



Agenda Item Summary

File #: 23-00311

Agenda Date: 7/11/2023

Agenda Item Name:

Addition of Land Conservation Projects to the Alachua County Forever Active Acquisition List

Presenter:

Emily Uhlmann, Senior Planner – Senior Planner of Environmental Protection Department, (352) 275-2050

Description:

Staff requests the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) approve the addition of the following land conservation projects to the Alachua County Forever Active Acquisition List. The staff recommendation is based on the addition of these properties to the Priority Pool by the Land Conservation Board as outlined in Resolution 22-066.

1. Watermelon Pond – Sheffield (Full Price List)
2. Paynes Prairie Additions – The Koppaka Family Foundation (Full Price List)

Addition of these projects to the Active Acquisition List, authorizes staff to: obtain title work and appraisals, negotiate price and terms with the owners, and execute purchase or option contracts. Any purchase contract or option will be brought back to the Board for consideration.

Recommended Action:

Approve the addition of the following properties on the Active Acquisition List.

1. Watermelon Pond – Sheffield (Full Price List)
2. Paynes Prairie Additions – The Koppaka Family Foundation (Full Price List)

Prior Board Motions:

None

Fiscal Note:

Watermelon Pond – Sheffield (Fee Simple) - Cost Estimates:

- Alachua County Property Appraiser (ACPA) Value: \$161,160*
- Acquisition Due Diligence: \$47,500
 - Due Diligence: title work, appraisal, survey, environmental assessment
- Stewardship, initial 10 years: \$39,080

Total estimated cost for acquisition and 10 year Stewardship: \$247,740

The current annual property tax revenue of all the project parcels is: \$289.40

Paynes Prairie Additions – The Koppaka Family Foundation (Fee Simple) - Cost Estimates:

- Alachua County Property Appraiser (ACPA) Value: \$125,064*
- Acquisition Due Diligence: \$38,200
 - Due Diligence: title work, appraisal, survey, environmental assessment, baseline documentation report
- Stewardship, initial 10 years: \$0 (Alachua Conservation Trust would manage)

Total estimated cost for acquisition and 10-year stewardship: \$163,264

The current annual property tax revenue of all the project parcels is: \$1,114.18

Estimated acquisition costs for both properties total: \$371,924

Estimated stewardship costs for the initial 10 years for both properties total: \$39,080

*Listed value is based on what is currently listed on the ACPA website. Actual value will be based on updated appraisals obtained for the property as part of the acquisition process.

Sufficient budget exists in the Wild Spaces Public Places (WSPP) Land Allocation for these costs.

Project 6184160- WSPP-General Operating & Due Diligence: 021.41.4160.537.31.00

Project 6194101-WSPP-Land Acquisition: 021.41.4160.537.61.00

If the WSPP Surtax budget in Fund 021 is exhausted if/when either of these parcels are brought to the Board for acquisition, they will be funded from the new surtax (beginning 1/1/23) with budget in Fund 140.

(Exhibit 5)

Strategic Guide:

Environment

Background:

Watermelon Pond – Sheffield: On April 11, 2023, the Felton Sheffield nominated the subject property to the Alachua County Forever Program. On May 25, 2023, the Land Conservation Board placed the 40.29-acre Watermelon Pond – Sheffield property in the Priority Pool as an acquisition project.

The Sheffield project includes one parcel (02711-006-004) located southwestern Alachua County between Newberry & Bronson, along SW 119th Ave. It is bordered to the east by the Alachua County-owned Watermelon Pond Preserve’s Ferran Tract, and its southeast corner touches Ashton Biological Station, which is under an Alachua County Conservation Easement. Protection of the imperiled sandhill natural community is the focus of environmental acquisitions in this area of the county.

There are three main upland community types on the property: sand pine plantation, former sandhill (in the area of the pine plantation that was harvested), and successional hardwood forest. Formerly, the uplands on this property were likely dominated by a sandhill natural community, and there are many remnant native species on site that are still represented on the property. Approximately two-thirds of the uplands were converted to sand pine plantation historically, and approximately 11 acres of this area were harvested sometime in or after 2020. This area was not replanted, and it is naturally revegetating with native understory species which are also found in the unharvested pine plantation, but at lower densities. The remaining uplands have succeeded into a hardwood forest with a moderately open understory.

Wetlands on the property include a small sinkhole lake in good condition. No invasive species were observed during the site visit. Additional information can be found in the attached property evaluation.

(Exhibits 1 & 2)

Paynes Prairie Additions – The Koppaka Family Foundation: On April 05, 2023, Ram Koppaka, on behalf of the Koppaka Family Foundation, nominated the subject property to the Alachua County Forever Program for consideration as a Conservation Easement. On May 25, 2023, the Land Conservation Board placed the 23-acre Paynes Prairie Additions – Koppaka Family Foundation property in the Priority Pool.

The Koppaka Family project includes one parcel (07177-002-000). The property is located in central Alachua County, south of Gainesville and it has public road frontage along SE 56th Ave. It is located immediately south of Serenola Forest Preserve, which is owned by the County and managed by Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT). ACT owns the parcel along its northwest boundary and has a life estate agreement on parcels to the northeast. ACT is also working on other projects in the area. If acquired, this property could help facilitate better access to Serenola Preserve for management and public recreation.

Ecologically, the property is almost entirely successional hardwood forest except for an approximately 2.5-acre portion in the southeast corner that is being maintained as pasture. There is also a powerline easement on the north side of the property between this parcel and Serenola Preserve which is maintained by Duke Energy. The property has been used for a variety of agricultural pursuits since prior to the late 1930's. The current landowners acquired the property in 1983, and they grew a variety of exotic vegetables on two acres in the southern portion of the property and also planted a variety of fruit trees throughout the rest of the property through the mid-1990s. The property was leased to another individual in 1999 who currently uses the property to stable and graze horses. Invasive plant species are widespread across the site and were observed in low to moderate densities. Staff also found a couple individual *Matelea floridana* plants near the northern boundary, which are listed as state-endangered.

Additional information can be found in the attached property evaluation.
(Exhibit 3 & 4)

General:

The staff recommendation is based on the addition of these properties to the Priority Pool by the Land Conservation Board as outlined in Resolution 22-066.

As with all our conservation lands, if accepted as an acquisition, this property will go through the vetting process for the Registry of Protected Places.

Comp Plan Reference:

Policy 6.0 Land Conservation Program within the Conservation and Open Space Element, states “Establish and maintain a land conservation program for the purchase, preservation, and management of natural areas and open space to complement the regulatory approaches identified in other section of this element.”