

News



Fall – 2005



Gulf growers assess Wilma's damage to buildings, fruit and trees! Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles H. Bronson tours growing region for "first hand" look at the hurricane's destruction.

Wilma "Whips" Gulf Groves as Season Begins

Hurricane Wilma, with her 100 plus mile per hour winds was the last thing that "Gulf" Growers needed to kick-off the 2005-06 season! This "fast and furious" hurricane, the season's 21st named storm, hit Florida's "Gulf" citrus region with its best shot! Collier and Hendry, two of Florida's top five citrus growing counties with 130,000 acres, were pummeled hardest by the storm's winds and rain, leaving a big part of the new season's crop on the ground! Charlotte, Glades and Lee counties were also impacted by Wilma.

On a tour, hosted by John Alexander of Alico, Inc., Florida Ag Commissioner Charlie Bronson witnessed first hand the fury of Wilma. In a follow-up letter to Governor Jeb Bush, Bronson wrote, "As a 5th generation Floridian who's been involved in agriculture all my life, I can say without hesitation that I have never witnessed such extensive devastation to our state's agriculture sectors as caused by Wilma." Florida Rep. Denise Grimsley, Hendry County Commissioner Darrell Harris, Congressman Foley's aide Dick Keen and several media reporters also toured the property.

Preliminary reports by "Gulf" growers, as well as by Mongi Zekri, the UF/IFAS multi-county citrus agent, indicate major impacts. Initial estimates range from 60-85% of the grapefruit crop was lost. 40-60% of the early-mid season oranges were lost. And, 20-25% of the Valencia crop was lost. All report that these are

initial estimates and that many factors will also impact these numbers.

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association is working with all Florida citrus organizations to coordinate the industry's response for grower assistance for impacted growers. Growers can immediately help themselves by contacting local Farm Service Agency offices in the region. The number for the Collier/Glades/Hendry office is (863) 983-7250. The Charlotte/Lee office is (239) 997-7331. Remember to keep records, receipts, etc. Take photos, videos, etc. to document losses. Precedent for grower assistance was set by last year's hurricanes, and will serve as a guide for "Wilma" relief efforts.

Besides the initial losses of damaged trees and fruit, another big unknown is the storm's impacts on the spread of citrus canker. Commissioner Bronson told the media that it will be between six weeks to six months before the FDACS and USDA will know. He noted that survey crews will be out looking as soon as possible.

While Hurricane Wilma and citrus canker continues to challenge growers here and statewide, there are many "good" things happening in the "Gulf" region to help sustain the citrus growing industry.

The 14th annual Citrus Expo continues to be one of the best attended and supported educational and social networking events in the industry (see story page four).

continued on next page

Gulf Citrus Growers Association Elects 2005-06 Officers

At its 19th annual meeting on June 1, 2005 at the LaBelle Civic Center, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association elected its officers to serve the organization for the 2005-2006 season. The association elected the following: **President**, David Wheeler of Wheeler Farms, Inc.; **Vice President**, Mark Colbert of A. Duda & Sons, Inc.; **Secretary**, Wade Timpner of Jackson Citrus, Inc. and **Treasurer**, Miller Couse of Gram & Couse Farms.

Wheeler is a 1986 graduate of the University of Florida's College of Agriculture with a degree in Food and Resource Economics. He began his citrus

business career as an owner/operator of a gift fruit stand/packinghouse in Lake Placid. He joined the family's citrus operation in 1990 as a grove manager for Wheeler Farms, Inc. The company owns groves in Southwest Florida, the "Ridge" of Highlands and Polk Counties and on the east coast of the state. Wheeler is now president of Wheeler Farms, Inc.

He is past president of the Florida Citrus Production Manager's Association and a director of the Dundee Citrus Growers Association in Central Florida. Wheeler is also a graduate of the Wedgeworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture

and Natural Resources administered through the University of Florida's Institute For Agricultural Sciences. Prior to his election as GCGA president, he served as treasurer of the association.

Wheeler spent his formative years in Winter Haven and graduated from Winter Haven High School and Polk County Community College. He is married (wife Anne Marie) and has three children (David, Jr., Laura and Anna Grace). He is a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Lake Placid.



GCGA 2005-2006 Officers



(Seated left to right) Vice President, Mark Colbert, A. Duda & Sons; President, David Wheeler, Wheeler Farms, Inc.; (Standing left to right) Treasurer, Miller Couse, Gram & Couse Farms and Secretary, Wade Timpner, Jackson Citrus, Inc.

Gulf Citrus Growers Association 2005-2006

Board of Directors

David Wheeler, President
Mark Colbert, Vice President
Wade Timpner, Secretary
Miller Couse, Treasurer
Elvie Engle
Emmett Evans, III
Stephan Gardinier
Billy Heller
John Hoffman
Mike Murphy
Steve Smith
Dallas Townsend
Callie Walker
Ron Hamel
 Exec VP/General Manager

Publisher's Statement

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Wilma "Whips" Gulf Groves as Season Begins continued from front page

Growers and allied trade representatives participate in the Expo, co-sponsored by Gulf Citrus Growers, *Citrus Industry Magazine* and UF/IFAS' Southwest Florida Research and Education Center.

Final edits are being made on the Best Management Practices (BMPs) manual for citrus in the Caloosahatchee River Basins. Final rule adoption and implementation of the actual BMPs will follow shortly, along with the formal ceremony to "roll out" the plans. For details, please read the story on page five! After over two years of meetings and workshops

coordinated through GCGA, the Florida Department of Agriculture's Office of Water Policy and UF/IFAS, developing the best management practices, this is certainly "good news" for the growers and the environment!

Another real key to the future of the industry is the use of mechanical technology to harvest the orange crop. The "good news" here is that recently, the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences has made a major commitment to intensify its role in citrus mechanical harvesting technology/

abscission right here in Southwest Florida. Gulf Citrus Growers Association would like to thank Florida Senator J.D. Alexander for his leadership in this endeavor. By working in "Gulf" groves where the majority of mechanical harvesting is taking place, UF/IFAS can better "partner" with industry to expedite the adoption of the technology. Please read story on page seven for the latest information. The association was actively engaged in supporting this imitative and will remain actively involved in the efforts.

GCGA Begins New Season with New Board Leadership



2005-2006 Gulf Citrus Growers Association Board of Directors

(L to R) Billy Heller, Stephan Gardinier, Emmett Evans, III, Steve Smith, Elvie Engle, Wade Timpner, Callie Walker, Mark Colbert, Miller Couse, Dallas Townsend, John Hoffman, David Wheeler and Ron Hamel. Absent from photo Mike Murphy.

At its 19th annual meeting on June 1, 2005 in LaBelle, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association elected its board of directors for the 2005-2006 season, following annual election meetings held in each of

the organization's five counties. The newly elected leadership will direct the association as it works to represent the citrus growing industry in Southwest Florida's "Gulf" production region which

includes Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee counties. Please refer to the information below for the GCGA directors and the counties they represent.

GCGA 2005-2006 Board of Directors

Charlotte County

Emmett Evans III
Evans Properties

Collier County

John Hoffman
Barron Collier Partnership

Mike Murphy
Cooperative Producers, Inc.

Glades County

Miller Couse
Gram & Couse Farms

Hendry County

Mark Colbert
A. Duda & Sons, Inc.

Stephan Gardinier
Gardinier Florida Citrus

Steve Smith
Alico, Inc.

Wade Timpner
Jackson Citrus, Inc.

Dallas Townsend
Dorlas Ranch

David Wheeler
Wheeler Farms, Inc.

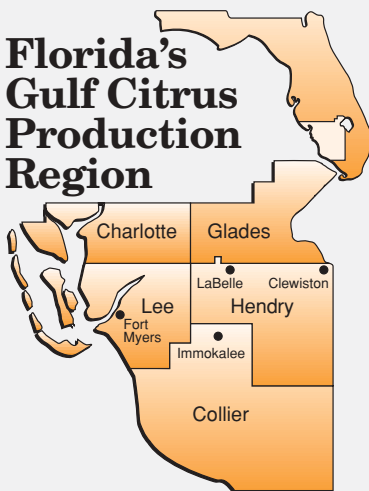
Lee County

Elvie Engle
Farm Op., Inc.

At-Large Seats
Billy Heller
Pacific Tomato Growers

Callie Walker
HUPA, Inc.

Florida's Gulf Citrus Production Region



Committee Chairmen Appointed to Serve for 2005-2006 Season

GCGA President David Wheeler recently appointed the following individuals to chair the association's operating committees for the 2005-2006 season. Please contact these leaders for updates and information related to their respective committees.

Community Relations

John Hoffman

Governmental Affairs

George Austin

Labor Relations

David Lopez

Membership

Billy Heller

Production & Research

Mark Colbert

Tax Sub-Committee

Craig Simmons

Associate Member

Jeff Campbell

14th Citrus Expo Continues as Industry's Top Event

Citrus growers and industry leaders from throughout the "Sunshine State" attended the "Citrus Expo" at the Lee County Civic Center and Harborside Event Center in Ft. Myers on August 24th and 25th. Over 1000 growers, allied trade representatives, industry leaders and guests participated in the two-day event which included a trade show, seminar program and Citrus Expo Banquet. The event is co-sponsored and organized by *Citrus Industry Magazine*, Gulf Citrus Growers Association and the University of Florida/IFAS Southwest Florida Research and Education Center.

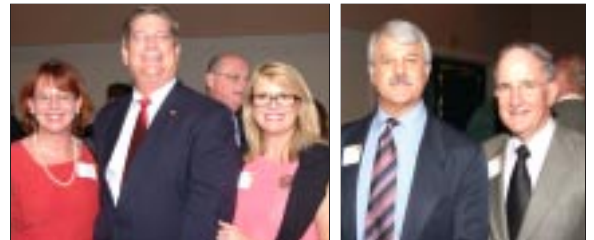
Under the theme, "Building Value for Citrus Beyond the 'Commodity'", the seminar program featured leading experts who are finding ways to attract "green payments" which can keep growers, farmers and ranchers on their land. "We have to work with the environmental community...and we have to work with the governmental community to work to sustain agriculture in a rapidly urbanizing state," said Norm Todd, chair of the Citrus Expo Seminar Committee.

State Senator Rod Smith, chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee told attendees that he intends to pursue the formation of a statewide agriculture task force of "top thinkers" to get into the issues in detail... regarding the pressures of a rapidly urbanizing state.

Rounding out the seminar program were presentations on marketing of Florida citrus from the Florida Department of Citrus and Rick Pensa, president of Insight, Information and Consulting Services. Pensa noted that consumers are now searching for food that provides "health on the go", and suggesting that Florida orange juice and citrus provide those product attributes. The FDOC's Leigh Killeen shared the highlights of the Department of Citrus' new marketing programs for the 2005-2006 season. The thrust will be on continuing to re-position orange juice as "healthy, pure and simple"!

The banquet was very well attended and featured Florida Congressman Connie Mack, whose district includes a large portion of Southwest Florida. The Congressman expressed his long and strong support for Florida's citrus industry and agricultural commodities. Congressman Mack promised his support in the fight to eradicate citrus canker and to protect the industry from unfair trade.

In addition to Congressman Mack, the banquet featured updates from Florida Ag Commissioner Charlie Bronson who showed pictures which documented the reasons that Florida citrus growers cannot live with canker. Bronson made compelling remarks regarding the state's and nation's commitments to eradicate the disease and work together with growers to win the battle. Dr. Dan Gunter, FDOC's executive director, highlighted the department's efforts to "grow the market" for Florida citrus. And, Roy Padrick, managing editor of *Florida Grower Magazine*, presented the Citrus Achievement Award to Quentin Roe.



Citrus Expo 2005: Trade Show, Seminars & Banquet!

Top Left: GCGA's Ron Hamel thanks Mariann Holland of *Citrus Industry Magazine* for her years of dedication to the Citrus Expo. She was presented with a painting featuring Florida oranges and *Citrus Industry Magazine* as created by artist Bill North.

Top Right: Congressman Connie Mark delivered the keynote address at the GCGA Citrus Expo Banquet. He noted the importance of the citrus industry to the state's economy, and pledged his support.

Top Center: The seminar program focused on ways to keep growers and farmers on their land with "crops" such as "greenspace" and "water storage", which are growing in demand as Florida continues to urbanize!

Center Left: AG Commissioner Charlie Bronson welcomes Carol Wehle, executive director of the South Florida Water Management District (left) and Alice Carlson, SFWMD governing board member (right) to the Expo.

Center Right: State Senator Burt Saunders (left) and Dr. Bernie Lester discuss issues related to citrus.

Bottom: The Citrus Expo "Trade Show" continues to be the industry's best!

Thank You 2005 Banquet Sponsors!

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Lykes Bros. Inc. / New Harvest Inc. • Oakley Groves, Inc.
Pacific Tomato Growers, Ltd. • Plant Food Systems, Inc. • ProSource One

BMPs for “Gulf Citrus” Region Near Adoption

Following over two years of strategic “working” and “planning” sessions lead by the Florida Department of Agriculture’s Office of Water Policy and the University of Florida’s Institute For Agricultural Sciences’ BMP “team”, the Best Management Practices (BMP) manual for the “Gulf Citrus” production region is in its final stages of completion. Citrus grower leaders, coordinated through the Gulf Citrus Growers Association and with the support of Florida Citrus Mutual, spent hundreds of hours putting together a comprehensive list of conservation practices that will enable the region’s growers to remain pro-active in addressing water quality issues in the Caloosahatchee River Basins and throughout Southwest Florida. The process also included a number of workshops with representatives of the South Florida Water Management District, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the USDA’s Natural Resource and Conservation Service, the Charlotte Harbour National Estuary Program and other regulatory agencies.

The “Gulf Citrus” BMP manual is being adopted by rule as outlined under the Florida Watershed Restoration Act. Once adopted, citrus growers in the region can “voluntarily” sign a “Notice of Intent” with FDACS to participate in the program. Growers will have the option of selecting from a “menu” of BMPs, as outlined in the manual, depending on their grove operations. Following their selection of the practices, and the actual implementation of them, growers will operate under a “Presumption of Compliance” with water quality standards, explained Ken Kuhl of the FDACS Office of Water Policy, who represented the department throughout the “citrus BMP” process. “The implementation of the BMPs contained in the manual positions growers more favorably relative to existing and emerging (e.g. TMDLs) state water quality standards,” Kuhl added.

Providing excellent “citrus grower” leadership for the four sub-committees that comprise the key elements of the BMP manual were: Mark Colbert, Water Resource Management; Dick Crockett, Erosion and Sediment Control; Steve Smith, Pest Management and Jim Snively, Nutrient Management. A number of sessions within each important area



USDA’s NRCS Personnel Promote BMPs!

Through the Mobile Irrigation Labs and other programs, USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service personnel assist “Gulf” citrus growers in the implementation of the best management practices for citrus.

were held with area growers, the public and members of the regulatory community to address the issues and discuss the recommended practices to enhance natural resource conservation.

Providing hours of professional water management guidance from UF/IFAS were Brian Boman, Ph.D., Sanjay Shukla, Ph.D., Bob Rouse, Ph.D., Mongi Zekri,



“High Tech” in “Gulf” Groves!

Citrus growers in Southwest Florida are adding the latest technology such as Agrilink Florida’s Weather Station to their groves as they incorporate the recently developed BMPs to their operations.

Ph.D. and Ed Hanlon, Ph.D. These key individuals worked with the sub-committees throughout the process, as well as assisted in the editing process. They worked intensely with the growers to identify, evaluate and develop the citrus BMPs based on the best information and scientific basis available to sustain citrus production in the region while protecting the natural resources of Southwest Florida. “We have reached the first milestone in the BMP development and implementation process...the completion of the manual. Now begins the most important part ...the implementation phase,” said Dr. Boman. “This will require long term commitments from growers to take the steps necessary to ensure a healthy environment for future generations. Continuing education is essential for the successful implementation of the BMPs. UF/IFAS will continue to assist growers in this next phase,” Boman added.

“This effort, to create and adopt by rule the citrus BMP manual for the ‘Gulf Citrus’ region, could not have come at a more critical time,” says Ron Hamel, executive vice president of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association. “The SFWMD, the FDEP, local county governments and the environmental community of our region are all focused on the issues impacting water quality in the Caloosahatchee River Basin and the downstream estuaries. Implementation of these BMPs, which are recognized by the regulators, will prove to be the best strategy for our citrus growers to embrace. We at GCGA will continue to promote and support this initiative in the months and years ahead. And, on behalf of the association, I would like to thank all the individuals, agencies and members of the public who assisted in the development of our ‘Gulf Citrus’ BMP manual.”

Representatives of FDACS, SFWMD, USDA/NRCS, GCGA and the Southwest Florida Resource Conservation & Development Council are now in the process of putting together a “cost/share” program to assist the region’s citrus growers as they continue to implement the best management practices. Growers are urged to monitor this process and apply for “cost/share” funding for the priority practices as selected in accordance with the Gulf Citrus BMP Implementation Committee.

9th Annual “Gulf” Classic Supports “PR” Effort

The 9th Annual “Gulf” Classic Golf Tournament held May 13th at Bonita Bay Group’s Shadow Wood Country Club continued its long and successful “track record” of raising funds to support many of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association’s community relations and outreach programs in Southwest Florida. Twenty-eight teams and over one-hundred golfers competed in this year’s event. The “Gulf” Classic was played under perfect conditions and Shadow Wood’s director of golf, Bill Harley and his staff once again did an outstanding job of coordinating the tournament.

The top winning team at this year’s event was sponsored by Industrial Communications and included Mike Halloran, Tom Haarsgaard, Eddie Rodriguez and Brad Fenton. Coming in second was the First Bank of Clewiston team represented by Carey Soud, Chris Soud, Mike Pressley and Andy Higginbotham. Placing third was the Duda Fresh Citrus team of Tommy Duda, Matt Erpenbeck, Berry Burkett and Neal Livingston.

The 2005 “Gulf” Classic Tournament Committee included Chair Rachel Walters, Bayer CropScience; David Bridges, Farm Credit of Southwest Florida; Jeff Campbell, Oswald, Trippe & Company, Inc.; Sarah Hatton, Valent USA; Andy Hill, Ben Hill Griffin Fertilizer; Robert Murray, Florida Favorite Fertilizer; Sonya Tuten, Ag-Tronix, Inc.; Richard Woodruff, WilsonMiller and Steve Smith, Alico, Inc. These “volunteers” worked many hours to assure that the GCGA event continued to be “first class” and well attended.

“The “Gulf” Classic continues to be one of the association’s key events and activities that contribute to the GCGA’s mission of ‘telling the citrus story’ to the folks in the urban centers of Southwest Florida,” said Ron Hamel, executive vice president. “Without successful and well-supported events and activities our message would not be delivered nearly as strongly as necessary in these most critical times for agriculture. We thank all our sponsors, supporters and participants who made this event so successful.”



Industrial Communications Team Places 1st!
It is all “smiles” for 1st! (L to R) Brad Fenton, Mike Halloran, Eddie Rodriguez and Tom Haarsgaard. Congratulations from GCGA!



2nd Place Went to First Bank of Clewiston!
The “First Bank” team included (L to R) Chris Soud, Andy Higginbotham, Carey Soud and Mike Pressley. Congratulations from GCGA!

2005 Gulf Classic Sponsors

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association would like to say “thank you” to the following Gulf Classic sponsors:

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Chemical Co.
Culligan Water

Diamond R Fertilizer
Duda
Eden BioScience
Everglades Farm Equipment Co.
First Bank of Clewiston
Gator Ag Group, Inc.
Gulf Citrus Management
Heidt & Associates
J&H Grove Holdings LC
Oswald, Trippe and Co., Inc.
Pavese Law Firm
Peace River Citrus Products
RHT Engineering, Inc.
Southern Gardens Citrus
Stallings Crop Insurance, Corp.
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Wheeler Brothers, Inc.
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Mechanical Harvesting Advances in “Gulf” Region

As the 2005-06 citrus season begins, recent meetings at the state and regional levels have brought renewed interest and focus to mechanical harvesting technology for citrus here in Southwest Florida. As the leading region in the pioneering and use of the new technology...growers, harvesters and researchers recently gathered in Immokalee and Lakeland to review the industry’s progress, and to prioritize plans for the future.

For the past several years, the Florida Department of Citrus (FDOC), through its Citrus Harvesting Research Advisory Council and with the support of the University of Florida’s Institute For Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), has invested wisely and aggressively in advancing the technology and promoting its adoption. The FDOC’s and UF/IFAS’ efforts have lead to three main types of machines/systems. The three are being utilized in area groves and researchers are studying and documenting their progress.

Today, about 25,000 acres are being harvested mechanically statewide with the vast majority in the “Gulf” region. However, all “players” involved agree... that the use of an abscission agent, along with these systems would greatly increase the number of acres that are harvested mechanically. With the FDOC re-focused on “growing the market” for Florida citrus...the department has changed its “investment” strategy for mechanical harvesting. It is focusing its efforts and funding initiatives, including attracting federal funds, primarily on the “registration process” for an abscission agent. The FDOC is moving aggressively in this direction, but the anticipated registration date for such a compound remains five to seven years away.

As the FDOC works on abscission registration, University of Florida/IFAS research and extension administrators, along with industry leaders are getting more actively engaged in advancing citrus mechanical harvesting technology efforts. Thanks to key Florida legislators, lead by Senator J.D. Alexander, a “Gulf” citrus grower himself, \$1.2 million in state funds have been added to this year’s UF/IFAS budget for citrus mechanical harvesting projects. And, these funds are designated to be “re-occurring” in future UF/IFAS budgets. The Gulf Citrus Growers Association recently commended Senator Alexander and also pledged to help advance the technology.



Trunk Shake and Catch System in “Gulf” Groves!

Coe-Collier Citrus Harvesting, LLP’s mechanical harvesting equipment continues to harvest increasing acres of fruit in Florida’s “Gulf” region. Will Elliott represents the company on FDOC’s Citrus Harvesting Research Advisory. Photo courtesy of UF/IFAS.

In efforts to invest these newly appropriated dollars in accordance with the immediate needs of the industry, Dr. Harold Browning, director of the Citrus Research and Education Center at Lake Alfred, backed by Dr. Jimmy Cheek, UF senior vice president, convened strategic meetings with Southwest Florida citrus growers to discuss the priorities for the UF/IFAS’ harvesting research and education efforts. The meetings were held at the Southwest Florida Research and Education Center in Immokalee on September 2nd and October 12th, and were well-attended by the major investors in citrus mechanical harvesting systems, and growers who are currently using the new technology. Other UF/IFAS personnel, including Dr. Chris Waddill, Dr. John Dunckelman, Dr. Fritz Roka and Dr. Jackie Burns also attended.

During the sessions, growers and harvesters discussed their concerns and noted their priorities for moving the technology forward. Paul Meador of Everglades Harvesting & Hauling, Inc. and Chairman of the FDOC Citrus Harvesting Research Advisory Council noted the importance of the abscission registration process, but stressed the other research needs related to a compound’s use in the grove. Bobby Newsome of Barron Collier Company stressed the needs to use the technology later in the season, and promoted the research needed to determine that. Collectively, the growers indicated that they needed the research and education necessary to help move more aggressively. The top three “high” priorities cited by the group were: 1) abscission manage-

ment, 2) machine enhancements and improvements and 3) grower education.

Dr. John Dunckelman, associate center director of the Southwest Florida Research and Education Center in Immokalee recently commented on the increased funding in the UF/IFAS budget earmarked for mechanical harvesting. “This funding provides a wonderful opportunity for IFAS and the SWFREC to continue our work on mechanical harvesting and abscission in Florida citrus. The work will be focused more heavily in the Southwest Florida region than in previous years. As part of the IFAS team, we at the SWFREC look forward excitedly to working with Gulf Citrus and its growers in making well-adapted mechanical harvesting a reality for the industry.”

According to Dr. Browning, a multi-year plan to enhance the ability of the SWFREC in Immokalee to meet both short and long-term Southwest Florida citrus’ program needs is being developed. Meetings with the recently formed “advisory group” from the region will help us determine the best options and programs for the IFAS Mechanical Harvesting/Abscission Team to implement. In addition, he reported that IFAS will add a new faculty position to be placed at Immokalee to work in the initial area of citrus mechanical harvesting/abscission. Drs. Browning and Waddill also reported that UF/IFAS’ plans include improving and expanding the SWFREC’s facilities to support the increasing focus on “citrus” growers’ needs, including mechanical harvesting, in the “Gulf” region.



GCGA Recognitions, Scholarships & Communications



Associate Members Honored for 10-Years!

Annually, GCGA recognizes those Associate Members who have been supporting the association for 10 years. At the GCGA's 19th annual meeting two Associate Members were honored with commemorative plaques. (L to R) Ernie Neff, representing Southeast Agnet Radio; GCGA immediate past-president Billy Heller; Rusty Whitley and Joe English of Wiltshire, Whitley, Richardson & English, P.A.

Scholarship Foundation Recognizes 5 Students

During the past few months, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association Scholarship Foundation awarded scholarships totaling \$4,500 to students from Southwest Florida or who are pursuing college degrees related to citrus/agriculture.

In late Spring and in conjunction with the Southwest Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, \$1000 scholarships were presented to Kathleen Denisse Equite and Delia Bustamante. Equite is attending Florida Gulf Coast University. And, Bustamante has selected Tallahassee Community College. Ron Hamel, GCGA executive vice president, made the scholarship presentations at the Hispanic Chamber's Annual Scholarship Award Ceremony in Ft. Myers.

This Fall, the foundation awarded the additional three scholarships to Matthew Baker of LaBelle, Dhoha Zekri of Alva and Ellie McKenzie of Gainesville. Baker is attending the University of Florida. Zekri has selected Edison College. And, McKenzie is studying Agribusiness Management at the University of Florida. The students were recognized at the 2005 Citrus Expo Banquet.

GCGA annually awards scholarships in the Spring and Fall through the foundation. Applications can be obtained through the association office.

GCGA Tells "Canker Story," Seeks \$\$\$

As part of its communications efforts, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association continues to discuss the impacts of citrus canker on the region's growers to a growing audience... from members of the mass media to local, state and federal officials. Recently GCGA representatives traveled to Washington, DC, along with members of a "citrus delegation" coordinated through Florida Citrus Mutual to work to secure adequate funding to eradicate the disease and compensate commercial growers for sacrificing their trees for the public good. Attending the two-day "lobbying" trip and having citrus in the "Gulf" region were Mark Wheeler, Emmett Evans, Ron Edwards, Jim Snively and Robert Underbrink. Ron Hamel also attended representing the association. While in Washington, the group was pleased to receive the news by Ag Secretary Mike Johanns that USDA was committing an additional \$200-million to compensate growers for their destroyed trees. The group was also extremely pleased with the positive reception their message for adequate funding for the canker battle, including funds to compensate growers, was received.

New Website Address: www.gulfcitrus.org!

The GCGA Community Relations Committee recently established a new website address for the association. Please note the new address www.gulfcitrus.org. The website is currently being redesigned and will be updated on a regular basis. GCGA thanks Chet Townsend for his "technical support" for the site. The committee, chaired by John Hoffman has selected making the "website" more "user friendly" as its top priority for the coming season, and will be contacting members for input.