



Agenda Item Summary

File #: 25-00829

Agenda Date: 10/14/2025

Agenda Item Name:

Addition of Agricultural 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 Agricultural Land Conservation Board (ALCB) as outlined in Resolution 24-81. This is the first property to be evaluated for consideration as an agricultural land conservation easement under the new strategy and the first property that was reviewed by the ALCB.

1. Lochloosa Creek Flatwoods – Frog Song Organics, LLC, John Bitter, and Amy Van Scoik (Agricultural Conservation Easement)

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:

Approve the addition of the following property to the Active Acquisition List

1. Lochloosa Creek Flatwoods – Frog Song Organics, LLC, John Bitter, and Amy Van Scoik (Agricultural Conservation Easement)

Prior Board Motions:

None for this parcel.

On Sept. 10th, 2024, the Commission adopted Resolution 24-81, establishing the ACF Agricultural Land Protection Strategy, creating the ALCB, and authorizing \$10 million of Wild Spaces and Public Places funding to be utilized for acquisition of agricultural land conservation easements.

Fiscal Note:

Lochloosa Creek Flatwoods – Frog Song Organics (Agricultural Conservation Easement) - Cost

Estimates:

Total estimated cost for acquisition and 10-year stewardship: \$389,200

Staff are pursuing cost-share opportunities and will utilize funding partnerships if available.

The current annual property tax revenue of all the project parcels is: \$2,289.87

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 – Frog Song Organics: On May 15, 2025, the Frog Song Organics, LLC property was nominated to the Alachua County Forever Program (ACF) by the owners of the property and managers of the LLC, Amy Van Scoik and John Bitter for consideration as an agricultural conservation easement. The project includes two parcels (Alachua County Property Appraiser Tax Parcel Number 18827-001-000, owned by Frog Song Organics, LLC, John Bitter, and Amy Van Scoik and Parcel Number 18825-001-000, owned by Amy Van Scoik and John Bitter). On September 3, 2025, the Agricultural Land Conservation Board (ALCB) placed the approximately 65-acre property in the Priority Pool.

Frog Song Organics is a first-generation farm in eastern Alachua County on US Highway 301N. It was established in 2011 by Amy Van Scoik and John Bitter whose mission was to “provide nutritious foods to our local community.” The farm has been certified organic since 2012 by Quality Certification Services and follows Best Management Practices. The farm is in the Florida Wildlife Corridor, a statewide corridor of priority land protection established by the legislature, and one of ACF’s top three county-level priority corridors.

The farmers raise laying hens for eggs, pastured pork, and they grow a diverse range of specialty vegetable crops and fruit trees, as well as flowers, strawberries, melons, root crops and medicinal herbs. Their local sales outlets include Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and three to four weekly farmers' markets. The farm also hosts a variety of events and festivals, with agritourism and educational activities serving as major contributors to the farm’s community-oriented ethos. Over the last 15 years, the farmers have expanded their business model to play a key role in the local and regional agricultural economy and serve as an aggregator for other farms. The landowners also mentor beginning farmers and lease small plots on their farm to allow newer farmers space to grow and learn. Their long-term goal for the land is to serve as an agricultural education hub, to maintain healthy, productive soils through organic and regenerative practices, and to teach people techniques that will enable them to farm the land sustainably and in perpetuity.

A critical resource that contributes to the land’s environmental significance for conservation and to the farm’s productivity are its soils, of which a majority are Bonneau Series Class 2. According to the USDA Land Capability Classification, Class 2 soils are considered moderately high to high in productivity for a wide variety of common field crops. Due to the soil’s unique properties, the soil is more able to retain moisture for longer periods, and you can grow crops most of the year without irrigation. Based on this assessment and the landowners’ long-term vision, ACF Program staff have determined that Frog Song Organics aligns with the Agricultural Strategy’s goals and values.

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

General:

The staff recommendation is based on the addition of these properties to the Priority Pool by the Agricultural Land Conservation Board as outlined in Resolution 24-81.

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.”