

SAND HILL LAKES MITIGATION BANK
FDEP PERMIT NO. 0227351-001
SEMIANNUAL STATUS REPORT
PERIOD: JULY – DECEMBER 2023

For the period July – December 2023:

1. No prescribed fire was implemented (2023 scheduled dormant-season and growing-season burns on 1,250 acres were completed prior to July 2023).
2. Nuisance shrubs were spot treated with herbicide on approximately 99 acres of hydric pine flatwoods in August 2023 (Figure 1).
3. A minor occurrence of cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*) was observed and spot treated with herbicide at one location (Figure 2).
4. Feral hog damage to vegetation continues to be observed in multiple areas (Figure 3). A feral hog management contract is being developed between the Northwest Florida Water Management District and the US Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA—APHIS).
5. Inspection of perimeter fencing identified multiple locations where downed trees or large limbs on the fence require removal, or where minor breaches require repair (Figure 4).
6. Public fishing and hunting continued at the Sand Hill Lakes Mitigation Bank (SHLMB) in accordance with permit conditions.
7. Security and law enforcement patrols continued in accordance with permit conditions; no known violations were reported.
8. Water level gages were read at monthly in accordance with permit conditions. Data is available upon request.
9. Quantitative and qualitative vegetation monitoring required by permit conditions was conducted by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) in October 2023 and has been incorporated into the 2023 Annual SHLMB Report (to be submitted January 2024).
10. A Qualified Mitigation Supervisor team consisting of Robert Lide (Senior Environmental Scientist), Philip Garrett (Senior Environmental Scientist), and Coakley Taylor (Lands Manager) was submitted for FDEP approval (approved by FDEP via email of 1/8/2024).

Anticipated restoration and/or management anticipated for January – June 2024:

1. No prescribed fire is scheduled (all areas managed with fire were burned in 2023; next burns will occur no sooner than after June 2024).
2. Water level gages will continue to be read monthly in accordance with permit conditions.
3. Security and law enforcement patrols will continue in accordance with permit conditions.
4. Public fishing and hunting, overseen by FWC, will continue in accordance with permit conditions.
5. Inspections of perimeter fencing will continue with repairs made as warranted.
6. Upon execution of a contract, feral hog management activities will be implemented.
7. Exotic vegetation, if observed by NFWFMD or FWC staff, will be treated with herbicides.
8. Five-year renewal of FWC contract to manage public access for hunting, fishing, and other public use as allowed by the mitigation banking permit.

Overall, the site is in excellent ecological condition. All prescribed burns planned for 2023 were implemented during the first half of the year. Management activities continue in accordance with permit conditions. Issues identified above (minor occurrence of exotic and/or nuisance vegetation; feral hog populations; perimeter fencing maintenance) are being addressed.

Certification:

We certify, to the best of our knowledge, that this report represents a true and accurate description of the activities and site conditions at the time of this report. This semi-annual report was written in accordance with Specific Condition 27 of the permit.

Robert F. Lide

Robert F. Lide, Senior Environmental Scientist, QMS Team Member
18 January 2024

Philip Garrett

Philip Garrett, Senior Environmental Scientist, QMS Team Member
18 January 2024

Coakley Taylor

Coakley Taylor, Lands Manager, QMS Team Member
18 January 2024

Figure 1: Nuisance Shrub Herbicide Treatment Areas (JLY 2023 - DEC 2023)

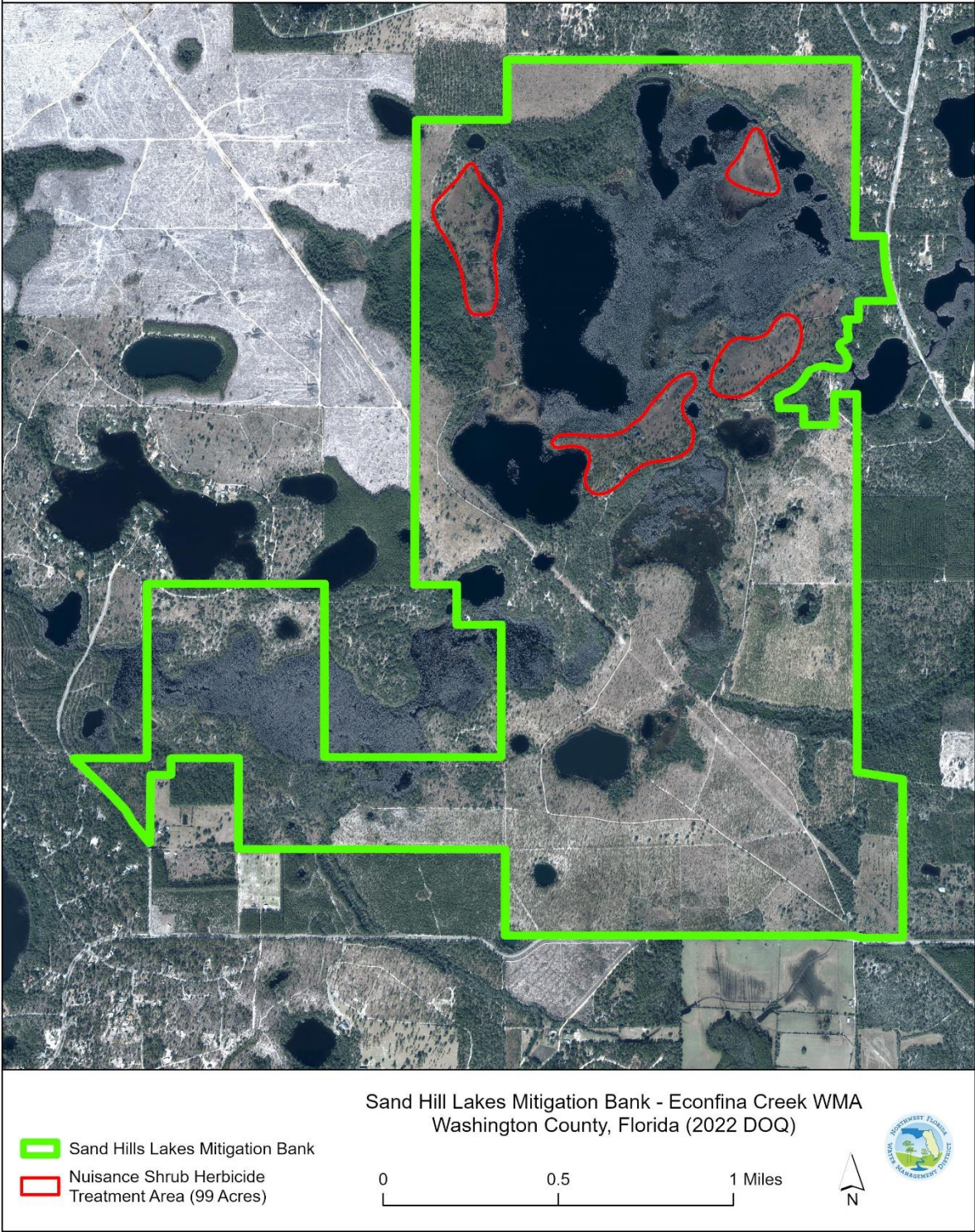


Figure 2: Spot Herbicide Treatment of Cogon Grass (JLY 2023 - DEC 2023)

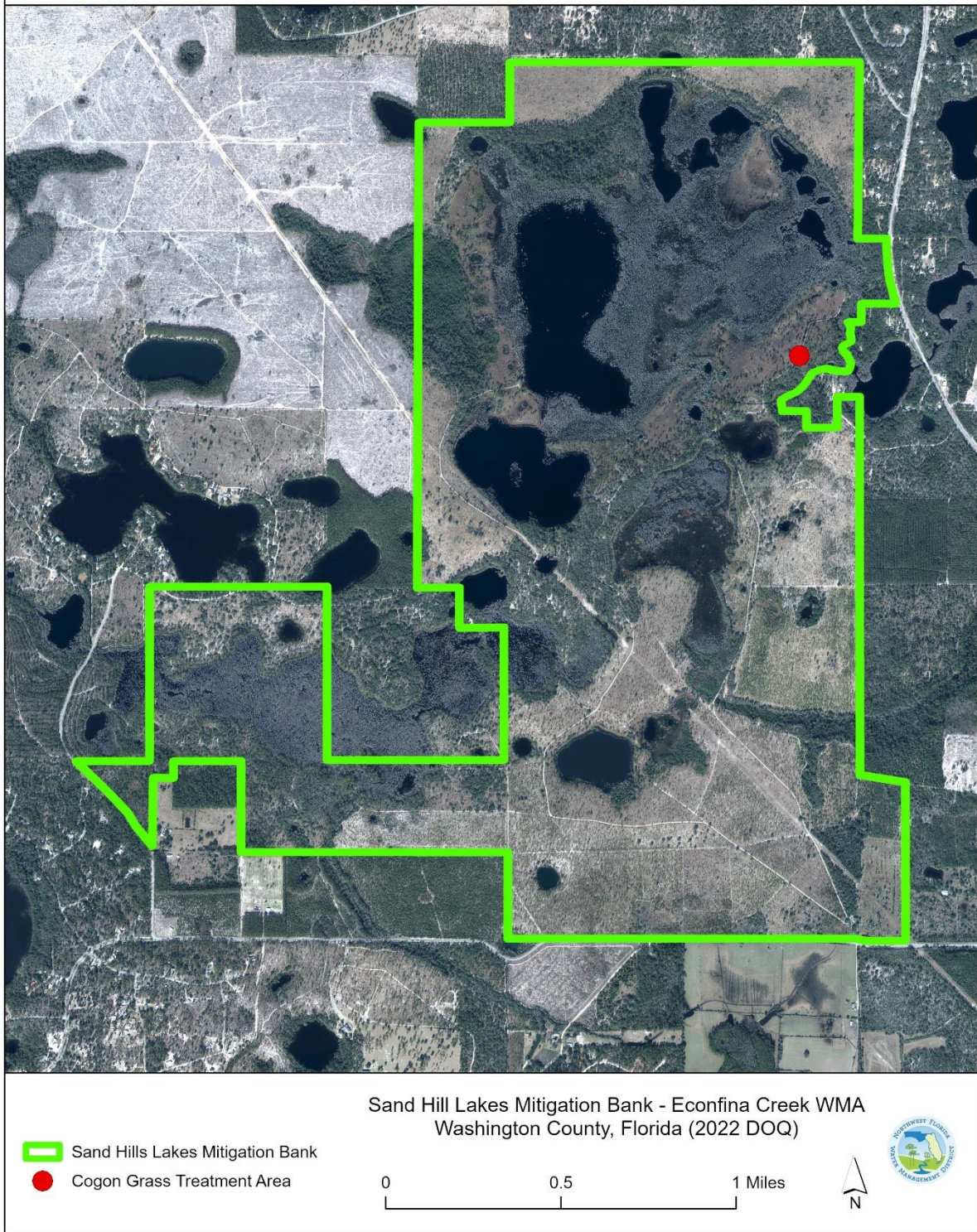


Figure 3: Observed Feral Hog Damage Areas in 2023

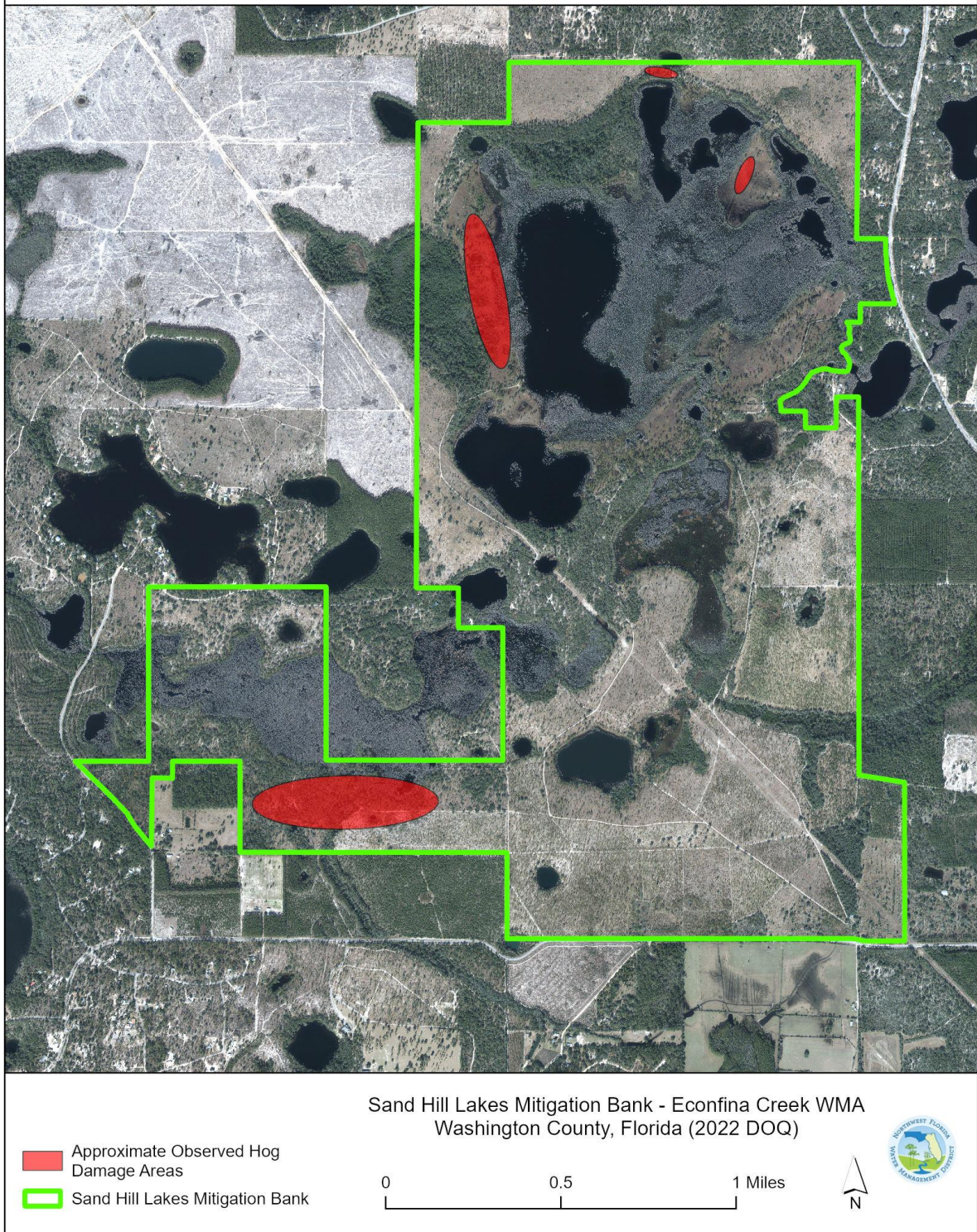


Figure 4: Perimeter Fence Inspection 2023

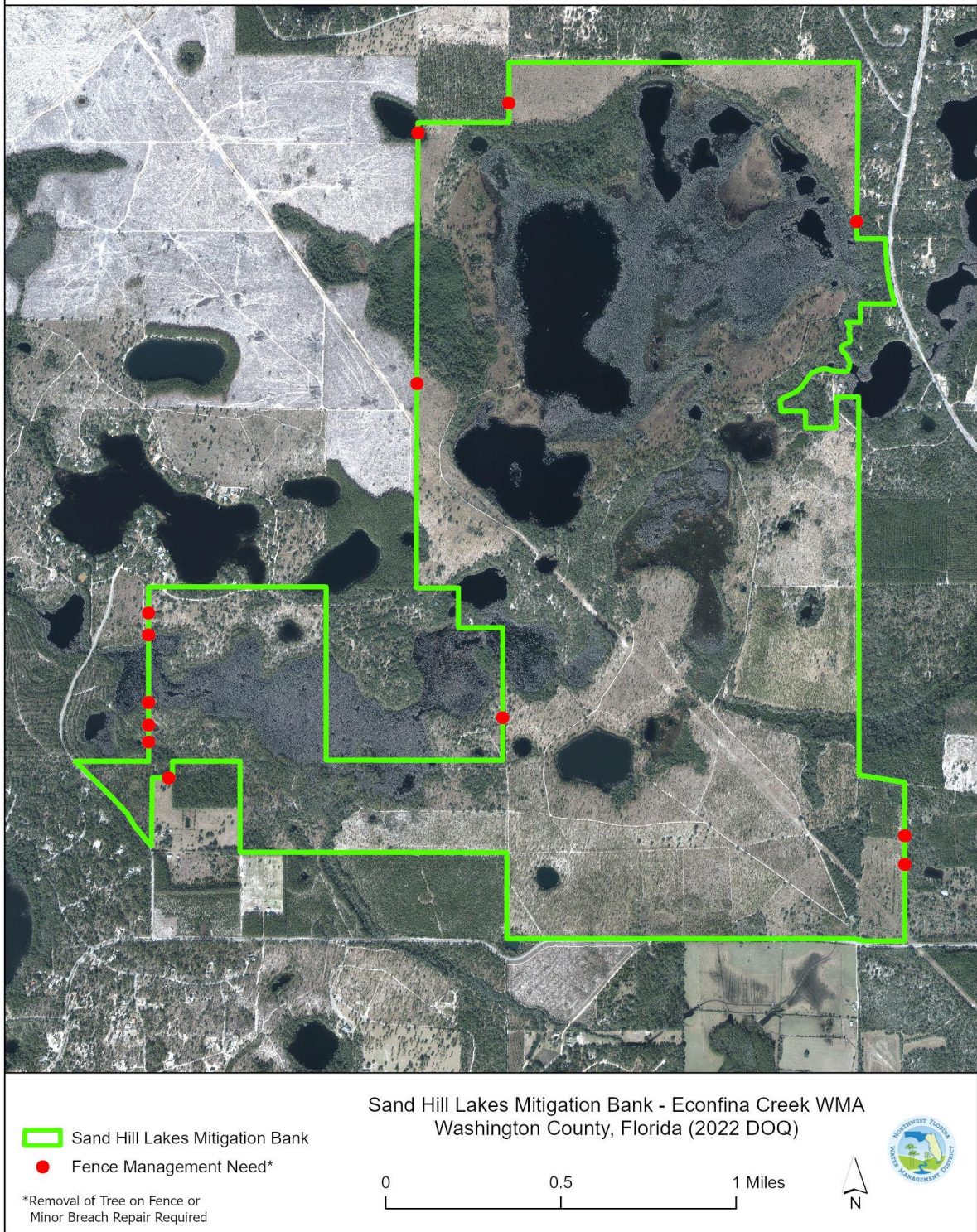


Table 1. Representative Photos



Sandhills Restoration 9/26/2023



Hydric Pine Flatwoods Restoration 9/26/2023



Hydric Pine Flatwoods Restoration 9/26/2023



Sandhills Restoration 9/26/2023



Feral Hog Damage 9/11/2023



Nuisance Shrub Herbicide 9/11/2023