

**Lochloosa Forest – Levy Prairie Connector**  
**Ashley Wood**  
**9/21/05**

**Inspection Date:** August 24, 2005  
**Parcel Numbers:** 18354-025-000 (9.36 ac), 18354-016-000 (29.95 ac)  
**S-T-R:** 32-11-21  
**Size:** 39.31 acres  
**Buildings:** 2 (Wood residence and 1880's historical house)  
**Just Value:** \$176,000 or \$4,477/acre  
**Total Value:** \$380,000 or \$9,667/acre  
**Project Score:** 5.00 out of 10  
**REPA Score:** 8.18 out of 10

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**Overall Description:**

The 39.31-acre Ashley Wood property lies within the Lochloosa Forest-Levy Prairie Connector (LOC) project. It is located in southeast Alachua County, southeast of the city of Micanopy and west of Orange Lake in the town of Evinston, on the west side of CR 225 (Map1). CR 225 is a designated scenic road that offers vistas of the lake and surrounding countryside. The property is composed of two tax parcels, both of which are owned and nominated by Mr. Ashley Wood, who has indicated his interest in negotiating a conservation easement on the property.

The Lochloosa Forest-Levy Prairie Connector (LOC) 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 Ashley Wood property is across CR 225 from the Wood property (evaluated by ACF), which is adjacent to the Lochloosa Wildlife Conservation Area (LWCA) and Orange Lake.

The Ashley Wood property consists of approximately twenty-five acres of improved pasture and approximately nine acres of upland mixed forest, with the remaining approximately five acres containing a depressional wetland feature, a small borrow pit with standing water at the time of the site visit, a historical 1885 house, and the owner's residence. The owner stated that there are often several sandhill cranes foraging in the pasture area between the historical house and CR 225, occasionally up to 30 individuals. The Ashley Wood property was not evaluated as part of the Alachua County Ecological Inventory Project (KBN Study).

The Ashley Wood property falls within the Orange Creek Basin Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) plan. The SWIM designation calls for Water Management Districts to prioritize water bodies for protection and restoration and to implement plans for meeting these goals. The SWIM report states, "Most of the major urban streams and lakes in central and southern Alachua County are listed on the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's 2002 list of impaired water bodies. These include... Orange Lake." It continues, "Monitoring data... shows continual declines in water quality in Gainesville urban streams, their receiving water bodies, and the large lakes in the basin." Preservation of the Ashley Wood property would assist in meeting the goals of the Orange Creek Basin SWIM plan by protecting the uplands in the Orange Creek watershed from further impacts.

**Natural Communities:**

Upland Mixed Forest	Fair – Poor
Depressional wetland feature	Fair

Other:

Improved pasture  
1880's house  
Wood residence  
Small borrow pit with standing water

**Key Species:**

The Ashley Wood property contains habitats that were deemed potentially significant for five animal species modeled by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC): bald eagle, indigo snake, northern yellow bat, osprey, and the endemic central Florida crowned snake.

FWC 2002 data indicate 22 bald eagle nests within a 5-mile radius of the Ashley Wood property. A nest and FNAI bald eagle element occurrence are located one third of a mile from the property. Staff observed an eagle nest on the property line that was not included in the FWC 2002 data; Mr. Ashley Wood stated that he saw eagles using this nest in spring 2005. The cluster of bald eagle nests around Orange, Newnan's, and Lochloosa Lakes has been apparent for the last twenty years and is one of the densest populations in the state of Florida (personal communication Steve Nesbitt, FWC).

The owner stated that there are often several sandhill cranes foraging in the pasture area between the historical house and CR 225, occasionally up to 30 individuals.

**Key Features:**

This property mainly consists of improved pasture (approximately 64%) and upland mixed forest (approximately 23%) with the remaining approximately 13% of the property containing a depressional wetland feature, a small borrow pit, a historical 1885 house, and the owner's residence.

The upland mixed forest is in fair to poor condition; this natural community has sustained some damage to the understory from cattle. The damage ranges from very little remaining understory in the poor quality areas to moderate amounts of understory and shrubs in the fair areas. The upland mixed forest connects to the upland mixed forest on the Jane Wood ACF Project property.

The wetlands on the property included a very small depressional wetland feature dominated by *Polygonum sp.* located in an area of improved pasture on the west side of the property and a small borrow pit with standing water at the time of the site visit located near CR 225 on the east side of the property.

**Management:**

Exotic control is the main management challenge on this property. Air potato, chinaberry, mimosa, camphor tree, golden rain tree, and Caesar weed were observed by staff. These invasive exotic species need to be treated, and regular invasive exotic plant control activity should be implemented on the property.

In addition to the invasive exotics observed on the property, staff also observed very severe invasive exotic infestations on neighboring properties, especially air potato.

The understory of the upland mixed forest has sustained some damage from cattle; if a conservation easement is negotiated, exclusion of the cattle from this area would aid in understory regeneration and increase the quality of this natural community. Staff discussed this issue with the owner at the time of the site visit, and he may be amenable to excluding cattle from this area.

**Recreation:**

As the owner has indicated an interest in a conservation easement, and intends to continue living and grazing cattle on the property, it is unlikely that recreational opportunities will be available on the site. However, protecting this property would help preserve the scenic value along CR 225, which is a state-designated scenic road.

**Parcel Data:**

<u>Parcel</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Just Value</u>	<u>Total Value</u>
18354-025-000	9.36	\$56,200	\$186,800
18354-016-000	29.95	\$119,800	\$193,200

The total 2005 Alachua County Property Appraiser's (ACPA) just or land value for the property is \$176,000 or \$4,477 per acre. The total value (Just, Building, Miscellaneous) is \$380,000 or \$9,667 an acre. These figures are for comparative purposes between nominated properties and are not necessarily an accurate reflection of the true cost of the property if acquired by the ACF program. There are two buildings listed by ACPA on the property.

Currently, this area is increasing in development pressure associated with Micanopy and the town of Evinston. Within approximately one mile of this site there are numerous smaller residential parcels and rural large-lot subdivisions.

The parcels have development potential for additional single-family detached (including manufactured or mobile home) residential use. Two residential structures currently exist on the property. Zoning currently allows for a residential density of one unit per five acres except for a small sliver of land approximately ½ acres in size that is zoned R-1A (1-4 units per acre). Under the current zoning, the project area could potentially be split up into five acre lots. There appears to be no natural features on the site that would significantly constrain development potential within the project area. A historic 1885 structure, known as the Evins-Wood House, located on parcel 18354-016-000 is eligible for local and national registry of significant sites. The project area has direct access to a county road (CR 225).

The development review is based on a limited desk-top review and relates to only the current Land Development Regulations, as well as policies in the updated 2002 Comprehensive Plan, which went into effect May 2005.

**Other:**

The historic 1885 Evins-Wood House is located on the Ashley Wood property. The house can be seen from CR 225, a designated scenic road, and people often stop along the road to photograph the house. From the house there is a beautiful scenic vista of Orange Lake across the pastureland on the Ashley Wood and Wood properties. Mr. Ashley Wood is in the process of restoring this house.

There are six archeological sites within approximately one mile of the Ashley Wood property listed on the Florida Master Site File maintained by the Division of Historical Resources. These include the Evingston [sic] Prehistoric burial mound from the St. Johns culture (700BC – 800 AD), habitations from prehistoric and Archaic (8500 BC – 1000BC) cultures, and artifact scatters from Archaic, Weeden Island (AD 450 – AD 1000), Alachua (AD 1250 – AD 1600), Deptford (700 BC – 300 BC), and first or second Spanish cultures.

**Literature Cited:**

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

Prepared for Alachua County Department of Growth Management, Gainesville, Florida.