

CARES Recipient Profile



THIS FARM
CARES

Farm: Southern Accent Farm

Location: Okeechobee, Okeechobee County

Date of Origination: 1996

Commodities: Cattle

Allen and Nicki Smith own and operate Southern Accent Farm, a purebred Brangus cattle ranch. Located in north Okeechobee County, the 800-plus-acre ranch is a mosaic of semi and improved pastures, forested wetlands and native hardwood hammocks.



Taylor Creek, which borders Southern Accent Farm, is a tributary of Lake Okeechobee. Because its waters flow south to the lake, and beyond to the Everglades, controlling the ranch's water, and any potential runoff, was a priority. With the help of the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), the Smiths replaced the old culverts and risers. During the dry season the new structures hold water to help in forage production. During the rainy season they keep sediment and nutrient runoff from going into Taylor Creek and the surrounding watershed.

Working in partnership with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), the Smiths have put valves on the free-flowing artesian wells. Once the wells were capped, a watering system was installed to fill concrete watering troughs in the pastures.

Looking at the long-range sustainability of Southern Accent Farm, the Smiths installed the largest commercial solar array in Florida's cattle belt. While the system currently produces half of the electricity used on the ranch, the barn roof has been reinforced to allow for additional panels.

Since moving to Okeechobee in 2002, the Smiths have become very involved in the community. Both are on the board of the Okeechobee Cattlemen's Association. Nicki's a past president of the Okeechobee Cattlewomen and serves on the boards of the Soil and Water Conservation District and the Okeechobee Area Ag Council. Allen is on the board of the Okeechobee County Cattlemen's Rodeo Committee, a member of the Southeastern Brangus Breeders Association and past board member of the Florida Brangus Breeders Association.

Source: FreshFromFlorida.com – 2012