



Agenda Item Summary

File #: 23-00654

Agenda Date: 10/24/2023

Agenda Item Name:

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

Presenter:

Emily Uhlmann, Senior Planner – Environmental Protection Dept., (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. Santa Fe River – Shireman (Full Price List)
2. Watermelon Pond – Biro (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. Santa Fe River – Shireman (Full Price List)
2. Watermelon Pond – Biro (Full Price List)

Prior Board Motions:

None

Fiscal Note:

Santa Fe River – Shireman (Fee Simple) - Cost Estimates:

- Alachua County Property Appraiser (ACPA) Value: \$3,000*
- Acquisition Due Diligence: \$22,900
 - o Due Diligence: title work, appraisal, survey, environmental assessment
- Stewardship, initial 10 years: \$10,780

Total estimated cost for acquisition and 10 year Stewardship: \$36,680

The current annual property tax revenue of all the project parcels is: \$143.75

Note: The Shireman property was originally nominated as a fee simple project, but the landowner may also be interested in conservation easement options for the property. Should an easement be pursued rather than a fee simple purchase, stewardship costs will only involve annual monitoring and associated staff time, approximately \$550/year. (Exhibit 5)

Watermelon Pond – Biro (Conservation Easement) - Cost Estimates:

- Alachua County Property Appraiser (ACPA) Value: \$793,509*
- Acquisition Due Diligence: \$54,000
 - Due Diligence: title work, appraisal, survey, environmental assessment, baseline documentation report
- Stewardship, initial 10 years: \$5,500 (Conservation Easement monitoring)

Total estimated cost for acquisition and 10-year stewardship: \$853,009

The current annual property tax revenue of all the project parcels is: \$6,853.50

Estimated acquisition costs for both properties total: \$873,409

Estimated stewardship costs for the initial 10 years for all properties total: \$16,280

*Listed value is based only 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 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/ when any of these parcels are brought to the Board for acquisition, they may be funded from the new surtax (beginning 1/1/23) with budget in Fund 140 if the WSPP Surtax budget in Fund 021 is exhausted, or if Fund 140 is deemed more appropriate.

(Exhibit 5)

Strategic Guide:

Environment

Background:

Santa Fe River – Shireman: On August 22, 2023, Jerome Shireman nominated the subject property to the Alachua County Forever Program. On September 26, 2023, the Land Conservation Board (LCB) placed the 10-acre Santa Fe River – Shireman property in the Priority Pool.

The Shireman project is located in northeastern Alachua County, north of Waldo. It is bordered to the north by the Santa Fe River (which is the county boundary with Bradford County), and to the east by US Highway 301. It includes one parcel (16905-004-0000). It is adjacent to the Alachua County-managed Santa Fe River Headwaters Preserve, western tract. Due to its size, location, and wetland cover, a desktop evaluation was conducted for this property with an abbreviated site visit.

The natural communities are primarily floodplain swamp and bottomland forest, with a small area (less than 1-acre) of mesic flatwoods in the southwest corner. The property contains an approximately ¼ mile segment of the Santa Fe River, and approximately 99.7% of the property falls within the Santa Fe River Strategic Ecosystem. The majority of the property consists of wetlands associated with the Santa Fe River, and it is entirely located within the river's 100-year floodplain.

Additional information can be found in the attached property evaluation.

(Exhibits 1 & 2)

Watermelon Pond – Biro: On August 22, 2023, John Biro nominated the subject property to the Alachua County Forever Program for consideration as a conservation easement. On September 26, 2023, the Land Conservation Board placed the 95.88-acre Watermelon Pond – Biro property in the Priority Pool.

The Biro project includes two parcels (02714-000-000 and 02712-004-000). It is located in southwestern Alachua County approximately 2.5 miles northwest of Archer, along SW 210th St., and one quarter mile east of the Alachua County managed Watermelon Pond Preserve Warny tract. Natural communities present on the property include sandhill, xeric hammock, successional hardwood forest, and scrub (rosemary balds).

Approximately two thirds of the property is sandhill with pockets of rosemary bald scrub scattered throughout. Although groundcover vegetation in the sandhill isn't contiguous, a diversity of the species typically found in this natural community are present onsite. The other third of the property is xeric hammock, with successional hardwood habitat mixed in. The represented natural communities are in good condition. Sand pine was harvested for timber from the north central portion of the property approximately six years ago, and from the eastern part of the approximately twenty years ago. With assistance from staff from the nearby Ashton Biological Preserve, the landowners have been engaging in management activities to restore the sandhill plant community to these harvested areas by planting longleaf pines and wiregrass and conducting limited prescribed burns.

Invasive plants found during the site visit were minimal, consisting of a few Chinaberry trees, one mimosa, and some centipede grass. The landowner has observed an abundance of wildlife on the site, including numerous gopher tortoises, Sherman's fox squirrels, turkey, deer, bobcat, indigo and rattlesnakes, and many species of birds.

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 Alachua County Forever 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.”