# UFWI 2024 Session 34

# Development and Assessment of Payment for Water Services Programs on Ranchlands in the Northern Everglades – **Program Development**

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# Challenge: Very Effective Drainage and Landscape Alterations

**Water defines and drives the environment of Florida**

- Human Environment
- Agricultural Environment
- Natural Environment

# The Need for Dispersed Water Management…

- Era of drainage
- Implications
  - Quality
  - Quantity
  - Timing
  - Distribution
- Increasing freshwater needs
  - Regional
  - Private

**Shallow water re-distributed across parcel landscapes using the natural features and relatively simple structures**

# Program Evolution: Watershed Collaborative Approaches with Landowners

- **2000** **LO Protection Act**: P Source Control Grants, Isolated Wetland Restoration
  Dairy Best Available Technologies
- **2002** LO Regional Public/Private
- **2005** **Lake Okeechobee & Estuary Recovery**
  Alternative Water Storage & Disposal on public and private lands
  FL Ranchlands Environmental Services Pilots
- **2007** **Northern Everglades & Estuaries Protection Program** Dispersed Water Management
  - 2011/12 NE-Payment for Environmental Services
  - 2013 Water Farming
  - 2016 Basin Management Action Plan PPP projects; SJRWMD Pilot
  - 2022 NE Watershed Water Services Projects (6 NE-PES renewals)

# Florida Ranchlands Environmental Services Pilot Project (FRESP) Partners

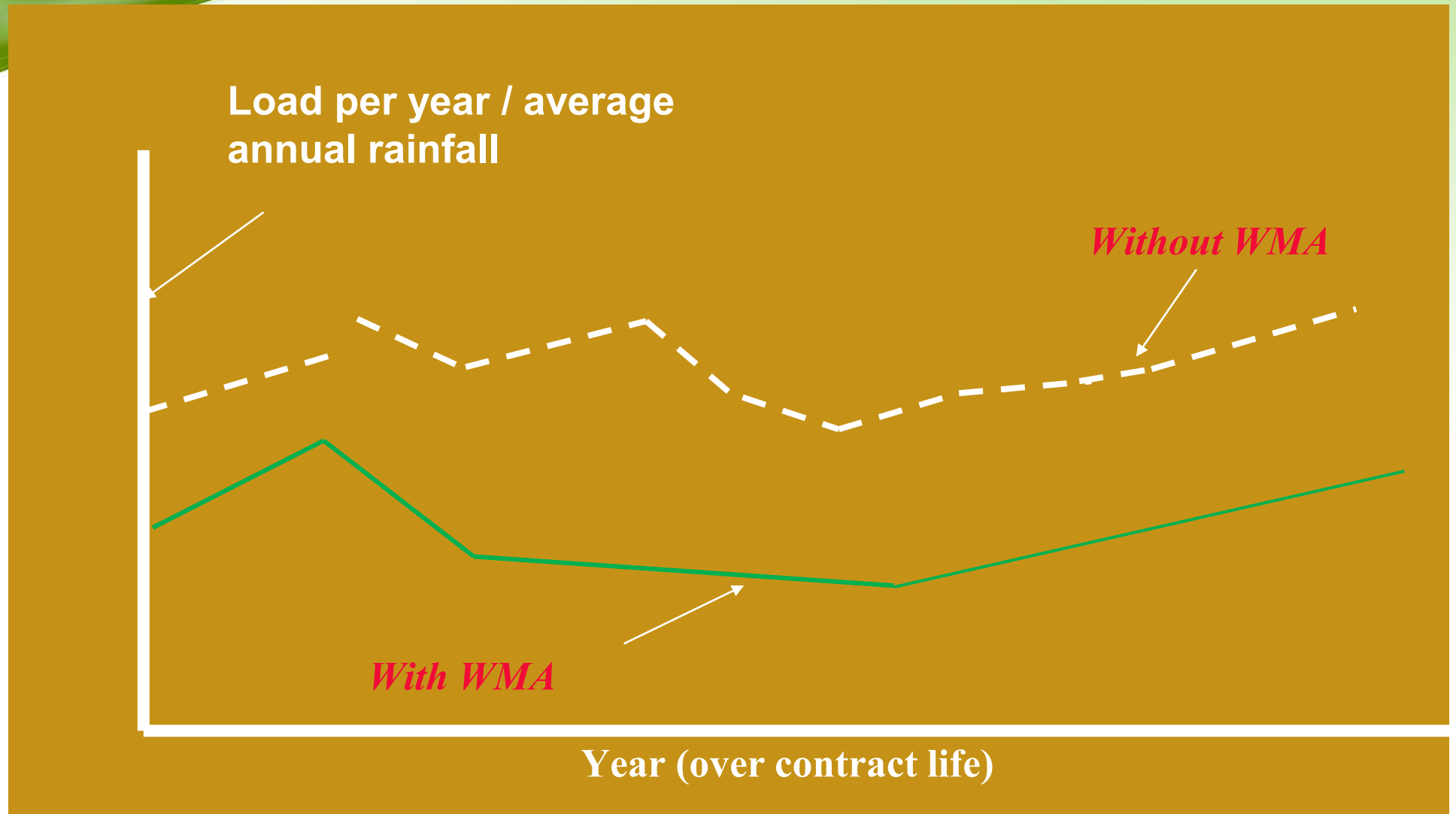
Participating FL Ranchers

# Florida Ranchlands Environmental Services Pilot Project (FRESP) Partners

- Design Program for Payment for the Environmental Services of:
  - Water retention
    - Seepage and base flow
    - Surface water peaks reduced
    - In high water conditions more will go to ET
  - Retention of Nutrients
    - Tributary water quality
    - Loads to Rivers

- Payment is：
  - Services above regulatory expectations
  - Profitable to landowners, and feasible to administer
  - Payments require documenting services
  - Makes sense for the restoration program
    - Immediacy
    - Flexibility
    - Cost savings

# Reduce nutrient load coming from Water Management Area (WMA) project sites



# Principles Guiding Water Services Design

## Contracts not easements

- Fixed length option contracts between agencies of state and ranchers
- Simplify sign up and service estimation
- Streamline approval process

## Market-based principles

- Buyers choose which landowners to contract with based on assessment of service potential
- Buyers can be private or public sector

# *The Water Services Vision – To leverage and enhance traditional programs*

## Payment for Water Services

- **Payments for producing water services in a manner that benefits other environmental services**
  - **Landowners choose how to produce, what and how much**
- **Diversification/profit center**
- **Payment depends on *documented* performance**
- **Contracts awarded to most cost-effective projects**

# Water Services Partnership Benefits

- Innovative approaches
- Utilize landscape and landowner's expertise
- More natural projects
- Multiple resource benefits
- Longevity post-contract from proof of concept
- Most cost-effective not size dependent
- Cost-savings potential over typical public approach
- Schedule benefits
- Local and regional economic enhancements
- Maintain private lands on tax role
- Jobs

# Lessons Learned

- ***Baseline*** *(above existing pre-project) water management required*
- **Monitoring** to ensure performance
- Streamlined permitting assurances
- Targeting project location
  *Location affects cost-effectiveness;* ***Benefit multiple impaired water bodies; Corridor***
- **Dedicated funding**
- **Partnerships** and collaborations

# Future Projects

- Water Management District Basin/watershed problems
- FL Wildlife Corridor water services
- Maintaining green space
- Landowners identify water opportunities
- Most simple cost effective project
- Holistic view
- Create interest
- Alternative funding sources
- Collaboration between partners – MOUs
- Maintain trust