



Proposed Alachua County Forever Acquisitions

Santa Fe River – Hitchcock Conservation Easement Acquisitions

Charlie Houser

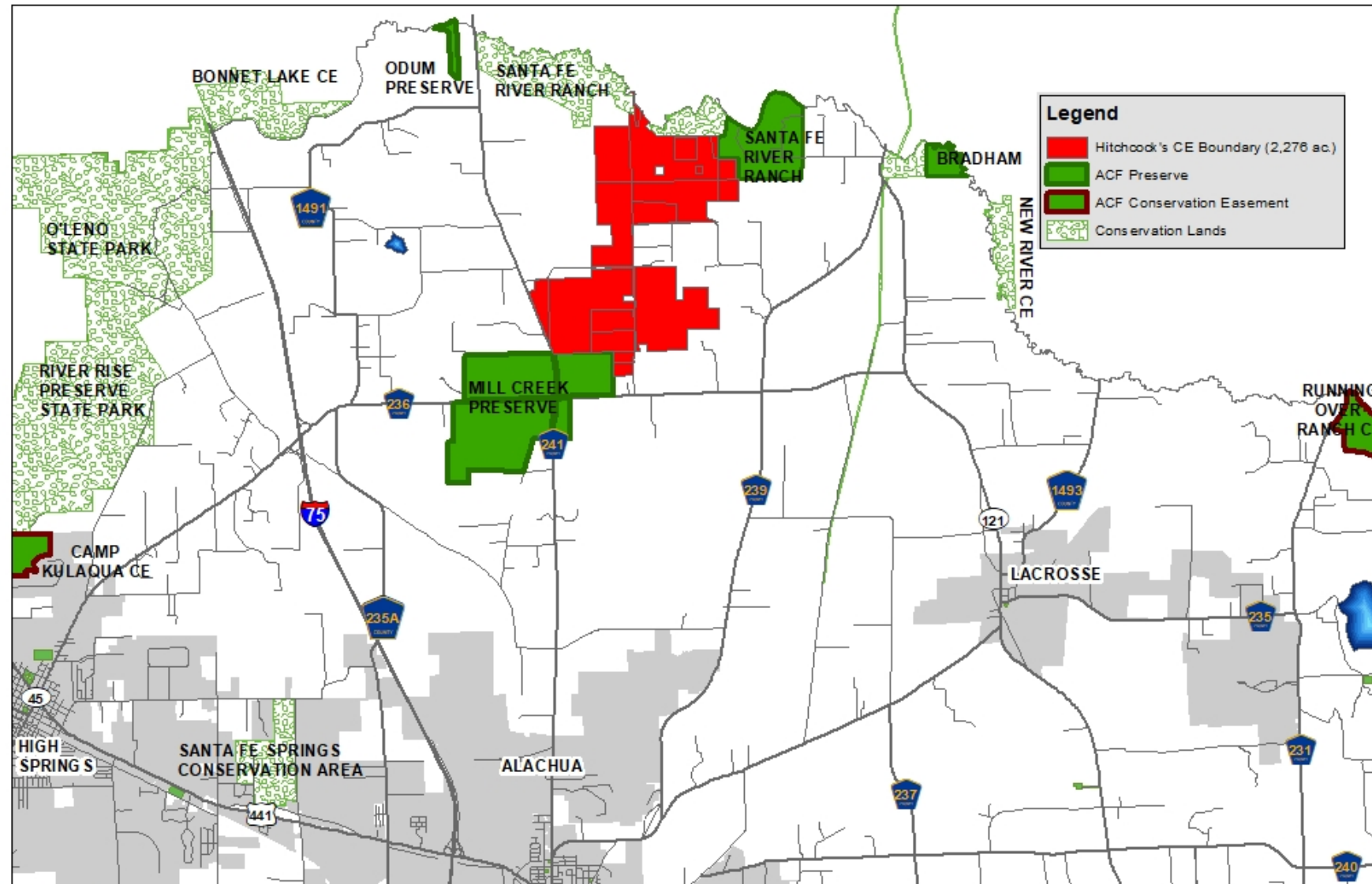
Director, Office of Land Conservation & Management

The Hitchcock Property

- Owned under two family corporations, Hitchcocks Ranch, LLC and Hitchcock & Sons, Inc.
- 18 adjoining parcels covering approximately 2,276 acres.
- Connects the County's Mill Creek Preserve to existing conservation lands along the Santa Fe River.



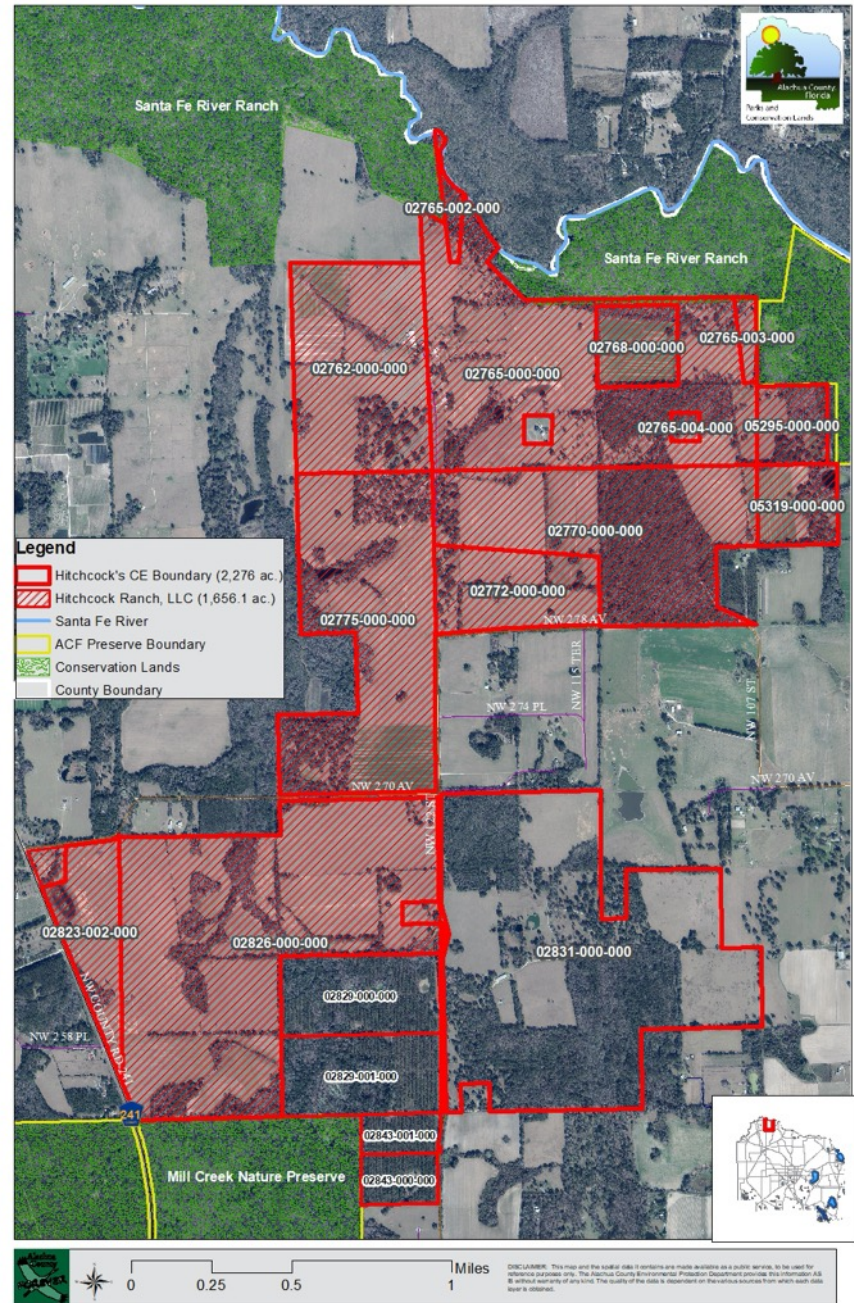
Santa Fe River - Hitchcock Location Map



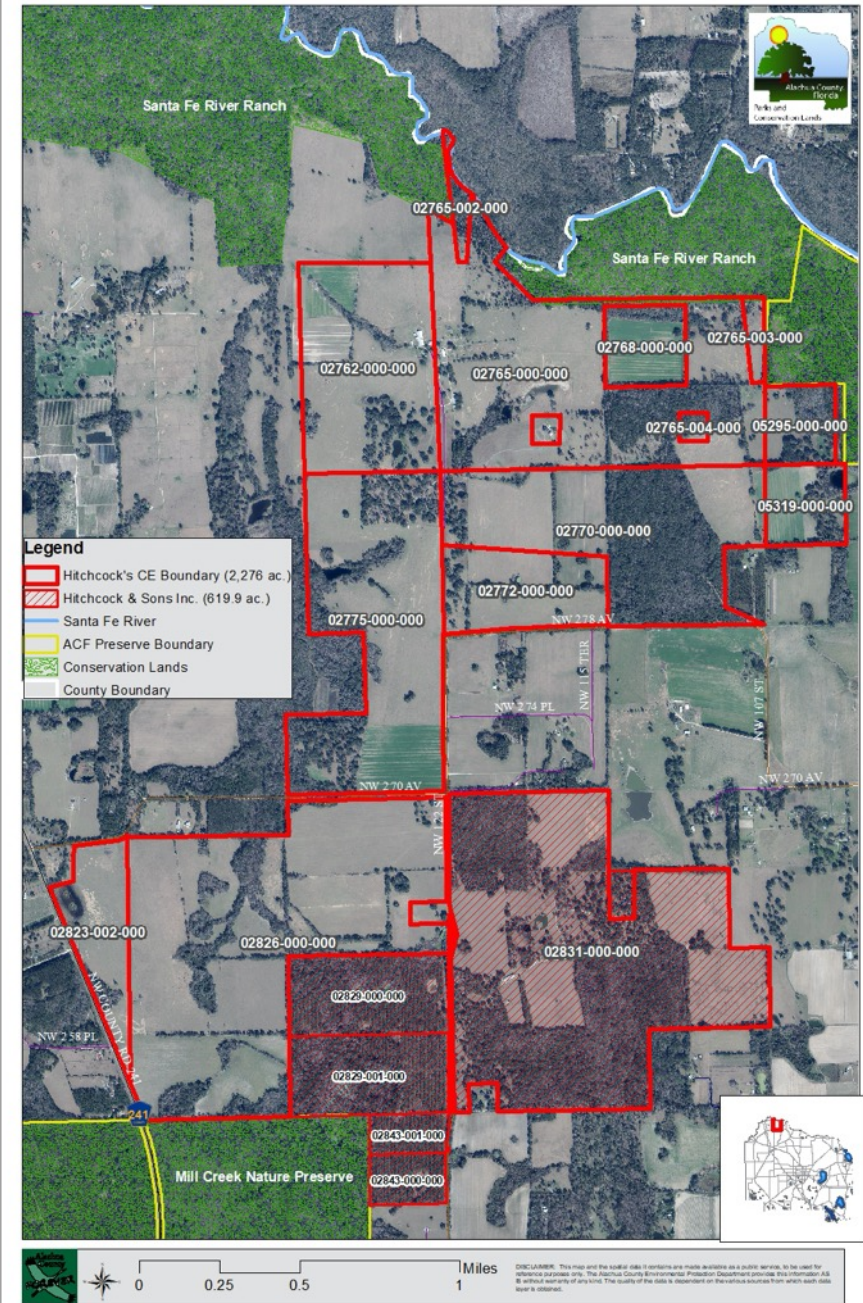
0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

DISCLAIMER: This map and the spatial data it contains are made available as a public service, to be used for reference purposes only. The Alachua County Environmental Protection Department provides this information AS IS without warranty of any kind. The quality of the data is dependent on the various sources from which each data layer is obtained.


Santa Fe River - Hitchcock Ownership (Hitchcock Ranch, LLC)



Santa Fe River - Hitchcock Ownership (Hitchcock & Sons, Inc.)



The Hitchcock Property History

- Established in 1932, "Santa Fe River Ranch" was one of the top Polled Hereford producers in the United States.
 - The Hitchcocks purchased the majority of the property in 2008, restoring its historical use as a cow-calf cattle operation.
 - In 2012, the Hitchcocks began developing a wedding event venue.
 - In 2016, Hitchcock and Sons, Inc. purchased the 475 ac. Valley View property.
 - In 2020, the Hitchcocks added the 205 ac. James Addition that connects to Alachua County Forever's Mill Creek Preserve.
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The Hitchcock Property Hydrology

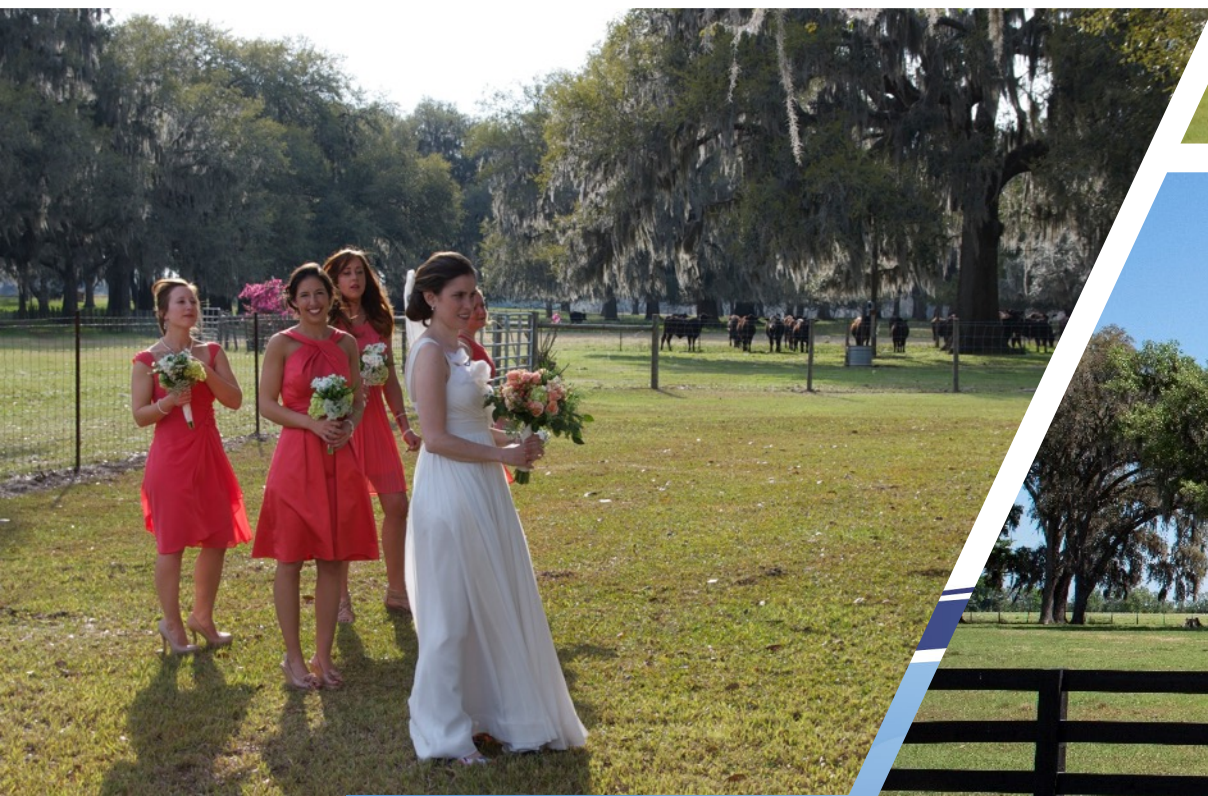
- Notable karst features throughout the property with apparent connections between the Santa Fe River and Floridan Aquifer.
- 13 seep/spring groups and dozens of sinkholes identified.
- Includes portions of two tributaries of the Santa Fe River.



The Hitchcock Property Habitat

- Weighted matrix score of 8.39
- 610 acres in natural communities
 - Floodplain Swamp
 - Bottomland Hardwood
 - Depression Marsh
 - Mesic Hammock
 - Upland Mixed Forest
 - Sandhill/High Pine
- Two nominees for champion trees
 - National champion Red Cedar
 - Florida champion American Holly












The Hitchcock Property

Current Development Potential

- Currently zoned "Agriculture" allowing one single-family dwelling per 5 acres.
 - A simplified analysis of the property by county staff, indicated the landowners may be able to develop up to 543 units through clustering and setting aside 50% as conservation land.
 - Wells and septic tanks would be required to provide water and sewer service.
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Hitchcock Conservation Easements


Excluded Areas

- There are two agri-tourism related “event-centers” commonly referred to as the “Santa Fe River Ranch” and “Valley-View.” These event centers are utilized primarily for weddings and other organizational events.
- Eight homesites (approximately 5 acres each in size) are excluded from the conservation easements for existing or future family homes.



Hitchcock Conservation Easements

Contract Provisions

- Separate contract and conservation easement for each ownership entity
 - Hitchcock Ranch, LLC.
 - Hitchcock & Sons, Inc.
 - Contracts are mutually dependent, i.e., both Conservation Easement acquisitions are to close at the same time.
 - Closing date to be no later than December 31, 2021.
(Tentative Dec. 17, 2021).
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Hitchcock Conservation Easements


Calculation of Purchase Price

Estimated total purchase price = \$5,568,941, subject to survey.

- Hitchcocks Ranch, LLC:
1,656 ac. @ \$2,598.42 /ac. = \$4,302,983.52
- Hitchcock & Sons, Inc.:
386.3 ac. @ \$2,598.42 /ac. = \$1,003,769.65 (Valley View)
200.5 ac. @ \$1,307.67 /ac. = \$262,187.84 (James Addition)
 - Seller donation of one-half of appraised value for the James Addition = \$262,185.83


Hitchcock Conservation Easements

Contract Provision

- October 15, 2021 deadline to exercise the option
 - December 15, 2021 end of inspection period
 - December 31, 2021 closing date
 - Seller may terminate contracts if federal income tax laws change to make the sale of the conservation easements no longer financially feasible. In such an event, the Seller will reimburse County all due diligence costs.
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Hitchcock Conservation Easements

“The Purpose of this Conservation Easement is to ensure the Protected Property will be retained forever substantially unchanged from its present condition of a mosaic of working agricultural land (including but not limited to silviculture, productive cow-calf agricultural operations, and other limited agricultural activities that sustain the long-term economic viability of the Protected Property) combined with the preservation of rural, scenic, and natural communities in close proximity to the Santa Fe River, which collectively create an important wildlife corridor on the Protected Property.”




Hitchcock Conservation Easements

Land Management Principles


1. Maintenance and enhancement of natural resource values.
 2. Protection of the scenic, geologic, hydrologic, and other distinctive natural features.
 3. Protection of water quality by protecting the natural integrity of riverine buffers, streams, ponds, seeps, and karst features which directly influence the Floridan Aquifer and the Santa Fe River.
 4. Protection of natural areas and wildlife habitat, particularly habitats utilized by federal, and state listed species.
 5. Protection and maintenance of soil health and control of soil erosion.
 6. Continuation of the historical agricultural use of the land for cow and calf operations
 7. Continuation of silviculture activity in compliance with BMPs.
 8. Preservation of wildlife corridors, and scenic landscapes through the avoidance of land fragmentation.
 9. Prohibition of subdivision and conversion to other land uses that would destroy or impair the “Conservation Values”.
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Hitchcock Conservation Easements Prohibitions

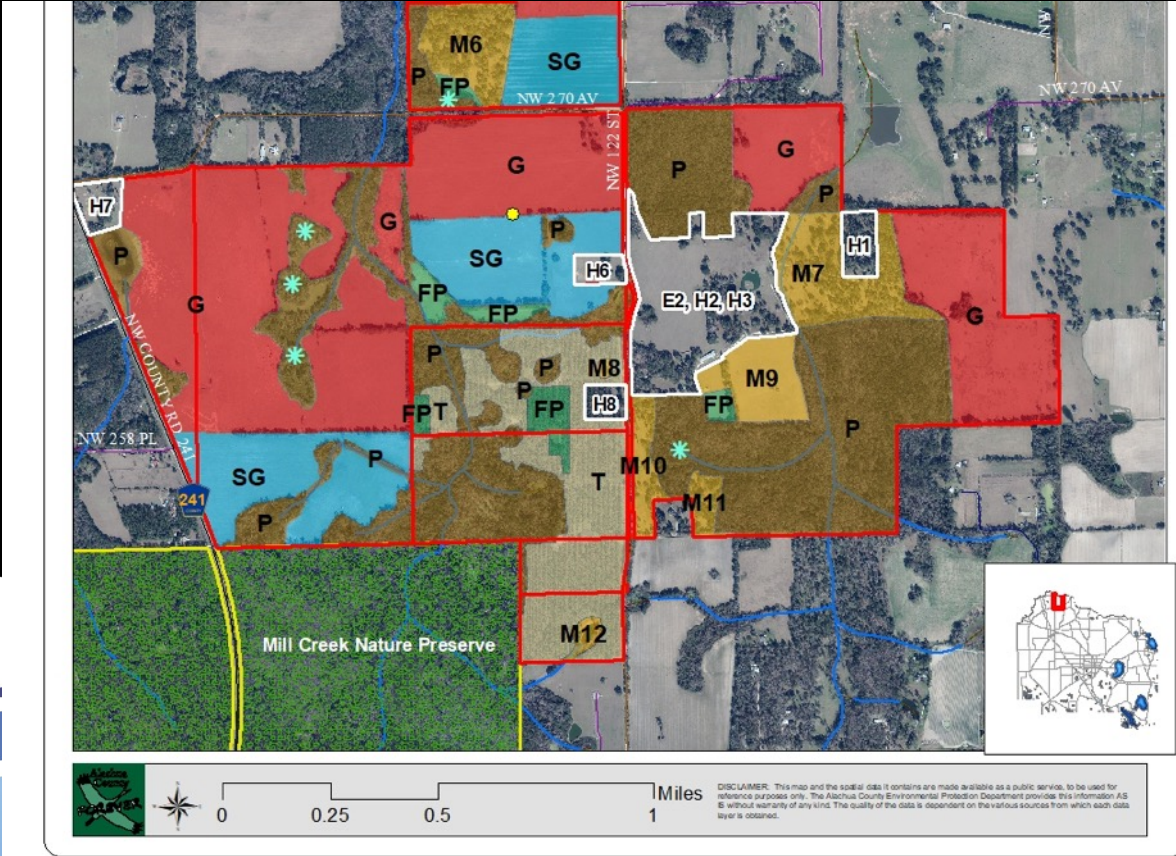
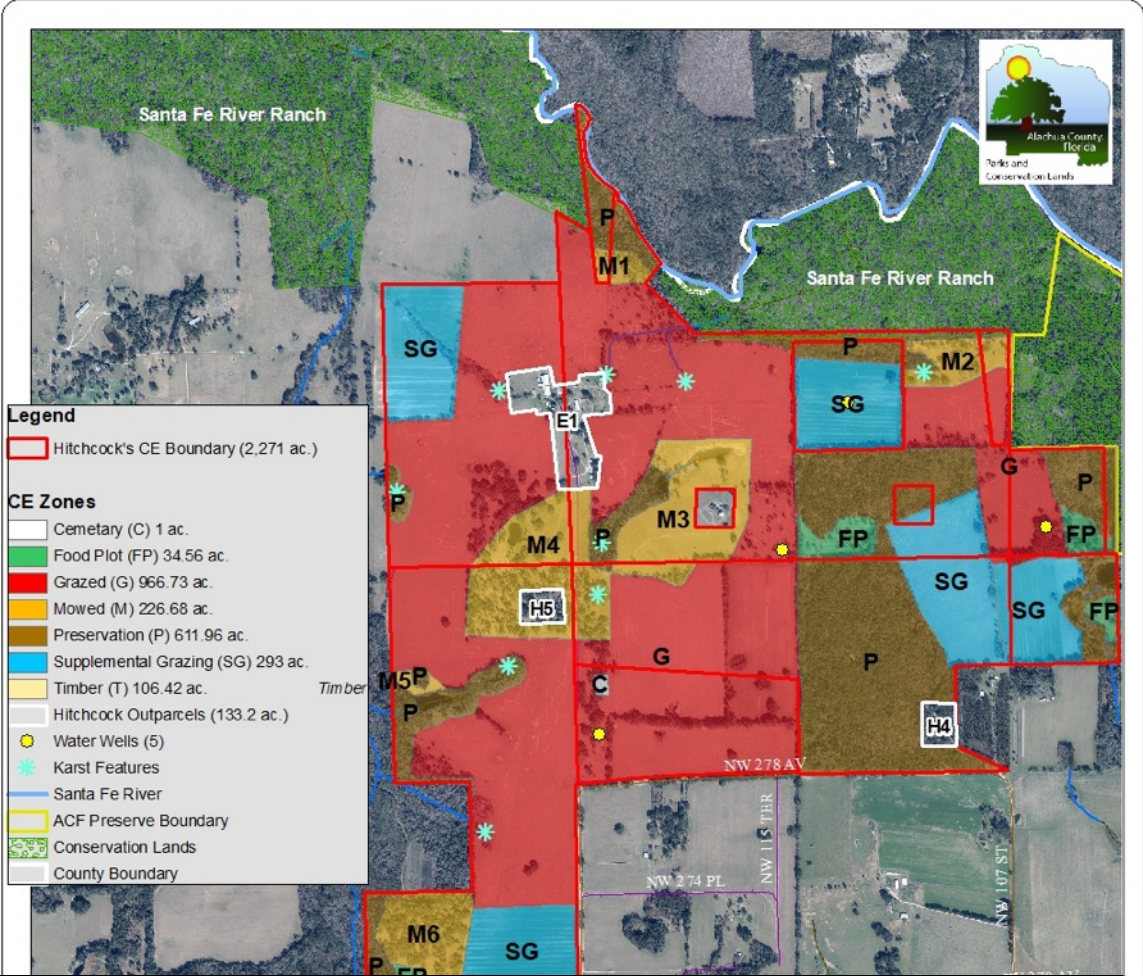
1. Construction or placing buildings, roads, signs, billboards or other advertising, utilities, or other structures.
 2. Dumping or placing soil or other substance or material as landfill or dumping or placing of trash, waste, debris, or unsightly or offensive materials.
 3. Removing or destroying trees, shrubs, or other vegetation (excluding exotic or invasive species), unless otherwise permitted.
 4. Excavating, dredging, or removing loam, peat, gravel, soil, rock, or other material.
 5. Surface use, except for purposes that permit the land or water area to remain predominantly in its natural condition.
 6. Activities detrimental to drainage, flood control, water conservation, erosion control, soil conservation, or fish and wildlife habitat.
 7. Acts or uses detrimental to such retention of land or water areas.
 8. Acts or uses detrimental to the preservation of the structural integrity or physical appearance of sites or properties of historical, architectural, archaeological, or cultural significance.
 9. Subdivision of the Protected Property into two or more lots, tax parcels, or units of land.
 10. Exploration for and extraction of oil, gas, minerals, peat, muck, marl, limestone, lime rock, kaolin, fuller's earth, phosphate, common clays, gravel, shell, sand, and similar substances. No sale of surface or subsurface minerals.
 11. Commercial Water Wells are strictly prohibited, but Water Wells related to existing permissible agricultural land uses may be permitted if located outside of the boundaries of this Conservation Easement in support of Grantor's agri-tourism event facilities.
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Hitchcock Conservation Easements

Land Use Zones


- Designated land use zones allow specified agricultural uses while also requiring certain conditions or limitations to protect the conservation values of the property.
 - Grazing, 966.73 ac. Stocking limited in grazing plan. Conversion to silvo-pasture or silviculture permitted.
 - Preservation, 611.96 ac.
 - Supplemental Grazing, 293 ac. Up to 75 ac. per year may be used for row crops.
 - Mowed (Semi-natural), 226.68 ac.
 - Timber, 106 ac.
 - Food Plot, 34.56 ac.
 - Cemetery, 1 ac.
 - Construction of new agriculture related structures (all impervious surfaces) limited to 45,000 sq. ft.
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Santa Fe River - Hitchcock Conservation Easement Zone Map



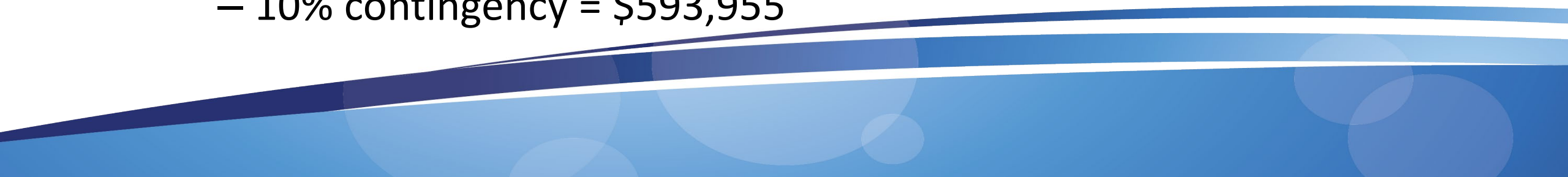
Hitchcock Conservation Easements

Water Resource Protection

- All agricultural activities (including cow-calf operations) and silviculture activities to be conducted pursuant to FDACS “Best Management Practices.”
 - Most of the wetlands, streams, seepage areas, and karst features on the property are within designated “Preservation” areas.
 - Application of fertilizer prohibited in areas designated as “Mowed” in close proximity to the Santa Fe River.
 - Use of fertilizer may be applied according to “BMP’s” provided that water bodies and the aquifer are protected from harm.
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Hitchcock Conservation Easements

Summary of Costs

- Estimated due diligence cost = \$370,605
 - Boundary survey and signage
 - Title insurance
 - Baseline Documentation Report
 - Appraisals
 - Attorney's fees and recording
 - Total Expenditure Request = \$6,533,501.00
 - Land cost = \$5,568,941
 - Due diligence = \$370,605
 - 10% contingency = \$593,955
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Hitchcock Conservation Easements

Recommendation

1. Approve and authorize the Chair to exercise Option Contracts to Purchase a Conservation Easement:
 - Hitchcock and Sons Inc. Option Contract
 - Hitchcocks Ranch LLC. Option Contract;
 2. Approve and authorize the acceptance of title subject to the exceptions listed in the attached Title Insurance Commitments (Exhibits 13 and 14) and as listed in the background;
 3. Authorize staff to execute additional documents as necessary to close the transaction; and
 4. Approve the attached budget amendment authorizing the expenditure of funds for due diligence and associated closing costs.
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