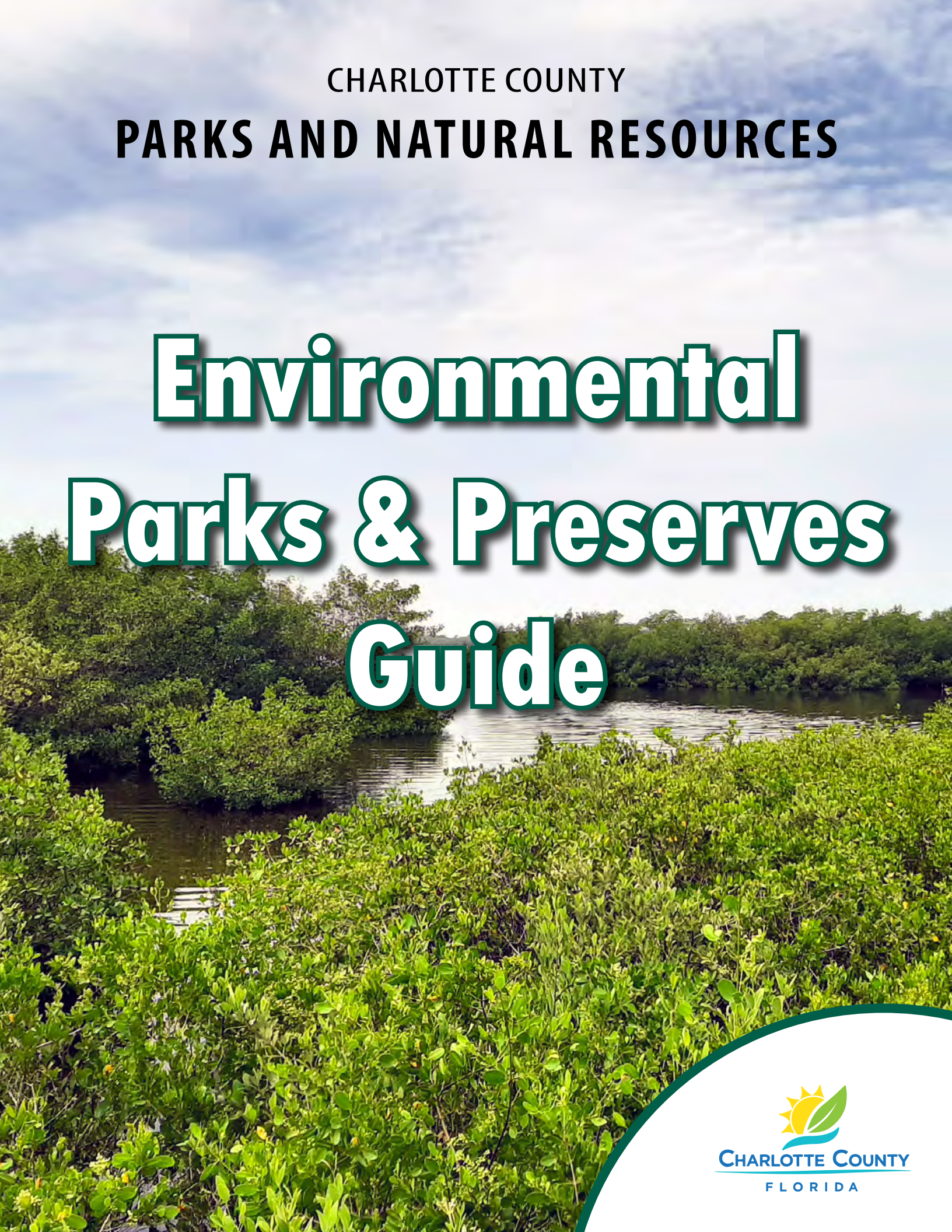
CHARLOTTE COUNTY

PARKS AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Environmental Parks & Preserves Guide



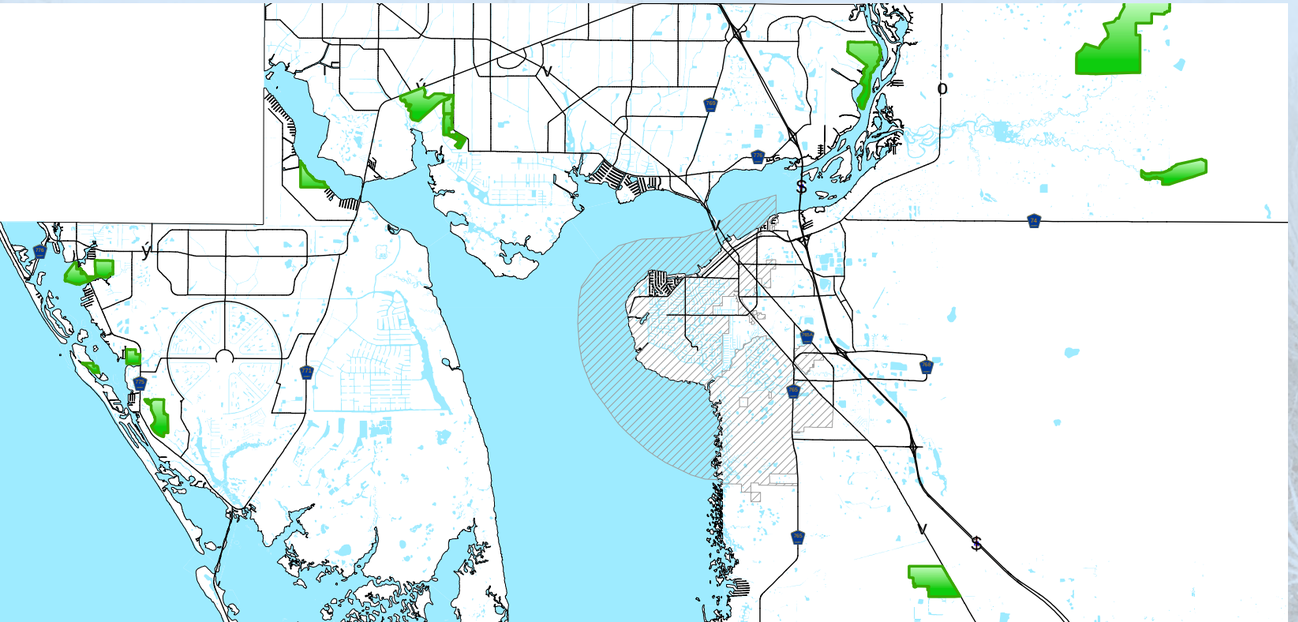
CHARLOTTE COUNTY
FLORIDA

WHAT IS LAND MANAGEMENT?

Since 1988 Charlotte County Parks and Natural Resources has managed our environmental parks and preserves. The beauty of our natural landscape is one of the reasons so many choose Charlotte County to call home. Our environmental parks and preserves are where so many in this community go to relax, recreate or just BE. Whether we are biking, hiking, fishing or just watching birds and other wildlife these spaces are an important part of our lives. These parks and preserves also function to protect us by filtering water resources, recharging the aquifer, cleaning the air and the mangroves and estuaries that surround Charlotte Harbor help protect properties from storm surge. The harbor isn't just pretty but also a vital component to our economy. Charlotte Harbor is one of the best fishing destinations in the state and is exceedingly popular among tarpon fishermen. For all of these reasons we manage environmental parks and preserves but what is "land management"?

Land management is the process of stewardship of natural areas. We, county staff, work to restore, protect and maintain natural areas for the enjoyment of ALL Charlotte County residents and guests. We utilize many tools to meet the challenges of stewardship including habitat assessments, plant and wildlife monitoring, exotics control, mechanical treatment, and prescribed fire. When possible, we try to mimic the natural processes that shaped our natural landscape. Florida evolved with reoccurring fire. While fire can be devastating it is an essential, beneficial component of our landscape. So much so that some pinecones will only open after being exposed to very high temperatures. So, when we're talking about fire it isn't a question of if but when. Other parts of the country have shown us fire suppression is not the answer. Our challenge is to balance the safety of the community with the ecological needs of our environmental parks and preserves. We use machines to make the action of prescribed fire as safe as possible for the community and citizens around us. We create firebreaks, reduce tree density and height, and work cooperatively with other agencies such as, Florida Forest Service, Charlotte County Fire and Rescue and Charlotte County Sheriff's Office to protect our community and enhance the lives of everyone.

If you enjoy trail riding on a bike, horseback riding, kayak/canoe/standup paddleboarding, hiking, fishing or just quiet walks in the woods, Charlotte County Parks and Preserves are great places to get up, get out and GET ACTIVE!



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Charlotte County has thousands of acres of natural areas to explore. Many of those included in this guide are wild, primitive and full of surprises. Please follow these guidelines to remain safe.

- Have a plan! Let others know where you will be and when you plan to return. Some natural area locations are remote and may have limited cellular or GPS service.
- Before leaving home, confirm park hours and familiarize yourself with the the park rules online at CharlotteCountyFL.gov
- Take your time and stay on the trails.
- Water, sunscreen, a rain jacket, insect repellent and sturdy shoes are recommended for hiking.
- Be aware of and respect the surroundings and wildlife. For your protection and that of the wildlife keep a safe distance from wild animals as they may behave aggressively if provoked or frightened.
- Be considerate of other visitors.
- Read and respect posted notices of land management activities, which may restrict access to certain areas. Prescribed burning, exotic or non-native plant removal and other habitat restoration may be occurring during your visit.

PACK IT IN/PACK IT OUT

"Leave no trace" refers to a set of outdoor ethics promoting conservation.

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Dispose of trash and waste properly
- Respect wildlife
- Travel on trails
- Leave what you find
- Be considerate of others

TRAIL COURTESY

- Bikers yield to hikers and horses
- Hikers yield to horses

In case of emergency, call 911.

PROHIBITIONS

To ensure public safety and environmental protection, the following activities are not allowed:

- Removal of plants, animals or archaeological or cultural resources
- Release or relocation of plants and/or animals within environmental parks/preserves
- Open fires
- Harassment of wildlife
- Off-road vehicles
- Pets, except in areas/sites designated for leashed dogs

AMBERJACK ENVIRONMENTAL PARK

6450 GASPARILLA PINES BLVD., ROTONDA, FL 33947

Amberjack Environmental Park is a 225 acre park made up of rare and unique rosemary scrub, pine flatwoods, marshes, and other beautiful natural areas, located on the southern half of the Cape Haze peninsula. Many different wildflowers can be seen blooming year-round in these habitats. Amberjack Environmental Park is traversed by two wetlands, one that formed the headwaters of a tributary to the Lemon Bay Aquatic Preserve, and one that drains into the west branch of Coral Creek. They are havens for several species of wading birds, including great blue herons, glossy ibis, roseate spoonbills, and snowy egrets.

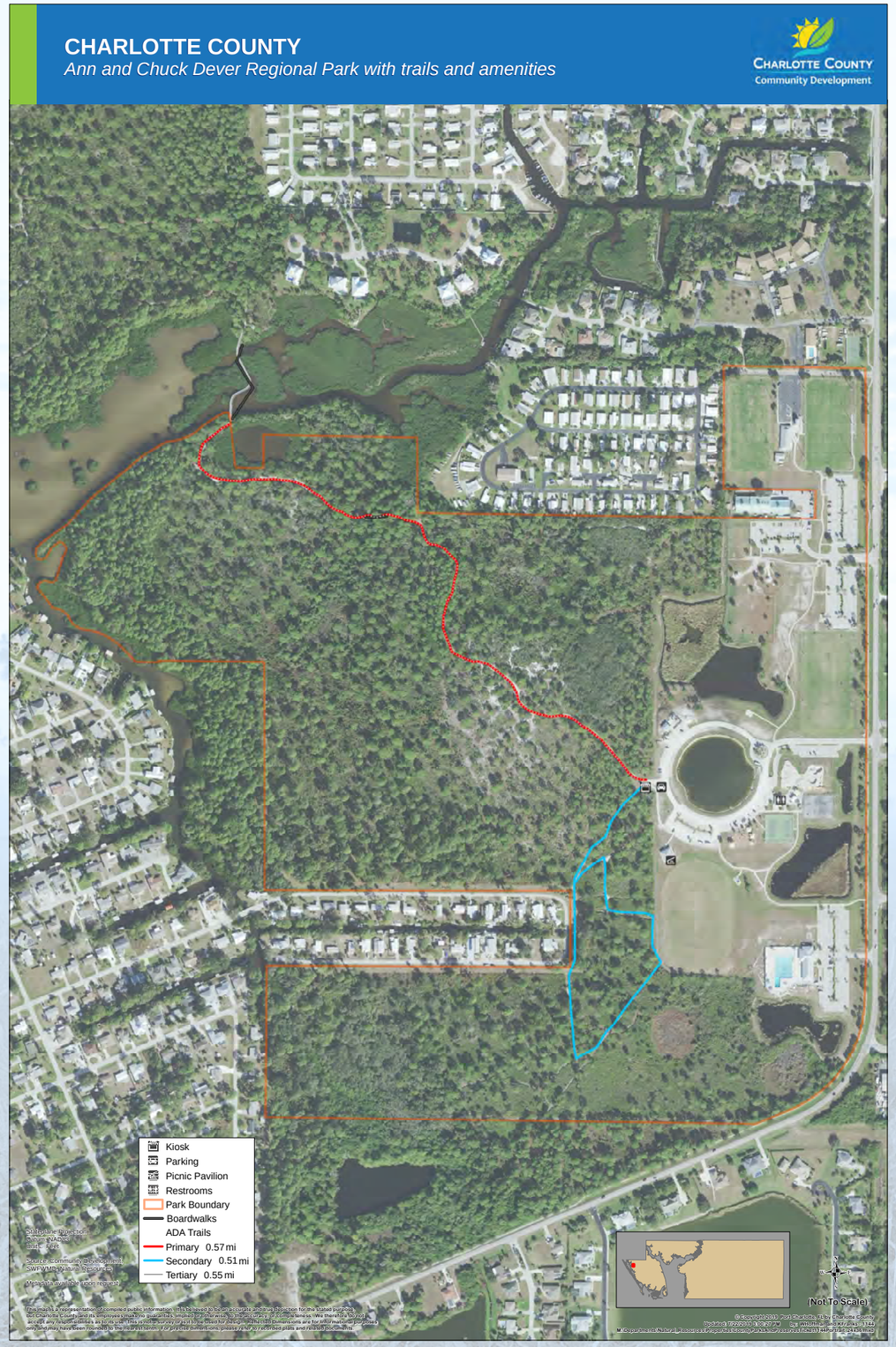
The park is located on the southern half of the Cape Haze peninsula in Englewood. Travel west on SR 776 (from Port Charlotte) and turn left onto CR 775 (Placida Rd). Drive approximately 4.3 miles and turn left on Gasparilla Pines Boulevard. Drive to the end of Gasparilla Pines and the park is on the right side of the road. This park has ADA accessible trails.

FLORIDA COMMUNITIES TRUST

POINTS OF INTEREST

- SCRUBBY FLATWOODS
- AMBERJACK SLOUGH
- DEPRESSION MARSH
- ROSEMARY SCRUB
- SAND LIVE OAK
- BOBCAT

CLICK HERE FOR
A VIRTUAL TOUR



ANN & CHUCK DEVER REGIONAL PARK

6961 SAN CASA DRIVE, ENGLEWOOD, FL 34224

Ann & Chuck Dever Environmental Park has over 137 acres of varying habitat types. In the park you will find a sanctuary of old growth pines, scrub habitat, and mature pine flatwoods with a mangrove fringe along Oyster Creek. Throughout these areas gopher tortoises have been observed, and along the creek perching snags are commonly used by osprey and bald eagle.

There is a boardwalk crossing Ann Dever and Oyster Creek is a great location to spot a variety of birds that utilize Oyster Creek and the surrounding tidal mangroves. The wetlands and mangroves provide habitat for wading birds such as the wood stork, white ibis, roseate spoonbill, little blue heron, reddish egret, snowy egret, and tricolored heron. The park is located in Englewood south of SR 776 adajent to Ann & Chuck Dever Regional Park.

FLORIDA COMMUNITIES TRUST

POINTS OF INTEREST

- GREAT HORNED OWL
- MANGROVE SWAMP
- COONTIE
- PRICKLY PEAR CACTUS

BILL COY PRESERVE

5350 PLACIDA ROAD, ENGLEWOOD, FL 34224

This 80 acre preserve is located along the northern section of Buck Creek, on the Cape Haze peninsula. The entire preserve is comprised of native habitat, predominantly scrubby flatwoods, and mesic pine flatwoods. These flatwoods transition into coastal hammock and mangrove swamp along Buck Creek, which flows into the Lemon Bay Aquatic Preserve.

The preserve is located along the northern section of Buck Creek on the Cape Haze peninsula. Travel west on SR 776 (from Port Charlotte) and turn left onto CR 775 (Placida Rd). Proceed south approximately 4 miles; the preserve is on the right side of the road.

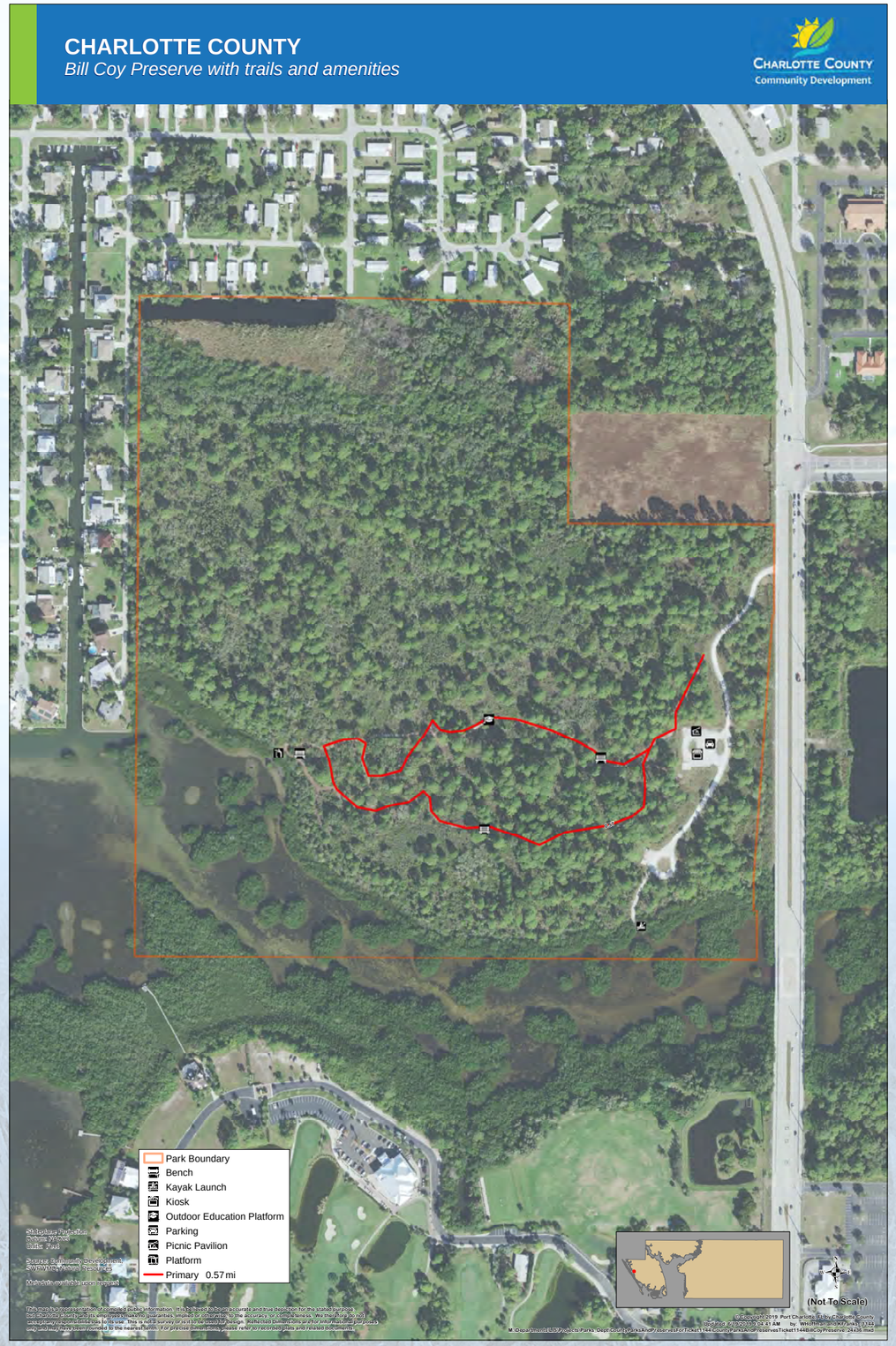
FLORIDA COMMUNITIES TRUST

CONSERVATION CHARLOTTE

POINTS OF INTEREST

- RED MANGROVE
- RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER
- LITTLE BLUE HERON
- MESIC FLATWOODS

CLICK HERE FOR A VIRTUAL TOUR



CEDAR POINT ENVIRONMENTAL PARK

2300 PLACIDA ROAD, ENGLEWOOD, FL 34224

Cedar Point Environmental Park is one of the last remaining large tracts of undeveloped land on Lemon Bay in Charlotte County. With 115 acres, Cedar Point has pine flatwoods, scrub, scrubby flatwoods, mangrove swamps, salt marshes, and wetlands. Many species of animals inhabit the pine flatwoods at Cedar Point including bobcat, coyote, yellow rat snake, pileated woodpecker, and bald eagle. Mangrove swamps are tidal wetlands that inhabit low energy shorelines in the coastal areas of southwest Florida. Mangrove trees are specially adapted to salt- and brackish- water environments. Mangroves provide habitat and nursery grounds for many species of fish and invertebrates. Situated on Lemon Bay, a long narrow estuary, Cedar Point is a great place to see wading birds in the mangrove fringes, watch for dolphins near the adjacent seagrasses and explore the pine flatwoods to find bald eagles, gopher tortoises, as well as a myriad of native plants.

The park is located in Englewood, south of SR 776. Travel west on SR 776 (from Port Charlotte) and turn left onto SR 775 (Placida Rd). Immediately after Lemon Bay High School, on the right, is Cedar Point Environmental Park.

FLORIDA COMMUNITIES TRUST

POINTS OF INTEREST

- CEDARS
- ECOTONE
- SEAGRASS BEDS
- BRACKEN FERN
- BALD EAGLES
- FIDDLER CRABS
- OAK SCRUB HAMMOCK
- EASTERN TOWHEE
- WILD COCO

CHARLOTTE FLATWOODS ENVIRONMENTAL PARK

15801 TAMIAMI TRAIL, PUNTA GORDA, FL 33955

Charlotte Flatwoods Environmental Park is 487 acres of mature pine flatwoods, hydric pine flatwoods, dry prairie, depressional marsh wetlands, and permanent freshwater ponds. Charlotte Flatwoods Environmental Park abuts both Southwest Florida Water Management preserve lands as well as Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission preserve lands, creating an important wildlife corridor to the Babcock/Webb Wildlife Management Area.

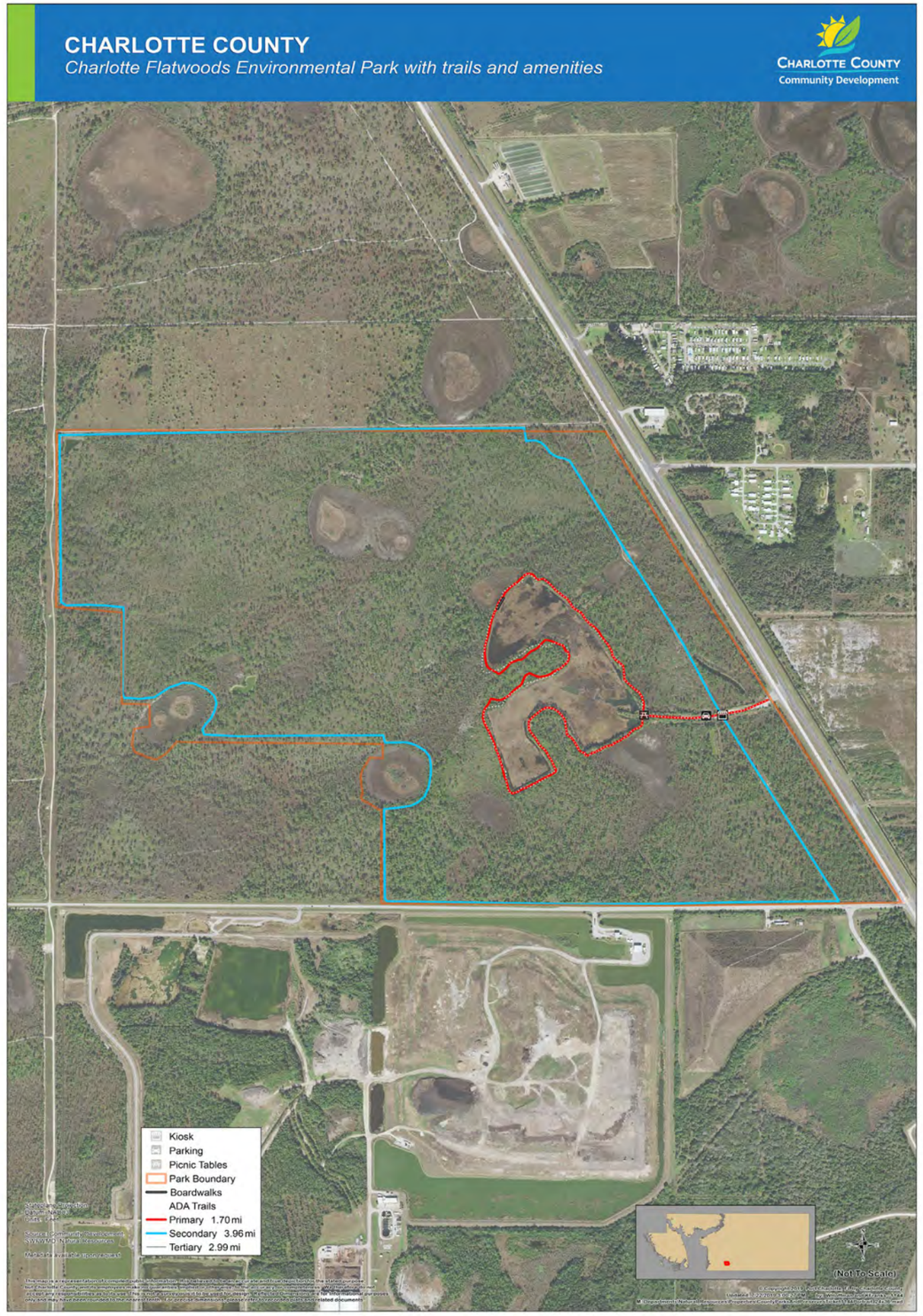
The depressional marsh wetlands and larger slough system are home to several species of wading birds, as well as a family of sandhill cranes. The wetland areas also provide habitat for a wide assortment of reptiles and amphibians including the American alligator, banded water snake, and cricket frogs. Bobcats, deer, otters, and turkeys can be observed roaming through the pine flatwoods and dry prairies.

The park is located in southern Punta Gorda, near the County line. Travel south on US 41 past Punta Gorda. The park is located on the northwest corner of Zemel Rd & US 41. A parking area is located to the right directly off US 41.

FLORIDA COMMUNITIES TRUST

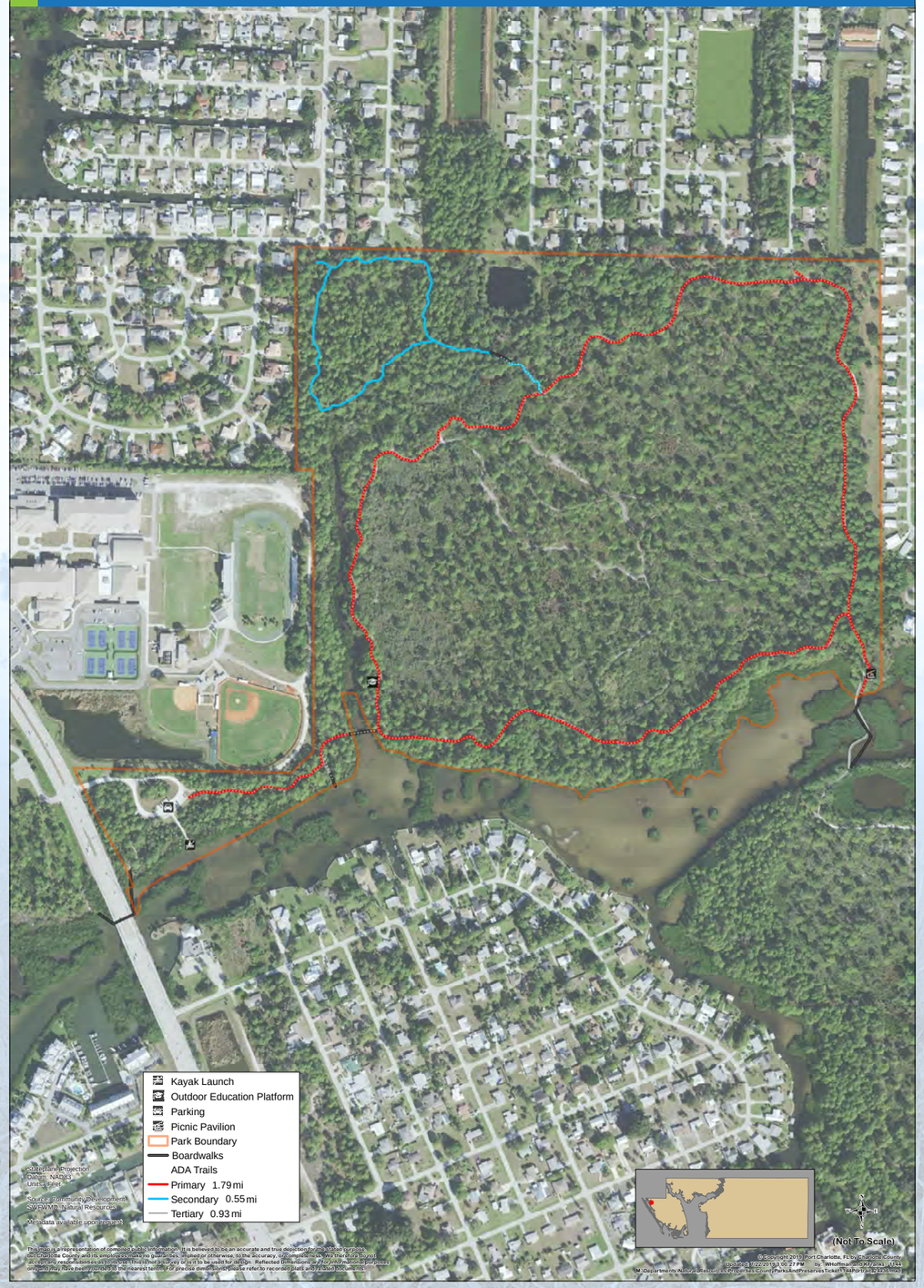
POINTS OF INTEREST

- FRESHWATER MARSH
- ALLIGATOR
- SANDHILL CRANES
- HYDRIC PRAIRIE
- NORTHERN BOBWHITE
- OTTERS
- EASTERN SCREECH OWL
- DEER



CHARLOTTE COUNTY
Oyster Creek Environmental Park with trails and amenities

Charlotte County
Community Development



OYSTER CREEK ENVIRONMENTAL PARK

2333 PLACIDA ROAD, ENGLEWOOD, FL 34224

Oyster Creek Environmental Park is approximately 135 acres of mesic pine flatwoods, hydric hammock, mangrove swamps, and scrubby flatwoods. Located in western Charlotte County, the Oyster Creek Waterfront Trail connects the Ann & Chuck Dever Regional Park with Cedar Point Environmental Park. The trail allows unfettered access to both parks, providing trail users the opportunity to experience both parks' marine life, waterfowl, and native flora.

The park also offers two boardwalks for hikers to traverse, giving patrons a great view of onsite mangrove swamps and the creek. These mangrove swamps are dense forests occurring along flat, low wave energy shorelines, and are among the most productive forests in the world. Species such as river otters, great blue herons, osprey, mullet, and American alligators can be observed utilizing these habitats.

Onsite pine flatwoods provide habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Bobcats, coyote, cottontail rabbits, and gopher tortoises can be observed roaming through these habitats. There are wide variety of birds calling Oyster Creek home including great horned owls, bald eagles, osprey, cat birds, warblers, and wrens.

FLORIDA COMMUNITIES TRUST

POINTS OF INTEREST

- CREEK ENVIRONMENT
- SLASH PINE
- MIGRATORY SONGBIRDS
- OSPREY

CLICK HERE FOR A VIRTUAL TOUR

PEACE RIVER PRESERVE

28000 SANDHILL BLVD., PUNTA GORDA, FL 33983

This 450 acre site is a mixture of scrubby flatwoods, mesic flatwoods, xeric and mesic hammocks, scattered depressional marshes, and mangrove swamp. The southern and eastern portions of this site transition into high marsh and mangrove communities that are typically flooded. This Preserve has vegetative structure that is suitable for the Florida Scrub Jay as well as other scrub dependent species.

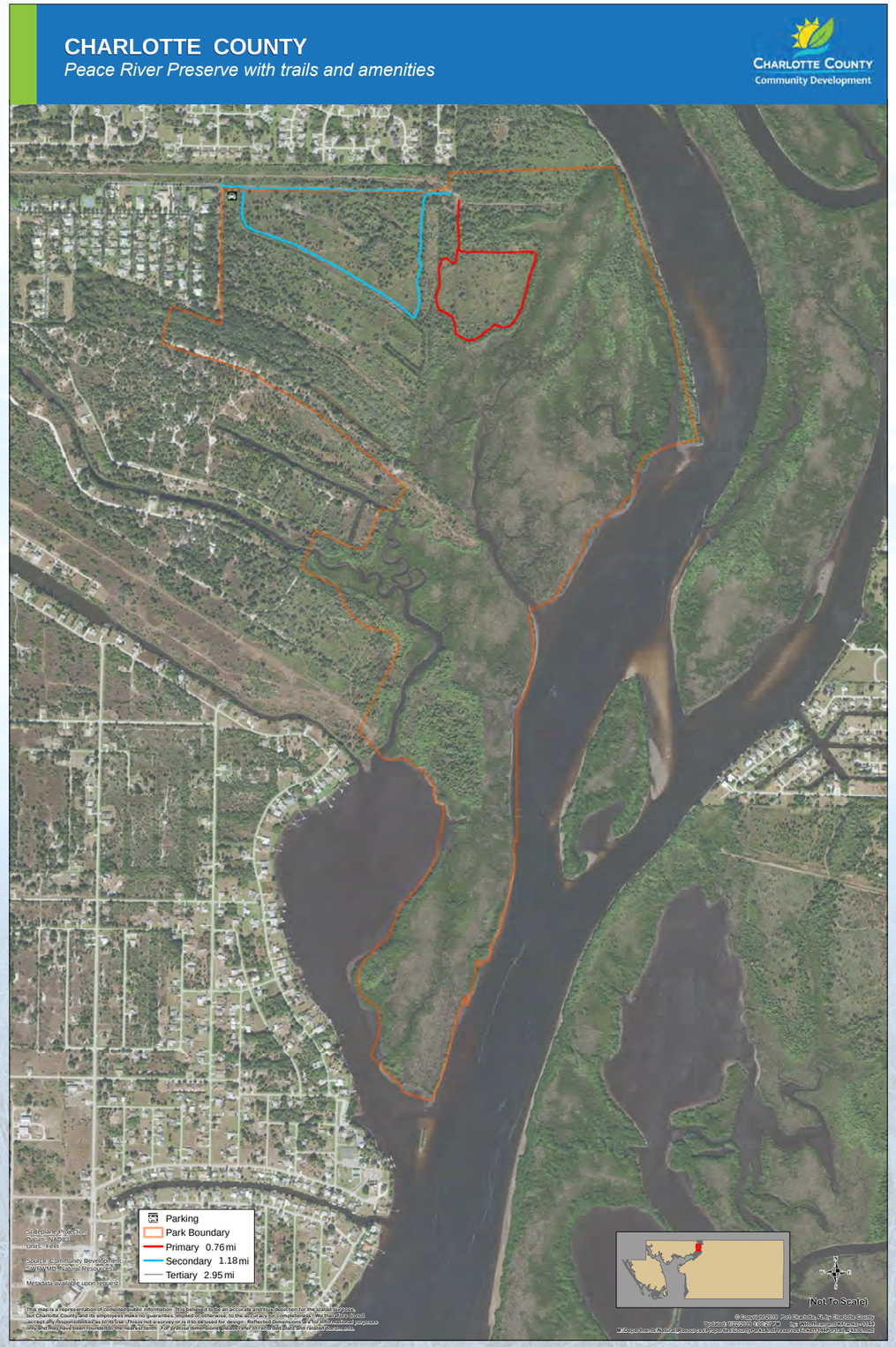
Most of the upland areas were historically transitional habitat between mesic flatwoods and scrubby flatwoods with different species of pine including long leaf and slash pine which make for great spots to see different species of fauna such as pileated wood peckers and blue jays. Other species of fauna that occupy the preserve include gopher tortoises and even mammals such as bobcats and deer.

Peace River preserve is located in the Deep Creek area of Port Charlotte, along the western shores of the Peace River. Travel I-75 to the Kings Hwy exit, exit to the north. Turn right onto Sandhill Blvd and proceed approximately 2 miles, the Preserve is on the right side of the road.

CONSERVATION CHARLOTTE

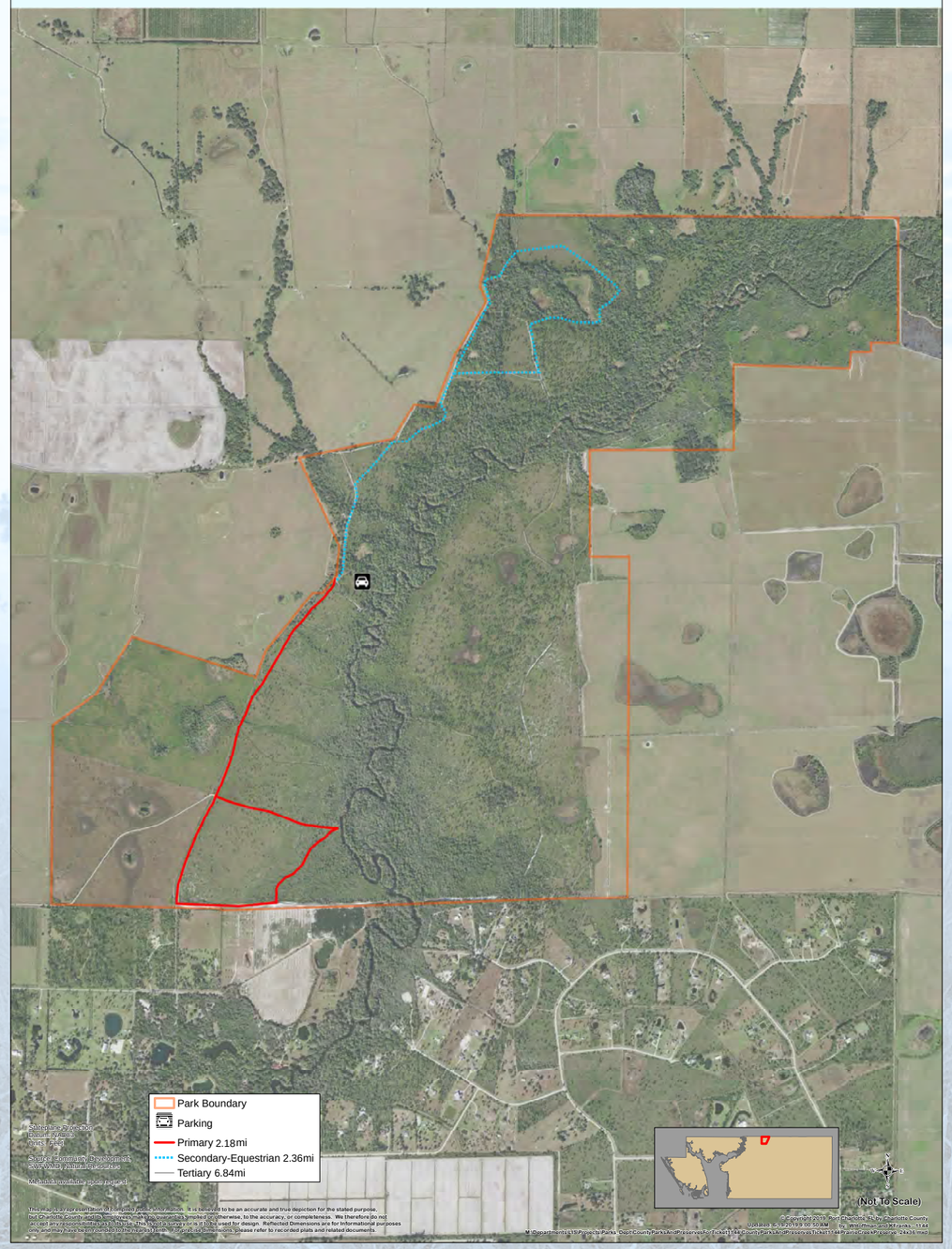
POINTS OF INTEREST

- WILD COFFEE
- SOUTHERN BLACK RACER
- RUSTY LYONIA
- HYDRIC HAMMOCK



CHARLOTTE COUNTY
Prairie Creek Preserve with trails and amenities

Charlotte County
Community Development



PRAIRIE CREEK PRESERVE

1900 DUNCAN ROAD, PUNTA GORDA, FL 33982

Prairie Creek Preserve is a 1,603-acre preserve located in eastern Charlotte County. It was purchased in 2008 with Conservation Charlotte funds. The vast majority of Prairie Creek Preserve is comprised of a mixture of upland habitats that have been well maintained by prescribed fires. The diverse array of habitat include scrub, scrubby flatwoods, palmetto prairies and pine flatwoods. There are also small areas of herbaceous marshes and improved pasture on the property. Prairie Creek traverses through the center of the property. The property provides habitat for several listed species of wildlife, including the Florida scrub-jay, gopher tortoises and eastern indigo snake.

Prairie Creek is a tributary of Shell Creek Reservoir, the source of drinking water for the City of Punta Gorda and parts of unincorporated Charlotte County. The Creeks provide 8,000,000 gallons of potable water per day to thousands of residents. The property also supports high-quality habitat for the Florida scrub-jay, gopher tortoise, and other rare species including State listed plants. Lands adjacent to and along Prairie Creek have been designated as areas of conservation interest by the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, the Southwest Florida Coastal Conservation Corridor Plan, and SWFWMD.

Prairie Creek Preserve is located in eastern Charlotte County along Prairie Creek, a tributary of the Shell Creek Reservoir. Travel I-75 to the Highway 17 exit, exit to the north. Proceed approximately 7 miles; the Preserve is on the right side of the road.

CONSERVATION CHARLOTTE

POINTS OF INTEREST

- FLORIDA PANTHER
- FLORIDA SCRUB-JAY
- NETTED PAWPAW
- PINE LILY

SHELL CREEK PRESERVE

4334 NELLIS LANE, PUNTA GORDA, FL 33982

This 370+ acre site was the largest area of unprotected native habitat remaining along the unchanneled portion of Shell Creek. This property was acquired, in 2007, to maintain and manage environmentally sensitive land for the Conservation Charlotte Program. The character of the preserve is unusual for south Florida. From the waterline the creek banks rise almost vertically for several feet, up to 10 feet in some places, indicating that this creek is very old geologically in comparison to most south Florida waterways. The entire site is made up of a wide variety of upland habitat types, an unusual feature for waterfront lands and a function of the highly incised creek. Cypress and bottomland hardwoods line the creek shores giving way to xeric hammock, and further landward are intermittent small areas of mesic hammock and scrub. Farther upland are large areas of mostly high-quality longleaf pine dominated mesic flatwoods. Several small streams and one major creek enter Shell Creek within the preserve from both the north and the south. The site contains three depressional wetland marshes.

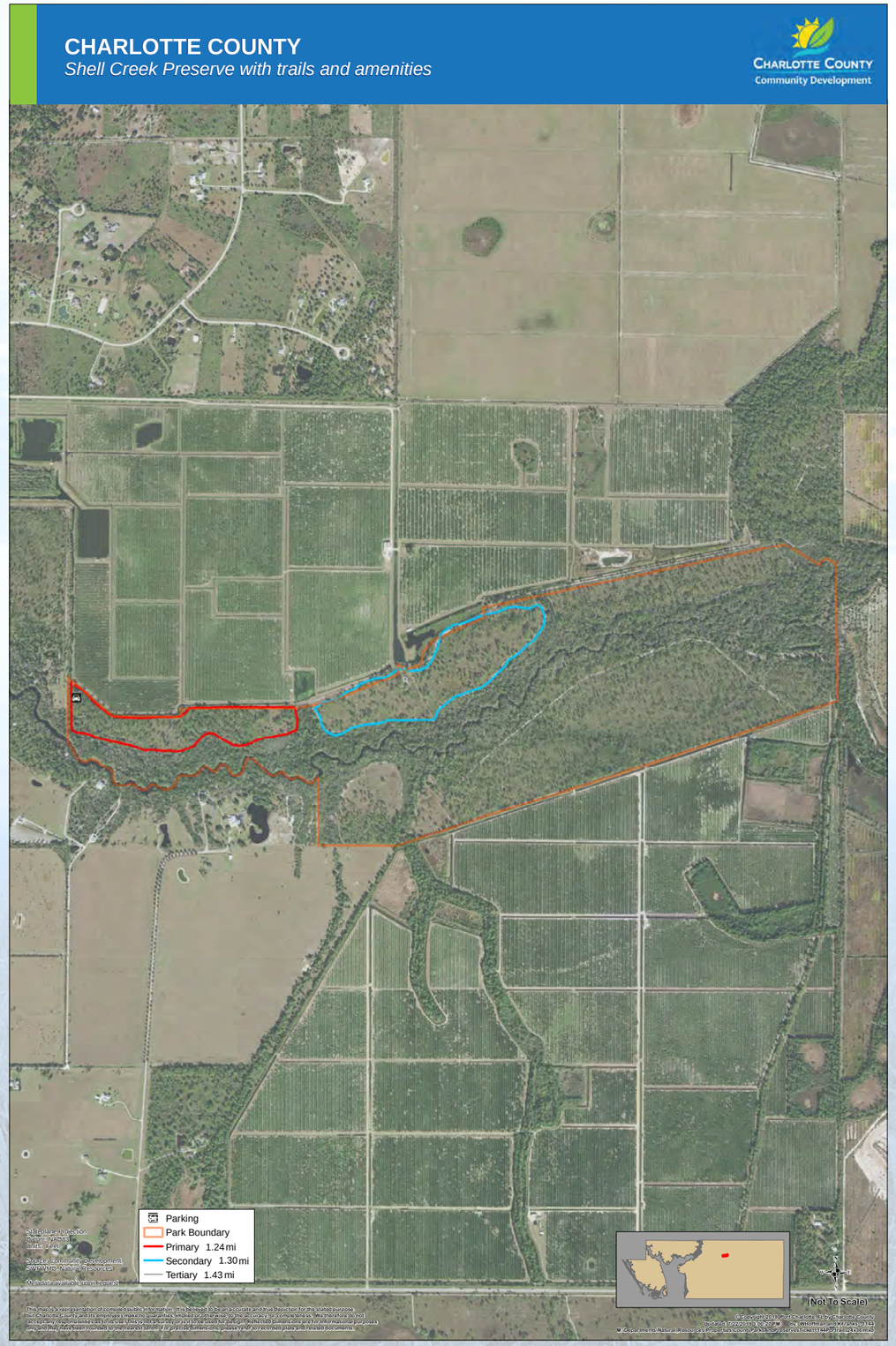
Shell Creek, along with Prairie Creek, are drinking water sources for the City of Punta Gorda and parts of unincorporated Charlotte County. The creeks provide 8,000,000 gallons of potable water per day to thousands of residents. Shell Creek preserve contains extensive acreage of high quality, rare native habitats, and over five miles of frontage on Shell Creek. The site provides an important native habitat link in a regional wildlife corridor from the Webb/Babcock preservation area to the Myakka Island (to the north).

Shell Creek Preserve is located along the southern fork of Shell Creek in eastern Charlotte County. Travel I-75 to the Highway 17 exit, exit to the north. Turn right on Washington Loop Rd, following Washington Loop to Trails End Rd, turn right. Follow signs to the Shell Creek Preserve.

POINTS OF INTEREST

- BARRED OWL
- BEAUTYBERRY
- FLORIDA BOBCAT
- FLORIDA WILD TURKEYS

CONSERVATION CHARLOTTE



THORNTON KEY PRESERVE

8 THORNTON KEY PRESERVE, ENGLEWOOD, FL 33946

Charlotte County's Thornton Key Preserve contains 31+ acres in the central portion of Thornton Key, one of Charlotte County's Gulf barrier islands. The Preserve contains valuable habitat such as tropical coastal hammock that includes several rare plant species, mangrove swamps, salt barrens, and herbaceous marshes. The preserve is one of the few examples of tropical hardwood hammock habitat remaining in southwest Florida.

Thornton Key preserve is a barrier island in Lemon Bay south of Stump Pass and east of Palm Island; in the center portion of the island. Access to Thornton Key is by boat, canoe, or kayak only. Access through Old Knights Pass east of Palm/ Knight Island - Longitude: -82.332019, Latitude: 26.889019.

CONSERVATION CHARLOTTE

POINTS OF INTEREST

- MARITIME HAMMOCK
- SALT BASIN
- FIDDLER CRAB
- ROSEATE SPOONBILL

TIPPECANOE ENVIRONMENTAL PARK

2400 EL JOBEAN ROAD, PORT CHARLOTTE, FL 33948

Tippecanoe Environmental Park is a 380 acre preserve with a diverse assortment of habitats including oak scrub, scrubby flatwoods, coastal hammocks, floodplain forests, salt marshes, and mangrove swamps. Scrub provides the ideal habitat for the Florida scrub-jay, as well as other protected species such as the gopher tortoise, eastern indigo snake, and gopher frog. Tippecanoe Environmental Park also boasts a rich history with multiple shell middens on the property, some dating as far back as 2,500 years.

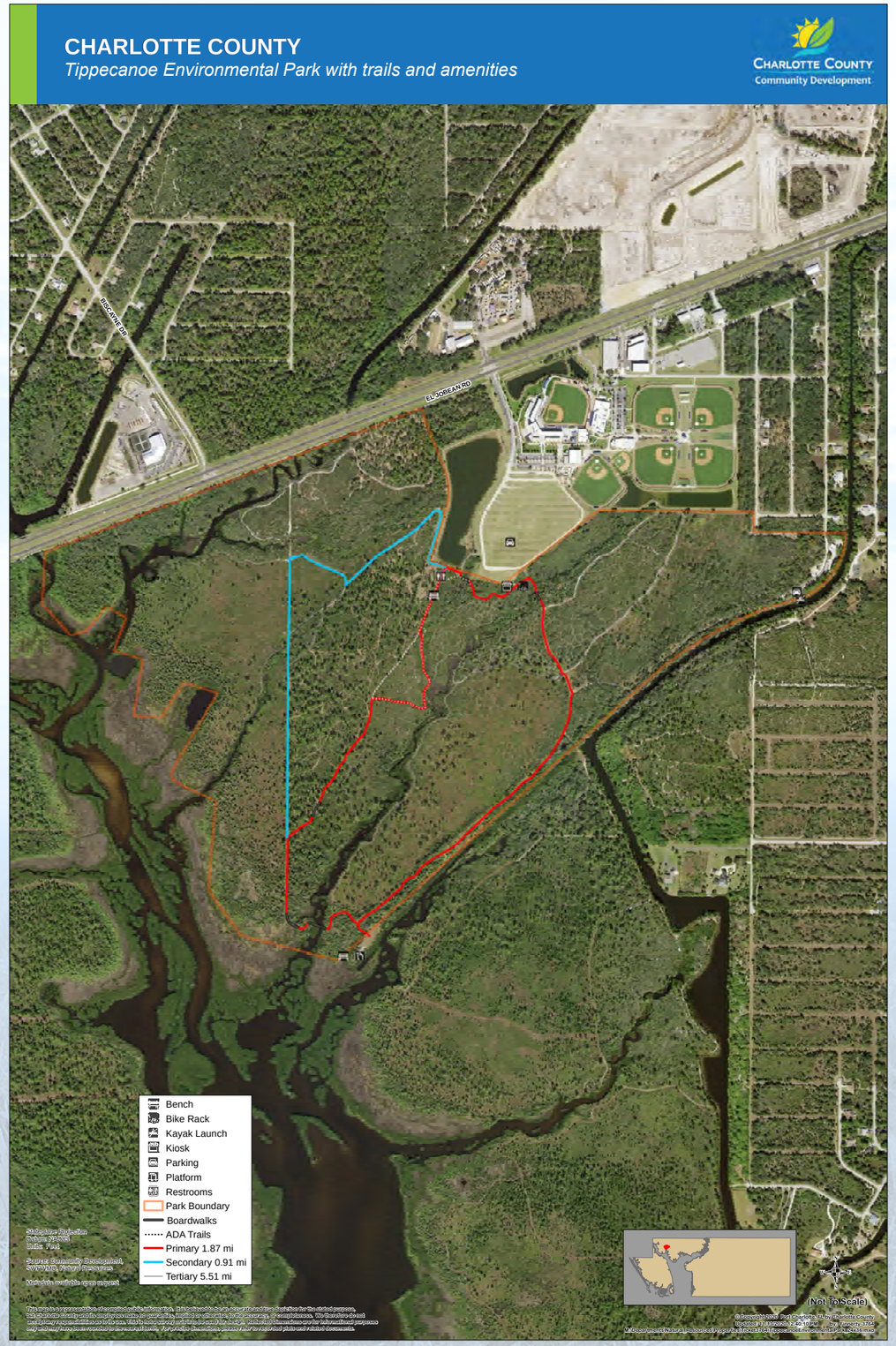
Tippecanoe is one of the few properties in the county to be a fantastic spot for doing bird watching with many different species including but not limited to the Florida Scrub Jay, American kestrel, Bald Eagle, and even the Red headed Woodpecker. There is even some great spots for seeing with there being boardwalks to the very southern end of the property and even a mound that overlooks the flamingo water way that leads into Peace River.

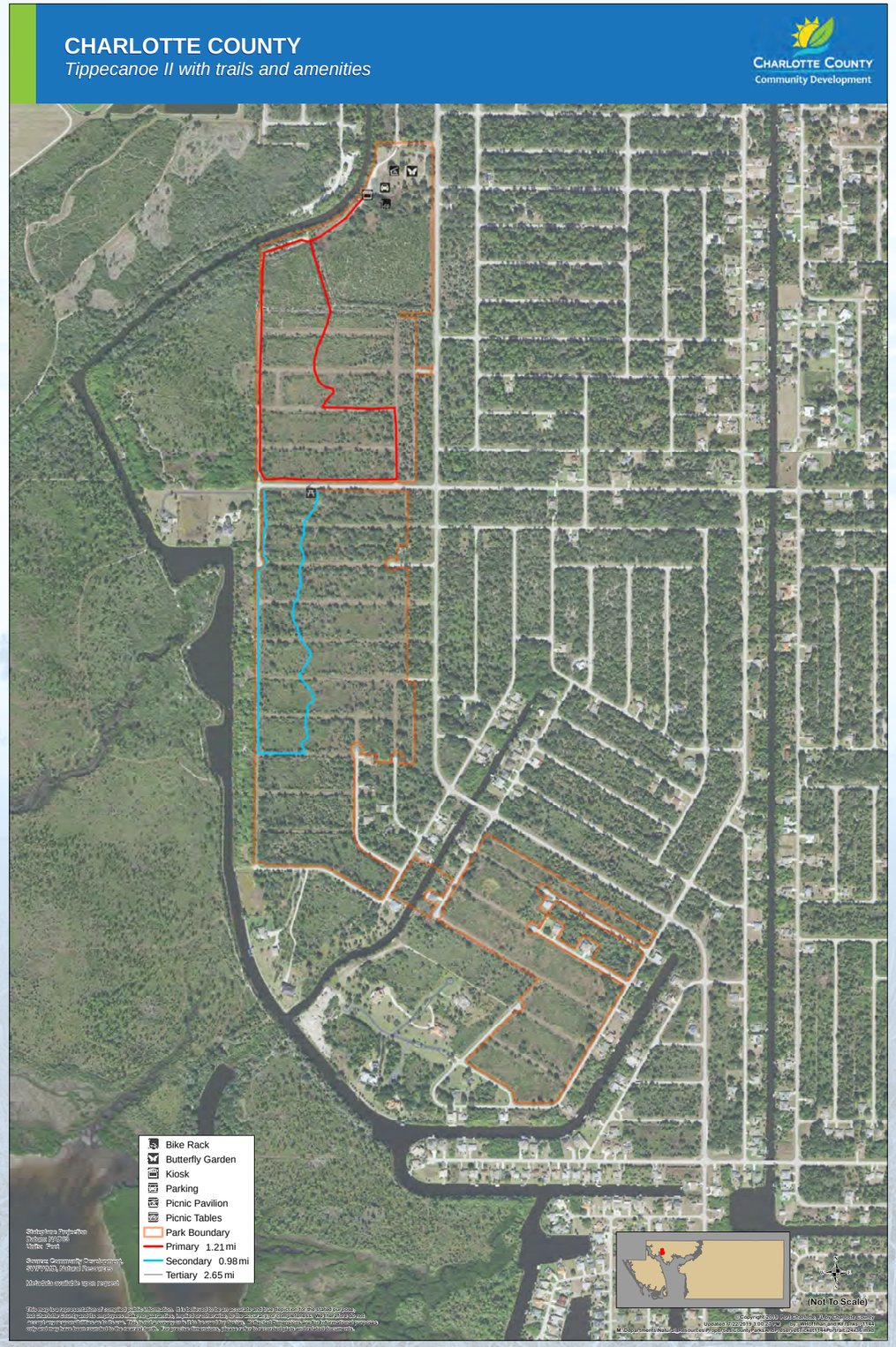
The park is located in the El Jobean area of Port Charlotte. Travel onto SR 776 toward the El Jobean area. The park is located behind the Charlotte Sports Park Stadium, 2300 El Jobean Road. This park has ADA accessible trails.

FLORIDA COMMUNITIES TRUST

POINTS OF INTEREST

- OAK SCRUB
- MOUNT TIPPECANOE
- SALT MARSH
- PALM HAMMOCKS
- SOUTHERN FLYING SQUIRREL
- OSPREY NESTING SITE





TIPPECANOE II

16259 JOPPA AVE., PORT CHARLOTTE, FL 33948

Tippecanoe II is a 182 acre mitigation preserve for the Florida scrub-jay, and contains scrub habitat and scrubby flatwoods, xeric hammock, mesic flatwoods, upland mixed forest, marshes, and a small area of palm hammock. These habitats, home to Florida scrub-jay, are also home to other listed species such as the gopher tortoise, the Florida mouse, Eastern indigo snake, and gopher frog.

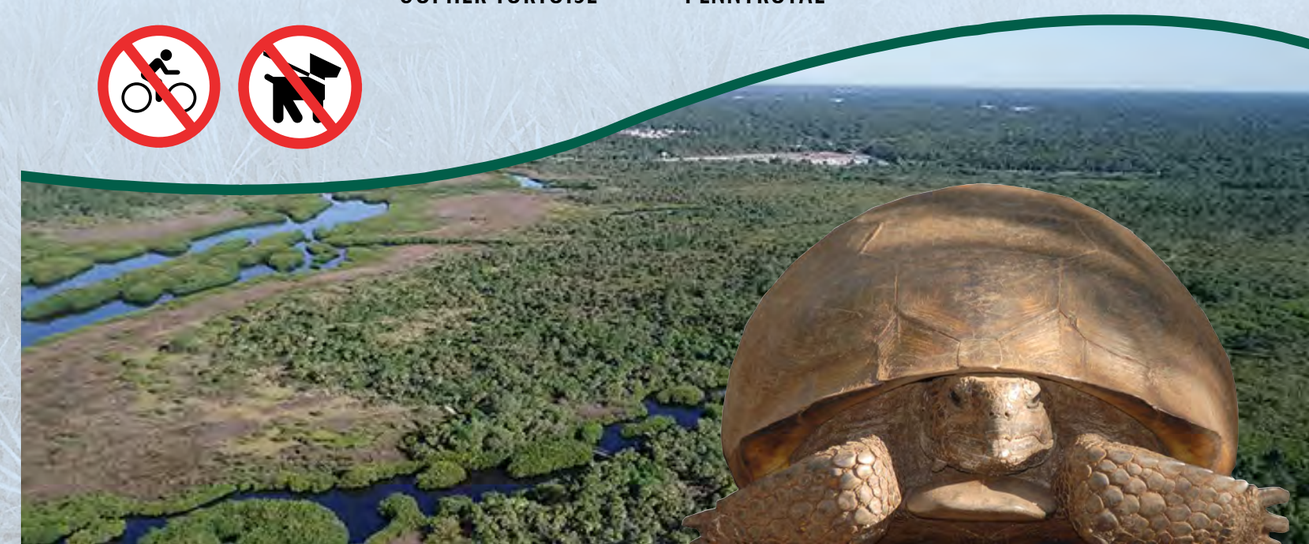
Tippecanoe II has a distinct butterfly garden with a picnic pavilion that provides for great shade on the property as well as attracting different species of insects such as the zebra long wing and monarch butterfly. Some of the flora that can be seen there includes beauty berry and butterfly milkweed that adds to the color of the overall landscape of Tippecanoe II.

Tippecanoe II is located off of Joppa Ave, which comes off of Flamingo Rd. With the address being 16259 Joppa Ave., Port Charlotte, FL 33948.

FLORIDA COMMUNITIES TRUST

POINTS OF INTEREST

- BROWN THRASHER
- GOPHER TORTOISE
- RED-SHOULDERED HAWK
- PENNYROYAL



CHARLOTTE COUNTY
FLORIDA

CHARLOTTE COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES

1120 CENTENNIAL BLVD.
PORT CHARLOTTE, FL 33953

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