



## Agenda Item Summary

---

**File #: 24-01079**

**Agenda Date: 12/10/2024**

---

**Agenda Item Name:**

**North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) – Notice of Grant Award Requirements**

**Presenter:**

Andi Christman, Land Conservation Program Manager, 352-264-6803

**Description:**

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service, through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, has awarded land acquisition reimbursement funding to Alachua Conservation Trust and Alachua County through the North Florida Wetland Connector Conservation Project: Phase 1 and Phase 2. Alachua County, as an established partner in the Project, will receive \$2 million in land acquisition reimbursement funding for acquisition of lands within the North Florida Wetlands Connector Conservation Project, including the Alachua County Forever acquisition projects: Lochloosa Slough-Weyerhaeuser tract and the Lochloosa Slough Fox Pen Connector tract. The grant award and partner commitments require that a notice of grant requirements be recorded for any properties included in the grant project.

**Recommended Action:**

1. Approve and Authorize Chair Signature on the Notice of Grant Requirements for the Lochloosa Slough property (Exhibit 1); and
2. Approve and Authorize Chair Signature on the Notice of Grant Requirements for the Fox Pen Connector property (Exhibit 2); and
3. Direct staff that the Notice of Grant Requirements for the Lochloosa Slough property and the Notice of Grant Requirements for the Fox Pen Connector property be recorded in the official records for Alachua County.

**Prior Board Motions:**

1. September 24, 2019 – The Board approved and authorized the Chair to exercise the option to purchase the Lochloosa Slough - Weyerhaeuser property.
2. February 23, 2021 - the Board authorized the County Manager to sign and submit the Partner Contribution Statement for Alachua Conservation Trust's Phase 1 NAWCA grant application. The partner contribution statement affirmed that Alachua County's purchase of the 1,861-acre Lochloosa Slough-Weyerhaeuser property will be used as match for the North Florida Wetland Connector Conservation Project - NAWCA Phase 1 grant. In signing the partner contribution statement, the County also affirmed willingness to apply a Notice of Grant Agreement or other recordable document to the property.
3. March 23, 2021, the Board approved and authorized the Chair to exercise the option to purchase

the Lochloosa Slough - Fox Pen Connector property.

4. August 24, 2021- the Board authorized the Chair to sign and submit the Partner Contribution Statement for Alachua Conservation Trust's Phase 2 NAWCA grant application. The partner commitment affirmed that Alachua County's purchase of the 3,936-acre Lochloosa Slough-Fox Pen Connector property will be used as match for the North Florida Wetland Connector Conservation Project - NAWCA Phase 2 grant. In signing the partner contribution statement, the County also affirmed willingness to apply a Notice of Grant Agreement or other recordable document to the property.

**Fiscal Note:**

Total NAWCA grant award is \$3,000,000.00. This grant is for a larger geographic area applied for by the Alachua Conservation Trust in which they will receive \$1,000,000.00; Alachua County will receive \$2,000,000.00 in land acquisition reimbursement funding (Fund 021.41.4160.331.3900 - Project 6194101 WSPP Land Acquisition: Lochloosa Slough: Fox Pen Connector).

**Strategic Guide:**

Environment

**Background:**

Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT) was awarded grant funding for conservation land acquisition from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) program to protect critical habitat for migratory birds and other wetland-dependent species in north central Florida. As a partner in this project, Alachua County will receive \$2,000,000.00 in land acquisition reimbursement funding from ACT for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the North Florida Wetland Connector Conservation Project, under grant number F22AP01110-03, awarded to Alachua Conservation Trust from the United States Department of the Interior – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service North American Wetlands Conservation Fund (Exhibit 3).

This grant award required evidence that ACT is supported by a partner entity that is already committed to conservation of land and water resources within the NAWCA grant region and that the grant awards will complement those existing conservation efforts in the same region. Alachua County provided those commitments in the form of Partner Contribution Statements (Exhibit 4) for the Phase 1 and Phase 2 grant application phases, specifically contributing the county's acquisition expenditures for the Alachua County Forever Program's (ACF) Lochloosa Slough and Lochloosa Slough Fox Pen Connector acquisitions as required match. The grant award and partner commitments require that a notice of grant requirements be recorded for any properties included in the grant project. The Notice of Grant Requirements establishes the obligation to comply with the grant terms and conditions (Exhibit 5), to ensure the long-term conservation of the Property and to obtain the consent of the US Fish and Wildlife Service – Division of Bird Habitat Conservation (DBHC) prior to the sale, conveyance or encumbrance of any interest therein. If any interest is converted, sold, conveyed, or otherwise encumbered, an attributable share may be owed to DBHC.

Approval and recording of these Notices of Grant Requirements serves as public notice that the County must use the property consistent with the purposes of the grant and cannot dispose of the property. A similar Notice has been approved by the BOCC and recorded for previous NAWCA match properties including: Little Orange Creek Preserve (in 2012) and Barr Hammock Preserve (in 2008). These types of recorded Notices are typical for land conservation grants. The purposes of the land conservation projects are unchanged under the terms of the grant and remain consistent with the County's goals when the properties were acquired under the Alachua County Forever program.

**Comp Plan Reference:**

Alachua County Comprehensive Plan (2019-2040):

Conservation and Open Space Element: 6.0 LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAM; Objective 6.4 “Other Acquisition Programs,” states: “Coordinate with other programs for the acquisition and management of natural areas and open space for recreational, open space and conservation purposes.”

Policy 6.4.1 states:

“The County shall seek to maximize the effectiveness of local revenue sources by using them to leverage funds available from federal, state, municipal, private non-profit, and Water Management District programs, such as Florida Forever, Florida Communities Trust (FCT), Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL), and Save-Our-Rivers (SOR).”

Policy 6.4.2 states:

“The County shall provide support, in the form of information, coordination, assistance in obtaining grants, and other support activities to organizations and agencies that acquire and protect natural areas and open space for conservation, open space, and recreational purposes.”