

Babcock Ranch Preserve

“A Brief History”

Duane Weis, District Manager
Florida Forest Service



Babcock Ranch Preserve

“A Brief History”

Occupying land in both Charlotte and Lee Counties, the Babcock “Crescent B” Ranch spanned 91,361 acres prior to acquisition.

The ranch is named for Edward Vose Babcock, a timber baron and mayor of Pittsburgh, Pa (1918–1922), who established the Babcock Florida Company in 1914 with the purchase of 156,000 acres.



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Mr. Babcock sold the timber to the Rue Crate and Lumber Company, who then sent it to South Africa to be used in diamond mines as the excessive pitch provided protection from African termites.



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Fred C. Babcock, the son of Edward, started managing the ranch once the timber was harvested. Fred is credited with establishing the tradition of cattle ranching and stewardship that continues today.



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- Introduced cattle in 1930’s
- Donated 65,000 acres in 1940’s
- Started swamp buggy tours in 1993



Road to Acquisition

- Recognized as a Valuable Resource
 - Natural Communities
 - Water Resources
 - Agricultural Heritage
- Florida Forever Acquisition List



Road to Acquisition

St. Pete Times, November 27th, 2005:

“Last week Gov. Jeb Bush and the Cabinet landed a major prize for environmental preservation, voting to spend \$350-million for three-fourths of an old Florida ranch that's home to panthers and bears.

Bush called the acquisition of Babcock Ranch, which straddles Lee and Charlotte counties, "an historic purchase.”

As the largest conservation purchase in state history, other state officials hailed it as the crowning jewel of the state's Florida Forever land-buying program.”



Acquisition – July 31, 2006

- Through Kitson and Partners
- Retained Approximately 17,000 Acres
- Concurrently Sold 73,239.17 Acres
 - 67,618.81 to State of Florida
 - 5,620.36 to Lee County



Babcock Ranch Preserve Act

BRP was established to “protect and preserve the environmental, agricultural, scientific, scenic, geologic, watershed, fish, wildlife, historic, cultural, and recreational values of the Preserve, and to provide for the multiple use and sustained yield of the renewable surface resources within the Preserve”

FS 259.1053 (3)(b)



Transition

- Management Agreement with Kitson and Partners expires at midnight July 31, 2016
- Florida Forest Service assumes role of Lead Managing Agency
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission assumes role of Co-Lead Managing Agency



Transition

- Between Now and July 31, 2016
 - Develop Land Management Plan to be approved by the Board of Trustees, Acquisition and Restoration Council and Lee County
 - Establish Management Agreement with Lee County



Transition

- Between Now and July 31, 2016
 - Develop a plan for leasing agricultural and management activities
 - Develop a plan for transitioning from Kitson and Partners to the Florida Forest Service



Contact Information



Jim Karels, Director, Florida Forest Service
3125 Connor Boulevard, Tallahassee FL 32399
Jim.Karels@FreshFromFlorida.com 850.681.5822

Carl Conrath, Ranch Manager, Babcock Ranch Preserve
13103 Tamiami Trail, Punta Gorda FL 33955
Carl.Conrath@FreshFromFlorida.com 941.575.5860

Duane Weis, District Manager, Myakka River District
4723 53rd Avenue East, Bradenton FL 34203
Duane.Weis@FreshFromFlorida.com 941.727.2099

