

**Barr Hammock – Levy Prairie
Whitehurst
05/23/06**

Inspection Date: May 12 and 16, 2006
Parcel Numbers: 07418-000-000 (640 ac), 07421-001-000 (217.7 ac),
07419-000-000 (640 ac), 16471-001-000 (414.1 ac),
16374-004-000 (14.91 ac), 16472-000-000 (437.95 ac),
16825-001-000 (117.7 ac), 16824-001-000 (90.36 ac),
16824-000-000 (69.64 ac), 16476-000-000 (179.65 ac),
16822-001-000 (216 ac), 16812-000-000 (85.8 ac),
16478-001-000 (10.37 ac), 16823-000-000 (5 ac)
Size: 3,139.18 acres
S-T-R: Sections 7, 19, 20, 21, 22, 27, 28 and 29 of Township 11 South and
Range 20 East, Sections 26 and 24 of Township 11 South and
Range 19 East
Buildings: 0
Just Value: \$3,779,500 or \$1,204 per acre
Project Score: 8.33 of 10
REPA Score: 7.96 of 9.44

Overall Description:

The 3,134.18-acre Whitehurst property lies within the Barr Hammock (BAR) Alachua County Forever (ACF) Project area (Map1). It is located in southern Alachua County, south of the City of Gainesville, between Micanopy and Archer. The property lies north of CR234 and south of Wacahoota Road (Map 1). Approximately 2,920 acres of the 3,139 acre property consists of the Levy Lake basin (Map 2). Portions of the property not in the lake basin include a fringe of uplands to the east of the basin adjacent to I-75, a small, approximately 15 acre parcel on the north side of the lake, and two parcels totaling 75 acres on the southern side of the lake. The property contains a diversity of natural communities including basin marsh, shrub swamp, Prairie Lake, and wet prairie within the Levy Lake basin, mesic flatwoods, hydric hammock, upland mixed forest, baygall, blackwater stream, depression marsh, Sinkhole Lake, and basin swamp on the lands surrounding the basin.

Beginning in the late 1960's a series of levees and ditches were constructed to convert Levy Lake into a system that could be utilized for agriculture. The eastern end of Levy Lake has been encircled with a levee and numerous interior ditches were also constructed. The levee system on the western end of Levy Lake consists of a north, a south and an east levee. The encircling levee system was never completed. As intended, this system of ditches, dikes and pumps profoundly changed the hydrology of Levy Lake. Waters that formerly sheet flowed across Levy Lake are captured and conveyed to the very western portions of the lake via the exterior ditch system. Some of these waters may backflow into the western portions of the lake, but differences in water level on one side of the levee compared to the other are apparent throughout. During the El Niño winter of 1997-1998 excessive rainfall caused flooding of residences near the downstream Kanapha Prairie, and residences to the north of the eastern

portion of Levy Lake. This flooding brought attention to the role that Levy Lake could play in attenuation of flooding if it could again be utilized for water storage.

In 2001 the Whitehursts entered into a conservation easement with the US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Wetland Reserve Program that encompassed the portions of the lake basin in Whitehurst ownership and the small fringe of uplands to the east of the basin. According to this easement the landowner retains the rights to title, quiet enjoyment, and control of access, recreational uses and subsurface resources. The Natural Resources Conservation Service is in the process of developing and permitting a wetland restoration plan and management plan for Levy Lake with Ducks Unlimited being the primary author. The goals of the restoration and management plan for Levy Lake include 1) providing habitat for migratory birds and wetland dependent wildlife including threatened and endangered species, 2) the protection and improvement of water quality and groundwater recharge, and 3) the attenuation of water flows to reduce flooding. Wetland restoration activities are being funded primarily by the United States Government, but Ducks Unlimited is funding some of the design work associated with the restoration. In summary, the last version of the restoration plan involves allowing water to enter the eastern portion of Levy Lake from the north and east rather than having exterior ditches convey waters away from the basin. A water control structure will be placed in the levee dividing the two halves of the lake allowing waters in the eastern portion of the lake to be manipulated for management and allowing water from the eastern end to enter western portion of the lake near the top of the system. Further, plans entail creating a water control structure along an existing interior levee so that a 90 acre sub-impoundment can be managed for waterfowl, also within the eastern portion of the lake. Plans for the western portion of Levy Lake similarly include allowing waters from surrounding areas to enter this portion of the lake near its eastern end rather than having exterior ditches convey waters to the westernmost end of the lake before water can back flow into the western end of Levy Lake.

The Barr Hammock ACF Project scored 7.96 out of 9.44 on the Rapid Ecological Project Assessment (REPA) and is the third-highest ranked project to date. The Alachua County Ecological Inventory Project (KBN Study) describes Barr Hammock – Levy Lake as large area containing all of Levy Lake and part of Ledwith Prairie – two of the largest wetlands in Alachua County. It includes all the land between these two wetlands, some of which is high quality hardwood forest (a part of which has been logged), and includes smaller wetlands such as Mud Pond. It connects to Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park and Kanapaha Prairie. Levy Lake and Ledwith Prairie together constitute the largest area in Alachua County identified by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission’s “Closing the Gaps” publication as “a strategic habitat conservation area” (KBN 1996).

Natural Communities:

Wet Prairie
 Basin Marsh
 Shrub Swamp
 Prairie Lake
 Upland Mixed Forest
 Flatwoods
 Baygall
 Blackwater Stream
 Depression Marsh

Quality

Very Good – Fair
 Very Good - Fair
 Good
 Good
 Excellent - Good
 Fair - Poor
 Excellent to Good
 Excellent
 Good

Hydric Hammock	Excellent - Good
Basin Swamp	Excellent – Poor
Sinkhole Lake	Excellent

Other:

Ditches and Levee
Improved pasture with planted pine
Old field planted pine

Key Species:

The Whitehurst project contains habitats that were deemed potentially significant for twenty-four animal species as modeled by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) including bald eagles, American alligators, eastern indigo snakes, various wading birds and turkeys. In addition, there are records of nesting and roosting by sandhill cranes on Levy Lake. Mottled ducks are also known to utilize habitats within Levy Prairie (KBN 1996 and Ashton and Ashton 2000 in Barryman and Henigar 2001). This property has been called the most important habitat for the Florida sandhill crane on private land in Alachua County (KBN 1996). One active eagle’s nest and another last active in 1989 are known from the property. An FNAI element occurrence for sandhill cranes exists within the property boundaries. Within approximately a mile of the site there are three active eagle nests listed in the FWC eagle nest registry, and FNAI element occurrences of bald eagles, gopher tortoise, eastern diamondback rattlesnake, and sandhill cranes. Staff observed one active gopher tortoise burrow on the upland parcel on the south side of Levy Lake.

Invasive exotic plants are not widespread within the Whitehurst property. The only invasive exotic plants observed during the evaluation were tropical soda apple, white flowered wandering jew and a few individuals of coral ardisia along a fenceline. Other species such as alligator weed have been documented on the site (Berryman and Henigar 2001).

Key Features:

The bulk of this property is already in conservation via the conservation easement with the NRCS; however three parcels are not currently protected. Two of these parcels, approximately 75 acres on the south side of Levy Lake make an important connection between two disjoint parcels of the Rayonier Barr Hammock property providing access from one group of parcels to the other. The Rayonier Barr Hammock property is currently under contract with the ACF program and is expected to close by November 2006. Further, the ecological quality of the southern parcels is generally excellent. There are two areas (in total approximately 24 acres) that were old field in the 1930’s and are currently in planted pine and are of unknown original natural community. These areas are generally weedy and disturbed; however, it was in this area that an active gopher tortoise burrow was found. The remainder of the property is a highly diverse upland mixed forest, with a baygall, a small sinkhole lake and a blackwater stream creek system traversing the property that crosses onto the Rayonier Barr Hammock property to the west.

The northern parcel not in the conservation easement is mostly pasture planted in pines, with a fringe of upland mixed forest at the northern end. This wooded fringe upslope of the pasture is disturbed and currently utilized as rough pasture. Coral ardisia was observed along the fence line between this parcel and an adjacent parcel. This parcel provides access from Wacahoota Road to the Levy Lake basin and the dividing levee.

Natural community quality on the portions of the property with the conservation easement varies, but is generally good. Much of the eastern portion of Levy Lake appears to be in relatively good condition. Open expanses of marsh dominated by maidencane with scattered woody vegetation are common. Along the western end of the eastern portion of Levy Lake are some areas of higher elevation. These areas are currently being utilized as rough pasture and therefore have less cover than other portions of the basin. It is also in these areas that staff observed tropical soda apple. In a few locations the levee was placed landward of various forested communities. These forested communities are in decline, many of the canopy trees have died and presumably these communities are in the process of becoming basin marsh.

The upland fringe east of Levy Lake is comprised of upland mixed forest, basin swamp, baygall, and mesic flatwoods. The wetland communities appear to be in good to excellent condition. The upland mixed forest has been utilized in livestock operations and has long-unused stock pens in it's midst, but appears to be in good condition. A band of mesic and possibly wet flatwoods lies adjacent to I-75. These flatwoods are in fair to poor condition. They are fire suppressed and herbaceous diversity is low in most areas.

The western portion of Levy Lake, primarily basin marsh, has undergone some woody plant encroachment since the construction of the levees and ditches. Large expanses of shrubs and mesophytic trees such as maples have become established in some areas of the basin marsh. The restoration plan draft put forth by Ducks Unlimited and NRCS includes plans to breach levees, construct spillways and weirs in order to allow water to enter the western portion of Levy Lake at the top of the system, hopefully producing a more natural hydrologic regime. The extent to which this will reverse woody plant encroachment is unknown.

This property provides a wide connection, albeit across I-75, to Paynes Prairie. It also joins disjoint parcels of the Rayonier Barr Hammock property and is adjacent to the Rayonier Barr Hammock property.

Management:

Because of the conservation easement, management of much of this property will be subject to the management plan devised by the NRCS and Ducks Unlimited. No such plan has yet been written. It is anticipated that the bulk of the management guidelines will be in relation to hydrologic manipulations, but other guidelines may be provided with relation to prescribed fire or other measures to promote an herbaceous dominated system. Likewise hydrologic restoration and the goal of returning the basin marsh to a more herbaceous dominated system is being planned and funded primarily by the NRCS, but with inputs from Ducks Unlimited. Actions required to reverse the invasion of woody plants on portions of Levy Lake are unknown, but could include nothing except corrected hydrology, or it could include application of prescribed fire, mechanical manipulation during dry periods, or some combination of the above. Initial restoration activities will be funded by NRCS. Subsequent maintenance activities are the responsibility of the landowner.

Ongoing management of the upland communities particularly the flatwoods along I-75 may be somewhat difficult to achieve with fire due to its proximity to I-75 necessitating the restricted conditions under which this area may be burned, its long-unburned nature, and fuel levels. Therefore, in the event that fires are not practicable within a particular prescribed period, budgetary allowances may need to be made to allow for fuels reduction via mechanical methods.

The inaccessible nature of basin marsh will require specialized equipment to access portions of the marsh. Foreseeable reasons for needed access include prescribed fire, monitoring and surveys for invasive exotics.

Management of portions of the property not under the conservation easement will include management of planted pine (approximately 30-35 acres) and its eventual restoration to the appropriate natural community type. Much of the area on the southern portion of the lake will require little management save invasive exotic surveys.

Recreation:

This property is suited for passive recreation such as hiking and nature viewing and possibly biking. Levees would make scenic nature trails. Vistas of Levy Lake are impressive and provide opportunities to observe waterfowl and other marsh species. The conservation easement is written such that recreational uses of the property are not prohibited and purchase of the area within the conservation easement would give the public access to the vistas and recreational opportunities on Levy Lake.

Parcel Data:

<u>Parcel</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Just value</u>
07418-000-000	640.00	\$960,000.00
07421-001-000	217.70	\$ 89,300.00
07419-000-000	640.00	\$960,000.00
16471-001-000	414.10	\$224,000.00
16374-004-000	14.91	\$ 52,200.00
16472-000-000	437.95	\$484,200.00
16825-001-000	117.70	\$141,200.00
16824-001-000	90.36	\$135,500.00
16824-000-000	69.64	\$104,500.00
16476-000-000	179.65	\$193,100.00
16822-001-000	216.00	\$245,300.00
16812-000-000	85.80	\$103,000.00
16478-001-000	10.37	\$ 62,200.00
16823-000-000	5.00	\$ 25,000.00

The 2006 Alachua County Property Appraiser’s (ACPA) just or land value for the 3,139.18-acre property is \$3,779,500 or \$1,204 per 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.

This project consists of 14 parcels in a rural area of the county which is not currently experiencing a high level of development pressure at this time. There are mostly large rural lots in the area with a few small suburban subdivisions. All of the parcels are within the Barr Hammock/Levy Lake Strategic Ecosystem (SE) map.

The following parcels are all part of a conservation easement and have no development potential : 07418-000-000 (640 ac), 07421-001-000 (217.7 ac), 07419-000-000 (640 ac), 16471-001-000 (414.1 ac), 16472-000-000 (437.95 ac), 16825-001-000 (117.7 ac), 16824-001-000 (90.36 ac), 16476-000-000 (179.65 ac), 16822-001-000 (216 ac), 16812-000-000 (85.8 ac), 16478-001-000 (10.37 ac).

Three remaining parcels are outside of the easement boundaries and contain buildable area. Because these three lots (parcel 16824, 16823 & 16374-4) are within the Barr Hammock Strategic Ecosystem (SE) map designation, the Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) allows for up to 50% of the upland area of a property (within a SE) to be preserved. By preserving this area, the remaining upland area may be developed at the underlying gross density and with density transferred at a rate of 1 unit/10 acres of conservation area set aside. Therefore, the SE designation may not necessarily reduce the number of units that could be developed but could reduce the area of development. Both parcels also contain some wetland and floodplain areas.

Parcel 16374-004-000 contains a very small portion of wetlands in the southwest corner and floodplains exist on both the north and south sides. Based on the 14.91 acre size, two units could be built on this property based on the zoning and land use designation (3 if an official survey showed that the property was at least 15 acres). This site would require a flood prone area permit for access but otherwise could easily be developed.

The other parcels (# 16824, and 16823) contain both wetland and floodplain areas covering approximately 1/2 of the parcel area. No development activities can occur within the wetland and floodplain areas unless approved by the county. Under the current land use and zoning, these parcels could be developed for residential use at a density of 1 unit per 5 acres. Under the Comp Plan and land development regulations, a large scale development would have to be clustered and outside of the designated conservation areas (wetlands, floodplain, and a designated portion of the SE based on ground truthing) or go through a Special Area Plan process for the properties containing Strategic Ecosystems. Other regulated resources (archeological, eagle nest protection zones, listed-species habitat or significant habitat) that may exist on the site as well as access issues could have some additional impacts on attempts to develop this property. It appears that 15 to 20 units could be built on this property.

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:

There are two sites recorded in the Division of Historic Resources Florida Master Site File on the Whitehurst property. Further, staff observed a scattering of historic period refuse. In the 1938 aerial photographs a structure was located at the location where the refuse was observed. Staff observed ironware, bottles, historic period ceramics, iron fragments, and chimney flue liner shards. Within one mile of the Whitehurst property there are 33 additional sites recorded in the Florida Master Site File.

Literature Citations:

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

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

Berryman and Henigar. 2001. Levy Lake Flood Attenuation/Wetland Restoration Plan. Final Report prepared for Alachua County in association with St. Johns River Water Management District and Ashton and Ashton.

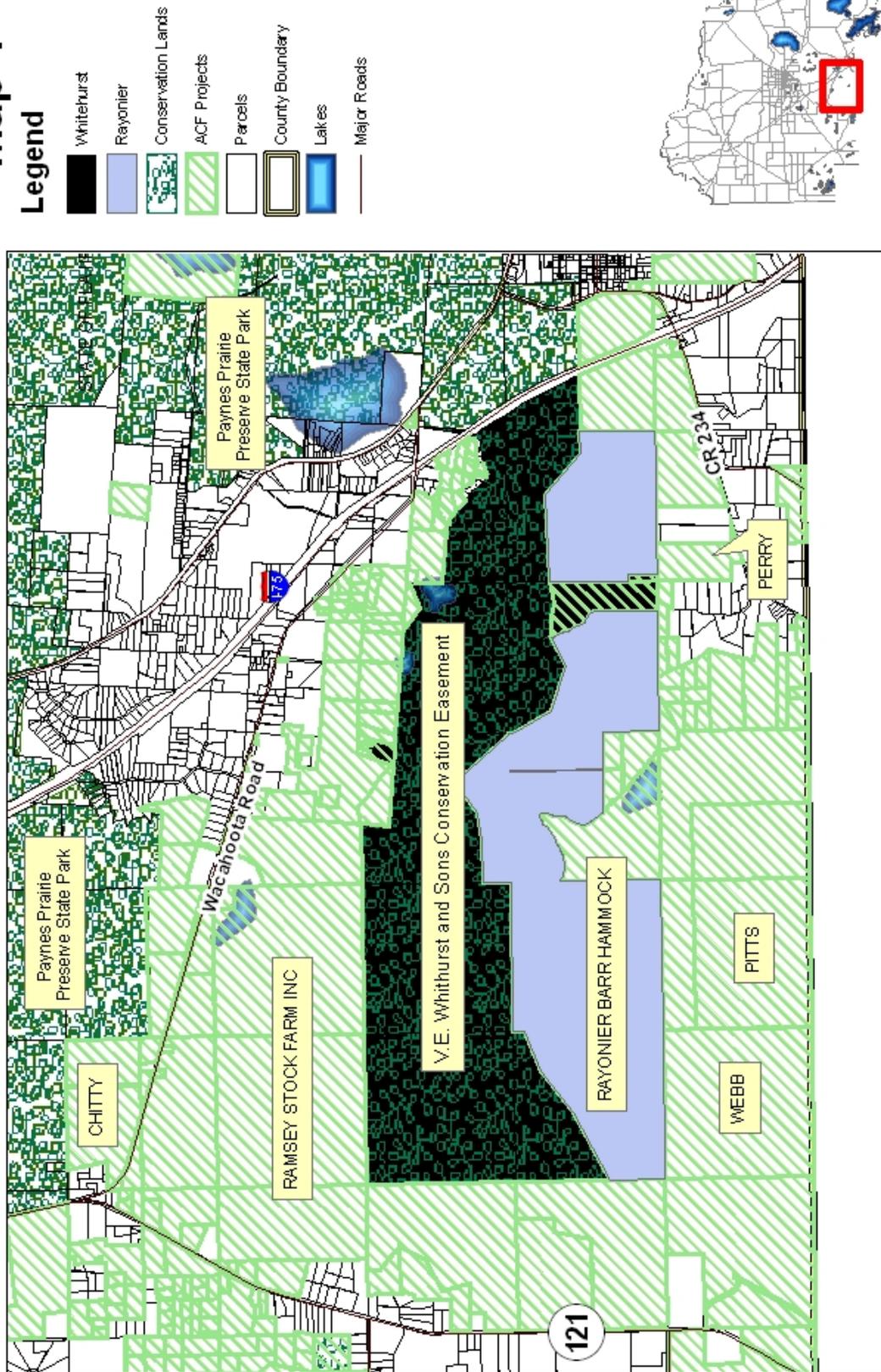
Barr Hammock - Whitehurst

May 15, 2006

CATEGORY	Criterion	WEIGHTING	Enter Criteria Value Based on Site Inspection	Average Criteria Score	Average Criteria Score Multiplied by Relative Importance
(I-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;		4		
	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.		5		
(I-2) PROTECTION OF NATURAL COMMUNITIES AND LANDSCAPES	A. Whether the property contains a diversity of natural communities;		4		
	B. Whether the natural communities present on the property are rare;		3		
	C. Whether there is ecological quality in the communities present on the property;		4		
	D. Whether the property is functionally connected to other natural communities;		5		
	E. Whether the property is adjacent to properties that are in public ownership or have other environmental protections such as conservation easements;		4		
	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;		3		
	H. Whether the property is relatively free from internal fragmentation from roads, power lines, and other features that create barriers and edge effects.		3		
(I-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;		4		
	E. Whether the property offers high vegetation quality and species diversity;		5		
	F. Whether the property has low incidence of non-native invasive species		5		
(I-4) SOCIAL AND HUMAN VALUES	A. Whether the property offers opportunities for compatible resource-based recreation, if appropriate;		5		
	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			4.45	
	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THIS CRITERIA SET IN THE OVERALL SCORE	1.3333			5.93
(II-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		
(II-2) ECONOMIC AND ACQUISITION ISSUES	A. Whether there is potential for purchasing the property with matching funds from municipal, state, federal, or private contributions;		4		
	B. Whether the overall resource value justifies the potential cost of acquisition;		4		
	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		2		
	AVERAGE FOR ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT VALUES			3.60	
	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THIS CRITERIA SET IN THE OVERALL SCORE	0.6667			2.40
	TOTAL SCORE				8.33
NOTES					
	General Criteria Scoring Guidelines				
	1 = Least Beneficial, 2 = Less Beneficial than Average, 3 = Average, 4 = More Beneficial than Average, 5 = Most Beneficial				
	top 20 qu = 66.7%				

Barr Hammock - Levy Prairie Whitehurst

Map 1



DISCLAIMER: The map and the statistics it contains are made available as a public service, to be used for reference purposes only. The Alachua County Engineering Department provides the information as is without warranty of any kind. The quality of the data is dependent on the nature sources from which the data were obtained.



Barr Hammock - Levy Prairie Whitehurst



Map 2

Legend

-  Whitehurst
-  ACF Projects
-  FNAI Managed Areas



DISCLAIMER: This map and the spatial data it contains are made available as a public service to be used for reference purposes only. The Alabama County Environment Department is not responsible for any errors or omissions in this map or the data it contains. The quality of the data is dependent on the source of the data and is not guaranteed.

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

