Fast Facts

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Florida Farm Bureau honored at AFBF Seattle meeting

At the AFBF Annual Meeting in Seattle, Florida Farm Bureau received an Excellence in Agriculture Award for all five program areas recognized by the national organization. The programs earning superior designations were: agriculture education and promotion, leadership development, member services, policy implementation and public relations and information. **Florida Farm Bureau also earned a President's Award for agriculture education and promotion, an honor that recognized the program as the best in its state membership class.** AFBF recognized the **Western Palm Beach County Farm Bureau's** promotion of the **Sweet Corn Fiesta** as one of 15 innovative new, local programs nationwide. **Jeb Smith** of Putnam County, Florida's 2009 Achievement Award winner, earned high praise for his accomplishments as an agricultural producer. **Carlton and Laura Lee Taylor** of Polk County stood out in close competition among the national Excellence in Agriculture candidates. **Jenny Black** of Lakeland delivered a poised, thoughtful contribution to the Discussion Meet. During the Jan. 11 closing session **Terry Bradshaw** entertained meeting participants with a keynote address that parodied his professional football career with good humor and regular exhortations to keep smiling. Convention delegates approved a number of policy statements that will guide the national organization for the next year, including a pointed "sense of the delegate body" declaration that expressed opposition to cap and trade proposals currently before the Congress. The delegates also affirmed support for a mandatory country-of-origin labeling program. Acting on proposals supported by Florida Farm Bureau, the voting members endorsed a workable ad hoc agricultural disaster program and a specialty crops title in future farm bills. Such policy declarations are clear endorsements of positions Florida's farmers and ranchers have enthusiastically championed. **A full report and photos is in the February *FloridAgriculture* Magazine.**

Florida Farm Bureau keeping tabs on freeze aftermath

Florida Farm Bureau is continuing to monitor the fallout from a multi-week freeze that hit the state in early to mid-January. "We know that many growers experienced severe losses in the aftermath of the freeze," said **FFB President John Hoblick.** "We need to do everything we can to assist these farmers in recovery efforts. The continued vitality of both our industry and Florida's economy is at stake." Farm Bureau is supportive of the efforts taken by Florida's congressional delegation when it became apparent that the cold weather was taking its toll on Florida agriculture. A letter signed by **U.S. Rep. Adam Putnam**, 15 other members of the House and both Florida senators asked for a thorough and expedited review of the damage assessment and emergency disaster declaration request when it is received. **Gov. Charlie Crist also formally asked U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to declare all of Florida an agricultural disaster area, making impacted growers eligible for low-interest loans.**

Proposed EPA numeric nutrient criteria released

FFB Director of Government and Community Affairs Staci Braswell reports the release of proposed numeric nutrient criteria last week by the EPA. These proposed criteria and regulations will levy a de facto water tax on Floridians by increasing water and sewer bills and will impose onerous economic burdens on agricultural producers. They will also set standards for flowing waters in Florida that may be impossible to meet. Florida Farm Bureau has partnered with Florida's Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Agriculture and the state's water management districts to ensure that Florida's agricultural industry does all it can to ensure a clean water supply. Unfortunately, EPA's one-size-fits-all approach, which affects only Florida, is generalized and fundamentally flawed because it does not take into account the unique characteristics of each of the state's rivers, streams and estuaries. Experts say the EPA standards will brand pristine streams and lakes as impaired, requiring the state to spend billions of scarce dollars to meet the standard. **Farm Bureau is encouraging its members to voice their concerns by attending hearings planned for Feb. 16, 17 and 18 in Tallahassee, Orlando and West Palm Beach. You can register your intent to attend or speak at one of the hearings by following a link at http://donttaxflorida.com/. Florida Farm Bureau is compiling a list of those planning to attend or speak at any of the hearings. If you have registered to attend or speak, please notify Braswell by calling her at (352) 374-1522 or e-mailing her at Staci.Braswell@ffbf.org.**

Listening sessions drawing nearer

The times and places for the listening sessions called for by FFB President John Hoblick have been finalized (except for District 8 – stay tuned). The sessions are being held to generate input as to ways Farm Bureau can work to improve rural communities and their way of life. The schedule for these sessions is as follows: District 1 – Okaloosa County Extension Office in Crestview on Feb. 4 at 6 p.m., con-

tact **Allen Scheffer**, (352) 538-3182; District 2 – Madison County Farm Bureau in Madison on Feb. 4 at 12 noon, contact **Dan Buchanan**, (352) 538-9850; District 3 – the WW Ranch in Bryceville on Feb. 22 at 7 p.m., contact **Greg Harden**, (352) 538-3346; District 4 – Marion County Extension Office on March 2 at 6 p.m., contact **Joe Siegmeister**, (352) 316-0190; District 5 – Hillsborough County Farm Bureau in Valrico on March 4 at 12 noon, contact **Ray Crawford**, (352) 538-2460; District 6 – Turner Agri-Center in Arcadia on March 4 at 6:30 p.m., contact **Andy Neuhofer**, (352) 318-2506; District 7 – The Marsh Landing Restaurant in Fellsmere on March 8 at 6 p.m., contact **Tom Hill**, (352) 317-6535; District 8 – at a location to be announced on March 26 at 12 noon, contact **Eva Webb**, (352) 317-0902.

Food Check-Out Week is Feb. 21-27

Food Check-Out Week, Feb. 21-27, is devoted to helping teach consumers how to stretch their grocery dollars with healthy, nutritious food. Farm Bureau's Food Check-Out Week is aimed at helping American consumers learn how to shop effectively to put nutritious meals on the table with fewer dollars. Now in its 12th year, Food Check-Out Week also highlights America's safe, abundant and affordable food supply, made possible largely by America's productive farmers and ranchers. For more information, contact **Kathy Richardson** at (352) 374-1533 or e-mail Kathy.Richardson@ffbf.org.

Farm Bureau Day scheduled for March 16

Farm Bureau Day at the Capitol will be held on Tuesday, March 16. The legislative reception will again be held at the Leon County Civic Center. Tickets are $10 each and will be available at local Farm Bureau offices beginning in February. A legislative briefing dinner will be held on Monday, March 15 at the Automobile Museum on Highway 90. Tickets are $10, payable at the door. This year Farm Bureau will host a silent auction in conjunction with the state 4-H association at the reception. For more information, please contact **Christine Scovotto** at the FFB state legislative office at (850) 222-2557.

Apply now for FRPP funding

The Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) is now accepting proposals for funding opportunities. Working through existing programs, USDA partners with state, tribal or local governments and non-governmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. FRPP provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and ranchland in agricultural uses and to protect historic or archeological resources. USDA provides up to 50 percent of the fair market value of the conservation easement. Applications must be submitted on or before March 11, 2010, to receive consideration for funding in fiscal year 2010. Land proposed for the FRPP must meet one of three eligibility categories: have prime, unique or other productive soil; contain historic or archeological resources; or furthers state or local policy consistent with the purposes of the program. Eligible entities must secure the appraisal, survey, and title search, prepare the conservation easement deed and pay for the closing. Owners of the parcels must have an adjusted gross income of less than $1 million and be in compliance with the USDA highly erodible land and wetland compliance requirements. Proposals should be submitted to the attention of **Ronald Howard**, USDA-NRCS, 2614 NW 43rd Street, Gainesville, FL, 32606. For further information check out the FRPP Web site at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp/ or contact Ronald Howard, (352) 338-9508 or e-mail ron.howard@fl.usda.gov.

Farm Bureau District II legislative meeting

FFB Senior Assistant Director of Field Services Dan Buchanan reports that Hamilton County Farm Bureau will hold its Annual County Legislative Meeting on Jan. 29 at the local VFW Club in Jasper. This county legislative meeting has been ongoing for more than 25 years, with the inaugural meeting called together by the late **Hilward Morgan,** a longtime Farm Bureau leader, when he was president. All elected officials have been invited to attend.

Cracker Shoot 2010

The Highlands County Farm Bureau is being joined by other sponsors to present the 10th Annual Sporting Clays Tournament at the Quail Creek Plantation in Okeechobee on Jan. 30 beginning at 8:30 a.m. Levels of participation include • **Gold Sponsorship** – $600; includes up to six shooters, lunches, use of shooting cart, gold sponsorship signage and recognition during awards ceremony. • **Team Sponsorship** – $400; includes four shooters, lunches and a station sponsorship sign on course. • **Station Sponsorship** – $100; includes sign on a course station. • **Individual Shooting** – $100; includes 100 target shooting round and lunch. Lunch (steak, potatoes and all the fixings) is sponsored by Highlands Independent Bank and Farm Credit of Southwest Florida. Please send your sponsor and/or contact name(s), team member names, address, phone number, fax number, and payment to: HC Farm Bureau, 6419 US Hwy 27 S, Sebring, FL 33876. Fax: (863) 385-5356. • • • Mark your calendars: **The St. Lucie County Farm Bureau sporting clays shoot is March 27, also at Quail Creek Plantation in Okeechobee.**