

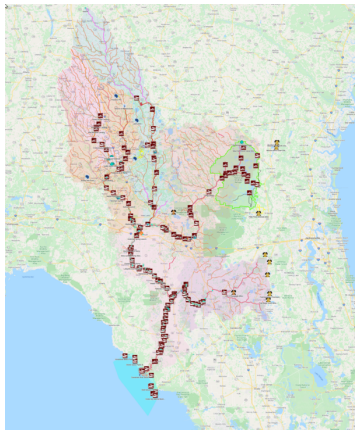
July 23, 2021

To: Matt Martin, Valdosta City Planner, mlmartin@valdostacity.com

Re: VA-2021-16 Deannexation Request by Uvalde Land Company

Dear Planner Martin,

I as a Lowndes County taxpayer and WWALS Watershed Coalition, Inc. ask the Greater Lowndes Planning Commission (GLPC) to recommend against deannexation in VA-2021-16 at its meeting this Monday, July 26, 2021. Also, Valdosta Mayor and Council should deny that deannexation at their later meeting.



No good reason has been given by the applicant for deannexation of that 310 acres of Withlacoochee River floodplain around Cherry Creek. There are substantial reasons to be concerned about potential uses of that land if deannexed. Instead, Valdosta and Lowndes County should purchase the entire 530.24 acre property down to the Withlacoochee River to add to a trails system up and down the Withlacoochee River.

Valdosta and Lowndes County cannot afford to risk the Cherry Creek Mitigation Bank, especially after the record floods of 2009 and 2013, and all the later Valdosta sewage spills in further rainstorms. As one of the donors of that same land to the University of Georgia said back in 2009, "Water is the gift that keeps on giving. We couldn't think of a better way to say thank you. If we don't have clean air to breathe and clean water to drink, what have we accomplished?" (Valdosta Daily Times, January 19 2008.)

As you wrote in the agenda sheet, the property "is located within the **Parks / Recreation / Conservation (PRC)** and the **Linear Greenspace /Trails (LGT)** Character Areas on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan".... Also, it "is the City portion of the "Cherry Creek Wetlands Mitigation Bank".... But there is no indication in the GLPC agenda materials that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has been contacted about that. If this is part of the deal Lowndes County made with USACE about Inner Perimeter Road, USACE should have a say.

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WWALS is an IRS 501(c)(3) nonprofit charity est. June 2012

WWALS Watershed Coalition advocates for conservation and stewardship of the Withlacoochee, Willacoochee, Alapaha, Little, Santa Fe, and Suwannee River watersheds in south Georgia and north Florida through education, awareness, environmental monitoring, and citizen activities.

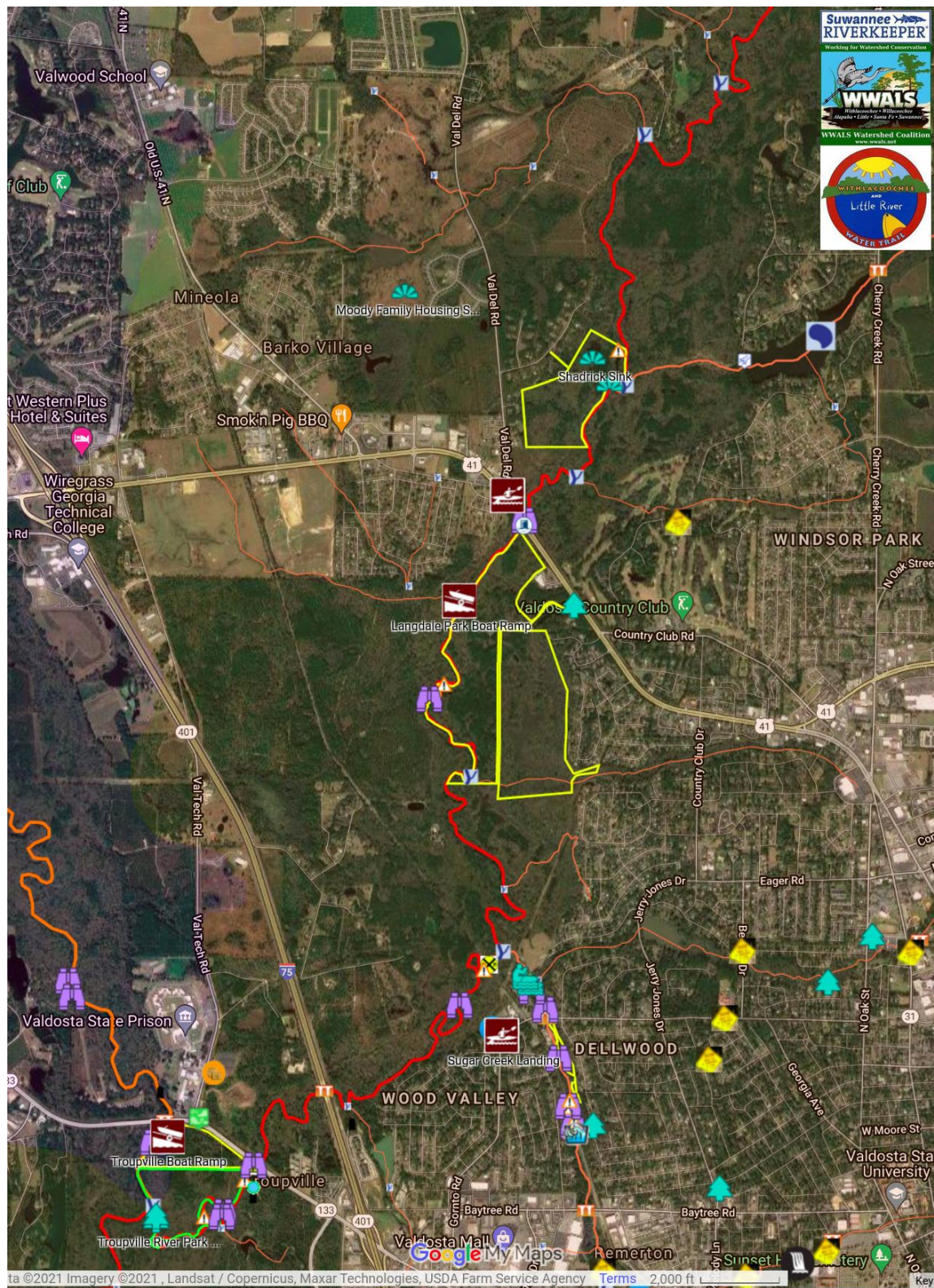
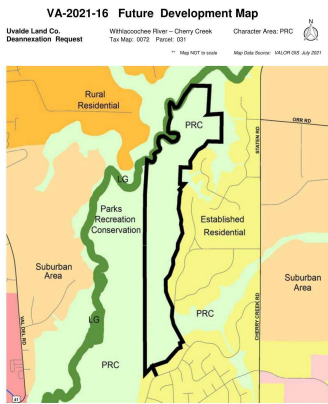
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Your suggestion of annexing the rest of that parcel into the City of Valdosta is interesting. However, further annexation would not be necessary for integration of the property into a series of land and water trails along the Withlacoochee River, linking up with the county-owned land on the west (right) bank around Shadrick Sink off of River Chase, and across North Valdosta Road (US 41) with Langdale Park, the largest park of the Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks and Recreation Authority (VLPR). Langdale Park is only partly within the Valdosta City limits; none of its extensive river frontage is inside the city.

Such a trails system would help preserve those pristine wetlands by letting people who appreciate them experience them and help keep them clean. It could link up with the existing VLPR Troupville Boat Ramp Park off of GA 133, between the Little and Withlacoochee Rivers, and the proposed Troupville River Park down to the Little River Confluence.

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Austin, Texas, is turning its urban Waller Creek into Waterloo Greenway of linked parks and trails down to the Colorado River.

Austin is a much bigger city, but because of that it has a much harder problem. I bet Austin cannot buy any land for \$200/acre. One Valdosta-Lowndes recently listed Troupville River Camp as number one on its top 20 list. A trails system all the way there from Cherry Creek would be a jewel for Valdosta and Lowndes County, supporting recreation and quality of life of the existing population, and drawing businesses and employees such as the city, the county, and

the Development Authority say they want to attract.

Also on that GLPC agenda is a subdivision rezoning with no indication that the two items are related. That subdivision, Val Del Villas on Bettys Place, is by Northside Property Development, of the same James Warren as Uvalde Land Company.

That location was rezoned for that subdivision in 2019 by the Lowndes County Commission. The survey plat annotated with flood certification says it was done for NATCO, LLC. NATCO owns all the land between Val Del Villas across the Withlacoochee River to Uvalde Land Trust. Part of that land NATCO in the past few years clearcut and replanted. Clearcutting would be an unfortunate use of the Uvalde tract, given the history of Withlacoochee River flooding, especially in 2019 and 2013, causing sewage spills from Valdosta.



As you indicated, “there has been no discussion of any proposed zoning for this property in Lowndes County, and a rezoning application has not yet been submitted to County staff.”

There are far too many unanswered questions about this deannexation and potential uses of the subject property. The Planning Commission should recommend denial, and the City of Valdosta should deny the deannexation request.

Further, the City, or Lowndes County, or VLPRA, or some other such organization, should purchase the entire subject property down to the Withlacoochee River and use it to build an extensive riverine land and water trails system.

Thank you for your consideration,

John S. Quarterman
Suwannee RIVERKEEPER®
/s
WWALS Watershed Coalition, Inc.