





Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Adam H. Putnam, Commissioner





Dear Friends,

It is my great pleasure to recognize the recipients of the 2015 Commissioner's Agricultural Environmental Leadership Award – Bull Hammock Ranch, Carlton and Carlton Ranch and Dasher Farm. These outstanding operations are pioneers in utilizing environmentally sustainable practices to reduce water use, protect Florida lands and maximize efficiency.

Since 1994, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has recognized agricultural enterprises that demonstrate leadership in developing and implementing innovative and progressive techniques to safeguard the environment and conserve natural resources. It is an honor to highlight the efforts and accomplishments of these environmental stewards who serve as outstanding examples of agricultural guardianship. With their help, we can preserve and maintain Florida's abundant natural resources.

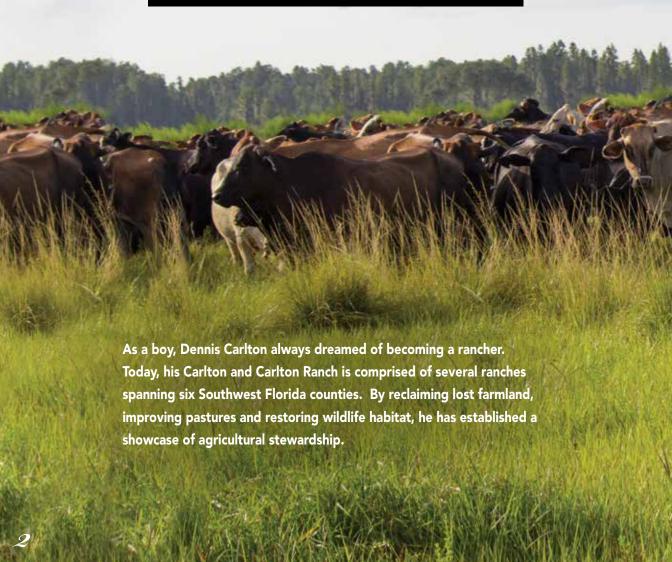
Sincerely,

Adam H. Putnam

Commissioner of Agriculture

Carlton and Carlton Ranch

Hillsborough County







Through Florida's
Non-mandatory Land
Reclamation Program, Dennis
successfully converted the
remnants of a depleted
phosphate mine into 1,200
acres of pine forests, wildlife
corridors and lush pastures ideal
for rotational grazing. Bountiful
lakes were created to capture
and filter storm water. Today,
Turkey Creek Ranch stands
as one of the largest wetland
restorations by private ownership
in the Tampa Bay area.







Audubon Ranch, leased from Hillsborough County, was once a mass of invasive plants and unsuitable for grazing cattle. With the help of his son-in-law Pat Thomas, Dennis was able to restore the property to a healthy and economically viable cow/calf and haylage operation.

Dennis Carlton's father and grandfather originally owned Limestone Ranch in Hardee County until they sold the property in the 1970s. When this same property came up for sale in 2000 Dennis didn't hesitate to buy it. Today son Dennis Jr. manages the Limestone Ranch, which is the largest of the Carlton family's cow/calf operations.

A man of strong faith, Dennis also opens his Limestone Ranch to a number of different groups, such as the Fellowship of Christian Athletes who spend a weekend of hunting and fellowship.









Following best management practices, Carlton and Carlton Ranch uses rotational grazing to improve its pastures and fences to keep cattle away from the young trees. Located on the Peace River corridor, Limestone Ranch enhanced the natural habitat for an abundant wildlife population.





Working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Dennis converted old citrus groves and pastureland near his home in Hillsborough County into more than 80 acres of strawberry fields. By installing a pump and well system on a 43-acre lake on his property, Dennis reduced the use of groundwater for irrigation and freeze protection of crops while maintaining the water quality and water levels of the lake.



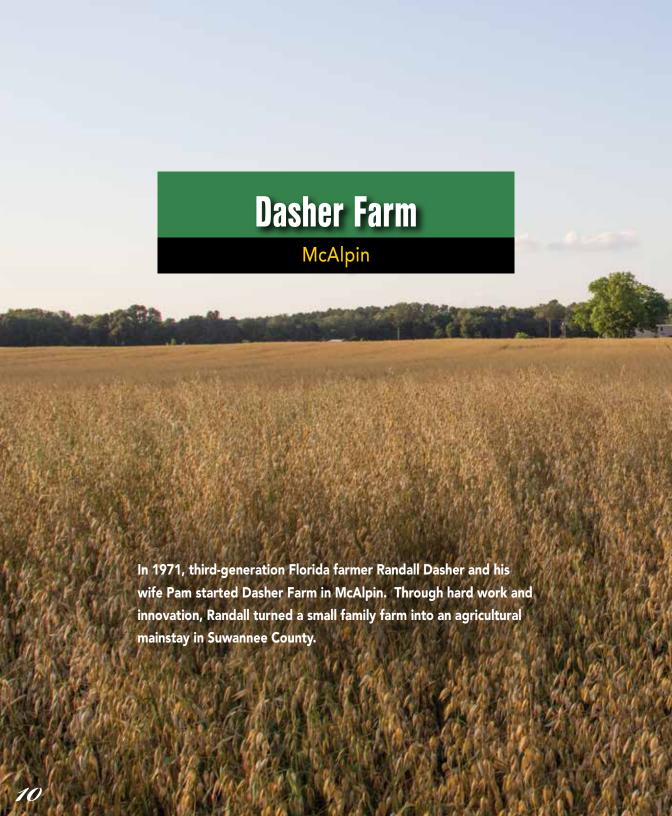








From left, back row:
Dennis Carlton Jr., Sara
Beth Carlton, Dennis
Carlton Sr., Alice Carlton,
Maci Parker, Melissa
Thomas, Patrick Thomas;
front row: Tripp Thomas,
Kassie Williams, Trent
Thomas, Tucker Thomas,
Jenna Parker.







By pairing a new method of drying seed with a more efficient cleaning process, Dasher Farm became one of the primary seed and grain processing and distribution businesses for Suwannee County and the surrounding areas.







Using the strip-till method, Randall plants the next crop, such as peanuts, tilling only the seed row and leaving the rest of the field undisturbed.

After the cover crops are harvested, the remaining straw is rolled down, creating a thick matte that will eventually break down and add organic matter to the soil. Below the surface, the crop's established root system prevents leaching or erosion.



Randall and his daughter Sarah have collaborated with Joel Love of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services in the use of non-traditional irrigation. After three years of using these methods, Dasher Farm has achieved the same yields using less fertilizer with no irrigation.

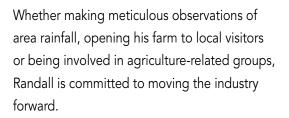
Dasher Farm is truly a family-run operation. Daughter Sarah has been working for Randall for more than 15 years. As a co-operator of Dasher Farm, Sarah oversees the seed processing plant, greenhouse and farm operations. Son Justin serves as the farm's field manager, handling the crops from planting to harvesting.

















To promote the growth of sesame in Suwannee County, Randall serves as a liaison between the local sesame growers, sesame developer Sesaco, and researchers including Elena Toro of UF-IFAS.



In 1986, Dasher Farm ventured into hydroponics, building several greenhouses to grow a variety of vegetables and herbs.

To lessen the farm's environmental impact, Randall worked with Bob Hochmuth of UF-IFAS to implement a series of best management practices in the enclosed hydroponic system.







To adapt to the changing needs of local and national markets the Dashers are constantly trying new crops. In addition to being enjoyed in local restaurants, their hydroponic lettuce can be found in area schools as part of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services "Farm to School" program.







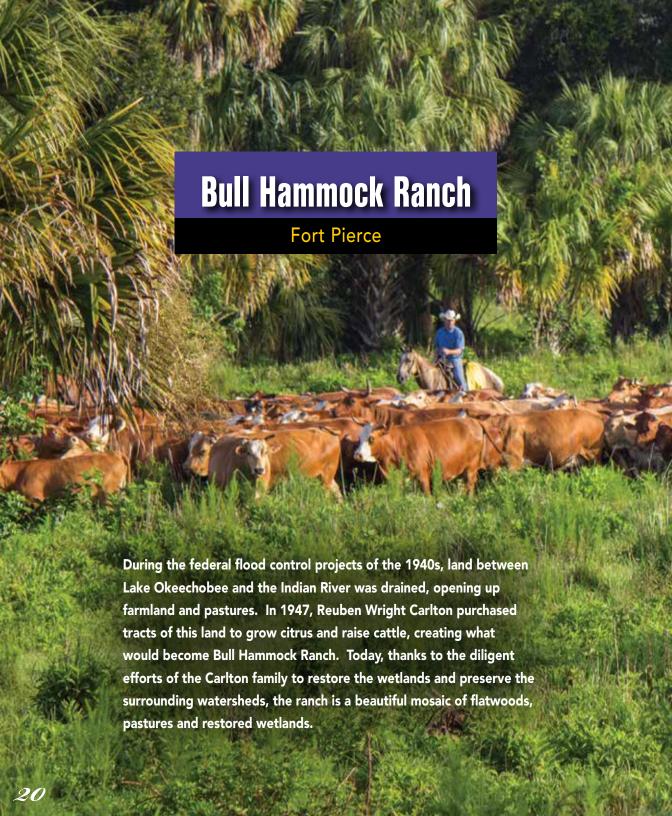
Randall hosts a peanut boil for family and friends each year in celebration of the fall harvest.







From left, back row: William Carte, Sarah Dasher Carte, Randall Dasher, Justin Dasher, Kylie Dasher; front row: Lindsleigh Carte, Maddie Carte, Pam Dasher.





The family constantly works to further improve the ranch. Wes Carlton worked with the South Florida Water Management District and the Florida Department of Agriculture and **Consumer Services** on a number of water retention projects to protect nearby watersheds. The restored wetlands have enhanced wildlife habitats, allowing migratory and endangered birds, deer and other animals to flourish.





Bull Hammock Ranch is a 7,500-acre cow/calf operation owned and operated by Reuben's grandson Wes Carlton and Wes's sister Mary Anne Carlton Cruse, both sixth-generation Florida cattle ranchers.

The Carltons are committed to keeping Bull Hammock Ranch a family-run operation. Wes's son Wyatt is very active on the ranch, learning the trade from his father; daughter Colby spends her summers helping out with the cattle drives and cattle shipping; Mary Anne runs the office and oversees the weighing of the cattle; and wife Tracy runs the office and cares for the animals.









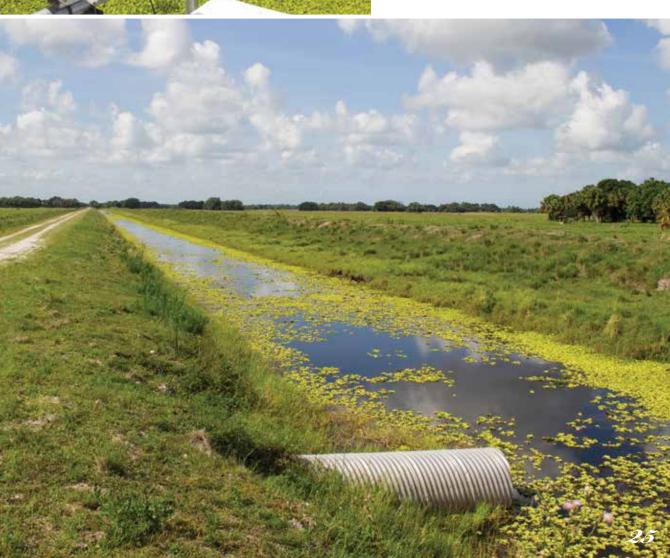


Working with engineer Loris Asmussen,
Bull Hammock Ranch implemented an
innovative water-farming pilot project that
utilizes abandoned citrus groves as reservoirs.
Through a system of culverts, the ranch can
divert excess water from the adjacent C-23
canal to the 1,622-acre reservoir where
nutrients are absorbed into the ground or
taken up by vegetation.





In 2011, Wes Carlton reached out to SFWMD and FDACS to develop a plan to restore wetlands to their native state. Using a series of water lines and troughs to capture and hold rainwater during the wet seasons, Wes was able to rehydrate a 2,000-acre wooded area while providing fresh drinking water to his cattle.





Bull Hammock Ranch's best management practices extend beyond water storage to include controlled burns, soil testing and analysis, and rotational grazing.









Wes Carlton's most effective management tool just might be his grandfather's 1956 Piper Super Cub, which he finds more efficient than a pickup truck. At least once a day he takes off to inspect waterways, water management controls, cattle and fences.







From left, the Cruse family: Griffin, Paige, Chuck, Mary Anne; the Carlton family: Wes, Tracy, Wyatt, Colby.



Previous Winners

2014

Agri-Starts, Inc. - Apopka Riverdale Potato Farm, Inc. - Elkton Milking R, Inc. - Okeechobee

2013

Kissimmee Park Properties, LLC - St. Cloud Ferris Farms - Floral City Farmton Tree Farm - Osteen

2012

Deroose Plants, Inc. - Apopka Southern Accent Farm - Okeechobee

2011

Straughn Farms, LLC - Waldo

2010

Saturiwa Conservation Area - Elkton 3 Boys Farm - Ruskin Arapaho Citrus Management - Fort Pierce

2009

Dairy Production Systems - High Springs Loop's Nursery - Jacksonville

2008

Carroll Brothers Nursery - Clearwater Brock Family Farm - Monticello

2007

Butler Oaks Farm - Lorida Gwinn Brothers Farm - McAlpin Buck Island Ranch - Lake Placid Fraleigh Nursery - Madison

2006

Tampa Wholesale Nursery - Dover Riverview Flower Farm - Riverview Lightsey Cattle Company - Lake Wales

2005

Kerry's Bromeliad Nursery - Homestead Larson Dairy - Okeechobee Richard N. Raid, Ph.D. - Royal Palm Beach

2004

Blue Heron Groves - Lakeland M&B Products - Tampa McArthur Farms - Port St. Lucie

2003

Williamson Cattle Company - Okeechobee Sun City Tree Farm - Ruskin Aquatica Tropicals - Plant City

2002

Holloway Irrigation Systems - Leesburg Daniel A. Botts - Orlando Sanwa Growers - Wimauma

2001

Carlton 2x4 Ranch - Arcadia Barthle Brothers Ranch - San Antonio

2000

Pacific Tomato Growers - Palmetto Evans Properties - Vero Beach

1999

Two Rivers Ranch - Thonotosassa Lykes Bros. - Okeechobee Suwannee Farms - O'Brien

1998

Longino Ranch - Arcadia V&W Farms - Avon Park

1997

Anclote River Ranch - Odessa

1996

Edward "Jack" Campbell - Homestead Citrus World - Lake Wales Ekkwill Waterlife Resources - Gibsonton

1995

Schroeder Manatee Ranch - Bradenton Burt McKee - Tampa Davie Dairy - Okeechobee O.F. Nelson and Sons Nursery - Apopka Bright Hour Ranch - Arcadia Deseret Ranches of Florida - St. Cloud Fulford Farms - Monticello

1994

Rafter T Cattle Company - Avon Park A. Duda and Sons - Oviedo Babcock Florida Company - Punta Gorda Gustafson's Dairy - Green Cove Springs Jon's Nursery - Eustis Adams Ranch - Fort Pierce

