

*Systematic Reconnaissance Flights and Exotic Plant Species Mapping at Selected
National Wildlife Refuges in Florida*

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Submitted to
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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Methods	3
Results	3
Acknowledgements	4
References	4
Figure 1: 2005 A.R.M.Loxahatchee NWR - <i>Casuarina equisetifolia</i> SRF.	5
Figure 2: 2005 A.R.M.Loxahatchee NWR - <i>Lygodium microphyllum</i> SRF.	6
Figure 3: 2005 A.R.M.Loxahatchee NWR - <i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i> SRF.	7
Figure 4: 2005 A.R.M.Loxahatchee NWR - <i>Pistia stratioides</i> SRF.	8
Figure 5: 2005 A.R.M.Loxahatchee NWR - <i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i> SRF.	9
Figure 6: 2005 Caloosahatchee NWR- <i>Acacia auriculiformis</i> SRF.	10
Figure 7: 2005 Caloosahatchee NWR - <i>Casuarina equisetifolia</i> SRF.	11
Figure 8: 2005 Caloosahatchee NWR - <i>Roystonea regia</i> SRF.	12
Figure 9: 2005 Caloosahatchee NWR - <i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i> SRF.	13
Figure 10: 2005 Florida Panther NWR- <i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i> SRF.	14
Figure 11: 2005 Island Bay NWR- <i>Cocos nucifera</i> SRF.	15
Figure 12: 2005 Island Bay NWR - <i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i> SRF.	16
Figure 13: 2005 Matlatcha Pass NWR- <i>Casuarina equisetifolia</i> SRF.	17
Figure 14: 2005 Matlatcha Pass NWR - <i>Cocos nucifera</i> SRF.	18
Figure 15: 2005 Matlatcha Pass NWR - <i>Colubrina asiatica</i> SRF.	19
Figure 16: 2005 Matlatcha Pass NWR - <i>Scaevola sericea</i> SRF.	20
Figure 17: 2005 Matlatcha Pass NWR - <i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i> SRF.	21
Figure 18: 2005 Merritt Island NWR - <i>Bambusa sp.</i> SRF.	22
Figure 19: 2005 Merritt Island NWR - <i>Casuarina equisetifolia</i> SRF.	23
Figure 20: 2005 Merritt Island NWR - <i>Imperata cylindrica</i> SRF.	24
Figure 21: 2005 Merritt Island NWR - <i>Melaleuca quinquenervia</i> SRF.	25
Figure 22: 2005 Merritt Island NWR - <i>Panicum maximum</i> SRF.	26
Figure 23: 2005 Merritt Island NWR - <i>Pennisetum purpureum</i> SRF.	27
Figure 24: 2005 Merritt Island NWR - <i>Ricinus communis</i> SRF.	28
Figure 25: 2005 Merritt Island NWR - <i>Roystonea regia</i> SRF.	29
Figure 26: 2005 Merritt Island NWR - <i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i> SRF.	30
Figure 27: 2005 Pine Island NWR - <i>Agave/Furcraea sp.</i> SRF.	31
Figure 28: 2005 Pine Island NWR - <i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i> SRF.	32
Figure 29: 2005 St. John's NWR - <i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i> SRF.	33
Figure 30: 2005 Ten Thousand Islands NWR - <i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i> SRF.	34

Cover photo: An island in Matlatcha Pass National Wildlife, Steven W. Woodmansee.

*This report has been amended and corrected from the May 11, 2005 version.

Introduction

The Institute for Regional Conservation (IRC) was hired to map invasive exotic vascular plant species during systematic reconnaissance flights across nine National Wildlife Refuges in Florida.

Methods

In February and April 2005 systematic reconnaissance flights were conducted over nine National Wildlife Refuges. Flights over Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee and Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuges were done in February during the time period when the pond cypress (*Taxodium ascendens*) have shed their needles enabling biologists to better see exotic plant species. IRC staff hired a pilot and rented a fixed wing aircraft to fly over all National Wildlife Refuges. Over Florida Panther, Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee, Ten Thousand Islands, St. John's, and Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuges a square kilometer grid was created and east/west transects along this grid were flown starting on the south end of each refuge. It was decided by IRC staff, and agreed upon by USFWS staff, that rather than fly transects across the remaining refuges (Island Bay, Pine Island, Matlacha Pass, and Caloosahatchee National Wildlife Refuges) that each individual island within the refuge would be flown over and observations were to be hand written on a sketch map brought aboard the aircraft. In addition, the northeast portion of Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, a barrier island, flights were made along the coast of each side of the island. While flying transects across the remaining area, a GPS recorder was brought on board and coordinates, species, and local infestation intensity of each exotic plant encountered were recorded by IRC biologists. Exotic plant density levels were defined as single stem, sparse, and dense categories. Transects were flown at an altitude of 500 feet as allowed by law at a speed of approximately 60 mph as conditions permitted.

Although every attempt was made to gain permission from the U.S. Air Force and NASA, restricted airspace (surrounding the space shuttle and launch pad) within Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge was not surveyed.

Data were downloaded, and using a mapping program, overlaid on maps of each refuge. Data were interpreted and each island or square kilometer cell (cell) within the refuges was assigned a value. Due to the lag time during GPS position recording, species located 130 meters outside the grid toward the directional heading were assigned to the previous cell. Maps were then created for all exotic species observed at each refuge.

Plant taxonomy follows Wunderlin (1998).

Results

A total of 16 exotic plant taxa were mapped during this survey. Among them *Acacia auriculiformis*, *Casuarina equisetifolia*, *Cocos nucifera*, *Colubrina asiatica*, *Imperata cylindrica*, *Lygodium microphyllum*, *Melaleuca quinquenervia*, *Pistia stratioides*, *Roystonea regia*, *Scaevola sericea*, *Schinus terebinthifolius*, and the partial taxon *Agave/Furcraea* sp. were invading intact plant communities. *Bambusa* sp., *Panicum maximum*, *Pennisetum purpureum*, and *Ricinus communis* were observed in disturbance areas at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge.

Although listed by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services as endangered in the state of Florida, *Roystonea regia* was mapped since in these preserves, it occurred outside of its natural range. In addition, in the case of the *Agave/Furcraea*, positive identification of the taxon should be made on the ground to verify that this is not a native species before removal takes place.

For maps of exotic plants see figures 1-30. In addition to this report all the electronic files include ARC Map documents and JPEGs of all the maps.

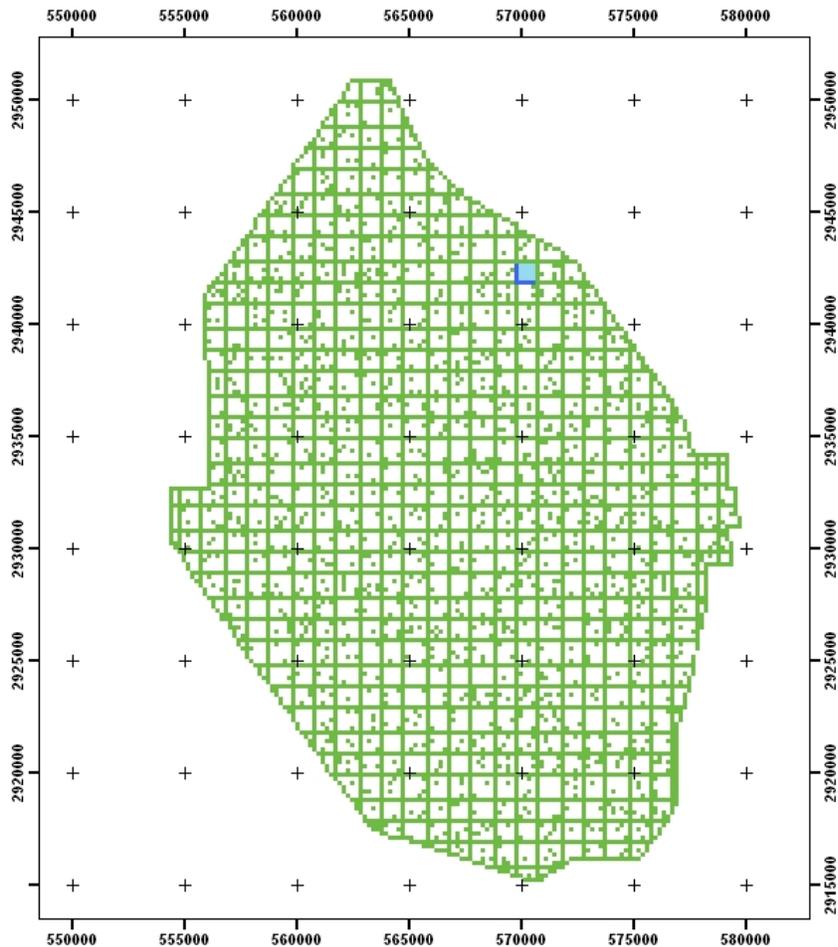
Acknowledgements

The authors wish to acknowledge Ron Auringer who piloted the aircraft and George Sigler of Speed Aviation Inc. who provided the aircraft. William G. Thomas Jr. helped by providing contact information of refuge managers and other key persons. Jeffrey Schardt of Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge greatly aided us in obtaining permission from U.S. Air Force in NASA to fly in restricted air space at the refuge. Cheri Erhardt from Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge supplied maps of the refuge. Mike Barry, Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, provided information on his observations of exotic pest plants within the refuge. We also wish to thank the U.S. Air Force and NASA for permitting us to fly in portions of their restricted air space.

References

Wunderlin, Richard. P. 1998. Guide to the Vascular Plants of Florida. Gainesville, University Press of Florida.

Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005



Data collected February 2005 by
 Steven W. Woodmansee and Stephen Hodge
 Map prepared by Steven W. Woodmansee and Keith Bradley
 The Institute for Regional Conservation
 Miami, FL
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Casuarina equisetifolia

-  none
-  sparse

Figure 1: 2005 Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge - *Casuarina equisetifolia* SRF.

Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge
Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
May 2005

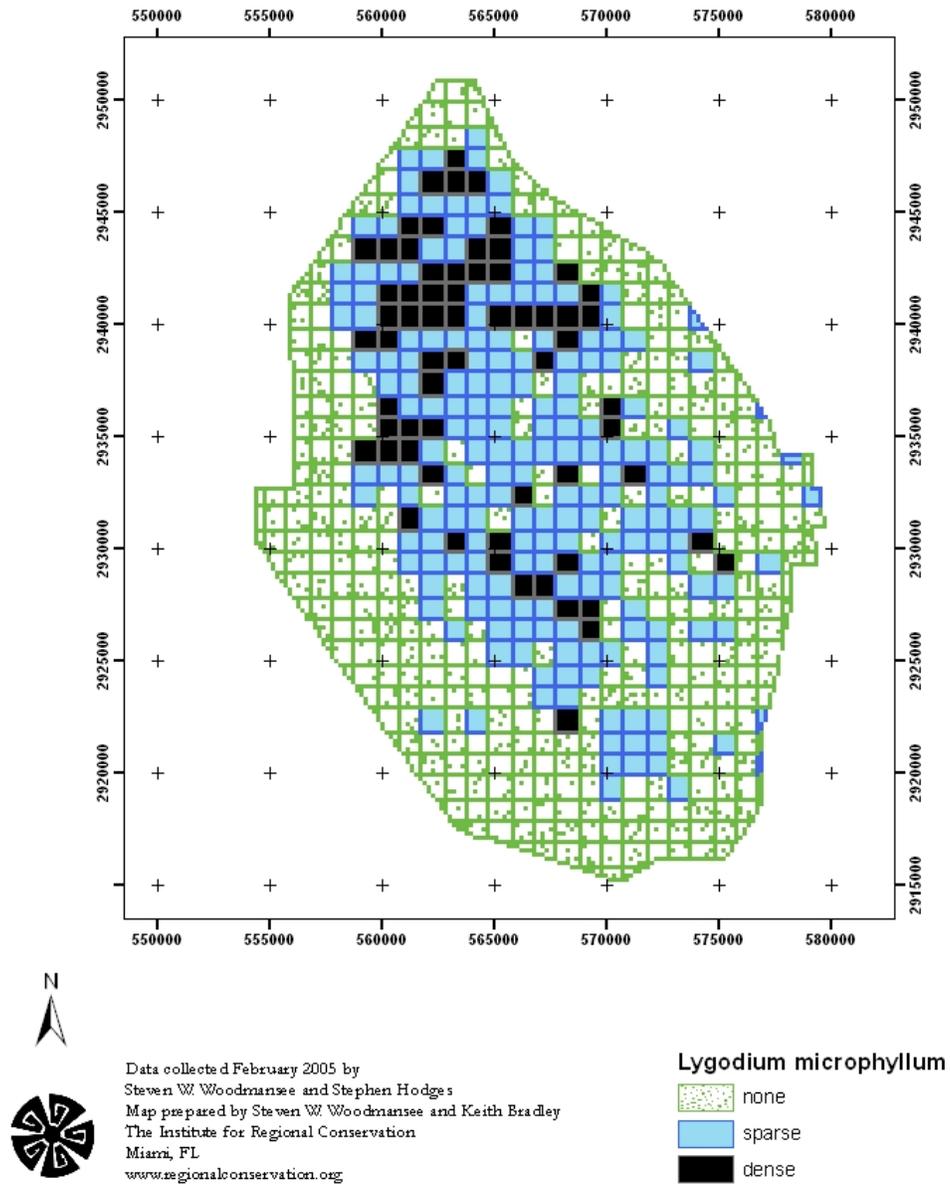


Figure 2: 2005 Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge – *Lygodium microphyllum* SRF.

Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005

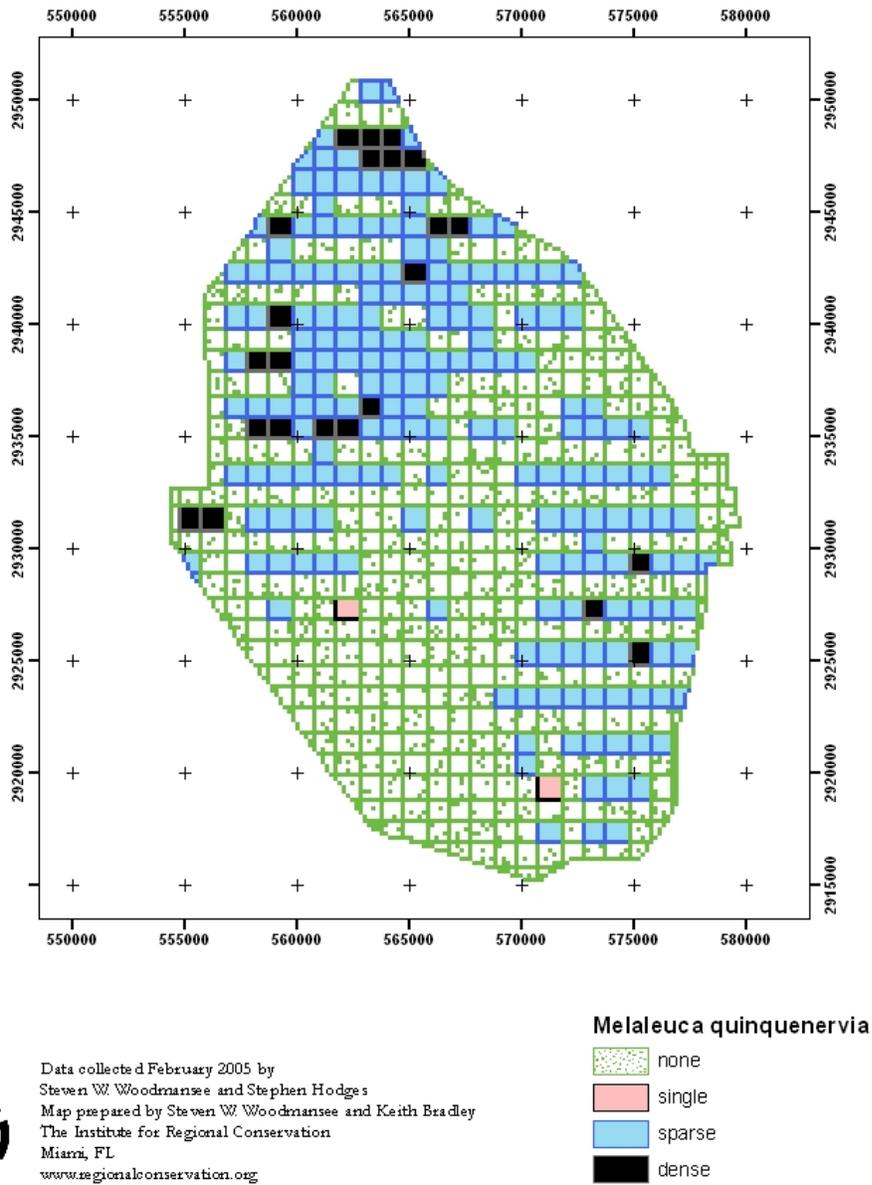
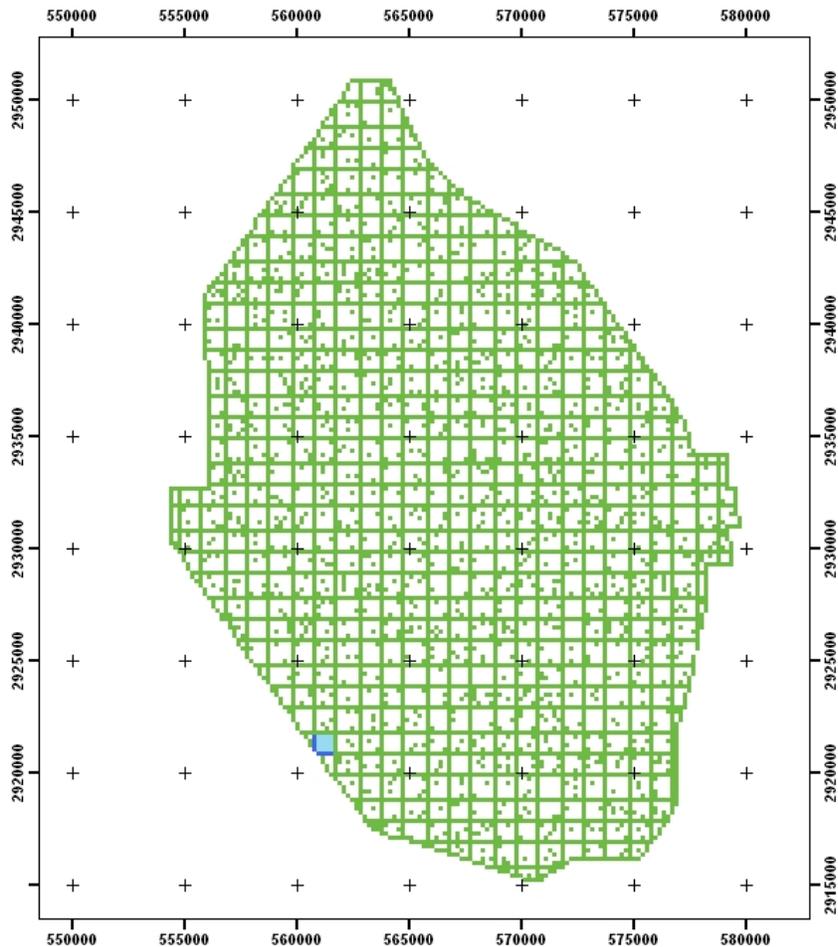


Figure 3: 2005 Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge – *Melaleuca quinquenervia* SRF.

Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge
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 May 2005



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Pistia stratiotes

- none
- sparse

Figure 4: 2005 Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge – *Pistia stratioides* SRF.

Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005

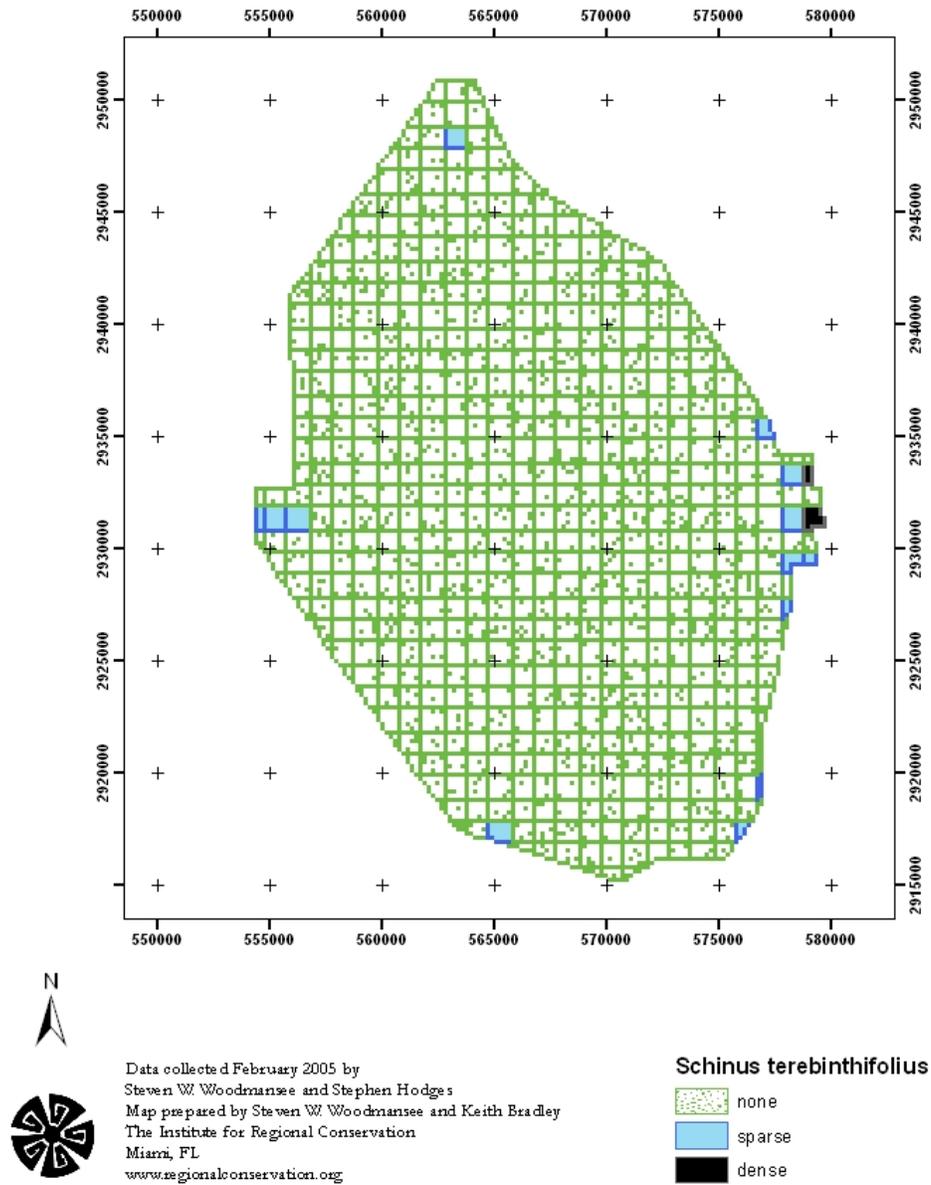


Figure 5: 2005 Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge – *Schinus terebinthifolius* SRF.

Caloosahatchee National Wildlife Refuge
Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
May 2005

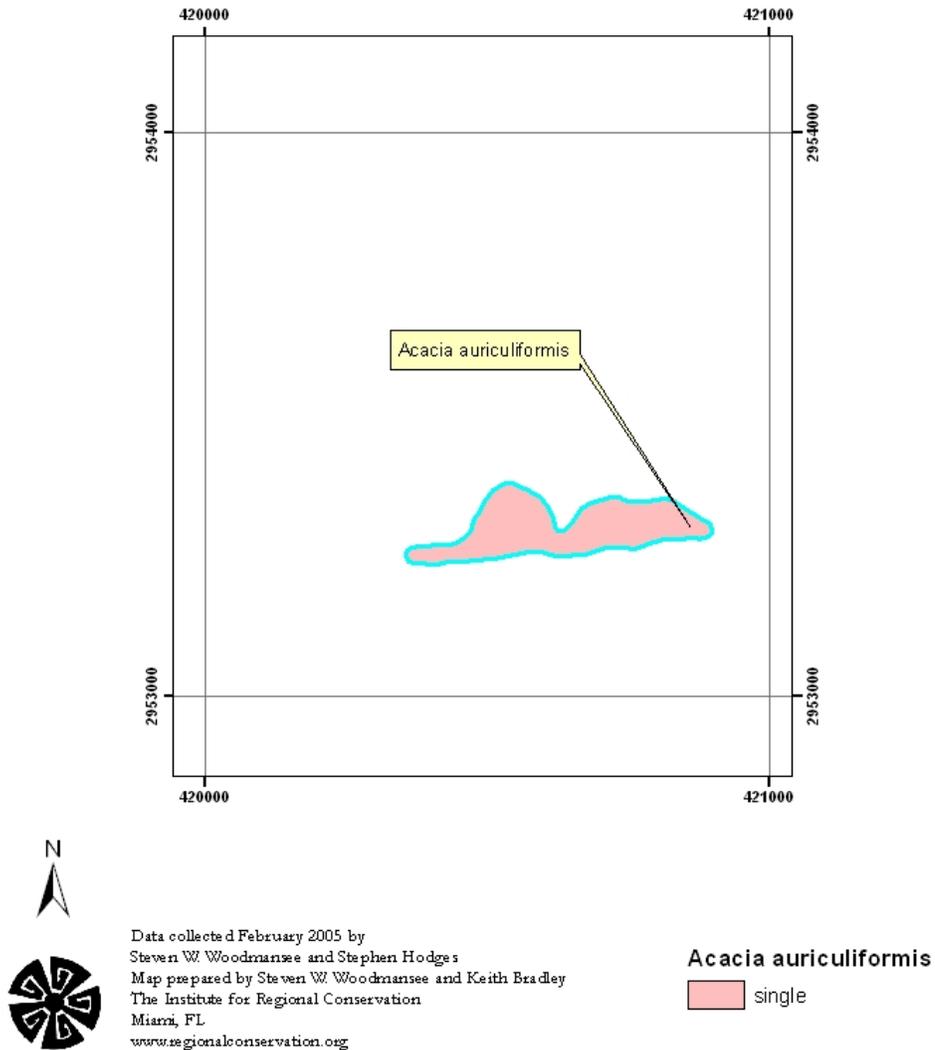


Figure 6: 2005 Caloosahatchee National Wildlife Refuge – *Acacia auriculiformis* SRF.

Caloosahatchee National Wildlife Refuge
Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
May 2005

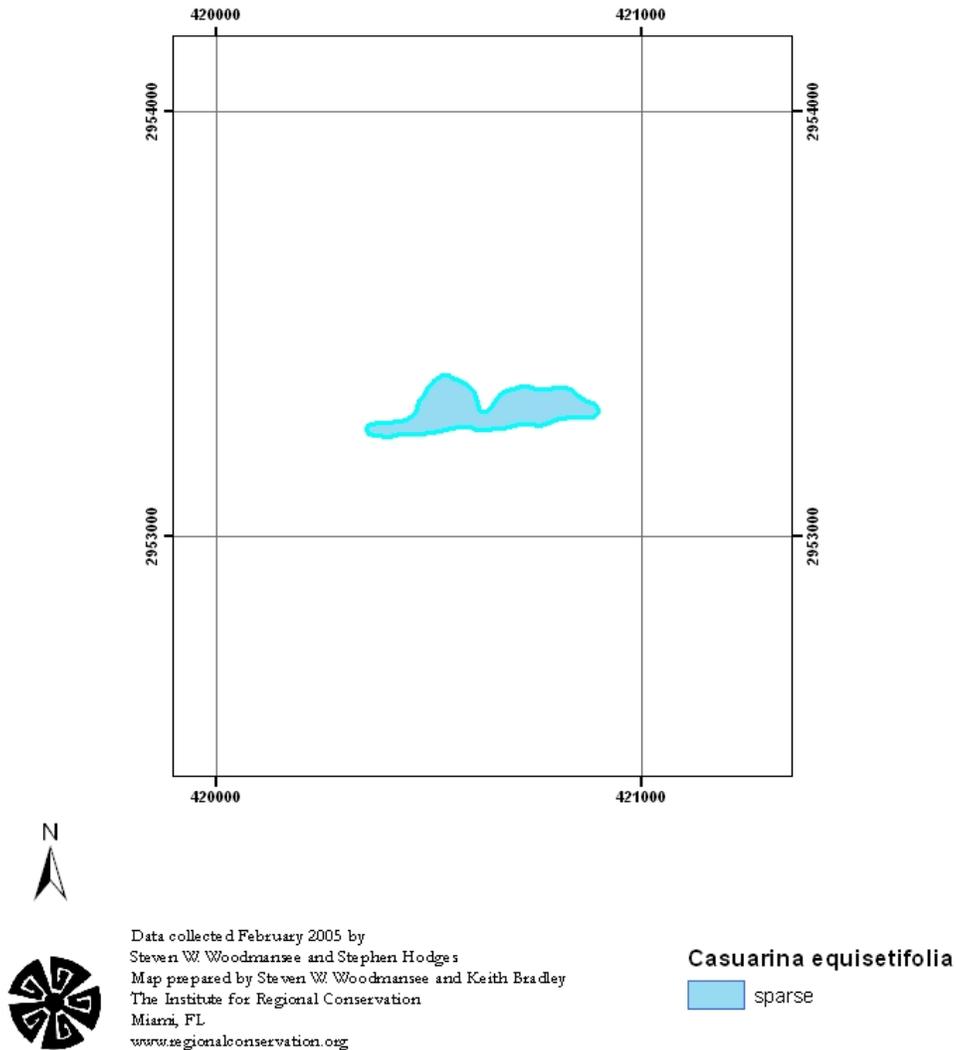


Figure 7: 2005 Caloosahatchee National Wildlife Refuge – *Casuarina equisetifolia* SRF.

Caloosahatchee National Wildlife Refuge
Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
May 2005

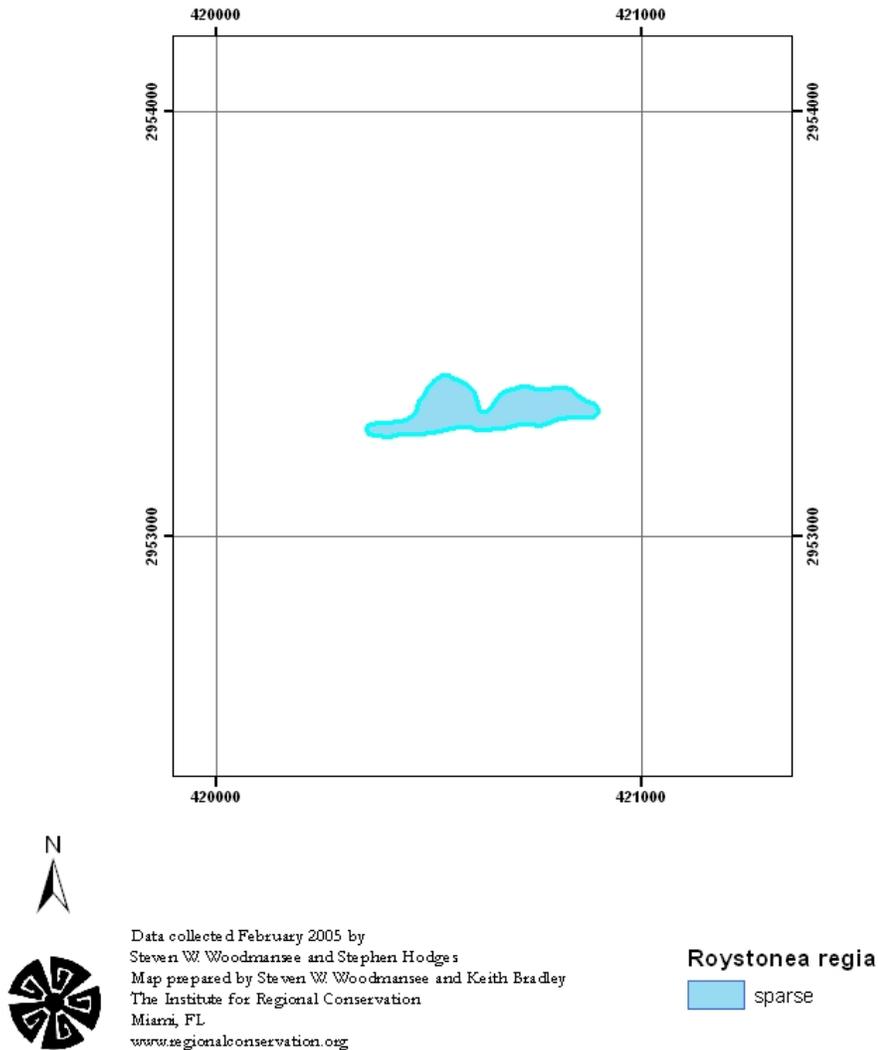


Figure 8: 2005 Caloosahatchee National Wildlife Refuge – *Roystonea regia* SRF.

Caloosahatchee National Wildlife Refuge
Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
May 2005

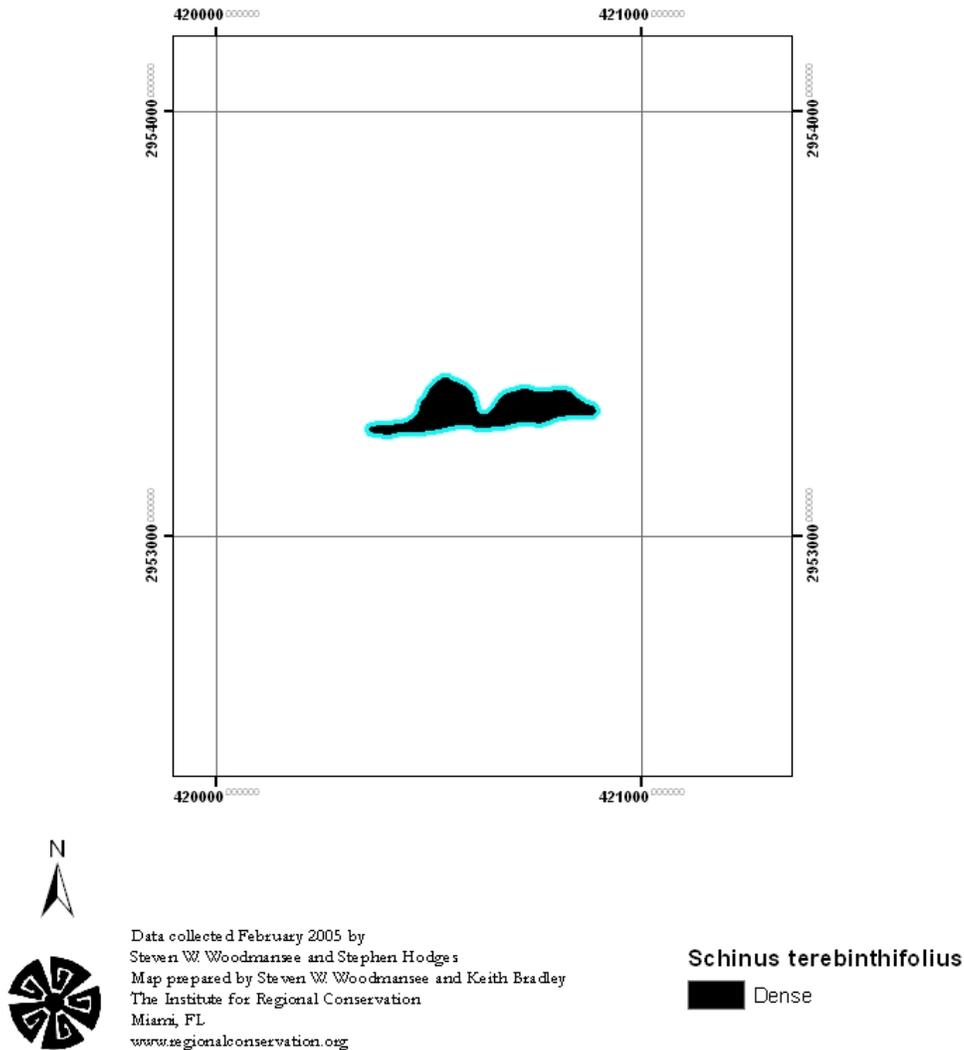
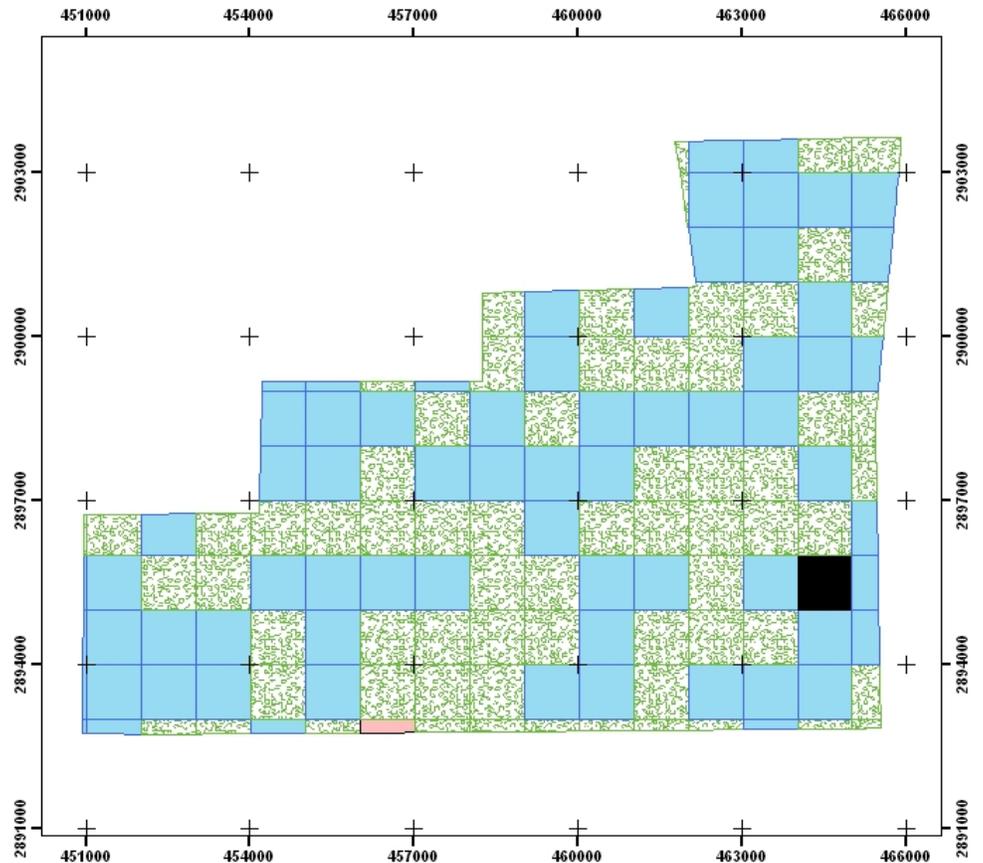


Figure 9: 2005 Caloosahatchee National Wildlife Refuge – *Schinus terebinthifolius* SRF.

Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005



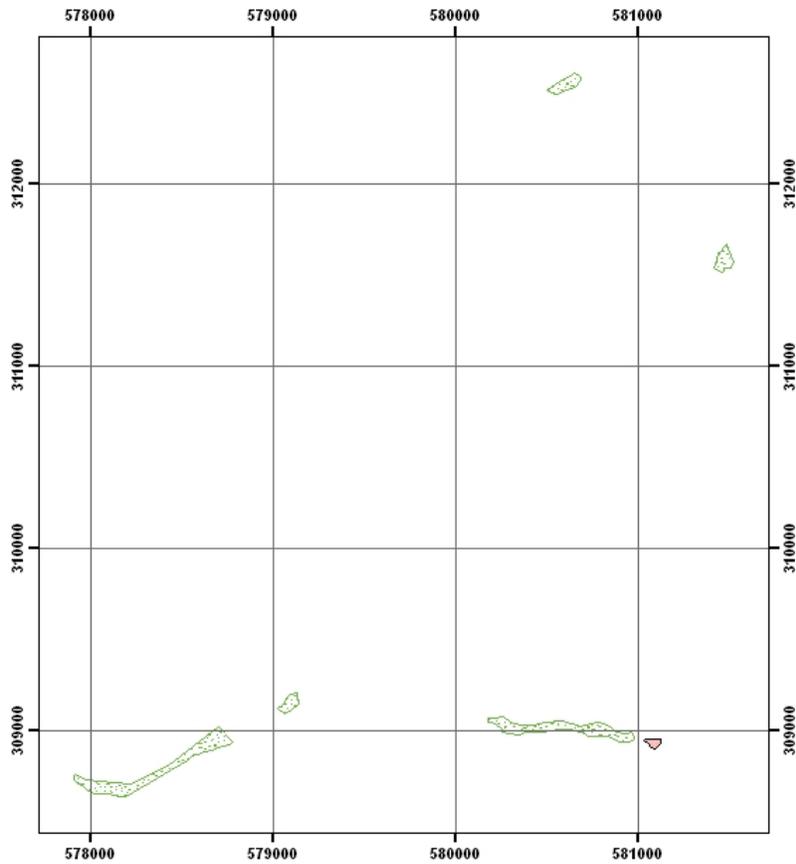
Data collected February 2005 by
 Steven W. Woodmansee and Stephen Hodge
 Map prepared by Steven W. Woodmansee and Keith Bradley
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 Miami, FL
www.regionalconservation.org

Schinus terebinthifolius

-  none
-  single
-  sparse
-  dense

Figure 10: 2005 Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge – *Schinus terebinthifolius* SRF.

Island Bay National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005

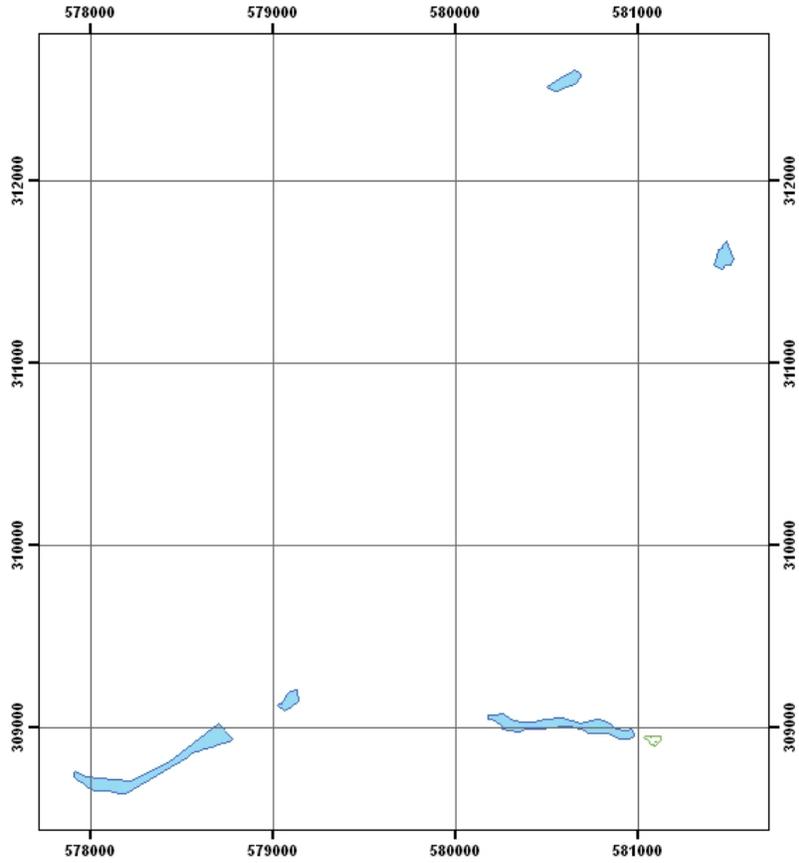


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 Map prepared by Steven W. Woodmansee and Keith Bradley
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Cocos nucifera
 none
 single

Figure 11: 2005 Island Bay National Wildlife Refuge – *Cocos nucifera* SRF.

Island Bay National Wildlife Refuge
Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
May 2005



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Map prepared by Steven W. Woodmansee and Keith Bradley
The Institute for Regional Conservation
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Schinus terebinthifolius

- none
- sparse

Figure 12: 2005 Island Bay National Wildlife Refuge – *Schinus terebinthifolius* SRF.

Matlatcha Pass National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005

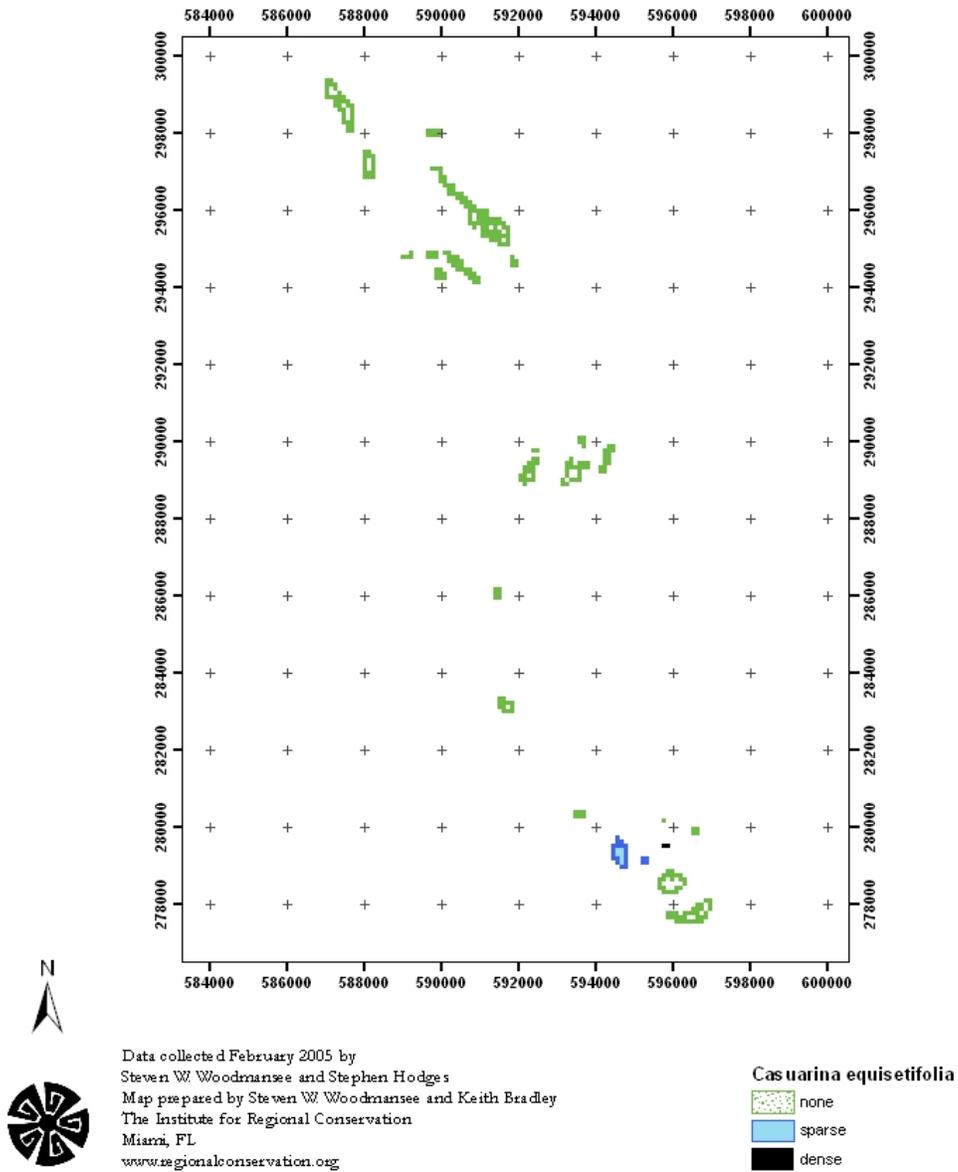


Figure 13: 2005 Matlatcha Pass National Wildlife Refuge – *Casuarina equisetifolia* SRF.

Matlatcha Pass National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005

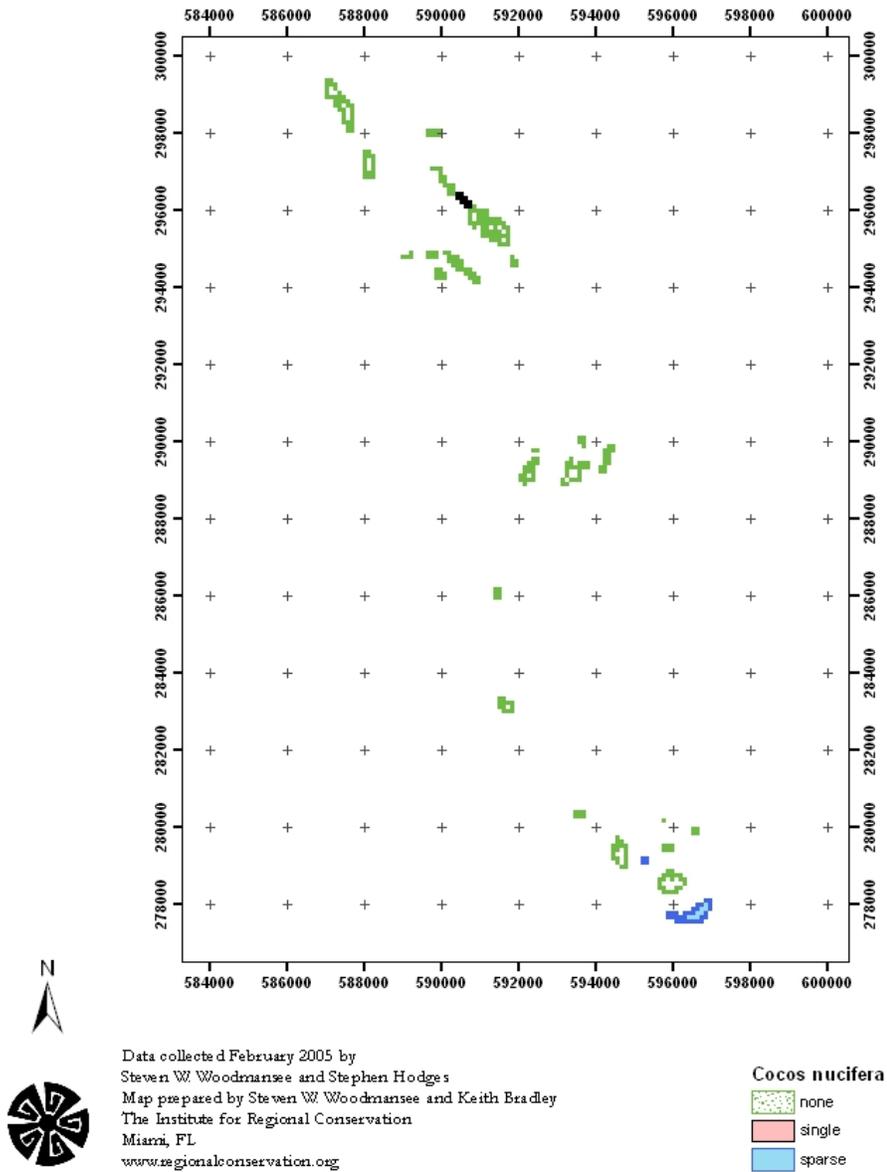


Figure 14: 2005 Matlatcha Pass National Wildlife Refuge – *Cocos nucifera* SRF.

Matlatcha Pass National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005

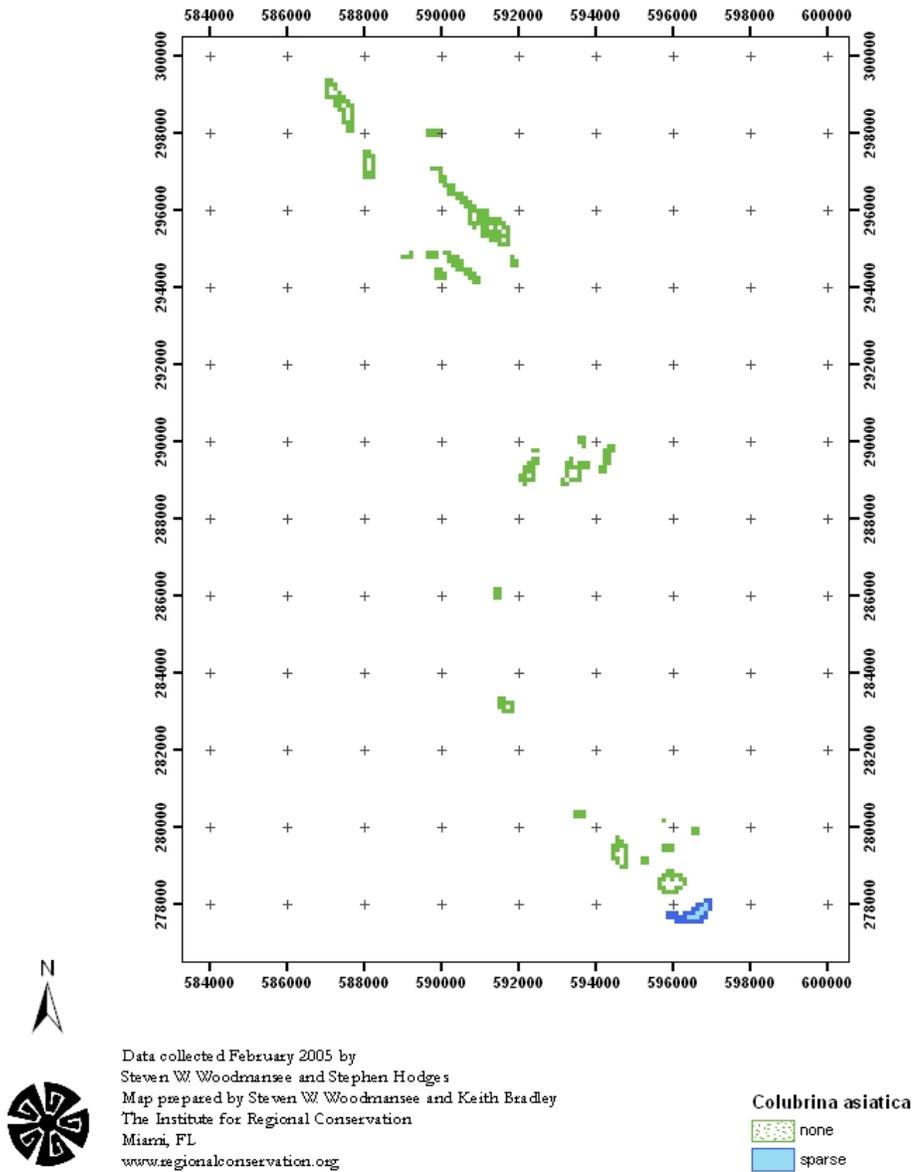


Figure 15: 2005 Matlatcha Pass National Wildlife Refuge – *Colubrina asiatica* SRF.

Matlatcha Pass National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005

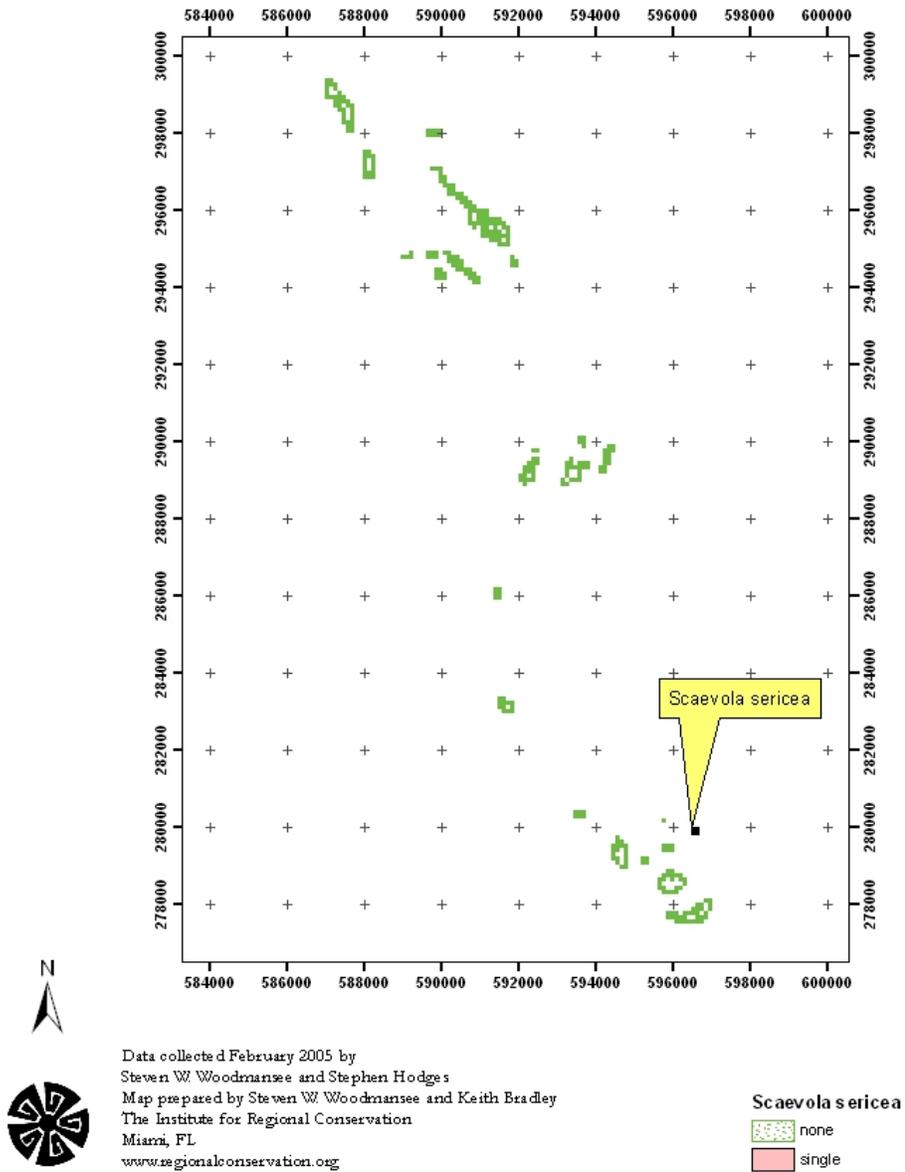


Figure 16: 2005 Matlatcha Pass National Wildlife Refuge – *Scaevola sericea* SRF.

Matlatcha Pass National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005

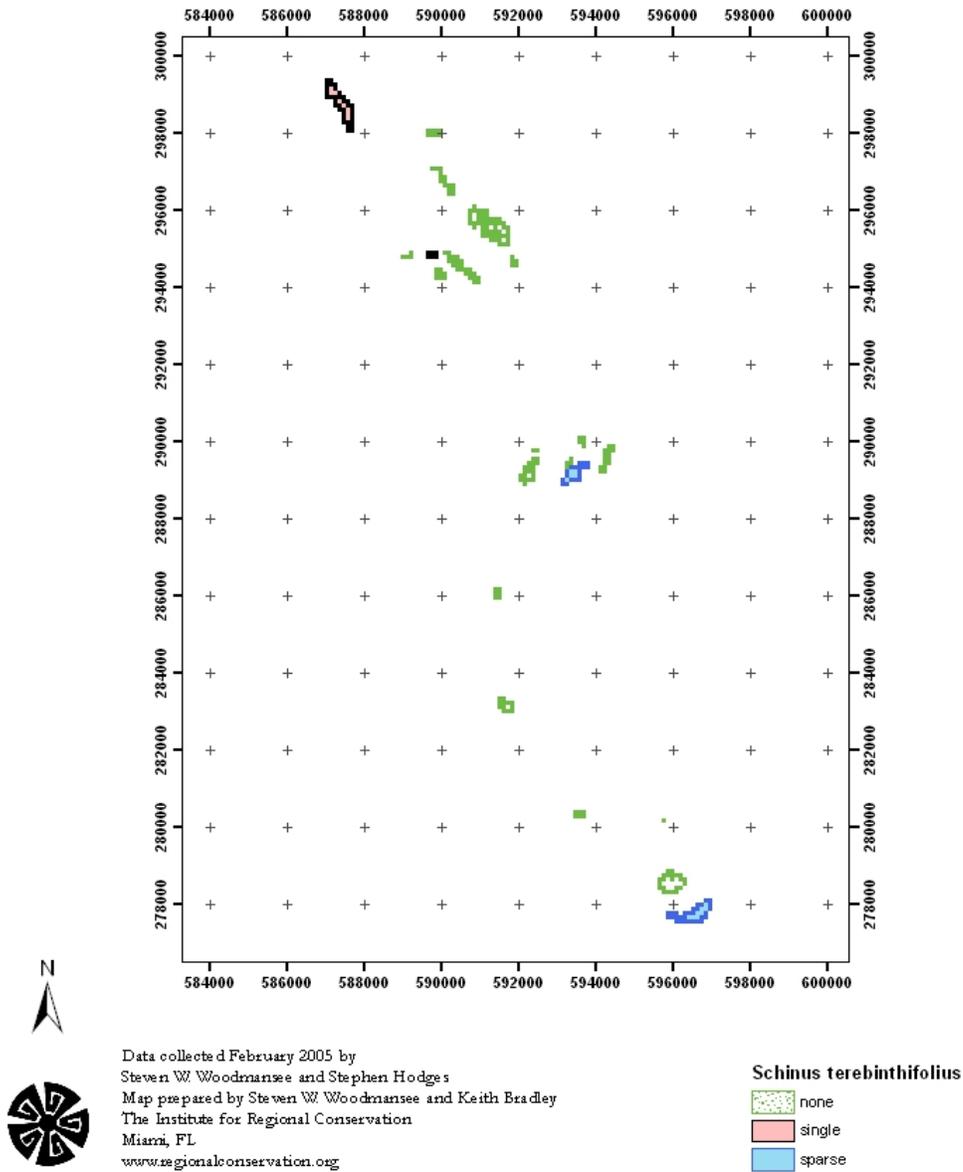


Figure 17: 2005 Matlatcha Pass National Wildlife Refuge – *Schinus terebinthifolius* SRF.

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005

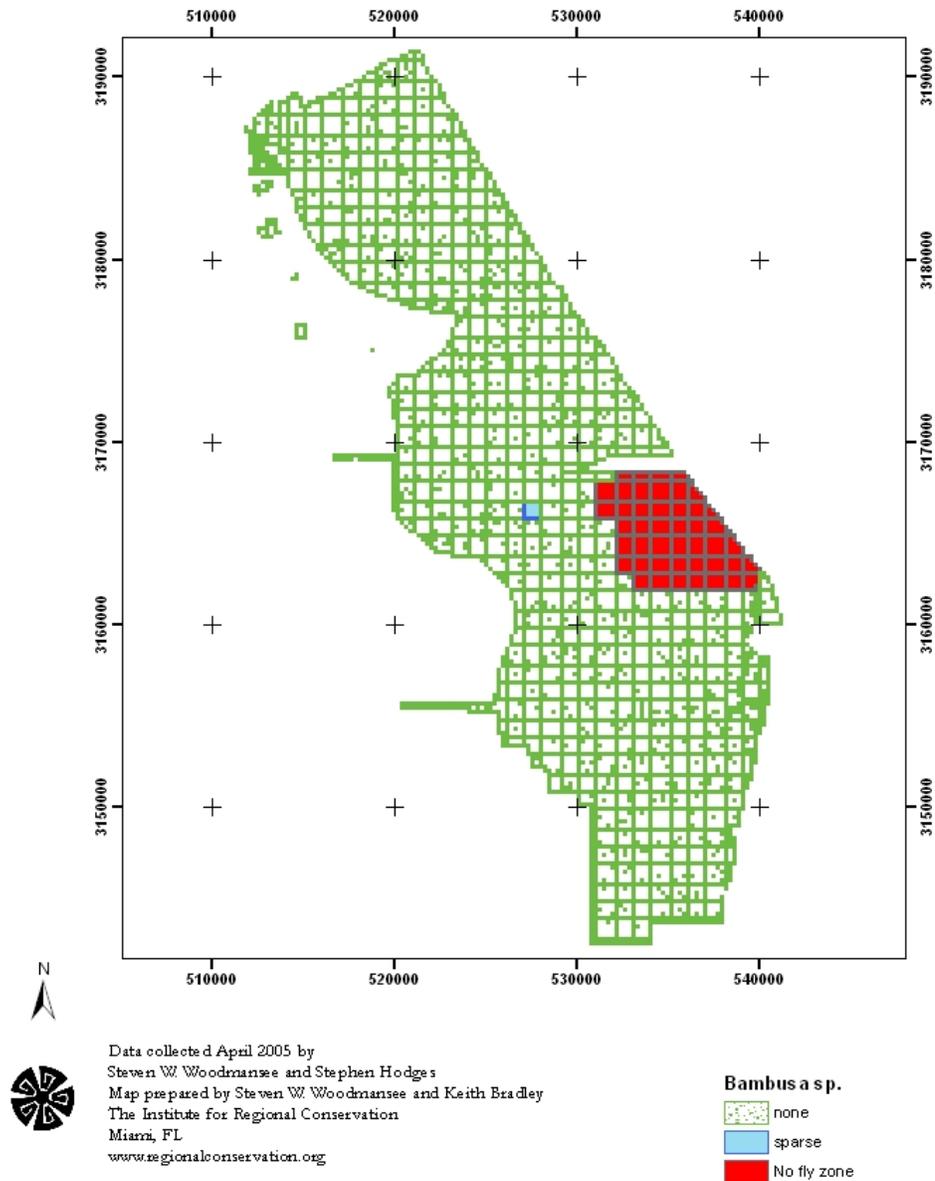


Figure 18: 2005 Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge – *Bambusa sp.* SRF.

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005

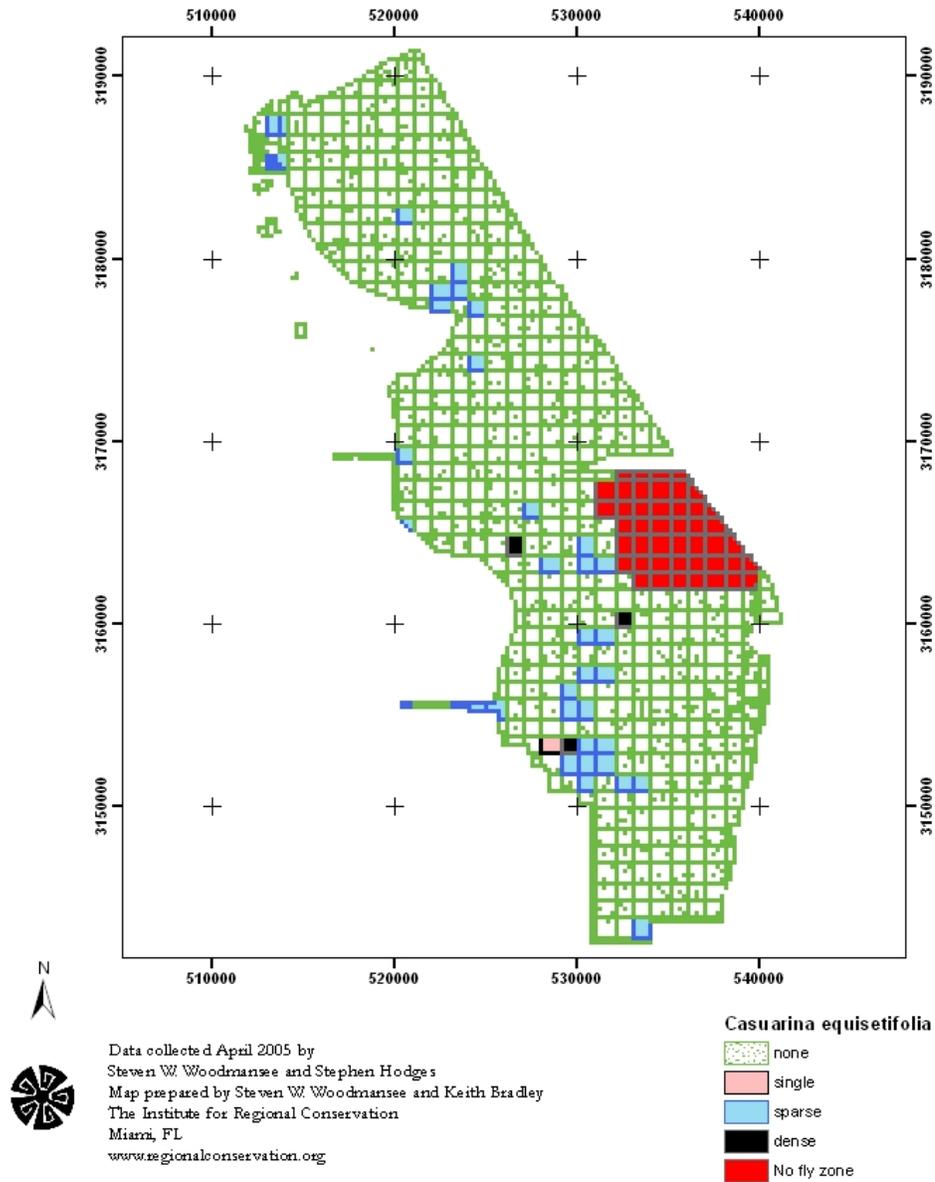


Figure 19: 2005 Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge – *Casuarina equisetifolia* SRF.

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005

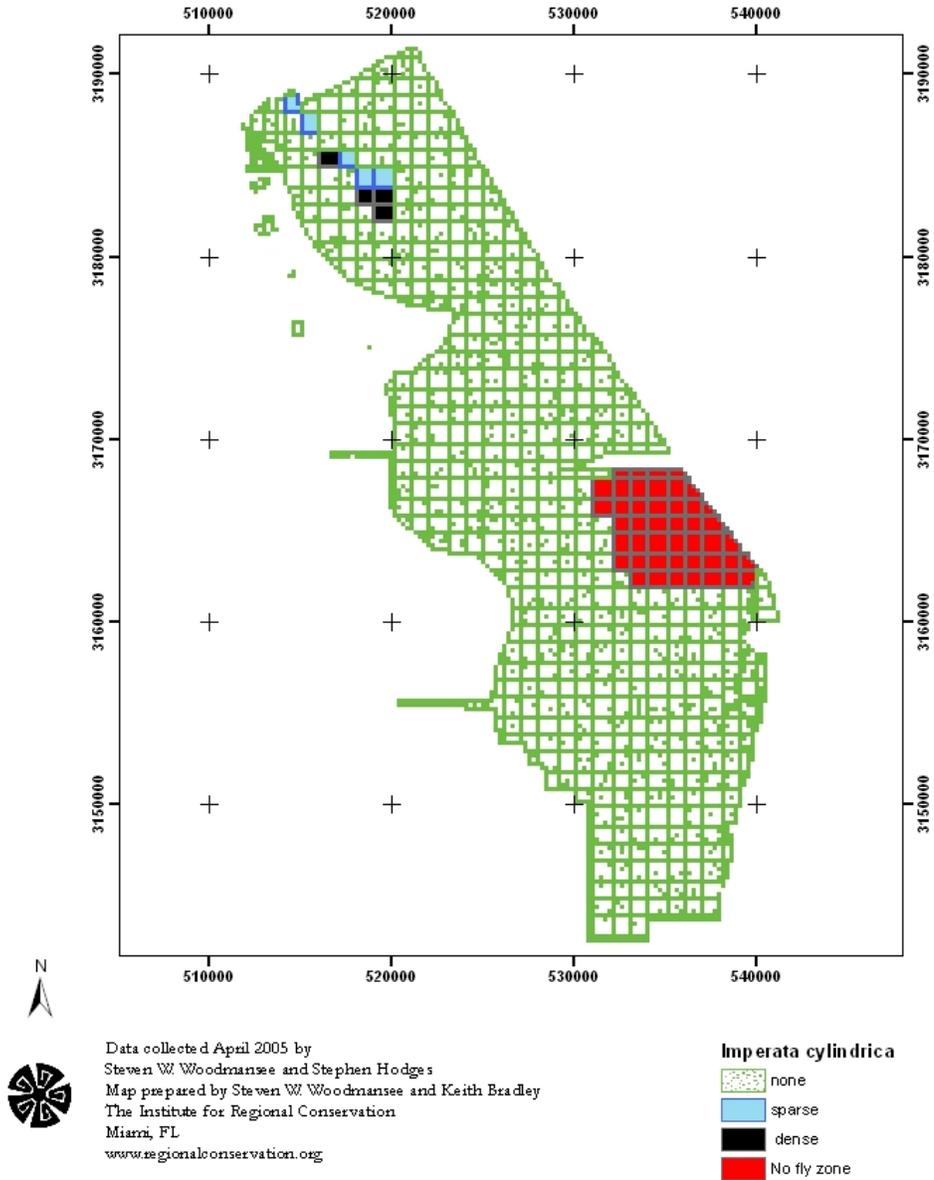


Figure 20: 2005 Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge – *Imperata cylindrica* SRF.

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005

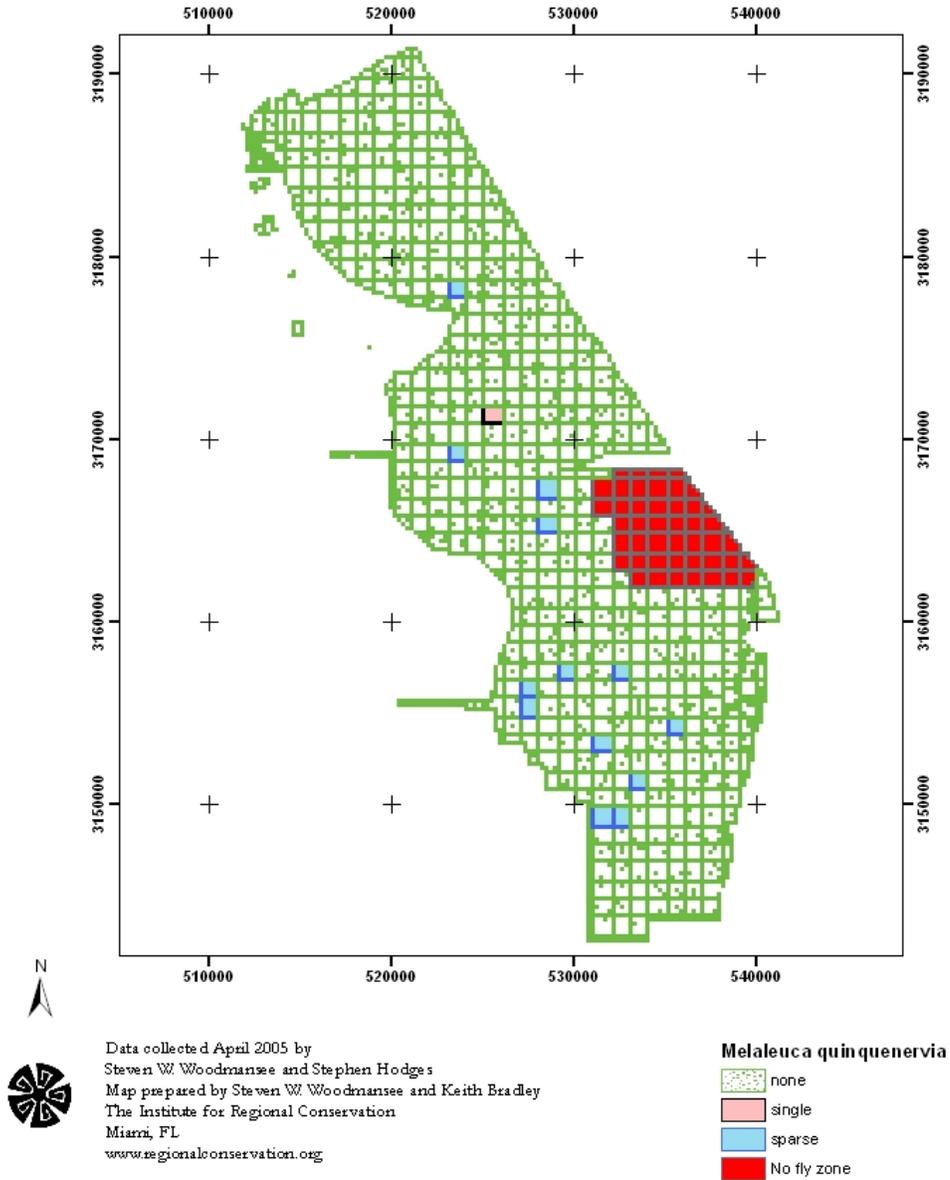


Figure 21: 2005 Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge – *Melaleuca quinquenervia* SRF.

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
May 2005

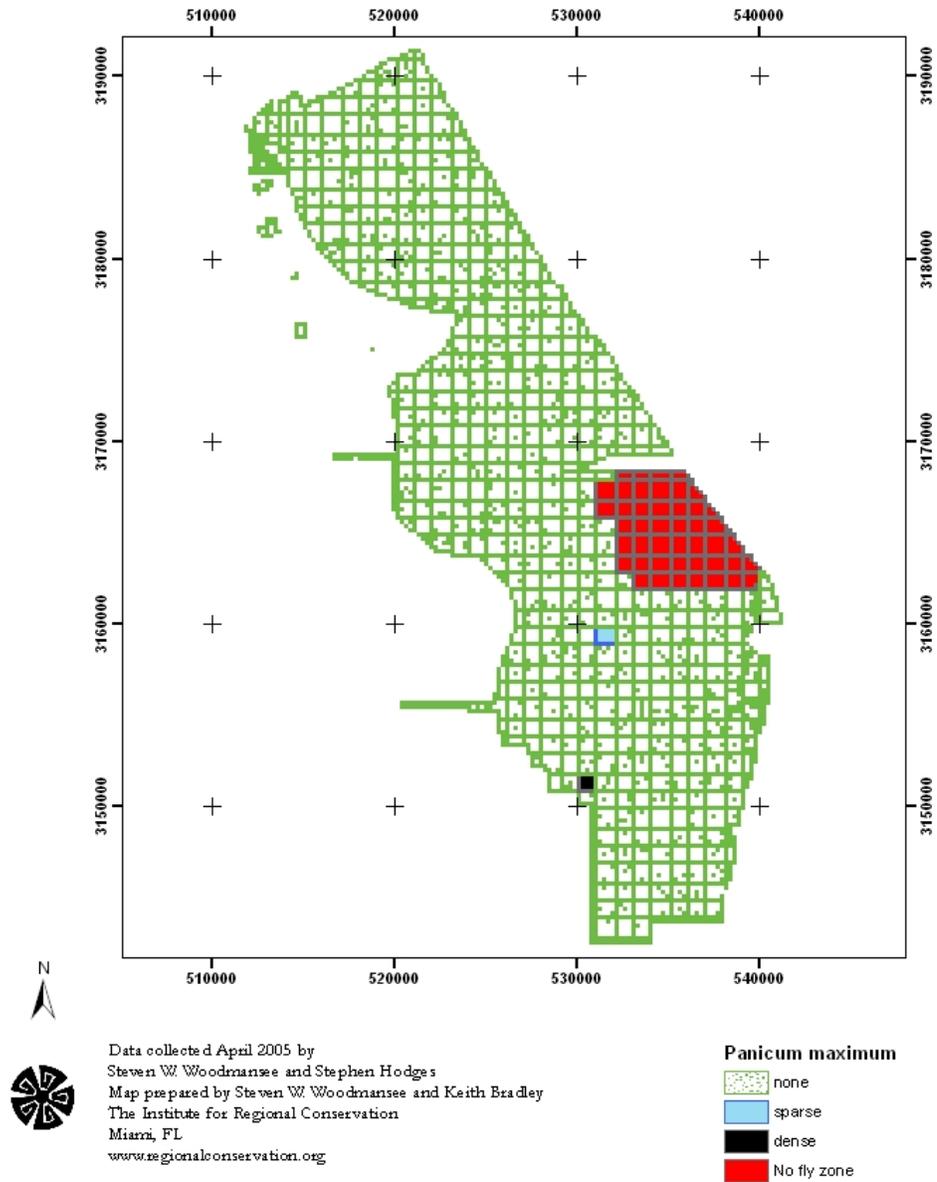


Figure 22: 2005 Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge – *Panicum maximum* SRF.

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005

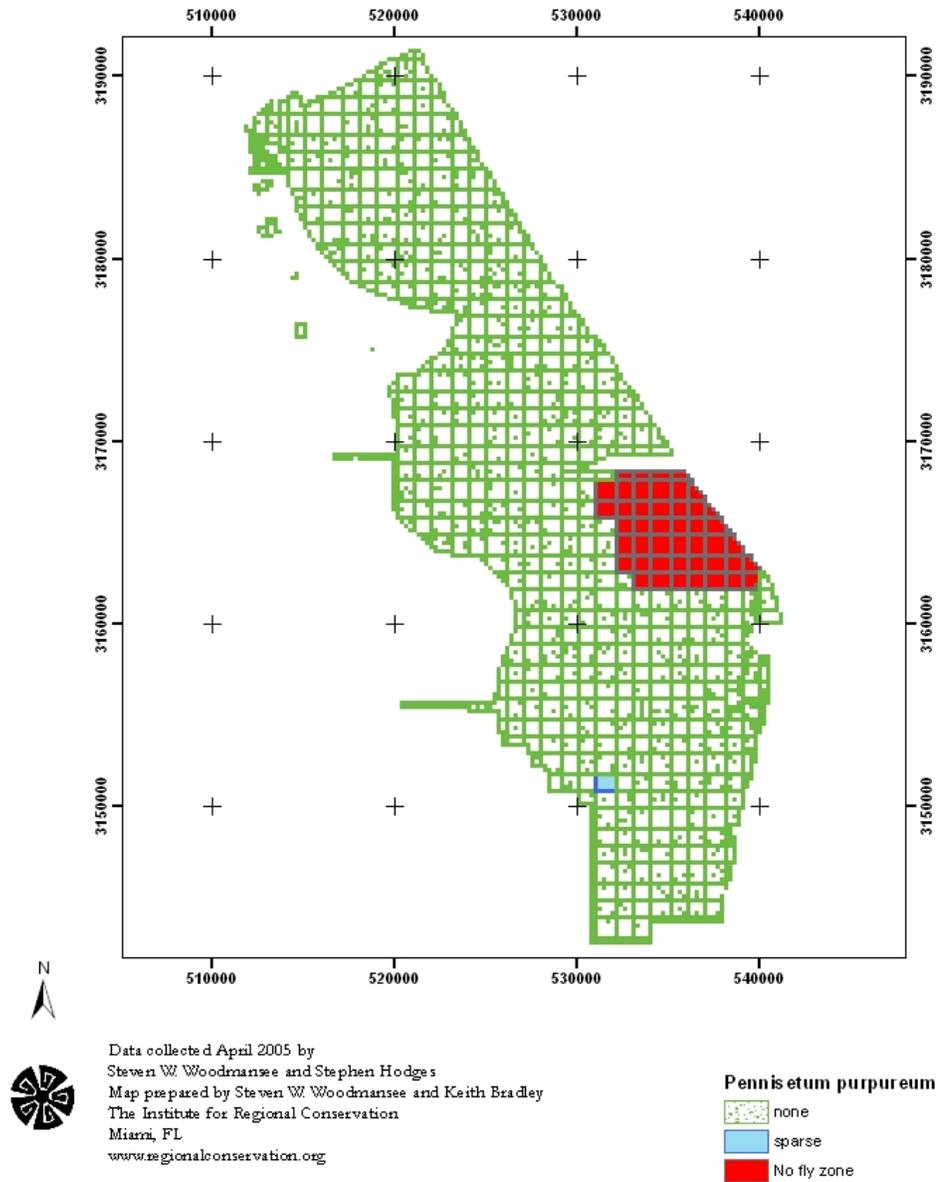


Figure 23: 2005 Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge – *Pennisetum purpureum* SRF.

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005

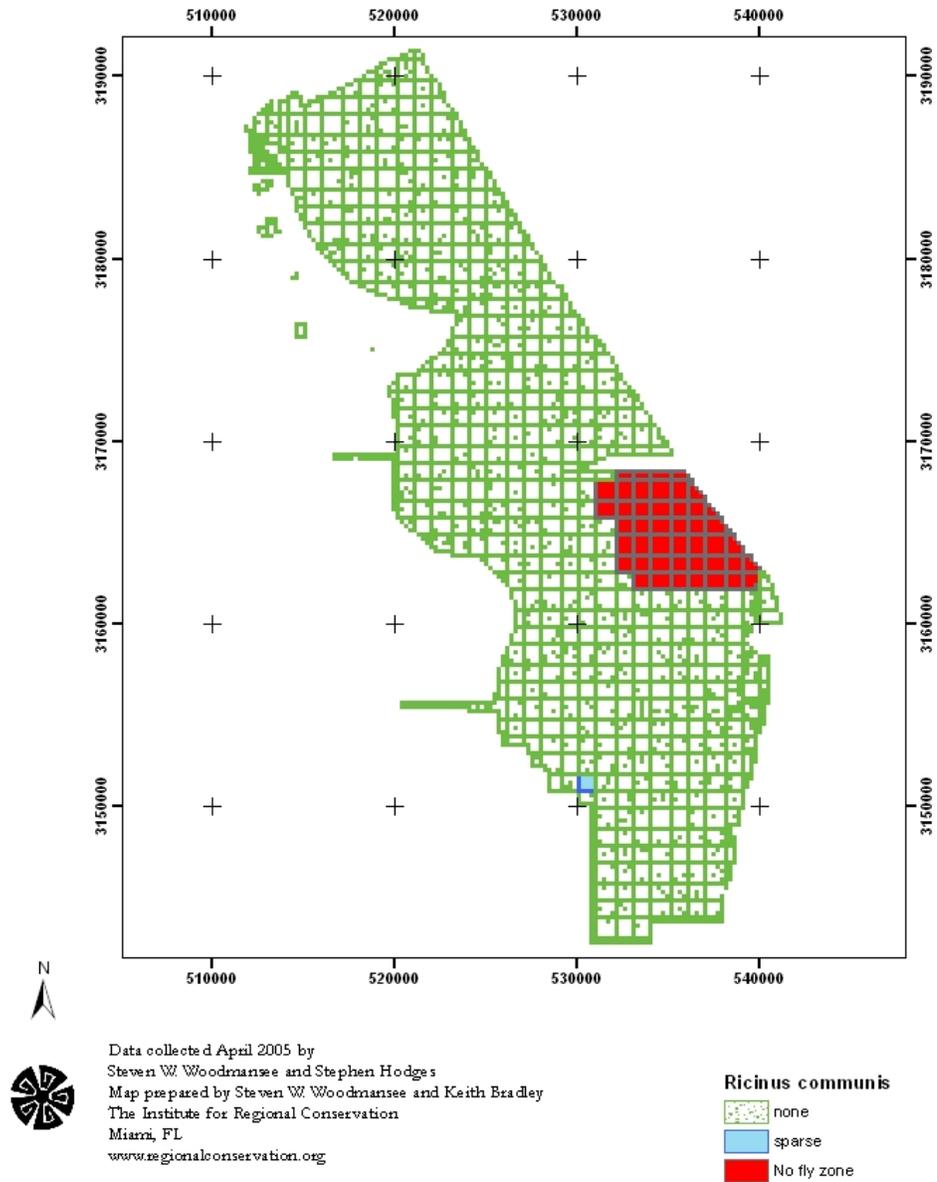


Figure 24: 2005 Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge – *Ricinus communis* SRF.

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005

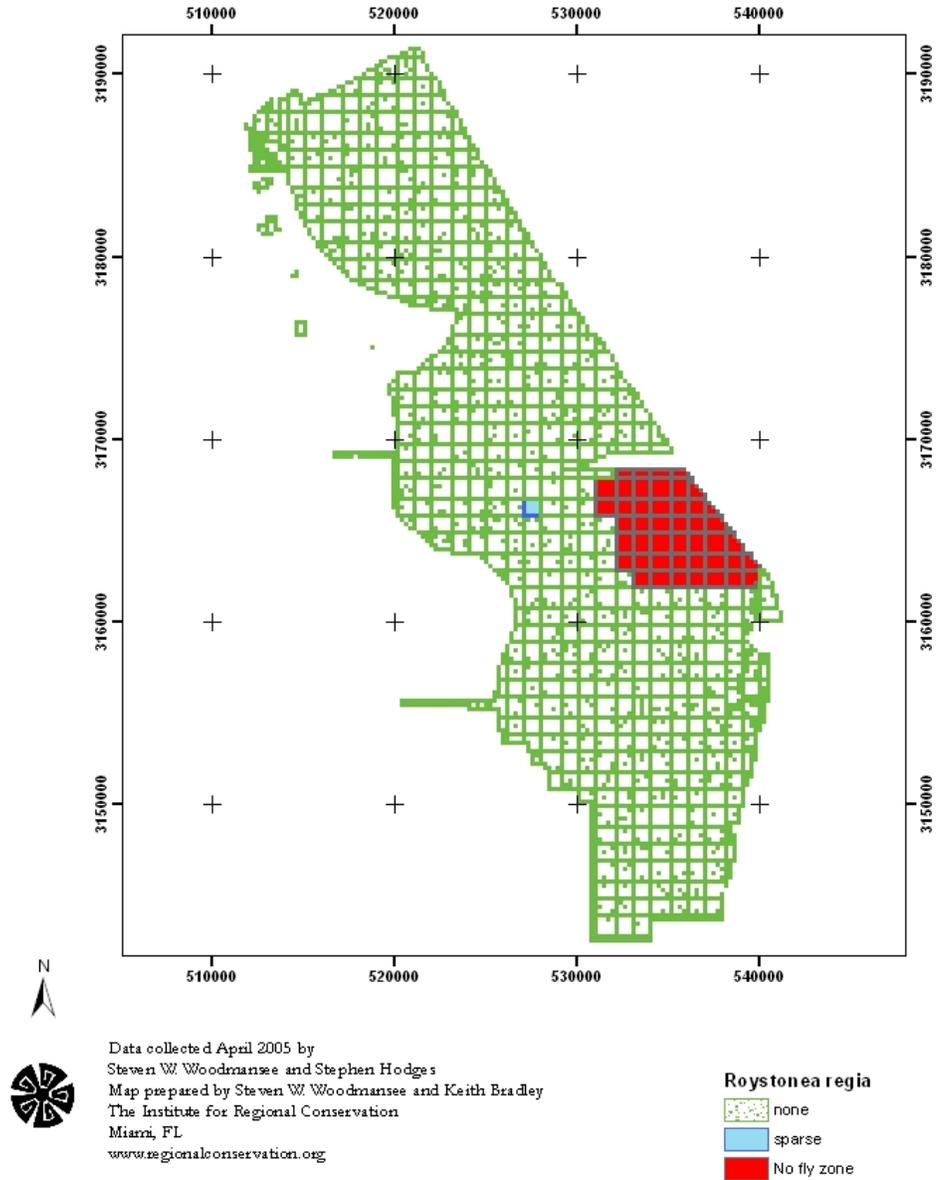


Figure 25: 2005 Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge – *Roystonea regia* SRF.

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005

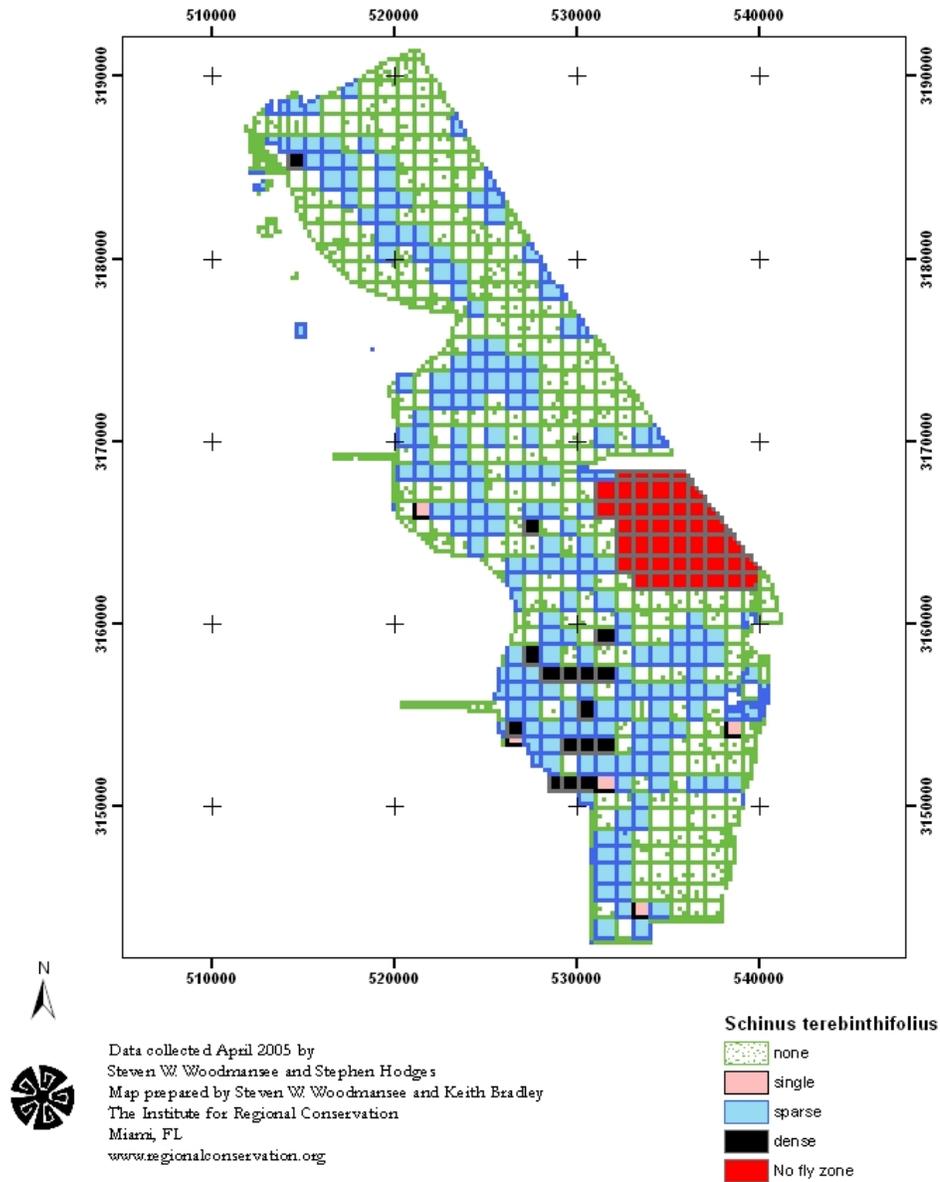


Figure 26: 2005 Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge – *Schinus terebinthifolius* SRF.

Pine Island National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005

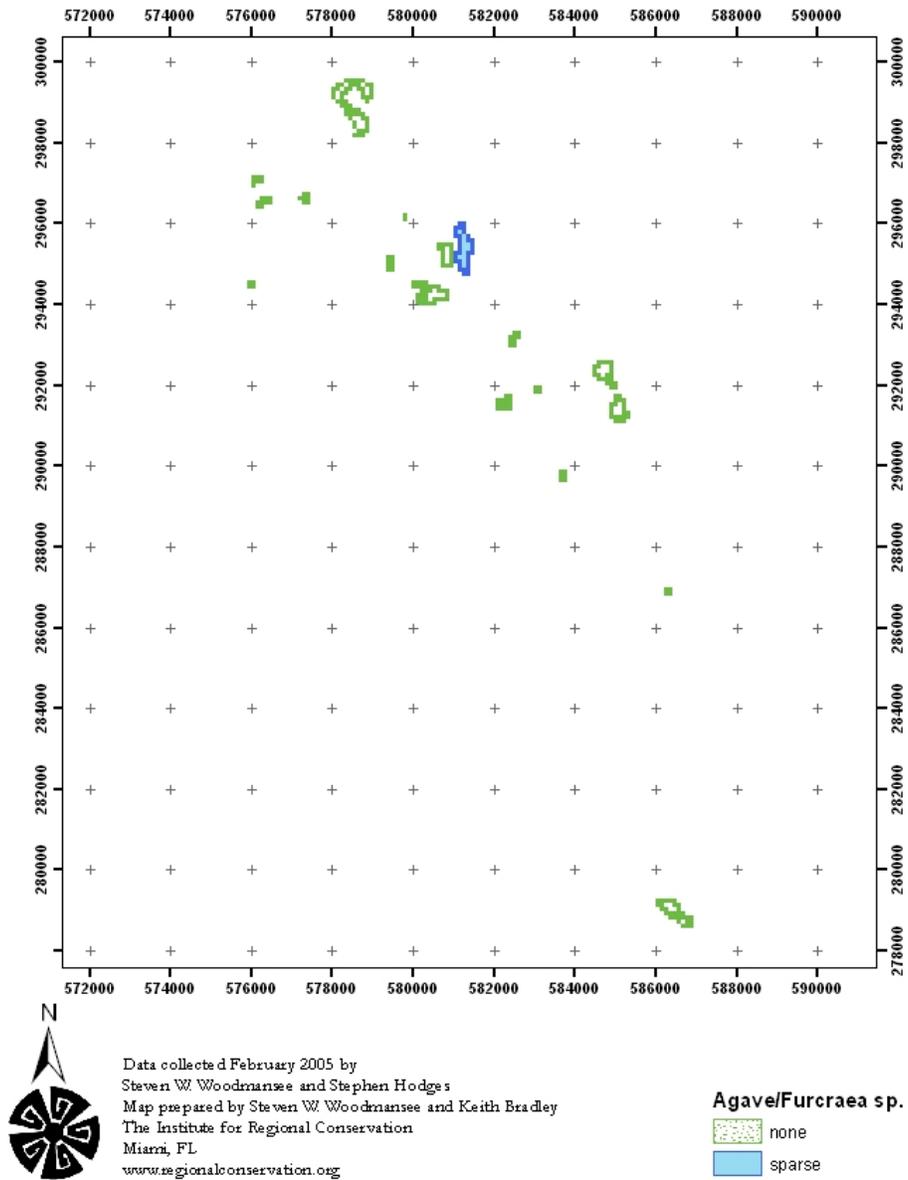


Figure 27: 2005 Pine Island National Wildlife Refuge – *Agave/Furcraea* sp.SRF.

Pine Island National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005

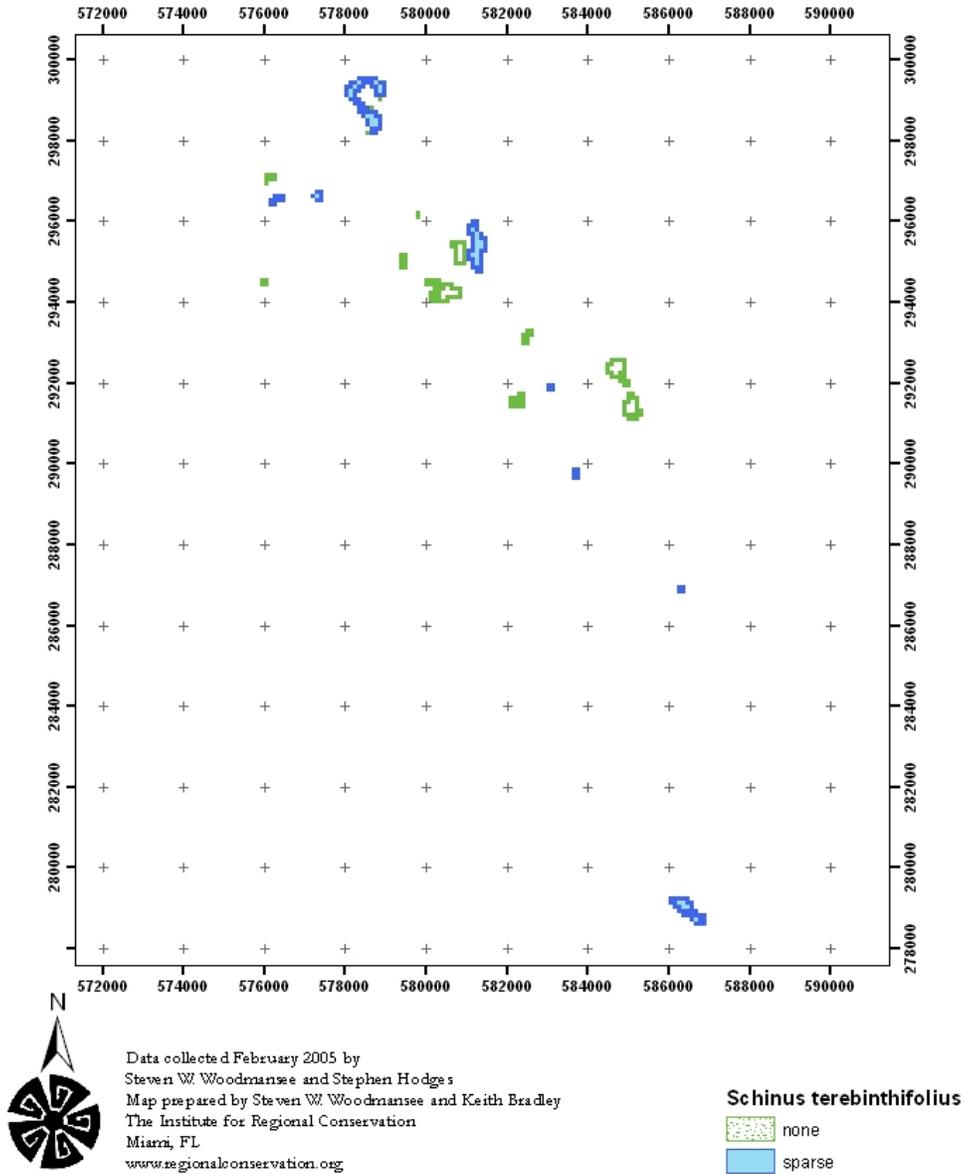


Figure 28: 2005 Pine Island National Wildlife Refuge – *Schinus terebinthifolius* SRF.

St. John's National Wildlife Refuge
 Systematic Reconnaissance Flights
 May 2005

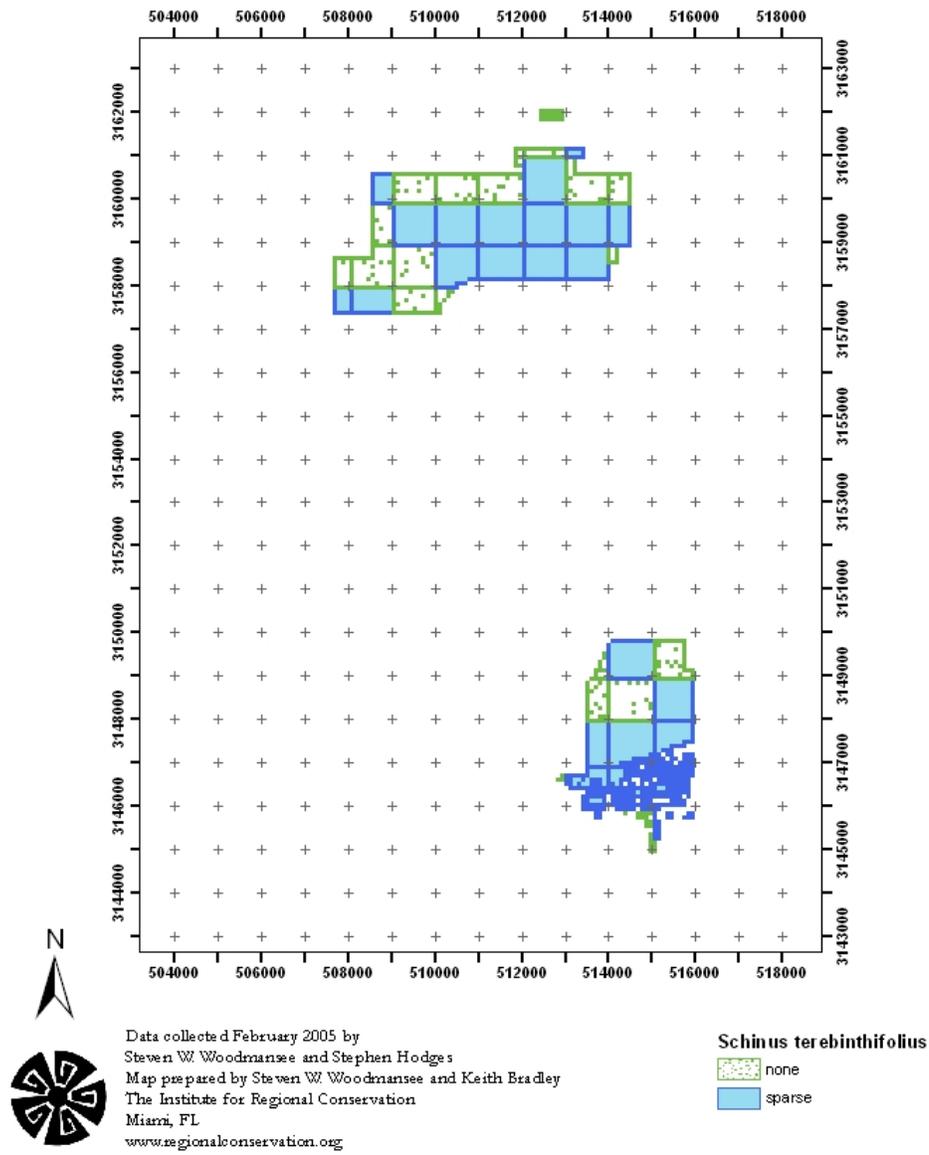


Figure 29: 2005 St. John's National Wildlife Refuge – *Schinus terebinthifolius* SRF.

Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge
 Aerial Reconnaissance Flights
 March 2005

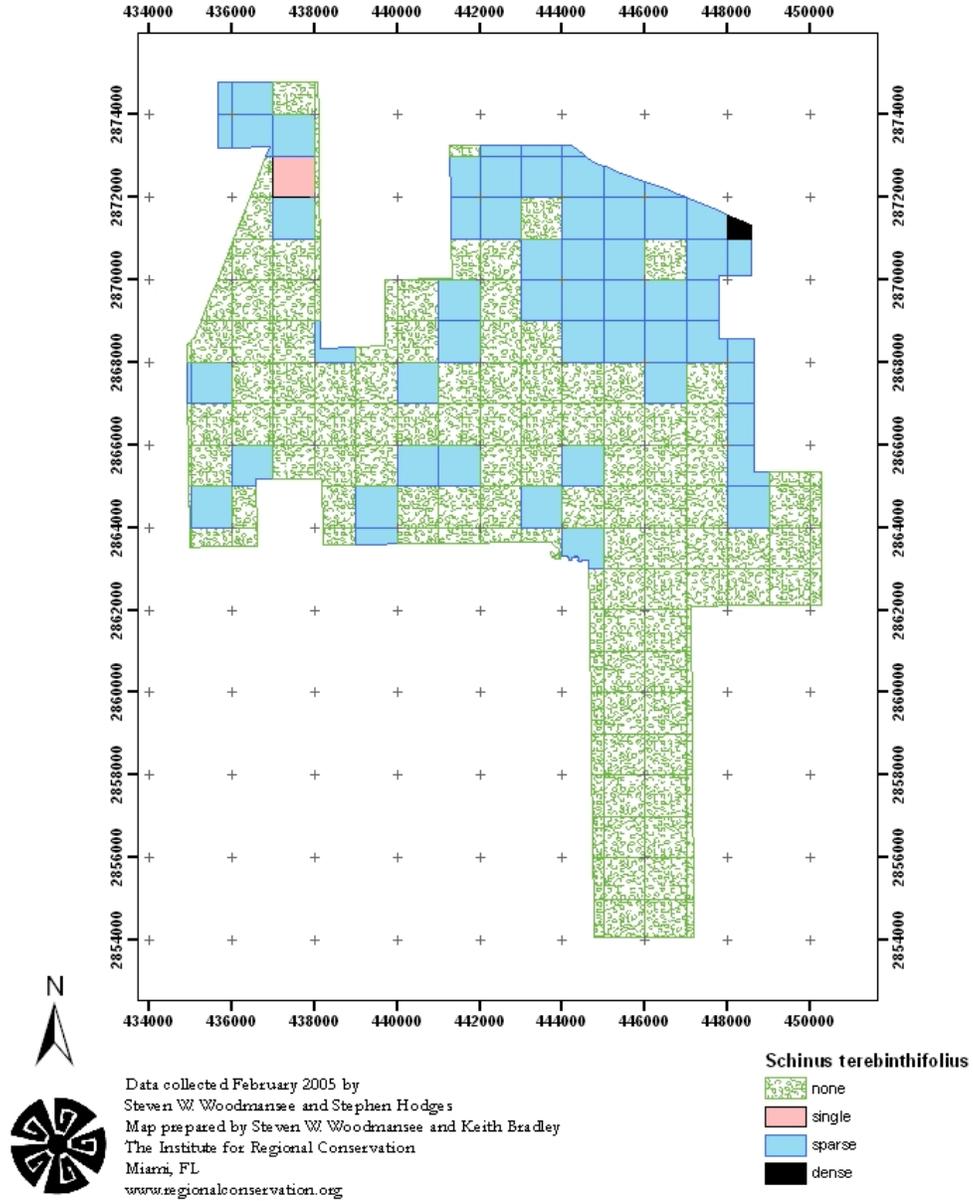


Figure 30: 2005 Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge – *Schinus terebinthifolius* SRF.