

# **Crossroads Environmental Consultants gets contract to monitor conservation and environmental restoration projects**

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• By Jan Lindsey  
• Posted October 7, 2009 at 1 a.m. , updated October 7, 2009 at 6:18 p.m.  
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MARTIN COUNTY — Crossroads Environmental Consultants has landed a five-year deal with the federal Natural Resources Conservation Services to monitor conservation and environmental restoration projects under way on 71,000 acres in 14 Florida counties.

Two large parcels — one 5,000 acres and the other 6,000 — lie in western Martin County, north and south of Martin Grade, said Toby Overdorf, president of the Palm City firm. Cattle pasture, pine forest and wetlands comprise the tracts, he said.

The contract also covers large properties in Okeechobee, Brevard and Highland counties, and many smaller properties, some of which are in Martin, St. Lucie and Indian River counties, he said. Some of the land is privately owned and some is government property.

Crossroads' role is to monitor the efforts in place and report back to the Natural Resources Conservation Services, a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Overdorf said staff scientists will visit the individual parcels as needed. That could mean visits once every three months or once a year, depending on the project.

"Our role is to make sure whatever is being done on that property is having success," he said.

Crossroads' scientists gather data on the animals and exotic and nuisance plants on the tracts to determine what is going on with the land. They make recommendations to the division, he said, as well as reporting progress.

The firm won the contract with a base bid of 47 cents an acre, or about \$40,000 a year, renewable for five years. Overdorf said the specifics of the contract are still being negotiated and the price could climb to as much as \$500,000 over the five years.

"It will vary on the amount of acreage we end up monitoring, the amount of travel, and if there is additional reporting, secondary monitoring and that sort of event," he said.

"We look to potentially be adding two positions over the course of the contract, with one of them coming in the early part of next year."

Overdorf said the contract is a coup for the 8-year-old firm and he hopes it will lead to growth for the company.