



Fast Facts

Vol. 16 No. 13 Timely Communication For Farm Bureau Leaders December 19, 2008

Published by Florida Farm Bureau • P.O. Box 147030 • Gainesville, FL 32614-7030 • (352) 378-8100 • <FloridaFarmBureau.org>

FARM BUREAU OPPOSES PUBLIC ACQUISITION OF U.S. SUGAR

At its meeting on Dec. 10, the board of directors of Florida Farm Bureau declared its opposition to the acquisition of U.S. Sugar Corp. lands by the South Florida Water Management District. Farm Bureau firmly supports the rights of private property owners to acquire, use and sell property but opposes the unnecessary acquisition of more land by government. There is also a concern that the proposed purchase would drain funding and focus away from implementation of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan and other initiatives in which much time and funding have been invested. The purchase of U.S. Sugar's land would likely cause thousands of acres of productive agricultural land to be removed from local tax rolls, leaving local communities struggling to make up for the loss of ad valorem tax revenues and endangering their future. The plan for the District to purchase U.S. Sugar's land, then to lease it back to the company over a seven-year period at a bargain rate, also would create unfair competitive advantages over other South Florida agricultural producers. * * * * * **LATE BREAKING NEWS** – FFB Assistant Director of Government and Community Affairs Charles Shinn reports that the South Florida Water Management District governing board voted on Dec. 16 to accept the contract offer made by U.S. Sugar, with the condition that obtaining financing will not cut into its core projects of water quality, flood control, water supply and Everglades restoration.

HOBCLICK ANNOUNCES STAFF APPOINTMENTS

FFB President John L. Hoblick has announced the appointment of Frankie Hall as director of the Agricultural Policy Division, Adam Basford as national affairs coordinator and Andrew Walmsley as an assistant director of the Agricultural Policy Division. Hall will manage the division's policy development and implementation efforts and coordinate the Federation's state advisory committees. He has been employed by Florida Farm Bureau for more than 20 years. As national affairs coordinator, Basford will be responsible for federal legislative issues as well as building relationships with Florida's congressional delegation. He has been employed by the Federation for five years. As an assistant director of the Agricultural Policy Division, Walmsley will be the lead staff member on energy issues and will work with Florida Farm Bureau's advisory committees. He will also be responsible for FFBF's Carbon Trading Program and Environmental Services Program. Walmsley joined Florida Farm Bureau in 2006. * * * * * **MORE LATE BREAKING NEWS** – Shaun Fulford has accepted the position of Young Farmer & Rancher Leadership Group/Women's Leadership Committee Coordinator in the Field Services Division. She is currently working for the Marion County School Board as an Ag Teacher and FFA advisor.

WATER MANAGEMENT NEWS AND ACTIVITIES

FFB Assistant Director of Government and Community Affairs Cara Martin reports that she participated in an airboat tour sponsored by the St. Johns River Water Management District on Dec. 8. Areas toured included the Blue Cypress Recreational Area, the Blue Cypress Water Management Area and the St. Johns Marsh Conservation Area. On Dec. 11, Martin participated in a special meeting of the Southwest Florida Water Management District Green Industry and the Agricultural Advisory Committees. The topic was the Phase III Water Shortage Rules. The Phase III Water Shortage was declared in October and affects Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas counties. The current Phase III rule language bans turf renovation and replacement through June 2009. After discussion, the industry group and District staff agreed that the following recommendations would be presented to the District governing board (which approved the changes on Dec. 16): To remove the current restriction on turf renovation and replacement; and to modify the establishment irrigation allowances for both new construction and for renovation/replacement sod installations as follows; • First 15 days after planting, watering is allowed every day; • Next 15 days, watering is allowed every other day; • After the initial 30 days, watering will follow current District rules of one day per week.

FREE POULTRY CALENDARS AVAILABLE

FFB Director of Public Relations Rod Hemphill reports that as part of its ongoing efforts to educate backyard poultry owners about what they can do to protect their birds against avian influenza (AI), USDA is offering free and informative calendars for 2009. These calendars, which feature full-color photos of poultry and other birds each month, contain useful information in English and Spanish about protecting poultry from infectious poultry diseases such as AI and include tips on what to do should poultry owners suspect that their birds are infected. Those interested in receiving this free calendar can go to <http://healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov> and click "2009 Backyard Biosecurity Calendar."

USCIS LISTS REVISED VERIFICATION DOCUMENTS

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has submitted to the Federal Register an interim final rule that revises the list of documents acceptable for the Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification, process. The revised form will improve the security of the employment authorization verification process. Employers will be required to use the revised form for all new hires and to reverify any employee with expiring employment authorization beginning 45 days after publication in the Federal Register. The current edition of the Form I-9, dated June 5, 2007, will no longer be valid for use 45 days after publication of the rule in the Federal Register. The interim final rule and an informational copy of the revised Form I-9 will be available for public comment at www.regulations.gov for 45 days after publication in the Federal Register. The revised Form I-9 will be available on the USCIS Home page 45 days after publication in the Federal Register. The Handbook for Employers, Instructions for Completing the Form I-9 (M-274) is being updated to reflect these changes and will be published on the USCIS Web site in the near future. More information is available at <http://www.laborlawyers.com/>.

NEWS FROM FIELD DISTRICT TWO

FFB Assistant Director of Field Services Dan Buchanan reports that the Women's Committee representatives from Field District Two celebrated the Christmas season by preparing holiday baskets for those staying at the Ronald McDonald House in Tallahassee. All ten counties within District Two participated with representatives from Madison, Jefferson, Taylor, Gadsden and Lafayette County Farm Bureaus working on the actual basket preparations. The Christmas Party was held on Dec. 15. • • • The District Two annual Women's Conference will be held Jan. 23 at Wakulla Springs Lodge. For details call Kelly Lyons at (386) 294-3976 or Dan Buchanan at (352) 538-9850. "Empowering Farm Bureau Women" is the theme of the conference.

FORESTRY COURSES ANNOUNCED

The Florida Division of Forestry and University of Florida IFAS are cooperating to offer Certified Pile Burners Courses in 2009. The courses will be offered on Jan. 14-15 in Jacksonville, Feb. 24 in Sebring and March 19 in Milton. The instruction will show how to burn piles legally, safely and efficiently. Most importantly, lives could be saved by decreasing risks associated with smoke on roadways. When the weather is dry, certified pile burners will receive priority for authorization to burn. Also, certified pile burners are allowed to burn up to two hours longer per day and get multiple day authorizations. The number of trainings offered and attendance at each training are limited so those interested are urged to act quickly. The cost of the course is \$50 per person and includes all course materials, test and lunch. For more information, call **Chris Demers** at (352) 846-2375. • • • A workshop on how to use prescribed fire safely and effectively will be offered three times. Burn demonstrations will be conducted if weather and conditions allow. The demonstrations are scheduled for: • Jan. 20, Austin Cary Memorial Forest, Gainesville. Contact **Benjamin Koubek** at (352) 846-2374 to register; • Jan. 29, Withlacoochee Training Center, Brooksville. Contact **Shaun Stewart** at (352) 754-6865 to register; • Feb. 17, Bear Lake Pavilion, Milton. Contact the **Santa Rosa County Extension Office** at (850) 675-6654 to register.

STILL TIME TO BID ON TURKEY HUNTING WITH AG CHIEF

Florida Farm Bureau's Young Farmer and Rancher program is auctioning off a weekend turkey hunt with Commissioner of Agriculture Charles H. Bronson. The high bidder will purchase a two-person, guided turkey hunt at Evans Farm in North Florida. The hunt will take place the weekend of March 21 or March 29, 2009, based on Bronson's schedule. Hunters will arrive on Friday afternoon and depart after the Sunday morning hunt. The hunt will include full accommodations and guide service. Bids will be accepted until midnight, Eastern Time, on Friday, Jan. 30, 2009. The auction is being conducted entirely on-line at the Florida Farm Bureau Federation's Web site, <http://FloridaFarmBureau.org>. Click on the photo of the turkey on the left side of the home page. At press time, bidding stood at \$785.

PATSY NATHE IS WOMAN OF THE YEAR IN AGRICULTURE

Patricia "Patsy" Nathe of Dade City, co-owner of R.J. Nathe and Sons logging company and Tall Timber Cattle and Grove, has been selected to receive the "Woman of the Year in Agriculture Award" for 2008. Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles H. Bronson is scheduled to present the award to Nathe on Feb. 5, during the opening-day luncheon at the Florida State Fair in Tampa.

FOOD CHECK-OUT WEEK IN FEBRUARY

The 2009 Food Check-Out Week is scheduled for Feb. 15-21. A new logo, promotional materials, consumer-focused messages and media talking points are being developed to support the new theme and will be available in advance of Food Check-Out Week. Food Check-Out Week will continue to provide the opportunity to support charities such as Ronald McDonald Houses, local food banks and shelters through food and cash donations. For more information, contact **Kathy Richardson** at (352) 374-1533.