

## **Tab 3**

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### **Wetlands and Species Environmental Analysis**



September, 26, 2008

Ms. Valerie Seidel  
The Balmoral Group  
341 North Maitland Avenue, Suite 10  
Maitland, FL 32751

**RE: Environmental Letter Report  
Gardenia Trails II & III PD&E Study  
Lake County, Florida  
FM Nos. 415432-1-22-01 and 416111-1-22-01  
E Sciences Project Nos. 1-1001-001 and 1-1001-002**

Dear Ms. Seidel:

E Sciences, Incorporated (E Sciences) has conducted a preliminary ecological assessment for the proposed Gardenia Trails II & III, from Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd. to Marion County Road in Lake County, Florida.

The scope of our services included identifying the approximate extent of on-site wetlands and vegetative community types, and identification of listed species within the proposed corridor. This letter report offers a summary of findings from the field reconnaissance conducted on July 23 and 24, and September 3, 2008. The Gardenia Trails II and III are associated within an abandoned CSX railroad line from Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd. to south of Lake Ella Road. From Lake Ella Road north to Marion County Road the proposed trail leaves the abandoned rail corridor and crosses several land use types.

### **Wetlands**

The corridor crosses over several upland land use types, however there are four locations where the alignment crosses through or very close to wetlands (**Figure 1**). The wetland areas include: Lake Geneva, two sinkholes adjacent to Lake Ella Road, a depression area east of the intersection of Arlington Avenue and West Lakeview Street, and a wetland and stormwater pond located northeast of Clay Avenue North and Oak Street. The trail corridor is expected to impact wetlands and/or come close enough to trigger wetland permitting regulations. If wetland impacts do occur it will require an environmental resource permit (ERP) application to be submitted to the St. Johns River Water Management District prior to construction.

### **Listed Species**

During the field reconnaissance, three listed species, or indicators of species, were observed within or adjacent to the corridor (**Figure 2**). The gopher tortoise and southeastern American kestrel are listed as threatened species by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the Sherman's fox squirrel is listed as a species of special concern.

Viable gopher tortoise burrows were observed within and adjacent to the trail corridor. Prior to construction, a relocation permit will need to be obtained from FWC to relocate the tortoises out of the construction area.

Two pairs of southeastern American kestrels were observed during the field reconnaissance. One pair was observed immediately west of the trail corridor near Dixie Avenue and Urick Street. Another pair was observed close to the northern extent of the trail by Marion County Road. Protection guidelines for kestrels are focused on foraging habitat and nest sites. Kestrels typically nest within tree cavities in snags or within man made structures. Trail development would pose minor impacts to the kestrels foraging habitat. It would be advised that a nest search be conducted during the permitting phase to evaluate if the kestrels are nesting within or adjacent to the trail corridor. If the kestrels are not nesting near the trail corridor, then concurrence from FWC may be required to identify if the trail development would not cause significant impacts to the kestrel.

In addition, a Sherman's fox squirrel was observed west of the corridor on Anderson Lane. Protection of the Sherman's fox squirrel primarily involves not impacting the animal's nest tree. It would appear that this trail project would represent a low potential of impacting this species. It is recommended that during the permitting phase, a survey to evaluate if the Sherman's fox squirrel is nesting within the project corridor should be conducted. If the survey identifies a nest within the project corridor then further coordination with FWC will be necessary.

### **Summary**

The proposed Gardenia Trails II & III extend from Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd. to Marion County Road in Lake County, Florida. It appears that the initial design of the trail will impact wetlands, therefore an environmental resource permit from the St. Johns River Water Management District will be required. Mitigation for wetland impacts within the project can be mitigated in accordance with Florida Statue (FS) 373.4137 (i.e. Senate Bill 1986). Mitigation of proposed wetland impacts will assure that there is no net loss to wetland resources. In addition, three listed species were identified along the proposed corridor: gopher tortoise, southeastern American kestrel, and Sherman's fox squirrel. A gopher tortoise relocation permit will be required from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission prior to commencement of construction activities. Further surveys are recommended prior to construction to determine if the proposed trail will impact the southeastern American kestrel and Sherman's fox squirrel. If an impact to either of these species is determined then an appropriate FWC permit would be required. No other listed species or ecological issues that would represent a developmental constraint were identified during the field reconnaissance. Please note that listed species are mobile and this report does not preclude the possibility that additional listed species could inhabit the trail corridor in the future.

E Sciences appreciates the opportunity to be of service to you. If you have any questions or require any additional information, please feel free to contact our office at (407) 481-9006.

Sincerely,  
E SCIENCES, INCORPORATED

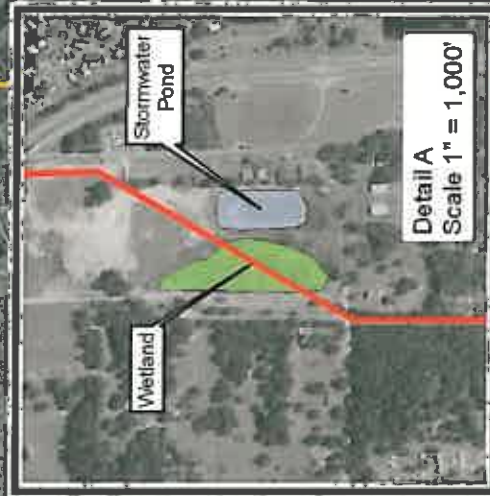
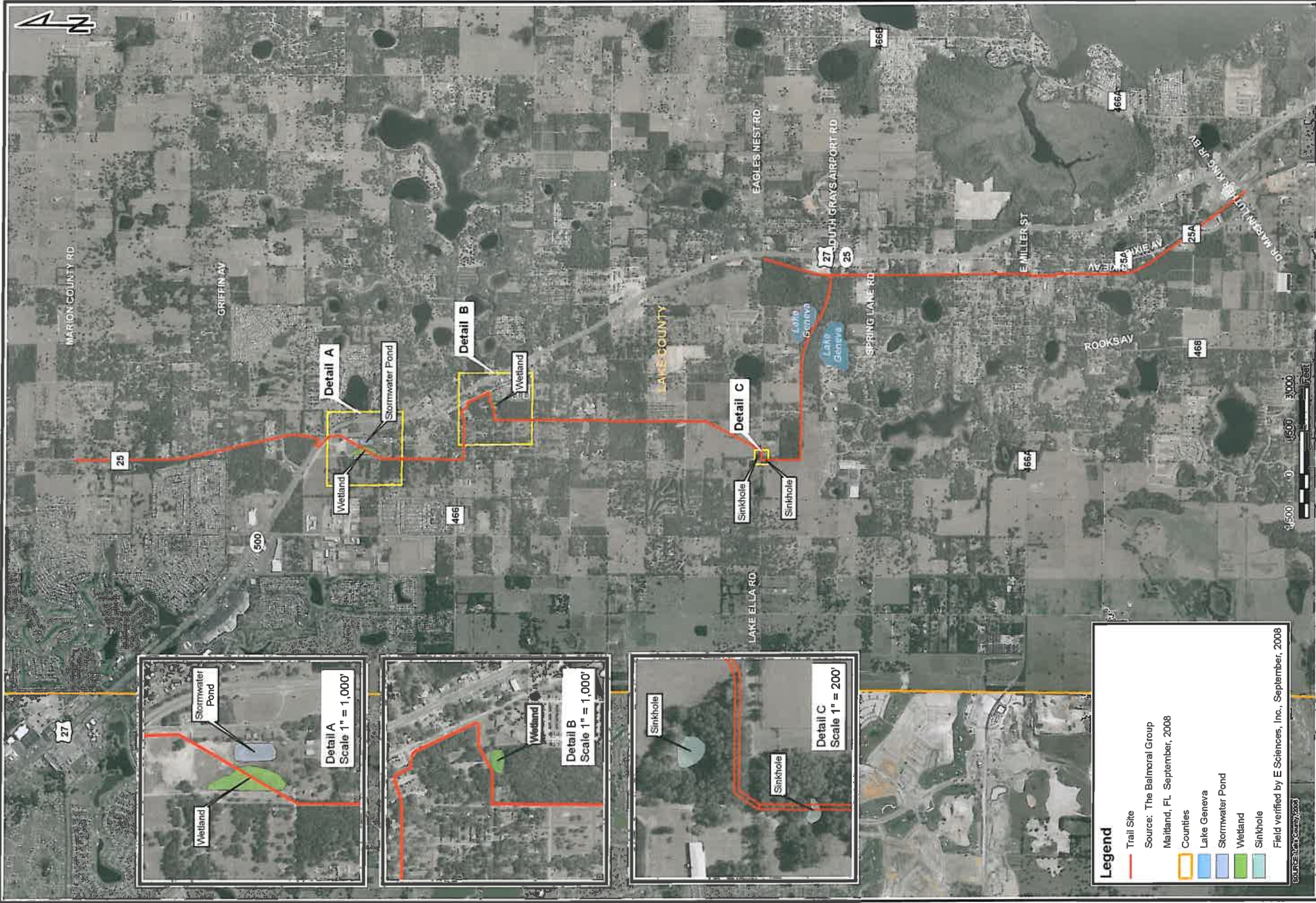


Doug Powers  
Project Scientist



David M. Mahnken  
Senior Scientist

Attachments: Figure 1 – Wetland Map  
Figure 2 – Wildlife Map



**Legend**

- Trail Site
- Source: The Balmoral Group  
Maitland, FL September, 2008
- Counties
- Lake Geneva
- Stormwater Pond
- Wetland
- Sinkhole

Field verified by E Sciences, Inc., September, 2008  
SOURCE: Marion County, 2008

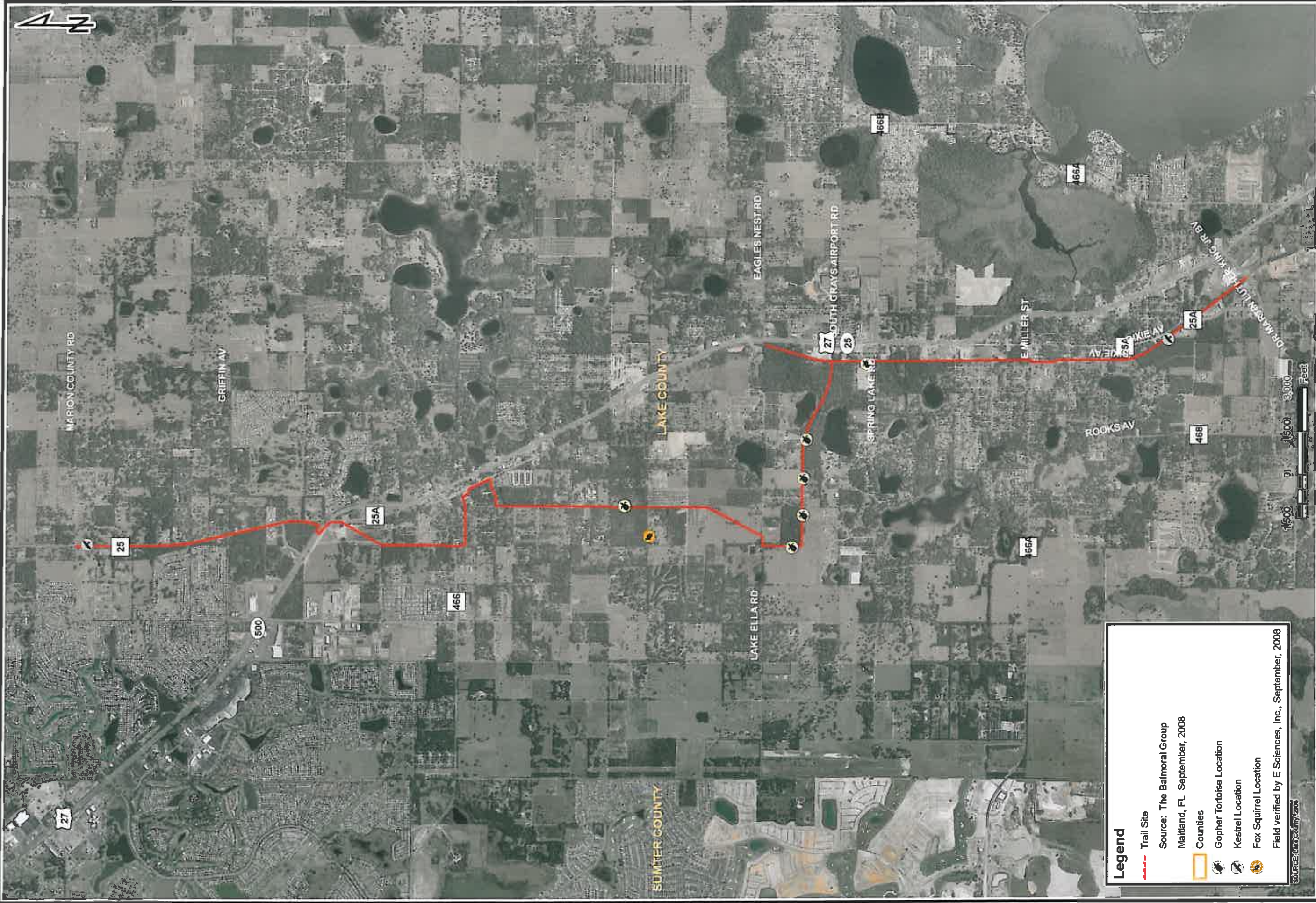
**Gardenia Trail II and III**  
Sections 4, 9, 10, 15 & 33  
Townships 18S & 19S, Range 24E  
Lake County, Florida

Wetland Map  
SCALE: 1" equals 3,000'  
DATE: 09/26/2008

FIGURE  
**1**

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DRAWN BY: TH  
CHECKED BY: [Signature]  
PROJECT NUMBER: 1-1001-001



**Legend**

- Trail Site
- Source: The Balmoral Group  
Maitland, FL September, 2008
- Counties
- Gopher Tortoise Location
- Kestrel Location
- Fox Squirrel Location
- Field verified by E Sciences, Inc., September, 2008

SOURCE: Lake County, 2008

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### Gardenia Trail II and III

Sections 4, 9, 10, 15 & 33  
 Townships 18S & 19S, Range 24E  
 Lake County, Florida

Wildlife Map

SCALE: 1" equals 3,000'  
 DATE: 09/22/2008

FIGURE  
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