

Florida Ranchlands Environmental Services Project (FRESP)

Lake Okeechobee Watershed



Collaboration Partners: Alderman-DeLoney Ranch, Buck Island Ranch, operated by Archbold Biological Station (ABS), Lykes Bros, Inc., Williamson Cattle Company, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), Florida Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), and Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection (FDEP).

Funding: \$2.3 mil from USDA NRCS, FDACS, SFWMD and WWF for a 3-year pilot project. Additional \$2 mil approved by Florida legislature.

Project Purpose:

- Design, field test, and evaluate a market-based program to pay for environmental services on ranchlands, specifically water storage, phosphorus retention, and wetland habitat enhancement.
- Provide environmental benefits for South Florida and the greater Everglades ecosystem.
- Produce measurable benefits to the environment, be profitable for ranchers, cost-effective for tax payers, easily administered, and replicable in other regions and watersheds.

Goals and Anticipated Outcomes

Phase I (3 Years): Design and Testing (October 2005-September 2008)

- Implement and operate one of 3 water management alternatives (WMAs)—rehydrated wetlands, pasture water management, storm water treatment impoundment—on 4 different ranches.
- Develop transparent and credible ways to measure on private lands the provision of key environmental services: 1) water storage, 2) phosphorus retention and 3) habitat creation.
- Design operating rules for a market-based, pay for performance program that makes environmental services profitable for ranchers and rewards innovation in providing these services:
 - Model contracts and duration, eligibility criteria
 - Safe harbor, wetland jurisdictional issues
 - Targeting to maximize results
 - Long term financing

Phase II (2 Years): Scale-up and Transition (2009-2010)

- Test these operating rules and begin to scale-up the pay for performance program to the whole region, with more participants.

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