

CARES Recipient Profile



THIS FARM
CARES

Farm: Lightsey Cattle Company

Location: Polk, Highlands & Osceola County

Date of Origination: 1850

Commodities: Cattle

Lightsey Cattle Company is owned and operated by brothers Cary and Layne Lightsey. Based in Lake Wales, it consists of four separate ranches -- Tiger Lake Ranch, West Lake Wales Ranch, XL Ranch and Brahma Island.



The Lightsey family is committed to preserving and protecting their land. As leaders in the agricultural community, they are dedicated to continuing the ranching culture, always looking for innovative ways to ensure the ranches remain economically strong and environmentally rich.

Part of that commitment is diversifying their farming operations. By opening up Brahma Island for guided commercial hunting they were able to control wildlife populations and pay down the ranch's taxes. This model helped develop the criteria for guided hunting that is the standard for Florida hunting preserves. On Tiger Lake Ranch, they planted citrus groves and turned to truck farming, timber harvesting, and sod and seed production. They began giving ecological tours of the property, offering the public a chance to see an untouched piece of Florida history.

They restored XL Ranch by partnering with the Nature Conservancy on a pilot program that restored the natural water flow on the property and welcomed back wildlife and thriving vegetation. Due to the Lightseys' stewardship ethic, they were chosen by an independent non-profit organization specializing in ecological research and conservation to help restore a 3,500-acre reserve adjacent to the XL Ranch.

Other conservation practices the family implements include rotational grazing and controlled pasture burning. Tiger Lake Ranch uses low-volume microjets for irrigation. The grasses use nutrients from the water as fertilizer and water quality leaving the ranch is excellent, proven by over 30 years of testing. Nearly 70% of all the Lightseys' property is in seven different types of conservations easements -- preserving the land, wildlife and Florida's history.

When asked why he is a farmer who CARES, Lightsey said, "we're really just landlords of this land if you think about it. I feel like that we have the opportunity to protect this land and leave it as God intended it. It's our job to protect it for the people of Florida."

Source: FreshFromFlorida.com – 2007