

# **PROTECTED SPECIES ASSESSMENT**

**Prairie Mine Road  
Polk County, Florida**

**February 2026**

**Prepared by:**



**22102 Kimble Avenue □ Port Charlotte, FL 33952  
(941) 457-6272  
[www.IVAenvironmental.com](http://www.IVAenvironmental.com)**

The following assessment has been prepared to identify on-site 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 (Polk County parcel ID # 23-30-02-000000-033020) is located within Section 02, Township 30S, and Range 23E in Mulberry, Florida. Please refer to the attached Location Map.

**SITE CONDITIONS**

A site inspection was conducted by qualified staff ecologists in February 2026. During the inspection, temperatures ranged from 70° - 77° F, winds were 5-10 mph, and skies were partly cloudy.

**VEGETATIVE COMMUNITIES**

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

<b>FLUCCS ID</b>	<b>FLUCCS DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ACREAGE</b>
190	Open Land	8.30
618	Shrub Wetland	19.7
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>28.0</b>

**FLUCCS 190 – Open Land**

This upland habitat lacks a significant canopy. Midstory and groundcover species present include: Bahia grass (*Paspalum notatum*), Mexican clover (*Richardia brasiliensis*), false buttonweed (*Spermacoce sp.*), finger grass (*Digitaria sp.*), ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*), fanpetals (*Sida sp.*), lovegrass (*Eragrostis sp.*), beggar’s tick (*Bidens alba*), and sandspur (*Cenchrus sp.*).

**FLUCCS 618 – Shrub Wetland**

This wetland habitat contains a canopy of slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*), melaleuca (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*), earleaf acacia (*Vachellia farnesiana*), laurel oak (*Quercus laurifolia*) and cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*). Midstory and emergent species present include: Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolia*), saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*), grapevine (*Vitis rotundifolia*), greenbriar (*Smilax spp.*), goldenrod (*Solidago spp.*), gallberry (*Ilex glabra*), blackroot (*Pterocaulon pycnostachyum*), bluestem (*Andropogon spp.*), staggerbush (*Lyonia fruticosa*), wax myrtle (*Morella cerifera*), Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), and hempvine (*Mikania scandens*).

**LISTED SPECIES SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

To provide approximately 80 percent coverage of the site, both linear and nonlinear overlapping transects were completed across the parcels per FWC guidelines. Transects were spaced approximately 30-50 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 properties 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 properties. These resources included, but were not limited to, the following: FWS Wood Stork Colony Map(s); Scrub Jay Territory Search Database; Audubon Eagle Nest Locator Database; FWS Florida Bonneted Bat Consultation Area Map(s); FWS Crested Caracara Consultation Area Map(s); FWS Red-cockaded Woodpecker Consultation Area Map(s); and FWS Panther Consultation Area Map(s). In the event that the sites contained suitable habitat for a protected species, or if the sites were 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 a mile 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.

Search of available online resources revealed that the subject property is located within the Consultation Area of the Florida scrub jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*). However, the site lacks any habitats which would be classified as Type I, II or III scrub jay habitat and no evidence of utilization by the species was observed during the site inspection. Therefore, the Florida scrub jay is not likely to affect future development of the parcel.

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 during the site inspection. 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.

Search of the Audubon Society Bald Eagle Nest Locator website revealed no nests within a half-mile radius of the subject property. No eagles or nests were observed on or around the subject property. Bald eagle should therefore not likely affect the future development of the subject property.

The subject parcel is located within an area that could potentially be utilized by the least tern (*Sternula antillarum*). No evidence of utilization by the least tern was observed onsite during the site inspection. Thus, the least tern is not likely to affect the future development of the property. However, least terns prefer to nest in open, sparsely vegetated habitats. Long pauses in construction can lead to ideal nesting sites. If least terns are found to be nesting onsite additional consultation with Florida Fish and Wildlife may be required.

Search of available online resources revealed that the subject property is located within the Consultation Area of the Everglades snail kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis plumbeus*). No evidence of utilization by the Everglades snail kite was observed onsite during the site inspection. The Everglades snail kite is not anticipated to be utilizing the subject property, and therefore, is not likely to affect the future 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. Thus, the Florida bonneted bat is not likely to affect the future development of the property.

Search of available online resources did not reveal documentation of any other listed wildlife species currently utilizing the subject properties.



The subject site contains habitats which are being utilized by the gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*). Two (2) potentially occupied gopher tortoise burrows were observed on the parcel. A 100% gopher tortoise survey and relocation permit from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will be required prior to development of the site if the gopher tortoise burrow cannot be avoided during construction.

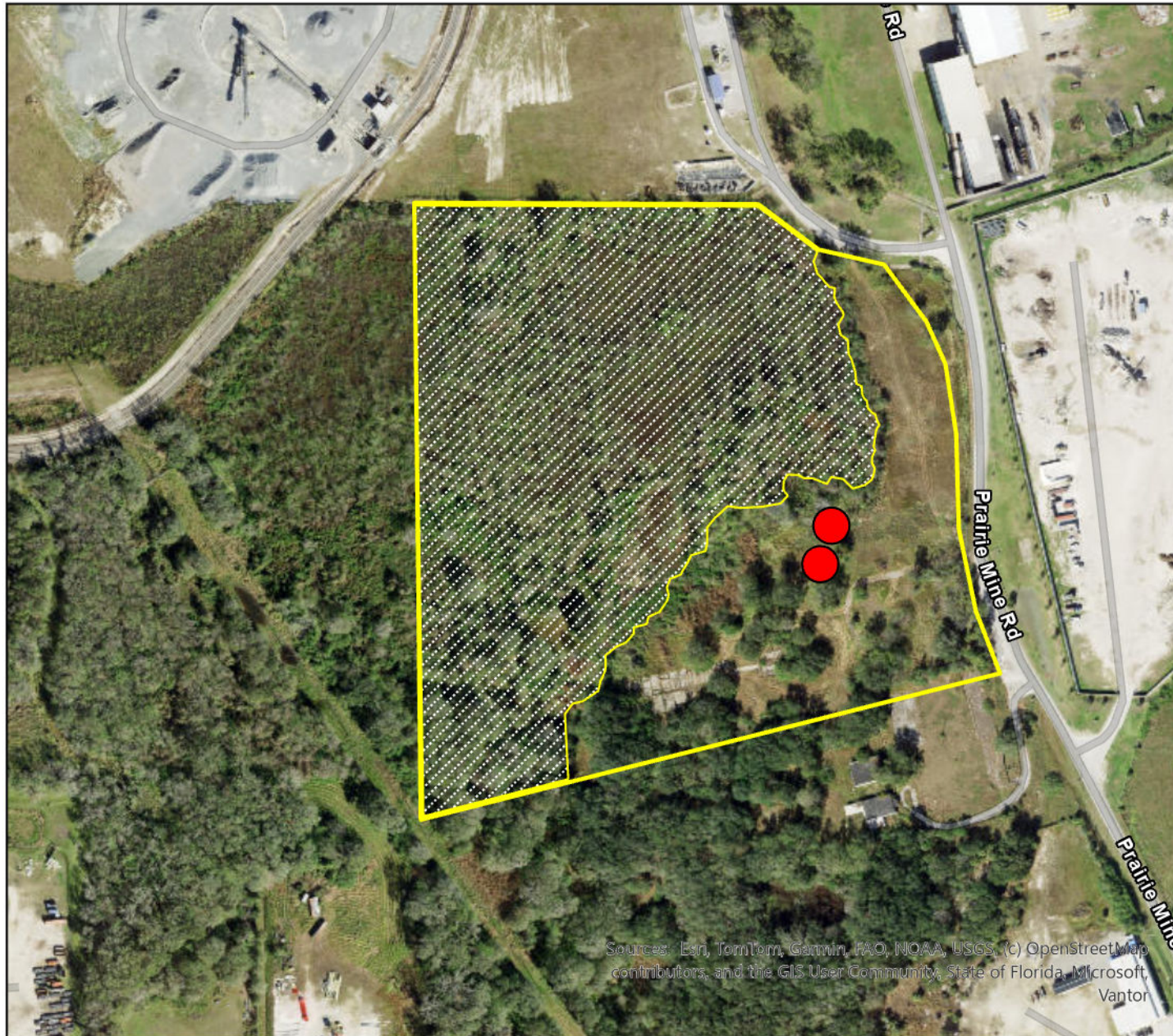
No other protected species or evidence of protected species utilization which would require permits from the FWC or FWS were observed onsite during the site inspection.

# SECTION 02; TOWNSHIP 30S; RANGE 23E

## LEGEND

FLUCCS	DESCRIPTIONS	ACREAGE
190	OPEN LAND	19.7+/-
618	SHRUB WETLAND	8.30+/-
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>28.0+/-</b>

-  POTENTIALLY OCCUPIED GOPHER TORTOISE BURROW (2)
-  WETLAND AREA 19.7 ACRES



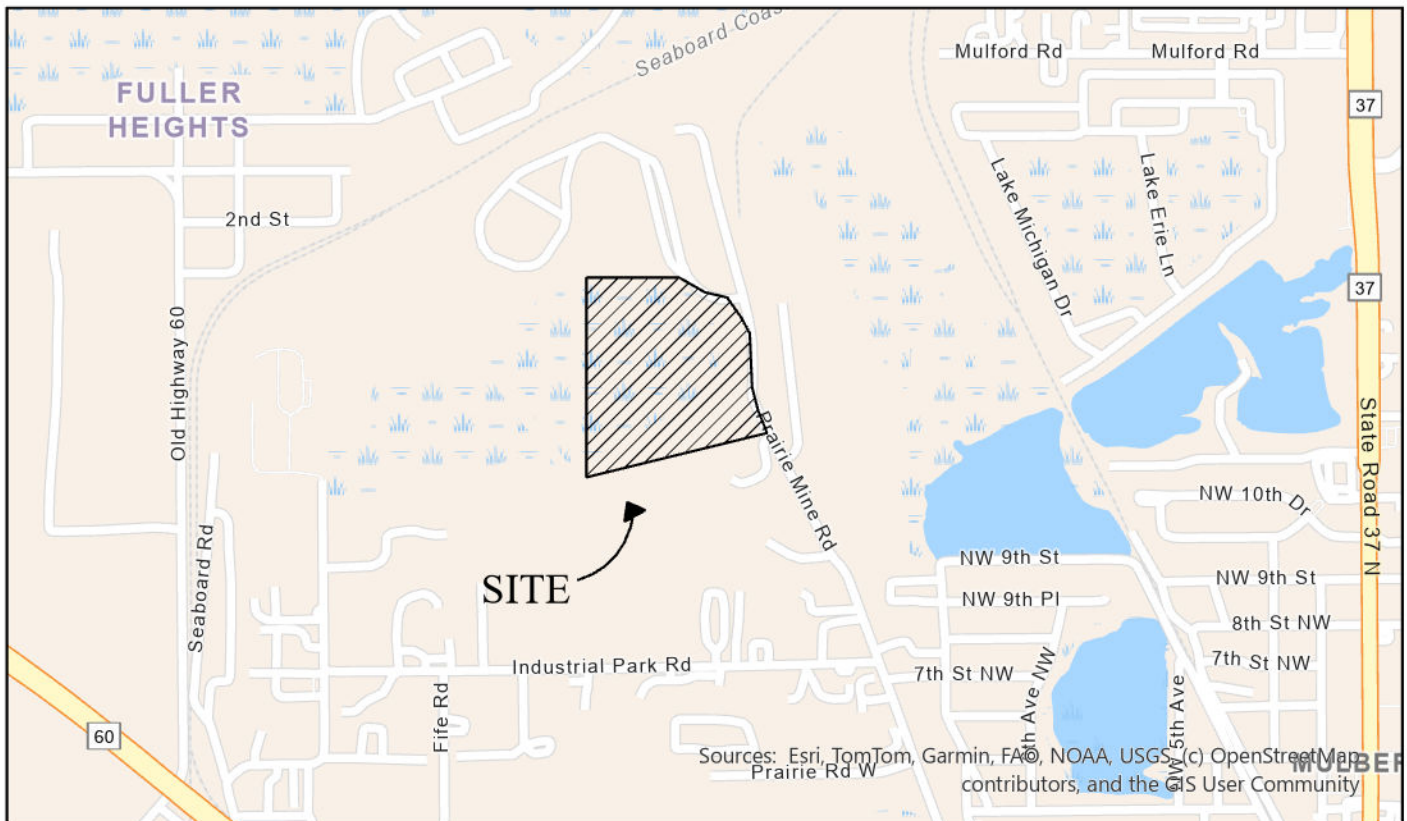
- NOTES:
1. FOR PERMIT USE ONLY NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION.
  2. PROJECT BOUNDARY IS APPROXIMATE AND WAS OBTAINED FROM COUNTY GIS.
  3. MAPPING APPROXIMATE AND BASED ON INTERPRETATION OF 2017 AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY AT 1"=30' SCALE.
  4. THE DELINEATION OF ANY ON-SITE WETLANDS, SURFACE WATERS, AND/OR OTHER SURFACE WATERS IS PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO REVIEW/APPROVAL BY APPLICABLE REGULATORY AGENCIES.

## PRAIRIE MINE ROAD PROTECTED SPECIES ASSESSMENT MAP

# SECTION 02; TOWNSHIP 30S; RANGE 23E



## POLK COUNTY, FLORIDA



LOCATION MAP

## PRAIRIE MIND ROAD LOCATION MAP

