secretary for Land and Recreation on November 3, 2009. Further information on the reduced impacts of the service road on Rock Springs Run State Reserve was provided to FDEP on February 8, 2010. After additional discussions and coordination, **the FDEP Deputy Secretary for Land and Recreation sent a letter to FDOT on March 30, 2010 which provides full Section 4(f) concurrence.** Copies of each of the above referenced letters are included in **Appendix C**.
6. **Federal Interest:** The property was purchased using EEL Bonds, CARL and P2000/ CARL funding sources. No Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) were used to purchase and/or make improvements to the Reserve.

3.2 Measures to Minimize Harm

Minimization of impacts to state park, forest and conservation lands has been a primary focus throughout the development and selection of alignment alternatives. The propose alternative is consistent with the *Use of Natural Lands by Linear Facilities Policy as Approved by Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund*, January 23, 1996. The policy states that "owners and operators of linear facilities must avoid location on natural resource lands unless no other practical and prudent alternative is available and all steps to minimize impacts...are implemented. The test of practicality and prudence will compare the social, economic, and environmental effects of the alternatives."

The following measures are proposed to minimize harm to the Section 4(f) resources identified in this document.

Incorporation of Design Features

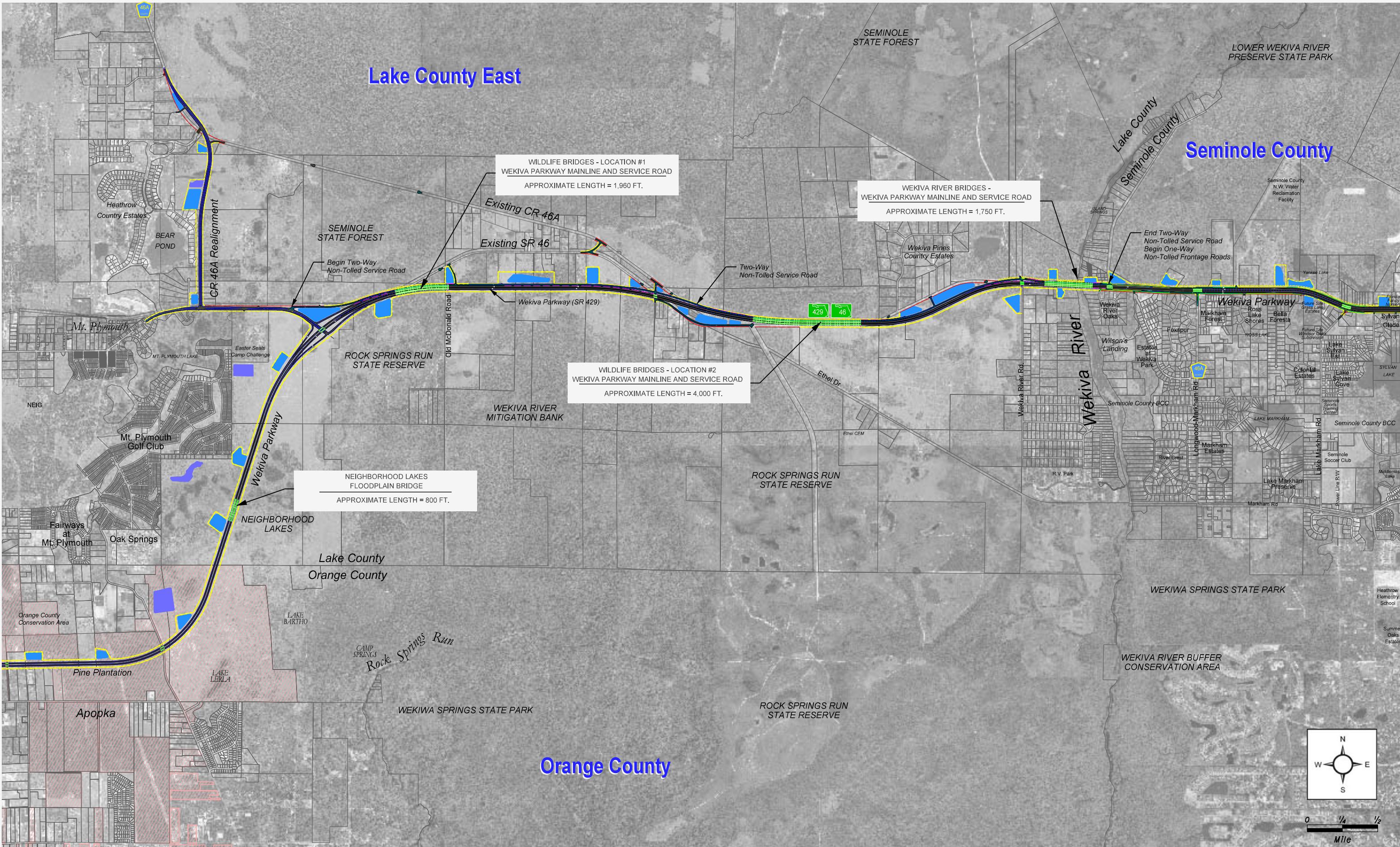
- To minimize potential impacts, the proposed limited-access facility closely follows the existing SR 46 alignment within this section of the project study area.
- FDOT has committed to examine options to further minimize impacts as a part of the PD&E Study, as well as during final design.
- Extensive coordination with FDEP has occurred throughout the PD&E Study to avoid, minimize and mitigate direct and indirect impacts to Rock Springs Run State Reserve to the extent feasible. At the specific request of FDEP, the proposed alignment through Neighborhood Lakes was located as far west as possible to leave the largest contiguous acreage with the Reserve.

- No stormwater treatment ponds currently exist along SR 46 within the study area. The proposed project includes elements intended to enhance the existing conditions in the environmentally sensitive Wekiva River Protection Area, including stormwater treatment ponds to filter pollutants from runoff which eventually drains to the Wekiva River. At the request of state land managers, the use of flowage easements as an alternative to ponds within state park, forest and conservation lands will be addressed with FDEP in the drainage design/ permitting phase.
- In addition, the proposed stormwater ponds are located on the west side of the alignment through Neighborhood Lakes at the specific request of FDEP. Promoting contiguous conservation lands within the Reserve was key to enhancing wildlife protection and habitat connectivity.
- The proposed alternative includes replacing two existing SR 46 wildlife structures (a 52-foot bridge west of Old McDonald Road and a 26-foot culvert east of the existing SR 46/CR46A intersection) with 1,960-foot and 4,000-foot bridges, respectively for both the expressway and the parallel service road. The existing 561-foot Wekiva River bridge will be replaced with 1,750-foot bridges for the mainline and the service road. These long bridges will enhance wildlife habitat connectivity between Seminole State Forest and Rock Springs Run State Reserve and reduce the number of wildlife-vehicle conflicts. The locations and approximate lengths of those wildlife structures are shown on **Exhibit 6**.

Replacement of Lands

- The acquisition of the Neighborhood Lakes property was completed in March 2007 to provide necessary right-of-way for the proposed construction of the Wekiva Parkway. The acreage required for roadway and stormwater ponds through Neighborhood Lakes is estimated at 192 acres of the total 1,619 acres purchased. The land not needed for right-of-way for the proposed alternative can be added to the Wekiva River Basin State Parks, specifically the Rock Springs Run State Reserve. With the addition of the Neighborhood Lakes parcels, the total acreage would be approximately 15,416 acres. Therefore, approximately 1,400 acres would be added to the Wekiva River Basin State Parks as a result of the purchase, with approximately 945 acres contiguous with the previous boundaries of the Rock Springs Run State Reserve.
- The acquisition of Neighborhood Lakes and the perpetual conservation easement obtained from the Wekiva River Mitigation Bank has resulted in an increase in the acreage of both private and state-owned conservation lands within the Wekiva River Protection Area as compared to the No-Build Alternative. Acquisition of the Neighborhood Lakes property allowed the proposed alignment to be set as far west as possible, which minimized impacts to Rock Springs Run State Reserve and maximized contiguous conservation land west of the Reserve.
- Similarly, the agreement for the perpetual conservation easement obtained within the Wekiva River Mitigation Bank provided necessary right-of-way for the proposed project and minimized impacts to the surrounding environment.
- The proposed alternative will provide wildlife habitat through the acquisition of Neighborhood Lakes which expanded the contiguous conservation corridor from Orlando to the Ocala National Forest known as the Wekiva-Ocala Greenway.

Lake County East



LEGEND

- Stormwater Ponds
- Municipal Boundaries
- Floodplain Compensation Ponds

- Proposed Alternative R/W
- Existing R/W

Orange County

Exhibit 6

Locations and Approximate Lengths
of Proposed Wildlife Structures