NEW EXPERIENCE IN SOIL SURVEY

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Before the surveyors lay more than 300 square miles--200,000 acres--of trackless and treacherous Everglades. Aerial photographs showed the only distinctive landmarks to be widely scattered hardwood hammocks or willow thickets. The remainder of the primeval wilderness appeared to be flat, unvarying broad marshes of sawgrass.

Despite such bleak prospects, the surveyors had to cross and recross this forbidding area until they had mapped every soil type and outlined its boundaries on aerial photographs. The surveyors were soil scientists with the USDA Soil Conservation Service.

With the accomplishment of this unenviable task, the soil mapping of Palm Beach County would be nearing completion and would soon be in line for publication. Then a detailed inventory of the county's greatest asset, its soil, would be available to all interested in this valuable and varied resource.

But how? The vehicles they had for regular field work could not be used on the soft organic soils of the "glades". To go on foot would be suicide.

A swamp buggy, or halftrack, was the only answer, and the only way to get it was through the generosity of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. The vehicle was made available in the spring of 1971--a period of drought most favorable for the soil survey.

From the rear deck, which was 5 feet above the ground, or from the upper deck, 2 or 3 feet higher,