

Watermelon Pond

DeCubellis

12/5/2024

Project Score	6.20 of 10.00	Buildings/ Structures	2 on ACPA, 6+ on site (Home, mobile home, Barn, sheds, pole barn)		
Inspection Date	11/8/2024	Just Value	\$800,000	Just Value Per Acre	\$5,000
Size (Total, ACPA)	160	Total Value (Just, Misc, Bldg)	\$1,136,000	Total Value Per Acre	\$7,100
Parcel Number	Acreage (ACPA)	Acquisition Type			
02716-002-000	80	Conservation Easement			
02716-000-000	80	Natural Community	Condition		
Section-Township-Range	12-11-17	Depression marsh	Fair		
Archaeological Sites	0 recorded on site, 0 in 1 mile	Other	Condition		
Bald Eagle Nests	0 on site, 0 in one mile	Pine plantation			
		Successional hardwood forest			
		Pasture			
REPA Score	N/A (Adjacent to Watermelon Pond ACF Project Area; 7.47/9.44)				
KBN Score	Not in a Strategic Ecosystem				
Outstanding FL Waters	N/A				

Overall Description:

The DeCubellis property is in Southwestern Alachua County south of Newberry and west/southwest of Archer, on the boundary with Levy County. The 160-acre property consists of two parcels (ACPA TPN 02716-002-000 and 02716-000-000) under two slightly different ownership configurations within the same family. The western boundary of the property is connected to the King and Warney tracts of Watermelon Pond Preserve, and the property also forms a physical connection to the Biro Conservation Easement to the north, which is under contract to be acquired by the County. The property is adjacent to the current boundary of the Watermelon Pond ACF project area. It has been nominated for consideration as a conservation easement.

Uplands on the property consist of semi-improved pasture, pine plantation, and successional hardwoods. Aerial imagery, nearby intact habitats, and remnant native vegetation found onsite indicate that historic communities likely included sandhill, xeric hammock, and dry prairie. Based on aerial imagery assessments, land clearing seems to have begun around the 1960's, and by the mid 1970's, the land had been almost entirely converted for agricultural use. There are two homesites on the property – one primary residence, and a smaller mobile home, as well as various supporting and agricultural

structures including a couple small pole barns, a barn, and several storage sheds. The property is currently used primarily for grazing (approximately 50 cattle and several horses at the time of the site visit) but was historically harvested for timber – both sand pine and slash pine. There is still a stand of slash pine east of the primary homesite, and there are remnants of the historic sand pine plantation mixed with successional hardwoods around the edges of the southern parcel. Some of the more open areas that were historically cleared for pasture are filling in with scattered oaks. Remnant native vegetation was present in the understory, but was relatively sparse, especially in the more heavily shaded areas.

Wetland features on the property include two depression marshes on the southern parcel. Both wetlands include two separate deeper pools of water that are connected during periods of high water according to the landowner as well as observed historically in aerial photographs. The wetlands are in fair condition and are commonly utilized by a variety of birds. Species observed using the wetlands during the site visit include great blue heron, anhinga, great egret, little blue heron, white ibis, and various frogs of undetermined species. Sundews and an abundance of burr marigolds were observed along the edges of the northern wetland. Other native herbaceous plants were observed along wetland edges, but they were not robust. Vegetation around the wetland edges is managed through grazing and/ or mowing. More limited management along wetland edges could allow some species to recover.

The elevation undulates across the property, ranging from roughly 44ft in the wetlands to roughly 90 ft in the southeast corner and is generally higher on the eastern side of the property. No archaeological sites are known to occur onsite. Only one invasive plant species, tropical soda apple, was observed in low density during the site visit. Wildlife observations during the site visit included gopher tortoise (and numerous burrows) and deer, as well as a variety of bird species in addition to those listed previously, including phoebe, pileated woodpecker, redheaded woodpecker, pine warbler, northern flicker, and red-winged blackbird. The landowners are avid recreational birders and listed, at minimum, forty other species that they have observed on the property including sandhill cranes (which have nested onsite many times), chuck wills widow, painted bunting, indigo bunting, bobwhite quail, barred owl, great horned owl, eastern screech owl, belted kingfisher, eastern blue bird, and many others. They have also observed a variety of mammal and reptile species including southern fox squirrel, gray fox, bobcat, striped and spotted skunk, alligator, diamondback and pygmy rattlesnake, coral snake, ring necked snake, banded water snake, and others. The landowners value the tranquility of the site and shared concerns about significant development in the area and throughout Florida. They greatly enjoy the abundance of wildlife they are able to see and are interested in management strategies they could incorporate into their current management that would help better support birds, pollinators, and other wildlife.

Development Review:

This development analysis is based on a limited desk-top review and is founded upon current County Land Development Regulations and Comprehensive Plan policies. The Development Scenario is oversimplified and is meant only to convey a general sense of the potential of development intensity that could be possible based on land use and zoning conditions.

The parcels are owned by the DeCubellis and Chandler Ash. The parcels have a Future Land Use of Rural Agricultural. In accordance with the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan, Rural Agricultural areas are intended to be protected in a manner consistent with preservation of agriculture, open space, rural character and the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas. Under the current land use and zoning the property may be developed at a maximum intensity of 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres.

There are some wetlands on the property, which, along with the adjacent 75 ft wetland buffer, restricts the amount of developable land. 100-year floodplain bisects the entire property. Development within floodplains is discouraged and requires standards for floodproofing. Further investigation would be needed to determine if listed species habitat for gopher tortoises or other species are present. Under the Alachua County Unified Land Development Code, up to 25% of the property may be set-aside as a conservation area for listed species. Determinations are made on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, the western 100 ft of the property is restricted from development, per the Preservation Buffer Code, due its location adjacent to Watermelon Pond Preserve.

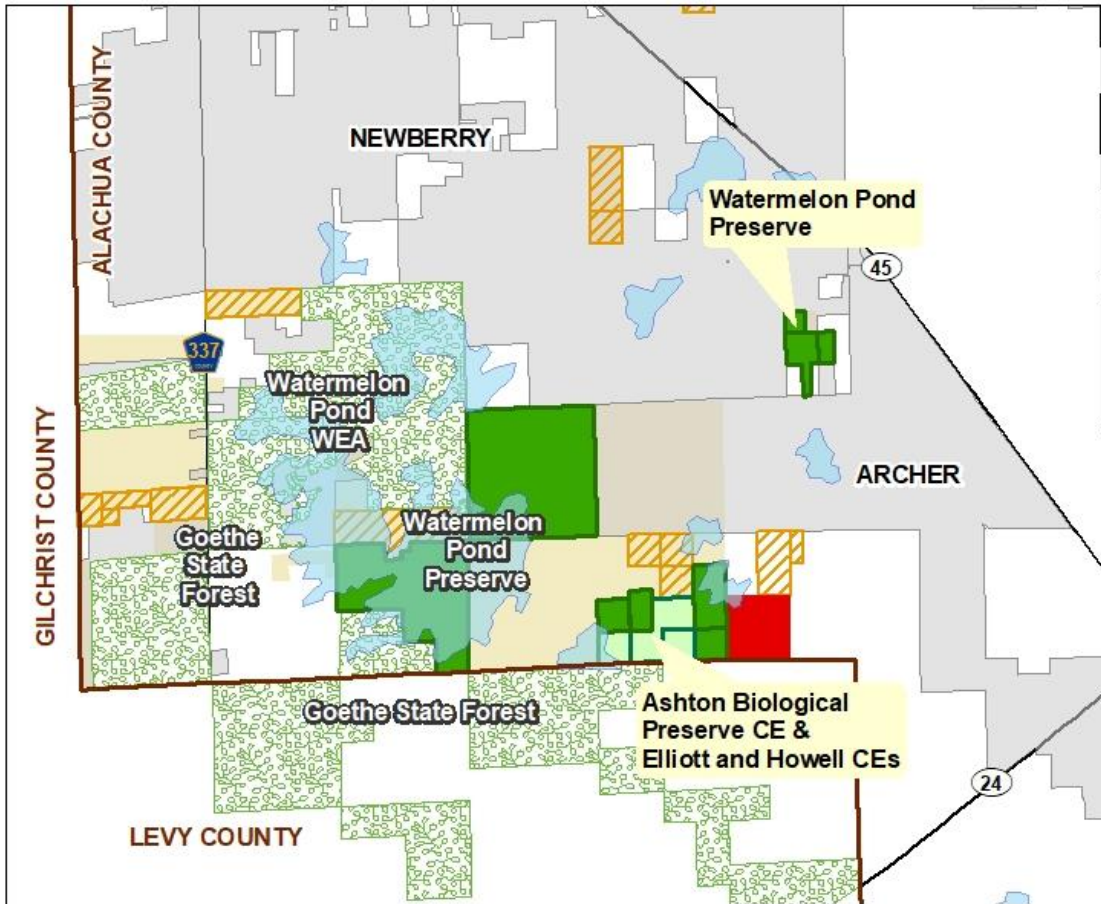
The current zoning and future land use indicate this property is developable, however, there may be somewhat less area for development due to the wetlands, floodplain, preservation buffer, and potential for listed species habitat. The somewhat remote location, limited infrastructure, and associated higher construction costs may also diminish the prospects and potential for development activities.

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CATEGORY	Criterion	WEIGHTING	Enter Criteria Value Based on Site Inspection	Average Criteria Score	Average Criteria Score Multiplied by Relative Importance
(I-1) PROTECTION OF WATER RESOURCES	A. Whether the property has geologic/hydrologic conditions that would easily enable contamination of vulnerable aquifers that have value as drinking water sources;		5		
	B. Whether the property serves an important groundwater recharge function;		5		
	C. Whether the property contains or has direct connections to lakes, creeks, rivers, springs, sinkholes, or wetlands for which conservation of the property will protect or improve surface water quality;		1		
	D. Whether the property serves an important flood management function.		2		
(I-2) PROTECTION OF NATURAL COMMUNITIES AND LANDSCAPES	A. Whether the property contains a diversity of natural communities;		1		
	B. Whether the natural communities present on the property are rare;		2		
	C. Whether there is ecological quality in the communities present on the property;		2		
	D. Whether the property is functionally connected to other natural communities;		3		
	E. Whether the property is adjacent to properties that are in public ownership or have other environmental protections such as conservation easements;		4		
	F. Whether the property is large enough to contribute substantially to conservation efforts;		4		
	G. Whether the property contains important, Florida-specific geologic features such as caves or springs;		2		
	H. Whether the property is relatively free from internal fragmentation from roads, power lines, and other features that create barriers and edge effects.		2		
(I-3) PROTECTION OF PLANT AND ANIMAL SPECIES	A. Whether the property serves as documented or potential habitat for rare, threatened, or endangered species or species of special concern;	4			
	B. Whether the property serves as documented or potential habitat for species with large home ranges;	4			
	C. Whether the property contains plants or animals that are endemic or near-endemic to Florida or Alachua County;	5			
	D. Whether the property serves as a special wildlife migration or aggregation site for activities such as breeding, roosting, colonial nesting, or over-wintering;	3			
	E. Whether the property offers high vegetation quality and species diversity;	3			
	F. Whether the property has low incidence of non-native invasive species.	4			
(I-4) SOCIAL AND HUMAN VALUES	A. Whether the property offers opportunities for compatible resource-based recreation, if appropriate;	2			
	B. Whether the property contributes to urban green space, provides a municipal defining greenbelt, provides scenic vistas, or has other value from an urban and regional planning perspective.	5			
	AVERAGE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN VALUES			3.15	
	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THIS CRITERIA SET IN THE OVERALL SCORE	1.333			4.20
(II-1) MANAGEMENT ISSUES	A. Whether it will be practical to manage the property to protect its environmental, social and other values (examples include controlled burning, exotics removal, maintaining hydro-period, and so on);	3			
	B. Whether this management can be completed in a cost-effective manner.	5			
(II-2) ECONOMIC AND ACQUISITION ISSUES	A. Whether there is potential for purchasing the property with matching funds from municipal, state, federal, or private contributions;	2			
	B. Whether the overall resource values justifies the potential cost of acquisition;	3			
	C. Whether there is imminent threat of losing the environmental, social or other values of the property through development and/or lack of sufficient legislative protections (this requires analysis of current land use, zoning, owner intent, location and	2			
	AVERAGE FOR ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT VALUES			3.00	
	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THIS CRITERIA SET IN THE OVERALL SCORE	0.667			2.00
	TOTAL SCORE				6.20
NOTES					
General Criteria Scoring Guidelines					
1 = Least beneficial, 2 = Less Beneficial than Average, 3 = Average, 4 = More Beneficial than Average, 5 = Most Beneficial					



Watermelon Pond - DeCubellis Location Map



Legend

- DeCubellis Parcels (160 ac)
- ACF Preserve
- Conservation Easement
- Partner Conservation Lands
- Lakes
- ACF Active Acquisition List
- ACF Project Areas
- Municipal Boundaries
- CountyBoundary

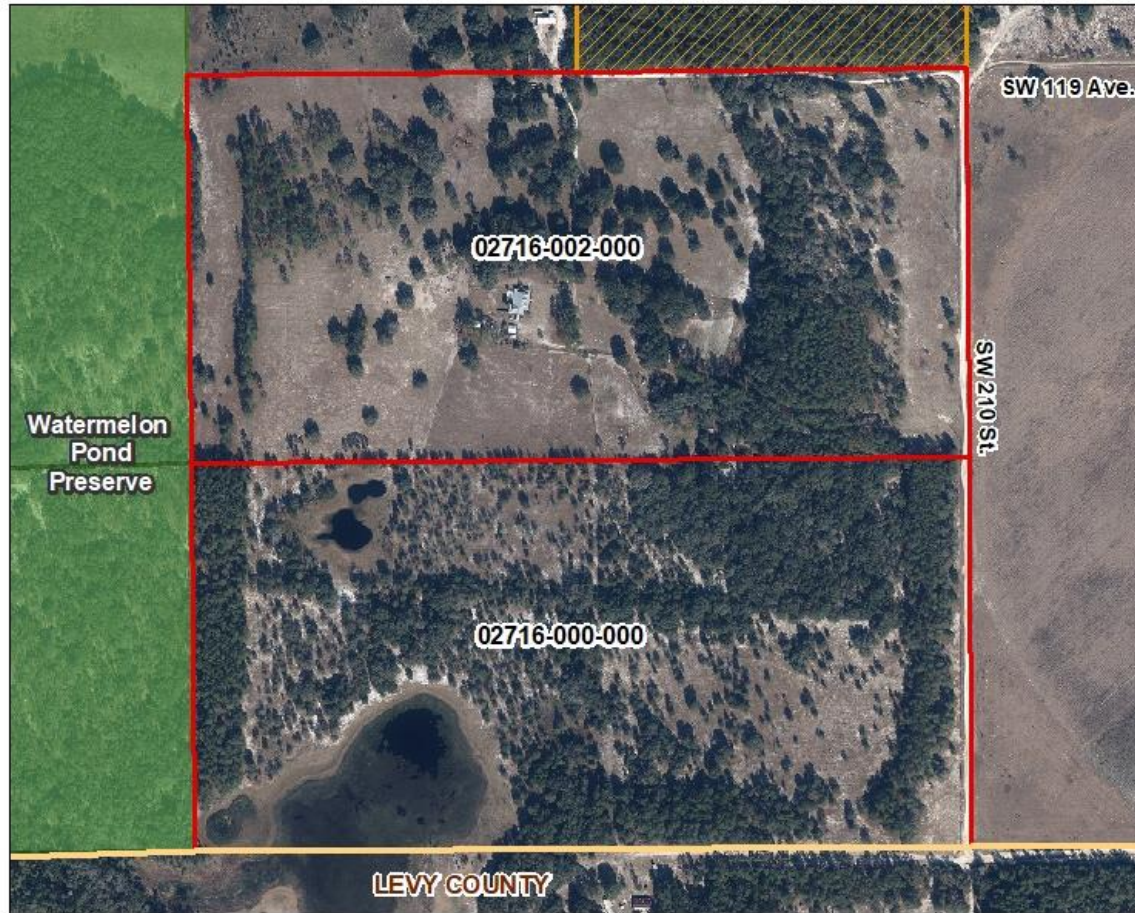


0 1 2 4 Miles

DISCLAIMER: This map and the spatial data it contains are made available as a public service, to be used for reference purposes only. The Alachua County Environmental Protection Department provides this information AS IS without warranty of any kind. The quality of the data is dependent on the various sources from which each data layer is obtained.

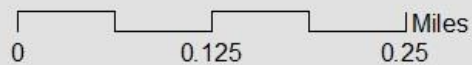
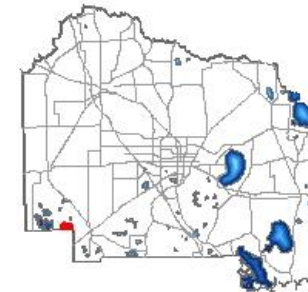


Watermelon Pond - DeCubellis Parcel Map



Legend

- DeCubellis Parcels (160 ac.)
- ACF Preserve
- Biro Parcels (95.88 ac.)
- CountyBoundary



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