



# COMMITTED TO STEWARDSHIP

## BABCOCK RANCH *Florida*



Babcock Ranch is not untouched land. It is the result of more than a hundred years of careful tending by the Babcock family. Ranch business operations funded generations of stewardship activities to maintain the excellent condition of the property and provide habitat for the ranch's abundant wildlife.

Creation of the new town of Babcock Ranch has helped assure that careful tending continues in perpetuity. As part of the Master Environmental Resources Permit (ERP) for Babcock Ranch, the new town has assumed responsibility for a variety of stewardship activities on neighboring preserve lands.

### **BABCOCK RANCH– THE RESULT OF MORE THAN A HUNDRED YEARS OF CAREFUL TENDING BY THE BABCOCK FAMILY**

Those responsibilities include both recurring activities for management of invasive species, and restoration and mitigation projects such as:

- | Restoration of historical flow ways/greenways
- | Maintenance of surface water quality
- | Ecological restoration of disturbed uplands
- | Functional habitat design for wildlife
- | Enhancement of wildlife corridors
- | Habitat for panther mitigation

Delay in construction of the new town did not stall progress on the environmental front. Key commitments already fulfilled include:

- | Completion of a regional wildlife connectivity study – identifying strategies to create permanent wildlife corridors connecting parks and natural lands throughout southwest Florida, with Babcock Ranch serving as a central nexus connecting several corridors
- | Planting for panther habit, converting 75 acres of farmland
- | Comprehensive plan for storm water management through build out
  - All elements of the storm water system design work together to achieve the ultimate effect of slowing the movement of water as it makes its way across the 18,000 acre development area
- | Design and construction of a weir system to restore historical hydraulics of the Curry Lake ecosystem



## Stewardship Case Study: Rehydration of Preserve Wetlands

**BABCOCK RANCH**  
*Florida*



Environmental investments at Babcock Ranch over the past decade are delivering impressive results. The benefits are most visibility evident in the area around Curry Lake, where natural surface water flows had been significantly altered over the years to accommodate farming and ranching activities.

Three weirs aimed at rehydrating about 70 acres to historic conditions were constructed in 2012. With the weirs now retaining water that was previously drained off in through the ranch's system of ditches, the wet season has been significantly extended – starting a month earlier, and ending a month later.

The rebound of the ecosystem has been remarkable.

Almost immediately, native vegetation began reclaiming the territory. Restoration of natural conditions restored their advantage over the invasive plants the benefited from drier soil. And that is only the beginning of the story. Look below the surface around the big dyke, and you will discover the crayfish that have returned – a prime attraction for a host of birds that are once again congregating along the banks.

**BY REHYDRATING THE AREA AROUND CURRY LAKE, THE WET SEASON HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY EXTENDED – STARTING A MONTH EARLIER, AND ENDING A MONTH LATER.**

Curry Lake provides a model for the surface water management strategies that will be incorporated throughout the new town of Babcock Ranch. Rather than create manmade solutions for storm water, we are working to restore the capacity of natural systems to slow and filter surface waters as it makes its way across the property.