



Agenda Item Summary

File #: 25-00560

Agenda Date: 7/8/2025

Agenda Item Name:

Support for Alachua Conservation Trust's North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grant Application

Presenter:

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

Description:

Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT) is applying for North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) Grant from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) that, if awarded, will provide funding to both ACT and Alachua County, as grant recipients, for the acquisition of the Lochloosa Connector – Les Que Two property. Any award to ACT/Alachua County would be presented to the Board for approval in the form of a grant agreement at a future Board meeting. This is the fifth Phase of NAWCA funding sought by ACT in Alachua County, and each phase has included reimbursement of acquisition dollars expended by the County as a component of the grant. Staff requests the Board to authorize the Chair to sign the attached Partner Contribution Statement and Matching Contribution Plan Statements, which staff will forward to ACT for use in ACT's NAWCA (Phase 5) grant application.

Recommended Action:

Approve and Authorize the Chair to sign the attached 1) Partner Contribution Statement, and 2) Matching Contribution Plan Statement for Alachua Conservation Trust's NAWCA grant Phase 5 application.

Prior Board Motions:

On May 26, 2020, the Board authorized the County Manager or her designee to sign and submit the 2020 partner contribution letters for Alachua Conservation Trust's federal grant applications for RCPP and NAWCA (Phase 1).

On August 24, 2021, the Board authorized the Chair to sign a revised Partner Contribution statement letter for Alachua Conservation Trust's July 2021 NAWCA (Phase 2) grant application.

On December 14, 2021, the Board authorized the County Manager or her designee to approve changes to the Partner Contribution Forms when there is a reduction in funds requested in order to efficiently adjust applications as the need arises.

On June 28, 2022, the Board authorized the Chair to sign the Partner Contribution Statement for Alachua Conservation Trust's NAWCA (Phase 3) grant application for the Lochloosa Creek Flatwoods – Brown tract.

Fiscal Note:

The attached Partner Contribution Statement under NAWCA states that the County will contribute an estimated \$4,750,000 in total for the fee-simple purchase of the Lochloosa Connector – Les Que Two property, which includes land, appraisals, due diligence, and other acquisition costs. The expenditures will be presented to the Board at a future meeting for consideration for the property. The Board may authorize the expenditures through exercise of Option Contract for the property.

If awarded the NAWCA grant could provide an estimated \$2,000,000 in land acquisition reimbursement funding to leverage the Alachua County Forever program's land conservation acquisition funds and extend funding resources to cover additional projects.

Sufficient budget exists in the Wild Spaces Public Places Land Allocation for these costs.

Project 6184160- WSPP-General Operating & Due Diligence: 140.41.4160.537.31.00

Project 6194101-WSPP-Land Acquisition: 140.41.4160.537.61.00

Strategic Guide:

Environment

Background:

The Lochloosa Connector – Les Que Two property consists of approximately 520 acres in eastern Alachua County and is on the County's Alachua County Forever Program's active acquisition list. To help offset the cost of that purchase, Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT) is preparing a Phase 5 application for a North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) Grant from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) that, if awarded, will provide funding to both ACT and Alachua County, as grant recipients, for the acquisition of the Lochloosa Connector – Les Que Two property.

If approved, the grant would reimburse the County for up to an estimated \$2 million in acquisition costs for the project.

This grant application requires evidence that ACT is supported by a partner entity that is already committed to the 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. The Alachua County: Lochloosa Connector – Les Que Two property acquisition project would satisfy this requirement. The grant also requires the applicants to provide a match for the grant funding that would be awarded. For this application, the County's match would consist of "excess" contributions made by the County for Phases 1, 2 and 3, as well as a portion of the County's purchase costs for the Les Que Two property.

Previous phases of the ACT NAWCA grant applications established a Matching Contribution Plan for the Phase 1, 2 and 3 of the NAWCA grants. This plan reflects funds committed in previous NAWCA phases which exceeded the match amount needed for the previous phases and, therefore, are available for match in this phase. \$3,495,000 from the Matching Contribution Plan's old match will be credited towards this Phase 5 application. As this is a reimbursement grant, the County will not be penalized or otherwise in violation of the grant if we are unable to purchase the Les Que Two property. Any award to ACT/Alachua County would be presented to the Board for approval in the form of a grant agreement at a future Board meeting.

Alachua County has already benefitted from ACT's work in being awarded NAWCA grants for prior

phases, with the receipt of a \$2 million reimbursement or land acquisition costs previously expended for the Lochloosa Slough and Lochloosa Slough – Fox Pen Connector land acquisition projects.

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.”