



## Agenda Item Summary

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**File #: 24-00238**

**Agenda Date: 3/26/2024**

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**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 project 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. Lochloosa Creek Flatwoods – Cobble (Full Price List)

Addition of this project 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 property on the Active Acquisition List.

1. Lochloosa Creek Flatwoods – Cobble (Full Price List)

**Prior Board Motions:**

3/22/2005 – The BoCC placed parcel 19869-000-000 on the Active Acquisition List (adjacent to this subject parcel).

**Fiscal Note:**

**Lochloosa Creek Flatwoods - Cobble (Conservation Easement) - Cost Estimates:**

Total estimated cost for acquisition and 10-year stewardship: \$334,256

The current annual property tax revenue of all the project parcels is: \$417.48

Purchase and maintenance would be funded from either the 2016 Wild Spaces Public Places surtax or the Conservation Lands portion of the new infrastructure surtax. Purchase and maintenance would be funded from either the 2016 Wild Spaces Public Places surtax (fund 021.41.4160.537) or the Conservation Lands portion of the new infrastructure surtax (fund 140.41.4160.537).

*Cost Estimates include both parcels in the project. Additional details can be found in Exhibit 4*

## **Strategic Guide:**

### **Environment**

#### **Background:**

Lochloosa Creek Flatwoods – Cobble: On January 10, 2024, Brian Cobble nominated the subject property to the Alachua County Forever Program for consideration as a conservation easement. This nomination includes two parcels (Alachua County Property Appraiser Tax Parcel Numbers (ACPA TPN) 19868-000-000 and 19869-000-000) the latter of which is already on the Active Acquisition List). The original parcel was placed on the Active Acquisition List at the March 22, 2005 BoCC meeting. The property is now under new ownership, and the landowner would like an additional adjacent parcel to be included for consideration of a conservation easement. On February 22, 2024, the Land Conservation Board placed the additional 5± -acre Lochloosa Creek Flatwoods – Cobble parcel in the Priority Pool.

The Cobble property is located in southeastern Alachua County, west of Hawthorne. The northern boundary of the property borders the Gainesville-Hawthorne Rail Trail, and much of the southern boundary abuts a portion of Phifer Flatwoods Preserve, which is managed by Alachua County. The property primarily consists of planted loblolly lines, most of which are less than 2 years in age. A portion of Lochloosa Creek runs through the center of the property from north to south and is surrounded by a narrow band of bottomland/ floodplain forest. The groundcover on the site was somewhat patchy and suppressed, but native species were present, and are expected to recover over time under the landowner's current management plan. The 5-acre subject parcel addition that is being considered here for inclusion on the Active Acquisition List is very similar in ecological character to the larger parcel with scattered hardwoods, young, planted pines, and a short section of the creek.

The landowner's goal for the property is to manage it under a multiple-use concept that supports timber production and low-density grazing ("silvo-pasture") while improving wildlife habitat, protecting soil and water resources, enhancing aesthetics, and recreation. The landowner is adhering to relevant Best Management Practices (BMPs) in managing the site and is utilizing prescribed fire and other management techniques to promote the regeneration of native species. His desire is to manage the site so that it can potentially be suitable as a gopher tortoise recipient site in the future. Invasive plant species were observed in low-moderate densities. The landowner is aware of them and has treatment plans in place.

Additional information about the previously nominated parcels can be found in the attached site evaluation. (Exhibits 1 and 2)