

**Santa Fe River  
Santa Fe River Ranch  
(Hitchcock property)  
2/14/18**

<b>Project Score:</b>	8.47 of 10.00	
<b>Size:</b>	2,167.92 acres	
<b>Parcel Numbers:</b>	02768-000-000 02765-002-000 02762-000-000 05319-000-000 05295-000-000 02765-004-000 02765-000-000 02770-000-000 02772-000-000 02775-000-000 02823-002-000 02826-000-000 02831-000-000	
<b>S-T-R:</b>	T 6,7 R 18,19 S 35-36 10-12 1,2,4	
<b>Buildings:</b>	15 According to Tax App.	
<b>Land Just Value:</b>	\$3,233,900	\$1,491.71/ac
<b>Total Just Value: Land+Bldg+Misc</b>	\$4,163,200	\$1,920.37/ac

<b>Natural Communities</b>	<b>Condition</b>
<b>Springs/Ephemeral Seeps</b>	13 identified
Blackwater River	Excellent
Sinkhole	Good
Floodplain Swamp	Fair
Bottomland Hardwood	Good
Upland Hardwood/Calcareous Mesic Hammock	Good
Former Sandhill/High Pine	Poor
Upland Mixed Woodland	Poor-Fair
Depression Marsh	Fair
Old Field Succession Forest	Fair
<b>Other:</b> Low Impact Development, Improved Pasture	
<b>Archaeological Sites</b>	1 Documented

**REPA Score:** 8.96 of 9.44  
**KBN Score:** Ranked 1 of 47 projects  
**Outstanding Florida Waters:** Santa Fe River

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**Overall Description:**

The Santa Fe River Ranch (Hitchcock property) is a 3.5 mile long, 2,167.92 acre corridor that connects Alachua County Forever's (ACF) Mill Creek Preserve with 2,400 feet of Santa Fe River frontage. The St. Johns River Water Management District's (SRWMD) Santa Fe River Ranch property, including the Osceola Land and Timber parcel that was jointly acquired by the SRWMD and ACF, is immediately adjacent to the property on the north side along the river. Additionally, this property abuts the University of Florida's Beef Unit on the northwest corner. The southern and western portions of the property abut County Road 241. The owners are interested in a conservation easement that would protect the property from future development and allow them to continue their cow-calf and agro-tourism operation.

Santa Fe River Ranch is a sprawling cattle and agro-tourism operation that contains large variations in land cover, former and intact plant communities, many recharge and discharge karst features, soil types, and wildlife habitat. The developed portion of this property has 15 structures according to the Alachua County Property Appraiser. During site visits staff also noted a significant number of additional small active agricultural structures such as hay feeders, historical residences, and a small historical family cemetery still used today. Most structures are within a 50 acre area in the north central portion of the property. The owners maintain a low density cow-calf operation on the property. The agrarian influence on this property pre-dates 1938 aerial photographs, with a large portion of the property in some form of grazing and agricultural activities, including tobacco production. There is one documented low density Archaeological site on the property with three similar low density or scattered sites within one mile. The Land Owner, Mr. Hitchcock, informed County staff he has found many shards of pottery and worked projectile points on the property.

Santa Fe River Ranch has many notable hydrologic and karst features throughout the property. The highest density witnessed was adjacent to the Offsite Creek which is located near the West boundary of the Ranch. This creek originates in the northeast portion of Mill Creek Preserve. These features ranged from small ephemeral seeps to larger more consistent seeps or springs. No flow rate measurements were taken on site for these features but most of these were low volume discharges. Sinkholes were plentiful throughout the property with one specimen that had a small underwater open cave that, according to the landowner, receives discharge water from the Santa Fe River during Flood Stage. After further analysis and consultation with Robin Hallbourg of Alachua County Environmental Protection Department staff, this cave opening may have a connection to the Floridan Aquifer. A large sinkhole in the southeast corner of the property was previously a dump site and contained large quantities of household appliances and refuse. Most of the property is clear of waste and debris. To date, site visits have yielded 13 seep/spring groups and dozens of sinkholes of various diameters and depths.

Current grazing, wildlife management practices, habitat variation, and tract size make this parcel a highly valuable wildlife and connectivity corridor. Sherman Fox Squirrel and Sandhill Crane, Florida listed species, were witnessed during site visits. Populations of the Oval Pigtoe, a federally listed bivalve mollusk, were found just 3 miles upstream on the Santa Fe River. Confirmed active Gopher Tortoise dens were identified throughout much of the property and seemed most abundant in the northeast pastures and wooded areas. Land owners actively exclude cattle from approximately 300 acres for hunting, in addition to excluding many of the seeps and creeks from cattle. They expressed a willingness to exclude additional wetland areas from the cattle operation.

This tract consist of an estimated 1,620 acres of improved pasture, 520 acres of forested uplands and bottomlands, with the remaining 30 acres in open water ponds and small water features. The pasture is mostly improved perennial forage grasses with some sporadic native herbaceous cover. Throughout the pasture remnant native species can be found which include Southern Red Oak and Longleaf Pine in the former high pine areas and Southern Hackberry, Flowering Dogwood, Spruce Pine, Live Oak, mature Loblolly Pine, and Southern Magnolia in the former Upland and Bottomland hardwood forested areas.

The 520 forested acres on the property contain a plethora of community types and species but likely consisted of upland mixed woodland, slope forest/upland hardwood forest, bottomland hardwood forest, forested depression marshes, and former cypress/tupelo swamp. These plant communities have varying levels of diversity in the tree cover with the largest found in the slope/upland hardwood forest areas found in the southeast corner of the tract. Gum Bully, Southern Magnolia, Pignut Hickory, Florida Maple, Swamp Chestnut Oak, Spruce Pine, Southern Hop Hornbeam, Flowering Dogwood, Winged Elm, Musclewood, and Red Buckeye were all found in this area. The forest cover in this portion resembled portions of Mill Creek. Although no American Beech were observed, further investigation of the area may reveal some.

The northeastern wooded portion of the property exhibited multiple former plant communities. In places it resembled an upland hardwood component but a large quantity of the woods exhibited upland mixed woodland indicators. In this area Southern Red Oak, Flowering Dogwood, and widely spaced cut heart pine stumps remained throughout. This portion had considerably more disturbance with remnant pine plantation and significant quantities of the forest cover consisting of young pioneer species such as Laurel Oak, Water Oak, and Sweet Gum. Due to the shape of the property and the arrangement of the river frontage, the bottomland hardwood forest and floodplain forest consisted of less than 50 acres along the Santa Fe River.

The most plentiful exotic species witnessed were perennial pasture grasses such as Bahia and centipede, but a small patch of Cogon Grass was also found. A long list of broadleaf and other notable exotics such as Camphor, Chinaberry, Coral Ardisia, Tropical Soda Apple, and Japanese Climbing Fern were noted. Significant Feral Hog damage was common closer to the Santa Fe River. Owners are actively managing most exotic plants with spot spray herbicide treatments, and actively trapping feral hogs. These treatments have largely been effective as all noted populations were minimal.

This development analysis is based on a limited desk-top review and is founded upon current Alachua County Land Development Regulations and Comprehensive Plan policies. The Scenario is oversimplified, and is meant only to convey a general sense of the potential of development intensity that could be possible based on the existing land use and zoning.

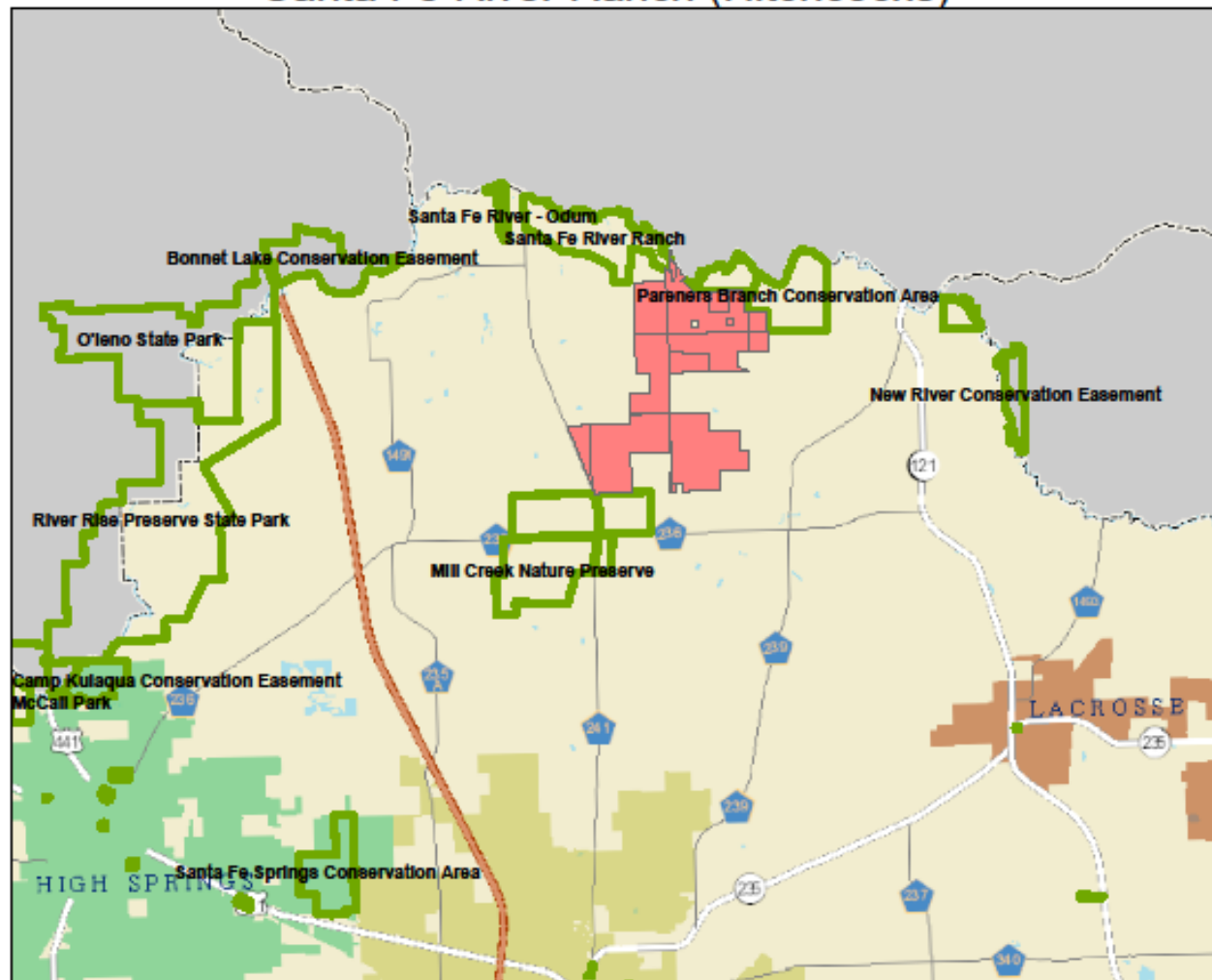
The project area consists several parcels totaling approximately 2,168 acres that is zoned agriculture (Ag) and Land Use classification of Rural Agricultural (Rural/Ag). About 10% of the property contains wetlands and/or floodplains and approximately 228 acres are within designated strategic ecosystem. If the entire parcel were to develop, at 1 unit per 5 acres, with 50% set aside as conservation, which allows for an additional 1 unit per 10 acres available through clustering, a maximum number of 543 units might be obtainable.

Currently, the supply of available land and housing meets or exceeds demand for single-family residential use for this area.

CATEGORY	Criterion	WEIGHTING	Enter Criteria Value Based on Site Inspection	Average Criteria Score	Average Criteria Score Multiplied by Relative Importance
(1-1) 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;		5		
	D. Whether the property serves an important flood management function.		3		
(1-2) PROTECTION OF NATURAL COMMUNITIES AND LANDSCAPES	A. Whether the property contains a diversity of natural communities;		5		
	B. Whether the natural communities present on the property are rare;		5		
	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;		5		
	F. Whether the property is large enough to contribute substantially to conservation efforts;		5		
	G. Whether the property contains important, Florida-specific geologic features such as caves or springs;		5		
	H. Whether the property is relatively free from internal fragmentation from roads, power lines, and other features that create barriers and edge effects.		3		
(1-3) 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;		5		
	B. Whether the property serves as documented or potential habitat for species with large home ranges;		5		
	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;		5		
	E. Whether the property offers high vegetation quality and species diversity;		3		
	F. Whether the property has low incidence of non-native invasive species;		3		
(1-4) SOCIAL AND HUMAN VALUES	A. Whether the property offers opportunities for compatible resource-based recreation, if appropriate;		2		
	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.		5		
	AVERAGE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN VALUES			4.25	
	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THIS CRITERIA SET IN THE OVERALL SCORE	1.3333			5.67
(11-1) 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);		3		
	B. Whether this management can be completed in a cost-effective manner.		5		
	A. Whether there is potential for purchasing the property with matching funds from municipal, state, federal, or private contributions;		5		
	B. Whether the overall resource values justifies the potential cost of acquisition;		5		
(11-2) ECONOMIC AND ACQUISITION ISSUES	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			4.20	
	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THIS CRITERIA SET IN THE OVERALL SCORE	0.6667			2.80
	TOTAL SCORE				8.47

# Santa Fe River Ranch (Hitchcocks)

Map 1



## Legend

- SFRR Hitchcocks
- Conservation Areas



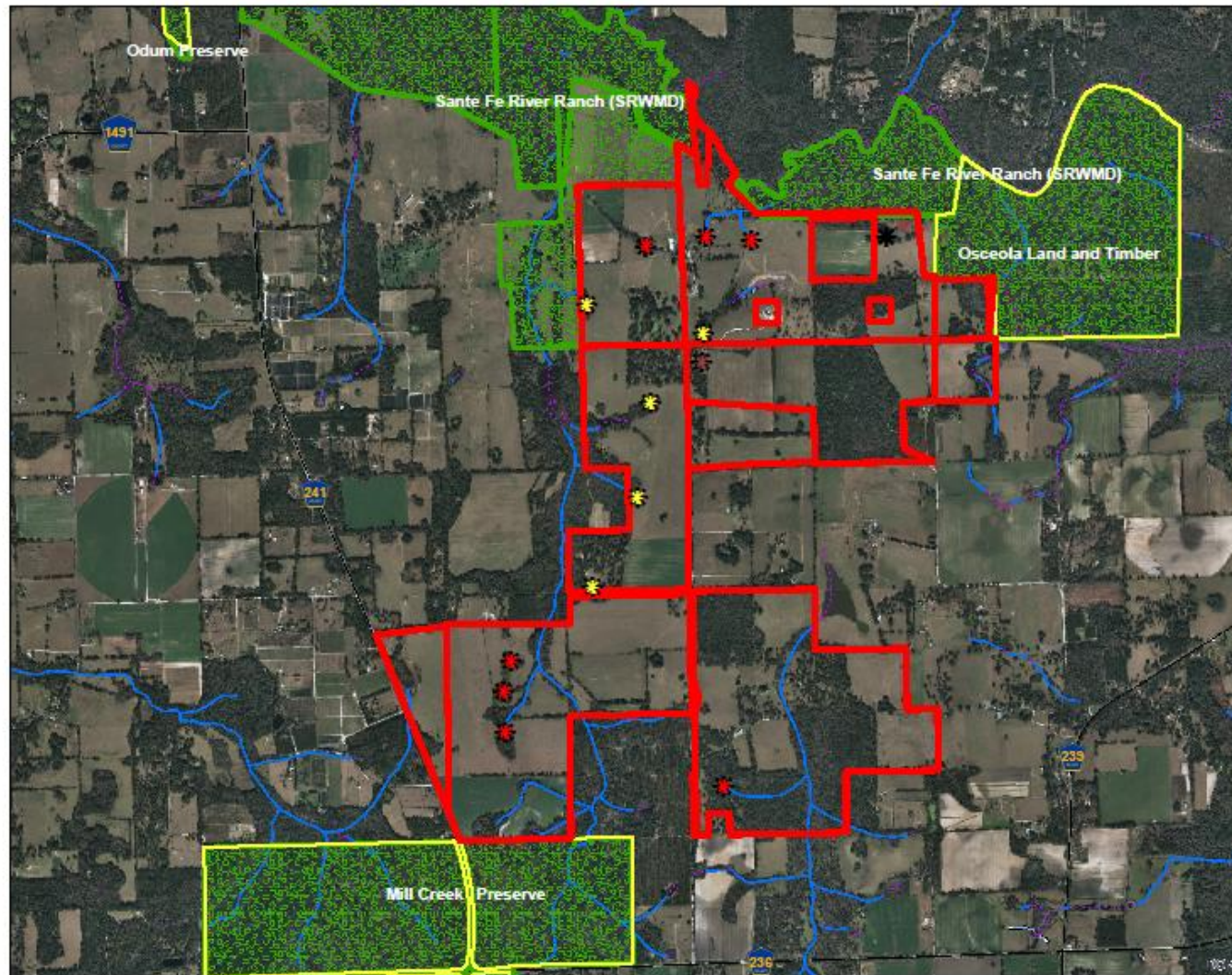
0 0.5 1 2 3 4 5 Miles

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# Sante Fe River Ranch (Hitchcocks)

Map 2



## Legend

- \* Karst\_Features
- Sante Fe River Ranch (Hitchcocks)
- ACF Preserve Boundary
- Conservation Lands



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

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