



Agenda Item Summary

File #: 24-00724

Agenda Date: 8/13/2024

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. Mill Creek – Williams-Rauscher (Full Price List)*
2. Watermelon Pond – Johnson (Full Price List)
3. Watermelon Pond – Moore-Purcell-Trammell (MPT) (Full Price List)
4. Lake Santa Fe – Wagner (Full Price List)

**The Williams-Rauscher property may be referred to as “Williams” in some attached documents. See background information for detail.*

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. Mill Creek – Williams-Rauscher (Full Price List)
2. Watermelon Pond – Johnson (Full Price List)
3. Watermelon Pond – Moore-Purcell-Trammell (Full Price List)
4. Lake Santa Fe – Wagner (Full Price List)

Prior Board Motions:

None

Fiscal Note:

Mill Creek – Williams-Rauscher (Fee Simple, Donation) - Cost Estimates:

Total estimated cost for acquisition and 10-year stewardship (fee simple): \$45,075

The current annual property tax revenue of all the project parcels is: \$1,055.13

Watermelon Pond – Johnson and Moore-Purcell-Trammell (Fee Simple) - Cost Estimates:

Total estimated cost for acquisition and 10-year stewardship: \$573,936 (See Exhibits 7 and 8 for breakdown)

The current annual property tax revenue of all the project parcels is: \$469.48

Lake Santa Fe – Wagner (Fee Simple) - Cost Estimates:

Total estimated cost for acquisition and 10-year stewardship: \$52,625

The current annual property tax revenue of all the project parcels is: \$669.61

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 7 and 8

Strategic Guide:

Environment

Background:

Mill Creek – Williams-Rauscher: On May 02, 2024, Kathryn Williams nominated the subject property to the Alachua County Forever Program (ACF) for consideration as a fee simple donation. On June 27, 2024, the Land Conservation Board (LCB) placed the 5.00-acre Mill Creek – Williams-Rauscher property in the Priority Pool. The Williams-Rauscher project includes one parcel (Alachua County Property Appraiser Tax Parcel Numbers (ACPA TPN) 02915-010-009) under one ownership. The property is in northwestern Alachua County, north of the city of Alachua, along County Road 241.

Based on aerial imagery and a limited site visit, the natural communities within the parcel include a stream, bottomland forest (the 2.5 acres of the parcel within the 100-yr floodplain), and the remaining acreage outside the floodplain seems to be either upland mixed or upland hardwood forest. The western side of the property has been cleared for agricultural use historically based on aerial imagery dating back to 1938, and likely consists of successional hardwood forest. The landowner wishes to donate the property to the Alachua County Forever program in honor of her parents. With respect to this, she requested that we add the name “Rauscher” to the future project name at the LCB meeting. Some attached maps and documentation may refer to the property as “Williams” rather than “Williams-Rauscher.”

The Williams-Rauscher property was evaluated as a desktop evaluation with a limited site visit and did not receive an individual property score; however, the property is already within the Mill Creek ACF project area boundary which has a Rapid Ecological Project Assessment (REPA) score of 7.4. The property is being recommended for inclusion on the Active Acquisition List per Section 4.d of Resolution 22-66.

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

Watermelon Pond – Johnson and Moore-Purcell-Trammell: The Johnson property (ACPA TPN 02697-001-000) was nominated by George Johnson on May 15, 2024, and the Moore-Purcell-Trammell property (ACPA TPN 02697-000-000) was nominated by Cynthia Moore on June 4, 2024. On June 27, 2024, the Land Conservation Board placed the 30-acre Johnson property and the 30-acre Moore-Purcell-Trammell property in the Priority Pool. Because of their adjacency, these properties were

evaluated together as one project, and they would be managed together should they be acquired. Acquisition of these properties would expand the project area footprint surrounding the Dumford and Palmer property (ACPA TPN 02697-002-000) that was placed on the Active Acquisition List at the June 25, 2024 BoCC meeting. All three of these properties are within the Watermelon Pond ACF Project Area boundary, which has a REPA score of 7.47.

The properties are located in southwestern Alachua County near both the Gilcrest and Levy County boundaries. They are within the ACF Watermelon Pond project area and the Watermelon Pond Strategic Ecosystem. Goethe State Forest is located approximately a quarter-mile to the east across CR 337, and there are additional tracts of the Goethe State Forest within a half-mile to the north and south.

The nominated properties are sandhill with minimal human impact and wide range of species diversity. The sandhill is in good to fair condition. The overstory consists of mature longleaf pine trees with natural regeneration occurring sporadically. Blue jack, turkey oak and sparkleberry comprise much of the mid-story. Wiregrass is common in the understory, along with love grass, lopsided Indian grass, Florida rosemary, sandhill milkweed, and other native species. Overall, the Johnson property is a little more oak-encroached than the Moore, Purcell, & Trammell parcel, but it still retains a representative diversity of sandhill species. No structures were observed on the nominated properties. There is a primitive camp site located on the Johnson parcel consisting of a tent, campfire ring, chairs, table and plastic totes containing associated camping gear. Solid waste is very minimal, and the nominated properties are relatively free of invasive plants. There is a wide powerline and gas line easement that bisects the Moore-Purcell-Trammell property from north to south. Gopher tortoise burrows were present across both sites and were especially numerous in the right-of-way.

Additional information can be found in the attached site evaluations. (Exhibits 3 and 4)

Lake Santa Fe – Wagner: On May 20, 2024, Richard Long and Long and Frank Wagner nominated the subject property to the Alachua County Forever Program for consideration as a fee simple purchase. On June 27, 2024, the Land Conservation Board placed the 5.35-acre Lake Santa Fe – Wagner property in the Priority Pool.

The project includes one parcel (ACPA TPN 17485-020-000). The property is in northeastern Alachua County adjacent to the County-managed Lake Alto Preserve. The parcel is immediately west of the Lake Santa Fe ACF project area boundary. The property has approximately 645 ft of public road frontage on NE 145 Ln (“Waldo Canal Road”), and there is a small boat ramp and canal leading to Lake Alto just north of the property that is owned by the City of Waldo.

GIS layers and aerial imagery indicate that 98% of the property is forested wetland. The parcel does not appear to have been significantly cleared historically based on aerial imagery dating back to 1938. Invasive species such as air potato and Japanese climbing fern were observed in the small upland area during a brief visit to the site. There are a couple of dilapidated RV’s and other scattered solid waste in this area close to the road.

The Wagner property was evaluated as a desktop evaluation with a limited site visit and did not receive an individual property score. The property adjacent to projects within the Lake Santa Fe ACF project area boundary, which has a REPA score of 6.87. This property would expand protection for projects that have already been acquired in this project area (Lake Alto Preserve) and is being recommended for inclusion on the Active Acquisition List per Section 4.d of Resolution 22-66 to

amend the project boundary to include this parcel.

Additional information can be found in the attached site evaluation. (Exhibits 5 and 6)

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.”