



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
10117 PRINCESS PALM AVENUE, SUITE 120  
TAMPA, FLORIDA 33610

November 28, 2011

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF

Tampa Permits Section

***PUBLIC NOTICE***

Permit Application No. SAJ-2011-00551(IP-TEH)

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: This district has received an application for a Department of the Army permit pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. §1344) as described below:

APPLICANTS: Pasco County Board of County Commissioners  
7530 Little Road, Suite 320  
New Port Richey, Florida 34654

Florida Department of Transportation  
Florida's Turnpike Enterprise  
Post Office Box 613069  
Ocoee, Florida 34761

WATERWAY & LOCATION: The project commences at the intersection of Ridge Road and Decubellis/Moon Lake Road (CR-587) and ends at the intersection of Land O'Lakes Boulevard (US-41) and Connerton Boulevard in Pasco County, Florida, Sections 25-29, 32, and 33 of Township 25 South and Range 17 East and Sections 21, 22, and 27-30 of Township 25 South and Range 18 East. The project is located within the Pithlachascotee and Anclote River watersheds. The western portion of the project traverses the Serenova Tract of the Starkey Wilderness Preserve (see attached Sheet 29).

Directions to the site are as follows: From the intersection of US-19 and Ridge Road in Port Richey, the start of the project can be reached by traveling east on the existing Ridge Road for approximately 6 miles to its terminus at Decubellis/Moon Lake Road. From the intersection of SR-54 and Land O'Lakes Boulevard, the end of the project can be reached by travelling north on Land O'Lakes Boulevard for approximately 7.5 miles to its intersection with Connerton Boulevard.

LATITUDE & LONGITUDE:

Start: Latitude 28.273340 North  
Longitude 82.625251 West

End: Latitude 28.288769 North  
Longitude 82.488336 West

## PROJECT PURPOSE:

Basic: To construct a roadway.

Overall: To improve east-west roadway capacity between US-19 and US-41 and enhance overall mobility in both west and central Pasco County in accordance with the County's current Comprehensive Plan and the Metropolitan Planning Organization's Long Range Transportation Plan. The project will also provide additional roadway capacity and improved routing away from coastal hazard areas and improve hurricane evacuation clearance times in the event of a hurricane or other major weather-related occurrence in accordance with State of Florida requirements and the County's current Comprehensive Plan.

PROPOSED WORK: The applicants propose to construct a project known as "Ridge Road Extension." A public notice for this project was previously published in 2000 under file number SAJ-1998-02682 (the project file number has been changed to SAJ-2011-00551 (IP-TEH)). The alignment of the proposed roadway remains unchanged from that featured in the 2000 public notice. However, project impacts have been minimized since that time, as described in the "Avoidance and Minimization Information" section below.

The project includes the extension of the existing Ridge Road from its current terminus at Decubellis/Moon Lake Road east to US-41. The project is proposed to be constructed in 2 phases. Phase I, located west of the Suncoast Parkway, consists of a 4-lane divided roadway, approximately 4.21 miles in length. Phase II will be located east of the Suncoast Parkway and is proposed to be approximately 3.44 miles in length. Phase II is proposed as a 4-lane divided roadway, but Pasco County plans to construct only 2 lanes as part of the initial construction. The proposed route intersects the Suncoast Parkway approximately 3.2 miles south of SR-52 where a 4-ramp interchange is proposed for construction by Florida's Turnpike Enterprise (FTE), a division of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). Associated work proposed by FTE in the vicinity of the proposed interchange includes the construction of stormwater management ponds, toll booths, and approximately 1 mile of Ridge Road within the limits of the interchange access right-of-way.

A total of seven points of access are proposed. Within Phase I, the applicants propose to construct an access point at Station 33+74 (southern access only), connecting to the existing Town Center Road to serve existing, adjacent residential development. Three other access points are proposed within Phase I to serve planned adjacent development at Stations 44+00 (northern access only), 69+50 (northern and southern access), and 89+00 (northern and southern access). No access points are proposed within the Serenova Tract. A full-access interchange is proposed at the existing Suncoast Parkway. Within Phase II, an access point is proposed at Station 296+50 to serve a parcel designated as mixed-use under Pasco County's Comprehensive Plan. This mixed-use parcel would be bisected by the proposed roadway. A second access point within Phase II is proposed at Station 420+00 to provide a connection for the future Asbel Road, a north-south connector road to serve existing residential development west of US-41.

The proposed project, including Phases I and II of Ridge Road as well as the interchange with the Suncoast Parkway, requires impacts to 59.41 acres of aquatic resources as follows:

<b>Wetland Type</b>	<b>Perm Impact (ac)</b>	<b>Temp Impact (ac)</b>	<b>Total Impact (ac)</b>
Cypress	15.52	0.26	15.78
Cypress/Bay	2.23	0.07	2.30
Cypress/Marsh	0.51	0.02	0.53
Cypress/Slash Pine	2.86	0.53	3.39
Slash Pine	5.18	0.18	5.36
Bottomland Hardwood	2.94	1.14	4.08
Pine Flatwood / Marsh	1.87	0.05	1.92
Mixed Forest	3.09	0	3.09
Hardwood Forest	0.20	0	0.20
Wetland Scrub	6.97	0.03	7.00
Shrub/Brushland	2.26	0	2.26
Shrub/Brushland/Wetland Scrub	0.21	0	0.21
Willow/Marsh	0	0.03	0.03
Freshwater Marsh	2.44	0.06	2.5
Wet Prairie	10.20	0.41	10.61
Borrow Area	0.15	0	0.15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56.63</b>	<b>2.78</b>	<b>59.41</b>

Of the 59.41 acres of impact proposed, Pasco County proposes 47.59 acres to construct Phases I and II of the roadway and the FTE proposes 11.82 acres to construct the Suncoast Parkway interchange.

**AVOIDANCE AND MINIMIZATION INFORMATION:** The applicant has provided the following information in support of efforts to avoid and/or minimize impacts to the aquatic environment:

**Avoidance and Minimization Measures Proposed at the time of the 2000 Public Notice:**  
 In July 1997, Pasco County performed a wetland and habitat impact assessment on 5 alternative alignments to evaluate wetland impact minimization. In September 1997, Pasco County conducted a more extensive Route Study, analyzing 7 alternative alignments for the proposed roadway as well as a “no build” alternative. The alternatives were evaluated based on long-range planning factors, public safety, environmental impacts, property impacts, and cost. In 1998, Pasco County assessed potential impacts of alternative alignments on plant and animal species

protected under state and/or federal law. The 2000 public notice featured the following avoidance and minimization measures which are still featured in the project design:

- Bridging the entire wetland limits of the Pithlachascotee River with an 845-foot long bridge, rather than the 520 feet required to pass river flows.
- Use of the minimum recommended widths for the sidewalk (5') and shared-use path (12') per the Florida Bicycle Facilities Planning and Design Handbook and the FDOT Plans Preparation Manual.
- Limiting the proposed 5-foot wide sidewalk to the north side of Phase I, outside the limits of the Serenova Tract.
- Limiting the 12-foot wide multi-use trail to the south side of Phase I.
- Incorporation of seven wildlife crossings in the roadway design.

Avoidance and Minimization Measures Adopted After The 2000 Public Notice:

The applicants submitted an alternatives analysis to the Corps in September 2001. This analysis has been updated by the applicants as part of the current application. The applicants evaluated the following 12 alternatives (see attached Sheet 30 for a map of these alternatives):

	Description of Alternative	Wetland Impact (ac)*
1	“No-build”	0
2	Widen SR-52 from 6 to 10 lanes (at grade)	1.8
3	Widen SR-52 from 6 to 10 lanes (6 lanes at grade and 4 elevated)	0.3
4	Widen SR-54 from 6 to 8 lanes (at grade) and widen Tower Road from 4 to 6 lanes (at grade)	55
5	Widen SR-52 from 6 to 8 lanes (at grade) and widen SR-54 from 6 to 8 lanes (at grade)	0.2
6	New 4-lane road alignment “6A”	35
7	New 4-lane road alignment “6B”	29
8	New 4-lane road alignment “6C”	30.2
9	New 4-lane road alignment “6D”	31.5
10	New 4-lane road alignment “6E”	34.2
11	New 4-lane road alignment “6F”	38.4
12	New 4-lane road alignment “6G”	35.4

\*Acreages represent the approximate amount of aquatic resources that would be filled or excavated as a result of implementing the alternative. Acreages were computed for all alternatives by the applicants using the Florida Land Use, Cover and Forms Classification System so that all alternatives would be comparable. Acreages do not include the interchange work proposed by the FTE.

The alternatives that entail construction of a new road (Alternatives 6A-6G) all begin at the eastern terminus of the existing Ridge Road and end at the intersection of US-41 and Connerton Boulevard. The alternatives were evaluated with respect to community impacts (neighborhoods, homes, businesses, utilities, agriculture land, and archeological/historic sites); environmental impacts (wetlands, wildlife, floodplains, air quality, and water quality); travel characteristics (length of the alternative and network continuity); safety (motorized vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, and hurricane evacuation); estimated costs of construction and right-of-way; and the availability of funding to construct the alternative. The applicants determined that their preferred alternative, Alternative 6G, as presented in the attached drawings, represents the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative. The “no build” alternative, Alternative 1, was deemed impracticable because it did not meet the project purpose. Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5

involving the expansion of SR-52, SR-54, and Tower Road were deemed impracticable because the projected costs of these alternatives exceed available funding. Of the alternatives requiring construction of a new road, Alternatives 6A, 6B, and 6C would not align with the existing Suncoast Parkway underpass and were therefore deemed impracticable by the applicants since they would not provide network continuity, optimal traffic distribution, or improved hurricane evacuation. Alternative 6G was selected in lieu of Alternatives 6D, 6E, and 6F because 1) it meets the project purpose by providing the number of lanes needed to help meet the adopted Level of Service on the east-west roadways from US-19 to US-41, 2) it improves hurricane evacuation for the coastal population by providing adequate traffic capacity and an additional route to disperse traffic away from vulnerable areas, 3) it is the shortest and the least expensive alternative, and 4) it has adequate earmarked funding.

**Note: A full copy of the updated alternatives analysis is available at [www.saj.usace.army.mil/Divisions/Regulatory/interest.htm](http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Divisions/Regulatory/interest.htm) under the “Ridge Road Extension” header. Alternatively, you may request that a hardcopy or disk be mailed to you using the contact information for Tracy Hurst at the end of this notice.**

The preferred alignment of the proposed roadway remains unchanged from that advertised in the 2000 public notice. The 2000 public notice featured 69.31 acres of proposed wetland impacts. The updated application includes 59.41 acres of proposed wetland impacts, a reduction of 9.9 acres. Approximately 2.55 acres of previously proposed wetland impact have been removed from the project because they are now included as impacted wetlands within a FDOT widening project along US-41, authorized by Corps permit SAJ-2008-00329. Disregarding the 2.55 acres that have been removed from the project, the avoidance and minimization efforts of the applicants since the 2000 public notice have resulted in a 7.35-acre reduction in proposed wetland impacts.

Within Phase I of the project, the majority of the wetland impact reductions that have occurred since the 2000 public notice are the result of the following major changes to the typical roadway section within the limits of Serenova Tract at Wetland Areas W11, W12, and W13: 1) Reduction in median width from 64' to 40'; 2) movement of the multi-use trail closer to the roadway on the south side of the proposed road; and 3) use of a vertical retaining wall adjacent to the trail on the south side of the proposed road. The proposed roadway extends approximately 13,800 linear feet through the Serenova Tract. Since the 2000 public notice, the applicants have narrowed the median widths over approximately 7,007 linear feet within the Serenova Tract. The median width was reduced from 64' to 40' for a distance of 4,238 linear feet (Station 149+84 - Station 192+22). The median width has also been reduced along 2,769 linear feet of transitional zones (Stations 139+37 - 149+84 and Stations 192+22 - 209+44) that now have widths ranging from 40' to 64'. A retaining wall was added at Wetland Area W16 to reduce the area of wetland fill. The limits of construction at the Pithlachascotee River bridge at Wetland Area W10 were

narrowed from the right-of-way lines to the minimum needed to support construction activities. The current proposal also features the following additional measures to reduce the project footprint within the limits of the Serenova Tract in Phase I:

- Steepening roadway slopes from 1:4 to 1:2 on both sides of the roadway.
- Utilizing a shoulder gutter with inlets and storm sewer system for runoff in lieu of an open swale drainage system in locations where the roadway traverses wetlands.
- Steepening the front slopes within the clear recovery area from 1:6 to 1:4 (the maximum allowable) in locations where the roadway traverses wetlands.

Within Phase II of the project, the majority of the wetland impact reductions that have occurred since the 2000 public notice are the result of a change in the typical roadway section at Wetland Areas W28, W30, and W42, which utilizes shoulder gutters rather than roadside ditches to collect and convey storm water runoff. The proposed roadway extends approximately 18,181 linear feet through Phase II of the project. Since the 2000 public notice, the applicants have reduced the median width from 64' to 40' from approximately Station 303+28 to Station 468+09 (approximately 16,481 linear feet). A retaining wall was added at Wetland Areas W33 and W35 to reduce the area of wetland fill. Also, the slope of the maintenance berm on high fill slopes was increased at Wetland Areas W39 and W40.

The 2000 public notice featured 7 wildlife crossing locations. The current application features 9 wildlife crossing locations.

Both Phases I and II have been designed as limited-access facilities. Since the 2000 public notice, an access point within Phase II has been deleted in an area where an adjacent property owner holds an easement (Station 354+03 – Station 355+38). Instead of an access point, this area will be bridged.

Regarding the proposed interchange with the existing Suncoast Parkway, the applicants state that the alignment of the proposed roadway through the interchange is set by the location of the existing bridge on the Suncoast Parkway. Avoidance and minimization measures employed at the proposed interchange location include use of 2:1 side slopes and limiting clearing and grubbing activities to areas necessary for construction.

COMPENSATORY MITIGATION: The 2000 public notice featured a compensatory mitigation plan that included 1) hydrological enhancement of wetlands, exotic/nuisance vegetation control, and reforestation of cleared pastures and cypress domes within the 1,308-acre Anclote River Ranch Tract of the Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Preserve (see Sheet 29) and 2) transfer of the ownership of the previous Ridge Road right-of-way (approximately 205 acres) within the Serenova Tract to the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD).

In the current application, the applicants have proposed the following compensatory mitigation plans to offset unavoidable functional loss to the aquatic environment:

The mitigation plan presented by Pasco County to offset unavoidable impacts to 47.59 acres of aquatic resources associated with Phases I and II of the proposed roadway includes preservation of the River Ridge site coupled with the preservation of the 4G Ranch Critical Linkage Corridor, the Crockett Lake site, or the Starkey Ranch site. These areas are depicted on attached Sheets 31-35.

River Ridge Site Preservation (220.84 acres)

The River Ridge site consists of two areas that lie between the Starkey Wilderness Preserve to the south and the River Ridge subdivision to the north, within the floodplain of the Pithlachascotee River near the western end of the proposed Ridge Road Extension. These areas consist of 216.05 acres of mature floodplain wetland forest and 4.79 acres of pine flatwoods. No management of these areas is proposed since they are inaccessible and in excellent condition; however, Pasco County anticipates the need for minor maintenance for exotic plant species control. Pasco County currently owns these areas and proposes to grant a conservation easement in favor of the SWFWMD. The SWFWMD has agreed to accept maintenance of the areas.

4G Ranch Critical Linkage Corridor Preservation (830.93 acres)

The 1,300-acre 4G Ranch is a privately-owned cattle ranch that is also used by the landowner for hunting and fishing. The ranch is located north of SR-52 and east of US-41 in Land O' Lakes, Pasco County, Florida. The applicant proposes to preserve an 830.93-acre portion of the ranch, forming a roughly 2.5-mile north-south linear corridor along the eastern boundary of the ranch. The 4G Ranch is bordered by a privately-owned ranch on the east and residential lands on the west. To the north lies Cross Bar / Al Bar Ranch, which encompasses over 12,000 acres and is owned by Pinellas County. Cross Bar / Al Bar Ranch supports a wellfield managed by Tampa Bay Water. To the south lies the 2,980-acre Conner Preserve, owned and managed by the SWFWMD. The 830.93 acres proposed for preservation would provide a linkage between the public lands of Cross Bar / Al Bar Ranch and Conner Preserve. A linkage between Cross Bar / Al Bar Ranch and Conner Preserve was identified as one of seven critical wildlife linkages within Pasco County in a 2002 report published by Glatting Jackson, Inc., titled "Assessment of Measures to Protect Wildlife Habitat in Pasco County." The area to be preserved includes approximately 359.14 acres of aquatic resources, including wet prairie (157.08 ac), freshwater marsh (148.08 ac), cypress wetland (52.88 ac), reservoir (0.9 ac), and mixed forest wetland (0.2 ac). The remaining 471.79 acres consists of uplands, including cropland (220.72 ac), shrub and brushland (167.84 ac), open land (62.67 ac), hardwood-conifer mixed forest (12.16 ac), and tree plantation (8.4 ac). Pasco County proposes to purchase the 830.93-acre corridor and grant a conservation easement in favor of the SWFWMD. The Environmental Land Division of Pasco County will assume the management and maintenance responsibilities of the mitigation site. Pasco County proposes to develop a management plan for this mitigation site.

Crockett Lake Preservation (518.34 acres)

The Crockett Lake site is located immediately north of the proposed Ridge Road Extension and immediately east of Moon Lake Road. The proposed mitigation site is bordered by residential areas to the north and by the Serenova Tract of Starkey Wilderness Preserve to the east. The

518.34-acre site contains approximately 195.83 acres of aquatic resources, including bottomland hardwood forest (122.16 ac), cypress (32.89 ac), freshwater marsh (28.48 ac), emergent wetland (12 ac), and wet prairie (0.3 ac). The remaining 322.51 acres of uplands consist of pine flatwood (158.13 ac), cropland (89.97 ac), longleaf pine – xeric oak (36.9 ac), tree plantation (34.56 ac), and residential area (2.95 ac). Pasco County does not currently own this mitigation area. Pasco County proposes to preserve the parcel through a conservation easement in favor of the SWFWMD. The Environmental Land Division of Pasco County will assume the management and maintenance responsibilities of the mitigation site. Pasco County proposes to develop a management plan for this mitigation site.

#### Starkey Ranch Preservation (881 acres)

The 2,530-acre Starkey Ranch is a privately-owned cattle ranch in Pasco County. The ranch is located north of SR-54, primarily between the intersections of SR-54 and Starkey Boulevard and SR-54 and Gunn Highway. The Anclote River and its South Branch form the northern and eastern boundaries of the ranch. The applicant proposes to preserve an 881-acre portion of the ranch that directly abuts the Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park and Anclote River Ranch Tracts of the Starkey Wilderness Preserve to the north. The 881-acre site contains approximately 297.33 acres of aquatic resources, including bottomland hardwood forest (41.87 ac), cypress (220.6 ac), reservoir (15.59 ac), coniferous wetland forest (7.15 ac), freshwater marsh (6.37 ac), bay swamp (3.59 ac), wet prairie (1.47 ac), and mixed forest wetland (0.69 ac). The remaining 583.67 acres of uplands consist of pine flatwood (406.33 ac), cropland (145.05 ac), and hardwood-conifer mixed forest (32.29 ac). Pasco County does not currently own this mitigation area. Pasco County proposes to preserve the site through a conservation easement in favor of the SWFWMD. The Environmental Land Division of Pasco County will assume the management and maintenance responsibilities of the mitigation site. Pasco County anticipates minimal management needs with the exception of a prescribed burns and control of exotic species. Pasco County proposes to develop a management plan for this mitigation site.

The compensatory mitigation plan presented by the FTE includes a suite of options that the FTE believes will offset the proposed impacts to 11.85 acres of aquatic resources associated with the Suncoast Parkway interchange. The three options presented include:

#### Cone Borrow Pit Property

The FTE currently owns 86.41 acres adjacent to the west side of the Suncoast Parkway, extending both to the north and south of the proposed Ridge Road Extension roadway alignment (see attached Sheet 36). The 86.41 acres consist of 64.61 acres of borrow ponds and 21.8 acres of rangeland. The FTE proposes to deed the 86.41 acres to the SWFWMD to be incorporated into the adjacent Serenova Tract.

#### Excess Mitigation Credit from Suncoast Parkway

Compensatory mitigation for the Suncoast Parkway (authorized in 1997 under Corps permit No. SAJ-1996-4305 and SWFWMD Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) No. 4315724.00) included the preservation the Serenova Tract and Anclote River Ranch Tract, encompassing approximately 10,168 acres. These tracts were purchased by FDOT and conveyed to SWFWMD. In combination with the Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park, the Serenova Tract and Anclote River Ranch Tract form the 18,000-acre Starkey Wilderness Preserve (see attached



Sheet 29). The SWFWMD manages the Serenova Tract and Anclote River Ranch Tract for passive nature-based outdoor recreation. The Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park is a regional park managed by Pasco County. The FTE performed a functional assessment of wetland losses and gains and determined that the approved compensatory mitigation for the Suncoast Parkway, described above, provided a surplus of wetland functional gain or mitigation credit. The FTE proposes use of this excess mitigation credit from the Suncoast Parkway project to mitigate impacts associated with the interchange for the Ridge Road Extension.

Purchase of Mitigation Credits from the Conner Tract

The FTE proposes to contribute \$239,894.50 to the SWFWMD for mitigation credit under the FDOT regional mitigation program authorized by Chapter 373.4137 Florida Statutes. The FTE proposes these monies fund mitigation efforts at the Conner Preserve (see attached Sheet 31).

**Note: Full copies of the proposed mitigation plans are available at [www.saj.usace.army.mil/Divisions/Regulatory/interest.htm](http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Divisions/Regulatory/interest.htm) under the “Ridge Road Extension” header. Alternatively, you may request that a hardcopy or disk be mailed to you using the contact information for Tracy Hurst at the end of this notice.**

EXISTING CONDITIONS: The proposed road alignment is located approximately mid-way between SR-54 and SR-52 in Pasco County. The proposed alignment traverses large, undeveloped tracts of land (see attached Sheet 1). The western portion of the project would bisect the Serenova Tract of the Starkey Wilderness Preserve (see attached Sheet 29). Property within the nine-mile span between these two roads consists of mixed flatwoods communities; bottomland hardwood forests; two riverine systems; existing cow pasture and slash pine plantations; and freshwater cypress and herbaceous wetland systems. The most pristine feature within the proposed project area is the Pithlachascotee River, which flows from the northeast to the southwest through the Serenova Tract. The proposed road alignment also requires crossing the Cross Cypress Branch of the Anclote River and another unnamed tributary of the Anclote River.

The wetlands are in relatively undisturbed condition within the Phase I area. The most obvious disturbance to wetlands in the area comes from a power-line easement, which bisects Phase I into two unequal sections. Cattle grazing occurs within many portions of the Phase I area, which adversely affects the wetland systems. Large tracts of native uplands have been converted to improved pasture, which results in the loss of natural upland buffers around the remaining wetlands. Large coniferous and hardwood wetland systems abound in Phase I. Native uplands are plentiful, with the most prevalent being pine flatwoods, xeric oak sandhills, and palmetto prairie.

Phase II of the proposed alignment traverses lands that have been notably altered by agricultural activities. The majority of the native uplands in Phase II have been replaced by improved pasture and pine plantations. There are some relatively undisturbed upland areas in Phase II (primarily mixed pine-oak flatwoods) that are interspersed throughout the wetlands. Connected sloughs and isolated cypress dome systems provide the majority of the wetland habitat in Phase II. Wetlands are numerous and include bottomland sloughs and strands, isolated cypress domes,

marshes and wet prairies. Most of the natural habitat occurs in the western reaches of Phase II. The eastern portion of Phase II is slightly more developed and consists of more residential dwellings and improved pasture than the western end of the phase.

#### ENDANGERED SPECIES:

Wildlife surveys for federally protected species that may potentially occupy the project area were initially conducted by the applicant in 1996-1998. As a result of these surveys, a territory was delineated for a single Florida scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens coerulescens*) family, consisting of two adults occupying pasture habitat. The delineated territory was at the eastern end of Phase I, immediately south of the proposed alignment. Scrub-jay surveys conducted by the applicant during 2000-2001 did not reveal any sightings of this species. Between August 2004 and January 2005, a pair of scrub-jays (with one juvenile in 2004) was observed by staff of the SWFWMD and Florida Natural Areas Inventory near the center of Phase I at the intersection of the proposed roadway and the power line corridor. Wildlife surveys for federally protected species that may potentially occupy the project area were conducted by the applicant again in 2005. The 2005 study also included a survey for federally protected plant species. No federally protected species were observed within the proposed project area; however, the federally-endangered wood stork (*Mycteria americana*) was observed in areas adjacent to the proposed project area. The project area contains potential wood stork foraging habitat and lies within the core foraging area of several known wood stork nesting colonies. The closest wood stork nesting colony is located approximately 4.75 miles from the proposed alignment.

In 2005, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) concurred with the determination of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (“Corps”) that the project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the Eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon corais couperi*). This determination was based on the applicants’ commitment to adhere to USFWS’ *Standard Protection Measures for the Eastern Indigo Snake* and the incorporation of wildlife crossings into the project design. The USFWS also concurred with the Corps’ determination that the project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the wood stork. This determination was contingent upon the creation of a compensatory mitigation plan in accordance with the Corps regulations. The USFWS also concurred with the Corps’ determination that the project may affect the Florida scrub-jay and provided a biological opinion. USFWS concluded that the proposed project may result in a minimal amount of incidental take of Florida scrub-jays but is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of this species. USFWS further offered that no critical habitat for this species will be affected, as none has been designated.

In 2009 and 2010, the FTE conducted additional pedestrian surveys of the portion of the proposed interchange that is located on the western side of the Suncoast Parkway. No federally protected species were observed during these surveys.

The Corps will reassess the adequacy of previous determinations per the Endangered Species Act and will reinstate consultation with USFWS if it is determined that (1) the amount or extent of taking specified in the incidental take statement is exceeded; (2) new information reveals effects of the agency action that may affect listed species or critical habitat in a manner or to an extent not previously considered; (3) the proposed project is subsequently modified in a manner that

causes an effect to the listed species or critical habitat that was not considered in the biological opinion; or (4) a new species is listed or critical habitat designated that may be affected by the proposed work.

ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT (EFH): This notice initiates consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on EFH as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act 1996. The Corps' initial determination is that the proposed action would not have a substantial adverse impact on EFH or Federally managed fisheries. The Corps' final determination relative to project impacts and the need for mitigation measures is subject to review by and coordination with the NMFS.

IMPACT ON CULTURAL RESOURCES: In 1997, Pasco County conducted a preliminary archeological survey of the project site and alternatives that included limited subsurface testing. The surveyors concluded that it is likely that both prehistoric and historic archaeological sites exist along the proposed alignment. The investigators noted that no mounds, middens, or standing structures were located and that archaeological sites were likely to consist of prehistoric lithic scatters. The investigators noted the presence of the Old Dade City road and recommended further research if the chosen alignment should impact the road.

In 1998, Pasco County performed a cultural resource assessment of the proposed alignment and located 2 previously recorded sites and 4 newly recorded sites as follows:

River Ridge Site (8Pa70): The River Ridge Site is located at the western end of the project. The researchers performed additional survey work on this previously recorded site and found that it extended farther east than originally thought. Remains from the late Paleo-Indian through the late prehistoric period indicate it was occupied by small groups of different peoples at many different times throughout prehistory. The researchers found the site ineligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and recommended no further survey work on the site. The researchers stated that monitoring by a qualified archaeologist during road construction should take place to ensure significant features are not present at the previously unknown eastern extent of the site.

Ridge Road 1 Site (8Pa669): Nine artifacts were recovered including chert; a secondary flake of agatized coral; small natural sandstone concretions; small bits of charcoal; a primary decortication flake and a secondary flake; and a chipped stone unifacial tool (a scraper made by retouching a flake). The researchers recommended no further work within the road right-of-way, but did recommend further survey work if ponds were proposed in the vicinity of the site.

Pond 2 Site (8Pa673): The researchers recovered 41 pieces of chert; 29 secondary flakes and 3 secondary decortication flakes; a projectile point base/stem; 6 chert secondary flakes; a limestone flake; a tiny burned bone fragment; and a chert core/hammerstone. The square shape of the projectile point fragment is characteristic of Middle or Late Archaic. The researchers stated that the site has good scientific research potential and recommended that mitigative excavations be conducted if it could not be preserved.

Pottberg 1 Site (8Pa67): The researchers performed additional survey work on this previously recorded Archaic site and found the site was larger than originally recorded. The investigators found 27 lithic debitage pieces and one biface fragment. The researchers concluded that this site was probably an extensive riverbank habitation zone during preceramic times. They recommended no further survey work since the artifacts were present in very low density and the site had already been deemed insignificant. The researchers concluded that the site was ineligible for listing in the NRHP.

Ridge Road 2 Site (8Pa670): Researches recovered lithic artifacts consisting of mostly debitage (waste flakes) at the Ridge Road 2 site. Materials recovered were distributed in very low density across the landscape. Recovered chert items were predominantly secondary flakes (11), with 2 secondary decortication flakes. An additional piece of chert block shatter and a non-diagnostic projectile point fragment were recovered. A large unifacial flake scraper tool was recovered. The investigators concluded that the site is a widely scattered manifestation of occupation that was probably intermittent in time and/or space along an old stream channel. They found the site to be ineligible for listing in the NRHP and stated that the cultural deposits at this site are not dense, diagnostic, or significant enough to warrant further work.

Bexley Site (8Pa668): The Bexley site has great potential for producing important archaeological information. Although no features such as fire pits or house patterns were found, the researchers believed they could be present. Investigators stated that the high density of artifact materials suggests a longer habitation than just a weekend deer-hunting camp. The site was logged at least once in the past and does not appear to have been disturbed by plowing in recent times. The artifact category with the largest number of specimens is lithic debitage (chips or flakes left from production of stone tools from local chert). An assemblage of waste flakes suggests both primary artifact production activities and later maintenance, reshaping and sharpening of finished tools. Such a combination of activities indicates a habitation at which very different kinds of tasks were taking place. The researches recovered only one projectile point tip at this site. Six pottery sherds from the same vessel were recovered. The checked pattern on their surface suggests a general Woodland cultural affiliation, which could narrow the dating to a range between A.D. 1-1000. The researchers stated that the north side of the site has dense and significant archaeological deposits. They recommended that if preservation in this area was not possible, Phase III data recovery should be conducted. They further recommended salvage excavation of an adequate amount of the prehistoric cultural remains prior to construction. The researchers noted that the portion of the site located south of the proposed right-of-way, at the edge of the wetland area, has a very low density of prehistoric cultural remains and is far less archaeologically significant. They recommended no further survey work in this area. For other portions of the site, researchers recommended further survey work.

In 1999, Pasco County completed an additional cultural resource assessment of the Ridge Road 1 Site (8Pa669) and the Pond 2 Site (8Pa673). Both sites were characterized as low density artifact scatters that are very common in west-central Florida. These types of sites generally represent small campsites or extractive locations. The small sizes, unexceptional artifact assemblages, and

lack of archaeological features (e.g., post molds, hearths, pits, etc.) led the researchers to conclude that the potential for additional research at these sites is limited. The researchers found these sites to be ineligible for listing in the NRHP.

By letters dated January 21, 2000 and April 25, 2000, the Florida State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurred with the findings of Pasco County outlined above. By letter dated April 19, 2000, the SHPO also determined that the interchange proposed by FTE will have no effect on historic properties listed, or eligible for listing in the NRHP, or otherwise of historical or architectural value.

Pasco County has informed the Corps that the above-referenced cultural resource surveys did not assess several proposed stormwater ponds and floodplain compensation ponds. Also, approximately 1,700 linear feet of the currently proposed alignment near the west end of the project has not been surveyed. The Corps will reassess the adequacy of previous survey work in coordination with the SHPO and the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

NOTE: This public notice is being issued based on information furnished by the applicant. This information has not been verified or evaluated to ensure compliance with laws and regulation governing the regulatory program. The jurisdictional line has not been verified by Corps personnel.

AUTHORIZATION FROM OTHER AGENCIES: On July 29, 2003, the SWFWMD granted ERP No. 18792.002 for Phases I and II of the proposed Ridge Road Extension. A modification of this permit (ERP No. 18792.004) was granted by the SWFWMD on February 26, 2008. The SWFWMD is currently evaluating a modification (ERP No. 18792.005) that incorporates the final design enhancements represented in the current Corps application.

Comments regarding the application should be submitted in writing to the District Engineer at the above address within 30 days from the date of this notice.

If you have any questions concerning this application, you may contact Tracy Hurst at the letterhead address, by electronic mail at Tracy.E.Hurst@usace.army.mil, by fax at 813-769-7061, or by telephone at 813-769-7063.

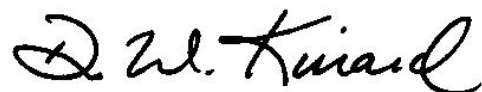
The decision whether to issue or deny this permit application will be based on the information received from this public notice and the evaluation of the probable impact to the associated wetlands. This is based on an analysis of the applicant's avoidance and minimization efforts for the project, as well as the compensatory mitigation proposed.

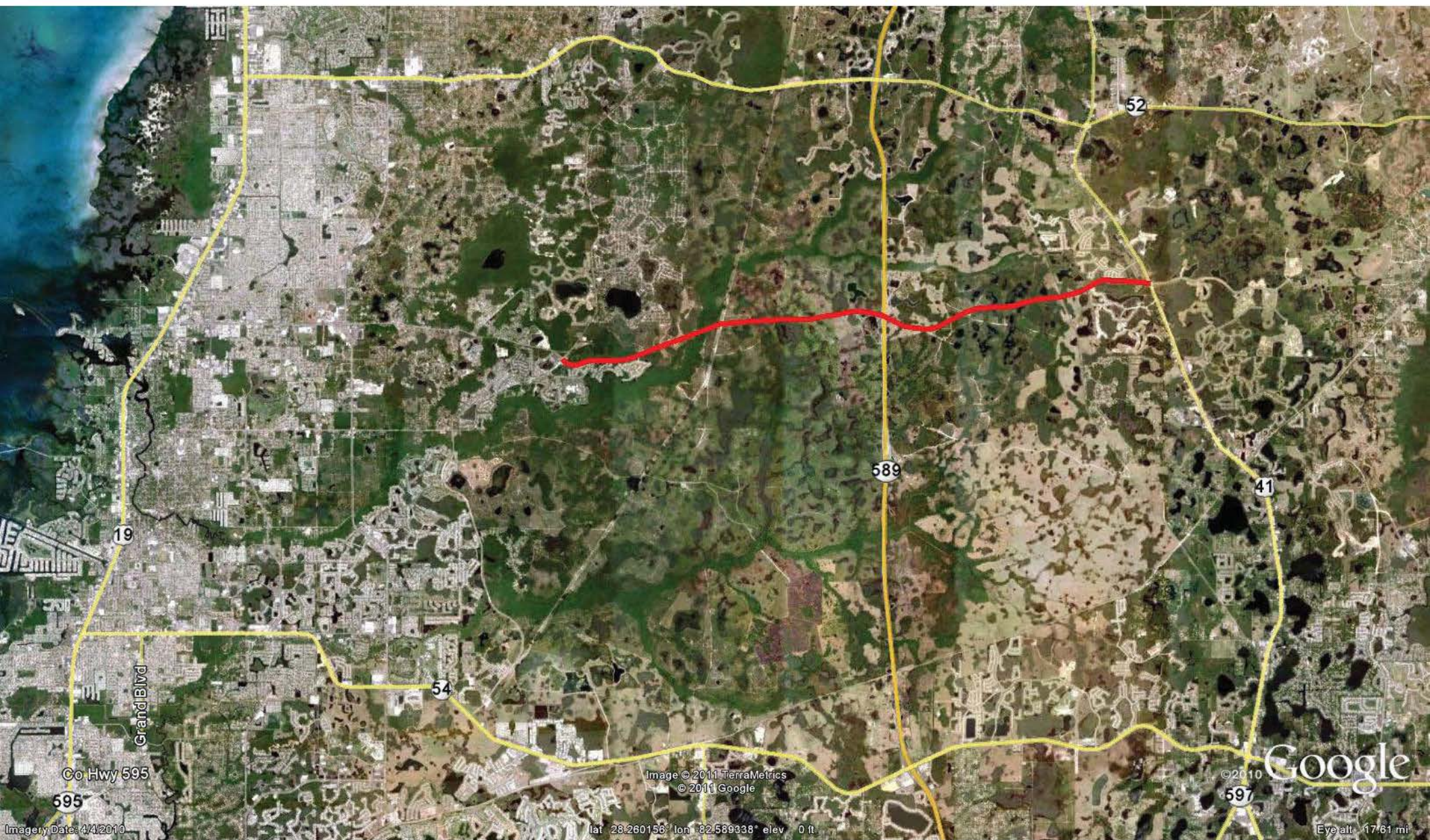
**IMPACT ON NATURAL RESOURCES:** Preliminary review of this application indicates that an Environmental Impact Statement will not be required. Coordination with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Marine Fisheries Services, and other Federal, State, and local agencies, environmental groups, and concerned citizens generally yields pertinent environmental information that is instrumental in determining the impact the proposed action will have on the natural resources of the area. By means of this notice, we are soliciting comments on the potential effects of the project on threatened or endangered species or their habitat

**EVALUATION:** The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact including cumulative impacts of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefits, which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal, must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the proposal will be considered including cumulative Impacts thereof; among these are conservation, economics, esthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historical properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food, and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownership, and in general, the needs and welfare of the people. Evaluation of the impact of the activity on the public interest will also include application of the guidelines promulgated by the Administrator, EPA, under authority of Section 404(b) of the Clean Water Act of the criteria established under authority of Section 102(a) of the Marine Protection Research and Sanctuaries Act of 1972. A permit will be granted unless its issuance is found to be contrary to the public interest. The US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, State, and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other Interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps to determine whether to issue, modify, condition, or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess Impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment and/or an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

**COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT CONSISTENCY:** In Florida, the State approval constitutes compliance with the approved Coastal Zone Management Plan. In Puerto Rico, a Coastal Zone Management Consistency Concurrence is required from the Puerto Rico Planning Board, In the Virgin Islands, the Department of Planning and Natural Resources permit constitutes compliance with the Coastal Zone Management Plan.

**REQUEST FOR PUBLIC HEARING:** Any person may request a public hearing. The request must be submitted in writing to the District Engineer within the designated comment period of the notice and must state the specific reasons for requesting the public hearing.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. W. Kivard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent initial "D".



BEGIN  
PITHLACHASCOTEE  
RIVER BRIDGE  
STA. 117+68.63

END INTERCHANGE  
BEGIN RRE PHASE II  
STA. 286+28.00

BEGIN EASEMENT BRIDGE  
STA. 354+02.63

END RRE PHASE II  
STA. 468+09.19

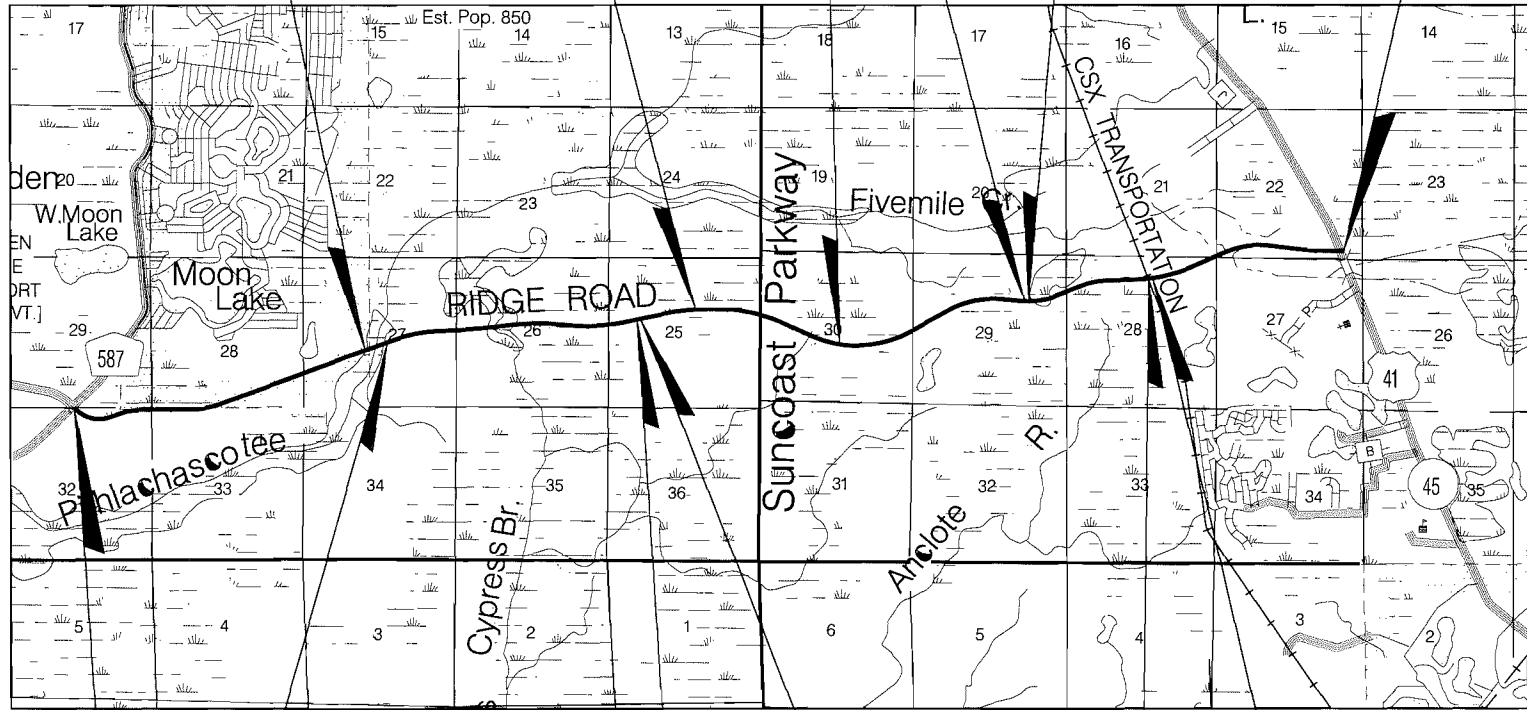
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BEGIN INTERCHANGE  
STA. 234+00.00

END EASEMENT BRIDGE  
STA. 355+37.63

R 16 E  
R 17 E

R 17 E  
R 18 E

R 16 E  
R 17 E



TO NEW PORT RICHEY

T 25 S  
T 26 S

T 25 S  
T 26 S

BEGIN RRE PHASE I  
STA. 11+78.92

R 16 E  
R 17 E

R 17 E  
R 18 E

R 16 E  
R 17 E

BEGIN WILDLIFE CROSSING BRIDGE  
STA. 213+50.00

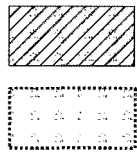
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STA. 398+37.26

END  
PITHLACHASCOTEE  
RIVER BRIDGE  
STA. 126+13.64

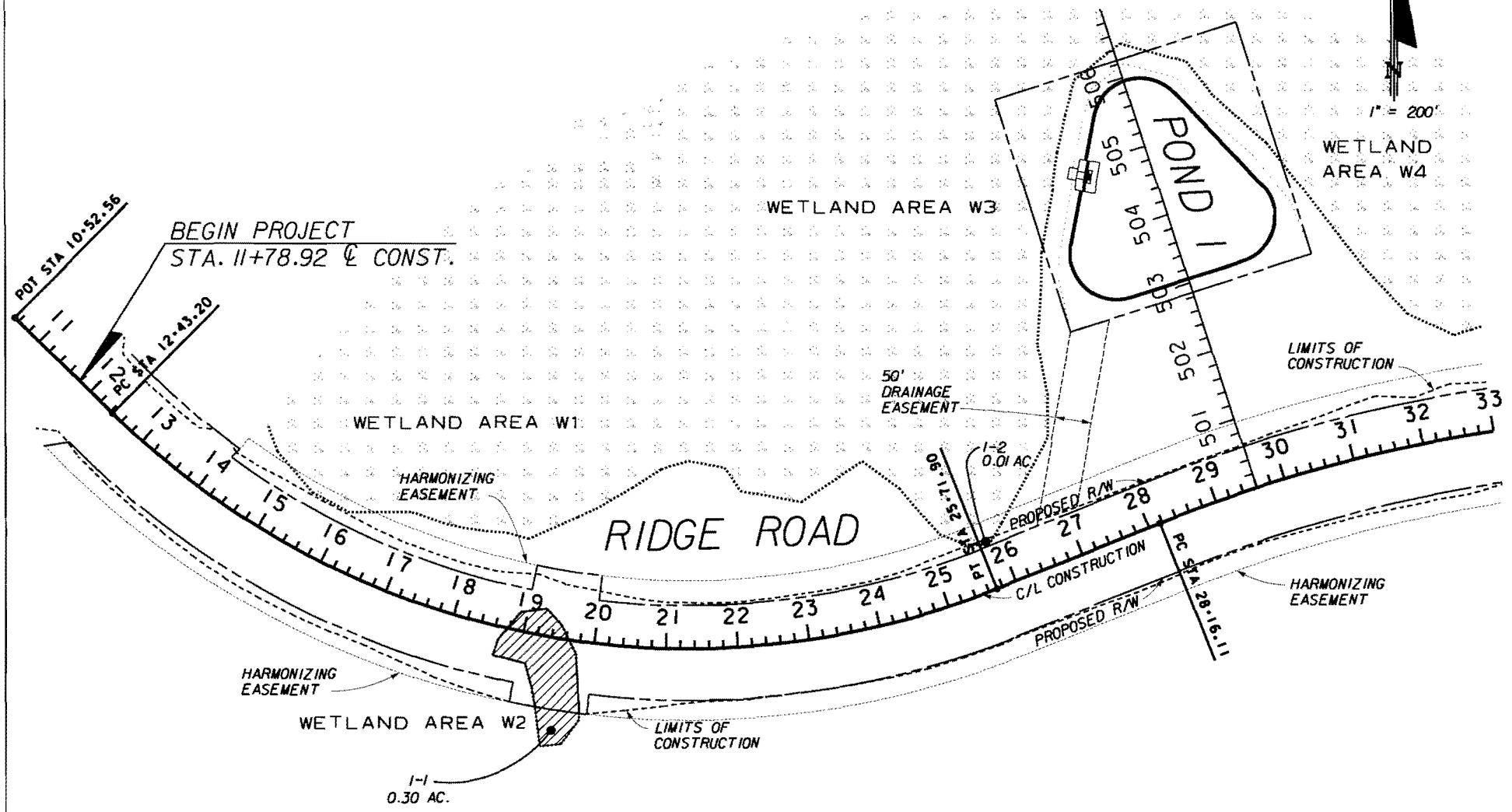
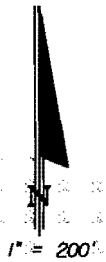
END WILDLIFE CROSSING BRIDGE  
STA. 214+70.00

END RAILROAD BRIDGE  
STA. 399+72.26





WETLAND IMPACT AREA  
WETLAND AREA



PITMAN HARTENSTEIN & ASSOCIATES, ENGINEERS, INC.




6989 EAST FOWLER AVENUE, TAMPA, FLORIDA 33607  
EB# 4464 THOMAS J. MONTGOMERY, P.E. NO. 35008



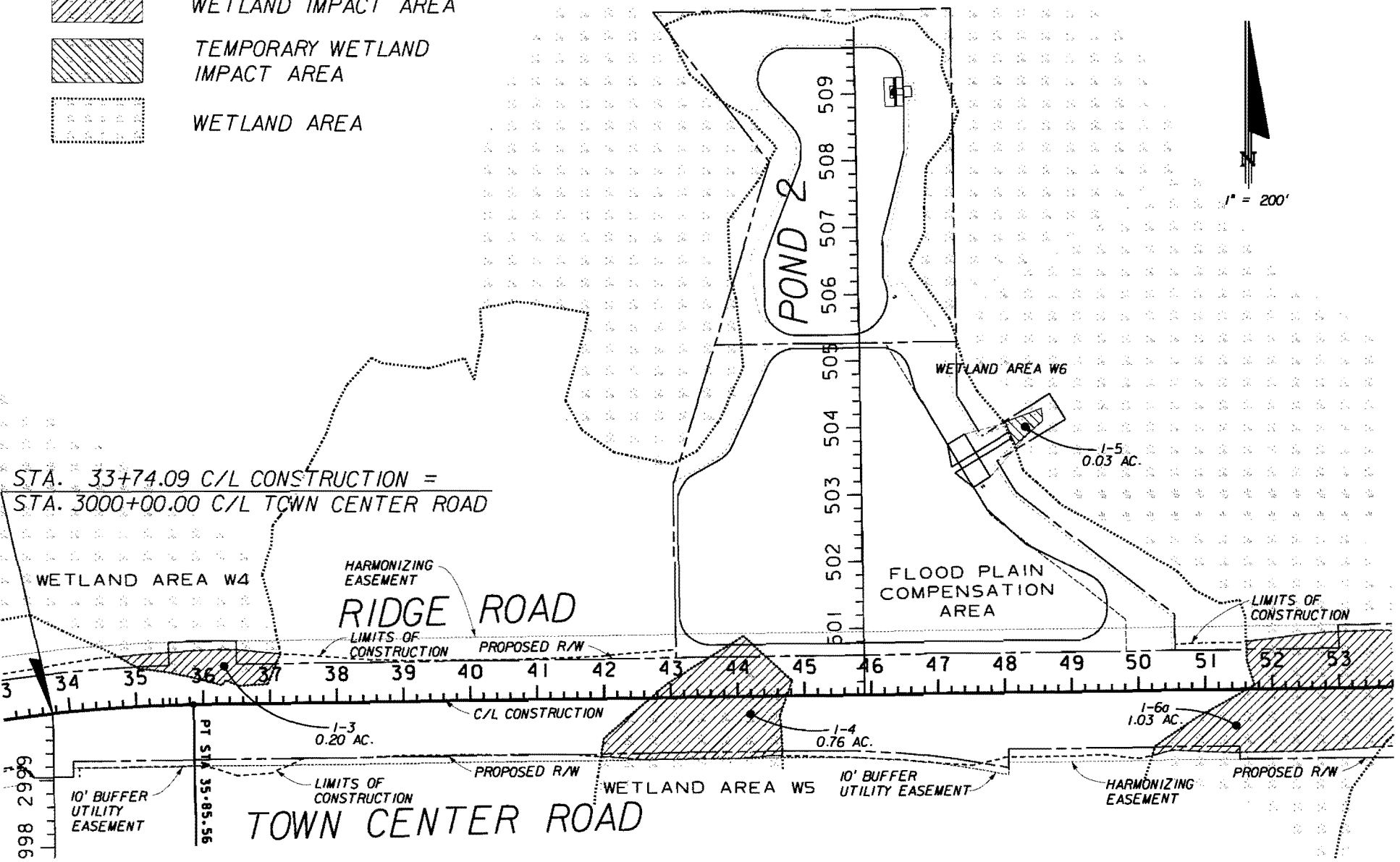
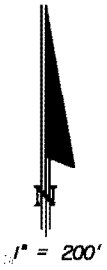
PASCO COUNTY

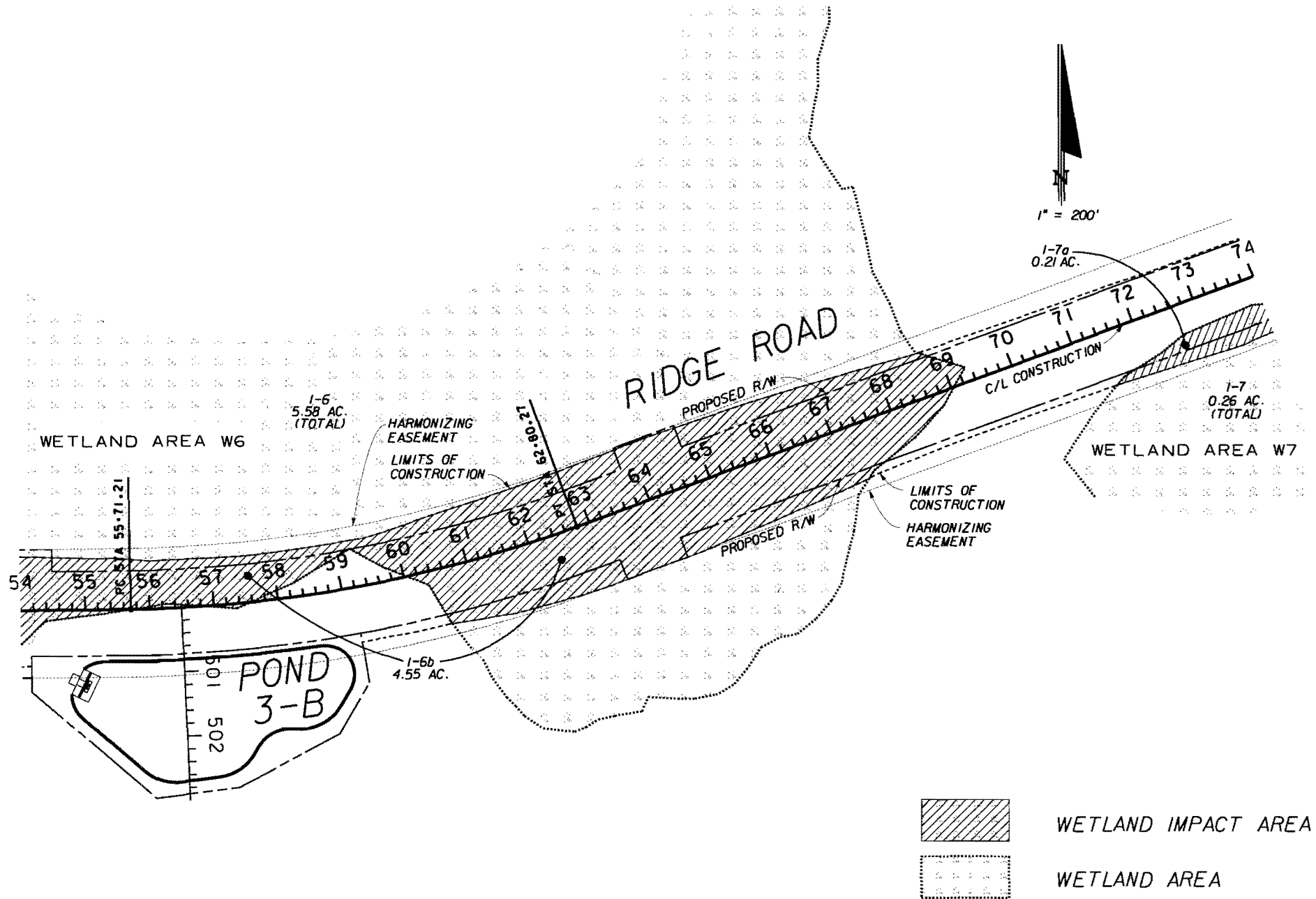
RIDGE ROAD EXTENSION  
PHASE I



ACOE PLAN SHEETS

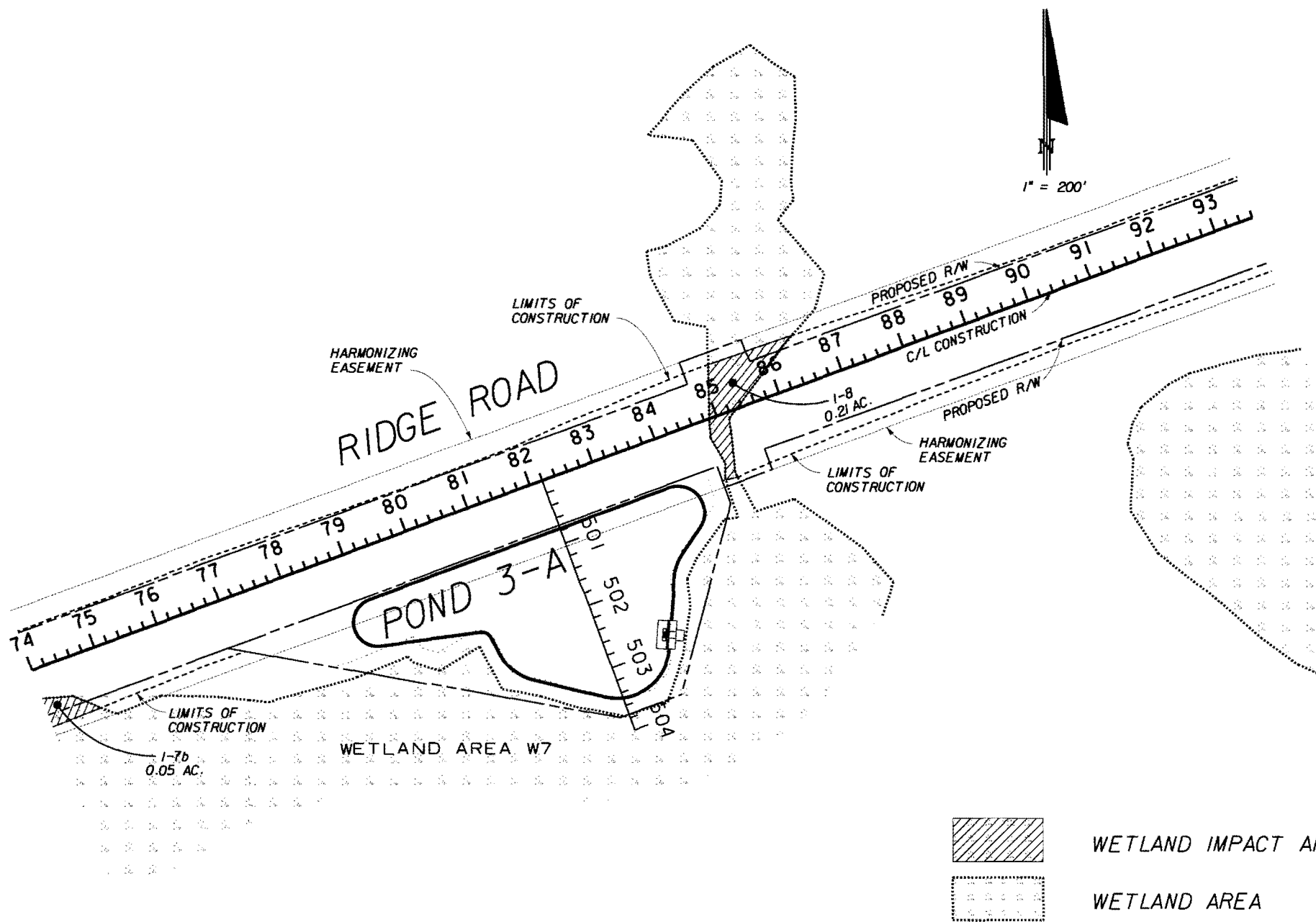
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-  WETLAND AREA

WETLAND AREA W5A



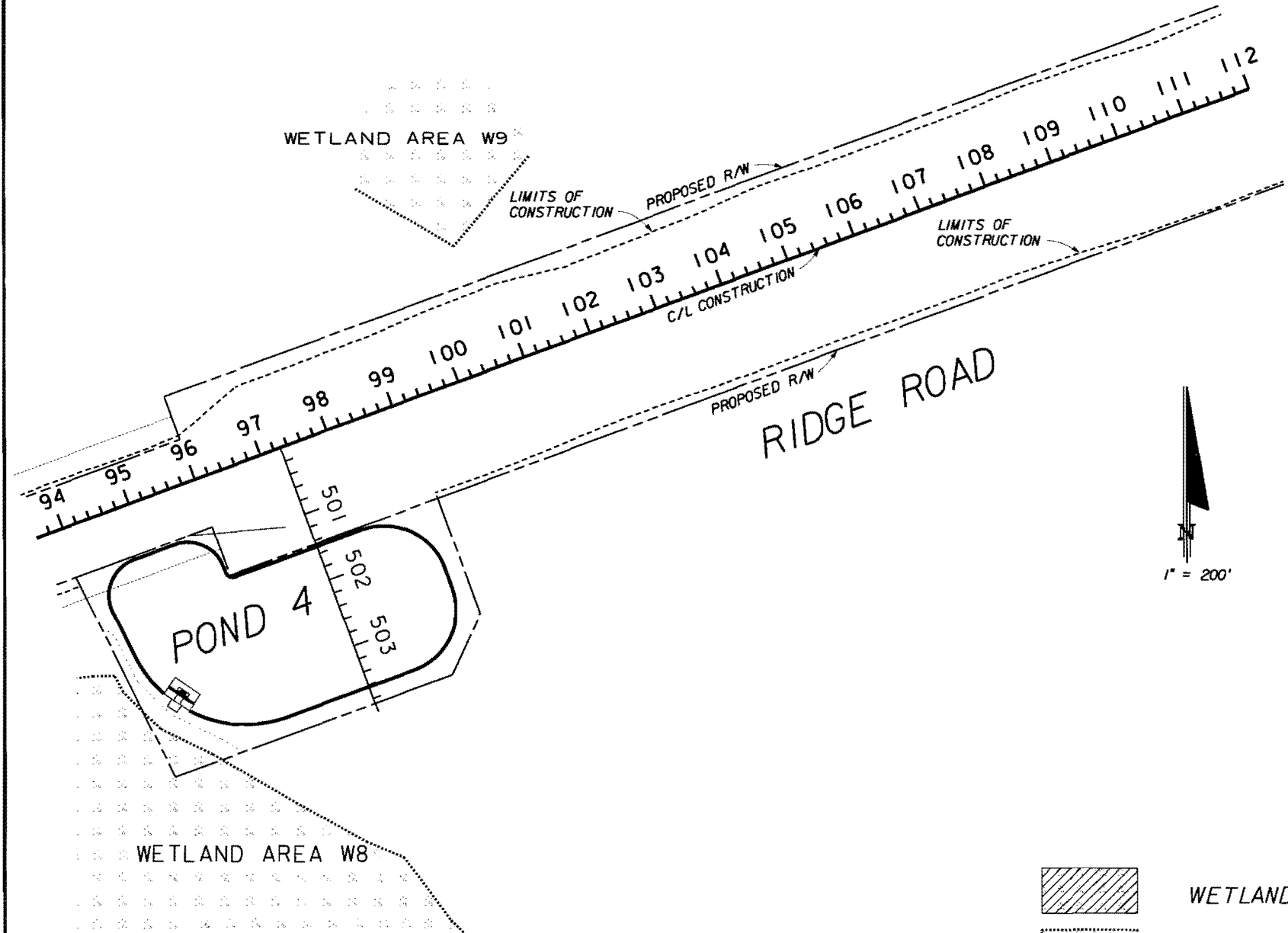


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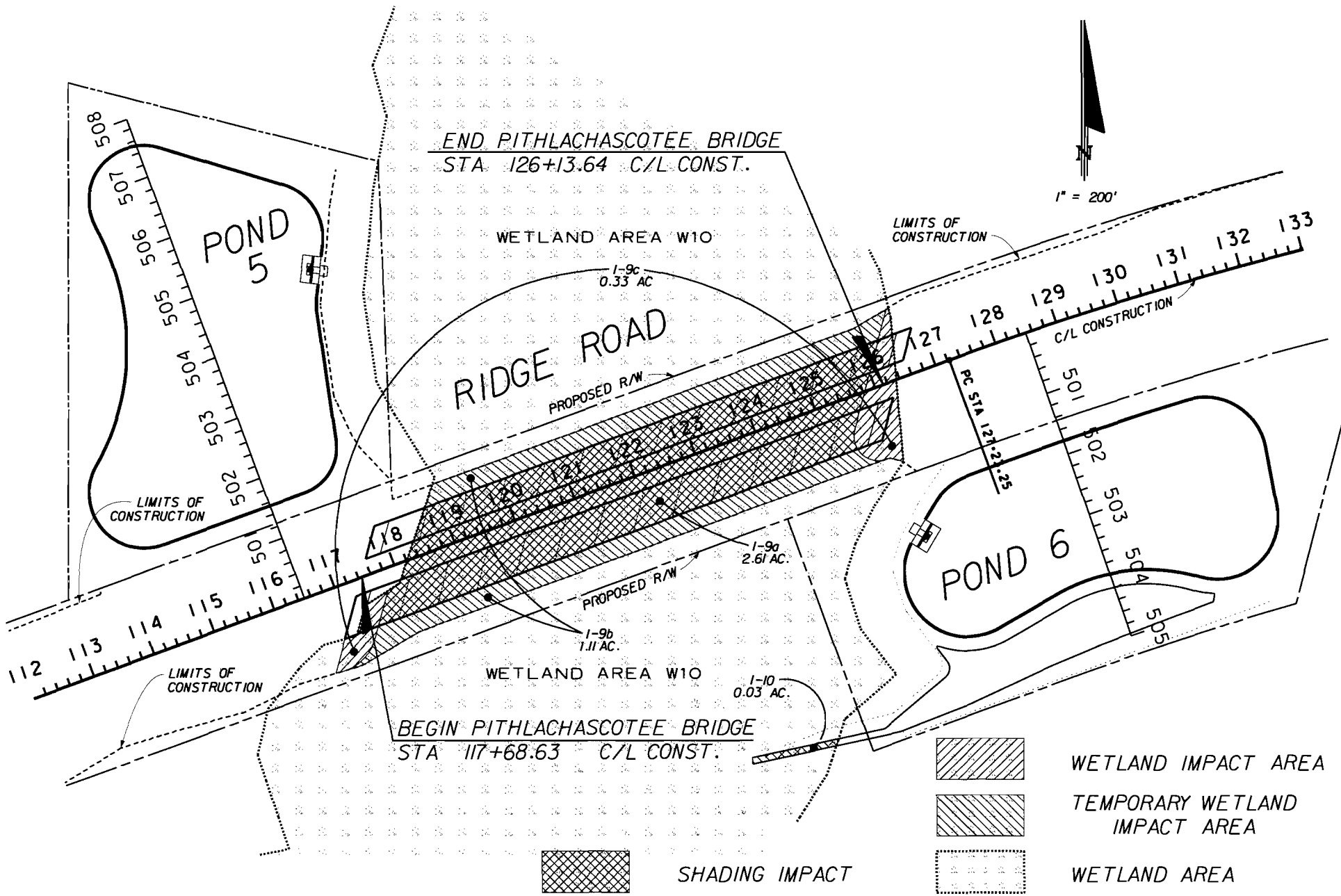
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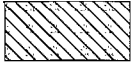



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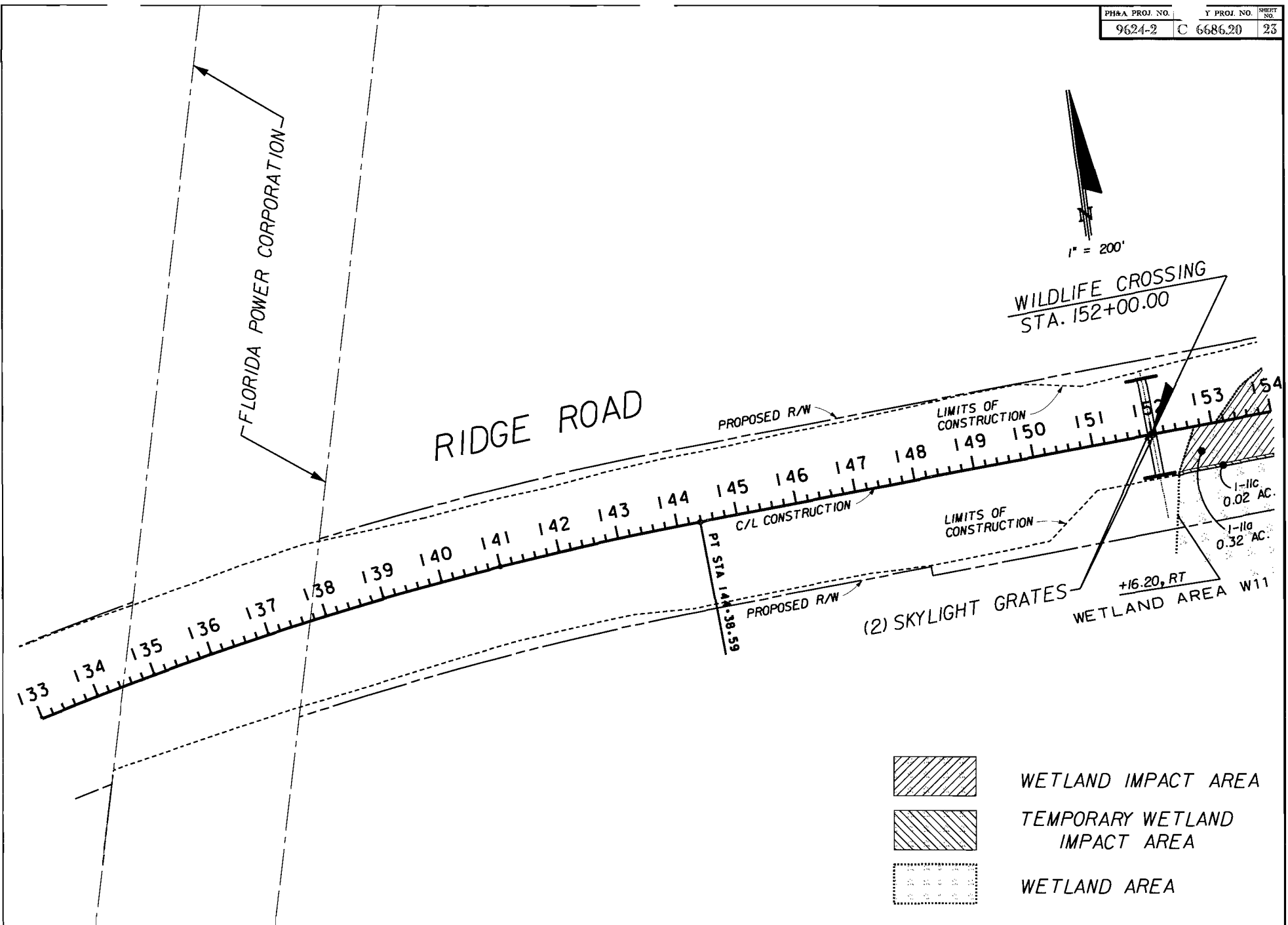





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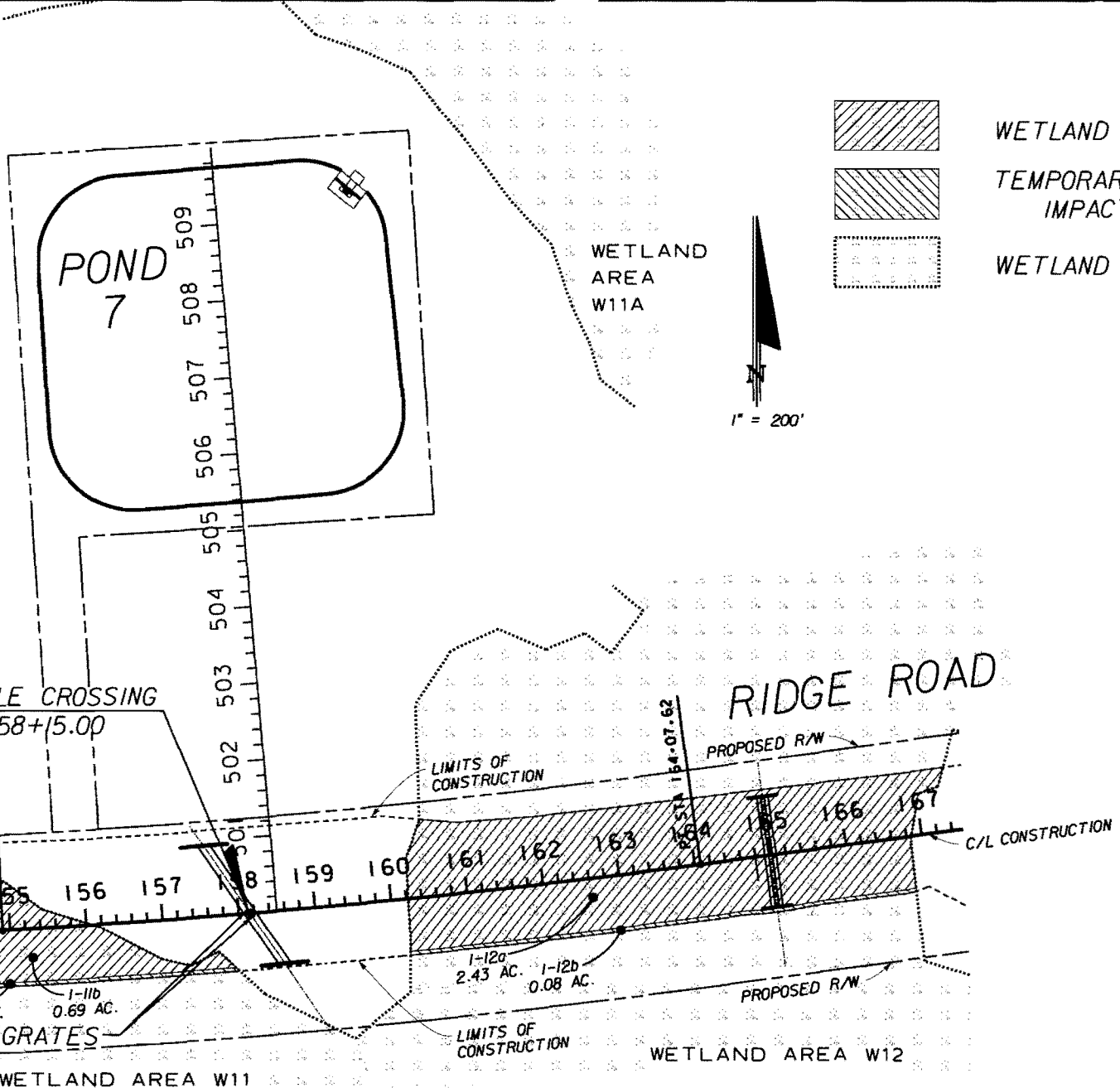


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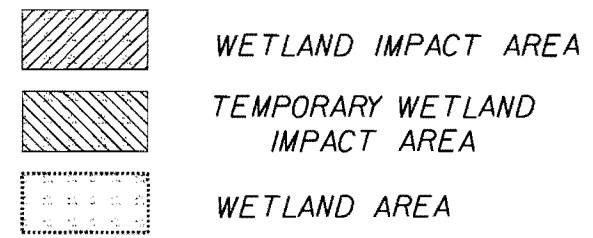
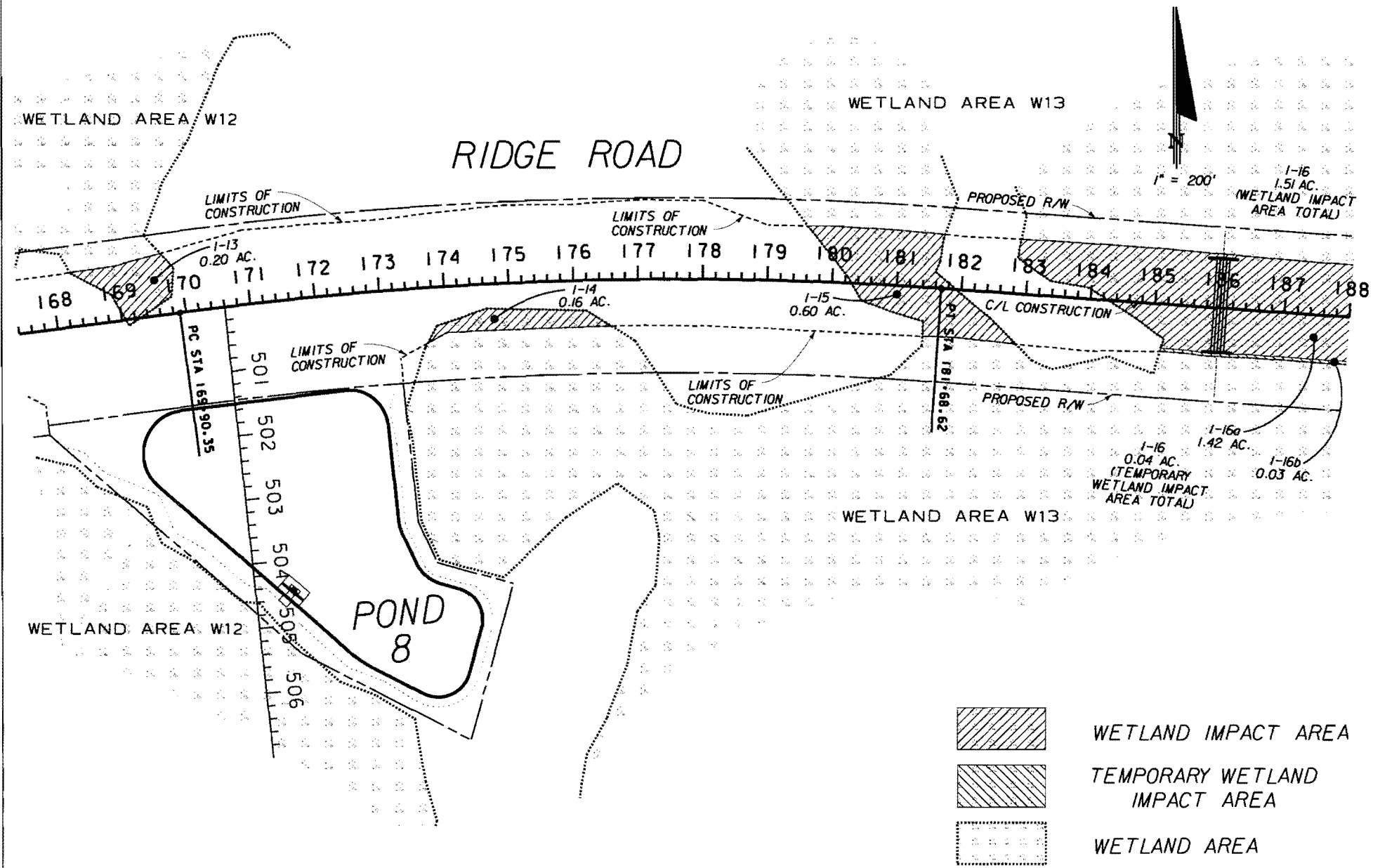
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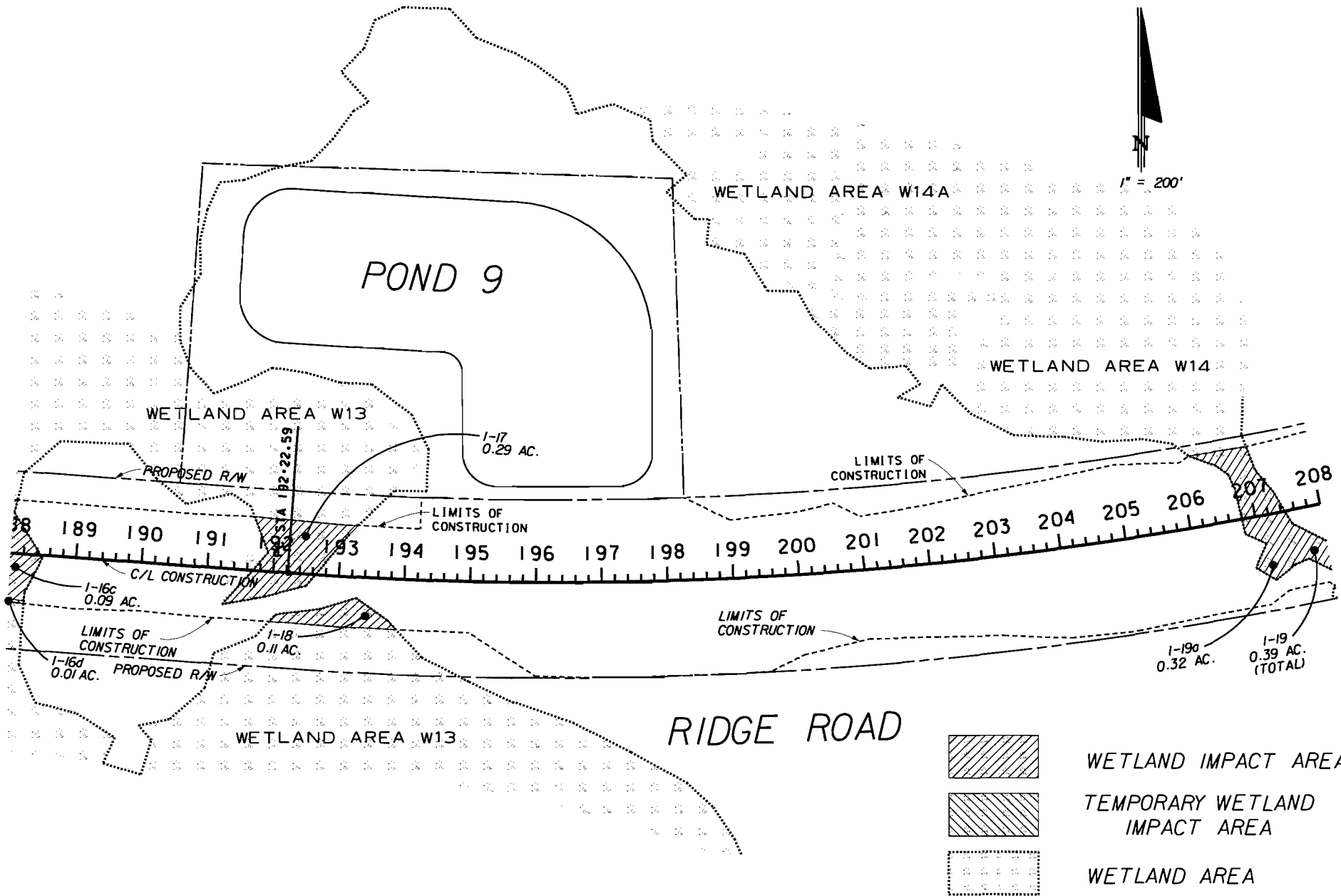


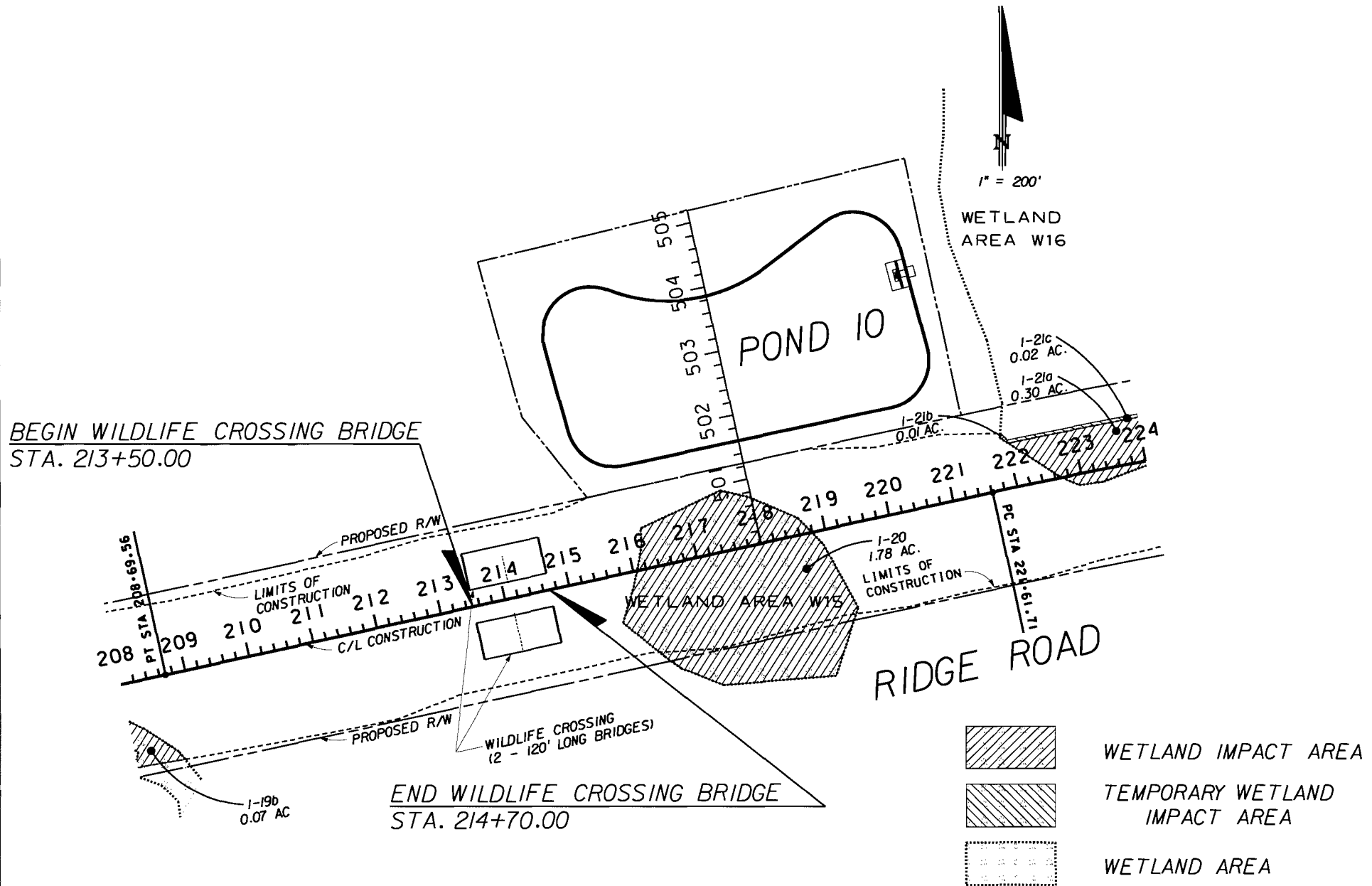
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-  WETLAND AREA



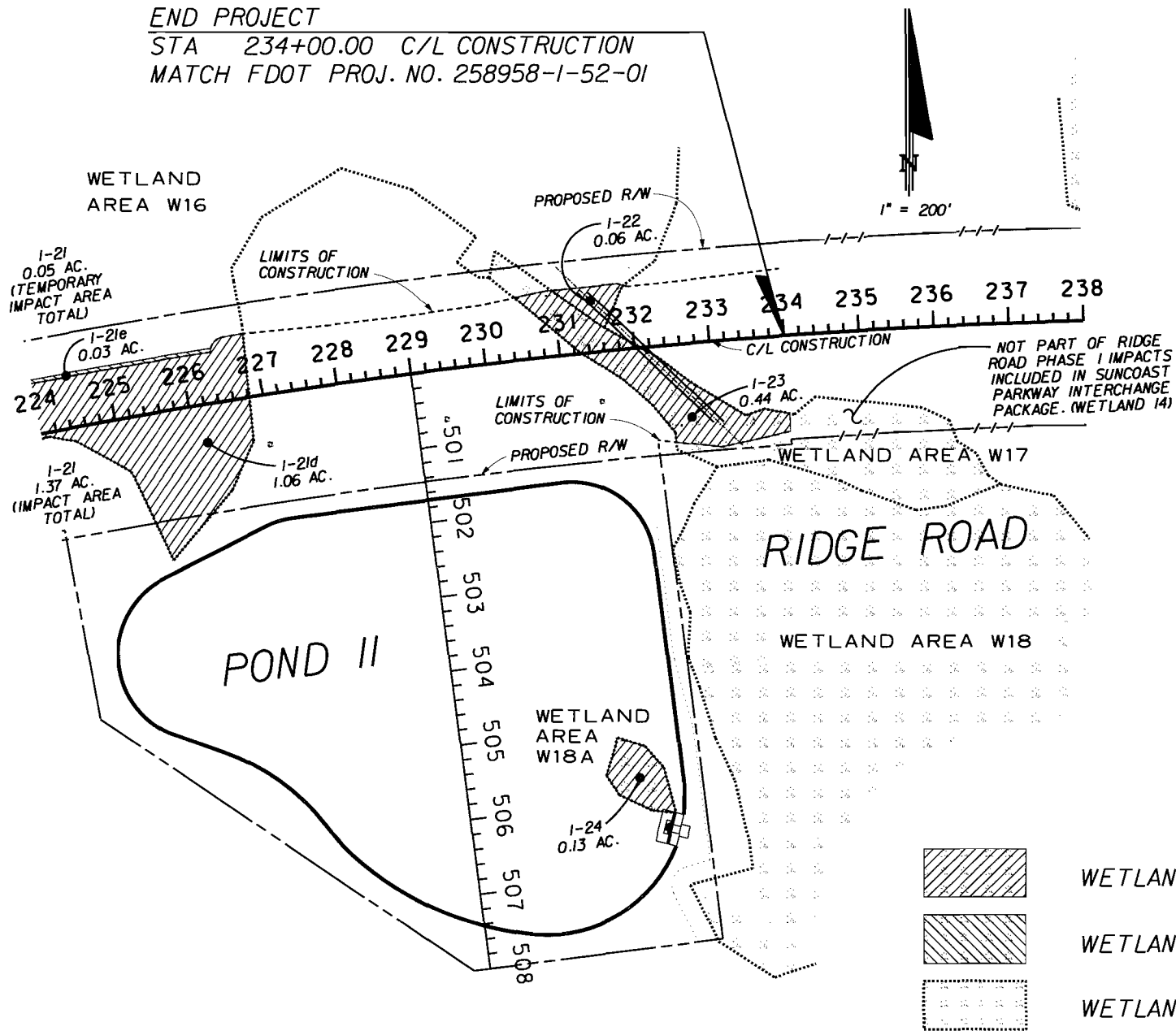


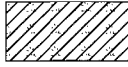
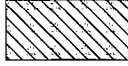



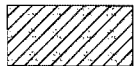




END PROJECT  
 STA 234+00.00 C/L CONSTRUCTION  
 MATCH FDOT PROJ. NO. 258958-1-52-01



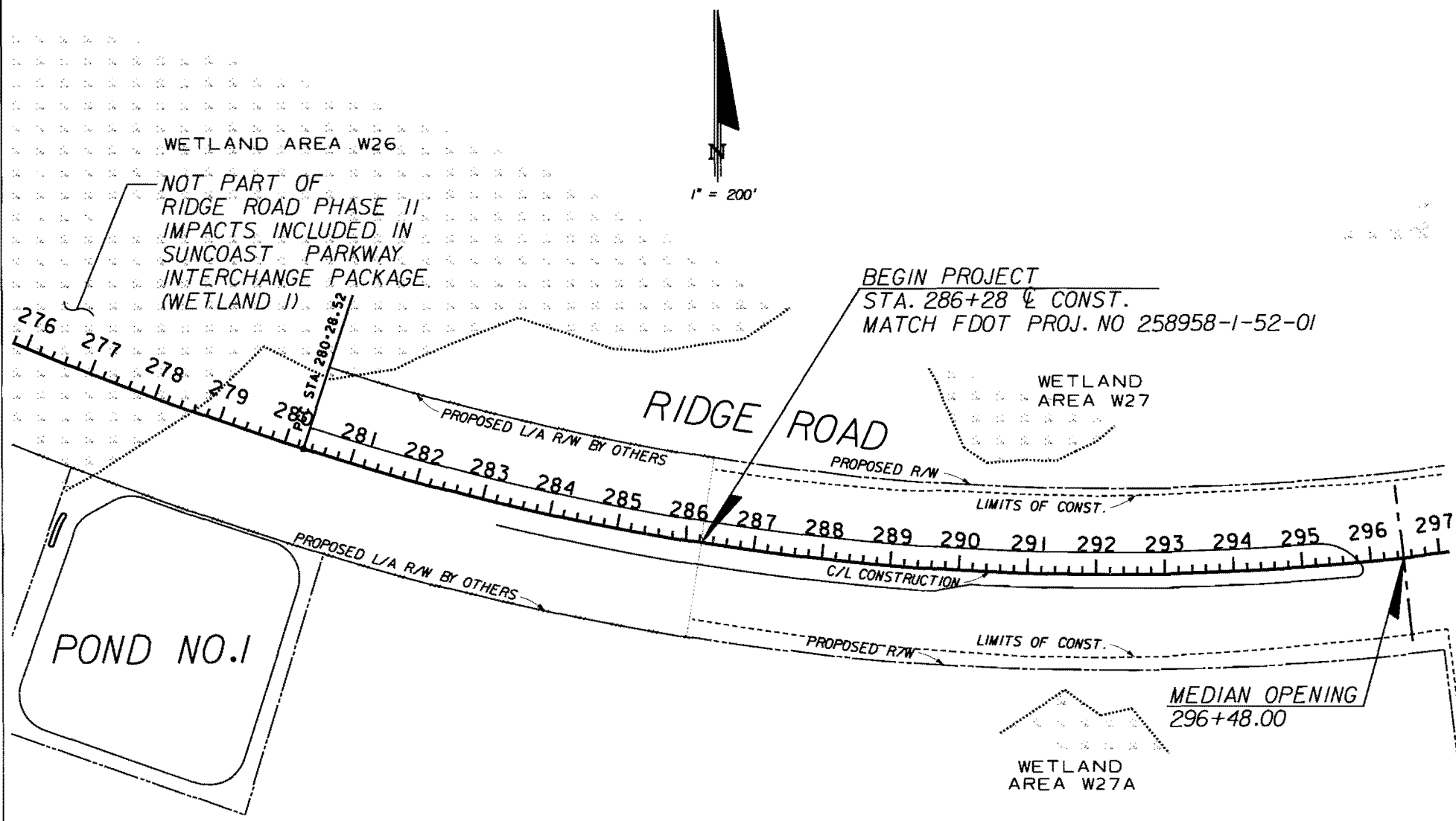
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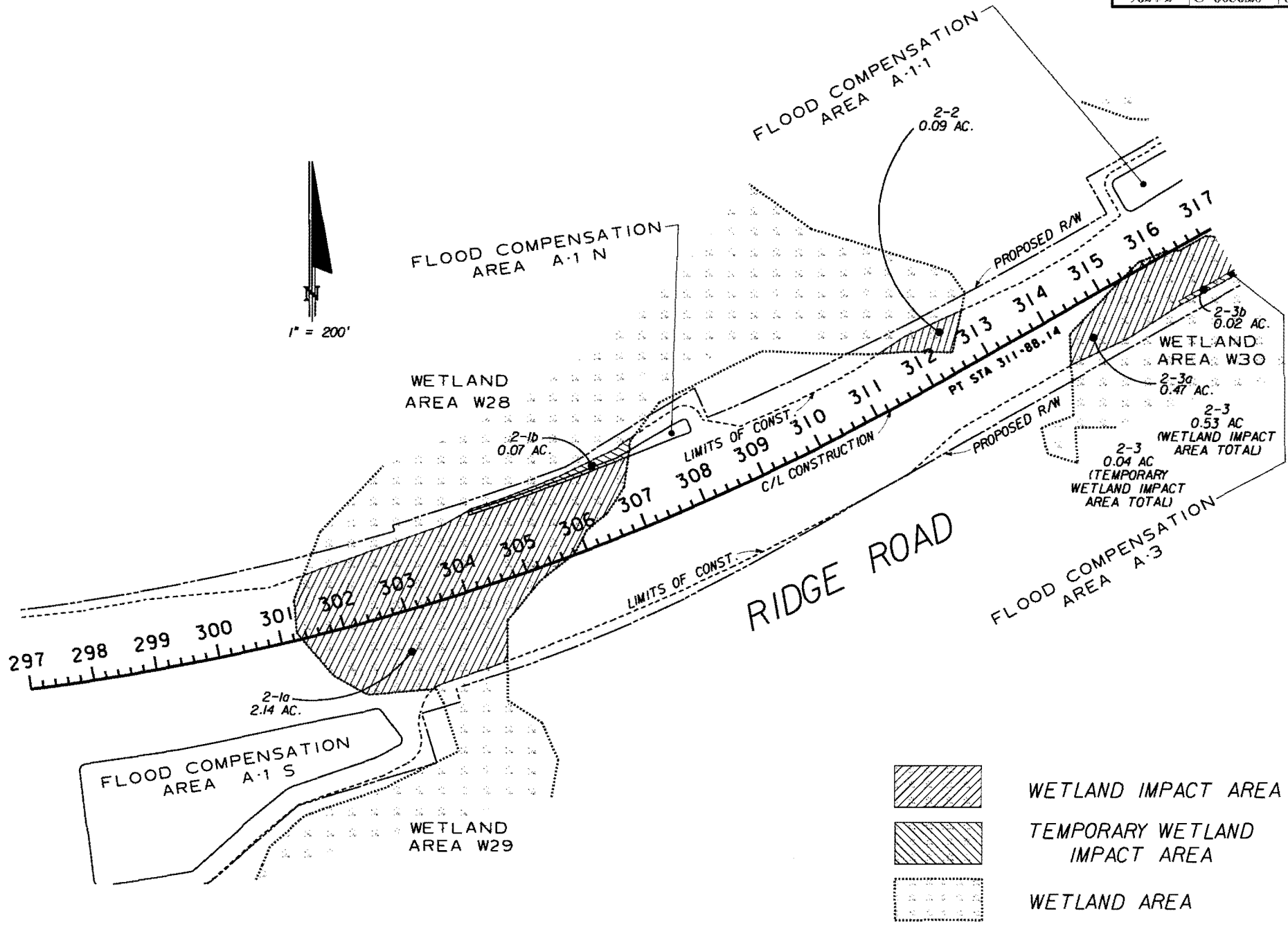
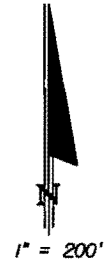


WETLAND IMPACT AREA



WETLAND AREA





PITMAN HARTENSTEIN & ASSOCIATES, ENGINEERS, INC.

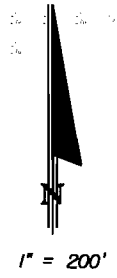
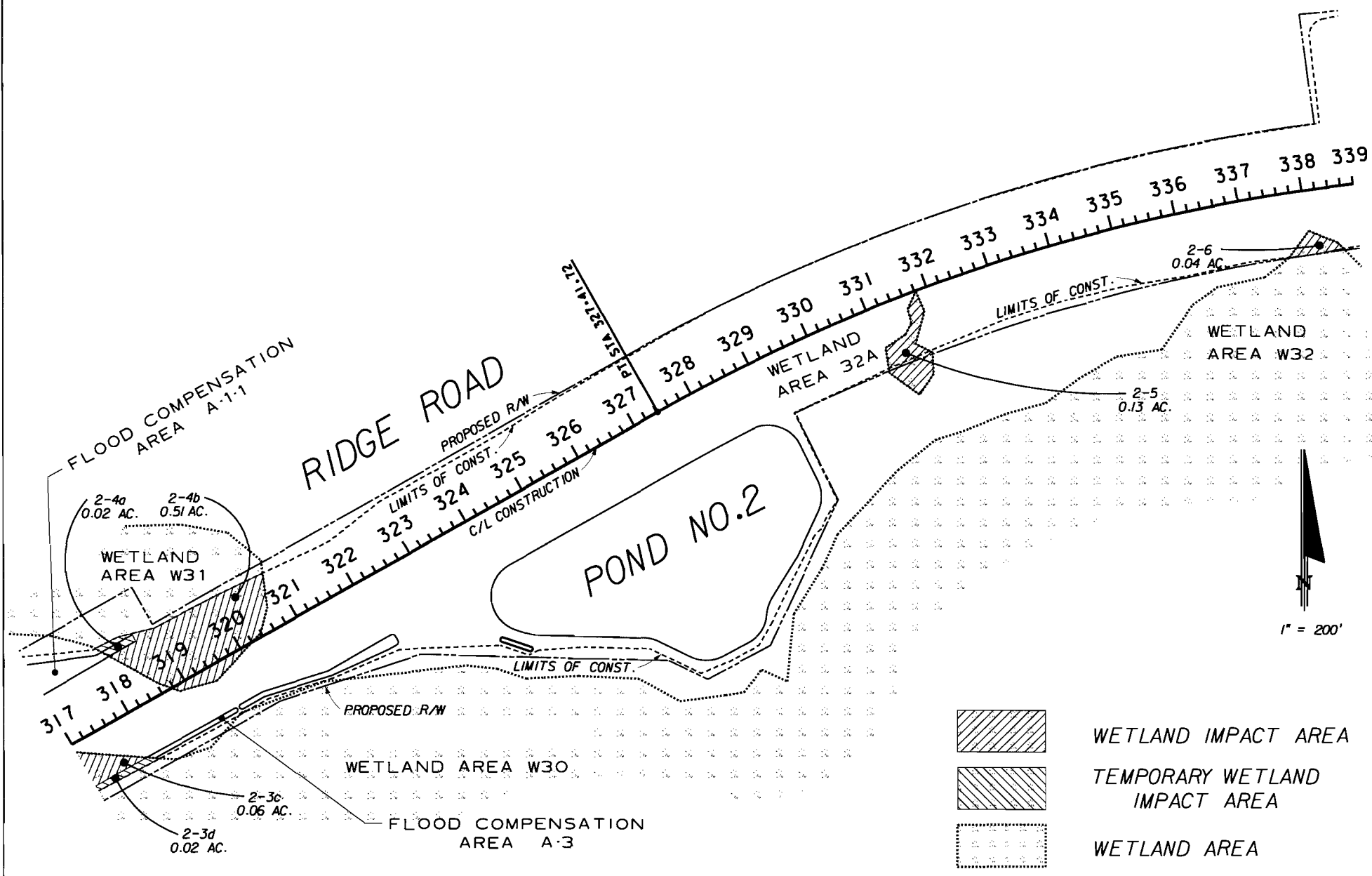
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 EB# 4464 THOMAS J. MONTGOMERY, P.E. NO. 35008


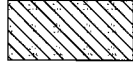



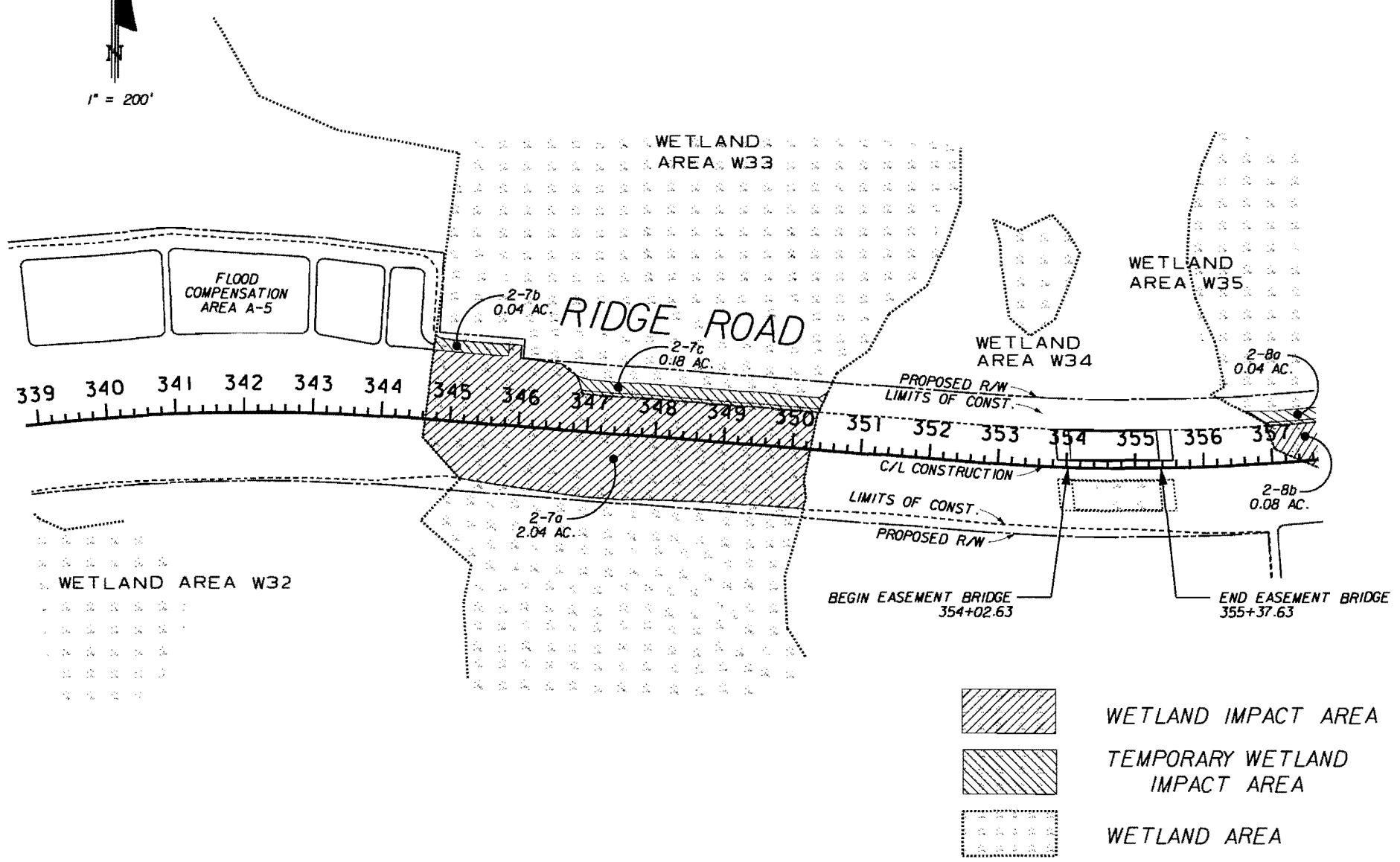
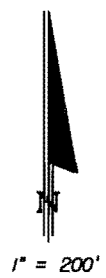
PASCO COUNTY

RIDGE ROAD EXTENSION  
 PHASE II

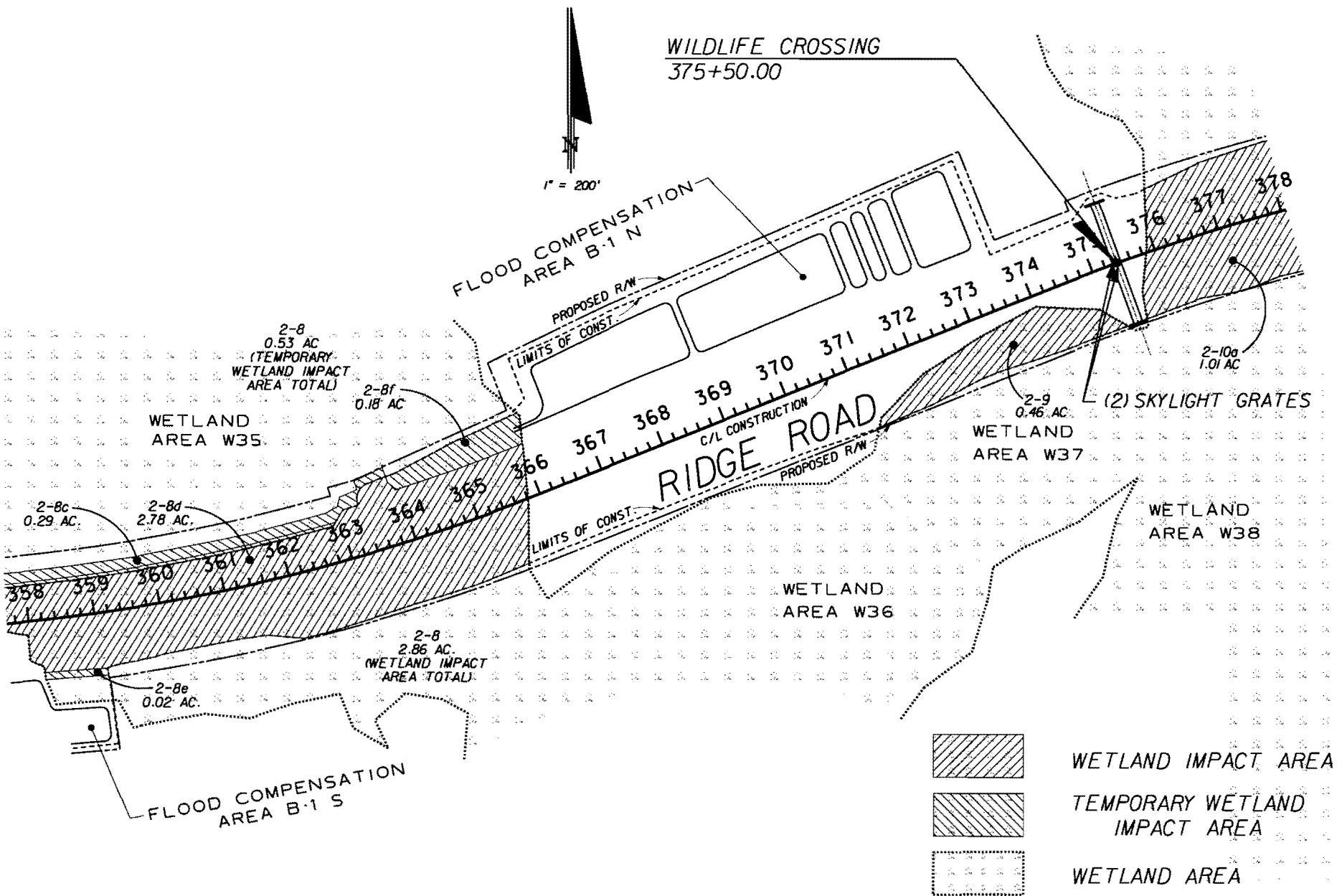
ACOE PLAN SHEETS

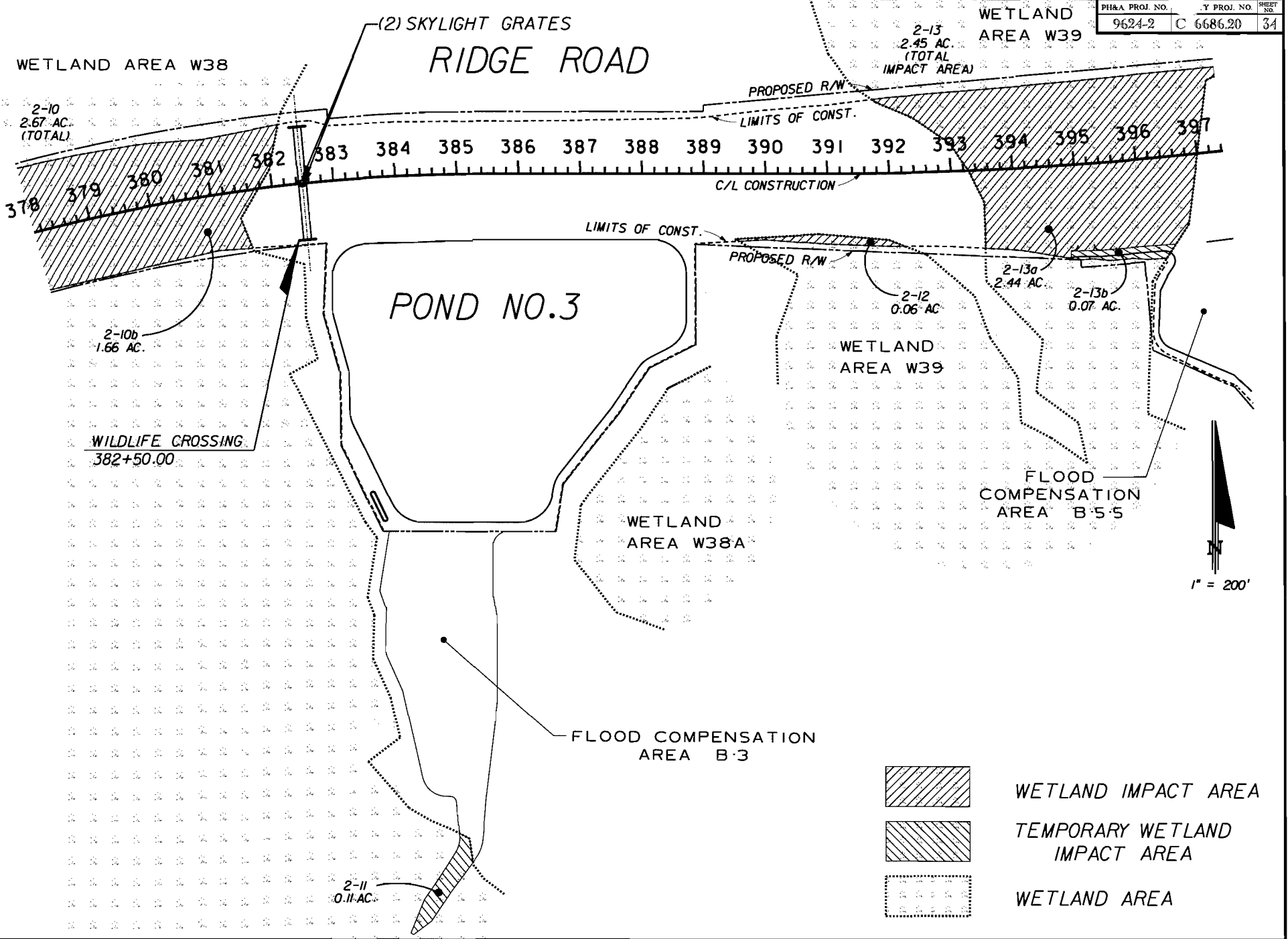



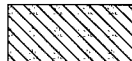

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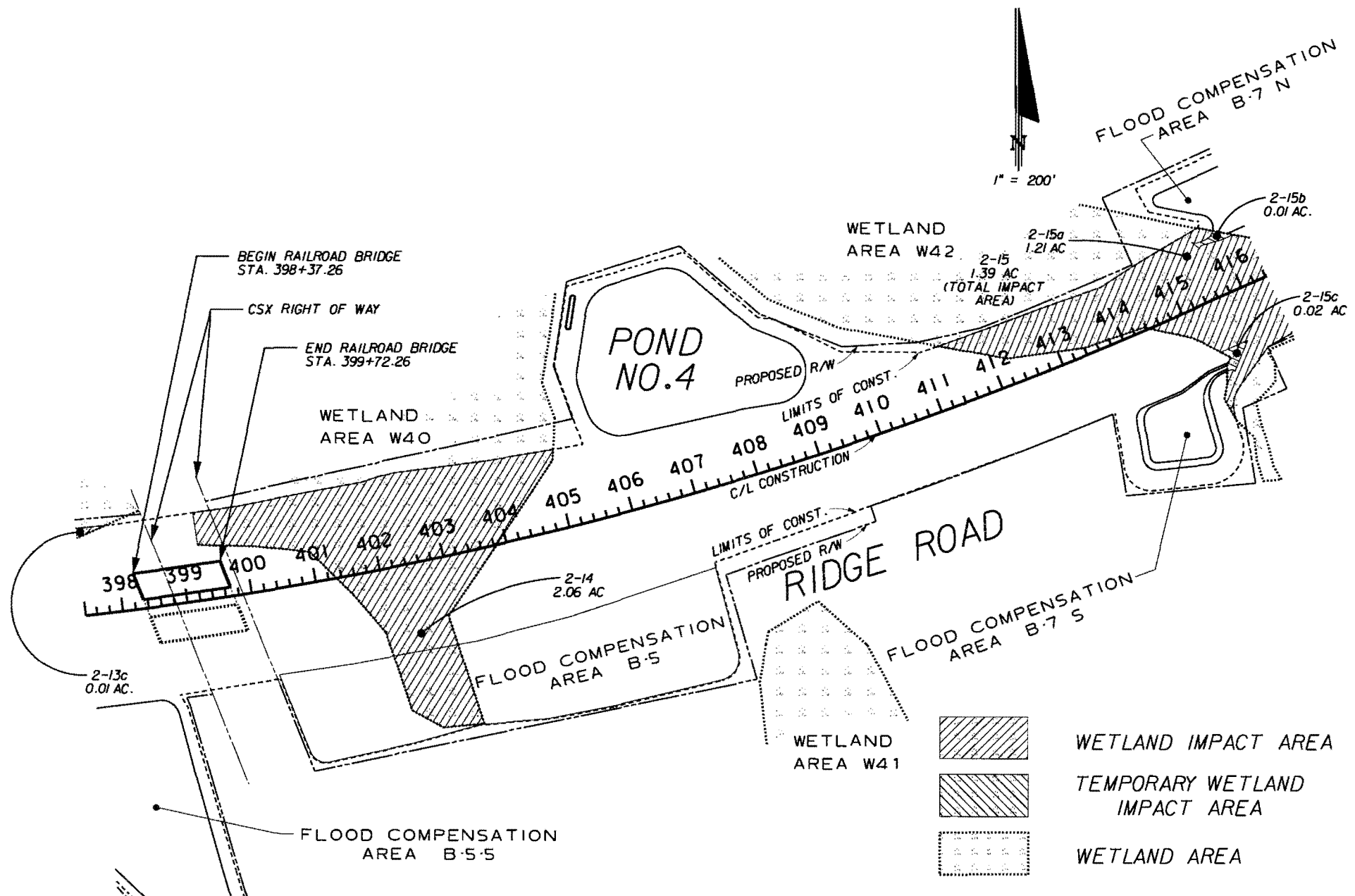








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PITMAN HARTENSTEIN & ASSOCIATES, ENGINEERS, INC.

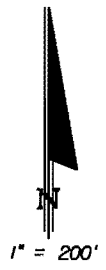
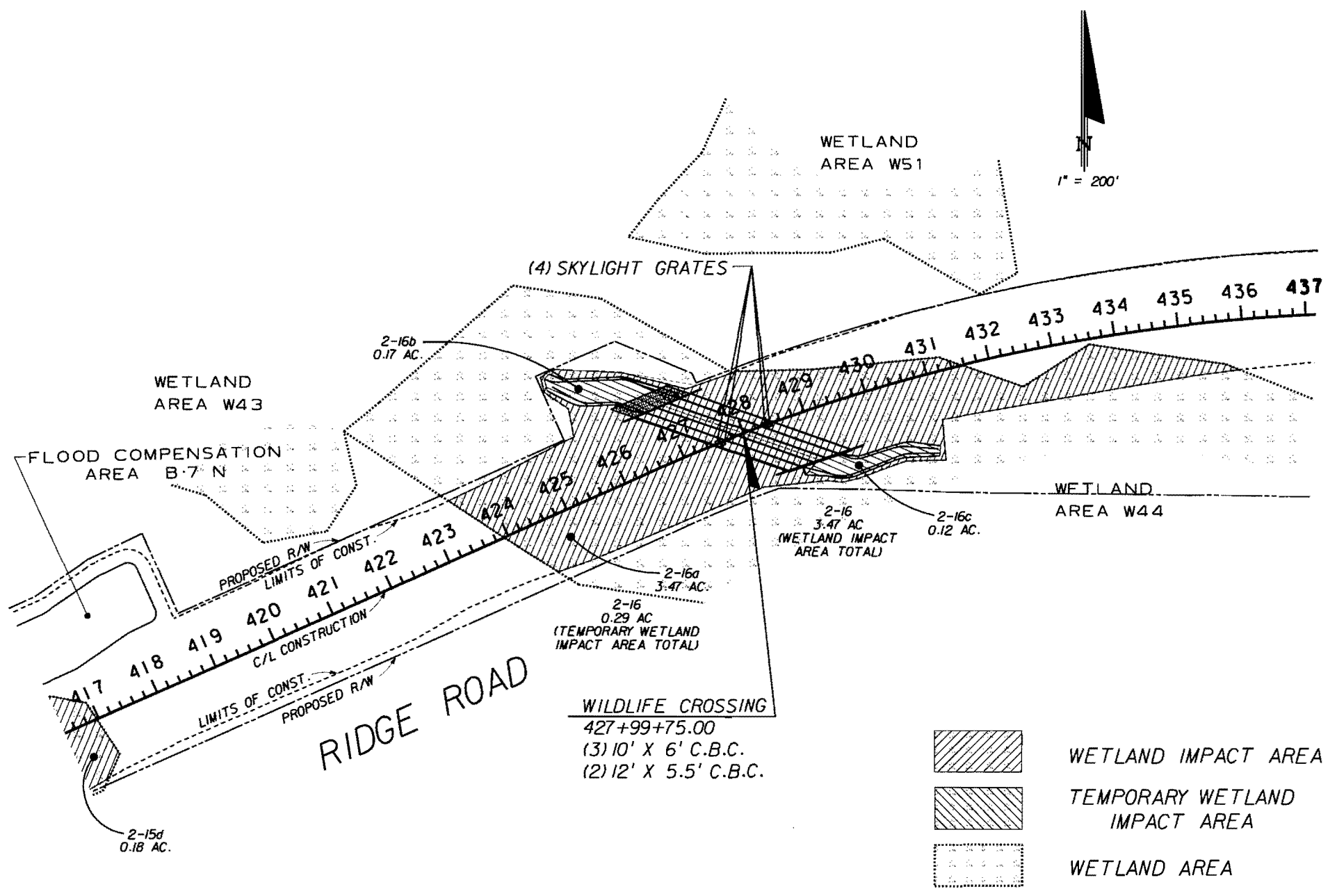
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 EB# 4464 THOMAS J. MONTGOMERY, P.E. NO. 35008

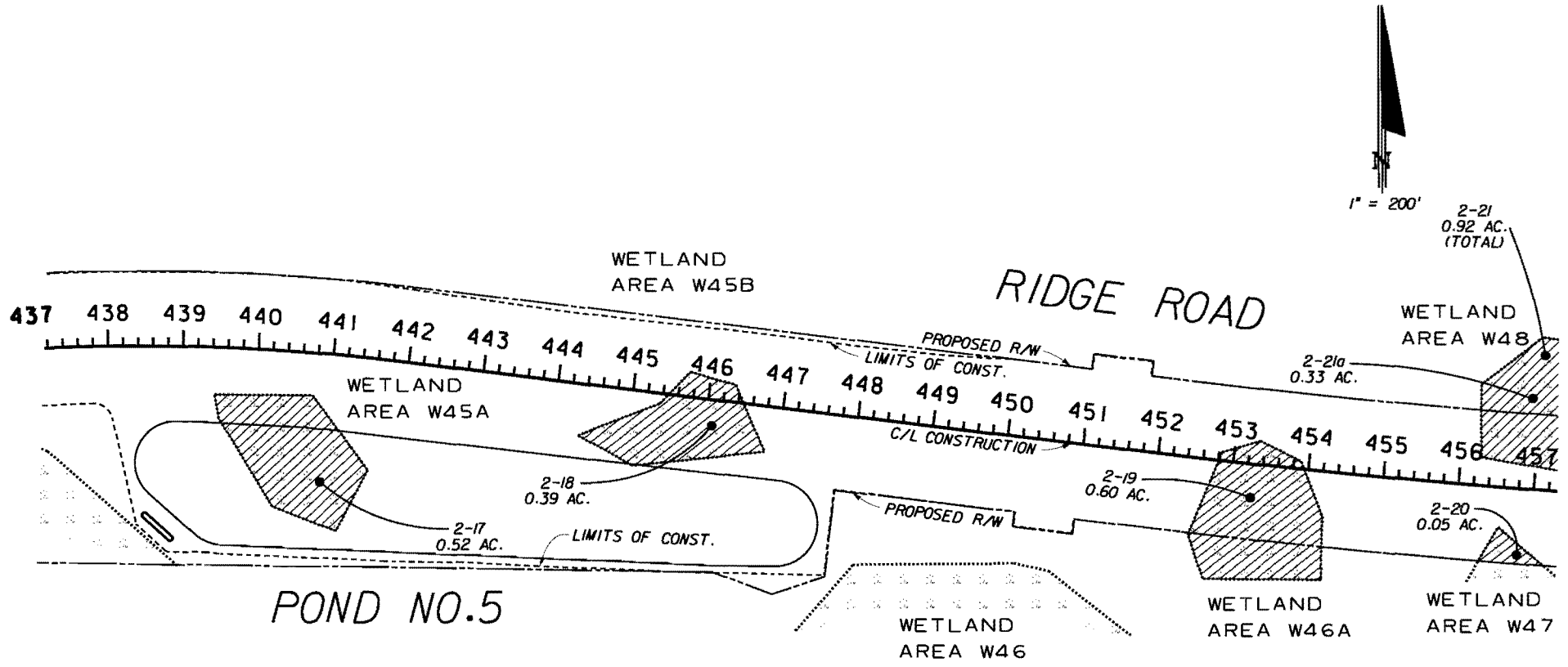



PASCO COUNTY


RIDGE ROAD EXTENSION  
 PHASE II

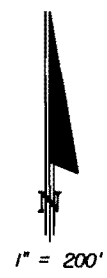
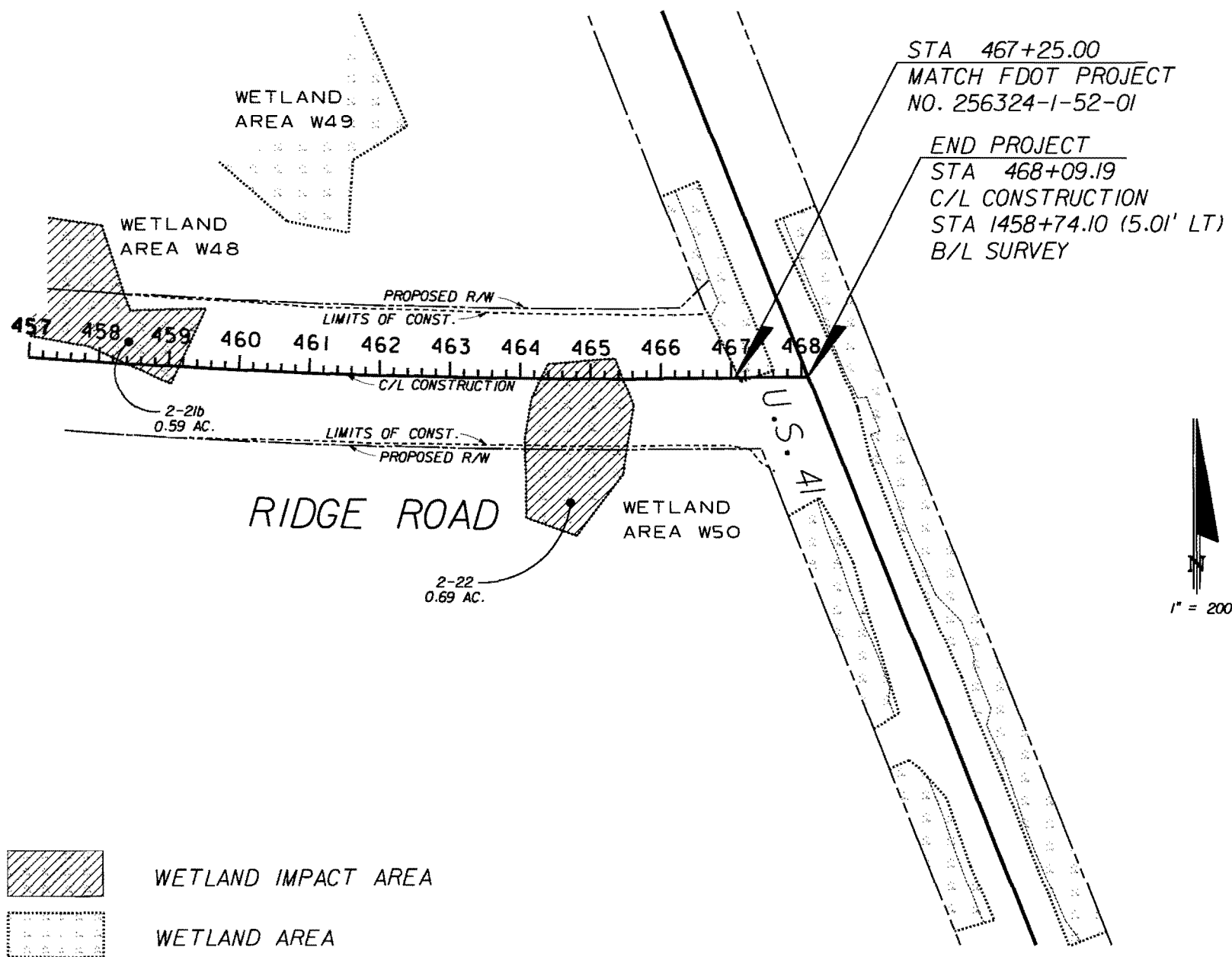
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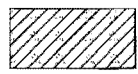



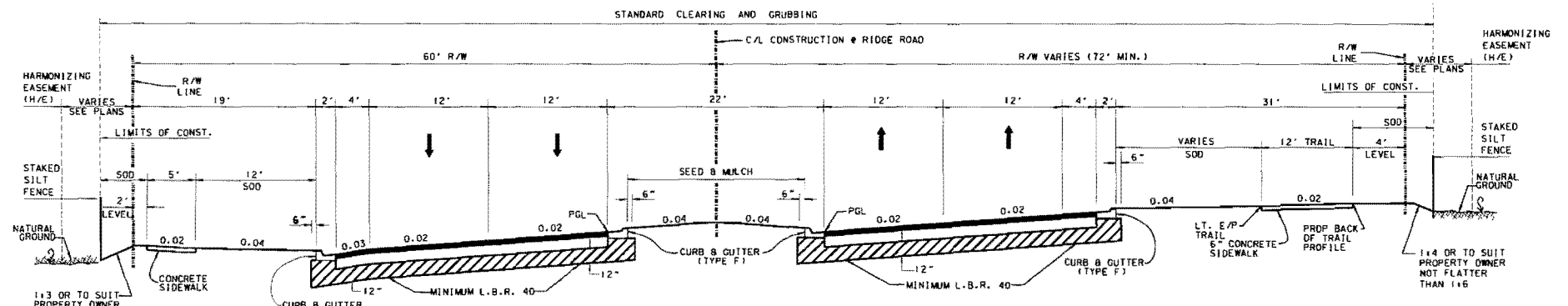


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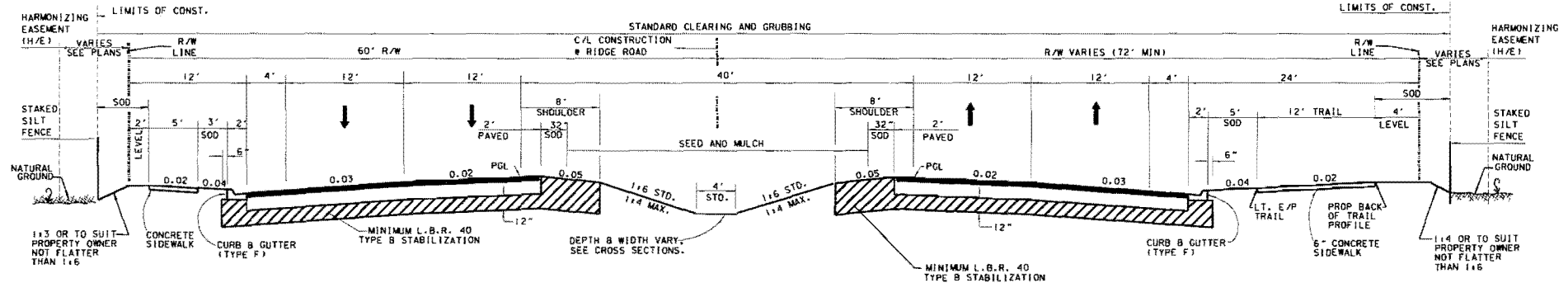


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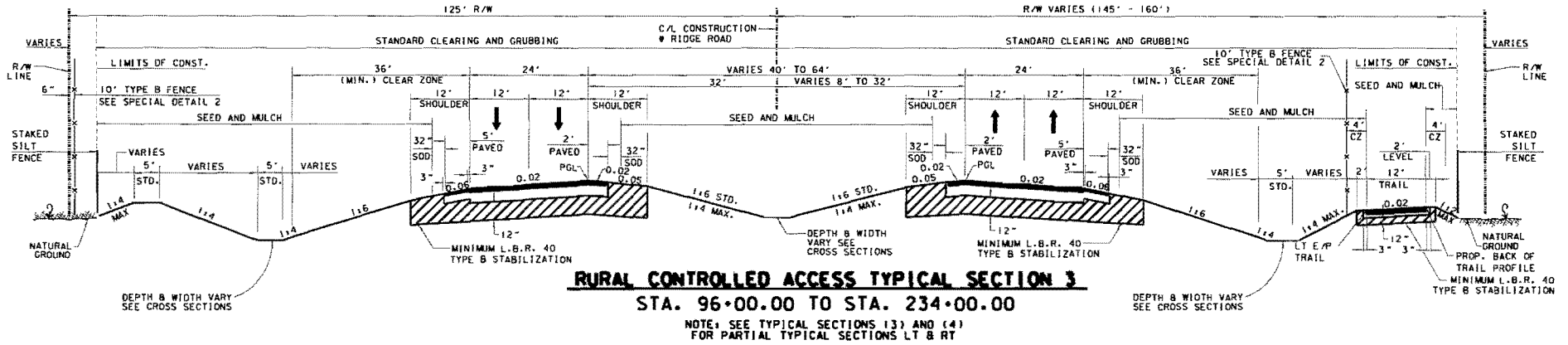
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**STA. 11+78.92 TO STA. 25+40.00**

**TRAFFIC DATA**  
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 DESIGN YEAR ESTIMATE - 2030 AADT - 30,600  
 D-50% 24-HR. T-10%  
 DESIGN SPEED - 45 M.P.H.



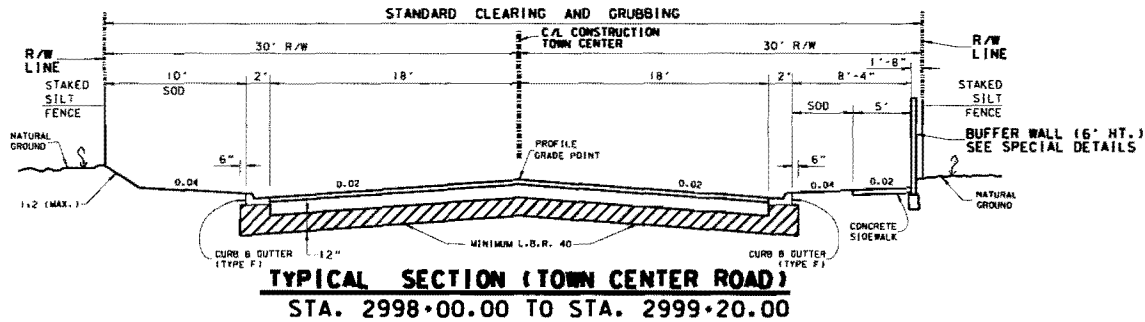
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**STA. 25+40.00 TO STA. 96+00.00**

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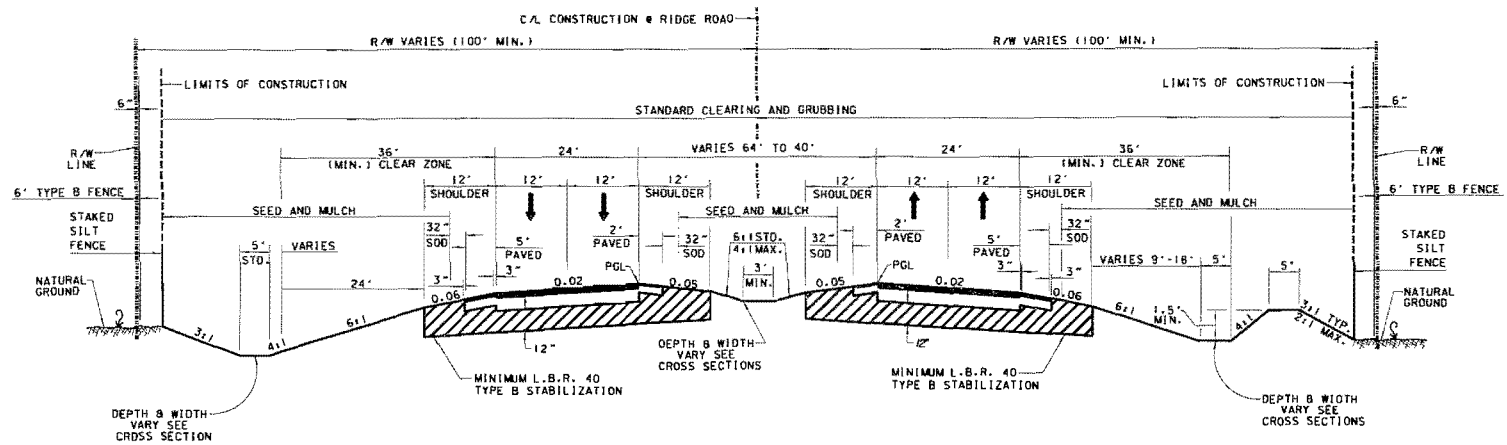


**TRAFFIC DATA**

CURRENT YEAR ESTIMATE • 2011 AADT • 0  
 DESIGN YEAR ESTIMATE • 2030 AADT • 30,600  
 D=50% 24-HR. T=10%  
 DESIGN SPEED • 70 M.P.H.







**TYPICAL SECTION**  
**STA. 286+28.00 TO STA. 320+42.35**  
**AND**  
**STA. 459+00.00 TO STA. 468+09.19**

**TRAFFIC DATA**  
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 DESIGN YEAR ESTIMATE - 203D AADT - 18,900  
 D = 50 % T = 10 % (24-HR)  
 DESIGN SPEED - 65 M.P.H.

# RIDGE ROAD/ SUNCOAST PARKWAY CONSTRUCTION

BEGIN L/A ROW  
STA 1223-77.97  
128.66 (LT)

BEGIN PROJECT  
STA 234-00.00

BEGIN L/A ROW  
STA 1223-74.31  
134.31 (LT)

B SURVEY  
RIDGE ROAD

PROPOSED R/W

POND 2

C CONSTRUCTION AND B SURVEY  
SUNCOAST PARKWAY

END CONSTRUCTION  
STA 629-24.79

EXISTING R/W

BEGIN CONSTRUCTION  
STA 314-60.00

PROPOSED R/W

EXISTING R/W

EXISTING R/W

BEGIN CONSTRUCTION  
STA 407-00.00

POND 3

POND 1

EXISTING R/W

END CONSTRUCTION  
STA 522-23.29

PROPOSED  
R/W

PROPOSED R/W

END L/A ROW  
STA 1276-11.52  
122.26 (LT)

END PROJECT  
STA 286-28.00

END L/A ROW  
STA 1275-97.78  
140.38 (LT)



WETLAND IMPACTS



**RSH**  
Rust, Smith and Hill, Inc.  
Civil Engineers, Surveyors and Planners  
Tampa, Florida

