

Appendix B

Simulated Change in Groundwater Levels within the North Florida-Southeast Georgia Regional Groundwater Flow Model (NFSEG)

Introduction

The North Florida-Southeast Georgia regional groundwater flow model (NFSEG) is a tool developed as a requirement of the North Florida Regional Water Supply Partnership (Partnership). In order to develop consistency in planning, establishment / assessment of minimum flows and levels (MFLs) and permitting decisions, the Partnership agreed to implement a joint regional groundwater flow model. Spanning larger areas within a single model enables improved representation of the aquifer system on a regional basis.

Technical experts from the SJRWMD and SRWMD and other key stakeholders worked collaboratively to develop the next generation regional-scale groundwater flow model for North Florida. The technical team's mandate was to ensure appropriate science is applied to the modeling and data analysis to support decision-making, and that the work completed is defensible, understood by the team, and collaboratively developed, as described in the Partnership's charter, available at northfloridawater.com. The current version of NFSEG is referred to as NFSEG v1.1 (Durden et al., 2019).

The NFSEG v1.1 was used to simulate changes in the potentiometric surface of the Floridan aquifer system (FAS) due to projected groundwater withdrawals. The focus of this effort is to assess the effect of groundwater withdrawals in the Western Water Supply Planning (WWSP) region (Figure B1).

NFSEG Overview

The NFSEG is a porous-equivalent, three-dimensional, steady-state, groundwater flow model covering approximately 60,000 square miles (Figure B1). The model is vertically discretized into seven layers representing, from top to bottom: (1) the surficial aquifer system (SAS), (2) the intermediate confining unit/aquifer system (ICU), where present; (3) the Upper Floridan aquifer (UFA); (4) the middle semi-confining unit (MCU), where present; (5) the Lower Floridan aquifer (LFA) where present; (6) the lower semi-confining unit; and (7) the Fernandina permeable zone of the LFA, where present. The model is horizontally discretized into uniform grid cells measuring 2,500 feet by 2,500 feet. Calibration of the NFSEG v1.1 was based on hydrologic conditions occurring during calendar years 2001 and 2009 (Durden et al., 2019).

Prior to development of the NFSEG, the groundwater models of the FAS in North Florida and Southeast Georgia used by staff focused on specific geographic regions relative to each WMD. The primary design objective of the NFSEG model was to develop a tool capable of making assessments that span water management District and state boundaries at required levels of accuracy and reliability. To this end, a considerable effort has been expended in the development and compilation of required data sets, in the model calibration, and in collaboration between affected districts and other stakeholders.

The following, which comes from USGS Scientific Investigations Report 2016-5116 (Kuniansky, 2016), is a general statement regarding modeling of the FAS using porous-equivalent media models.

“The USGS, multiple State water management districts, and other agencies and consultants have frequently used porous-equivalent media models for water-management problems to simulate the Biscayne aquifer and the FAS in Florida. The Biscayne aquifer and FAS are composed of karstified carbonate rocks that can be characterized as dual porosity continua. As of 2015, more than 30 models developed by the USGS have used a single-continuum porous-equivalent (SCPE) model approach to meet necessary calibration criteria for the study objectives. Many of the water management districts in Florida use a SCPE model approach for groundwater management and resource evaluation. Most of these SCPE models are applied to water-supply studies and are regional or subregional in scale and water budgets are desired; this is an appropriate application of such models.”

NFSEG version 1.1 meets requirements for use in water supply planning, regulatory evaluation, and MFL-related evaluation within the NFSEG domain and is currently being utilized in support of these types of evaluations.

Methodology

The NFSEG v1.1 was used to simulate changes in groundwater levels based on differences between 2009 pumps off (PO) or the 2014 to 2018 average groundwater withdrawals, which is referred to as current pumping (CP), and 2045 projected withdrawals. Water use estimates used as inputs to the NFSEG were updated and vetted through a thorough public review process. Simulations included groundwater level changes in the SAS, the UFA, and the LFA.

Results

Decreases in simulated groundwater levels (aquifer drawdown) were predicted across most of the planning region for the SAS, UFA, and LFA (Figures B1 to B4). Areas of drawdown in the aquifer were apparent in northeastern Dixie County, central Lafayette County, northern Levy County, throughout Madison County, and in western Taylor County. Small areas of increase in the simulated potentiometric surface (aquifer rebound) were associated with reductions in pumping between CP and 2045 or due to the change in pumping distribution between CP and 2045. The main area of increase is seen in southern Lafayette County and throughout Taylor County. Lower magnitudes of drawdown were observed where the Floridan aquifer tends to be semi-confined or unconfined. However, the heightened transmissivity of the aquifer in these areas increases the potential for spring flow changes induced by groundwater withdrawals.

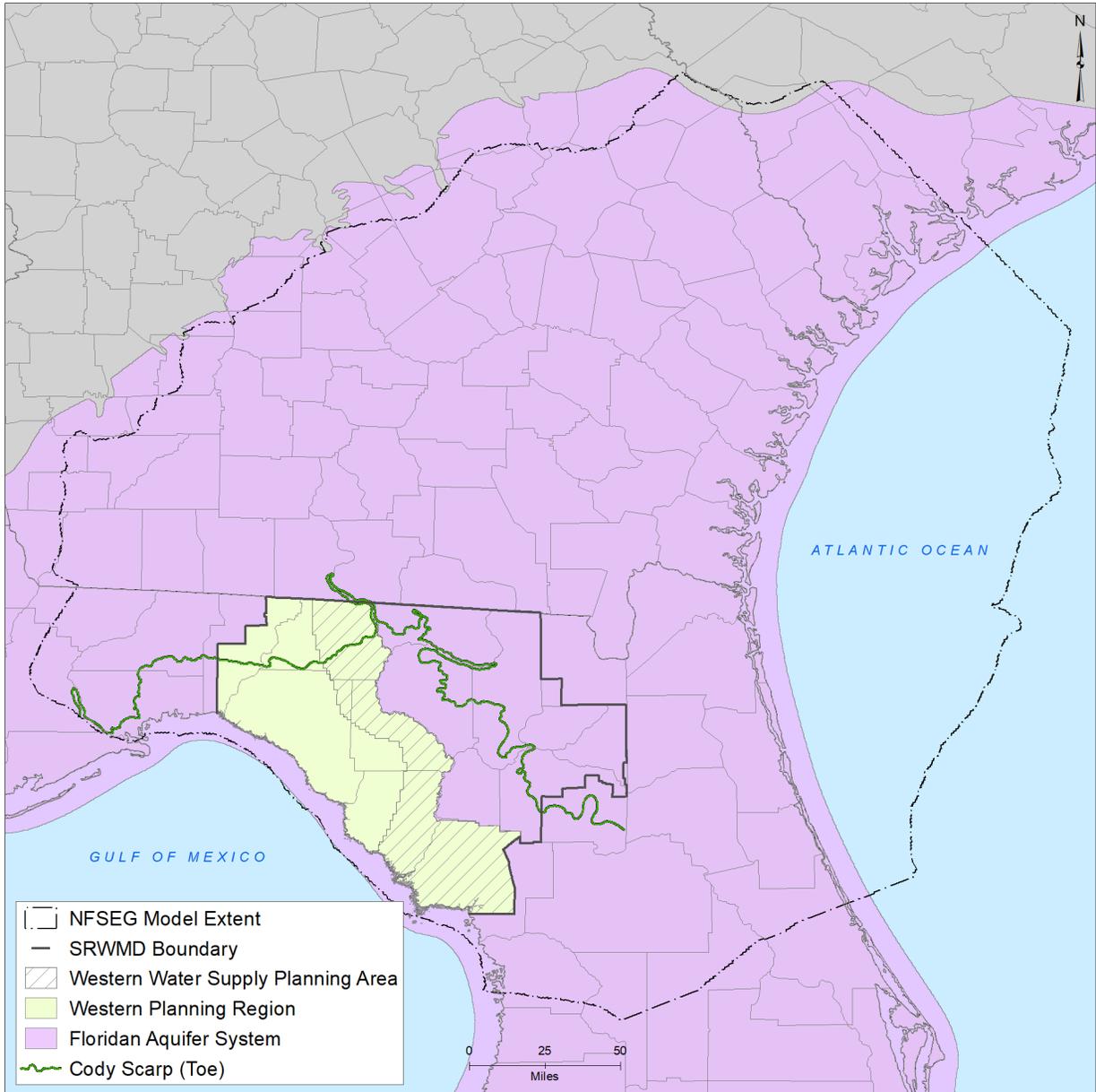


Figure B1. NFSEG model extent with coverage of the Floridan Aquifer system

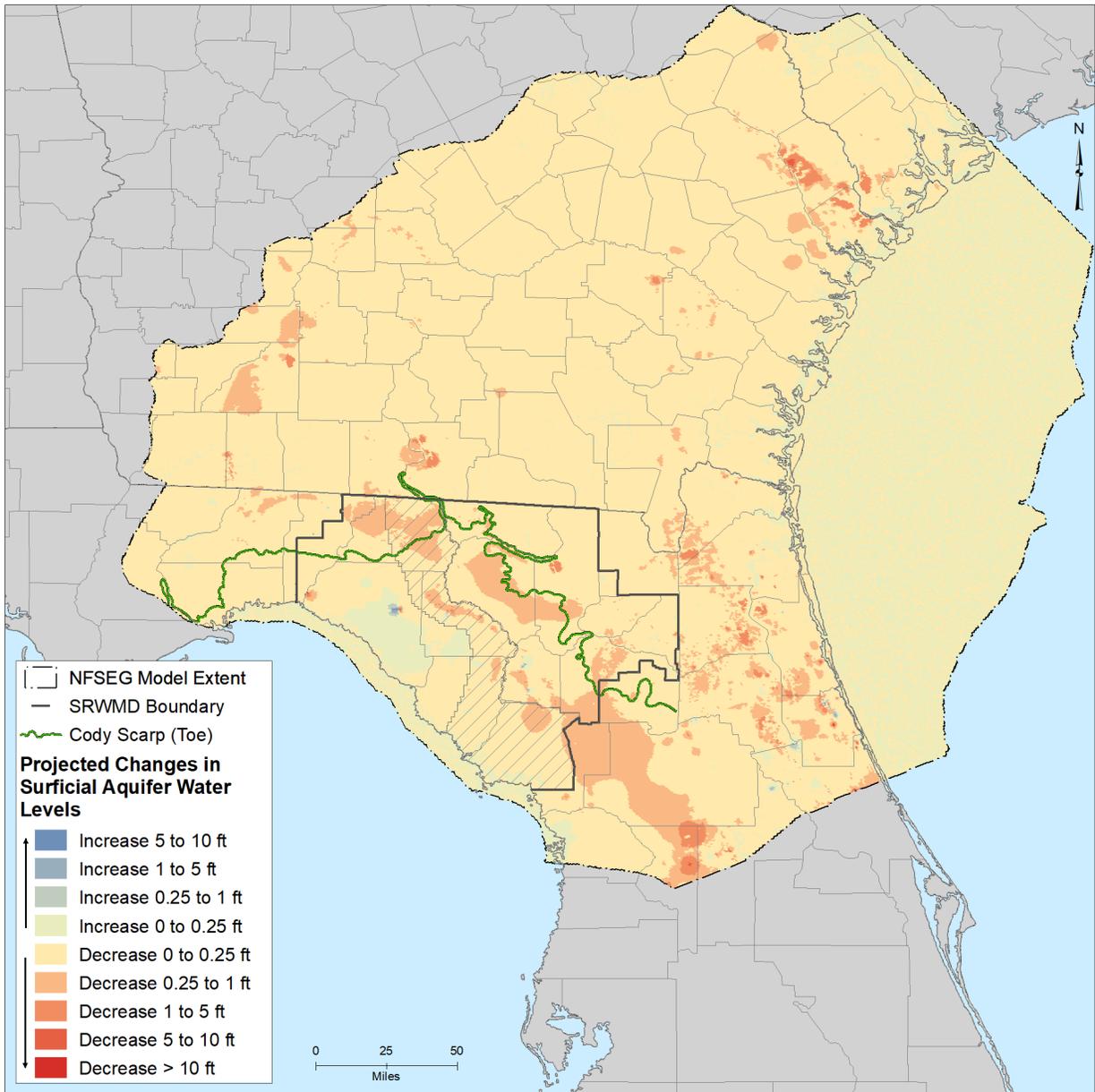


Figure B2. Changes in surficial aquifer water levels from CP to 2045 within the NFSEG domain

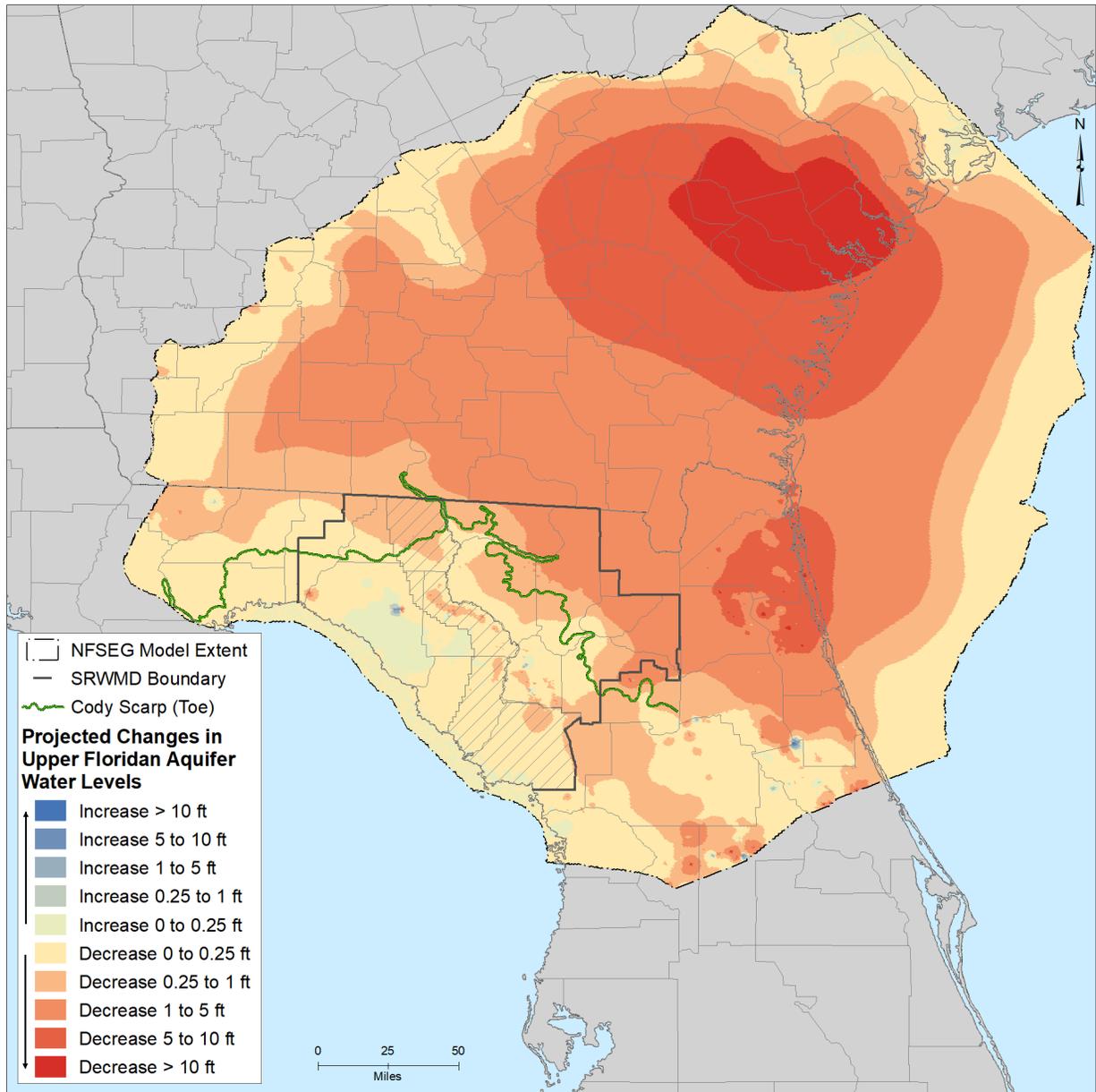


Figure B3. Changes in Upper Floridan aquifer water levels from CP to 2045 within the NFSEG domain

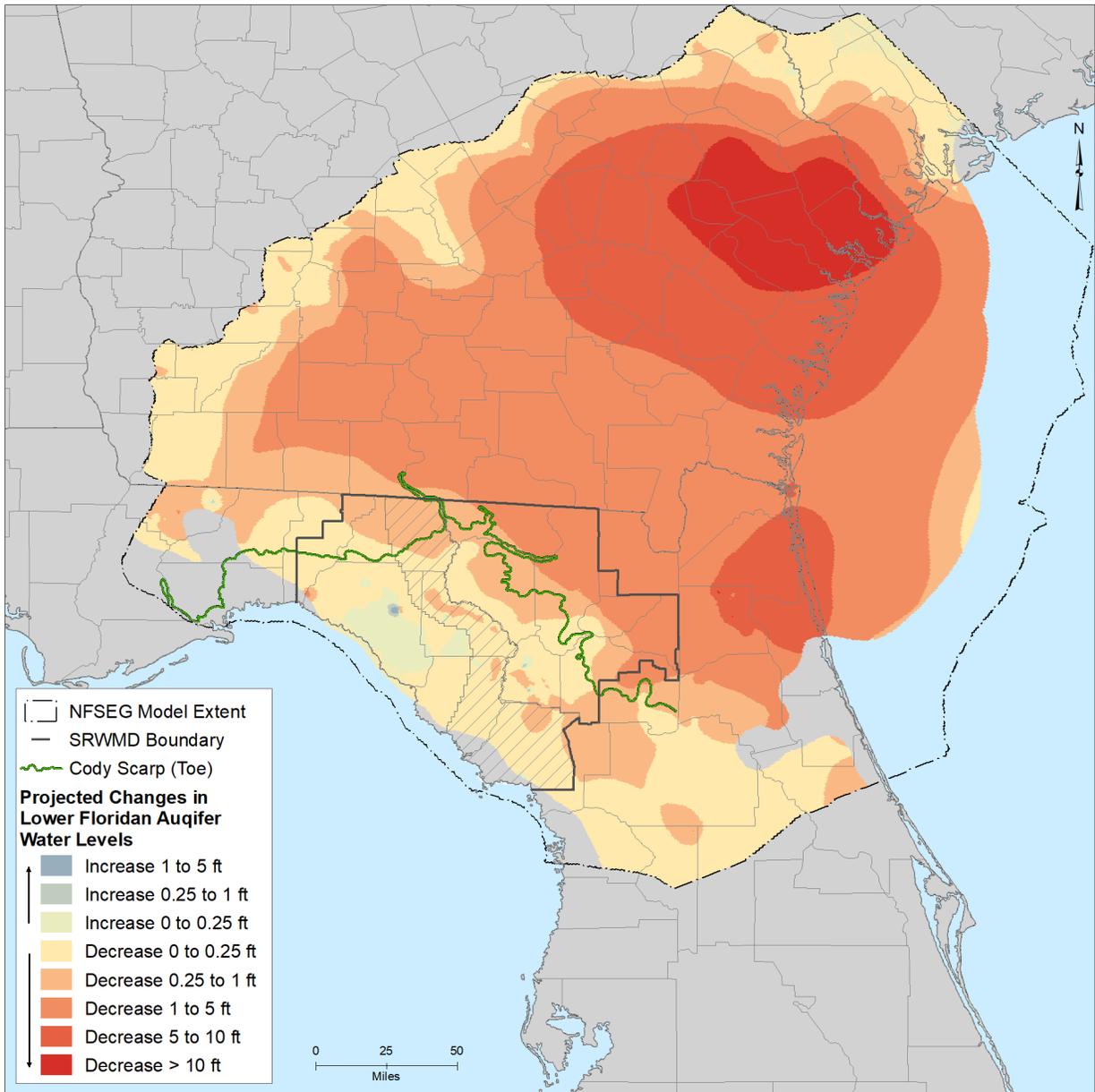


Figure B4. Changes in Lower Floridan aquifer water levels from CP to 2045 within the NFSEG domain

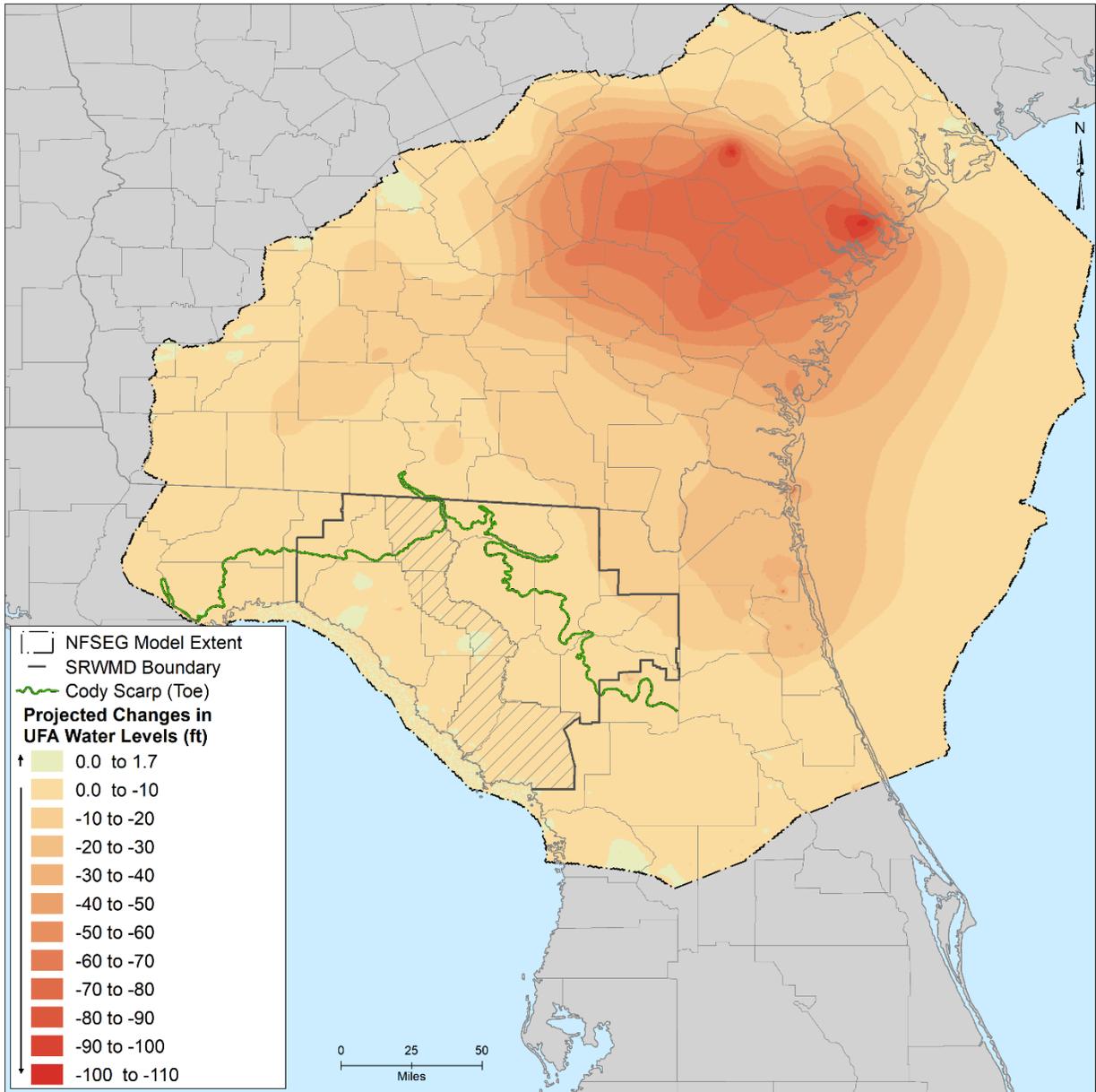


Figure B5. Changes in Upper Floridan aquifer water levels from PO to 2045 within the NFSEG domain

References

- Durden, D., F. Gordu, D. Hearn, T. Cera, T. Desmarais, L. Meridth, A. Angel, C. Leahy, J. Oseguera and T. Grubbs. 2019. *North Florida-Southeast Georgia Groundwater Model (NFSEG v1.1)*. St. Johns River Water Management District Technical Publication SJ2019-01. Palatka, Fla.: St. Johns River Water Management District. 513 pp.
- Kuniansky, E. 2016. *Simulating Groundwater Flow in Karst Aquifers with Distributed Parameter Models – Comparison of Porous-Equivalent Media and Hybrid Flow Approaches*. USGS Scientific Investigations Report 2016-5116.