



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 21-0884, **Version:** 1

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**Agenda Item Name:**

Addition of the Property of Limerock Mines LLC, et al to the Active Acquisition List

**Presenter:**

Charlie Houder / (352) 264-6804

**Description:**

Staff requests the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) approve the addition of property owned by Limerock Mines LLC, et al to the Active Acquisition List as a Bargain/Share project.

Addition of these projects to the Active Acquisition List, authorizes staff to: obtain title work and appraisals, negotiate price and terms with the owners, and execute option contracts.

The execution of any Option, will be brought back to the Board for consideration.

**Recommended Action:**

Approve the addition of property owned by Limerock Mines LLC, et al to the Active Acquisition List as a Bargain/Share project.

**Prior Board Motions:**

N/A

**Fiscal Consideration:**

Limerock Mines - Cost Estimates:

- \$84,500 :Acquisition Pre-Contract & Due Diligence
- **Tier 1 Stewardship:** (No Public Access & No Restoration - only site security)
  - 10-year stewardship costs are estimated to be \$371,500
    - Initial improvements: \$231,000
    - Operating costs: \$14,050/year (\$140,500/10 years)
- **Tier 2 Stewardship:** (Public Access to water, by appointment - no land improvements)
  - 10-year stewardship costs are estimated to be \$926,500
    - Physical improvements: \$266,000
    - Operating costs: \$66,050/year (\$660,500/10 years)
- **Tier 3 Stewardship:** (Full Public Access - Costs provided by Parks & Open Space staff)
  - 10-year stewardship costs are estimated to be \$5,444,962
    - Physical improvements: \$1,349,712
    - Operating costs: \$409,525/year (\$4,095,250/10 years)

Due Diligence - Operation: 021.41.4160.537.31.00 - 6184160

(Exhibit 2 - Provides detail for Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 stewardship scenarios)

**Background:**

The 316.96 property lies northwest of High Springs, west of I-75 and south of CR 236. Ownership is held by Limerock Mines LLC, High Springs Lime Rock LLC, and SP Lime Rock LLC all controlled by members of an extended family. The property was nominated for purchase through Alachua County Forever by Linda Sodek, Manager of Limerock Mines, LLC.

Staff evaluated the property and presented it to the Land Conservation Board (LCB) on May 27, 2021. The LCB requested additional information primarily regarding potential management and restoration of the property. During discussion, LCB members expressed concerns about the potential strategies for management of the property and agreement with Wild Spaces Public Places program priorities, including safety of the public and security and protection of the site. Several scenarios were discussed ranging from providing no public access with site management focused on aquifer protection, to access by appointment only as a mid-level strategy, to full public access for non-motorized boating, staffed in-house, or through a combination of County staff, contractors and concessionaires. Management costs have been estimated for a range of these scenarios, but will require significant additional time for site assessment of the site and feasibility of management options before being finalized. These scenarios are shown in Exhibit 2 as Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3.

Staff subsequently contacted various entities suggested by LCB members. Staff of the City of High Springs expressed support for the project but were unable to make any commitment due to the press of current projects. Dr. Baker, the Director of the University of Florida School of Forest, Fisheries, Geomatic Sciences, offered two faculty who may be of assistance in an advisory capacity. Dr. Chuck Cichra, professor of fish ecology management, and Taylor Stein, professor of ecotourism. This information was reported to the LCB at its meeting on June 24, 2021.

Jason Maurer, Parks and Open Space Manager, attended the June 24<sup>th</sup> meeting and provided a conceptual budget for management of the property as a county park. His estimates for seven day a week operation (Tier 3) included:

- \$102,000 for two full-time and one half-time employees;
- \$253,475 for expenses including vehicle operation and replacement;
- \$118,712 for new vehicles and equipment; and
- \$750,000 to \$1 million for site improvements including restrooms, fishing docks, trails, bridges, road improvements, fencing, and a small portable office.
- \$40,000 for natural resource management operating expenses on site (estimated by Office of Land Conservation and Management).

During discussion, the LCB members inquired about possibilities of partnership funding for acquisition of the property. Staff returned to the LCB on August 26, 2021 to present potential

opportunities. Charlie Houder briefly reviewed state and federal acquisition programs, then focused on Florida Forever and Springs Restoration. Both received appropriations in the FY 2022 State budget. Mr. Houder discounted the potential for Florida Forever funding since the project was relatively small and isolated.

Mr. Houder suggested that the greatest opportunity may lie with the Springs Restoration program administered through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Suwannee River Water Management District. This was based on the location of the property within the Hornsby Springs springshed and the direct connection between the lime rock ponds and the Floridan Aquifer. After further discussion, the LCB voted to place the property in the Priority Pool under the Bargain/Share category.

If the Board approves this project for the Active Acquisition List, staff will prepare for the submission of a grant application when the next cycle is initiated by the Suwannee River Water Management District. The last cycle required applications to be submitted by December 18, 2020. In accordance with Board policy, staff would not begin any acquisition activity until this or another grant is secured.

#### 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."