



Agenda Item Summary

File #: 26-00138

Agenda Date: 2/24/2026

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 (ACF) 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. Paynes Prairie Additions – Emmerson Preserve 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:

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

1. Paynes Prairie Additions – Emerson Preserve LLC (Full Price List)

Prior Board Motions:

None

Fiscal Note:

Total estimated cost for acquisition and 10-year stewardship: \$680,550
(Negotiated acquisition cost will be determined based on appraisals.)

The current annual property tax revenue of all the project parcels is: \$12,713.74

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 and Conservation

Background:

Paynes Prairie Additions – Emerson Preserve LLC: In December 2025, the subject property was nominated to the Alachua County Forever Program (ACF) for consideration as a fee simple acquisition. On January 22, 2026, the Land Conservation Board (LCB) placed the 72.5-acre Paynes Prairie Additions – Emerson Preserve LLC property in the Priority Pool. The project includes two parcels (Alachua County Property Appraiser Tax Parcel Numbers (ACPA TPN) 07213-001-000 and 07226-000-000) owned by The Emerson Preserve, LLC. The property is southeast of Gainesville on US HWY 441 N, just north of the Paynes Prairie Eco Passage. Natural communities on site consist primarily of mesic-xeric hammock and successional hardwoods but also include a sizeable basin marsh and a dome swamp on the southern parcel. It is in the Paynes Prairie Additions ACF Project Area as well as within the optimum boundary of Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park, which borders the property to the east.

Early historical records from the mid 1890's and aerial imagery dating back to 1938 indicate that the property previously consisted of undeveloped agricultural land with a couple of homesteads on the northern parcel. These homesteads are no longer present, but there are currently three residences on the southern parcel along the road, which were built in the early-mid 1930's according to property appraiser records. These homes are currently occupied by tenants and may be carved out of a potential acquisition by the County, pending discussion with the landowners, should the project move forward. There is also an elevated berm that cuts through the center of the northern parcel from north to south that may have been an old railway based on historic records.

At present, the property primarily consists of mesic hammock and successional hardwood forest. There were an abundance of large mature live oak trees onsite, which helped create a semi-closed canopy forest with other tree species onsite. Portions of the successional hardwood area/ hammock retained vegetative characteristics remnant of dryer upland communities. These areas often had more pine in the overstory and the understory was more sparsely vegetated. Wetland communities onsite include an approximately 10-acre basin marsh predominately on the southern parcel south of the powerline easement, with a smaller dome swamp in the center. The wetland was fairly dry during the site visit, and although most of the plant species were dormant for the winter, the wetland habitat seems to be intact, except for the berm created for the powerline right-of-way that cuts off the northern tip of the wetland and is in good condition.

Additional information can be found in the attached desktop evaluation. (Exhibits 1 and 2)

General:

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."