

# STUDY AREA OVERVIEW

The Suncoast Corridor study area is located along Florida's Nature Coast through Citrus, Dixie, Gilchrist, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, and Taylor Counties and is home to more than 280,000 residents (Figure 1).

## Environment

The predominately rural counties located within the Suncoast Corridor study area contain natural resources, landscapes, and public lands that have been highly attractive to residents and year-round visitors for decades. This area has many unique features and natural resources including rivers, springs, wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, coastal areas, conservation areas, state parks, and agricultural lands. Some notable resources include the Big Bend Seagrasses Aquatic Preserve, the Flint Rock and Aucilla Wildlife Management Areas, the Suwannee and Santa Fe Rivers, Blue Springs, Fanning Springs, Crystal River, and the Goethe State Forest. The study area also contains numerous large acreage conservation easements. These areas support significant fish, wildlife, and plant populations including threatened and endangered species such as the West Indian manatee, the Florida scrub-jay, and the gopher tortoise. The study area also includes an abundance of prime farmlands and agricultural properties that serve both economic and environmental functions in addition to Spring Protection and Recharge Areas, prospective Florida Forever Lands on the current priority lists for acquisition, and Florida Ecological Greenways Network critical linkages.

## Community

The population of the eight-county study area is projected to increase approximately 15% by 2045, adding over 40,000 more residents to the area (Table 4).

