

**Lochloosa Creek Connector
Crevasse Property
3/11/04**

Inspection Date:	March 11, 2004
Parcel Number:	16276-000-000, 16278-000-000, 18215-000-000
Size:	645 acres
# Owners:	1
Buildings:	2
Section-Township-Range:	24-10-20, 30-10-20, 29-10-21
Just Value:	\$ 524,800 or \$813/acre
Matrix Score:	7.89 of 10.0

Overall Description:

The 645-acre Crevasse Property, lies within the Lochloosa Forest-Levy Prairie Connector Alachua County Forever (ACF) Project. It is located off of CR 234, south of SR 20 between Hawthorne and Gainesville. It is bounded by Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park on three sides.

The Lochloosa Forest-Levy Prairie Connector project scored 8.18 out of 9.44 on the Rapid Ecological Project Assessment (REPA), and is the second highest ranked project to date.

The Crevasse property comprises the vast majority of the Prairie Creek Alachua County Ecological Inventory Project (KBN Study), which was the 6th ranked project overall and classified as a high priority. The KBN Study summarizes the Prairie Creek project as, “This is the downstream end of Prairie Creek where the creek reaches Paynes Prairie. It includes a bit of the prairie basin, some of the creek and its floodplain swamp, some magnificent hydric hammock with large live oaks, some partially cleared pasture areas, and an assortment of other habitats in small patches. It is currently impacted by an assortment of large game animals that are kept there. It is an important part of the connector linking the Paynes Prairie ecosystem to the Newnans Lake ecosystem” (KBN 1996).

The property contains a mosaic of upland and wetland natural communities. The wetlands associated with Prairie Creek are of high quality with high species diversity and good wildlife habitat. Much of the site is utilized as pasture and has been impacted by grazing. However there still is native species present and with the removal of intense grazing, the pastures should regenerate naturally. In addition to natural areas, the property contains a large homestead and improved pastures.

The Crevasse property is on the State of Florida Division of Recreation and Parks Acquisitions and Inholdings list as part of the Paynes Prairie Optimum Park Boundary. The St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRMWD) is currently looking to acquire the western portion of the property that abuts Paynes Prairie. The County may be able to partner with the SJRWMD on acquisition of the property, which would then be managed as part of Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park or by the SJRWMD.

Natural Communities:	Quality
Blackwater Stream	Excellent
Upland Mixed Forest	Fair
Basin Swamp	Good
Hydric Hammock	Good
Floodplain Swamp	Excellent
Depression Marsh	Good
Wet Prairie	Good
Mesic Flatwoods	Fair

Other:

Rough Pasture
Improved Pasture
Low Impact Development

Key Species:

The site provides potential habitat for listed species, especially those that utilize the Prairie Creek corridor. There are two bald eagle nests located within one mile of the property. An American Alligator (SSC) was observed on the banks of the creek. No other listed species were observed during the site visit. However, the KBN report states that, "being adjacent to one of the areas on Paynes Prairie most heavily used by wading birds and other wildlife, this is a particularly important wildlife area" (KBN 1996).

Key Features:

The Crevasse property has long been sought by the State for inclusion within the Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park. It is surrounded by the Preserve on three sides, and contains the downstream end of Prairie Creek before it reaches Paynes Prairie. It provides excellent wildlife habitat and its acquisition would enhance water quality of Prairie Creek, which outflows to both Paynes Prairie and into Orange Lake via Camps Canal.

This property is within the Orange Creek Basin which was designated by the St. Johns River Water Management District as a Surface Water Management and Improvement (SWIM program) area in September 2003. This designation affords a high funding priority for improving surface water quality.

The Prairie Creek floodplain swamp is of excellent quality. Noted overstory species include maple, cypress, sugarberry, cabbage palm, and willow. The groundcover was dominated by hydrophytic species such as maidencane, *Rumex* spp., chain fern, lizard's tail, wood grass, and woodoats. Diversity of this area is high and there is good cover and structure for wildlife.

The hydric hammock community was also of high quality and contained an overstory of cabbage palm and several oak species.

A portion of the prairie basin is found on the property. Dominant plants include pasture grass, dog fennel, and maidencane. It is currently being managed through mowing and grazing, however lack of mowing during the past year has resulted in an overgrowth of dog fennel. This portion of the site would benefit from prescribed fire.

The northern parcel is drier than the remainder of the site and contains sandy soil and species such as bracken fern, sand live oak, sparkleberry, laurel oak, and yaupon holly. It may have once been an upland pine forest, however it now lacks many of the essential components of this natural community such as a pine overstory and typical groundcover species. This habitat grades into more of an upland mixed forest natural community with sweetgum, musclewood, pignut hickory and dense midstory.

Much of the site is now rough pasture, which contains an overstory of laurel oak, live oak, cabbage palm, southern magnolia, and a midstory of yaupon holly, American holly and a groundcover of predominantly pasture grasses. This area is heavily grazed. It appears to have once been mesic/hydric hammock natural community, and reducing grazing pressure would greatly benefit the diversity of this area. Approximately 100 acres of the site is an enclosure where the owners raise wild game to sell to game reserves. This area is also heavily grazed resulting in minimal groundcover.

A large basin swamp with an overstory of cypress and maple and several small depression marshes are found throughout the property.

A large home used as lodge is also on the property; however this portion of the site is likely to be excluded by any ACF and SJRWMD acquisitions.

Management:

Natural resource management on the Crevasse property will entail reducing grazing pressure to allow native groundcover species to regenerate and supplement with planting if necessary. In addition, the wet prairie habitat adjacent to Paynes Prairie would benefit from prescribed fire. Invasive plants were not much of a problem at this time, a small patch of coral ardesia was observed. However monitoring for invasive plants is necessary.

Prairie Creek is channelized into Camps Canal in the southern portion of the property and much of the flow down the creek is now diverted into Orange Lake rather than into the Prairie. A water control structure returns 45% of the Prairie Creek flow to the Prairie, which comprises about a third of the total Paynes Prairie Basin water budget (FDEP 2001). According to the Paynes Prairie management plan, “clearly the restoration of Prairie Creek flow was, and still is, one of the most significant hydrologic restoration projects that can be undertaken in the watershed” (FDEP 2001). The County may be able to partner with the State and other agencies on hydrologic restoration of Prairie Creek, however this is likely to be an expensive endeavor.

Recreation:

The Crevasse property is appropriate for low impact nature based recreation such as nature study and hiking trails. Water based activities such as canoeing and kayaking is also a good possibility. This property will likely be managed as part of the Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park, and access will be via the park or via the creek from Newnan’s Lake or Camp’s canal.

Parcel Data:

Parcel	Owner	Acreage	Just Value
16276-000-000	Crevasse	45	\$67,500
16278-000-000	Crevasse	270	\$73,000
18215-000-000	Crevasse	330	\$384,300

The total 2004 Alachua County Property Appraisers (ACPA) just or land value for the subject property is \$ 524,800 or \$813 an acre. There are two buildings on the property, a 5,400 square foot home utilized as a lodge and associated structures. The total price (just, buildings, misc.) is \$981,500 or \$1521 an acre. The parcel with the house will most likely be split, resulting in acquisition of the western portion of the property that does not include the house. The entire Crevasse estate of approximately 730 acres is currently for sale with an asking price of \$3,990,000, which includes the parcel with the lodge.

The parcels have development potential for single-family detached (including manufactured or mobile home) residential use; however, approximately 80% lies within the 100-year flood plain (FEMA) or wetlands and therefore, the natural features (flood prone area, forested wetlands, marshes) appear to significantly constrain development potential for most (approximately 80%) of the project area. A rural subdivision of up to 24 lots could be approved for the upland parcels (parcel # 18215) adjacent to CR 234. The site has county road access in the southeast corner from CR 234.

The SJRWMD is planning on appraising the Crevasse property in the near future. A long standing dispute between the Crevasse family and the State over ownership on portions of the subject property will hopefully be resolved during property negotiations.

Other:

There are no Florida Division of Historical Resources Master Site File listings for the subject property, however there is one listing just outside of the property and the, “rim of Paynes Prairie is well known as a location of archaeological sites, and has yielded evidence of human occupation dating

from the Paleoindian...and archaic periods through the Spanish mission period to the Seminole Indians of the late 1700s and 1800” (Bureau of Archaeological Research 1993).

Citations

KBN, A Golder Associates Company. 1996. Alachua County Ecological Inventory Project.

FDEP. 2001. Paynes Praire Preserve State Park Unit Management Plan.

Bureau of Archaeological Research. 1993. An Archaeological Assessment of the Cone Ranch and Warner Woodruff C.A.R.L. Additions to Paynes Prairie State Preserve.