



Agenda Item Summary

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**File #: 24-00344**

**Agenda Date: 4/23/2024**

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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 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 (LCB) as outlined in Resolution 22-066.

1. Hasan Flatwoods – Holt / Woitas Trustee (Bargain Share List)
2. Lochloosa Creek Flatwoods – Samuel & Samuel (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 property on the Active Acquisition List.

1. Hasan Flatwoods – Holt / Woitas Trustee (Bargain Share List)
2. Lochloosa Creek Flatwoods – Samuel & Samuel (Full Price List)

**Prior Board Motions:**

None

**Fiscal Note:**

**Hasan Flatwoods – Holt/ Woitas Trustee (Conservation Easement) - Cost Estimates:**

Total estimated cost for acquisition and 10-year stewardship: \$1,449,985

The current annual property tax revenue of all the project parcels is: \$2,302.68

**Lochloosa Creek Flatwoods – Samuel & Samuel (Fee Simple) - Cost Estimates:**

Total estimated cost for acquisition and 10-year stewardship: \$452,675

The current annual property tax revenue of all the project parcels is: \$333.26

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.

Additional details can be found in Exhibits 5 and 6

## **Strategic Guide:**

Environment

### **Background:**

Hasan Flatwoods – Holt / Woitas Trustee: On May 18, 2022, Nanette and Ray Holt nominated the subject property to the Alachua County Forever Program for consideration as a conservation easement purchase. On July 28, 2022, the Land Conservation Board (LCB) placed the 413.25-acre Hasan Flatwoods – Holt / Woitas Trustee property in the Eligibility Pool. Following the acquisition of the Rembert Conservation easement to the west in January 2023 and the possibility of partnership funding through the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program, the property was brought back to the LCB for consideration. On March 28, 2024, the LCB placed the Hasan Flatwoods – Hold/ Woitas Trustee property in the Priority Pool as a bargain share project.

The Holt/Woitas Trustee project includes six parcels (Alachua County Property Appraiser Tax Parcel Numbers (ACPA TPN) 05726-000-000, 05720-000-000, 05626-000-000, 05615-000-000, 05615-002-000, and 05609-001-000). The parcels are in two ownerships within one family. The property lies between the Hasan Flatwoods, Mill Creek, and South Lacrosse Forest Strategic Ecosystems, but does not fall within a strategic ecosystem. Similarly, the property is located between, but not within the following ACF Project Areas: Hasan Flatwoods, Mill Creek, and Burnette Lake. It has been nominated by the landowners for consideration as a conservation easement.

At present, the majority of the property is being used for agricultural production. Much of the land was used for potato production historically, and aerial images show that roughly the same agricultural footprint exists today. A portion of the property is currently leased for row crop production, including watermelon and kale at the time of evaluation, and corn, cattle, peas, and beans at different times. The landowners have an interest in utilizing the property for landscape tree production (oaks, hollies, etc.) in the future. Approximately 20% of the property remains in a more natural habitat condition. This primarily includes the wetlands and stream channels and associated forested slopes, most of which are in good condition. Approximately 1,300 feet of the Bad Dog Branch creek system flows through the property and continues through the Rembert Conservation Easement to the west.

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

Lochloosa Creek Flatwoods – Samuel & Samuel: On January 31, 2024, Barbara and Andrea Samuel nominated the subject property to the Alachua County Forever Program for consideration as a fee simple purchase. On March 28, 2024, the Land Conservation Board placed the 53.92-acre Lochloosa Creek Flatwoods – Samuel & Samuel property in the Priority Pool.

The Samuel & Samuel project includes two parcels (ACPA TPN 19871-000-000 and 19871-001-000) owned by two sets of family members. The property is located in the east-central portion of Alachua County, between Gainesville and Hawthorne, nearly a mile south of State Road 20 along a private road. There are no structures on the property except for a few scattered hunting stands, and very few invasive plants were identified on the property. The purchase of the property could potentially provide better management access to the east side of the Phifer Flatwoods Preserve (Additions).

Historic aerial imagery shows that the property had been entirely cleared for agricultural purposes prior

to 1938, and much of the area remained in a more open state through the 1980's and 1990's. The majority of the property consists old field successional pine which is regenerating with loblolly, slash pine, and hardwoods; successional hardwood forest in the northern part of the property, and an approximately 7-acre stand of planted loblolly pines that are approximately 10-years old. The southern portion of the property contains a recovering mesic flatwoods natural community and a small dome swamp in fair-poor condition. The bottomland forest surrounding the wetland is in good condition and contains a variety of native species including pinkster azaleas which are commercially exploited. Additional information can be found in the attached site evaluation. (Exhibits 3 and 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 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."