

Buck Island Ranch

As part of an ecosystem services pilot project, Florida ranchers are paid to retain water on their pasture. Buck Island Ranch restores seasonal wetlands while continuing to graze cattle amidst water control structures. Increased infiltration due to culverts and drainage ditches helps filter phosphorus from agricultural runoff and create wildlife habitat.



Northern Everglades

Buck Island and other Florida Ranchlands Environmental Services Project (FRESP) ranches are located in a region of central Florida known as the Northern Everglades. Over the last 100 years, the wetlands ecosystem of the Everglades has been drained for agricultural production and channelized for flood control. These shifts in water management have resulted in reduced biodiversity, degraded water quality, and low water table levels.



FRESP water control structures



Water retention monitoring stations



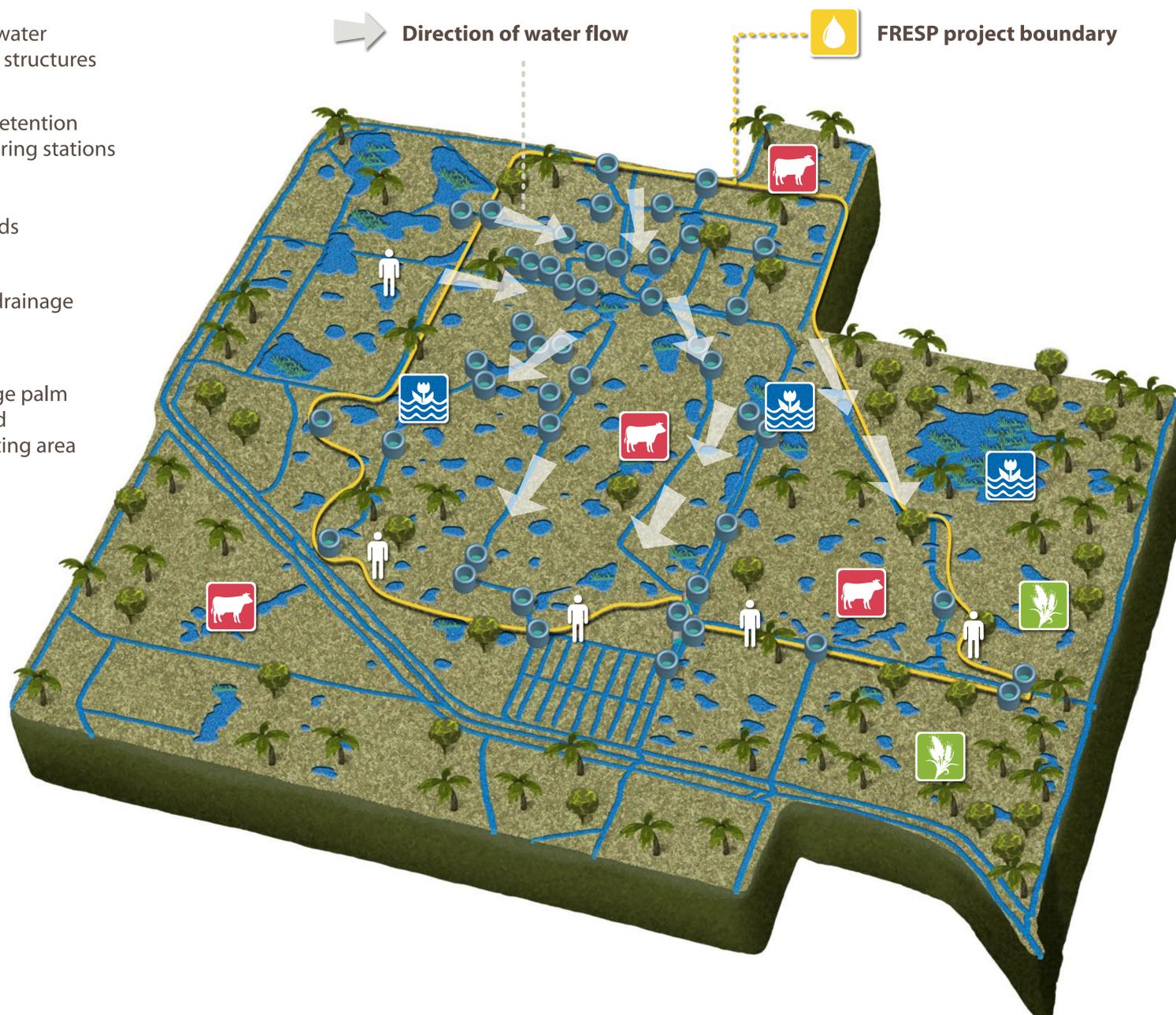
Wetlands



Major drainage ditches



Cabbage palm and sod harvesting area



With 3,000 head of cattle on 10,500 acres, Buck Island Ranch is among the top 20 commercial cow-calf producers in Florida. In addition to cattle sales, the ranch also earns income from sod production, hunting leases, and cabbage palm harvesting.



Culverts with riser structures installed in a network of drainage ditches retain water on the ranch and reduce phosphorus runoff to the larger Everglades ecosystem.



As part of the FRESP pilot, Buck Island Ranch receives payments for land rental, foregone production, and consultation on project design. In a scaled-up program, payments will be based on either acre feet of water retention or nutrient load reduction, with precise payment levels established through a reverse auction process to ensure the efficient allocation of funds.



Researchers are assessing the anticipated benefits of the project's higher water levels and water retention to wetland plants, frogs, fishes, and other invertebrates.

Farm Revenue Sources (Gross), Average 2007-2009

Source	Revenue	Customer
Cattle sales	89%	Feedlots
Other agricultural revenue (sod, cabbage palm)	3%	Sod and tree harvesters
Hunting leases and nature tourism	3%	Sportsmen and tourists
Payments for water retention services	5%	FRESP pilot

Revenue calculations and all financial information provided by the landowner.



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