



Oconee River Land Trust

July 6, 2023

Jackson County Planning Department
Attn: Hannah Slater, Planner
67 Athens Street
Jefferson, GA 30549

RE: Potential Impacts of New Quarry on Conservation Easements along the North Oconee River

To Hannah and Planning Staff,

It has come to our attention that Vulcan Industries, Inc. is planning to purchase four properties north of Athens (Jackson County tax parcels 017 067, 017 067A, 017 070A, and a portion of 017 081), totaling approximately 800 acres, with the intent to create a quarry on them. Tax parcel 017 067A has nearly a mile of frontage on the North Oconee River.

The proposed quarry is located on parcels that abut the river and important wetlands. These wetlands, part of a larger high quality wetlands system that safeguards the quality of the river's water and mitigates flooding. The construction and operation of a quarry on these parcels would likely impact these important conservation features and functions.

Oconee River Land Trust holds two conservation easements adjacent to or very near to the proposed quarry site. See the attached map for location of the protected greenspaces. One is across Chandler Bridge Road and just upstream along the North Oconee River from the quarry, and the other, which has extensive wetlands and a heron rookery, is less than 1,000 feet downstream from the proposed quarry site along the river. Each of these easements has Georgia Department of Natural Resources-designated high priority habitats, including Beaver Ponds; Freshwater Marsh, Bottomland Hardwood, Mesic Hardwood, and Oak-Hickory-Pine Forests.

We are concerned that the proposed quarry will negatively impact water quality in the North Oconee River and wetlands downstream from the site by contributing to sediment runoff and erosion, which harm aquatic species by raising the turbidity of the water. We are also concerned that habitats adjacent to the quarry site will be negatively impacted by fragmenting a wildlife travel corridor along the river and that the noise of quarry operations will disrupt the heron rookery and other wildlife. Great blue herons need larger, unfragmented habitats in which to nest and are very sensitive to loud noises, often abandoning their nests if loud noises are not transient.

Oconee River Land Trust Board of Directors

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Moreover, according to Jackson County's Approved Comprehensive Plan, the parcels on which the quarry would be built are zoned agricultural and rural, with the smallest parcel zoned residential. None of these uses are consistent with the industrial designation what would be required for a quarry. Oconee River Land Trust easements identify scenic views as a conservation purpose. The proposed quarry would degrade the scenic quality of the area and could easily result in environmental impacts that are greater than rural, agricultural, or residential use, and therefore inconsistent with the County's Plan and detrimental to the quality of habitats we protect.

Considering the potential negative impacts on the North Oconee River and its wetlands and the habitats and species that live nearby on ORLT's easements, and on the scenic rural character of these easements, we urge you not to issue a permit for Vulcan's proposed quarry.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you'd like to discuss our concerns about the impacts the new quarry may have on the easements we hold.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura Hall".

Laura Hall
Conservation Director

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2/16/2021 2 pm

Schramm
CE

Proposed
Vulcan Quarry
Parcels

Peterson
CE

89

334

94

429

89

Jefferson River Rd

Commerce Rd

Jefferson River Rd

3378 ft

J&J Fle

Google Earth

1985

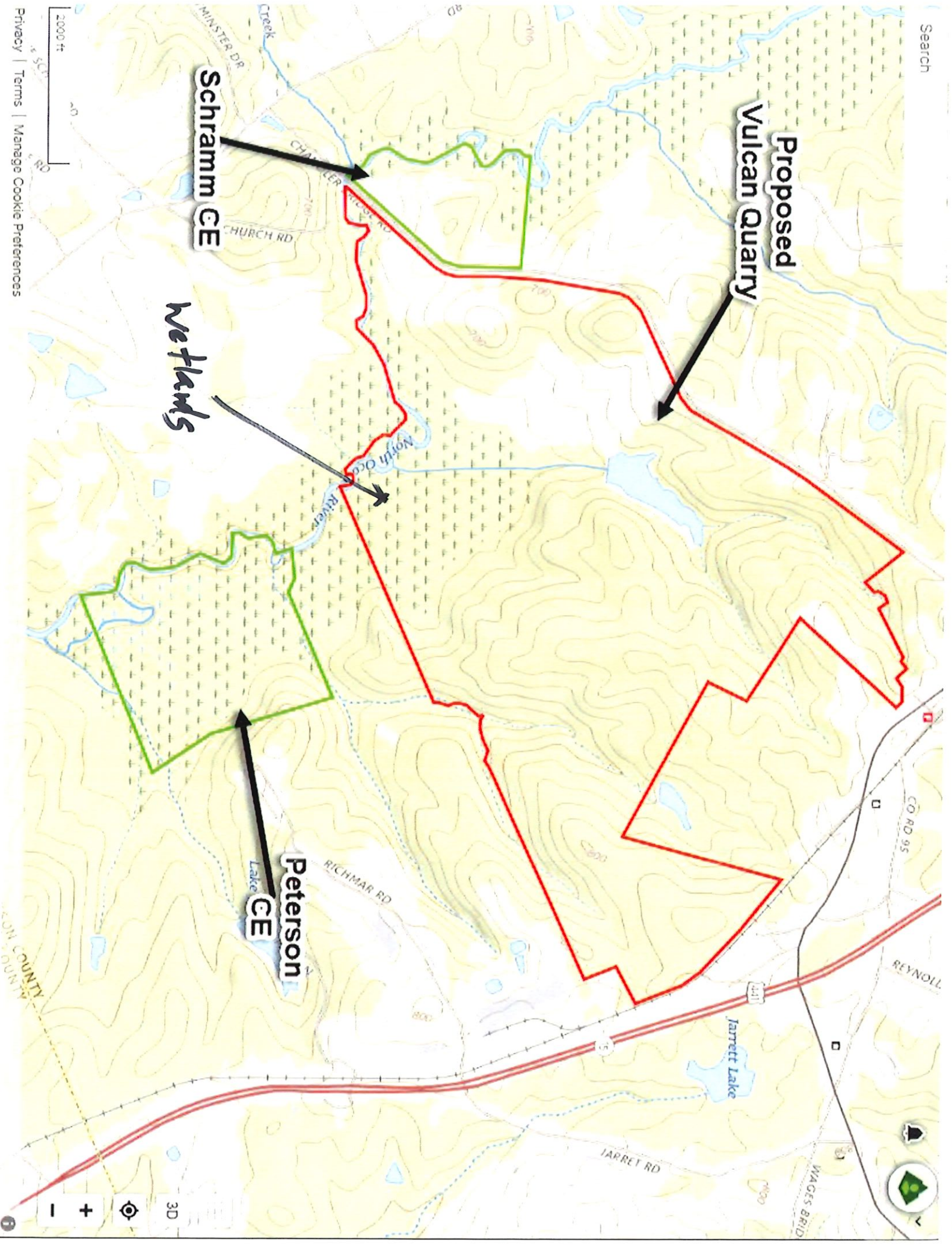
Imagery Date: 4/4/2021 34°02'23.33" N 83°25'15.73" W elev 0 ft eye alt 14610 ft

**Proposed
Vulcan Quarry**

**Schramm
CE**

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CE**



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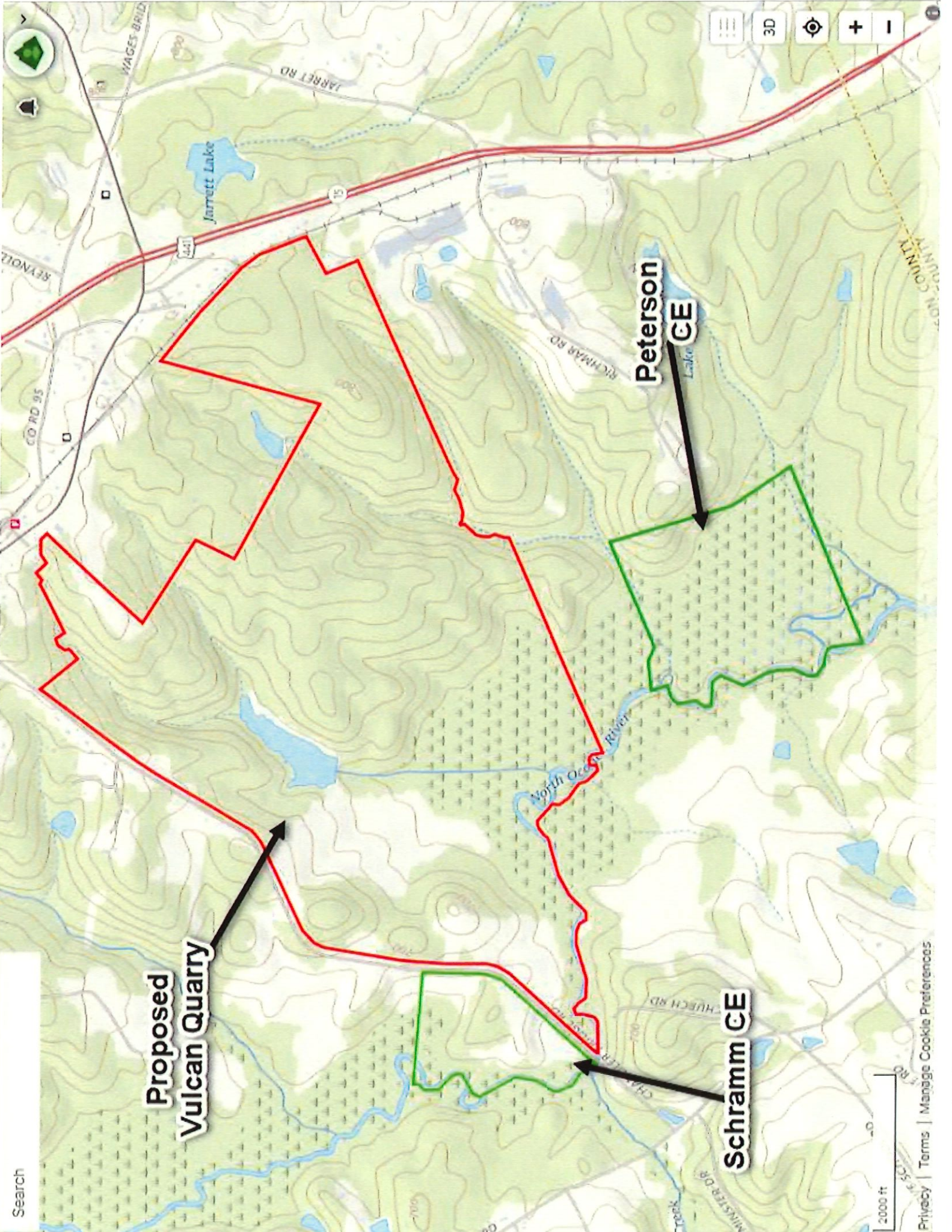
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Laura Hall
Conservation Director

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Search

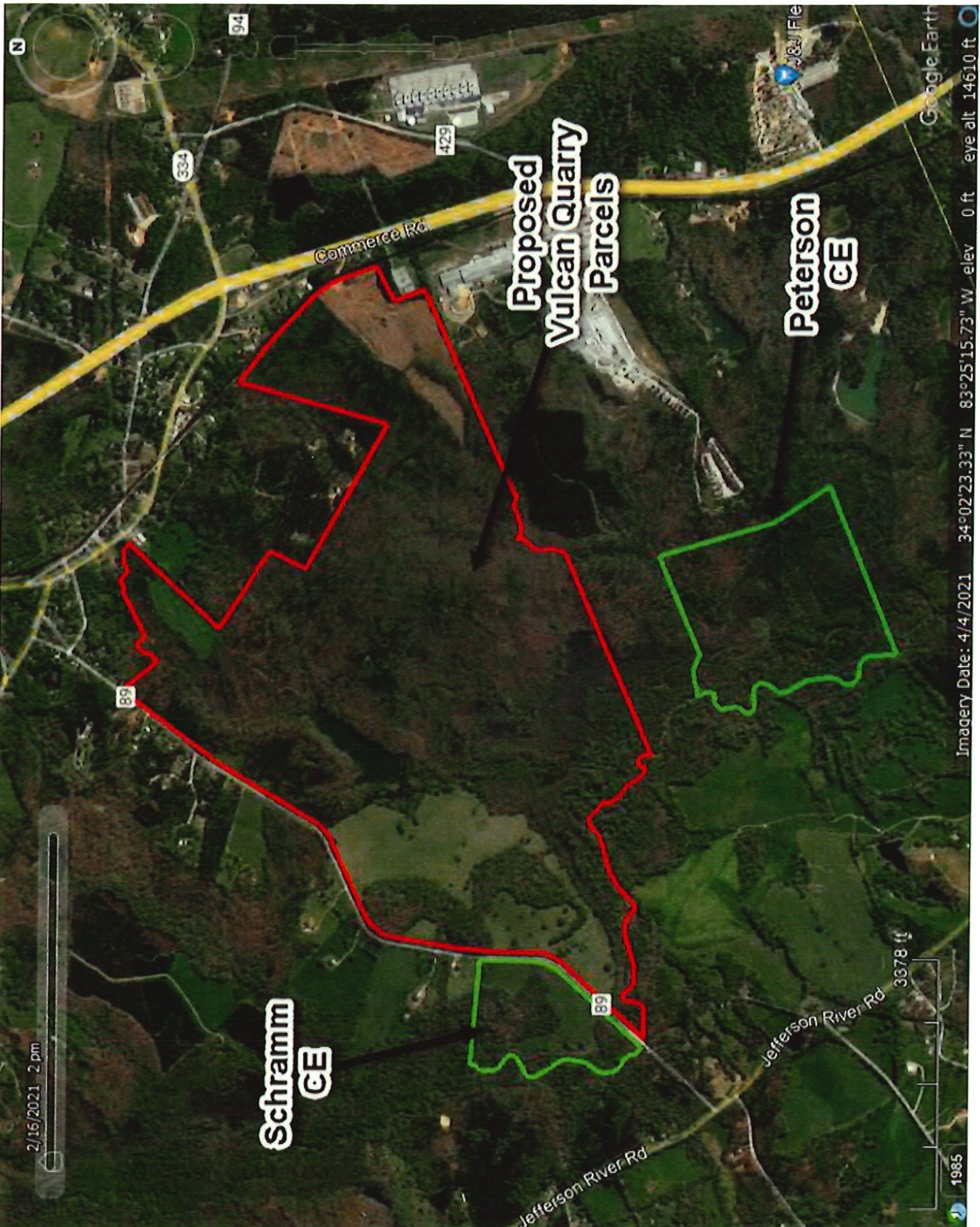
**Proposed
Vulcan Quarry**

**Peterson
CE**

**Schramm
CE**

2000 ft

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2/15/2021 2 pm

**Schramm
CE**

**Proposed
Vulcan Quarry
Parcels**

**Peterson
CE**

Commerce Rd

Jefferson River Rd 3378 ft

Jefferson River Rd

89

334

94

429

383/Fl

1985

Imagery Date: 4/4/2021

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