

SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Governing Board

FROM: Stephen Schroeder, Chief, Office of Administration

THRU: Tim Alexander, Deputy Executive Director, Business and Community Services

DATE: March 26, 2021

RE: Lasky Tract Acquisition, Gilchrist County

**RECOMMENDATION**

Authorize staff enter into detailed assessment and negotiations for the acquisition of a fee interest in 351.74 acres +/- on the Lasky Tract in Gilchrist County.

**BACKGROUND**

In November 2020, the District received an offer to sell a fee interest in a parcel of real property located in Gilchrist County identified as the Lasky Tract. The offeror proposed a price of \$855,000, which is negotiable and dependent upon appraisals.

The parcel is adjacent to the District-owned Nature Coast Tract and includes approximately one mile of river frontage. The parcel is located within the Fanning Manatee Priority Focus Area, the Eastern Water Supply Planning Area, and the Suwannee Basin Management Action Plan. The parcel is 100% within floodway. The parcel is also 100% within the Fanning Springs Springshed and contains 40 acres +/- of riverine surface water. The parcel is partially within the District's Florida Forever Workplan.

After initial review, land management staff conducted a site visit and determined that the parcel has a highly used road through the property that leads to the riverbank. Visual inspection revealed household dumping has occurred on the parcel including discarded appliances and furniture. Due to the flooding potential, staff believes debris are subject to being washed into the river. Further, staff identified damage caused by vehicles and boat launching on the riverbank.

Staff identified that initial management issues will include controlling access to the property to prevent further dumping and damage to the parcel, and a cleanup of existing refuse which will be of minimal cost. Open access will remain from the District's adjacent tract to the South which is more controlled and would eliminate further dumping.

Staff believes that ownership by the District will protect the river water quality by cleaning up and preventing future dumping on the property, will prevent further development within the floodway, and protect the riverbank from further damage. Additionally, District ownership will increase public recreational opportunities on the parcel, provide opportunity for longleaf pine restoration, and potential future timber harvesting.

Discussions with the offeror have concluded that there is no interest in reconfiguring the parcel or selling a conservation easement. The owner has agreed that if the Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) recommends a Phase 2 ESA he will consider paying for the Phase 2 but reserves the right to withdraw the offer.