CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY FOR SAWPIT ISLAND, BIG TALBOT ISLAND STATE PARK, FLORIDA

Submitted to

Foth Infrastructure & Environment, LLC

By

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Aerial view of Saw Pit Island, Talbot Island State Park Foth|olsen).

PCARG

Acknowledgements

We thank the Florida Division of Historical Resources, Florida Division of Natural Resources, staff at Talbot Island, and Foth Infrastructure & Environmental, LLC, for facilitating this project.

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Introduction

This project performed a cultural resource Phase I survey for the recently acquired Sawpit Island of the Big Talbot Island State Park, located in Duval County, Florida, along the Nassau River at the boundary between Duval and Nassau counties (Figures 1, 2). The work was carried out ahead of shoreline stabilization efforts needed by the State.

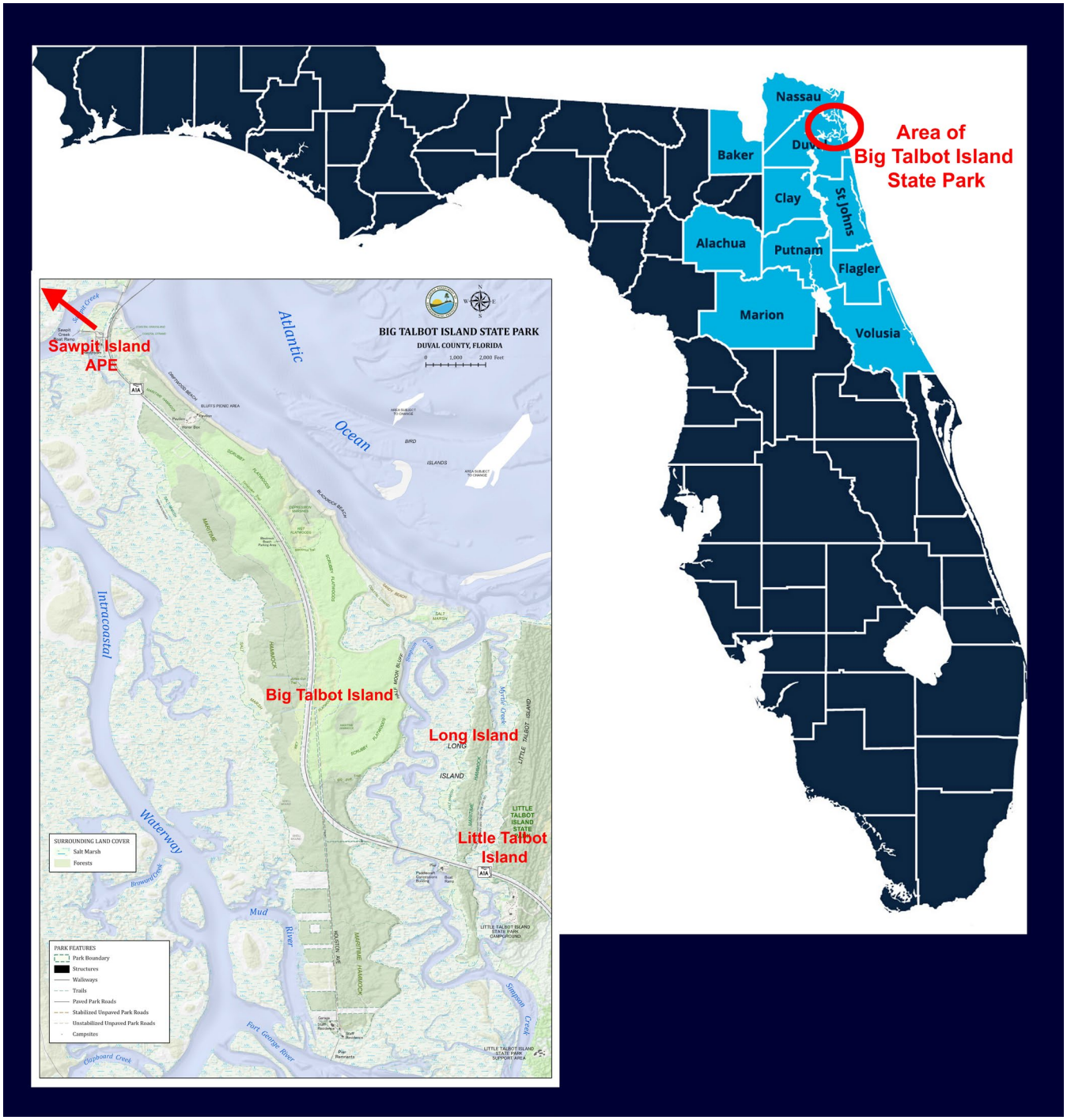

Figure 1. Relational maps for project- left: Talbot Island State Park map showing Talbot Island, Long Island, and Little Talbot Island, with southern edge of Sawpit Island (after FDEP 2024a); right: Florida county map highlighting Nassua and Duval counties, the general APE area.

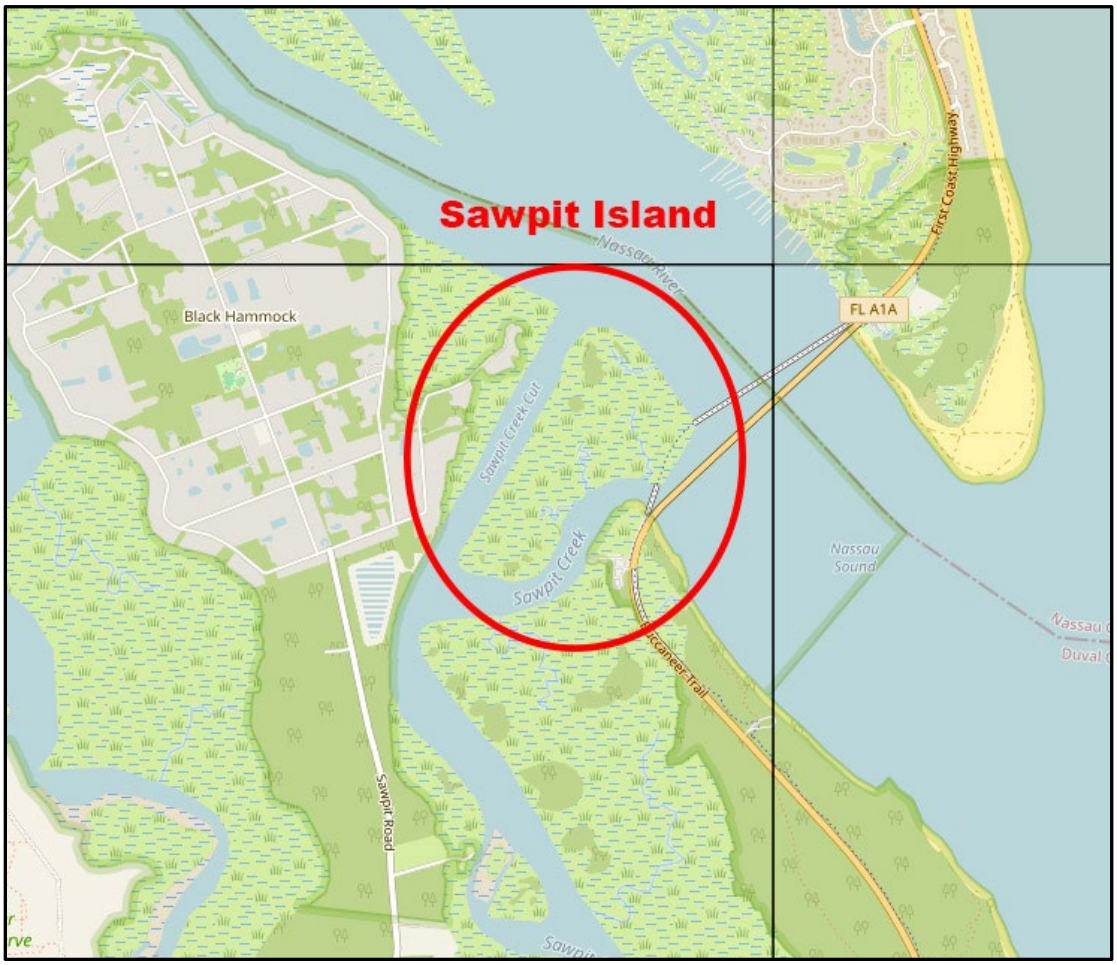

Figure 2. Map of Sawpit Island (Https://chartsnoaa.gov/InteractiveCatalog.shtml 2025).

The Area of Potential Effect (APE) covers 15 acres of land (see Figure 3). Prior to testing, there was only one recorded archaeological site in the area, DU8097, Sawpit Creek (Sutherland 1993), located off the southwest side of the Nassau Sound bridge. The site was recorded as a linear shell midden associated with St. Johns pottery. It was said to measure approximately 20 meters wide running perpendicular to the water's edge and 50 meters long paralleling the river to the west and north. The report indicated that the site had suffered considerable damage from erosion.

Pre-Columbian Archaeological Research, Inc.'s (PCARG) project followed the guidelines and standards required by the Florida Division of Historical Resources (DHR), set forth in Module 3. It employed methodology and equipment to identify, assess, and document cultural resources in the APE.

The results of the investigation showed no evidence of cultural resources in the APE. Consequently, PCARG recommends no additional investigations.

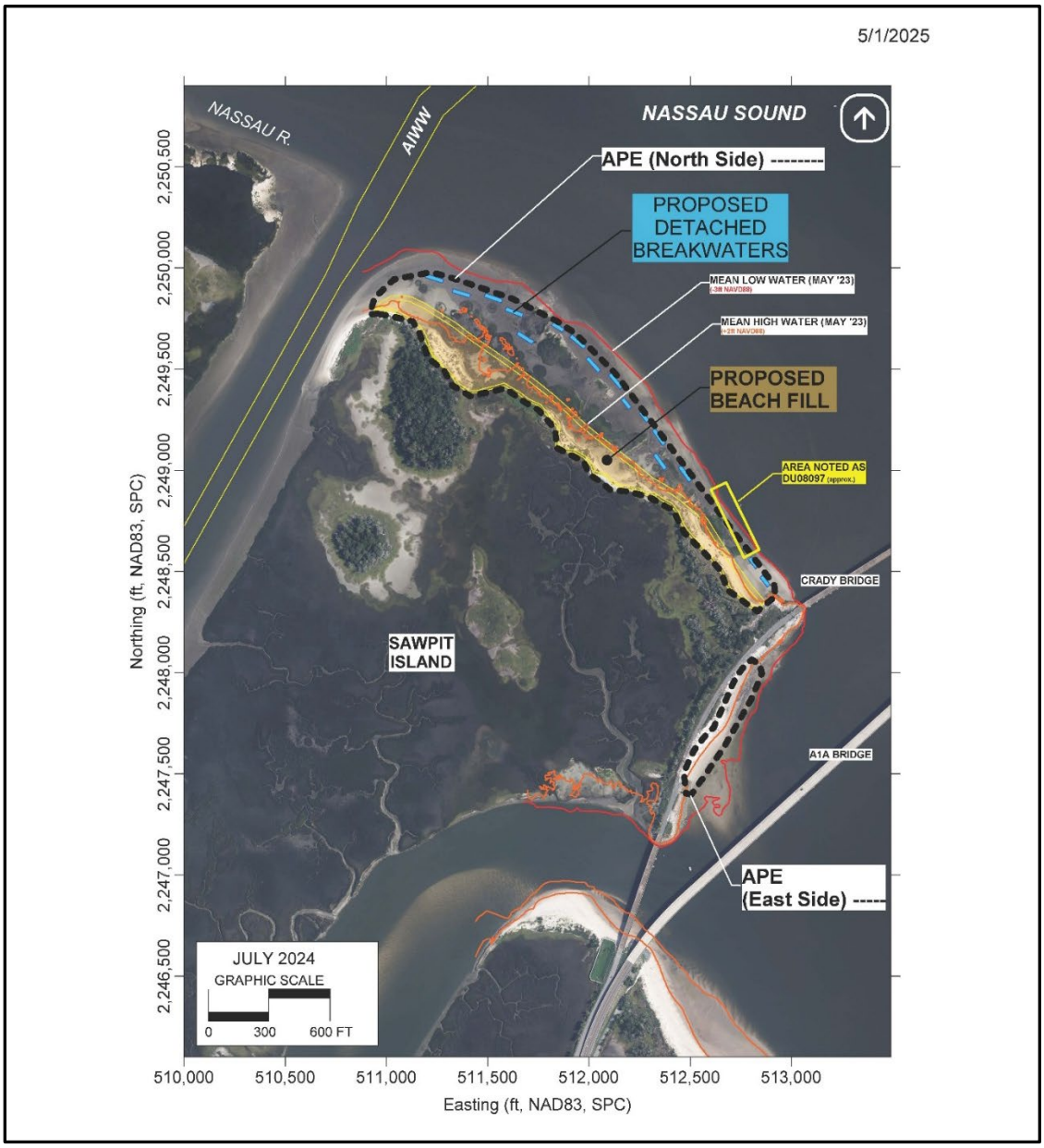

Figure 3. Area of Potential Effect of project, Sawpit Island (Foth|olsen).

Geographic and Environmental Setting

The Talbot islands are in the Barrier Island Sequence District, in the Sea Islands Province. The islands are located at the southern end of a long string of barrier islands extending from the Santee River in South Carolina to the St. John's River in Florida. These islands formed as portions of the mainland submerged and younger, unconsolidated sediments later accumulated along the barrier beach (Godfrey 1976). Sea Islands generally are short, curved barrier islands, separated from each other by river entrances or sounds and from the mainland by well-developed marshes or estuaries (Raichle et al. 1997). As with all barrier islands, the Talbot Islands consist of parallel dune ridges and swales covered with coastal vegetation. Ponds and marshes have developed in many of the swales that lie between the dune ridges, the primary topographic relief of the islands. Big Talbot Island ranges in elevation from sea level at the beach to 20 feet on the northeastern side of the island and 20 feet on the central-eastern side. The

highest point on Little Talbot Island is a 40-foot suite of sand dunes at the north end of the island. Over the years the natural topography of the Talbot islands has been altered significantly by road and drainage construction (e.g., FDOT's State Road A1A but mostly by coastal erosion) (FDEP 2024a).

Up until the early 1940's, Sawpit Island was part of Black Hammock Island to the west, and the island extended well eastward parallel to the north shoreline of Big Talbot Island and separated by Sawpit Creek. In 1943, a channel was cut from the western portion of Sawpit Creek to make a direct path to Nassau Sound and the South Amelia River leading to Fernandina. This created what is now Sawpit Island, and dredge spoil piles from that cut still exist on the island today. This cut is part of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway. Also occurring in the 1940's, the first A1A bridge connecting Amelia Island to Big Talbot was constructed. This bridge, now known as the George Crady bridge, connected through Sawpit Island as the bridge crossed Nassau Sound. In the 1940's the eastern point of Sawpit Island/ Black Hammock Island extended roughly ½-mile east of the current eastern shoreline of Sawpit. The hydrodynamic changes at Sawpit Creek, combined with the construction of the bridge and the hardened abutment, had a significant impact on Sawpit Island and contributed to the erosion of the eastern tip of Sawpit Island (Browder and Cooper 2019).

Between 1953 and 1960, ditches were constructed throughout the area in an effort to eradicate mosquito larvae which developed in the low, wet swale areas between the dunes. Ditches were designed to connect the swales and to drain to adjacent estuarine tidal marsh areas. Dunes were leveled to fill low areas as well as spoil from the ditches. During ditch construction, heavy machinery damaged plant life. Ditches dating from the1800s have been recorded from early survey maps and likewise affected the island's natural hydrology (FDEP 2024a).

The most dramatic topographic changes to the Talbot islands have resulted from coastal erosion and accretion. The shoreline extending from mid-Georgia, south to Little Talbot Island, Florida, has changed significantly, both in location and size, over the past 150 years, primarily due to jetty building at the mouths of the St. Marys River and St. Johns River in the late 1800s. Although localized, these constructions caused sand erosion and accretion on islands both to the south and the north. While regional beach renourishment projects are on-going, barrier islands (FDEP 2024a), the Talbot islands, and Sawpit Island in particular, have been severely affected by the effects of sea level rise and are expected to continue to experience increasing inundation and erosion in coming decades (Browder and Cooper 2019).

More than a dozen soil types occur within Big Talbot State Park. In general, sandy, well-drained soils occur along the beaches and in the rolling upland ridges. Poorly drained, mucky, organic, sulfur-smelling, lowland soils occur in the estuarine marshes (Watts 1991). Spodosols account for 90 percent of all Big Talbot Island soils, identified by a hardpan or red spodic layer. The hardpan is composed of organic matter, iron, and sometimes aluminum. Layers of the spodic hardpan are visible in long horizontal stripes in the eroded bluffs at Big Talbot Island. These soils commonly occur in areas dominated by scrub oaks. Black Rocks soils are found on the east shoreline of Big Talbot Island. On Little Talbot Island, the upland soils are excessively drained sand, with no diagnostic horizons. The north end has soils of brown fine sand that contain bands of heavy minerals, mostly rutile and ilmenite. Specific to Sawpit Island, across the creek from Big Talbot Island, soils are sandy, mucky, and poorly drained (Figure 4).

The primary ecosystems of the general APE are marine, estuarine, riverine, palustrine, and upland, which have provided numerous animal and plant resources for its human occupants over the millennia. These include whales, porpoises, sea turtles, shark, oysters, clams, shrimp, marine and estuarine fish, snakes, racoon, possum, rabbit, turkey, ducks, gopher tortoises, alligators, and lizards. Vegetation

includes yaupon holly, coontie, cabbage palm, saw palmetto, acorns, hickory nuts, as well as mixed hardwoods, pines, and cedars (Larson 1980).

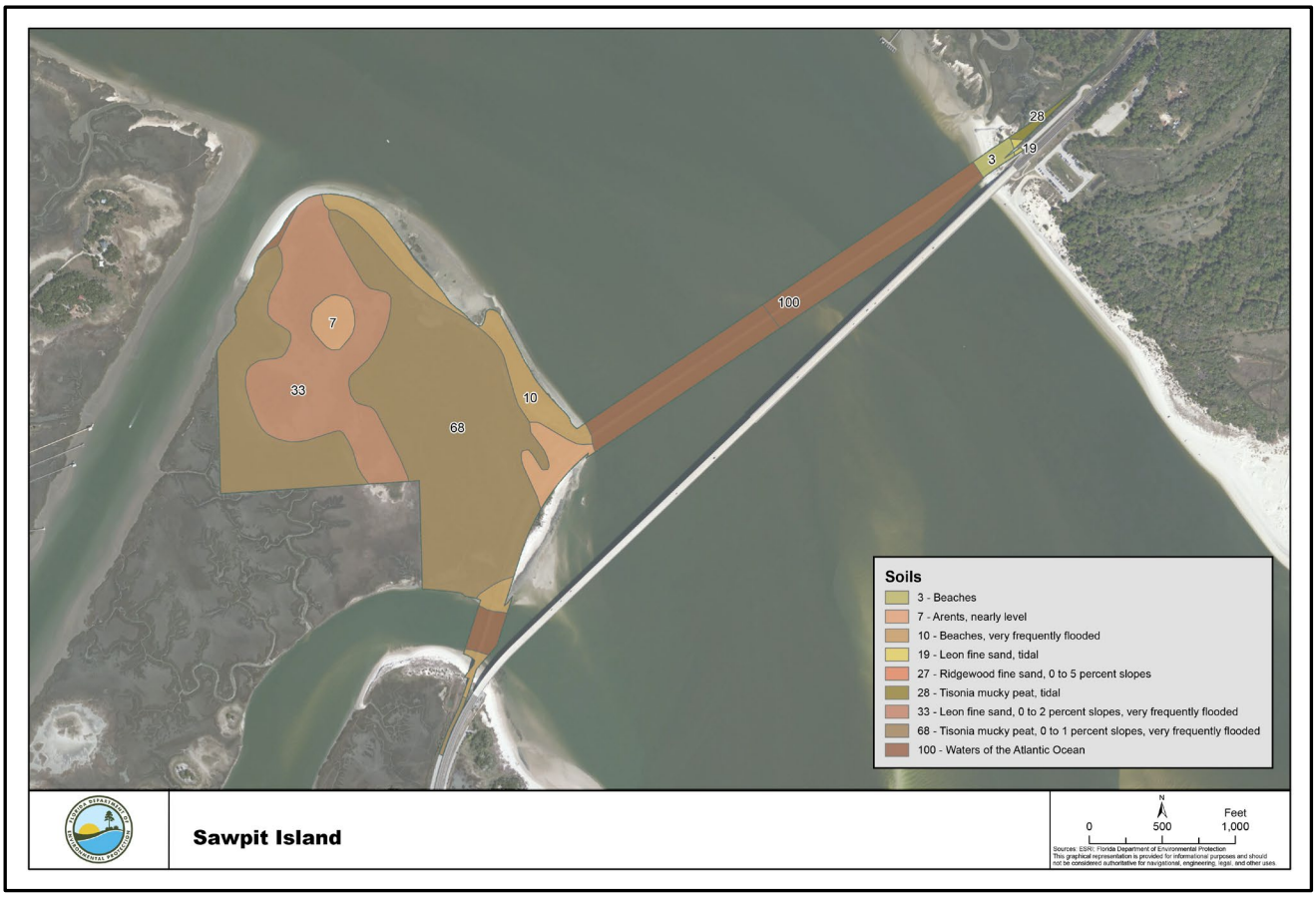

Figure 4. Soil map of Sawpit Island (after FDEP 2024b).

Prehistoric Background

Paleoindians entered North America and arrived in North Florida near the end of the Pleistocene, more than 14,000 years ago. Glaciers still covered much of the northern half of the continent with much of the earth's water frozen in ice. Climatic conditions in Florida were substantially different from today. The region was drier and cooler, sea levels were significantly lower (as much as 75 meters below sea level), and the Gulf Coast shoreline extended roughly 100 miles seaward of its present location, while the Atlantic coastline reached the same at the latitude of Jacksonville. Modern coastal areas, which are now flat, low and wet, were formerly dry. Inland drainages, springs, and wetlands were virtually non-existent, and the water table was much lower. Fresh water was scarce and available primarily in rain-fed water ponds and lakes, and deep sinkholes fed by springs, most plentiful in the karstic limestone formations. These water sources supported rich natural communities of plants and animals.

Paleoindians took advantage of these resources, subsisting on hunting, fishing, and collecting a wide range of fauna and flora (Anderson and Sassaman 2012:36-59; Dunbar 1991; Halligan et al. 2016; Milanich 1994:37-59). Most of the Paleoindian record consists of stone tools and debitage with some bone and ivory artifacts preserved in karst rivers. The principal diagnostic stone tool of the period is the lanceolate-shaped point, namely, Clovis, Suwannee, and Simpson projectile

points, associated with hunting now extinct megafauna such as the mastodon and the giant bison (Dunbar and Hemmings 2004; Dunbar and Webb 1996). To date, the majority of Florida Paleoindian sites have been found in the north central to northwestern part of the state. No Paleoindian period sites have been found in the Nassau or Duval counties, Talbot Island area where the project is located. This is perhaps because these coastal areas did not have the perched freshwater sources where game and hunters converged during this time period as did areas to the west, and more recently have been identified south and more central to the peninsula (see Thulman 2012) (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Hypothetical rendering of a Paleoindian hunt (Https://PaleoindianPeriod/LostWorlds.org).

The Archaic Period (8000–500 BC) is the longest period of cultural development in pre-Columbian North America. It is divided into three periods reflecting the gradual fluctuation in climate until current conditions were reached in the last stage. Important advancements include construction of mounds, shell rings, and other earthworks in association with larger settlements and the establishment of long-distance trade. Additionally, the Archaic Period is marked by a greater diversity of artifacts than are recorded for the Paleoindian Period. Projectile points (indicating their use as atlatl dart tips) are thicker, smaller and triangular with notched or stemmed bases and occur along with flake stone axes, adzes, scrapers and knives. Ground stone tools, such as celts, and ornaments, such as pendants, make up the Archaic assemblage as well as gourd and basket containers, and wooden tools and dugout canoes (Anderson and Sassaman 2012:66-113; Milanich 1994:61-87, 95-100).

Very few Early Archaic sites have been found in northeastern Florida as rising sea stands were still lower than present levels. Sea levels began stabilizing by the Middle Archaic giving rise to an increase in the number and types of sites found. Projectile points from the period include Hardee, Sumter, Alachua, Putnam and Newnan. The end of the Late Archaic is defined by the appearance of fiber-tempered ceramics in the greater Southeastern United States. Cultural changes include increased populations and a high reliance on aquatic, estuarine, and marine resources. Regional settlements are centered around mounds and/or horseshoe, semicircular or oval shaped middens (Milanich 1994: 95, 97-98).

The McGundo Midden site (8DU7511) on Fort George Island, Florida, just south of the APE, is a good example of Late Archaic peoples' focus on a coastal diet. The site was once a large mound-midden complex destroyed in late historic times by shell mining. The remains of shellfish are overwhelmingly oyster, which became the subsistence base that led to the rise of "shell rings" on the lower Atlantic coast. These site complexes dominated the coastal landscape in northeast Florida and the Georgia and South Carolina coasts for the next millennium (Saunders and Russo 2011).

The Woodland period (500 BC–AD 1000) is distinguished by increased sedentism, the adoption of mound construction for burial, expansion of estuarine resource exploitation, and increased agricultural production, facilitated by a more stable environment from which to exploit natural resources. While plant resources became more important, there is little evidence of domestication during this time. The Woodland period is known as the St. Johns I period in northeastern Florida. The period is divided into three subperiods (I, Ia and Ib) based on style changes of the dominant ceramic type, St. Johns (Milanich 1994:243-274).

The Mississippian period (AD 1000–1565) is known as the St. Johns II period in northeastern Florida. Like the preceding period, St. Johns II is subdivided into three subperiods (IIa, IIb, and IIc) based on stylistic changes of St. Johns ceramics, namely the appearance of Check Stamped pottery (Figure 6). The St. Johns II is more complex than the preceding period with an increase in village and mound sites The period contains many of the classic Mississippian traits such as construction of large, truncated mounds and the presence of Southern Cult burial paraphernalia in association with perceived elite burials. Burial mounds are often large in size and complex and contain exotic materials, worked copper, and other ornamentation.

A particularly significant St. Johns II village was the Mill Cove Complex, approximately 15 km west of the mouth of the St. Johns River, in a suburb of Jacksonville (Ashley 2005). It was the largest of the period for northeast Florida with two principal mounds containing hundreds of human burials accompanied by copper plates, copper beads, galena, mica, quartz crystals, stone celts, and other pieces of exotica (Moore 1894; 1895; Ashley et al. 2018).

Subsistence strategies of this period focused on river and marine resources (Figure 7), though evidence suggests that plant cultivation was becoming a more important factor. The end of the period saw the introduction of European settlements and trade goods within the archaeological assemblage (Milanich 1994:243-274).

Figure 6. St. Johns II Check Stamped Pottery (Florida Museum of Natural History).


Figure 7. Timucua Indian women fishing circa 1562. Drawings by Jacques Le Moyne.
The Florida Photographic Collection (https:statearchivesfl. Archive No. 900000/N20126).

Historic Background

When Juan Ponce de León claimed Florida for Spain in 1513 only Yamasee Indians occupied the vicinity of Talbot Island. The earliest documented European to the area was French mariner and explorer Jean Ribault in 1562 on behalf of King Charles IX. Ribault, and his company of Huguenots, attempted to colonize, but he was imprisoned for a period by Queen Elizabeth I. In his absence, Rene de Laudonniere returned to help fortify the settlement to be known as Fort Caroline (Amelia Island Plantation 1973:18). France's claim to Florida lasted just three years. In late summer 1565, Spanish troops under the command of Pedro Menendez de Aviles defeated Ribault who had returned to Florida and the French settlers. That same year Menendez established St. Augustine. For the next 80 years the Spanish continued to establish missions, cultivate land, and to convert the Indians that they encountered to Catholicism. One of the largest missions was San Juan del Puerto, located on the east side of Fort George Island. Smaller missions were located on Big Talbot and Amelia Islands (Amelia Island Plantation 1973:18).

As the Spanish and French vied for control of Northeast Florida, the indigenous people were referred to as "Timucua". The name "Timucua" (recorded by the French as *Thimogona* but this is likely a misprint for *Thimogoua*), actually referred to the Utina, another group to the west of the St. Johns River (Milanich 1999, 2000).

At the turn of the century, the region was overrun by English forces, accompanied by Indians and blacks, on their way to burn St. Augustine. In 1702, Georgia Governor Oglethorpe ordered a British force against the Spanish settlement. By 1763, Spain ceded all of Florida to England (Bullard 2005:24).

From the British period (1763-83) through the Second Spanish period (1783-1821) the Talbot islands and surrounding areas were used for plantation agriculture. Oranges, sugar, indigo, and cotton were grown. Little Talbot served as pasture for horse and cattle grazing. Prominent planters included Spicer Christopher, John Houston, John Queen, and Zephaniah Kingsley (Schafer 1996:214).

Between 1807 and 1812 (the beginning of the War of 1812) regular (and often illicit) trade between Spain and Great Britain occurred, an economic pattern that would endure into the nineteenth century. In 1821 Spanish-controlled Florida became part of the United States. During the Territorial Period, many people came to homestead in what becomes Duval County (1822) and Nassau County (1824), a number establishing plantations. Population substantially increased with stability after the Seminole wars (ending 1842) and accompanying Florida statehood (1845). Up until this point, St. Augustine had been the only real substantial town. But by the early 1850s, Jacksonville emerged as a major center, primarily due to lumber export (Amelia Island Plantation 1973:22; Schafer 1969:214-219).

In 1853, the Florida Board of Internal Improvement convened at Tallahassee to discuss transportation issues in the state. The Talbot Island area figured predominantly with the establishment of coastal shipping with New York. The cross-state railroad in 1855 further enhanced production, boosting the economy for the region (Amelia Island Plantation 1973:22; Johannes 1976:25).

The Civil War (1861-1865) curtailed growth in northeast Florida. At the onset, a small volunteer Confederate States of America militia regiment resided in the area of Talbot Island. But during majority of the conflict, the region was controlled by Union troops, with the three principal towns in the region- St. Augustine, Jacksonville, and Fernandina- evacuated (Figure 8). Stores of cotton and other commodities abandoned by fleeing residents were confiscated and shipped north (Figure 9). Most of the wharves, businesses, and warehouses were destroyed during the war, but by 1870 rebuilding occurred (Amelia Island Plantation 1973:23; Johannes 1976:30; Brown 1996:234).

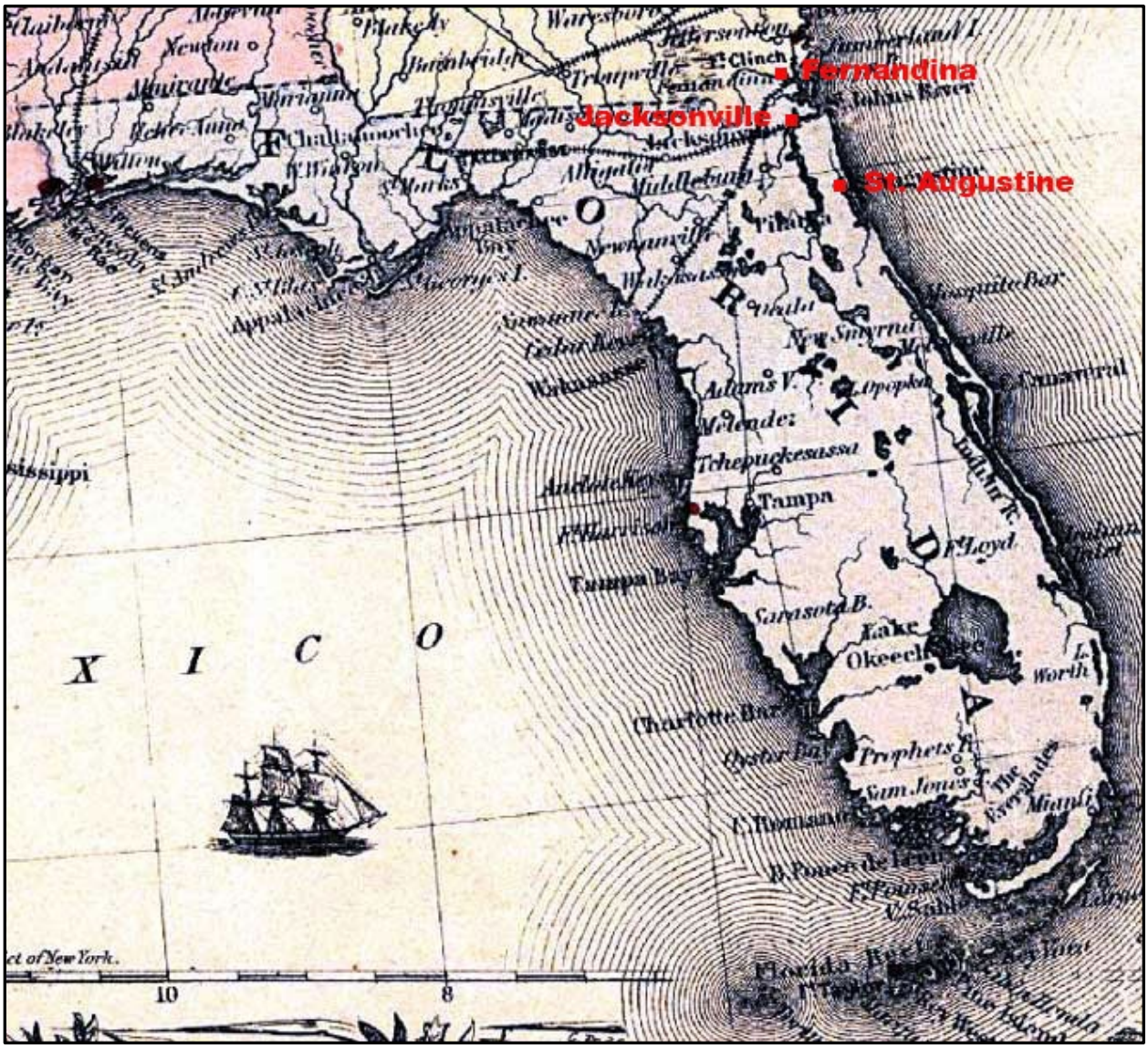

Figure 8. 1861 map of Florida showing Civil War military establishments. Highlighted here are the towns of St. Augustine, Jacksonville, and Fernandina, which were evacuated when the Union Army took control (after Https://fcit.usf.edu/florida/maps/pages/94400/f9440/f9440.htm 2025).

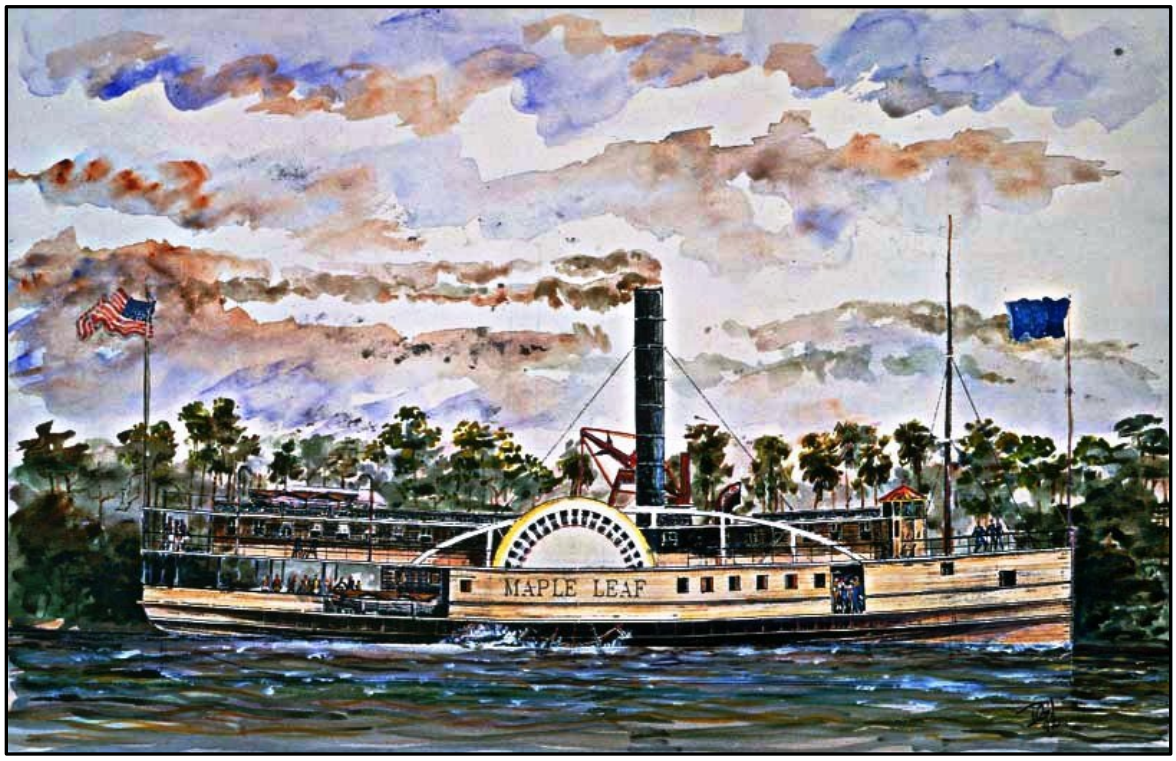

Figure 9. Painting of the Civil War Union Maple Leaf. The transport ship was sunk in the St. John's River near Jacksonville by a Confederate torpedo, having passed the Nassau Sound on its way from the Northeast south (Https://wwwmapleleafshipwreck.com).

In the mid-1870s, hotels and other luxury establishments drew tourism to the region. Transportation provided by steamship lines allowed travelers the opportunity to make weekly trips from as far away as New York. In 1892, three New York based steamship lines offered continuous ocean service to Nassau County, Florida. The area's proximity to Cuba was ideal for running contraband arms to the rebel Cuban army in 1896. Economic growth flourished during this period lasting about 20 years until the major centers of distribution for the region shifted to Jacksonville (Duval County) and Savannah, Georgia (Amelia Island Plantation 1973:28).

As the extent of Florida railroads increased, so did the accessibility to large amounts of virgin longleaf yellow pine within the interior. Much of the valuable lumber was shipped out of northeast Florida. After the commodity was mostly depleted by the turn of the century, mills adapted to the production of turpentine and resin. During the heyday of lumber and naval stores industries, tugs were frequently utilized to tow large ships. By the 1930s the naval stores industry followed in the wake of the lumber industry as the once plentiful natural resources were depleted (Johannes 1976:12, 79). In 1936, the Container Corporation built a $6,000,000 plant that utilized pulp for the manufacture of paper and boxes. Soon after, Rayonier Corporation established a factory to manufacture rayon pulp from regional pine stands (Johannes 1976:37). By 1938, the existence of the two mills had a profound effect on the community by first creating the modern industries and for spurring the growth of new businesses (Fernandina City Commission 1940:41).

The area of Talbot Island reached its commercial height in the early 1900s but gradually shifted to tourism with the increasing number of vacationers to the region. Many arrived from Jacksonville by train and aboard steamers.

A significant part of Jacksonville's growth in the 20th century was the result of navy bases established in the region. Naval Air Station Jacksonville ("NAS Jax") became the first navy installation in the city. This base was a major training center during World War II.civilian and active-duty personnel (CNRSE 2025). During the War, US military monitored for the presence of German submarines that frequented portions of the eastern seaboard. A number were spotted in the water of northeast Florida. Additionally, regular aerial bombing and gunnery practice was conducted at the mouth of Nassau Sound during WWII (USND 1941-1946) (Figure 10).

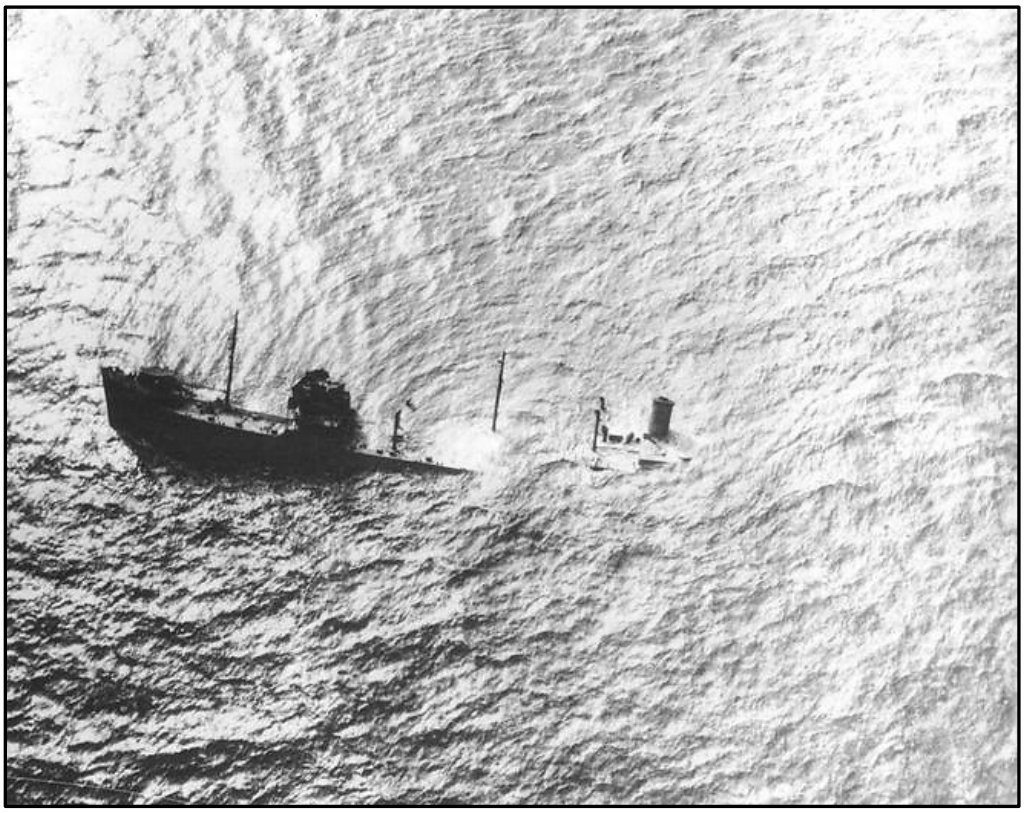

Figure 10. Aerial photograph of the SS Gulfamerica sinking off the coast of Jacksonville Beach in 1942. A German U-boat sunk the oil tanker while moving through coastal waters of the Atlantic Ocean (Photograph provided by Scott Grant/Beaches Museum and History Park), Florida Time-Union (2017).

In the immediate postwar and early modern era, shrimping and fishing became the major Nassau and Duval county industries. Most watercraft were registered as fishing vessels although owners employed some for freight, miscellaneous, towing, or yachting services. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, the pulp industry and tourism became the principal sources of income for residents (Johannes 1976:37; NYM 1982:70).

Apart from tourist destinations such as Amelia Island and Fernandina Beach, the Talbot Island public state lands maintain its undeveloped islands, marshes, and rivers, ideal for fishing, kayaking, nature walks, bird-watching, sunbathing, and sunset-watching (Lambert 2014). With acquisitions starting in 1952 to the present (Sawpit Island), Talbot Island land management continues its preservation efforts (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Boneyard Beach is just a short hike from Jimmy Buffet Memorial Boulevard (State Road A1A) on Big Talbot Island. The Talbot Islands and surrounding parks and preserves are immediately south of Amelia Island and north of Jacksonville. (Photograph taken by Bob Rountree, Https://www.floridarambler.com/florida-camping/talbot-islands).

Previous Research and Current Archaeological Site Status

Archaeological work in the area of Big Talbot Island has been limited. The first formal research began in the 1960s by William Jones (1988). He focused on tabby ruins of the Houston plantation (DU90). In 1974 Lynn Nidi (1980) conducted a modest survey of accessible areas along the St. Johns River, recording two new sites and five previously known sites.

In 1998, Keith Ashley and Robert Thunen (1999) carried out a survey of the southern one-third of Big Talbot, recording one new archaeological site and seven previously recorded. The results showed a St. Johns II period occupation (Woodland to Mississippian, AD 750-1200) on the eastern side of the island marked by shell middens, and with light Contact to Mission period (AD 1200-1650) presence on the west side.

A site-specific survey conducted in 2005 for the Timucuan Trail project revealed an additional archaeological site which was previously unrecorded (Ashley and Rolland 2015).

Exposure of the islands to the Atlantic Ocean and its seasonal extremes probably dictated occasional or seasonal human use and settlement rather than long term and persistent village occupations. After contact, documented uses of the islands were still intermittent and short lived, at least until the establishment of plantation agriculture on Big Talbot Island during the late Second Spanish (1783-1821) and early American Territorial (1821-45) periods.

The Florida Master Site File (FMSF) records 22 cultural resources or sites on Big Talbot (BT) and Little Talbot (LT). Sites include:

1. DU1, The Grand Site, a sand mound and shell midden ring with St. Johns II, Savannah, and Mission period elements. The National Register of Historic Places listed it in 1970 (BT).
2. DU2, Talbot Island Mound B, a sand mound of undetermined period (BT).
3. DU80, the Talbot Island site, a multi component shell midden bisected by State Road A1A (BT). Although damaged, much of the site is intact and preserved (BT).
4. DU93, the Half Moon Bluff site, a shallow shell midden, heavily impacted by erosion (BT).
5. DU106, Big Talbot Island site, is a shallow oyster shell midden (BT).
6. DU627, the Middle Midden, a shell midden with Swift Creek, St. Johns II, Savannah and Mission period elements. Disturbances include pot hunting and possibly mining the shell midden for tabby in constructing the Houston plantation buildings (BT).
7. DU13260, The Simpson Point Site, a shell midden with evidence of Deptford period occupation.
8. DU13262, the Big Talbot Bluff site, a shell midden located on an eroding dune (BT).
9. DU628, a shell midden with St. Johns II elements (BT).
10. DU629, a shell midden possibly St. Johns II (BT).
11. DU630, a shell midden of unknown period (BT).
12. DU16346, The Talbot Tip site, a multicomponent shell midden site encompassing the St. Johns period, located on the northern one-third of Big Talbot Island (BT).
13. DU90, The Houston Plantation, consists of the remains of foundations or walls of six tabby structures. As noted above, it is possible that shell from Du627 was used in making the Houston structures (BT).
14. DU631, Talbot I, a probable 18th- or 19th-century habitation site, based on recovery of ceramic sherds (BT).
15. DU1254 is a 19th/20th-century structure remnant (BT).
16. DU1548, the Chimney Site, likely to be a fallen sugar evaporator structure of the 19th and possibly the 18th century (BT) (Figure 12).
17. DU1549, the Houston Cemetery, located on private property adjacent to the park (BT).
18. DU16006, Dune Edge, a plantation site, is currently eroding into Nassau Sound. It is believed that this site is associated with the Christopher Plantation, a late 18th/early 19th-century plantation site on the northernmost part of Big Talbot Island (BT) (Figure 13).
19. DU16346, the Talbot Tip site, St. Johns and Second Spanish period (BT).

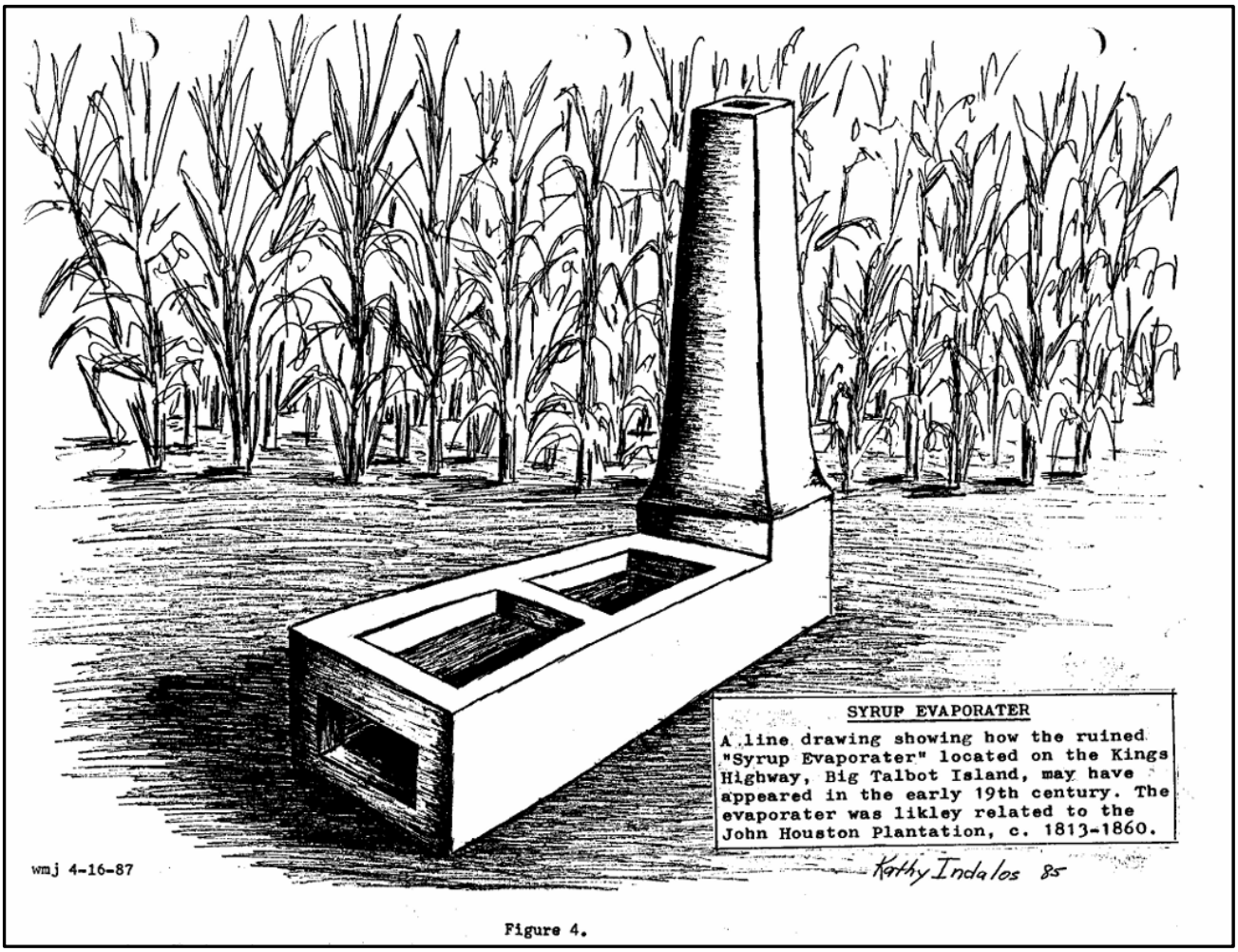

Figure 12. Sketch of the remains of a syrup evaporator from DU1548, the Chimney Site, likely part of the John Houston Plantation of the early to mid-19th c. (Jones 1988, fig. 4).

20. DU637, a shipwreck reported as occurring in a dune or underwater in Simpson's Creek, which separates Long Island from Big Talbot Island (BT).
21. DU3157, the remains of a wood-hulled ship which began washing out of the dunes in the 1980s (LT).
22. DU8030, The Bird Island Wreck site, a late 19th-century shipwreck site located near the Bird Islands in Nassau Sound.

Figure 13. Brick well casing associated with DU16006, Dune Edge, part of the late 18th-early 19th c Christopher Plantation, located in the far southern portion of Big Talbot Island. Upper depiction shows the feature in 2015 when it was first exposed due to coastal erosion. The lower image was taken in 2016 (after Ashley et al. 2018, photographs taken by William Stanton and Allison Conboy, respectively).

It should be noted that the majority of the prehistoric sites on Big and Little Talbot islands are not located in the interior of the islands where lowland, wet flat woods and scrubby flatwoods dominate (FDEP 2024a). This

environment was not appealing to prehistoric peoples of the region, who preferred upland, hardwood hammocks. Early historic farmers likewise preferred well drained soils and access to fresh water from creeks.

To the immediate west of Talbot Island is the National Park Service's Timucua Ecological and Historical Preserve, with approximately 200 prehistoric and historic archaeological resources. These sites represent almost every cultural period of the region: Archaic, Orange, Woodland, Mississippian, Protohistoric, Mission Period, First Spanish Period, British Period, Second Spanish Period, and 19th Century American to the present. Site types range from artifact scatters, village sites, shell middens, sand mounds, earthworks, and tabby ruins. The majority are St. Johns period and 18th and 19 century sites (USDOI, NPS 1996:79-86). This pattern is consistent for the northeast region as well as the environmental settings that support them.

Immediately to the north, on Amelia Island, close to 50 prehistoric archaeological are recorded that date from the pre-ceramic to the colonial era, represented primarily by St. Johns culture with influences from societies to the north. Most are identified as shell fields and mounds. There was also a Spanish colonial component where Timucuans resided together. Most of these sites are located on the northern portion of the property (Bullen and Griffin 1984). It would seem that the southern area bordering the Nassau Sound was too unstable, less protected from storms and currents, for sustainable residence, as was the area of the Sawpit Island. Moreover, the unconsolidated soils and associated coastal grass stands bordered by marsh on this tract (FDEP 2024a) would not be favorable for early human habitation.

Survey and Methodology

From June 23rd to July 1st, PCARG staff conducted fieldwork on Sawpit Island. The first step was to perform a thorough, systematic pedestrian survey for cultural remains in the APE, which included an intertidal zone that is submerged out to a depth of 3 feet. A systematic pedestrian survey on the neap low tide was conducted for any exposed cultural remains. This was followed by shovel testing, and soil probing and coring. Access to the site was by boat (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Jon boat used to reach Sawpit Island.

PCARG's shovel testing strategy followed the Division of Historical Resources, Module 3 guidelines for archaeological survey (Figures 15, 16). Testing of high probability areas were covered by 50 x 50-centimeter shovel tests at 25-meter intervals on a cartesian grid. The presence of a reported shell midden, 8DU8097, on the northeast facing beach defined the entire north portion of the APE as high probability. A 10% sample of low probability also was tested using Module 3 guidelines. The placement of these shovel tests was on the west (marsh) side of the old roadbed, dug at 50-meter intervals.

Figure 15. Shovel Test 3. This unit shows stratigraphy representative of the survey area. It also shows that the depth of the shovel tests were limited to 50 cm due to the high water table.

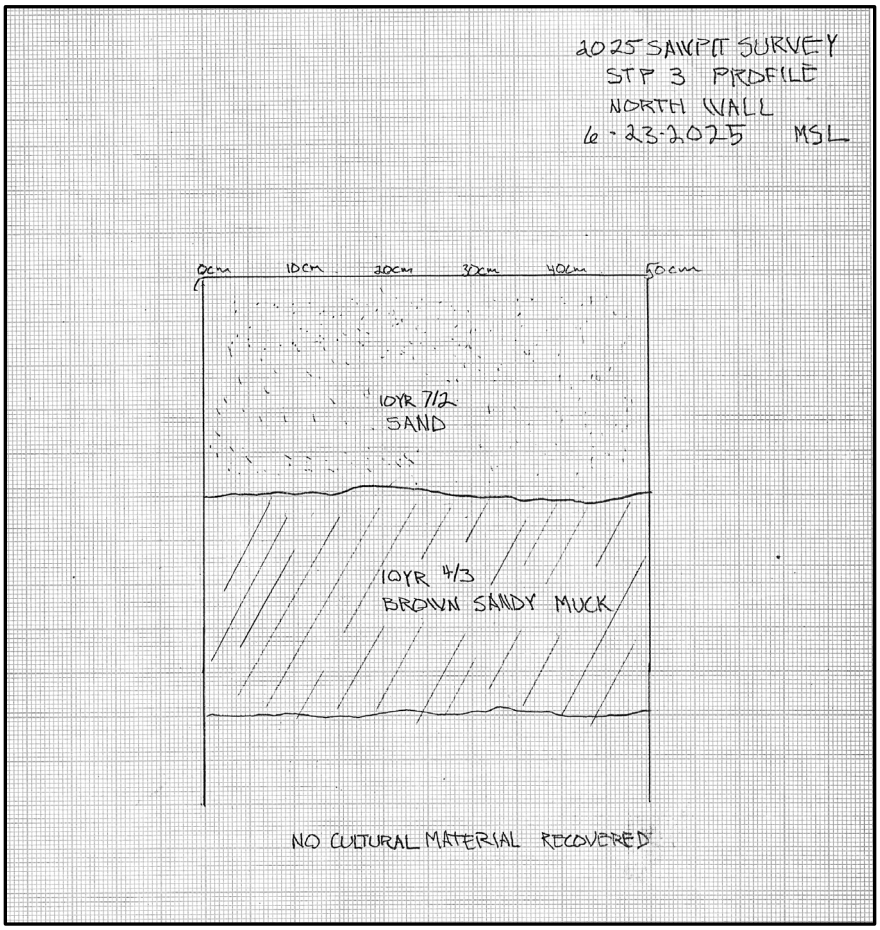

Figure 16. Profile sketch of Shovel Test 3 showing the two levels of natural stratigraphy that characterize the APE.

Soil from each shovel test was screened through ¼ inch hardware mesh. All shovel tests were recorded on shovel test field forms with the information required by the Division's Module 3 guidelines. A single transect of 50 x 50-centimeter shovel tests was dug at 25-meter intervals between the water and the marsh or areas deemed off limits due to shore bird nesting. The shovel tests were excavated stratigraphically to a depth of a meter or until water intrusion (usually around 50 cm). The shovel test locations and associated data were recorded using a Mesa 3 tablet with a 16 mp camera paired with a Geode GNSS antennae of sub 30 cm accuracy. The shovel test pits were recorded using ESRI's Field Maps software.

PCARG also probed for remains of shipwrecks and other solid historic features, such as lost aids to navigation, barges, etc., at 25-meter intervals using a 10-foot fiberglass push probe (Figure 17). In addition, 3-inch sediment cores were collected and analyzed for cultural material at 25 m intervals in areas of proposed detached breakwater features. The intertidal zone was systematically surveyed for any ferrous metal artifacts with a Mine Lab Excalibur II underwater metal detector.

A GIS site map was prepared showing the location of all shovel tests, probes, and cores (Figure 18).

Figure 17. Probing transect (upper) and physical probing (lower).

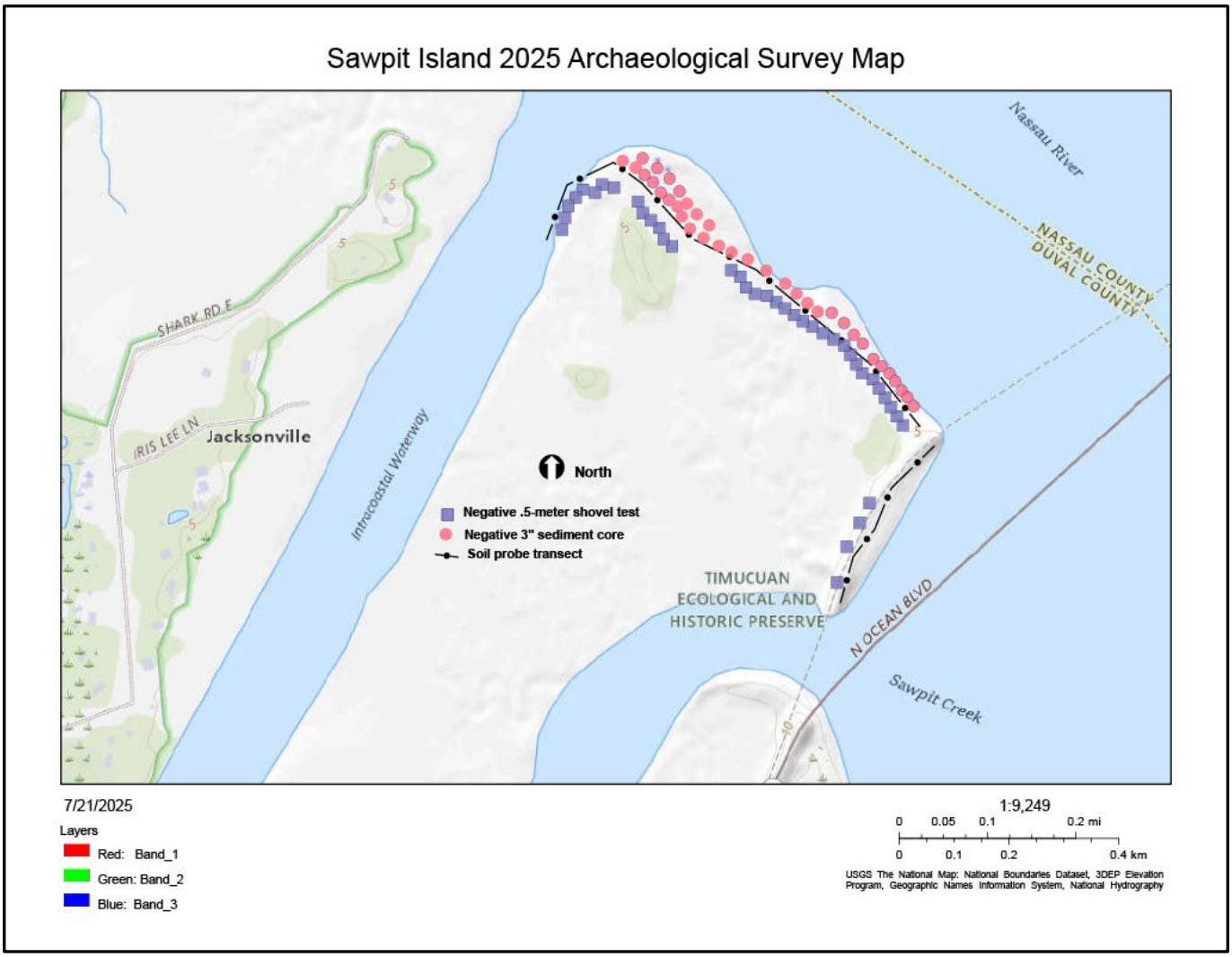

Figure 18. Sawpit Island 2025 archaeological survey map.

Results and Recommendations

45 shovel test, 80 probes, and 35 cores were sampled. No cultural material of any antiquity was recovered or discovered in any of our tests at Sawpit Island. DU8097 was determined to be a natural oyster bed of considerable age as is attested to by the size of oyster shell remains (Figure 19). Storm debris attests to the high energy active shoreline (Figure 20).

No further testing is necessary for the completion of this project.

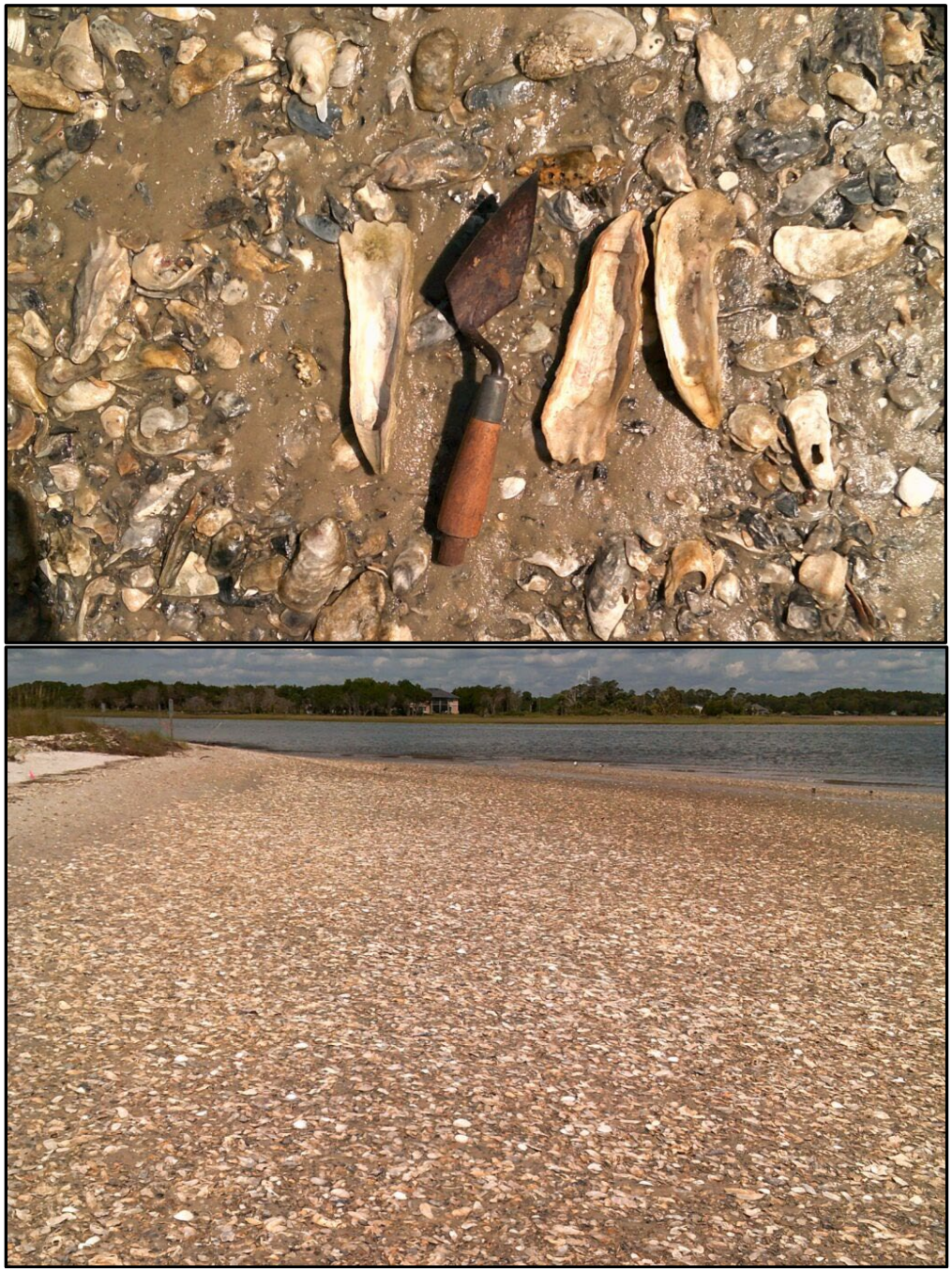

Figure 19. Exfoliating oyster shell from relict bar (upper) and relict bar (lower).

Figure 20. Shell hash/debris deposited by storms in APE.

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