

# **THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES REPORT**

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## **STENNIS AIRPORT SITE 10 2-ACRE PARCEL**

Hancock County, MS

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# **Executive Summary**

The Hancock County Port and Harbor Commission (HCPHC) requested a threatened and endangered species survey on a 2-acre +/- parcel, Stennis Airport Site 10, for potential future development of the site. The project is located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Fred and Al Key Road and John C Robinson Road 0.19 miles south of Texas Flat Road within the boundaries of Stennis International Airport in Hancock County, Mississippi.

Site plans have not been finalized. The survey includes 2 acres east of Fred and Al Key Road, south of John C Robinson Road. Commercial and industrial properties are located outside the property boundary along the two adjacent roadways as well as the Stennis airport facilities to the west.

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## **Chapter 1. Introduction:**

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The purpose of this survey is to examine the project area and to assess potential impacts under requirements of the United States Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, in accordance with the Endangered Species Act (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) and to satisfy the Mississippi Dept. of Wildlife Fisheries and Parks requirement for a threatened and endangered species (T&E) survey to be completed prior to any construction activities commencing. The survey included all areas that might be impacted by construction equipment and all areas that may be used for ingress and egress. This is the final report of the field survey conducted in October of 2024. Also included are site photographs taken during site reconnaissance for a wetland delineation conducted by Neel-Schaffer in May of 2024.

The project is located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Fred and Al Key Road and John C Robinson Road 0.19 miles south of Texas Flat Road within the boundaries of Stennis International Airport in Hancock County, Mississippi, Section 1 – Township 8S – Range 15W, at decimal degrees 30.379396N, -89.449633W, (16N 264607 3363372 UTM), Kiln Quadrangle. The project is 2 acres located adjacent to other commercial and industrial properties as well as Stennis International Airport. Plans for the site have not been finalized.

Soil type(s) as listed by the NRCS and Department of Agriculture on the site include Atmore silt loam, 0-2% slopes (At) and Beauregard silt loam (Be).

## **Chapter 2. Survey Methods and Species**

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The proposed site was reviewed on topographic maps, soils maps and aerial photographs for preliminary findings on the site. Literary study of features and habitats for all species listed in Hancock County was reviewed prior to the field survey being conducted. The preliminary review indicated the project area is an undeveloped property adjacent to other commercial and industrial properties and an airport. The surrounding area includes additional undeveloped properties, residential properties, and Hancock High School.

The field survey found the site has been cleared of vegetation. Additional site reconnaissance conducted in May by Neel-Schaffer observed the site contained a mix of pine and hardwoods. The boundaries of the site along the roadways included roadside drainage features and overhead power lines. There were no tributaries or streams within the boundaries of the site, and there were no areas of ponding. The absence of water resources indicate that the site would not provide suitable habitat for aquatic species or water-dependent species (West Indian Manatee, Alligator Snapping Turtle) listed in Hancock County. The absence of ponding on the site indicates there is no suitable habitat for the Dusky Gopher Frog. The site is not within a marsh area and would not provide suitable habitat for the Eastern Black Rail.

The site was reviewed for visible evidence or critical habitat for the following species listed in Hancock County:

PE – Tricolored Bat, *Perimyotis subflavus*

T – Black Pinesnake, *Pituophis melanoleucus lodingi*

E – Gopher tortoise, *Gopherus polyphemus*

C – Monarch Butterfly, *Danaus Plexippus*

E – Louisiana Quillwort, *Isoetes louisianensis*

## Site Description:

Terrain in the project area is relatively flat with roadside drainage features located along the roadways and driveways located along the property boundaries. The property has recently been cleared of vegetation, but it was previously dominated by mixed pines and hardwood species. There are no streams or tributaries within the property boundary. Water on the site drains into manmade ditches along the roadways which flow through culverts generally north to the Jourdan River (USGS HUC 03170009 MS Coastal: Bayou Talla-Jourdan River). The project is located in the Eastern Gulf Coast Flatwoods (152A) Major Land Resources Area portion of the Atlantic and Gulf Coast Lowland Forest and Crop Region (LRR T) as described by the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

## Species Surveys:

Tricolored Bat, *Perimyotis subflavus*

The proposed project area is a recently cleared, previously undeveloped partial within an existing industrial park adjacent to Stennis International Airport. Species observed prior to clearing included a mix of pines and hardwoods. There are no abandoned buildings within the property boundaries, and buildings on adjacent properties are currently in use. There are no caves or bridges located within the site boundaries. The limited size of the project and the high volume of vehicle and air traffic in the vicinity limit the possibility of presence for the species. During the survey, the species was not observed within the property boundaries or on surrounding properties.

Black Pinesnake, *Pituophis melanoleucus lodingi*

The Black Pinesnake is sometimes associated with Gopher Tortoise burrows which were not present on the site. The scope of this project did not provide suitable habitat for the species due to the small size of the property as well as the high traffic volume on the surrounding properties. The site has been recently cleared and does not provide downed vegetation which could potentially be used as shelter by the species. There are no wildlife corridors that would allow migration onto the site from undeveloped properties in the area. During the survey, the species was not observed and no indications of its presence were observed.

Gopher tortoise *Gopherus polyphemus*

The preliminary review of the site for the Gopher Tortoise indicated the project is located in an undeveloped parcel surrounded by commercial and industrial properties and an airport. The area within the property has been cleared of vegetation. The soil types in the survey area included Atmore silt loam and Beauregard silt loam which are not considered priority, suitable, or marginal soil types for the species. The field survey was conducted in October and the entire project area was surveyed. The survey found no areas of suitable habitat within the property boundaries. During the survey, no active, inactive, or abandoned tortoise burrows were located.

Monarch Butterfly, *Danaus plexippus*

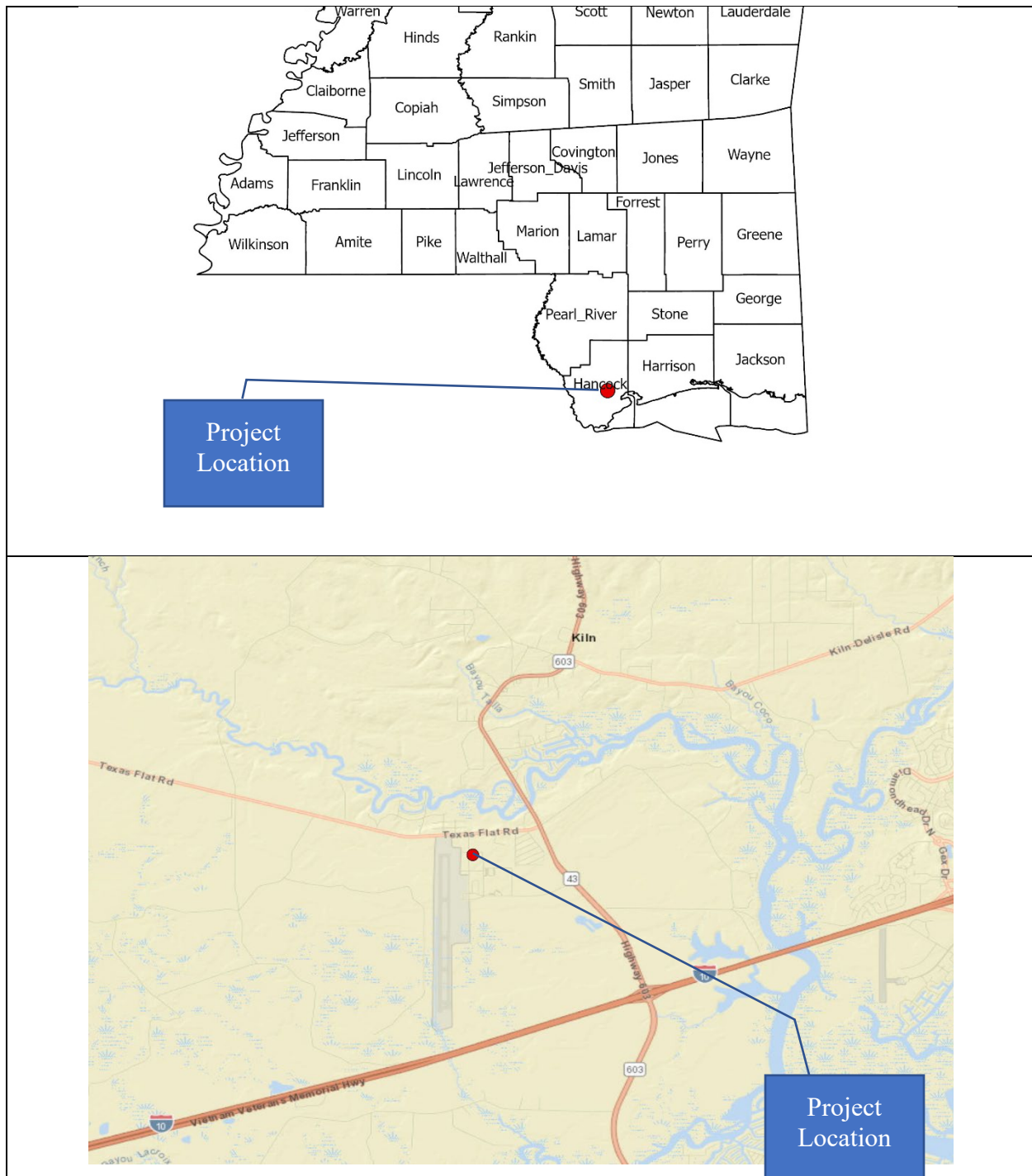
The survey was conducted during the fall. The property was recently cleared of vegetation. Additional site reconnaissance conducted by Neel-Schaffer in May indicated the site was mixed pine and hardwoods within the property boundary. The areas along the roadways and adjacent commercial properties are mowed and maintained by Hancock County and the respective property owners. Some herbaceous species are present along the eastern boundary the property boundary and the adjacent property. The survey included a review for milkweed, but during the survey no milkweed plants were observed in the area. During the review period, the species was not observed.

### **Chapter 3. Summary and Recommendations**

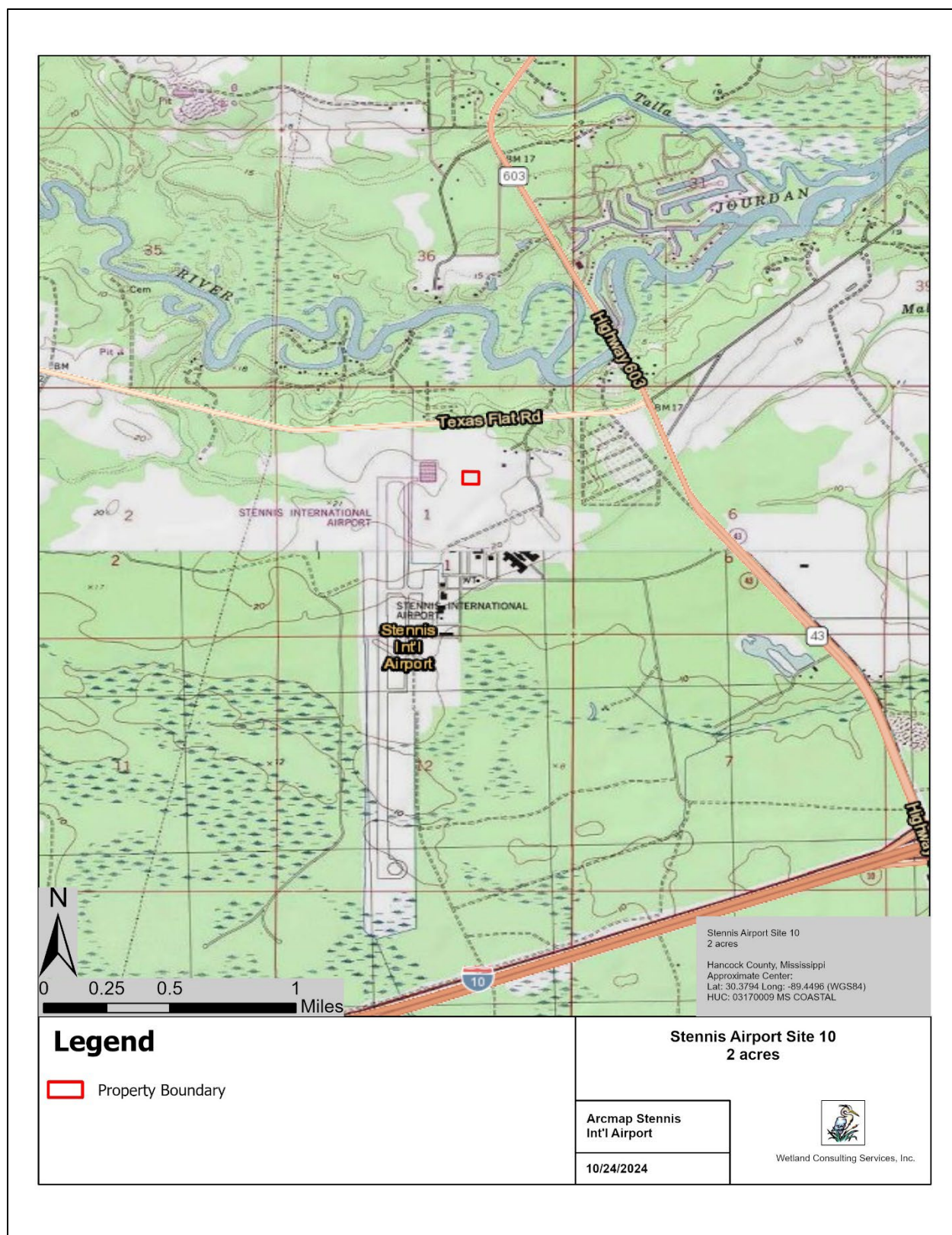
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Site conditions at this project enabled a visual survey of the property to be conducted as well as visual observance of adjoining properties for the listed species. During the course of this survey, gopher tortoise burrows were not present, and habitat for other species listed in Hancock County was minimal or non-existent within the survey area.

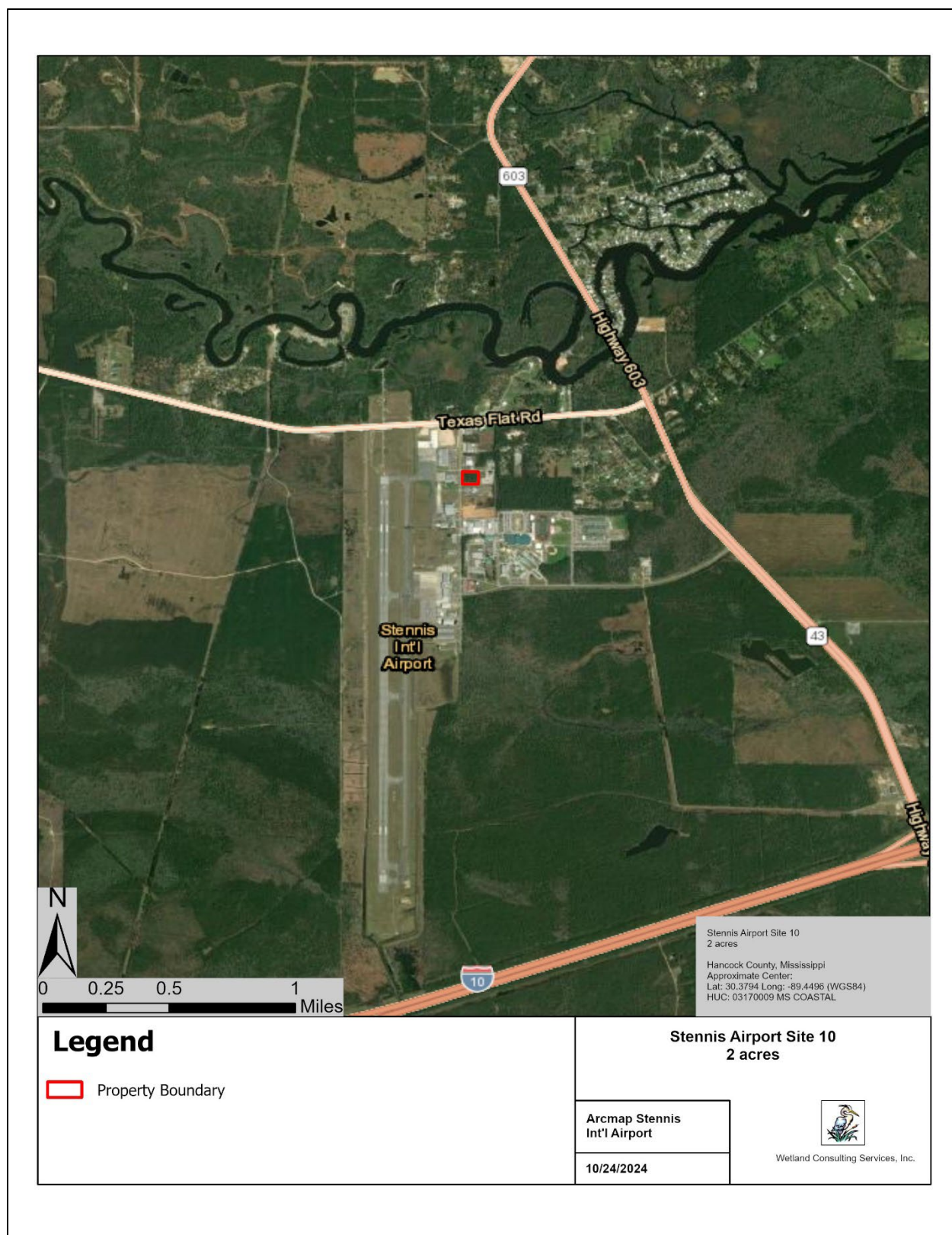
It is the recommendation of Wetland Consulting Services, Inc. that this project be approved with a condition that if any activities related to this project discover a listed species, Wetland Consulting Services, Inc., and/or the US Fish and Wildlife Service are notified and construction activities in that area be postponed until an additional review can be completed.



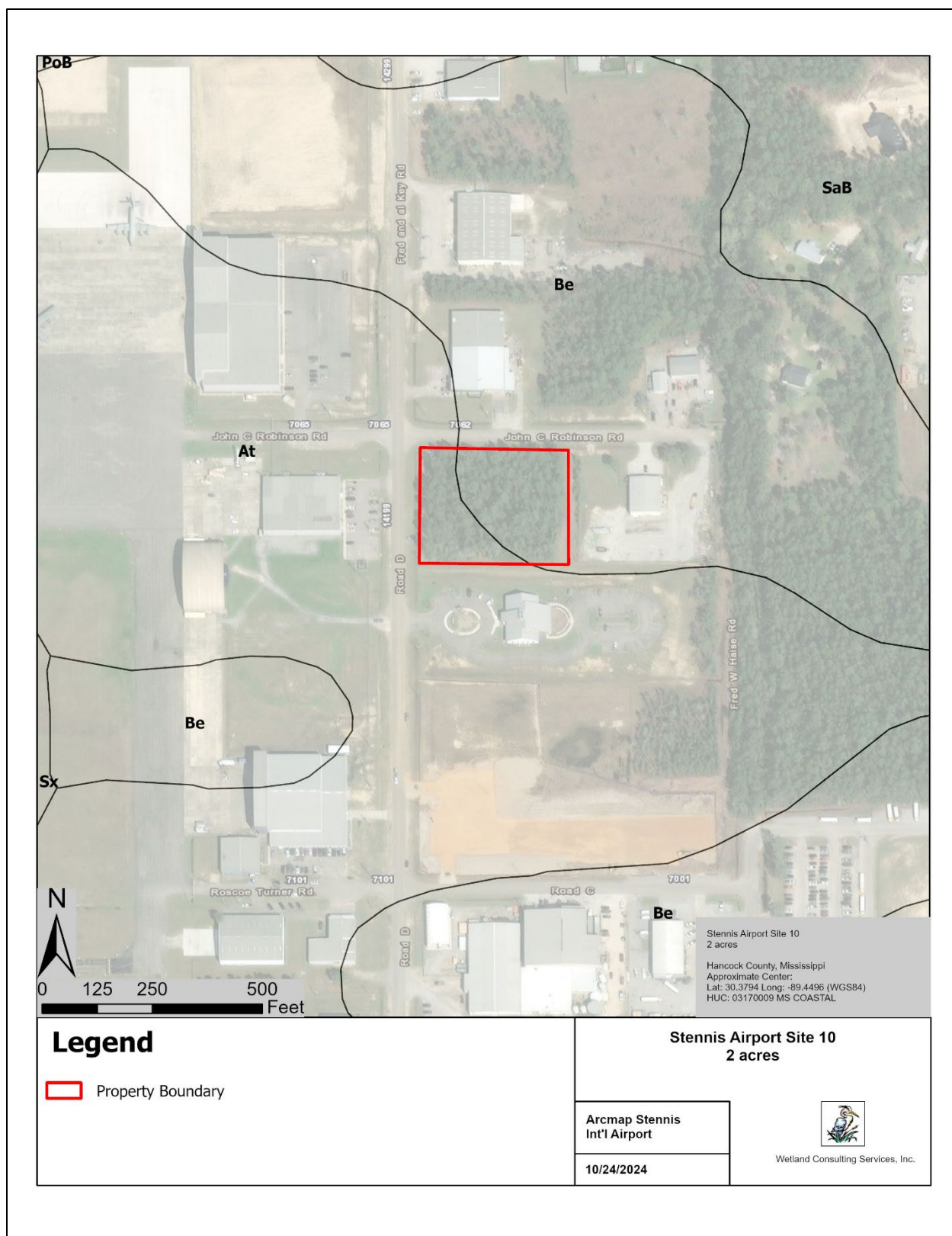
**Figure 1.** State and County Maps.



**Figure 2.** USGS Topographic Map for project area



**Figure 3.** Aerial Map for project area.



**Figure 4: Soil Map**

## Soil Index Information

Soil Map—Hancock County, Mississippi

### Map Unit Legend

| Map Unit Symbol                    | Map Unit Name                                           | Acres in AOI   | Percent of AOI |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| At                                 | Atmore silt loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes                 | 2,471.7        | 24.9%          |
| Be                                 | Beauregard silt loam                                    | 465.1          | 4.7%           |
| Bg                                 | Bigbee-Bibb complex, frequently flooded                 | 299.4          | 3.0%           |
| EsA                                | Escambia loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes                    | 949.7          | 9.6%           |
| EsB                                | Escambia loam, 2 to 5 percent slopes                    | 68.2           | 0.7%           |
| Gu                                 | Guyton silt loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes, rarely flooded | 1,384.9        | 14.0%          |
| HA                                 | Handsboro association                                   | 287.7          | 2.9%           |
| HIA                                | Harleston fine sandy loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes        | 899.5          | 9.1%           |
| HIB                                | Harleston fine sandy loam, 2 to 5 percent slopes        | 204.1          | 2.1%           |
| Pe                                 | Plummer loamy sand                                      | 221.9          | 2.2%           |
| PoA                                | Poarch fine sandy loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes           | 270.1          | 2.7%           |
| PoB                                | Poarch fine sandy loam, 2 to 5 percent slopes           | 303.0          | 3.1%           |
| PoC                                | Poarch fine sandy loam, 5 to 8 percent slopes           | 36.8           | 0.4%           |
| SaA                                | Saucier fine sandy loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes          | 286.9          | 2.9%           |
| SaB                                | Saucier fine sandy loam, 2 to 5 percent slopes          | 138.9          | 1.4%           |
| SaD                                | Saucier fine sandy loam, 8 to 12 percent slopes         | 41.7           | 0.4%           |
| ScD                                | Saucier-Susquehanna complex, 5 to 12 percent slopes     | 0.5            | 0.0%           |
| St                                 | Smithton fine sandy loam                                | 553.7          | 5.6%           |
| Su                                 | Smithton fine sandy loam, frequently flooded            | 447.3          | 4.5%           |
| Sx                                 | Sulfaquepts                                             | 399.9          | 4.0%           |
| W                                  | Water                                                   | 190.4          | 1.9%           |
| <b>Totals for Area of Interest</b> |                                                         | <b>9,921.8</b> | <b>100.0%</b>  |

## Appendix A: Photographs

| Photo 1                                                                             |                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |                                                                                 |
| <b>Description</b>                                                                  | Northern boundary at John C Robinson Road facing southwest (airport facilities) |

| Photo 2                                                                             |                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
|  |                                     |
| <b>Description</b>                                                                  | Center of property facing southeast |

| Photo 3                                                                             |                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |                                                                                |
| <b>Description</b>                                                                  | Western boundary near northwest corner facing north (roadside ditches present) |

| Photo 4                                                                             |                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
|  |                                                      |
| <b>Description</b>                                                                  | Western boundary facing south along Fred and Al Road |

May 2024 Reconnaissance Photos – Courtesy of Neel-Schaffer





Note Page: