

Watermelon Pond Whitehurst Cattle Co.

12/4/2025

Project Score		Buildings	
6.20 of 10.00		0 on ACPA; 0 onsite	
Inspection Date		Just Value	Just Value Per Acre
11/25/2025		\$6,354,600	\$10,002
Size (ACPA acres)		Total Value (Just, Misc, Bldg)	Total Value Per Acre
635.36		\$6,354,600	\$10,002
Parcel Number	Acreage	Acquisition Type	
02660-001-000	475.46	Fee Simple	
02659-000-000	160	Natural Community	Condition
Section-Township-Range		Sandhill/ Former sandhill	Good - Fair
29-10-17		Wet prairie	Fair
28-10-17		Sandhill Upland Lake	Poor
Archaeological Sites		Xeric Hammock	Fair
0 recorded on site, 2 in 1 mile		Other	Condition
Bald Eagle Nests		Pine plantation	
0 on site, 0 in one mile		Agricultural (row crops, pasture)	
		Borrow pit/ wetland	
		Successional hardwoods	

REPA Score N/A (*Adjacent to Watermelon Pond ACF Project Area, 7.47)
KBN Score N/A
Outstanding Florida Waters N/A

*ACPA = Alachua County Property Appraiser

The 635-acre Whitehurst Cattle Co. property is located in southwest Alachua County, on the south side of Newberry (within the municipal boundary) and northwest of Archer. The property has three-quarter of a mile of frontage on County Road 337 and is one mile east of the Gilchrist County boundary and a little over three miles north of the Levy County boundary. The property consists of two parcels (ACPA TPN 02660-001-000 and 02659-000-000), neither of which are within a strategic ecosystem. The parcel is adjacent to parcels in the Watermelon Pond Alachua County Forever (ACF) project area along its entire southern boundary, and it connects to a portion of the Watermelon Pond Wildlife Environmental Area (WEA), managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). The property also falls within the Santa Fe River BMAP (Basin Management Action Plan) area, contributes to aquifer recharge water quality on the Santa Fe River. It has been nominated for consideration as a fee simple acquisition

Historically dominated by sandhill natural community type, the property retains many of the species associated with that natural community, as well as a rolling natural topography ranging from 110 feet in elevation to 48 feet in elevation. Aerial photographs of the property dating back to

1938 show some human use on portions of the site prior to this time, though most of the uplands appear to have remained intact until the late 1960's. By the 1970's the large parcel had been cleared (at least of trees) and divided into quadrants, the specific purpose of which is unknown but could have been related to exploratory mining activity in the area, or for another agricultural use. After a change in ownership in the 1990's, the large parcel was planted in longleaf pine. The latest aerial photograph we have (attached here) does not accurately reflect the most recent harvest that took place. The southern and eastern "treed" areas in the aerial (approximately 304 acres) were harvested within the last year (December 2024). This area has since been lightly root-raked, the tops of small hardwoods were chipped (March 2025), and other material was pile burned. It has not been replanted, but groundcover species indicative of former sandhill habitat are revegetating the site. Although obviously still recovering from disturbances over the last year, the variety of groundcover species observed indicates that the site could be restored to good ecological condition with time, prescribed fire, and invasive species control. Observed native species include coontie, turkey oak, bluejack oak, wiregrass, lovegrass, lopsided Indiangrass, pawpaw, prickly pear cactus, Florida rosemary, dog fennel, yucca, pawpaw species, shiny blueberry, goldenrod, and others. It would have been informative to see the property in the peak bloom season in October, as there was evidence of a variety of flowers, seeding grasses, and other herbaceous species that were past their flowering period at the time of the site visit or were impacted by the frost from a couple weeks ago. The northwestern 171 acres (which appear more cleared in the attached aerial) were harvested and replanted with longleaf sometime around 2018. The trees are now approximately seven years old.

The southwestern quadrant of the larger parcel has been a little more manipulated over time, and was once part of an older borrow area that may date back to the late 1930's. The most significant feature that remains is an approximately 12-acre steeply sided pit. This may have once been a more natural shallow wetland feature, but it is now functioning more like a recovering sinkhole/ sinkhole wetland. The elevation difference between the top and bottom of the pit is over 40 ft based on GIS topography models which show elevations as low as 42ft at the bottom and as high as 90 ft on the pit edges. Staff were able to get down to the bottom of the pit in one more gently eroded areas. There is a large wetland interspersed with a few shrubs and trees and an abundance of snags. Yellow bladderworts were observed in the shallow edges. The sloped sides of the pit were vegetated with mature oaks and other trees as well as a variety of shrubs and ferns.

Another prominent man-made feature which can be seen as early as the 1938 aeriels is a road connecting the deep borrow pit on the property to another presumed borrow/spoil area on the parcel to the north. In places, especially towards the northern boundary of the property, this road becomes a much more steeply elevated berm which is notable in the 2ft GIS topography layer. It is unclear how much of the road remains more extremely elevated outside of the property boundary, but the road did historically extend all the way to NE 250th St, though it doesn't seem to connect all the way at present.

The smaller eastern parcel has a more mixed agricultural use footprint and currently consists of row crops, pasture, and successional hardwoods/ xeric hammock. There were no cattle present at the time of the site visit, but the property may have been grazed in the past. There is an irregularly shaped historic wetland between the large and small parcels. Although this area has a distinctly different visual character, only a small portion of the feature is still functioning as a

wetland. Historically, this feature appears to have been a larger sandhill upland lake surrounded by wet prairie, but the hydrology has become much drier over time. Based on aerial imagery, this area doesn't appear to have held significant water since the 1960's, and now only a small area on the north side remains wet for extended periods of time. The remaining area is open and covered in dense grasses with no overstory trees. A portion of the historic wetland footprint is now used to grow crops.

Tracks of a variety of small mammals as well as those of deer and hogs were seen onsite. The property had an active hunting lease at the time of the evaluation, and multiple blinds and feeders were observed. Bird species observed include: American crow, palm warbler, yellow rumped warbler, northern house wren, mourning dove, pileated woodpecker, eastern phoebe, tufted titmouse, turkey, and Carolina wren. Several active gopher tortoise burrows of multiple age classes were also observed and there were also several rounded tunnel openings into pocket gopher burrows, potentially indicating the presence of pine snakes, or other fossorial snake species, though none were observed during the site visit. Invasive species identified include Japanese climbing fern and Chinese tallow in the borrow pit as well hairy indigo in harvested area and in the wet prairie. There are no recorded archaeological sites on the nominated property, and any infrastructure on site was associated with hunt stands or food plots.

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 property consists of 635 acres owned by the Whitehurst Cattle Co. on two parcels. The current land use and zoning are Agriculture. The current land use and zoning are Agriculture. Under the current land use designation, the property could be developed for single-family use at a density of one dwelling unit per 5 acres. Lands in agricultural areas are intended to provide for areas primarily consisting of agricultural and residential uses consistent with the City of Newberry's Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code.

The property has undergone consistent agricultural use over many decades, which has resulted in the loss of wetlands. There are approximately 17.45 acres of wetlands remaining, which are protected from development under Chapter 77 Article II, The County Wide Wetland Protection Code. In addition, a 75-ft average buffer around the wetlands would be protected from development. The estimated protected buffer area is 37.72 acres. There are approximately 51.82 acres of flood zone on the property, mostly overlapping with historical wetlands. Floodplain development is regulated through the Alachua County ULDC Chapter 406, Article VII. Developments in those areas would require a floodplain development permit and must comply with federal as well as local regulations.

The majority of the property is located in a Sensitive Karst Area and may contain karst features. Further investigation would be needed to determine if there are karst features on the property that qualify as Significant Geologic Features (SGFs). Under the Countywide Natural

Resources Protection Code, SGFs may be protected by a 25-150-ft buffer depending on their unique qualities. Certain karst features, such as paleo or relic sinkholes and closed landscape depressions may not be considered SGFs. Determinations are made on a case-by-case basis.

The property historically contains a variety of natural resources, some of which would benefit greatly from ecological restoration. There are currently limited protections in place for the remaining intact natural resources. While there is potential for karst features, their presence would not preclude development. The remote location, limited infrastructure, and associated higher construction costs may diminish the prospects and potential for development activities. The parcel can be expected to develop as the surrounding area of Newberry grows and expands infrastructure.

Watermelon Pond* - Whitehurst Cattle Co. - 12/04/2025

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.		1		
(I-2) PROTECTION OF NATURAL COMMUNITIES AND LANDSCAPES	A. Whether the property contains a diversity of natural communities;		2		
	B. Whether the natural communities present on the property are rare;		3		
	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;		4		
	E. Whether the property is adjacent to properties that are in public ownership or have other environmental protections such as conservation easements;		3		
	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;		3		
	H. Whether the property is relatively free from internal fragmentation from roads, power lines, and other features that create barriers and edge effects.		3		
(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;		4		
	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.		4		
	AVERAGE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN VALUES			3.35	
	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THIS CRITERIA SET IN THE OVERALL SCORE	1.333			4.47
(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);		4		
	B. Whether this management can be completed in a cost-effective manner.		3		
(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;		1		
	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		3		
	AVERAGE FOR ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT VALUES			2.60	
	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THIS CRITERIA SET IN THE OVERALL SCORE	0.667			1.73
	TOTAL SCORE				6.20

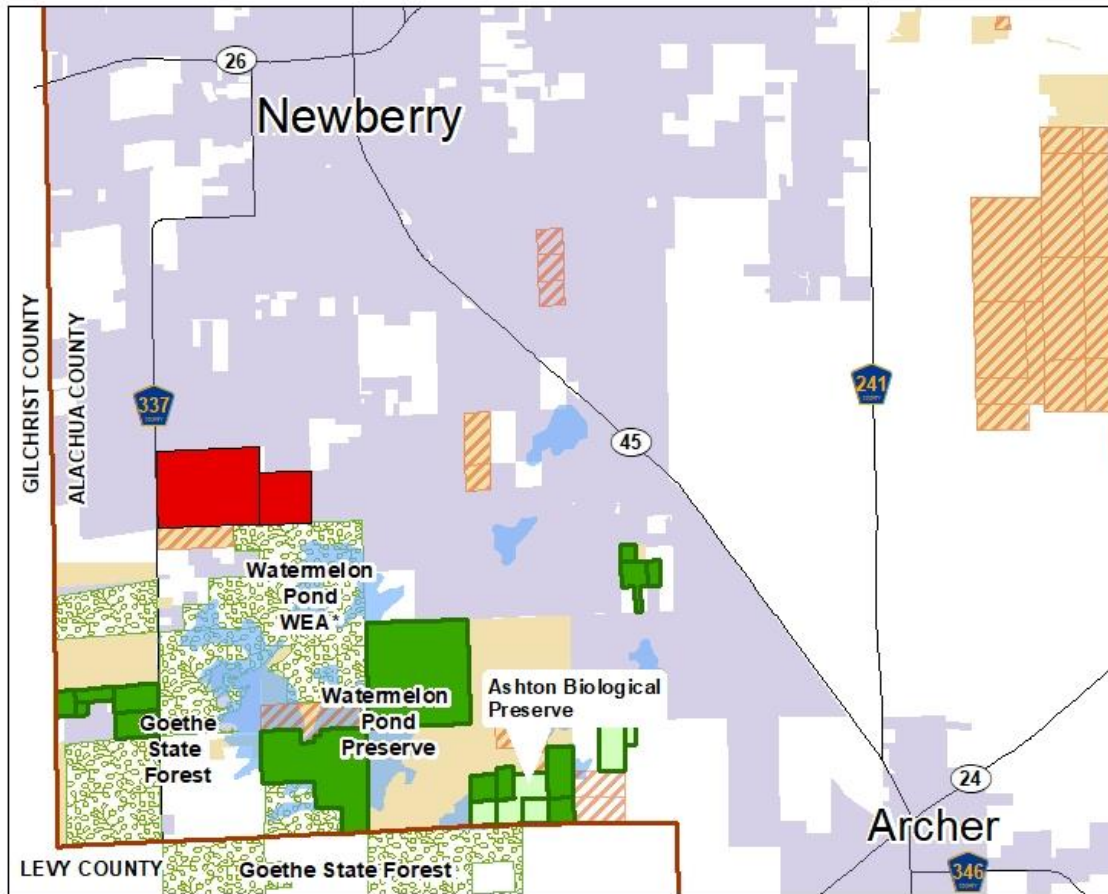
NOTES

General Criteria Scoring Guidelines

1 = Least beneficial, 2 = Less Beneficial than Average, 3 = Average, 4 = More Beneficial than Average, 5 = Most Beneficial



Watermelon Pond - Whitehurst Location Map



Legend

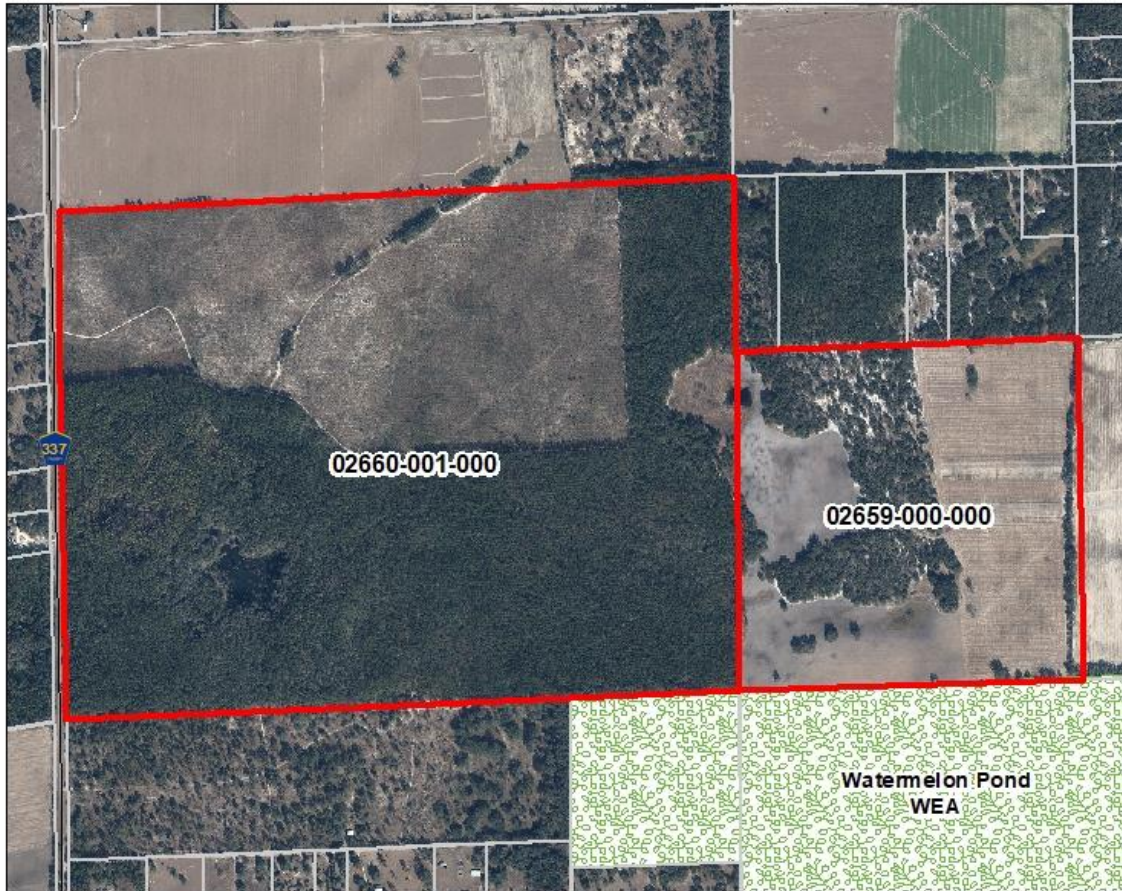
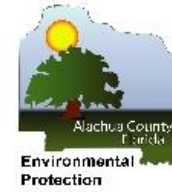
- Whitehurst Parcel (635.46 ac.)
- ACF Preserve
- Conservation Easement
- Active Acquisition
- Lakes
- Partner Conservation Lands
- ACF Projects
- Major Road
- CountyBoundary

*WEA = Wildlife Environmental Area



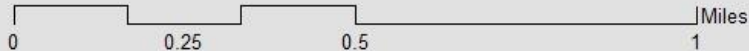
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Watermelon Pond - Whitehurst Parcel Map



Legend

- Whitehurst Parcel (635.46 ac.)
- ACPA Parcels
- Conservation Lands



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