



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, SAVANNAH DISTRICT
4751 BEST ROAD, SUITE 140
COLLEGE PARK, GEORGIA 30337-5600

May 15, 2024

Regulatory Division
SAS-2023-00518

PUBLIC NOTICE
Savannah District

The Savannah District has received a Prospectus describing the establishment and operation of a proposed commercial wetland compensatory mitigation bank (Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank) for Federal and State permits as described below:

The comment period for the proposal will close 30 days from the date of this public notice. Written comments, including suggestions for modifications or objections to the proposed work, stating reasons thereof, are being solicited from anyone having interest in this proposal, and must be submitted to be received on or before the last day of the comment period. Written comments concerning this proposed mitigation bank and Department of the Army Permit Application must reference the Sponsor's name and the Permit Application Number and be forwarded to the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) at the above address, or via the email listed at the end of this notice.

This public notice does not imply, on the parts of the Corps or other agencies, either favorable or unfavorable opinion of the work to be performed, but is issued to solicit comments regarding the factors on which final decisions will be based.

Application Number: SAS-2023-00518

Bank Sponsor: Mr. Troy Smith
J&W Landholdings, LLC
1750 Highway 21 North
Springfield, Georgia 31329

Project Agent: Mr. Greg Smith, CEO
Corblu Ecology Group, LLC.
1305 Lakes Parkway, Suite 110
Lawrenceville, Georgia 30043

Location of Proposed Work: The Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank is proposed on an approximately 1,079-acre site located along the southwest side of the Savannah River between river mile 52.7 and 56.5, approximately 2.0 miles southeast of the community of Clyo, in Effingham County, Georgia (centered at approximately latitude 32.4751, longitude -81.2306). The project is located in the Lower Savannah River basin (8-digit

hydrologic unit code (HUC) 03060109), within the Hog Branch-Savannah River sub-watershed (HUC-12 0306001090207) and the Black Swamp sub-watershed (HUC-12 030601090302). Please refer to the enclosed exhibits entitled Figure 1: Site Location Map and Figure 8: Topographic Map for more detailed information concerning the location of the proposed mitigation bank.

Geographic Service Area: The Geographic Service Area (GSA) is the defined area within which this mitigation bank can reasonably be expected to provide appropriate compensation for impacts to aquatic resources.

The proposed primary service area (Lower Savannah River Service Area) would serve the following 8-digit HUCs and portions of the listed counties in Georgia:

- *Lower Savannah River (03060109):* Chatham, Effingham, and Screven Counties.
- *Brier Creek (03060108):* Burke, Columbia, Glascock, Jefferson, Jenkins, McDuffie, Richmond, Screven, and Warren Counties; and
- *Middle Savannah River 03060106:* Burke, Columbia, Richmond, and Screven Counties

The proposed secondary service area (Ogeechee River Service Area) would serve the following 8-digit HUCs and portions of the listed counties:

- *Upper Ogeechee (03060201):* Burke, Emanuel, Glascock, Greene, Hancock, Jefferson, Jenkins, Taliaferro, Warren and Washington Counties; and
- *Lower Ogeechee (03060202):* Bulloch, Bryan, Chatham, Effingham, Jenkins, and Screven counties

The Sponsor's proposed GSA for this bank is depicted on the enclosed exhibit entitled Figure 6: Service Area Map.

Description of Mitigation Bank: The Bank Sponsor has proposed to develop a new mitigation bank to serve as compensatory wetland mitigation for the proposed primary and secondary service areas (as described above). The Bank Sponsor has delineated existing aquatic resources on the proposed project site, identifying approximately 838.06 acres of existing wetlands. The Bank Sponsor identified the existing conditions and vegetative communities on the site as detailed in the table below:

Vegetative Community	Acreage	Approx. Percentage of site	Existing Condition
Cypress-tupelo (brownwater) swamps	94.47	8.8%	Located along Savannah River; extended ponding and inundation evident; dominated by bald cypress (<i>Taxodium distichum</i>) and water tupelo (<i>Nyssa aquatica</i>); species diversity is relatively low as is typical with brownwater systems with longer hydroperiod duration.
Bottomland hardwood forest	329.25	30.5%	Some areas of harvesting/ cutting activities between 2012-2016, but vegetative community is regenerating naturally.
Mesic slope forests/hillside seeps	51.01	4.7%	Located along river bluffs and steep slopes; contains diverse vegetation community; transitional between upland and wetland depending on elevation, landscape position, and hydrologic inputs
Seepage swamp forest & Seepage swamp forest/baygall	129.09	12%	Some drainage ditches, but in interior portions where ponding is more frequent, vegetation is similar to cypress- tupelo forest with red maple; the baygall areas have overstory of bay species.
Freshwater ponds	13.1	1.2%	Located within the bottomland hardwoods along the Savannah River; has sparse vegetation consisting primarily of emergent and floating macrophytes; edges surrounding the ponds include, bald cypress and water tupelo and some transition to bottomland hardwood species.
Cutover/Planted pine wetlands	371.23	34.4%	Lengthy network of drainage ditches, pine planting and harvesting between 2012-2022; recently cutover so lacks overstory trees and contain a mix of recently planted slash pine (<i>Pinus elliotti</i>) and low shrubs, grasses, and herbs
Riparian/Levee Floodplain Forest	3.54	0.3%	Small, isolated sections of riparian levee floodplain forest along the Savannah River; mature forested systems transitioning between upland and wetland communities depending on elevation and hydrology.
Various Age Class Planted Pine and Mixed Upland Forest	87.42	8.1%	Intermixed between wetlands located in interior portions of the site and upland buffer zones; interior portions contain a mix of planted slash pine stands with sparse herbaceous vegetation
TOTAL	1,1079.11	100%	

Existing site conditions are also depicted on the enclosed exhibits entitled Figure 9: Vegetation Communities Map, Figure 17: Preliminary Jurisdictional Area Delineation Map, and Figure 19: Preliminary Soil Classification Map.

As currently conceptualized, the proposed project would involve approximately 84.82 acres of wetland restoration, 241.47 acres of wetland enhancement, 542.49 acres of wetland preservation, and 210.33 acres of upland buffer restoration. The proposed conceptual mitigation plan for the project consists of the actions depicted on the enclosed exhibit entitled Figure 20: Proposed Mitigation Areas Map.

Proposed functional improvements (see table below) to wetland functions will be measured in accordance with the *Georgia Interim Freshwater Wetland Hydrogeomorphic Workbook* (2018, 2021 Workbook V. 2.0; HGM Workbook).

HGM Metric	Wetland Function	Function Based Parameters	Mitigation Action
V _{HYDRO}	Hydrology	Soil Saturation and Inundation	Fill approximately 24,900 feet (4.7 miles) of drainage ditches.
V _{COMP}	Maintain Vegetative Community	Vegetation Composition	Planting native woody species and/or promoting natural regeneration of vegetation suitable for anticipated saturation durations.
V _{STRUCT}		Vegetation Structure	Management of planted vegetation and facilitate natural regeneration to development target stratum.
V _{LWD}	Biogeochemical Transformation/ Maintain Faunal Habitat	Large Woody Debris	Remove excessive woody debris and/or install woody debris from native species typical of wetlands where necessary.
V _{UP}		Upland Buffer	Permanent protection of upland buffer areas and planting with appropriate native woody species where appropriate.

While the Prospectus has not targeted the specific HGM wetland type(s) for this project, the Bank Sponsor has clarified that existing wetlands identified on site include a matrix of depressional and slope/flat wetlands that are distributed throughout a gently sloping seepage named Sam Hole Bay (western portion) and riverine wetlands in floodplain the Savannah River (eastern portion), and additional slope/seepage (slope HGM type) wetlands along the river bluff located between the eastern portions of the site.

To inform the targeted wetland HGM type and vegetation communities, the Bank Sponsor intends to identify suitable reference sites as well as to utilize the existing proposed preservation areas onsite. In order to objectively evaluate functional improvements achieved by the proposed project, the Bank Sponsor intends to collect baseline data for comparison with post-project monitoring for seven (7) years following completion of construction as conceptualized on the enclosed exhibits entitled Figure 21: Baseline Vegetation Monitoring Map (1 of 2), Figure 22: Baseline Vegetation Monitoring Map (2 of 2), Figure 23: Baseline Hydrology Monitoring Map (1 of 2), and Figure 24: Baseline Hydrology Monitoring Map (2 of 2).

Oversight: This compensatory mitigation bank may be considered one of a number of practicable alternatives available to applicants to compensate for unavoidable impacts associated with permits issued under the authority of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and/or Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act for projects located within the prescribed GSA.

Oversight of this compensatory mitigation bank will be by a group of Federal and State agency representatives collectively referred to as the Interagency Review Team (IRT). The IRT is chaired by the Corps and is comprised State and Federal resources agencies including representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division.

The actual approval of the use of this mitigation bank for a specific project is the decision of the Corps pursuant to Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act and/or Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The Corps provides no guarantee that any particular individual or general permit will be granted authorization to use this compensatory mitigation bank to compensate for unavoidable impacts associated with a proposed permit, even though mitigation from this bank may be available.

Authority: A public notice regarding the development of the proposed Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank is required pursuant to Title 33 Code of Federal Regulations Parts 325 and 332 and Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations Part 230, entitled "Compensatory Mitigation for Losses of Aquatic Resources, Final Rule", published in the Federal Register on April 10, 2008.

Consideration of Public Comments: The Corps is soliciting comments from the public; federal, state, and local agencies and officials; Native American Tribes; and other interested parties to consider and evaluate this proposed mitigation bank. The complete Prospectus can be viewed and downloaded online from our Regulatory Information Banking and In-Lieu Fee Tracking System (RIBITS) website at https://ribits.ops.usace.army.mil/ords/f?p=107:0:14725484526232:APPLICATION_PROCESS=AP_DB_DOC:::AI_STRING,AI_ID:inline,135344. If you are unable to view or download the Prospectus, please contact Ms. Katie Alston, Project Manager, Special Projects Team, at katherine.c.alston@usace.army.mil, or by phone at 912-652-5139. Written comments received will be considered by the Corps in evaluating this proposal.

Preliminary review of the Prospectus indicates that: 1) An environmental impact statement will not be required; 2) No species of fish, wildlife, or plant (or their critical habitat) listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (PL 93-205) will be affected; and, 3) No cultural or historical resources considered eligible or potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places will be

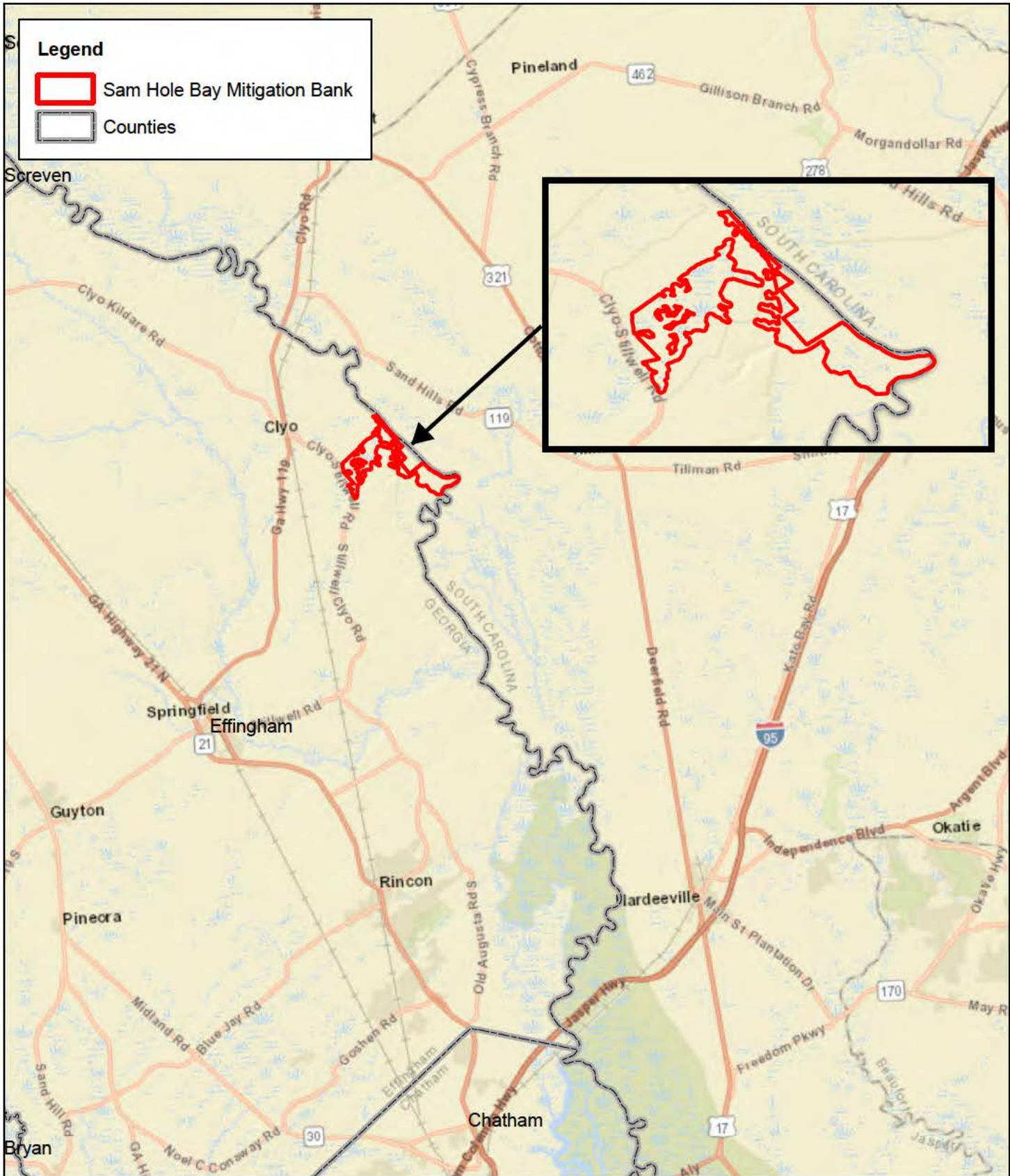
affected according to a website review of known listed properties. Additional information may change any of these preliminary findings.

Comment Period: Anyone wishing to comment on this proposal should submit comments by email to katherine.c.alston@usace.army.mil. Alternatively, you can submit comments in writing by mail to: Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District, Regulatory Division, Attention: Ms. Katie Alston, 100 West Oglethorpe Avenue Savannah, Georgia 31401-3604 no later than 30 days from the date of this notice. Please refer to the Project Name (Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank) and the Regulatory Division file number (SAS-2023-00518) in your comments.

If you have any further questions concerning this matter, please contact Ms. Katie Alston, at 912-652-5139, or via e-mail at katherine.c.alston@usace.army.mil.

Enclosures

1. Figure 1: Location/Vicinity Map
2. Figure 6: Service Area Map
3. Figure 8: USGS Topographic Map
4. Figure 9: Vegetation Communities Map
5. Figure 17: Preliminary Jurisdictional Area Delineation Map
6. Figure 19: Preliminary Soil Classification Map
7. Figure 20: Proposed Mitigation Areas Map
8. Figure 21: Baseline Vegetation Monitoring Map (1 of 2)
9. Figure 22: Baseline Vegetation Monitoring Map (2 of 2)
10. Figure 24: Baseline Hydrology Monitoring Map (1 of 2)
11. Figure 25: Baseline Hydrology Monitoring Map (2 of 2)



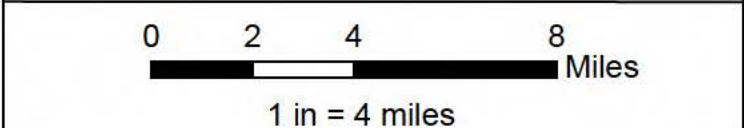
Legend

- Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank
- Counties

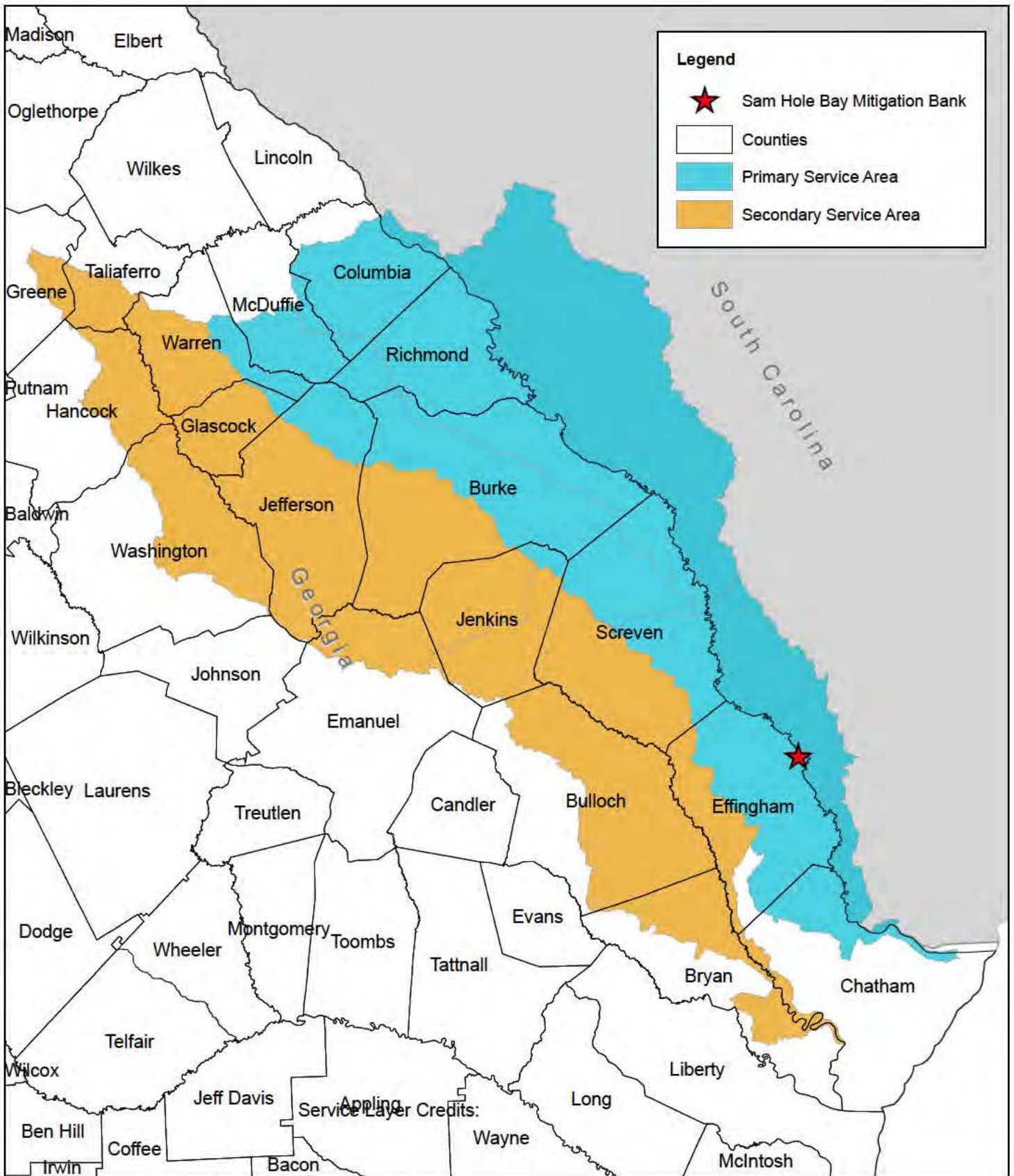


Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank
Effingham County, Georgia

Figure 1
Location/Vicinity Map



CEG Job No.:
04-030323-01



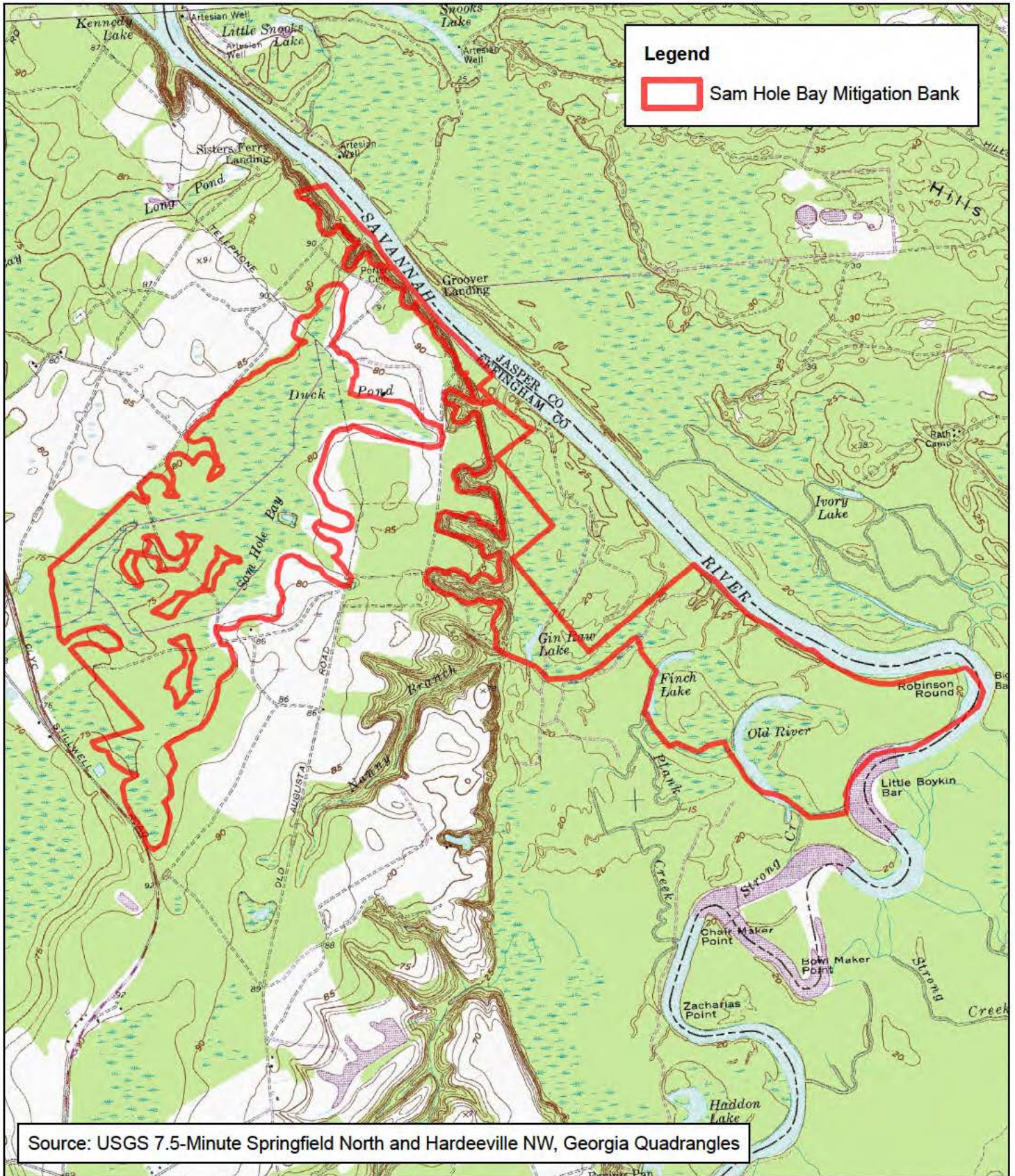
Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank
Effingham County, Georgia

0 10 20 40 Miles

1 in = 20 miles

Figure 6
Service Area Map

CEG Job No.: 04-030323-01



Legend
 Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank

Source: USGS 7.5-Minute Springfield North and Hardeeville NW, Georgia Quadrangles




Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank
 Effingham County, Georgia

0 1,250 2,500 5,000
 Feet






















1 inch = 2,500 feet

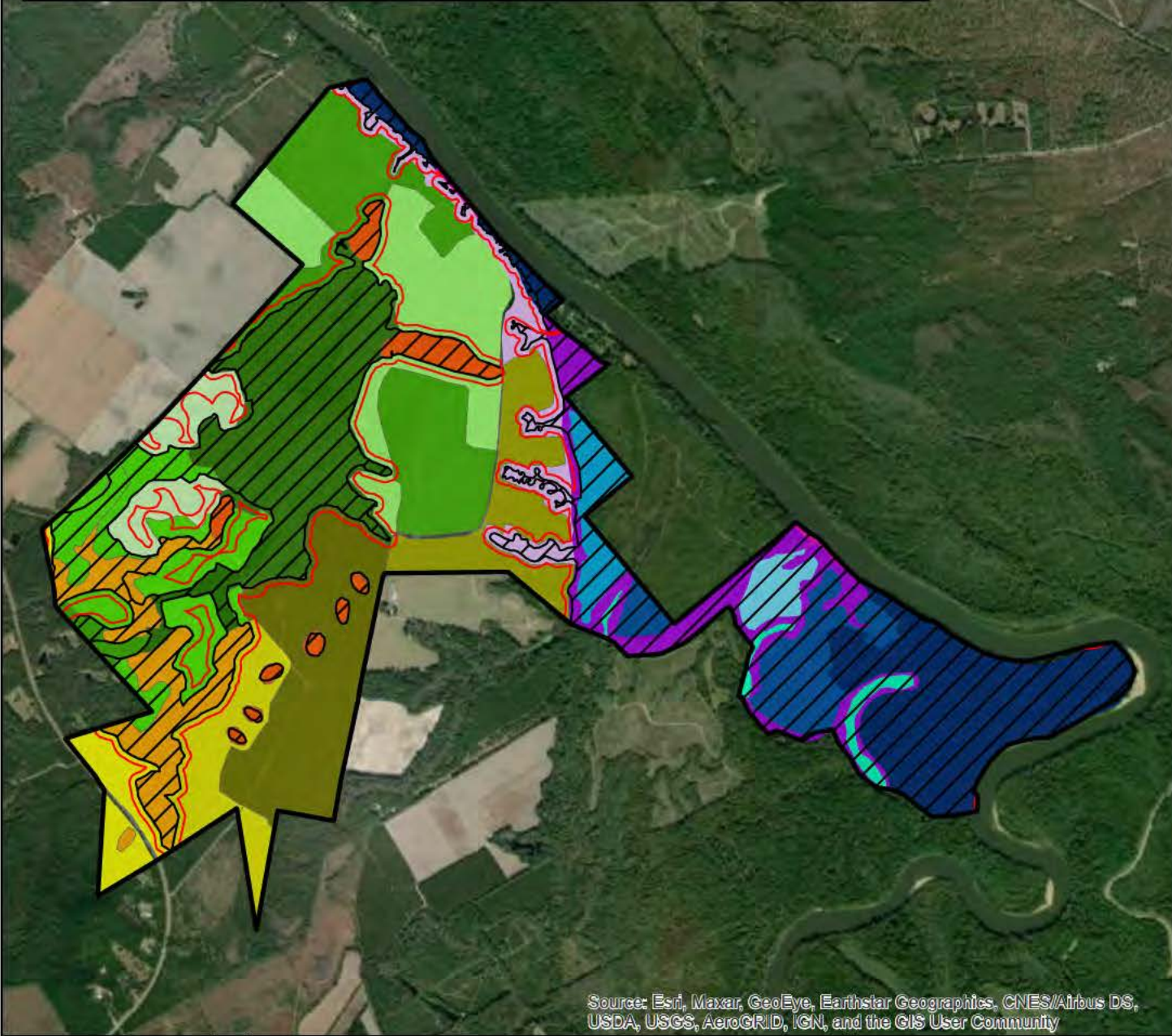
Figure 8
 USGS Topographic Map



CEG Job No.:
 04-030323-01

Legend

- | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------|---|-----------------------|
|  | Overall Property Boundary |  | Freshwater Pond |  | Planted Pine (2012) |
|  | Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank |  | Cypress-Tupelo |  | Planted Pine (2000) |
|  | Delineated Wetlands (~838.06 Acres) |  | Mesic Slope |  | Planted Pine (1995) |
| Name | |  | Planted Pine (2022) |  | Planted Pine (1990) |
|  | Bottomland Hardwood |  | Planted Pine (2020) |  | Riparian Levee |
|  | Bottomland Hardwood Cutover (2016) |  | Planted Pine (2018) |  | Seepage Swamp |
|  | Bottomland Hardwood Cutover (2015) |  | Planted Pine (2016) |  | Seepage Swamp/Baygall |
|  | Bottomland Hardwood Cutover (2012) |  | Planted Pine (2015) | | |



Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community



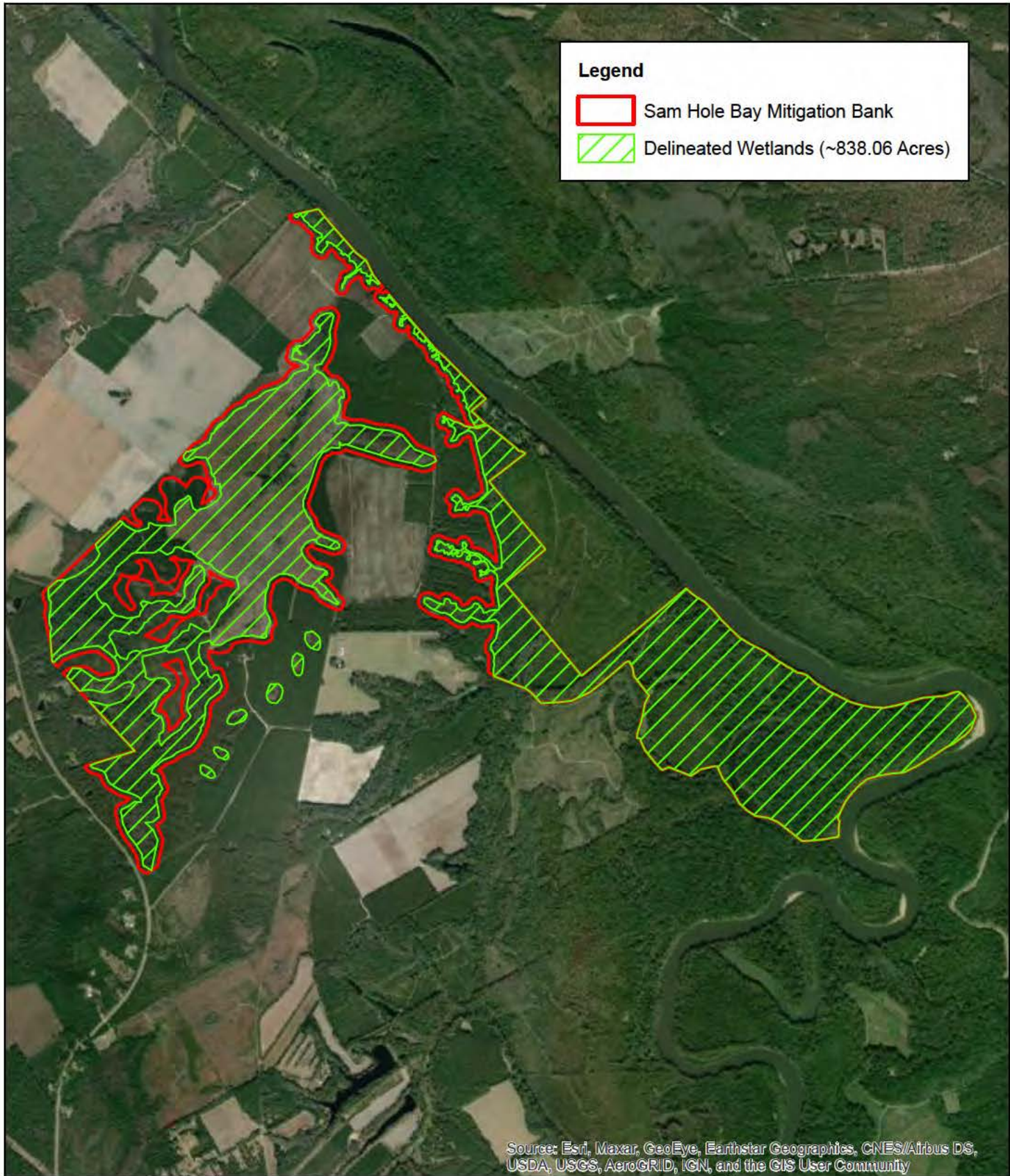
Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank
Effingham County, Georgia

Figure 9
Vegetation Communities
Map

0 1,250 2,500 5,000
Feet
1 inch = 2,500 feet



CEG Job No.:
04-030323-01



Legend

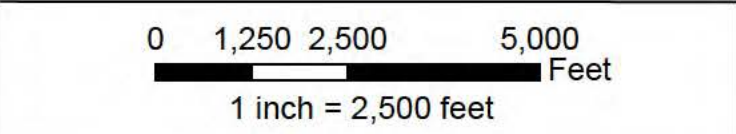
-  Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank
-  Delineated Wetlands (~838.06 Acres)

Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

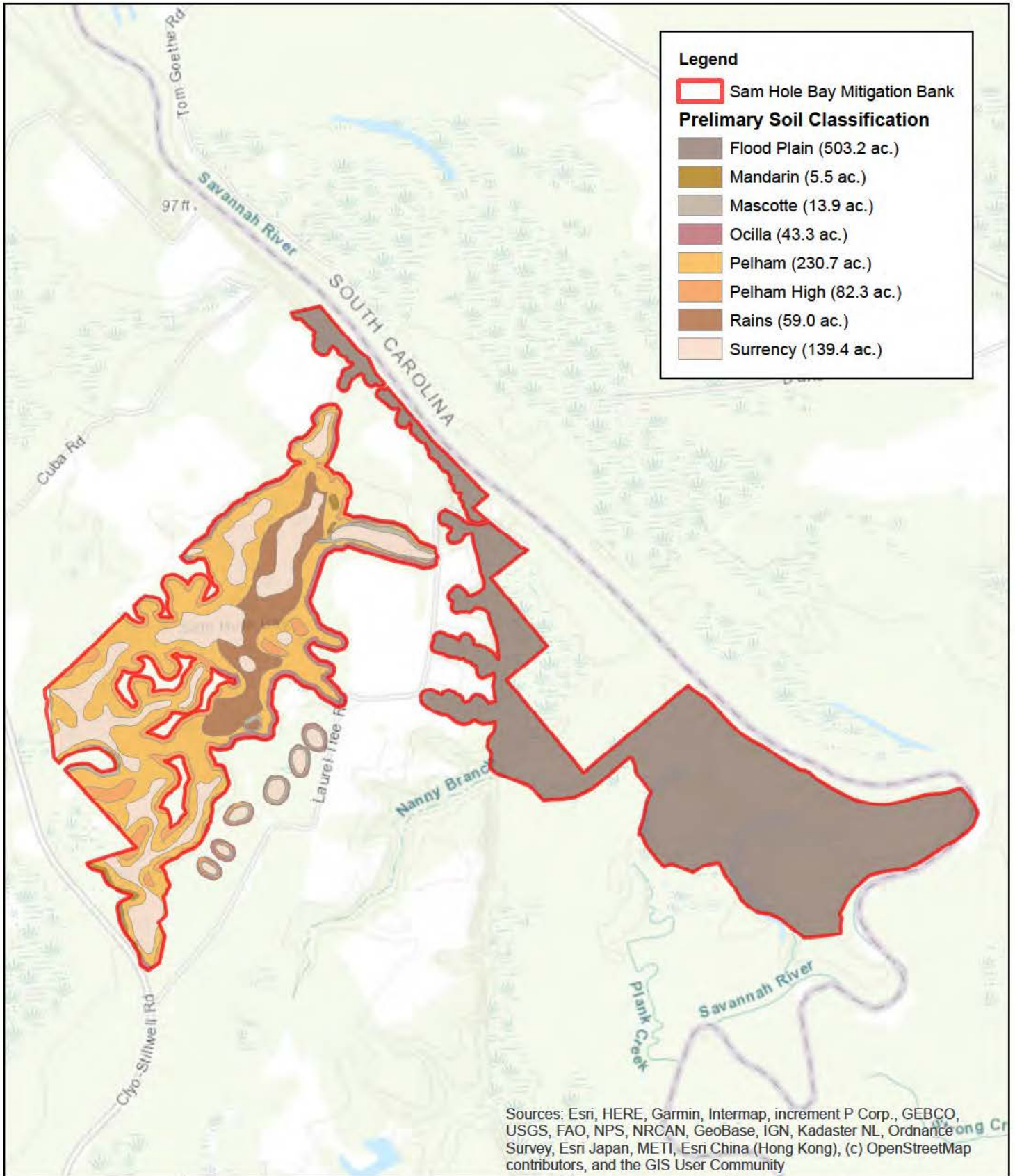


Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank
Effingham County, Georgia

Figure 17
Preliminary Jurisdictional
Area Delineation Map




CEG Job No.:
04-03023-01



Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank
Effingham County, Georgia

0 1,250 2,500 5,000
Feet

1 inch = 2,500 feet

Figure 19
Preliminary
Soil Classification Map

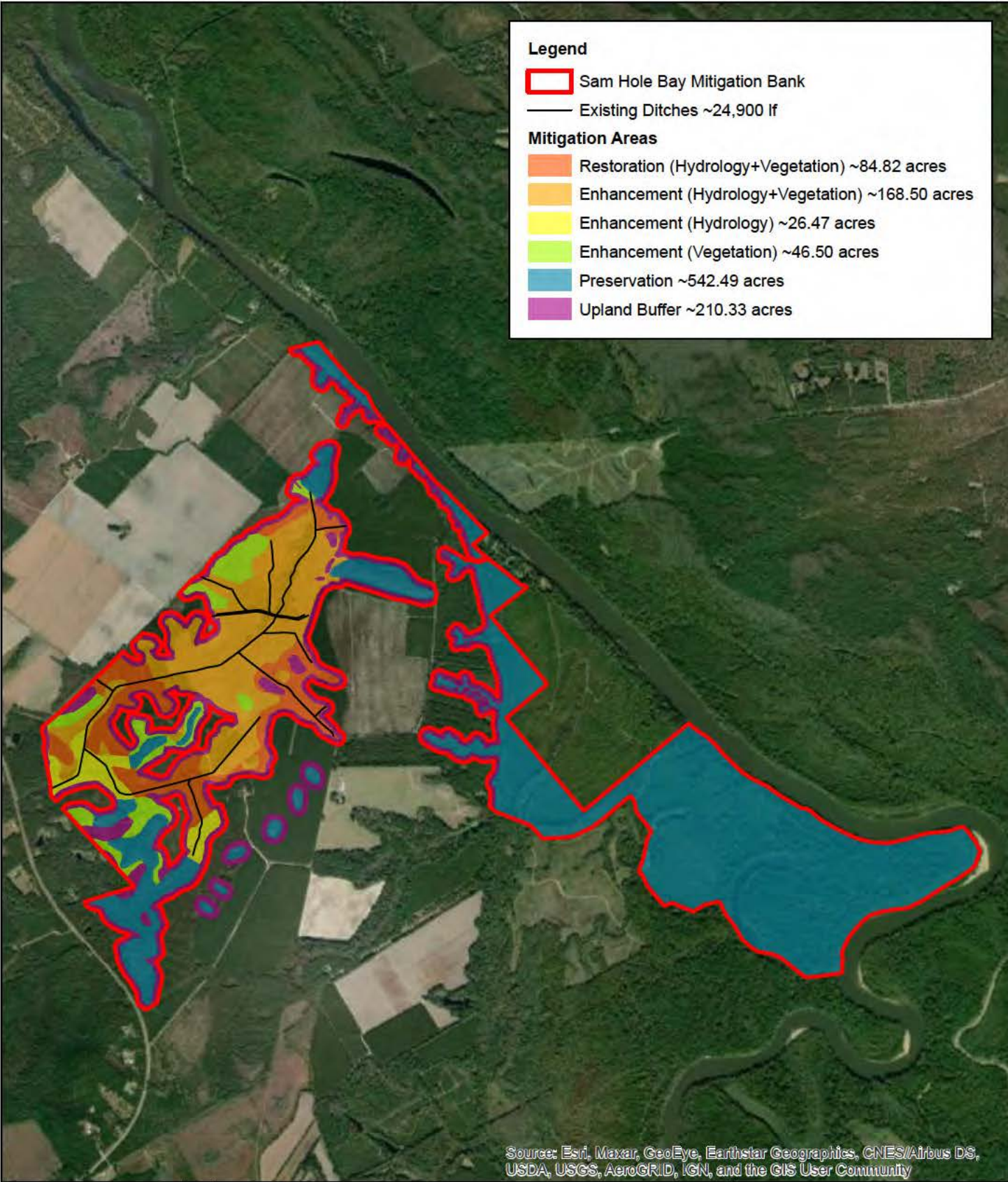
CEG Job No:
04-030323-01

Legend

-  Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank
-  Existing Ditches ~24,900 lf



Mitigation Areas


-  Restoration (Hydrology+Vegetation) ~84.82 acres
-  Enhancement (Hydrology+Vegetation) ~168.50 acres
-  Enhancement (Hydrology) ~26.47 acres
-  Enhancement (Vegetation) ~46.50 acres
-  Preservation ~542.49 acres
-  Upland Buffer ~210.33 acres

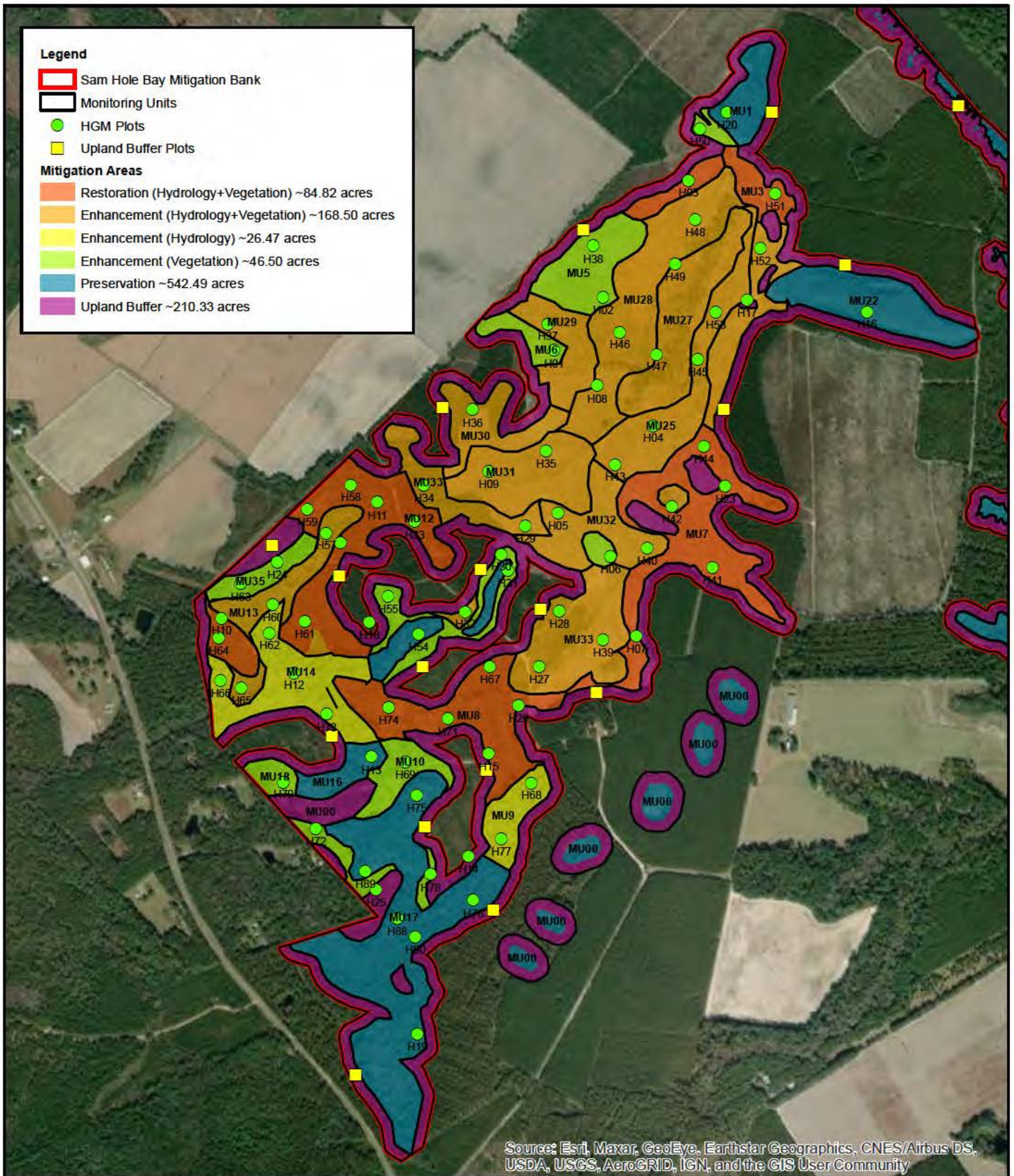


Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community



<p>Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank Effingham County, Georgia</p>		<p>Figure 20 Proposed Mitigation Areas Map</p>
<p>0 1,250 2,500 5,000  Feet</p> <p>1 inch = 2,500 feet</p>		

	<p>CEG Job No.: 04-030323</p>
---	-----------------------------------



Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank
Effingham County, Georgia

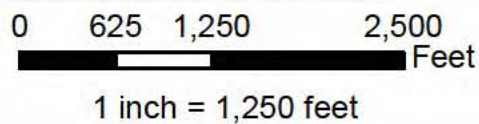
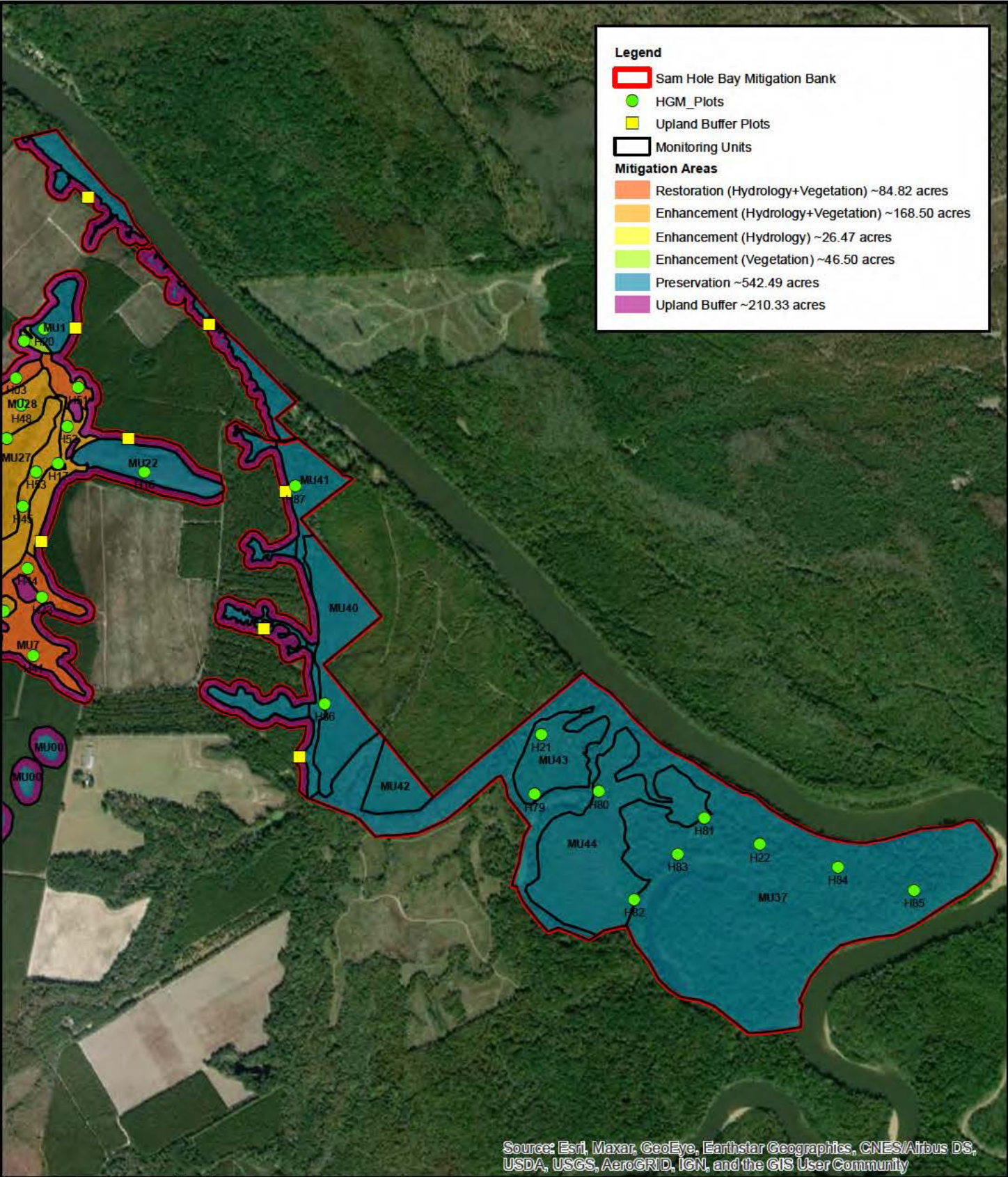


Figure 21
Baseline Vegetation
Monitoring Map (1 of 2)



CEG Job No.:
04-030323-01



Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank
Effingham County, Georgia

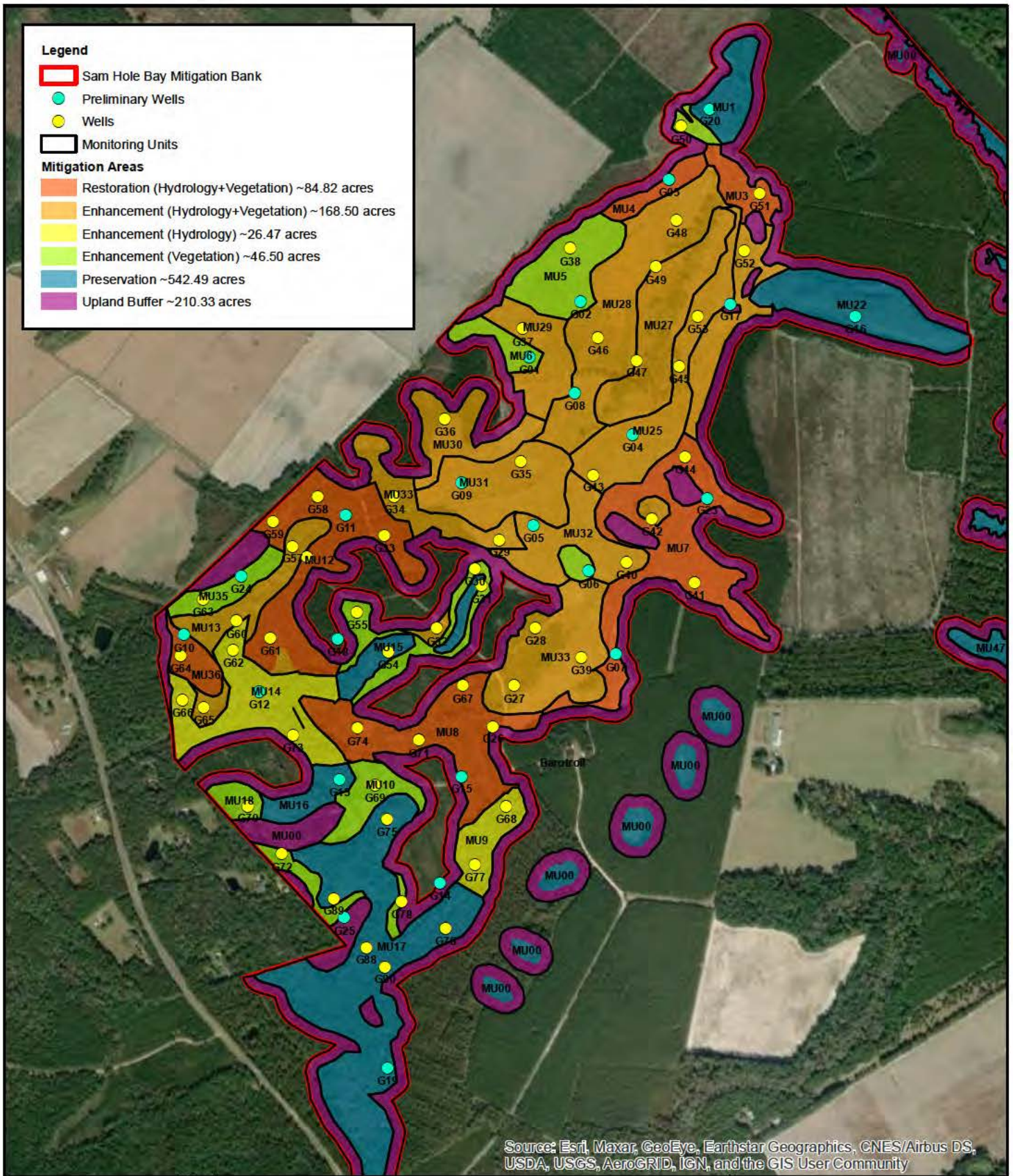
0 875 1,750 3,500

 Feet

1 inch = 1,750 feet

Figure 22
Baseline Vegetation
Monitoring Map (2 of 2)

CEG Job No.: 04-03023-01



Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank
Effingham County, Georgia

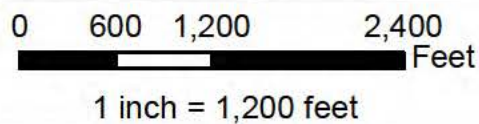
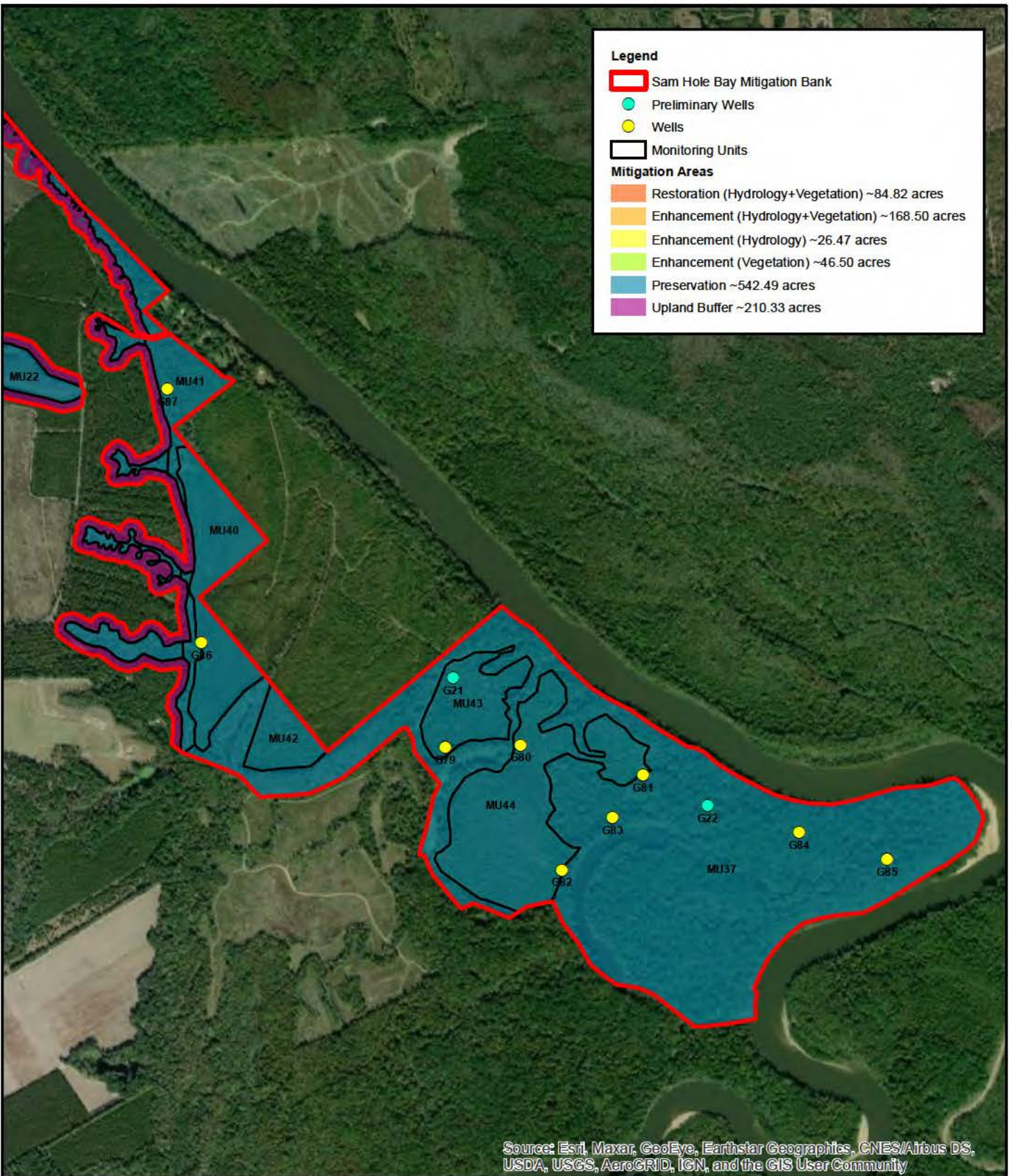


Figure 23
Baseline Hydrology
Monitoring Map (1 of 2)



CEG Job No.:
04-00323-01



Legend

- Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank
- Preliminary Wells
- Wells
- Monitoring Units

Mitigation Areas

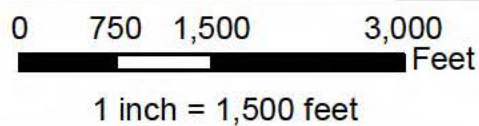
- Restoration (Hydrology+Vegetation) ~84.82 acres
- Enhancement (Hydrology+Vegetation) ~168.50 acres
- Enhancement (Hydrology) ~26.47 acres
- Enhancement (Vegetation) ~46.50 acres
- Preservation ~542.49 acres
- Upland Buffer ~210.33 acres

Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community



Sam Hole Bay Mitigation Bank
Effingham County, Georgia

Figure 24
Baseline Hydrology
Monitoring Map (2 of 2)



CEG Job No.:
04-030323-01