



Fast Facts

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Timely Communication For Farm Bureau Leaders

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AG'S VOICE IS HEARD AT EPA HEARINGS

FFB Director of Government and Community Affairs Staci Braswell reports that Florida's agricultural community turned out in full force for EPA's hearings held last week soliciting comment on the agency's proposed numeric nutrient criteria. In June 2008, several environmental groups filed a lawsuit against EPA requesting it promptly impose quantifiable and enforceable limits for fertilizer, sewage and animal waste runoff. In February 2009, FFB, AFBF, and several commodity organizations intervened in the lawsuit. In August 2009, EPA and the environmental groups reached a settlement that was approved by the court. The settlement agreement set a firm schedule to federally propose and promulgate numeric nutrient criteria for Florida. EPA published proposed regulations setting forth numeric water quality criteria for lakes, streams, canals and flowing water in the state and will finalize the rule by Oct. 15. The EPA heard from 237 speakers during the three days of public hearings. More than 180 speakers voiced their opposition to the proposed rule, discussing the flawed science, economic impact and competitive disadvantage Florida's agricultural operations, businesses and industry would face. Only 47 speakers spoke in favor of the proposed rule with nine speakers remaining neutral. More than 65 speakers represented agriculture and 31 of those speakers were Farm Bureau members. Written comments are still being accepted. Farm Bureau has several form letters that members can use to assist in the drafting of comments. For further information, please contact Braswell at staci.braswell@ffbf.org or (352)374-1522.

LISTENING SESSIONS ONGOING

The listening sessions called together by FFB President John Hoblick to generate input as to ways Farm Bureau can work to improve rural communities and their way of life are in full swing. The sessions in Districts 1, 2 and 3 have already taken place. The schedule for the remaining sessions is as follows: 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 the Western Palm Beach County Farm Bureau office in Belle Glade on March 26 at 12 noon, contact **Eva Webb**, (352) 317-0902.

LENTZ APPOINTED FFB INSURANCE SALES MANAGER

FFB Insurance Companies CEO Bill Courtney has announced that **Robert (Bob) Lentz** has been selected as the companies' state sales manager. Lentz began his Farm Bureau career in 1994 following a long and successful banking career. He has served as a district sales manager, an estate planning specialist and most recently as agency manager for Palm Beach County. Bob and his wife, Missy, will make their home in Gainesville. "I believe Bob is uniquely qualified to unite our agency force for the purpose of achieving our company goals of growing the membership, increasing auto production, becoming profitable and supporting the life company," said Courtney.

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 are available at local Farm Bureau offices. 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. Reservations are required. This year Farm Bureau will host a silent auction in conjunction with the state 4-H association at the reception. Places to stay include: Cabot Lodge on North Monroe, \$65, (850) 386-8880; La Quinta Inn North (Monroe), \$62, (850) 385-7172; La Quinta Inn South (Apalachee) \$65, (850) 878-5099. Rooms are blocked under Florida Farm Bureau. For more information or to RSVP, please contact **Christine Scovotto**, (850) 222-2557.

SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANTS AVAILABLE

FFB Assistant Director of Ag Policy Joshua Craft reports that the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) is now accepting proposals for the 2010 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The purpose of the program is to fund projects which enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Grant information, instructions and requirements are provided on the FDACS Web site located at http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/specialty_crop_grant/index.html.

AFBF FILES LEGAL CHALLENGE TO EPA ENDANGERMENT FINDING

The American Farm Bureau Federation recently filed a legal challenge to EPA's December finding that greenhouse gases endanger public health and welfare. The agency's action constitutes the first step toward economy-wide regulation of greenhouse gases and is an effort to achieve through regulation what has failed to pass Congress and failed as well at the Copenhagen talks, AFBF President Bob Stallman noted in a statement. "EPA regulation of greenhouse gas emissions from farms and ranches through the Clean Air Act could lead to costly and burdensome mandates on America's food, fiber and renewable fuel producers. It is imperative that the U.S. Court of Appeals conduct a thorough review of the EPA's endangerment finding," Stallman said.

EGG SALES PUBLICATION AVAILABLE

A publication aimed at individuals with flocks of fewer than 3,000 birds who sell eggs in retail settings, including farmers' markets, is now available from UF/IFAS. Titled, "Complying With Regulations to Sell Farm Fresh Eggs," it's available online at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FE828>. Sellers must have access to processing facilities that meet standards outlined in Florida Statutes Chapter 500, and then obtain a food permit from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS). The publication outlines basic steps needed to obtain the permit and includes links to helpful information sources. It was a collaborative effort between UF/IFAS, FDACS and Florida Farm Bureau.

WEB SITE MONITORS HSUS

The Center for Consumer Freedom (CCF) has announced the launch of a watchdog project dedicated to analyzing the activities of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). HumaneWatch will include a blog written by CCF's director of research, a growing document library and a database capable of tracking the dozens of nonprofit (and for-profit) organizations that make up HSUS's sprawling financial empire. The HumaneWatch Web site is located at <http://www.humanewatch.org>.

CONFERENCE WILL PRESENT FINANCIAL STRATEGIES

The Florida Agriculture Financial Management Conference will be held at the Rosen Plaza in Orlando on May 20-21. The conference theme is: "Paint Your Own Financial Picture: Financial Strategies to Survive the Tough Economy for Florida's Ag Producers." For more information on attending or sponsoring, contact **Linda Reindl** at the FNGLA office, (800) 375-3642, or go to <http://www.fn gla.org>.

REGIONAL ENERGY SUMMIT IN GAINESVILLE

USDA Rural Development will be presenting information regarding rural energy programs available through the agency at an Energy Summit on March 11 at Santa Fe College in Gainesville. USDA Rural Development provides funding for the development and commercialization of renewable energy sources to change the way people power their cars, homes, businesses and industries. The summit is scheduled from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Seating is limited; please RSVP to **Katrina Leonard** at katrina.leonard@fl.usda.gov or (386) 719-5590, ext. 110 by March 8.

DRY WELL DEADLINE IS NEXT WEEK

FFB Assistant Director of Government and Community Affairs Curt Williams reports that the Southwest Florida Water Management District has set a March 2 deadline for well owners to file claims for damage suffered during the Jan. 3-13 freeze. The region experienced an unprecedented freeze event in January, with 11 consecutive days of below 34-degree temperatures. Many permit holders had to pump large quantities of water to protect strawberry, citrus and other commodities. Many private residential wells failed as the pumping lowered the aquifer. The District declared an emergency on Jan. 27 to assist eastern Hillsborough County residents who were still without well water. For more information visit the District's Web site at <http://www.WaterMatters.org/frost-freeze> or call (813) 985-7481.

FIELD PERSONNEL ORGANIZE DESERET TOUR

FFB Assistant Director of Field Services Eva Webb reports that she, Tom Hill and Andy Neuhofer helped organize and conduct the Deseret Ranch "Ag Tour" on Feb. 3. The tour was held in conjunction with the National Association of Conservation Districts National Conference and Annual Meeting in Lake Buena Vista. Feedback was very positive with many attending thanking Florida Farm Bureau for showing support of Soil and Water Conservation Districts across the country.

AGRICULTURE AND CATTLE SHOW SCHEDULED IN MARCH

The Third Annual Miami International Agriculture and Cattle Show is slated for March 20-21 at the Tropical Park Ronald Reagan Equestrian Center in Miami. Last year the event attracted more than 45,000 visitors, with cattle breeders and potential buyers coming from 22 countries. For more information call (305) 228-3414 or e-mail Kelvin@MorenoFirms.com.