

# News



Spring – 2006

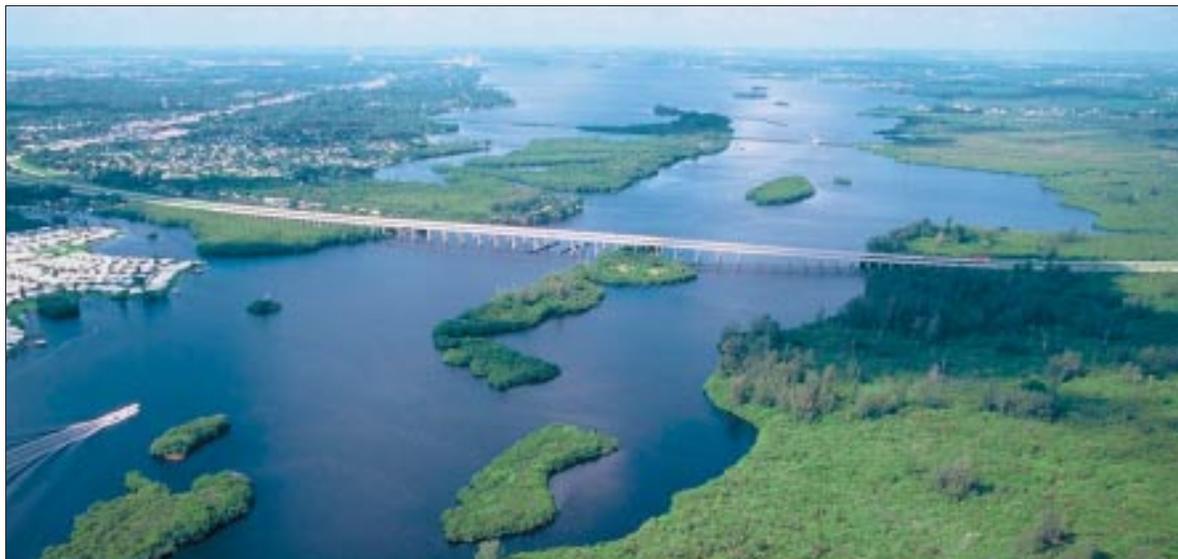


Photo courtesy of South Florida Water Management District

## Gulf Citrus BMPs “Officially” Released

Florida Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Charles H. Bronson recently participated in the “official” unveiling of the new Gulf Citrus Best Management Practice (BMP) manual in LaBelle. The Citrus BMPs “kickoff” and ceremonial event was hosted by Duda Farm Fresh Foods and attracted over 150 growers, allied trades reps, government agency leaders, county and state elected officials, educators and environmentalists. The “manual” covers the geographical five-county region including Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee.

The release of the Gulf Citrus BMP manual follows nearly two years of work coordinated through the Gulf Citrus Growers Association, the Florida Department of Agriculture’s Office of Water Policy, the South Florida Water Management District and the University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. Citrus growers, environmental groups, and officials from the state and federal agencies cooperatively worked to put together the document. The four-chapter manual calls for a series of environmentally-friendly agricultural practices designed to improve water quality in the region including the Caloosahatchee Basins. It is being adopted by rule in the Florida Administrative Code.

Commissioner Bronson thanked the citrus growers and leaders involved in putting the BMP manual together. He noted its timeliness relating to the major problems in the region including Lake Okeechobee releases and impacts to the Caloosahatchee River and the coastal

estuaries. “We all have to do our share and we all have to take responsibility,” Bronson told attendees. “By developing and implementing these citrus BMPs, we are showing that we are doing our part,” he added. “It is unfair to blame agriculture for all the water pollution in the state...or even most of it. People, in general are the polluters, but agriculturalists must step up and be part of the solution,” Bronson said.

Providing citrus grower leadership for each of the BMP manual’s four chapters and sub-committees were: Mark Colbert, Water Resource Management; Dick Crockett, Erosion Control and Sediment Management; Steve Smith, Pest Management and Jim Snively, Nutrient Management. These leaders chaired several meetings of their respective groups to build consensus on what “practices” should be included in the manual.

Brian Boman, Ph.D., UF/IFAS’ best management practices coordinator, hailed the manual creation and distribution as the first milestone in the process. “Now we are underway with the most important phase...the implementation of the recommended practices,” Boman said. “This will require long term commitments from growers to take the steps necessary to put these practices to work and ensure a healthy environment for future generations,” he noted.

Dr. Boman will lead an agricultural BMP “team” to assist growers in completing the official “Notice of  
continued on page eight

# President's Message

By David Wheeler

Without doubt...our citrus growing industry is facing unprecedented challenges! From the battles with citrus canker and greening...to the struggles in protecting our irrigation water supply and land use options...as I see it, our strength lies in our unified efforts and in our grower organizations!

From my perspective, there seems to be a misconception, held by some in our industry, that there is a wide duplication of roles between our statewide organizations and our local/ regional associations. In reviewing the efforts of these groups, I see quite a different picture! At the international, federal and state level, I feel that Florida Citrus Mutual does an excellent job of leading and representing Florida's citrus growers. Recent examples of this include the unified effort to protect the tariff; the "lobbying" initiative to fund the canker battle including compensation to growers and the effective action to garner hurricane relief funds for tree, crop and property losses. I commend FCM for its leadership on these "high profile" and other key issues facing us growers!

However, as big and complex as these issues are...they are only a part of the bigger picture! We, as growers, cannot afford to overlook the "grassroots" issues at the regional and local levels that impact our land use, water supply, infrastructure, property taxes, etc., etc. And, that is where our local organizations, such as the Gulf Citrus Growers Association, "weigh-in" on our behalf! One clear example of our "local effectiveness" comes to mind from my recent attendance at the "Issues '06 Regional Conference" held at Florida Gulf Coast University. It attracted over 400 of the region's top leaders. This day-long session was organized by State Rep. Mike Davis of Collier County, but included the full Southwest Florida legislative delegation, county elected and administrative officials from all five "Gulf" counties and most of the region's key business and civic leaders.



I was both proud and impressed as GCGA president...that "Gulf Citrus" was a sponsor and participant at this conference, geared to planning for the region's needs! We were "players" at the table! And, we were able to communicate the needs of "citrus" and "agriculture" to the leadership of our region. The fact that we were "there" did not just happen overnight! The reason that we were invited, involved and engaged is because we, "Gulf Citrus Growers," have "invested" years of effort, building working relationships with our community's key leaders and organizations. And we were "recognized" as being an important economic sector in the region!

The "founders" of our local organizations should be commended for their foresight in recognizing the need for leadership, representation and "a voice" at the local community level. These associations, through their locally-elected boards, provide the "grass-roots" grower leadership necessary to address these "unique" local issues, as well as provide a forum for consensus building on the broader issues affecting our industry. And they do this "cost-effectively" on behalf of ALL citrus growers in their regions and counties. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all "Gulf Citrus" supporters...our grower and associate members, as well as our sponsors who have stood with us over the years. This support enables GCGA to do a "first class" job of representing "Gulf" growers.

As we attempt to "reorganize" our industry at this most critical time in its history, I agree with those who advocate that citrus growers evaluate their operations and their membership "investments" in organizations. But this "grower" feels that our best option, as we move forward...is to work to make all our organizations, more effective and efficient to meet the challenges ahead! We, at "Gulf Citrus" will continue to be "team players" and do our part to maximize our members' "investments"!

## Governor Jeb Bush Appoints Wheeler to Citrus Commission

Governor Jeb Bush recently appointed David P. Wheeler of Wheeler Farms, Inc. and president of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association to serve a three-year term on the Florida Citrus Commission. Wheeler will represent "newly-created" district four, which includes Glades, Hendry, Highlands and Okeechobee Counties, as a grower member. The membership composition of the Florida Citrus Commission was reapportioned during the 2005 Florida legislative session to better reflect the changing citrus production trends in the state. This process led to the creation of four districts with three commissioners each, as opposed to three districts with four each, as well as a realignment of the counties comprising each district.

Wheeler will join Steven M. Smith of Alico, Inc. and Virginia S. Pena of Southern Gardens Citrus as Commissioners representing district four. Stephen W. Ryan of

Collier Investments, Ltd. represents newly-realigned district two which includes Collier County, one of the five counties represented by GCGA.

"We are extremely pleased that Governor Bush has appointed David Wheeler to serve on the Citrus Commission at this most critical and challenging time in the industry's history," said Ron Hamel, executive vice president of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association. "The GCGA now has three association members as "grower" members of the Florida Citrus Commission providing leadership for our industry and focused on the key marketing and research initiatives of the Florida Department of Citrus. This is a sincere tribute to the involvement and leadership of the citrus growers in the 'Gulf' region. On behalf of the association, we congratulate Mr. Wheeler for his recent appointment, and thank all those leaders who serve on the Florida Citrus Commission."

### Gulf Citrus Growers Association 2005-2006 Board of Directors

**David Wheeler**, President  
**Mark Colbert**, Vice President  
**Wade Timpner**, Secretary  
**Miller Couse**, Treasurer  
**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

**Gulf Citrus Growers' News** is published biannually by the Gulf Citrus Growers Association, Post Office Box 1319, LaBelle, Florida 33975, (863) 675-2180. Postmaster, please send address change to the address above. **Editor: Ron Hamel**

# Elections for “Gulf Citrus” Directors Scheduled



## 2005-2006 Gulf Citrus Growers Association Board of Directors

(L to R) Billy Heller, Stephan Gardinier, Emmett Evans, III, Steve Smith, Elvie Engle (resigned), Wade Timpner, Callie Walker, Mark Colbert, Miller Couse, Dallas Townsend, John Hoffman, David Wheeler and Ron Hamel. Absent Mike Murphy. Please “thank” these growers for volunteering to provide leadership to the growers of the “Gulf” region!

Elections for county citrus grower representatives to serve on the 2006-2007 Gulf Citrus Growers Association Board of Directors have been scheduled for May 18th and 19th. Wade Timpner, chair of the GCGA nominating committee, reminds voting members that according to the association’s by-laws, the board recently reapportioned the number of directors based on membership acreage enrolled. This formal process resulted in Collier County gaining one director and Hendry County losing one as noted below.

County directors will be elected at the May meetings according to the schedule below. The two at-large directors will be formally elected and the full 13-member, new board seated at the association’s 20th annual meeting on Tuesday, June 6th.

### Directors’ Elections

#### Thursday, May 18

**Charlotte County** (One director)  
9:00 a.m. Charlotte County Extension  
Port Charlotte

**Hendry County** (Five directors)  
2:00 p.m. Gulf Citrus Offices; LaBelle

#### Friday, May 19

**Glades County** (One director)  
9:00 a.m. Gulf Citrus Offices; LaBelle

**Lee County** (One director)  
9:15 a.m. Gulf Citrus Offices; LaBelle

**Collier County** (Three directors)  
11:30 a.m. Barron Collier Office; Immokalee

#### Tuesday, June 6

**Annual Meeting** (Two at-large)  
11:45 a.m. Townsend Ag Center; LaBelle

## GCGA 2005-2006 Board Members and Respective Counties of Representation

### 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  
Duda Farm Fresh Foods.

Stephan Gardinier  
Gardinier Florida Citrus

Steve Smith  
Alico, Inc.

Wade Timpner  
Jackson Citrus, Inc.

Dallas Townsend  
Dorlas Ranch

David Wheeler  
Wheeler Farms, Inc.

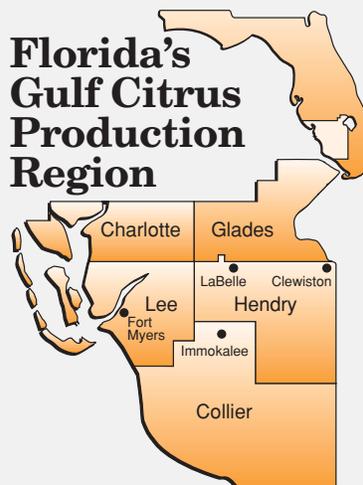
### Lee County

Vacant

### At-Large Seats

Billy Heller  
Pacific Tomato Growers

Callie Walker  
HUPA, Inc.



Instructions on the elections will be sent to each registered voting member with ample time to complete the voter registration documents and participate. Please contact Ron Hamel, GCGA executive vice president if you have any questions regarding the process to elect county and “At-Large” directors to the association’s board.

# GCGA's 6th "Country Gala" Supports "Gulf" Programs

Over 300 folks from throughout the "Gulf's" counties and the "Sunshine State" came to LaBelle Saturday evening, March 18th to help make the 2006 GCGA "Country Gala" one of the region's best attended social events of the year. Their personal generosity, as well as that of their companies, provided the financial support necessary to keep the association's programs on behalf of "Gulf" Citrus growers going strong in the months ahead!

"It was truly gratifying and exciting to spend a fun-packed evening with such a great group of people who come out to support our industry and our association," said David Wheeler, president of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association. "Our 'Gala' continues to grow in reputation as a great way to spend a Saturday

night...complete with great steaks, unique raffle and auction prizes and country entertainment," he added.

A record, 60 sponsors supported the 2006 "Country Gala" as platinum, gold and silver sponsors. And, an additional 45 individuals and businesses also contributed to the event through raffle and auction items, as well as by providing various goods and services.

"Gulf Citrus Growers is extremely fortunate to continue to 'partner' with the best steak cookin' group anywhere... the Hendry County Cattlemen's Association," said Ron Hamel, GCGA executive vice president. "And we are also grateful that Jack Burges of First Capital Realty, Inc. provides his leadership and auctioneering talents to this event. This special combination, along

with all the 'trimmings' and volunteers is what makes the Gala so successful," he added.

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association sends a special "thank you" to the 2006 Gala committee members including: **George Austin, Jack Burges, David Bridges, Jeff Campbell, John Catrett, Stefanie Cutshall, Mark Colbert, Hugh English, Sarah Hatton, Andy Hill, Callie Walker, David Wheeler and Richard Woodruff.**

The funds raised by the "Country Gala" are invested in the association's governmental and community relations programs aimed at enhancing the image of the citrus growers and industry in the "Gulf" region. A list of these efforts is available on request through the GCGA offices in LaBelle.



## 2006 "Country Gala" Highlights

**Top Left:** The GCGA "welcome" banner along with the colorful and festive décor, centered around a "Gulf" citrus theme, warmly greeted 2006 attendees!

**Top Right:** Jack Burges continues to bring "color", humor, excitement and friendly competition to the Gala... as Auctioneer!

**Second Row:** A great turn-out of over 300 folks from throughout the region... and the state set the mood for a fantastic evening of fun and fellowship.

**Third Left:** There was something fun for the "young" and "not-so-young" at the event! Fynn Taylor "tests" his new John Deere Tractor under the supervision of his parents Greg and Barbie. His grandpa is Mike Taylor of Collier Enterprises.

**Third Right:** Senator Burt Saunders and his wife Dr. Lillian Love (center) enjoyed the festivities at the Country Gala. Saunders, who is campaigning for Florida Attorney General, was welcomed by Rachel Walters of Bayer CropScience (left) and her husband Fred of Gulf Citrus Management.

**Bottom Left:** Dan Pool of Custom Citrus Care, Inc., second from right, was the \$1000 grand prize winner in the attendance ticket drawing. Sarah Hatton of Valent, USA (left) and Elaine Pool, Dan's wife, along with GCGA's Ron Hamel join in the celebration.

**Bottom Right:** Lisa Priddy and dad, Jack Price, who was recently recognized for his dedicated leadership by Florida's County Extension Agents, were among the Collier County folks at the Gala! GCGA salutes Jack for his years of service to agriculture!

# Thanks

to our  
Country Gala  
Sponsors!



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Hilliard Brothers of Florida, Ltd. ♦ Jack M. Berry, Inc. ♦ LCEC  
Murphy's Landing by The Bonita Bay Group ♦ Pacific Tomato Growers ♦ Pavese Law Firm  
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Southern Gardens Citrus Limited Partnership ♦ Triangle Chemical Company ♦ WilsonMiller

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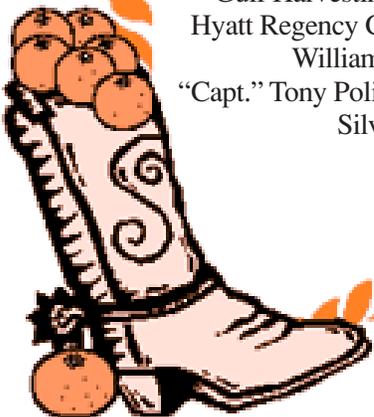
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Home and Ranch Real Estate Company ♦ Johnson-Prewitt & Associates, Inc.  
LaBelle Auto & Truck Supply / Napa ♦ MANA ♦ Olde Cypress Community Bank  
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CHICO'S ♦ The Cigar Bar, Richard Castiano ♦ The City of LaBelle ♦ CPI, Mike Murphy  
Stefanie Cutshall ♦ Don's Steakhouse ♦ Everglades Farm Equipment Company  
Farm Credit of Southwest Florida ♦ Flora and Ella's Restaurant ♦ Florida Department Of Citrus  
Florida's Natural Growers ♦ Gardinier Family Vineyards ♦ Gator Hammock  
Gulf Harvesting ♦ Gulfcoast Companies ♦ "Capt." Ron Hamel ♦ The Hayloft, Kelly Palmer  
Hyatt Regency Coconut Pointe Resort and Spa ♦ LaBelle Ranch Supply ♦ Lee Timber Company  
William North ♦ Oakley Groves, John Catrett ♦ PrawnBroker ♦ Press Printing  
"Capt." Tony Polizos ♦ Robert Richardson ♦ Saks Fifth Avenue ♦ Sanibel Harbour Resort and Spa  
Silver Pines Preserve, Robert Scarborough ♦ T&M Portable Restrooms  
The Veranda ♦ WilsonMiller



# 20th Gulf Citrus Growers Annual Meeting Set

The annual meeting of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association has been scheduled for Tuesday, June 6, 2006 at the Dallas Townsend Agricultural Center in LaBelle. The annual meeting and luncheon will mark 20 years of the association's service and leadership to the citrus growers of Southwest Florida's "Gulf" region. Please put this date on your calendar and plan to attend. The meeting will begin promptly at 11:45 a.m. and is being co-sponsored by Syngenta Crop Protection, Inc. and Southeast AgNet/*Citrus Industry Magazine*. The date of the annual meeting was moved to June 6th to accommodate the Florida Citrus Industry's Annual Conference being coordinated by Florida Citrus Mutual and set for June 7th-10th at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort in Bonita Springs.

"Our 20th annual meeting will certainly be a time to reflect on the many positive accomplishments that 'Gulf Citrus' has had since its formation by the local citrus growers in our five county region, and a time to recognize our leaders for their service to the growers of Southwest Florida," said Ron Hamel, GCGA's executive vice president.

"In spite of the many challenges facing the region's citrus growers, the GCGA leadership is committed to keeping the association as an effective voice for the growers in this part of the state," added David Wheeler, GCGA president. "I urge all grower and associate members to plan to attend and participate in the meeting."

The meeting will be a "members only" session and will feature updates from the

leadership. GCGA's two "At-Large" directors will be elected and the 2006-2007 board of directors will be "officially" seated. The officers for the coming year will also be announced and seated at the meeting.

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association Scholarship Foundation will also conduct its annual meeting in conjunction with this session.

Members will be receiving a letter of invitation to the 20th annual meeting along with the RSVP card. Although there is no charge for the meeting, members are requested to send in their registration cards or call the office so that staff can arrange for the luncheon. Please contact the GCGA offices for any other information (863) 675-2180.

## 2006 Citrus Expo Planning Underway

The annual Citrus Expo, Florida's largest "citrus only" event, has been scheduled for August 23rd and 24th at the Lee Civic Center in North Ft. Myers. This year's activities will reflect a broader organizational base to involve more growers and vendors.

In addition to the initial and longtime leadership of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association and the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, Southwest Florida Research and Education Center faculty, the Citrus Expo steering committee has been expanded to include representatives of the Peace River Valley and Highlands County Citrus Growers Associations.

"This new, broad-based partnership with the Peace River and Highlands County growers will bring new ideas and new excitement to the Expo planning stages, which we hope will lead to even greater attendance at the seminars and trade show throughout the 2006 event," said Ron Hamel, executive vice president of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association.

"We're very pleased that the Peace River and Highlands County growers' associations are now at the table to help us 'grow' this great event beyond our past successes. We are confident that the addition of these groups will provide valuable in-put and promotional support for the Expo," said Gary Cooper, president of Southeast AgNet, which now owns *Citrus Industry Magazine* and Citrus Expo. "We are also quite pleased that



The 2006 Citrus Expo trade show promises to be "first class."

these new stakeholders will share in the Expo's proceeds, making it even more advantageous for these growers and their associations," Cooper added.

Serving of the 2006 Citrus Expo steering committee are:

- Norm Todd and Ron Hamel of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association
- Brian Burns and Barbara Carlton of the Peace River Valley Citrus Growers Association
- John Gose and Ray Royce of the Highlands County Citrus Growers Association
- Bob Rouse and Harold Browning of the University of Florida/IFAS
- Ed Lounds of Brandt Consolidated, Inc. and David Owens of Bayer CropScience

Representing exhibitors:

- Gary Cooper and Robin Loftin of Southeast AgNet

- Carole McKenzie, publications manager of *Citrus Industry Magazine*

One of the main responsibilities of the regional citrus association representatives on the Expo steering committee is to develop a strategically strong seminar program for the widest base of citrus growers possible. "With the many new challenges facing Florida's multi-billion dollar industry Norm Todd and the program committee will have plenty of subject matter from which to craft this year's seminar program," said Hamel.

"Thanks to the work of Norm Todd, and all the other leaders from GCGA, and the faculty at the SWFREC in Immokalee, the Citrus Expo has prospered as the largest citrus-only event in our state," Cooper said. "With the dramatic changes in the industry, we want to broaden our base to involve a wider segment of Florida's citrus industry and revitalize this great event," he added.

# GCGA Urges Growers to Prepare for Hurricane Funds

Through the efforts of many agricultural groups, including the Gulf Citrus Growers Association, the Florida Congressional Delegation and the Florida and U.S. Departments of Agriculture...hurricane disaster relief funds are expected to be released beginning in early summer. At publication deadline, regulations regarding the maximum "caps" and other final details are in negotiation in order to create a more effective program. The USDA announced that hurricane aid totaling \$2.8 billion will be provided through Section 32 and through the Department of Defense, Emergency Supplemental Appropriations to Address Hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico, and Pandemic Act, 2006. \$1.2 billion has been earmarked for producers in Florida and other gulf coast states.

"We at "Gulf Citrus" would like to thank U.S. Senators Mel Martinez and Bill Nelson, as well as Congressmen Mario Diaz-Balart, Mark Foley, Connie Mack and Adam Putnam for their support in assisting our growers in this time of need. We sincerely appreciate their leadership and that of their colleagues in the process," said Ron Hamel. "Citrus growers also need to thank

the Bush Administration including U.S. Secretary Mike Johanns for the support of our industry."

In discussions with Joy Llossas, county executive director of the USDA Hendry/Collier/Glades County Farm Service Agency (FSA) Office in Clewiston, citrus growers suffering losses due to the 2005 hurricanes are encouraged to contact her office immediately in preparation of expected disaster program funds. She notes that her FSA office has created "informal loss notification sheets" to assist growers **prior to the actual disaster sign-up**. Llossas suggested that completing and submitting these forms will simplify the application process. "It will enable the county office staff to create, verify or update a producer's farm records," she said. **Please contact the Hendry/Collier/Glades FSA Office at (863) 983-7250.**

The local office also notes that the two key disaster programs expected to address losses for citrus growers are the Hurricane Indemnity Program (HIP) and the Tree Indemnity Program (TIP). The **HIP** will provide payments to farmers who received crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster

Assistance Program (NAP) payments as a result of the hurricanes. The payment will be 30% of the crop insurance indemnity or NAP payment and will be capped at 95% of the expected crop returns. The **TIP** will provide flat payments per acre for the replanting and rehabilitation (such as pruning or staking) of perennial orchards, that produce an annual crop, damaged as a result of the hurricanes. Loss levels will be based on tiers of damage (similar to the program put together for the hurricanes of 2004, however tier levels payments will be based on wind speed and fruit loss will not be a factor in the tier zones or the payment structure.

Mike Carlton of Florida Citrus Mutual reported that USDA is also making funds available through what it calls the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) to assist growers in recapturing cleanup costs associated with hurricane damage. He estimates the cost share of this program to be increased from 75% to 90%.

Ron Hamel, GCGA executive vice president reported that Joy Llossas has been recently selected a one of the five Florida FSA employees to attend national training for these hurricane disaster programs.

## SWFREC Hosts Mechanical Harvesting Workshop in Immokalee

In its continuing effort to educate the Florida citrus industry about the progress being made in mechanical harvesting within the "Gulf" region, the UF/IFAS' Southwest Florida Research and Education Center recently hosted a day-long workshop focused on the advance of this latest technology.

Over sixty growers, managers and industry leaders attended the session on April 6th which featured updates on UF/IFAS research along with citrus grove demonstrations of the two top mechanical harvesting machines being utilized in area groves. The continuous canopy shake and catch system, owned by T&S Harvesting, was highlighted in CPI's Ranch One Grove. And, the trunk shake and catch system owned by Coe-Collier Citrus Harvesting, LLP was demonstrated, along with the abscission agent CMNP at Barron Collier's Silver Strand Three Grove.

With the industry now harvesting about 25,000 acres mechanically, and the growing financial pressures for citrus growers to become more competitive to survive, the UF/IFAS' SWFREC is taking a more aggressive and leading role in the introduction and refinement of the technology.

Fritz Roka, Ph.D., an agricultural

economist at the SWFREC and one of organizers of the session, stressed that with the uncertainty of the harvesting labor situation work needs to be done quickly to perfect the new technology. In his presentation, Roka noted five impediments to mechanical harvesting's adoption. They include 1) concerns for tree health and production, 2) cost of grove preparation, 3) need for equipment options, 4) load allocations and 5) problems surrounding the late season harvesting of Valencia oranges due to the trees holding two seasons' fruit.

Dr. Jim Syvertsen, of UF/IFAS' Citrus Research and Education Center at Lake Alfred presented initial research indicating that field testing done so far has failed to show notable tree and/or root damage. He also noted that research has not shown any significant reductions in fruit production to date.

Dr. Jackie Burns, UF/IFAS' leading researcher for an "abscission agent," reviewed the status of her efforts with the experimental material, CMNP, which the industry is aggressively moving through the registration process at EPA. Burns explained that field tests with CMNP have been positive in reducing both the

force and time of the shake needed to remove citrus fruit from trees, including the late season Valencia's. The field demo's allowed growers to "sample test" the ability of the CMNP material sprayed on citrus and to witness its effectiveness in loosening the fruit.

Dr. Roka is still bullish on citrus mechanical harvesting and the UF/IFAS and the industry is very supportive of keeping the technology on a fast track! Roka points out that hand harvesting costs are from \$1.50 to \$1.70 per box here as compared to about 50 cents in Brazil. His and UF/IFAS' goal is to get costs in Florida down to 75 cents, to help keep the state competitive.

Currently, SWFREC is recruiting for a citrus horticulturist/physiologist to work with the "mechanical harvesting" team at the center. The position will initially be focused on citrus mechanical harvesting. The Gulf Citrus Growers Associations' leadership is promoting the advance of the new technology as a high-priority for the region's growers. State Senator J.D. Alexander has also been very supportive of this effort including the allocation of the necessary funding.



## Gulf Citrus BMPs Released at “Kickoff” Event



### Community Leaders “Team-up” For BMPs!

GCGA extends a sincere “thank you” to those organizations who supported this educational effort: **Environmental Consulting & Technology (ECT), Pavese Law Firm, The Scotts Company, South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and WilsonMiller.**

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Intent to Implement” form which is included in the manual. The team will meet with growers, on an individual basis to review their operations and complete questionnaires based on the suggested practices as part of the enrollment process. Once this is complete, and with the proper record keeping and documentation, growers will operate under a “Presumption of Compliance” with state water quality standards. **To enroll and participate in the voluntary Gulf Citrus BMP program please contact Ward Gunter (772) 468-3922, ext. 172. E-mail: [degunter@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:degunter@ifas.ufl.edu)**

Additional support to assist growers in the BMP process includes a “cost/share” program established through the collective efforts of GCGA, FDACS, SFWMD, USDA/NRCS and the Southwest Florida Resource Conservation & Development Council. Funds are being made available for up to 75% of a project’s cost according to specified BMP practices, and are being provided through FDACS, the SFWMD

and other sources. The cost/share dollars are administered through a “selection committee” and distributed based on specified criteria. **For more detailed information regarding the “cost/share” program, please contact Dan Rutledge, Hendry & Glades Soil and Water Conservation District office at (863) 674-5700. E-mail: [dan.rutledge@landing.hitfarm.com](mailto:dan.rutledge@landing.hitfarm.com)**

The Gulf Citrus BMP manual process was also strongly supported through the Hendry County Cooperative Extension Office and the Southwest Florida Research and Education Center in Immokalee. Representing their efforts were Drs. Ed Hanlon, Bob Rouse, Sanjay Shukla and Mongi Zekri. These individuals worked with the sub-committees throughout the process, as well as assisted in the editing process. Julie Carson, SWFREC’s communications director provided excellent support in the public relations aspects of the project.

In a recent article, Chuck Aller,



### Commissioner Bronson Highlights Citrus BMPs!

Commissioner Charlie Bronson expressed FDACS’ strong support for the citrus growers on the “Gulf” region. He thanked those involved for spending over two years working with the Office of Water Policy to put the Citrus BMP Manual together.

FDACS’ Office of Water Policy director, noted that BMPs are more critical now than ever before. He noted that the state is moving now to develop basin management efforts in watershed after watershed. And that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) is charged with making sure growers are in compliance with whatever total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) that are determined for a particular area. Aller also noted that the FDEP looks favorably on those who have been proactively monitoring themselves. “The time to get a BMP program in place is now. Not doing something is no longer an option,” he added!

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