



Agenda Item Summary

File #: 25-00176

Agenda Date: 3/11/2025

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 this property to the Priority Pool by the Land Conservation Board (LCB) as outlined in Resolution 22-066.

1. Lochloosa Creek Flatwoods – Little Orange Lake Investors, LLC (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:

1. Approve the addition of the Lochloosa Creek Flatwoods – Little Orange Lake Investors, LLC following property to the Active Acquisition (Full Price List), and;
2. In accordance with Land Conservation Board motion, direct staff to defer contract development on the Little Orange Lake Investors, LLC property until a contract has been executed on the Lakes of Hawthorne project to the north.

Prior Board Motions:

None for this project (Little Orange Lake Investors, LLC)

Referenced Project: The Lakes of Hawthorne, LLC project was added to the Active Acquisition List on January 14, 2025 (# 25-00069)

Fiscal Note:

Lochloosa Creek Flatwoods – Little Orange Lake Investors, LLC (Fee Simple) - Cost Estimates:

Total estimated cost for acquisition and 10-year stewardship: \$1,787,659

The current annual property tax revenue of all the project parcels is: \$2,748.98

Purchase and maintenance would be funded from the Wild Spaces Public Places surtax.

Additional details can be found in Exhibits 3 and 4.

Strategic Guide:
Environment

Background:

Lochloosa Creek Flatwoods – Little Orange Lakes Investors, LLC: On July 18, 2024, Putnam Land Conservancy (PLC) nominated the subject property to the Alachua County Forever Program (ACF) with permission from the landowner, for consideration as a fee simple acquisition. The project includes nine parcels under one ownership (see Exhibit 1). It is part of a larger land conservation project initiated by PLC to establish a protected corridor between the Little Orange Creek Nature Preserve in Alachua County the Ocala to Osceola portion of the FL Wildlife Corridor. On January 23, 2025, the Land Conservation Board (LCB) placed the approximately 178-acre property in the Priority Pool contingent on a contract with Lakes of Hawthorne project to the north by the County or other organization that would preserve a conservation corridor to the Little Orange Creek Nature Preserve. (The project to the north is currently owned by Lakes of Hawthorne, LLC. It was placed on the Active Acquisition List on Jan 14, 2025, Agenda ID: 25-00069).

The natural communities present on the property include classic upland lake, floodplain marsh, depression marsh, and mesic hammock. The site has had a mixed-use history, and the rest of the site includes two human-altered communities that are currently converted to pine plantation or open field. The most outstanding natural feature on the property is the over 3,400 ft of shoreline on Little Orange Lake that is bordered by floodplain marsh. The property has the potential to provide good recreational access to the lake from a 140 ft dock as well as a paved boat ramp. The natural communities on site were in fair – good condition, but invasive species presence was high across the site and included multiple challenging species such as cogon grass, Caesar’s weed, and air potato.

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

The staff recommendation is based on the addition of this property to the Priority Pool by the Land Conservation Board as outlined in Resolution 22-066. As with all Alachua County conservation lands, those accepted as fee-simple acquisitions, 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.”