

THE ALACHUA COUNTY FOREVER PROJECT SCORING REPORT

DRAFT 8/16/01, 10/4/01, 10/25/01, 10/30/01

SITE NAME: Barr Hammock, Levy Prairie Project – Pitts & Rudnianyn Parcels

MATRIX SCORE: 8.24 of 10.00

SIZE: 2,170 acres

LOCATION / DESCRIPTION: The Barr Hammock, Levy Prairie Project is centrally located on the southern edge of Alachua County, Map 1. It is bordered by I-75 on the east, Wacahoota Road on the north, Williston Road on the west and the Marion County line on the south. The Pitts and Rudnianyn site is the southern most ownership in the project. The Alachua County Ecological Inventory Project, also known as the KBN Study (KBN) ranked the Levy Lake – Barr Hammock Project sixth in the county, and categorized it as a high priority project. The KBN write-up is provided as Attachment 1. The overall project boundaries were expanded beyond the KBN project area for the Levy Lake – Barr Hammock Project by the nominator, the Conservation Trust of Florida (CTF), and then slightly further by Alachua County Forever Staff. Map 1 depicts the entire Barr Hammock, Levy Prairie Project boundary, the Pitts & Rudnianyn (P&R) site boundary and the KBN Levy Lake – Barr Hammock project area (Strategic Habitats). It also shows the Rayonier site, a keystone parcel in the project. The total project area is 11,697 acres.

The P&R site is one of the keystone parcels in the Barr Hammock, Levy Prairie Project. It comprises approximately 20 % of the over all project area. Both Mr. Rudnianyn, who holds a two-thirds interest in the property, and the Conservation Trust of Florida nominated the P&R site. Mrs. Marjorie Pitts, who holds a one third interest in the property, also supports the nomination of the property to the Alachua County Forever Program. The property is composed of 4 parcels totaling 2,170 acres. Almost 80% of the property falls within the FEMA 100 or 500-year flood hazard zone. Significant wetlands on the site include 1,281 acres of Ledwith Prairie and 52 acres of Mud Pond, Map 2. Wet prairie, basin marsh, depression marsh, shrub swamp, wet flatwoods, mesic flatwoods, basin swamp, upland mixed forest, hydric hammock, and rough/improved pasture are found on the site. Disturbances include cattle grazing and logging, although the cattle have been removed from the site for at least four months and no recent signs of logging (within the last year) were observed.

PROTECTING WATER RESOURCES: The P&R Site is located in the perforated aquifer zone of Alachua County according to the Florida Geologic Survey Open File Report 21 (Map 3). This is an area underlain by clays (the Hawthorn Group) perforated by numerous karst features that allow direct access to the aquifer. The St. John's River Water Management District's Aquifer Recharge Map for Alachua County shows that the site falls in an area of high aquifer recharge, 12 inches or more per year (Map 4). Ledwith Prairie straddles the Alachua – Marion County line and is one of the largest intact wetlands in the county at 2,200 acres. Approximately 1,281 acres of the P&R site is composed of Ledwith Prairie. Nearly 80% of the property falls within FEMA 100 or 500-year flood hazard zones. According to information provided by CTF and the KBN Study, water flows into Ledwith Prairie on the south side from Moore's Pond and Fish Prairie, then during periods of high water through a man-made connection and natural flow and seepage into Levy Prairie. From there water flows into Kanapaha Prairie and finally into Pearson Sink (Map 5). Water may percolate into the Floridan Aquifer while in Ledwith Prairie, Levy Prairie or any of the smaller wetlands on the property.

PROTECTING NATURAL COMMUNITIES AND LANDSCAPES:

<u>Natural Community Types</u>	<u>Condition</u>
Wet Prairie	Excellent
Basin Marsh	Excellent
Depression Marsh	Good-Excellent
Basin Swamp	Good
Shrub Swamp	Good-Excellent
Hydric Hammock	Good
Upland Mixed Forest	Good
Wet Flatwoods	Good-Fair
Mesic Flatwoods	Good-Fair
Rough/improved Pasture	

The Barr Hammock, Levy Prairie Project is adjacent to Paynes Prairie on the North and East sides. However, I-75 bisects the eastern connection and Wacahoota Road bisects the northern connection. The Kanapaha Prairie ACF Project lies on the west side of the project area and is bisected by Williston Road. Additional Pitts and Rudnianyn holdings are immediately south of the project area in Marion County. The P&R site is surrounded by agriculture and rural residential properties, with the Rayonier property to the north. Internal fragmenting features include a dirt road through the property, some farm fencing and the pastures. While there are several relict sinkholes on the site, no active sinkholes were observed.

PROTECTING PLANT AND ANIMAL SPECIES: The P&R Site provides excellent habitat for numerous endemic and listed species. The KBN Study states, “This [Levy Lake – Barr Hammock] is the most important habitat for the Florida sandhill crane on private land in Alachua County”. According to Steven Nesbitt of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, there are two bald eagle nests on Ledwith Prairie and one on Levy Prairie. He also related that the Ledwith Prairie / Levy Prairie area meets all or part of the annual requirements for approximately a dozen Florida sandhill cranes. He also emphasized the importance of the combination of open pasture and wetland areas to the cranes. The Closing the Gaps in Florida’s Wildlife Habitat Conservation System, 1994 report by the FFWCC lists Levy and Kanapaha Prairies as important for the following species: fox squirrel, southeastern American kestrel, limpkin, gopher tortoise, Florida pine snake, and eastern indigo snake.

Common Name	Endemic	Fed/State Status	FCREPA/FNAI Designation	Observed
Birds				
Bald Eagle		T/T	T/S3	S,K,F,L
FL Sandhill Crane	endemic	-/T	T/S3	S,K,F,L
Limpkin		-/SSC	SSC/S3	F
Osprey		-/SSC	T/S3S4	L
Southeastern American kestrel		-/T	T/S3	F,L
Swallow-tailed Kite		-/-	E/S2	F,K
Woodstork		E/E	E/S2	K,F,L
White Ibis		-/SSC	SSC/S4	K,F,L
Snowy Egret		-/SSC	SSC/S4	K,F,L
Little Blue Heron		-/SSC	SSC/S4	F,L
Tri-colored Heron		-/SSC	SSC/S4	K,F,L
Reptiles				
Alligator		T/T	-/S4	S,K,L
Gopher Tortoise		-/SSC	T/S3	F,L

Eastern Indigo Snake		T/T	SSC/S3	K,F,L(FNAI)
Florida Pine Snake		-/SSC	S3	F
Florida Box Turtle		-/-	-/-	S

Mammals

Sherman’s Fox Squirrel	endemic	-/SSC	T/S2	S,F
Round-tailed Muskrat	endemic	-/-	/S3	F

Arachnids

Blue Purse Web Spider	endemic		R/S4	S,F
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S=observed by Alachua Co. EPD staff and/or an LCB subcommittee member, K=documented through KBN Study, F=documented by the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission in the Closing the Gap study or either documented on site or high potential for occurrence on site via personal communication with either Paul Moler or Steven Nesbitt, L=species observed by Ray Ashton, Jr. and recorded in the Levy Lake Flood Attenuation/Wetland Restoration Plan, February 2001, Berryman Henigar & SJRWMD.

The Barr Hammock, Levy Prairie Project area provides habitat for species with large home ranges such as bobcats, American swallow-tailed kites and wild turkeys. The hardwood forests provide excellent habitat for migrating birds, as per the KBN Study.

The attached plant list is a compilation of plants observed on both the P&R and the Rayonier sites by county staff, individual members of the LCB subcommittee, and a list provided by the Conservation Trust of Florida prepared by David Hall, Ph.D., Attachment 3. Listed plants include the green fly orchid, cinnamon fern, rain lily, and Godfrey’s privet.

ACHIEVING SOCIAL/HUMAN VALUES: The P&R site provides outstanding scenic vistas and excellent opportunities for resource-based recreation such as, camping, picnicking, scenic overlooks, trails, and interpretive and educational programs. If acquired it would become part of a municipal defining greenbelt. The Barr Hammock, Levy Prairie Project is a part of the Emerald Necklace Land Conservation Initiative – “A publicly accessible, connected, and protected network of trails, greenways, open space, and waterfronts surrounding the Gainesville urban area”. The County is currently seeking federal funding for this project.

MANAGEMENT ISSUES: The P&R site is in good condition and will require limited restoration and management. The majority of the site can be restored, enhanced and/or maintained through the implementation of a regular prescribed fire program. The location and surrounding land uses are conducive to a successful prescribed fire program. Very few invasive exotic plants were observed on the site, the most problematic of which are bahia and centipede grass. The site is well buffered from external impacts, trespass, vandalism and invasive plants. The project site will require annual exotic plant maintenance to find and control any invasive plants that have recruited onto the site. Regular site/security inspections, signage, access control and facility development will be necessary. The more disturbed areas of the site (i.e. the old pastures) can either be used for the development of facilities (i.e., primitive camping, trailheads, interpretive kiosks, bathrooms, and picnic areas) or restored.

ECONOMIC/ ACQUISITION ISSUES: The Alachua County Property Appraisers’ “2000 Just Value” for the subject parcels is \$858,500 or \$396 per acre.

16832-000-000 - \$126,000

16831-000-000 - \$39,000

07486-000-000 - \$266,000

07485-000-000 - \$427,500

This figure is for comparative purposes between nominated properties, and is not necessarily an accurate reflection of the true cost of the property if acquired by the Alachua County Forever Program. Both owners have expressed an interest in seeing the property protected through the Alachua County Forever Program. Mr.

Rudnianyn has stated that he would consider a less-than-fee offer (i.e. conservation easement). The Barr Hammock, Levy Prairie Project would have a high probability of success as either a Florida Communities Trust or a Florida Forever grant project. There is also interest from the Southwest Florida Water Management District for the acquisition of approximately 300 acres of Ledwith Prairie for a mitigation project.

OTHER: The Levy Lake portion of the Whitehurst (approximately 3,100 acres) and Chitty (35 acres) properties were put into the USGS Wetland Reservation Program. In exchange for the restoration of Levy Prairie by the USGS, the Whitehurst's and Chitty's have placed a perpetual deed restriction on their properties. They will maintain Levy Prairie as a wetland and not build any structures, personal communication Kenneth Morgan, USGS. The restoration of Levy Prairie is currently in the planning phase.

REFERENCES CITED:

Berryman Henigar in association with the St. Johns River Water Management District, 2001. Levy Lake Flood Attenuation/Wetland Restoration Plan. Alachua County, Gainesville, Florida.

Cox, J., R. Kautz, M. MacLauhglin, and T. Gilbert, 1994. Closing the Gaps in Florida's Wildlife Habitat Conservation System. Office of Environmental Services, Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Tallahassee, Florida.

KBN, A Golder Associates Company, 1996. Alachua County Ecological Inventory Project. Alachua County Department of Growth Management, Gainesville, Florida.

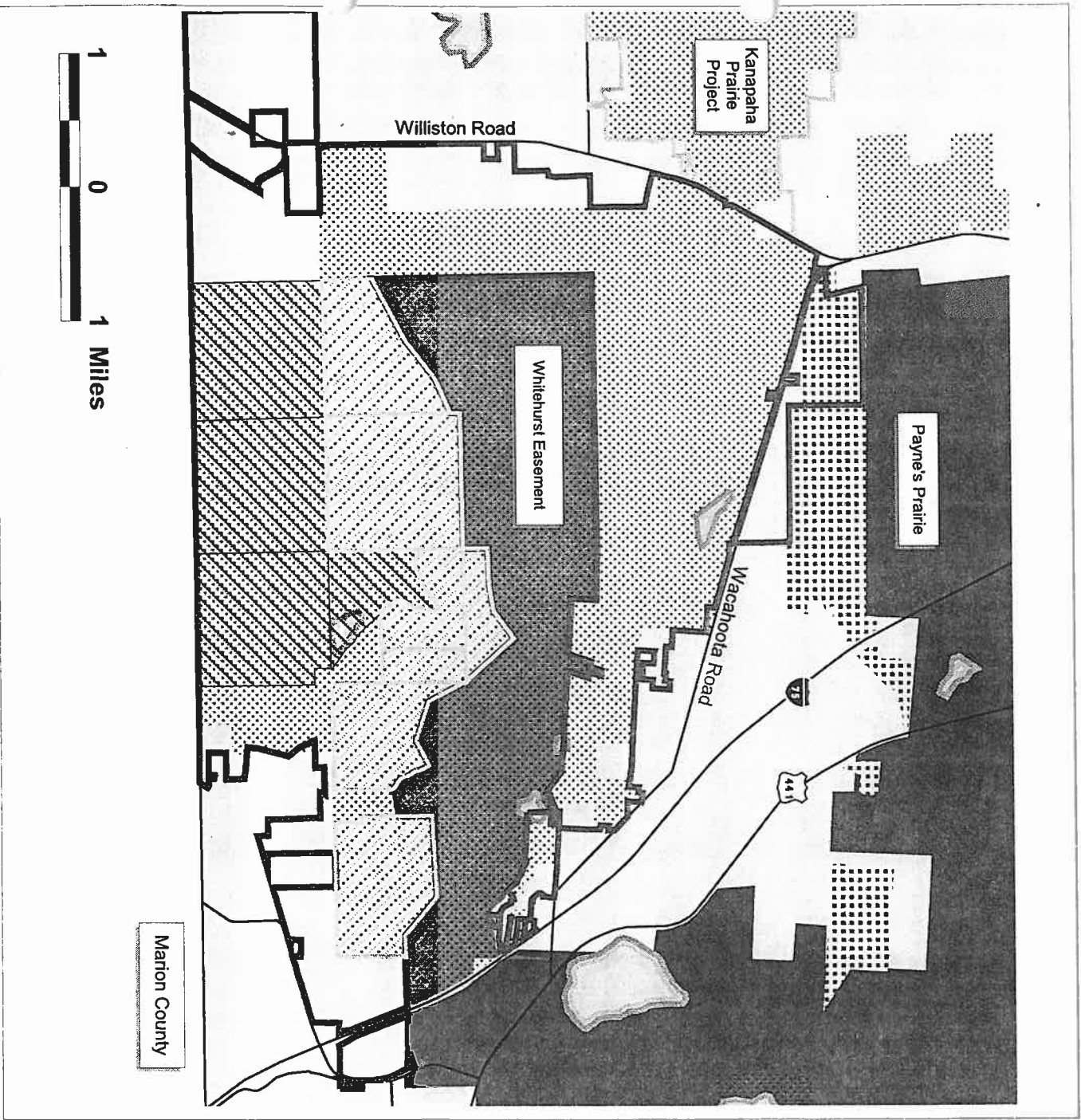
Macesich, M., 1988. Geologic Interpretation of the Aquifer Pollution Potential in Alachua County, Florida, Open File Report – 21. Florida Geologic Survey, Tallahassee, Florida.

BARR HAMMOCK, LEVY PRAIRIE PROJECT - PITTS & RUDNIANYN PARCELS (DRAFT 10/30/01)

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;		4		
	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;		3		
	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;		3		
	D. Whether the property is functionally connected to other natural communities;		4		
	E. Whether the property is adjacent to properties that are in public ownership or have other environmental protections such as conservation easements;		2		
	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.		4		
(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;		5		
	E. Whether the property offers high vegetation quality and species diversity;		3		
	F. Whether the property has low incidence of non-native invasive species.		4		
(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			4.1	
	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THIS CRITERIA SET IN THE OVERALL SCORE	1.3333			5.5
(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);		4		
	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;		5		
	B. Whether the overall resource values justifies the potential cost of acquisition;		5		
	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		3		
	D. Whether there is an opportunity to protect the environmental, social or other values of the property through an economically attractive less-than-fee mechanism such as a conservation easement.		3		
	AVERAGE FOR ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT VALUES			4.2	
	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THIS CRITERIA SET IN THE OVERALL SCORE	0.6667			2.8
	TOTAL SCORE				8.24









Map 1

Barr Hammock Levy Prairie

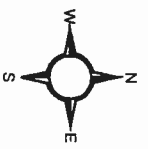
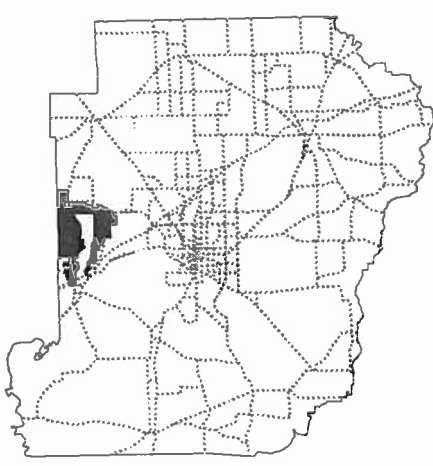


Location Map

Legend

-  Rayonier
-  Pitts and Rudnianny
-  Project Boundary
-  Lakes
-  Strategic habitats.shp
-  Whitehurst conservation easement
-  Conservation Lands
-  Potential Conservation Projects

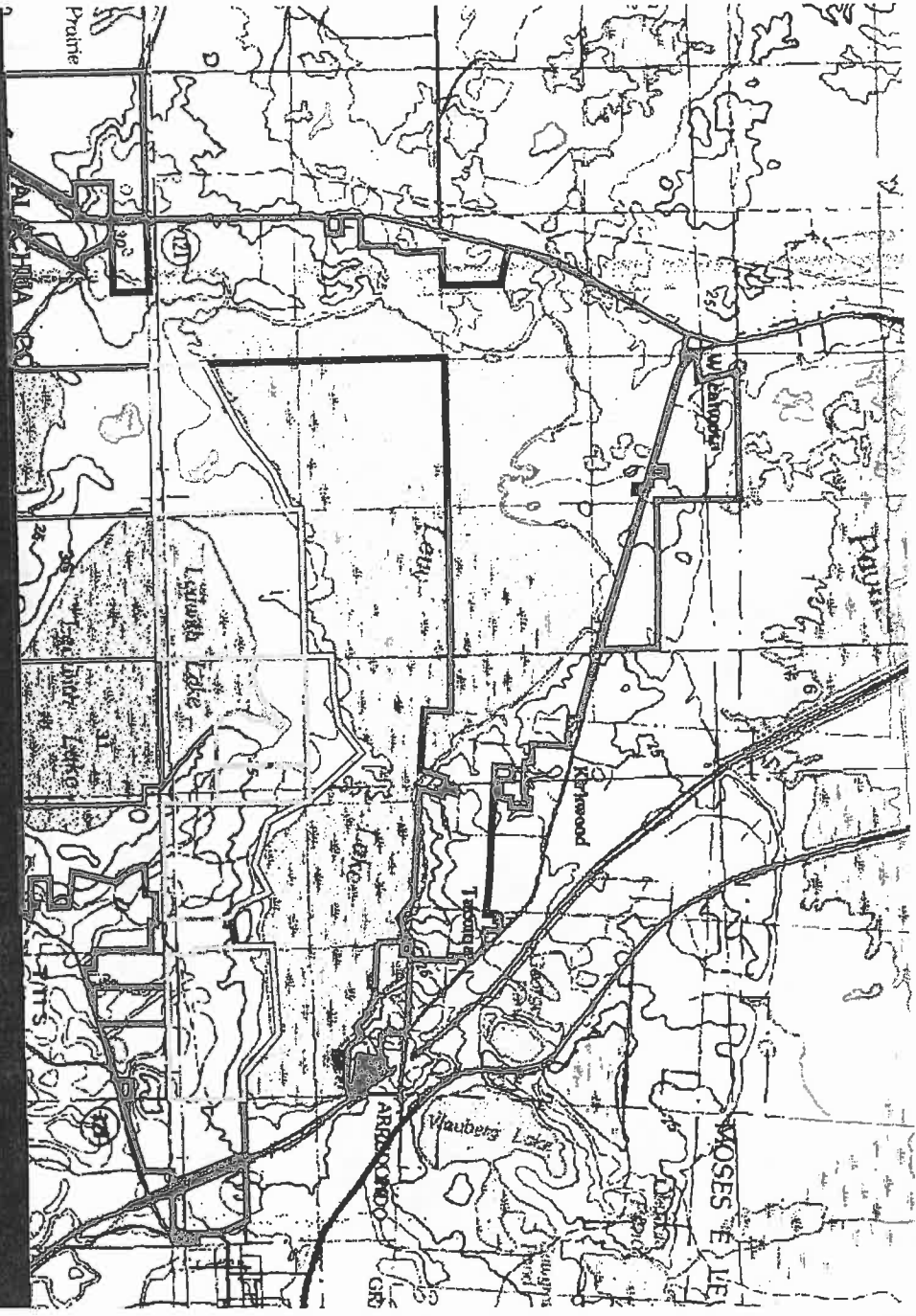
Project location in Alachua County





Map 2

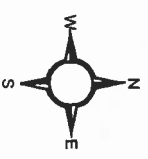
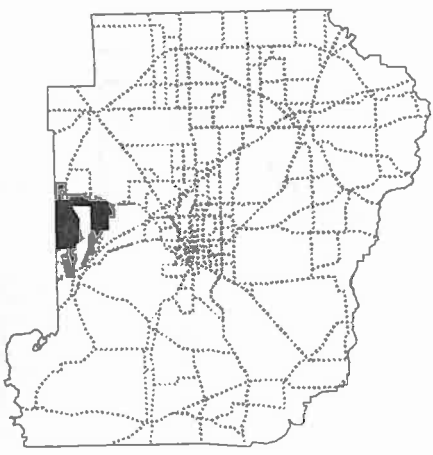
Barr Hammock Levy Prairie



USGS Topographic Survey Quadrangle Legend

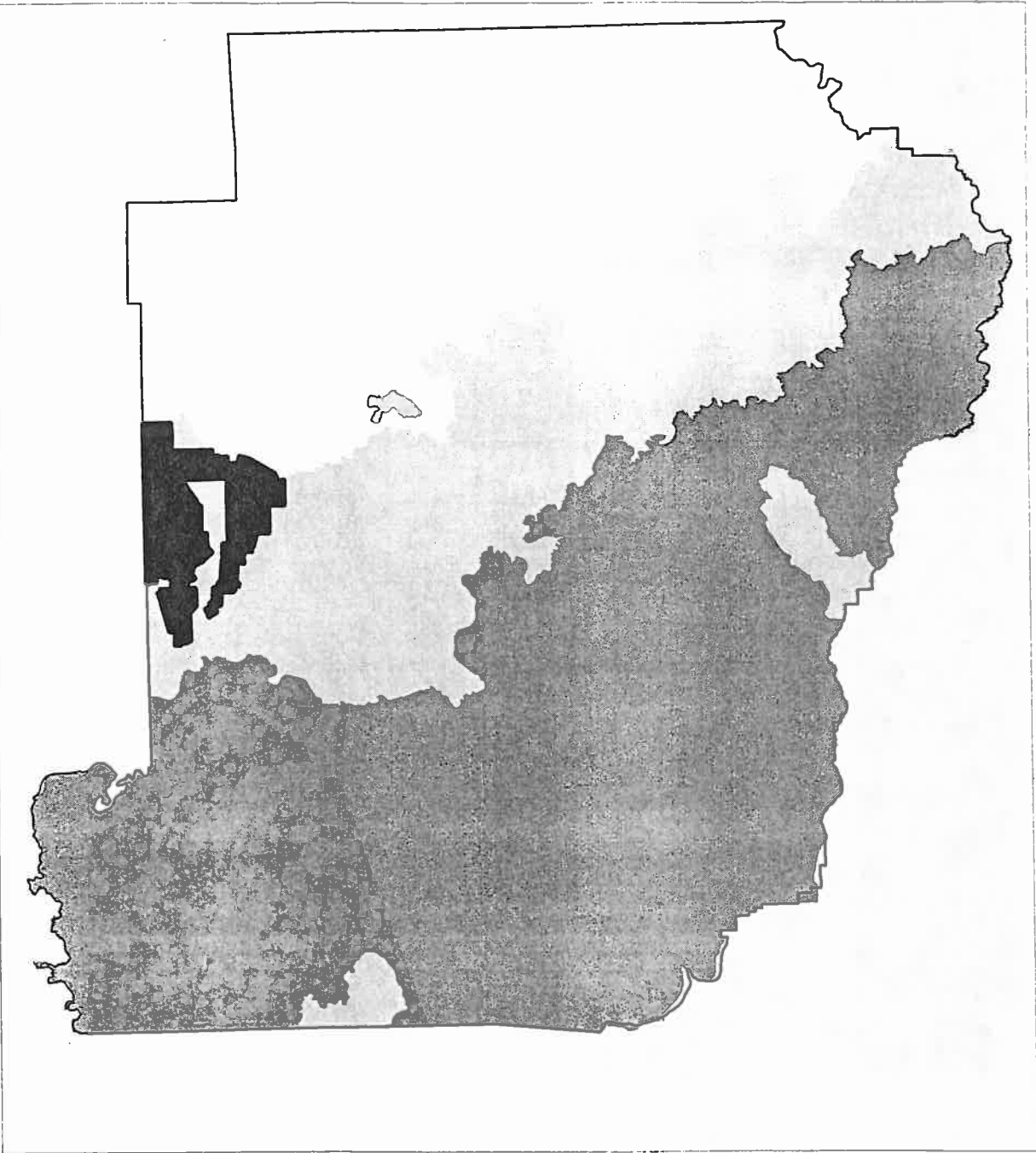
- Project Boundary
- Rayonier
- Pitts & Rudniansyn

Project location
in Alachua County



Map 3

Barr Hammock Levy Prairie

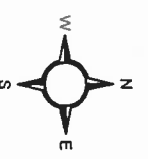


Aquifer Confinement

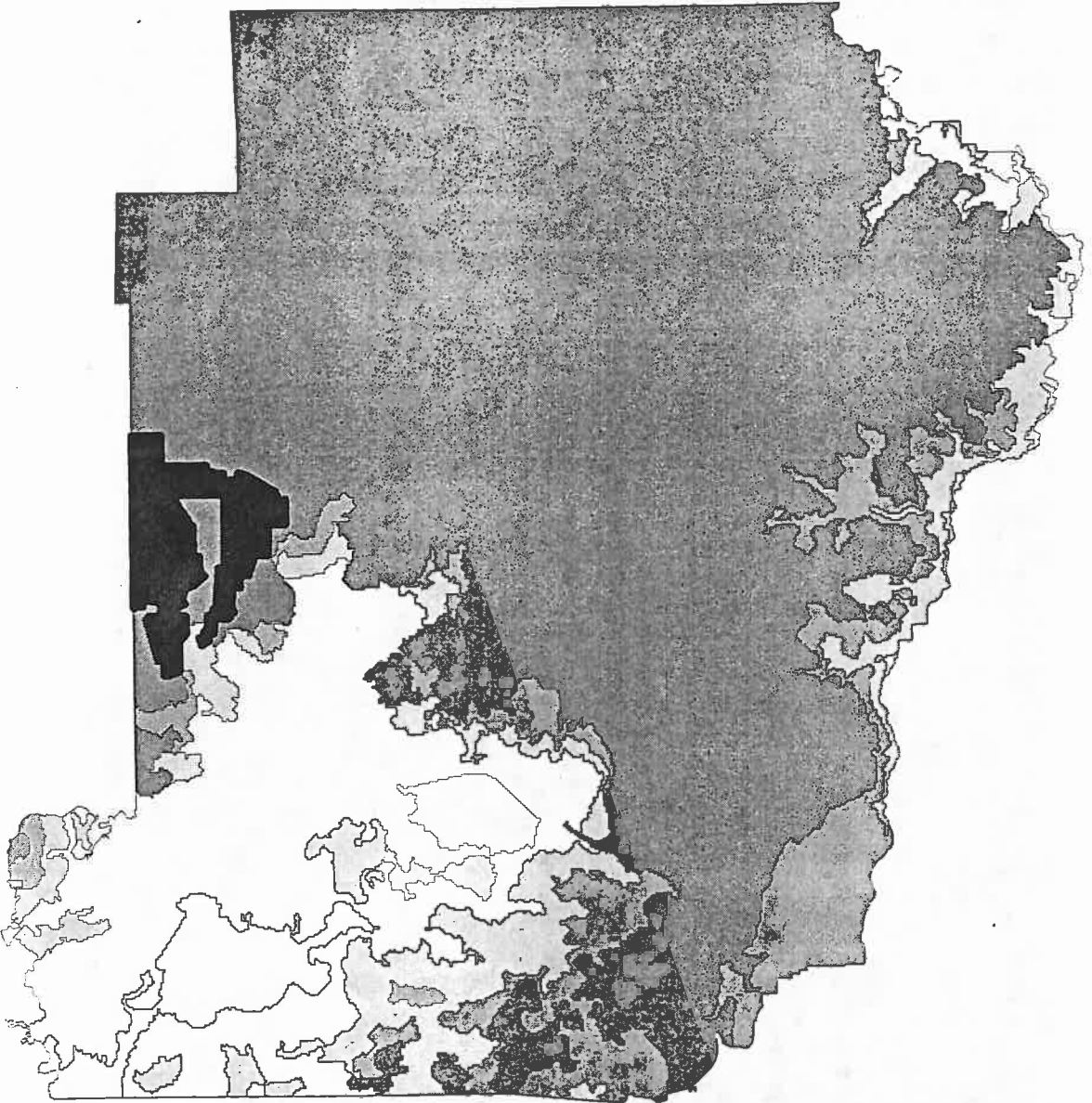
Legend

- Project Boundary
- Aquifer Confinement
- CONFINED
- PERFORATED
- UNCONFINED

Project location
in Alachua County



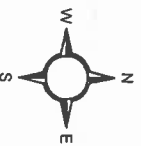
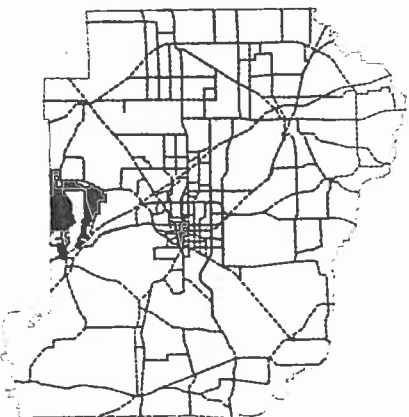
Map 4 Barr Hammock Levy Prairie



Aquifer Recharge Legend

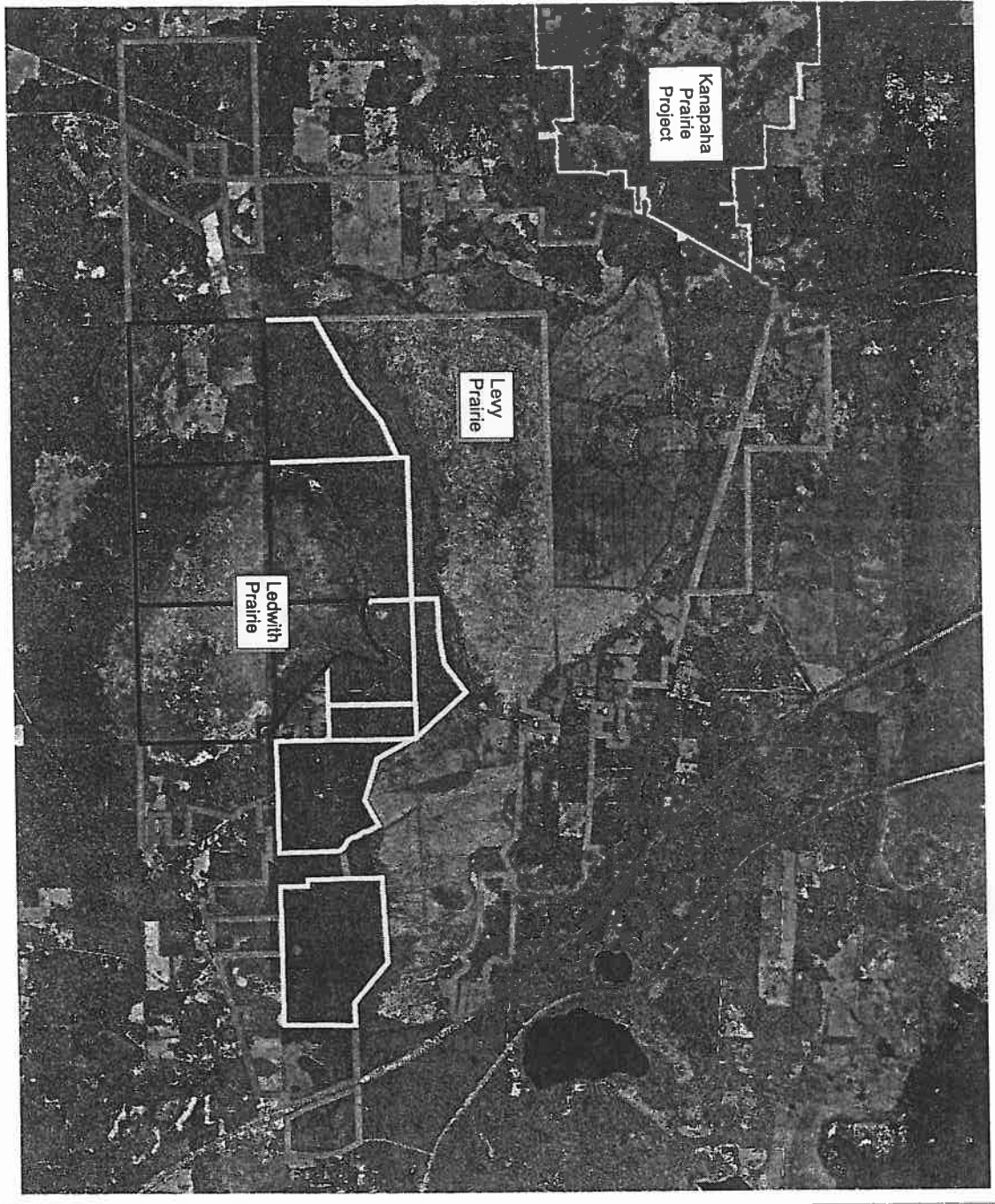
- Project Boundary
 - Aquifer Recharge
 - Discharge
 - 0-4
 - 4-8
 - 8-12
 - 12 or more
- Inches per year

Project location
in Alachua County





Map 5

Barr Hammock Levy Prairie



1996 Aerial

-  Project Boundary
-  Rayonier
-  Pitts & Rudniansyn

Project location
in Alachua County

