

News



Fall – 2010



L to R: Congressman Adam Putnam, GCGA president Carey Soud, keynote speaker Dr. Jack M. Payne, Commissioner of Agriculture Charles Bronson and Congressman Tom Rooney.

Industry Leaders Highlight 2010 Citrus Banquet

The 2010 “Gulf Citrus Industry Banquet” agenda featured several leaders who are strategically important to Florida’s citrus and agricultural industries.

Congressman Adam Putnam (R, Florida’s 12th Congressional District), a candidate for Florida Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services, served as master of ceremonies. Over 300 growers, industry leaders and guests attended this year’s banquet held at the Harborside Event Center in Ft. Myers.

Putnam interjected many key points on the importance of the November 2010 general election on Florida’s future. He noted key statewide political offices are up to the voters, including the Commissioner of Agriculture, a very important Cabinet-level position in the state’s decision making process. “Growers, farmers and ranchers need to not only vote...but be actively engaged in the process. We need to elect leaders with the same ‘vision’ for Florida...that we have,” he added.

Congressman Tom Rooney, a Republican representing Florida’s 16th District, highlighted the key issues facing the agriculture and from his Washington, D.C. perspective. He has the largest “agricultural district” in the state including Charlotte, Glades and Hendry counties. “As the only member of the Florida delegation serving on the House Committee on Agriculture, I am proud to serve all of our state’s growers, farmers and ranchers. As one of the nation’s leading agricultural producing states, Florida must have a strong voice as Congress begins work on the next Farm Bill,” noted Rooney.

“We must be prepared to promote our unique needs as one of our nation’s largest producers of “specialty crops,” said Rooney.

Regarding Florida’s efforts to address the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) actions to set numeric nutrient criteria (NNCs) for the state’s water bodies, Rooney promised continual support for a “science-based” and economically feasible approach from EPA. “I am working to fight the EPA’s assault on our farmers as the agency tries to over-regulate Florida agriculture. Before the agency imposes new rules and regulations on our agriculture, it must provide third-party reviews to determine the environmental and economic consequences,” he added.

Florida Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumers Services Charles Bronson noted the department’s commitment to address the pest and disease issues plaguing the citrus industry. He recognized the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s support in battling the “Canker,” “Greening” and “Black Spot” diseases, while introducing and thanking Cindy Smith, USDA/APHIS director, who attended the banquet, following her tour of “Gulf” region citrus groves.

Bronson expressed his concerns about the amount of land being taken off the tax roles for environmental purposes. He noted that over one-third of the state’s land is now in state or federal ownership, straining local and state governments’ resources and abilities to provide for

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Gulf Citrus Growers Association Elects 2010-11 Officers

At its 24th annual meeting on June 2, 2010 at the Dallas Townsend Agricultural Center in LaBelle, FL, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association (GCGA) elected its officers to serve the organization for the 2010-2011 season. Elected to lead the regional citrus growers association are the following:

President

Carey Soud
Soud Family Partnership

Vice President

Wayne Simmons
LaBelle Fruit Co., LLC

Secretary

Wade Timpner
George Austin, Inc.

Treasurer

Callie Walker
English Brothers

Carey Soud was re-elected to a second term as GCGA's president. He has over 20 years of professional management experience in the industry here in Southwest Florida. Soud has served on the association's board for two terms.

He is a partner in his family's citrus operation based in Hendry County. Soud earned a Masters Degree in Business



"Gulf Citrus" 2010-11 Officers
(Standing) Wayne Simmons, vice president (left) and Wade Timpner, secretary.
(Seated) Carey Soud, president (left) and Callie Walker, treasurer.

Administration from the University of South Florida with a concentration in accounting. In addition to his responsibilities with the family citrus business, he is

president of First Bank based in Clewiston, Florida.

Soud also served as a district vice president and treasurer of Florida Citrus Mutual, Florida's largest citrus grower organization and headquartered in Lakeland. In addition, he serves in leadership positions in other state and community organizations.

Wayne Simmons was elected GCGA's vice president for the coming year. Simmons, president of LaBelle Fruit Co., LLC, owns citrus groves in Hendry, Collier and Hillsborough counties. He has over 30 years experience in the citrus industry and served on the GCGA's board of directors for several years. In addition to his leadership at GCGA, Simmons currently serves on the Citrus Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) board of directors. He also served as president of the Florida Citrus Production Managers Association and the Hendry-Glades Farm Bureau.

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association represents citrus growers in Florida's "Gulf" production region including Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee counties. The region accounts for 25% of the state's citrus production.

GCGA Recognizes 10-Year Associates

At its 24th Annual Meeting, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association presented commemorative "10-Year" plaques to the GCGA's Associate Members who have continually supported the association for that time period. Recognized were: **Bruce Hendry Insurance; Everglades Farm Equipment Company, Inc.; Florida**

Orange Marketers, Inc.; Flo-Tec, Inc.; Gator Ag Group, Inc. and the **Hendry/Glades Farm Bureau.**

The association is proud of its associate membership program, which allows for allied trade support for the organization and provides the growers added value by providing resources to the association.



"Thank You" for 10 Years of Support!

(Left to Right) Bill Arrington, Orange Marketers, Inc.; Don Norris and Mark Henderson, Everglades Farm Equipment Company, Inc.; Edward Parker, Flo-Tec, Inc.; Gene McAvoy, Hendry/Glades Farm Bureau receive plaques from GCGA President Carey Soud.

Gulf Citrus Growers Association 2010-2011 Board of Directors

Carey Soud, President
Wayne Simmons, Vice President
Wade Timpner, Secretary
Callie Walker, Treasurer
John R. Alexander
Don Barwick
Mark Colbert
Emmett Evans III
Joe Hilliard II
John Hoffman
Tom Kirschner
Paul Meador
David Wheeler

Ron Hamel

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Gulf Citrus Growers Seats 2010-11 Directors

At its 24th annual meeting on June 2, 2010 at the Dallas Townsend Agricultural Center in LaBelle, FL, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association "officially" seated its 2010-2011 board of directors for the coming season. The newly elected leadership will direct the organization as it

works to represent the citrus growing industry in Southwest Florida's "Gulf" region, including Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee Counties.

The "Gulf Citrus" board members and their respective counties of representation are listed below.

Each of these leaders is a volunteer and is working on behalf of all the region's citrus growers. Please thank and support them during the coming season, and also suggest any positive changes that GCGA can make to better serve the industry in the "Gulf" region.



2010-2011 Gulf Citrus Growers Association Board of Directors

(Front, Left to Right) Mark Colbert, Wayne Simmons, Paul Meador, Tom Kirschner and Don Barwick. (Back Row) Ron Hamel, John R. Alexander, David Wheeler, John Hoffman, Callie Walker, Wade Timpner, Carey Soud, Joe Hilliard II and Emmett Evans III.

Florida's Gulf Citrus Production Region

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association represents citrus growers with thousands of acres of citrus in Southwest Florida's "Gulf" region, which accounts for about 25% of the state's total fruit production. The region's citrus industry generates nearly \$1-billion of total economic impact.



GCGA 2010-2011 Board of Directors

Charlotte County

Emmett Evans III
Evans Properties, Inc.

Collier County

John Hoffman
Barron Collier Partnership
Tom Kirschner
Cooperative Producers, Inc.
Paul Meador
Gulf Citrus Partners LP

Hendry County

John R. Alexander
Alico, Inc.
Mark Colbert
A. Duda & Sons, Inc.
Joe Hilliard II
Hilliard Brothers of Florida, LTD.
Wayne Simmons
LaBelle Fruit Co. LLC
Carey Soud
Soud Family Partnership

Glades County

David Wheeler
Wheeler Farms, Inc.

Lee County

Wade Timpner
George Austin, Inc.

At-Large Seats

Don Barwick
Heller Brothers Packing Corp.
Callie Walker
English Brothers

Committee Chairs Appointed to Serve for 2010-2011 Season

GCGA President Carey Soud appointed the following leaders to chair the association's operating committees for the coming year.

Please contact these volunteers for updates and information related to their respective committees.

Associate Member

Alison Pool

Community Relations

John Hoffman

Governmental Affairs

Joe Hilliard II

Labor Relations

Paul Meador

Long Range

Policy and Planning

George Austin

Membership

David Wheeler

Research and Production

Mark Colbert

Tax

Cliff Bowen

“Gulf Citrus” Launches “Round #3” in Psyllid/HLB Fight

With two consecutive seasons of successful, cooperative “area-wide” spraying to reduce Asian citrus psyllid populations in the region as its benchmark, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association’s “Psyllid Suppression Team” is launching what is being called “Round #3.”

“The goal is to unify citrus growers in the region to form a united front for managing the Asian citrus psyllid, vector of Huanglongbing (HLB) or ‘greening,’” says Dr. Phil Stansly, UF/IFAS entomologist, who is based at the Southwest Florida Research and Education Center (SWFREC).

“This season, we are recommending two dormant sprays, the first between fall flush and Christmas, and the second one in January or the first week of February,” said Dr. Stansly. “This strategy will take out most overwintering psyllids before they have time to spread HLB and clean up the remnants in the winter, leaving enough time before spring flush to provide a good kill. We have seen that this second dormant spray is the most effective of all ... and one that should never be skipped,” he added. “Post

bloom, we will work with growers to help evaluate Asian psyllid populations and determine the need for an area wide application prior to the onset of summer rains.”

The collaborative effort’s “team” includes GCGA, the Citrus Health Response Program (CHRP) of FDACS-DPI, the UF/IFAS Hendry County Extension Service’s Multi-County Citrus Agent, UF/IFAS’ SWFREC scientists and the aerial applicators.

Each team member has a specific role in the initiative. The GCGA, with its grower leaders, serves as the “organizer” and “promoter.” The FDACS-DPI’s personnel monitor psyllid populations before and after treatment periods. The UF/IFAS scientists help coordinate both the monitoring and implementation of the spraying. And, the aerial applicators work with the “grower ‘team captains’ to schedule applications in the sub-sections of the region. “This ‘team’ effort has truly produced positive results here in the ‘Gulf’ region,” said Ron Hamel, GCGA’s executive vice president. “It is a real tribute to all our leaders and participants that we are

achieving success in reducing psyllid populations. It is amazing what can be achieved when growers work together.”

“The National Academy of Sciences, the best brain trust in the scientific world, has concluded that coordinated, regional pest control is ‘the single most important tool immediately available’ in our fight against ‘greening.’ It is hard for me to accept anything less than eager, wholesale ‘buy-in’ from all citrus growers, regard-

news’ and ‘good results’ in the fight against ‘greening.’”

The CRDF has organized a subcommittee to promote the establishment of Citrus Health Management Areas (CHMAs) throughout the state, which will be structured similar to GCGA’s voluntary initiative. Simmons is also a member of that CRDF subcommittee.

The GULF program has been recognized as being “the first” organized “CHMA” in Florida, focused on attacking the psyllid, vector of HLB.

Dr. Stansly reported that over 108,000 acres of citrus groves participated in the 2009-2010 area-wide spraying in the “Gulf” region last season. Of that acreage, 73,180 were sprayed aerially and 35,000 by ground.

“There is no doubt that cooperative dormant sprays have been a success in Southwest Florida, and should be implemented in citrus state-wide,” said Dr. Stansly.

However, he warned against spraying too often. “Spraying throughout the year would not be a sustainable solution to the psyllid problem for various reasons

including: 1) psyllid nymphs and eggs are hard to control in your flush; 2) loss of beneficial insects and mites would likely result in outbreaks of secondary pests such as leafminers, scales and mites, and 3) the cost of year round calendar sprays would be too excessive.”

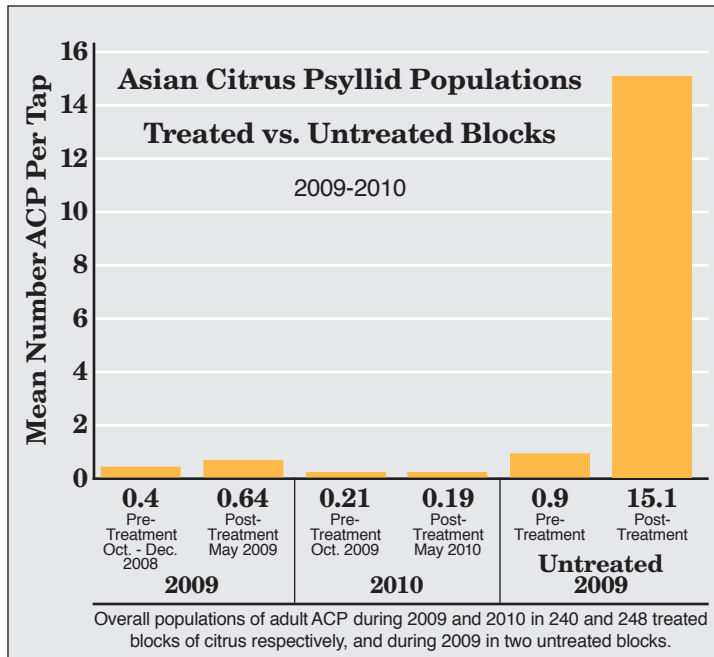
This year, Dr. Stansly and the GCGA “team” hope to improve its successful plan. “We hope to organize an area-wide scouting initiative with the objective of tracking psyllid populations throughout the region, pinpointing problem areas, and then assisting growers in making informed decisions on a block by block basis,” explained Stansly. “We are also investigating the feasibility of area-wide mass release of the parasitic wasp, *Tamarixia radiata* to enhance biological control.

For additional information and details regarding the program please contact:

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pstansly@ufl.edu

Dr. Mongi Zekri (863) 674-4092
maz@ufl.edu

Ron Hamel (863) 675-2180
gulfcitruscapron@embarqmail.com .



less of their location,” said Mark Colbert, chairman of GCGA’s Production and Research Committee, which is directing the association’s “team” efforts.

Wayne Simmons, GCGA vice president and a member of the Citrus Research and Development Foundation’s (CRDF) board of directors, added, “We are a long way from winning the war, but at least we have started to win some of the battles. Growers have finally received some ‘good



USDA Officials Tour “Gulf” Groves
Cindy Smith, USDA/APHIS Director (right) is briefed by Mike Murphy (left) on the “greening,” “canker” and “blackspot” diseases impacting area citrus groves. GCGA growers have created the “GULF” CHMA to battle these threats!

Industry Leaders Highlight 2010 Citrus Banquet

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basic needs. Bronson predicted Florida agriculture's progressive future into the production of "energy producing" crops, and cited his "Farm to Fuel" program.

Ken Keck, executive director of the Florida Department of Citrus (FDOC), provided an update of the key marketing and research programs being implemented by the department. He reported that the advertising agency recently engaged by the FDOC is developing a new campaign for Florida orange juice which will be implemented in early 2011. The campaign will focus on making orange juice more relevant to health-conscience consumers. Keck also noted the department's commitment to provide support for the research efforts to address the diseases which threaten the citrus industry.

Callie Walker, president of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association Scholarship Foundation, reported that over \$68,000 has been awarded to deserving students through the foundation's program. She noted that the program continues to be an important part of GCGA's community outreach program. She urged attendees to join the foundation and support the effort.

This year's "keynote" address was delivered by Dr. Jack M. Payne, senior vice president, agriculture and natural resources, University of Florida/Institute for Food and Agricultural Sciences. As the newly selected UF/IFAS vice president, Dr. Payne noted his first two and one-half months have focused on "meeting with producers, commodity groups, state legislators and other key stakeholders to discuss what IFAS does and represents."

"Tonight, I have the great privilege of visiting with a large segment of the state's citrus growers and an industry that defines Florida agriculture probably more than any other crop," said Payne. "I am very aware that Huanglongbing (HLB) is the most devastating disease of citrus worldwide. And, I would like to describe what IFAS is doing to combat it," he added.

Dr. Payne traced the history of the spread of HLB in Florida, the industry's aggressive actions to deal with it and IFAS' "all hands on deck" approach. "IFAS has aligned all its citrus expertise with the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) priority research areas. Its scientists have assisted in industry efforts to control the Asian Citrus Psyllid. And, IFAS has published its 'Guidance of HLB Management' document outlining best management practices (BMPs) for dealing with the disease, patterned after Brazil's experiences," he said.

"IFAS' position is to aggressively manage with the BMPs when HLB incidence is low. If incidence is high, growers may have no choice but to apply foliar nutrients and try to manage for short term productivity. Sadly, this will result in a dangerous build-up of inoculum statewide," Payne said.

Dr. Payne also thanked Senator J.D. Alexander and UF President Bernie Machen for their leadership in the formation of the Citrus Research and Development Foundation, Inc. (CRDF). "The formation of this central coordinating body to bring all urgent industry needs and funding under one umbrella, as recommended by the NAS, is a very positive step forward" he noted.

Payne also pledged UF/IFAS' leadership in coordinating and developing Citrus Health Management Areas (CHMAs), another National Academy of Sciences' recommendation. He cited the initial successful efforts of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association in "pioneering" its area-wide psyllid control program, in his reference to CHMA formation.

"So many challenges are before UF/IFAS and the citrus industry ...but together, I believe, we will have great success. IFAS is committed to performing 'cutting-edge' research to solve some of the world's most devastating problems," said Dr. Payne.



Citrus Banquet, Expo Well Attended!

Top Left: Industry leaders and guests greet Congressman Tom Rooney. **Top Right:** FDOC Executive Director Ken Keck highlights department's marketing programs. **Center Left:** Kristen Gunter, Joyce Carol Carter and Citrus Commissioner Stan Carter enjoy the event. **Center Right:** FDACS' DPI staff members "visit" with Congressman Adam Putnam. **Bottom:** The 2010 Citrus ExpoSM "tradeshow" and seminar drew hundreds of growers and allied representatives!

Thank You 2010 Banquet Sponsors!

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"Gulf Citrus" Conducts 24th Annual Meeting in LaBelle

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association's 24th Annual Meeting was held June 2, 2010 at the Dallas Townsend Agricultural Center in LaBelle.

GCGA President Carey Soud presided over the meeting and reviewed GCGA's highlights for the 2009-2010 year. He thanked the board of directors, committee chairmen, "members" and staff for their support during his first year as president.

Soud reported that "Gulf Citrus" number one priority for the year was the continuation and coordination of its area wide Asian psyllid spraying initiative to slow the spread of citrus "greening." He noted that through the cooperative efforts of GCGA, grower leaders, UF/IFAS/SWFREC and FDACS' DPI, the region's citrus growers are making progress in reducing psyllid populations. Soud added that the "Gulf" region's leadership had the foresight to work together even before the National Academy of Sciences made its recommendations to form Citrus Health Management Areas (CHMAs) as one of

the most effective immediate steps that growers could take to slow the spread of citrus "greening."

The GCGA president also reported that the association continued to focus its efforts on water management, land use planning and other environmentally-related issues unique to the region and which impact grower's bottom lines! Soud warned that with local government being challenged financially due to the economic downturn, growers need to remain vigilant on tax issues, and that GCGA was re-organizing its Tax Committee to monitor citrus valuations in "Gulf" counties in the months ahead. He also cited the association's successful efforts in working to lower ad valorem taxes in Charlotte County during the year.

"Despite the increasing list of 'challenges'...we are prepared to take them 'head on' through GCGA," said Soud.

Callie Walker, GCGA treasurer, reported that even with the economic pres-

ures impacting all sectors that the association had a very positive year "financially." She noted that the success was due to reductions in expenses and excellent support by grower and associate members for GCGA's special events. Copies of the annual audit are available to members by contacting the GCGA office.

Ron Hamel, GCGA executive vice president thanked the 24th annual meeting luncheon sponsors: **AgLIME Sales, Citrus ExpoSM, Southern Gardens Citrus and Syngenta Crop Protection.**

Ron Hamel and Carey Soud recognized out going board members Steve Smith and Mike Murphy for their leadership and support of the association. The two GCGA officers also recognized the 10 and 20 year "associate members" for their years' of support of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association. Please see page two and the "special insert" for detailed information regarding the companies that were honored by GCGA for their membership and support.



GCGA "Thanks" Smith

Steve Smith, (right) who served as Alico, Inc.'s representative from Hendry County on the Gulf Citrus Growers Association's board of directors and as association vice president was presented Bill North artwork by GCGA President Carey Soud.



24th Annual Meeting

Gulf citrus growers received reports on key issues from the GCGA leadership at the association's annual meeting. The organization had another successful year in its service to the citrus growers in the region.



GCGA "Thanks" Murphy

Mike Murphy of Cooperative Producers, Inc. (left), who served the Gulf Citrus Growers Association as a member of the board of directors and as chairman of the GCGA's labor relations committee was presented Bill North artwork by Ron Hamel.

GCGA's Scholarship Foundation Holds 2010 Annual Meeting

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association Scholarship Foundation held its 2010 Annual Meeting in conjunction with GCGA's 24th session.

Foundation President Callie Walker presided over the membership meeting. She recognized foundation board members John Hoffman, vice president; Joe English, secretary/treasurer; Norm Todd, director and David Wheeler, director and thanked them for their support during the

year. She also thanked the members for their support of the foundation.

Walker reported that the foundation had awarded scholarships to Assma Zekri, Matt Miller, Alex Jones and Michelle Hayes. In addition, she noted that the foundation continued to make scholarship awards through the Southwest Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

She reported that to date, GCGA and its foundation have awarded over \$68,000

in scholarships to deserving students.

The membership re-elected Walker to a three-year term on the foundation's board of directors.

Walker concluded her remarks by urging grower and associate members to join the foundation and contribute to the future of Florida's agriculture by supporting students' education.



Association Hosts 14th “Gulf Classic” at Verandah

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association hosted the 14th Annual “Gulf Classic” Golf Tournament May 14, 2010 at Verandah Country Club. Twenty-eight (28) teams competed in this year’s tournament, reflecting continuous industry-wide support of this GCGA event.

The “Gulf Classic,” coordinated and directed through the association’s Associate Member Committee, is one of key “special events” which financially supports the organization’s community and governmental relations programs in the region.

“Our association is truly thankful for the continual sponsorship support of the ‘Gulf Classic’ by both grower and associate members,” said Ron Hamel, GCGA executive vice president. “The Associate Committee is to be commended, once again for putting on a first class event,” he added.

The 2010 “Gulf Classic” Tournament Committee included **Stacy McCullough**, Farm Credit of Southwest Florida, Chairman; **Alison Pool**, Brown and Brown Insurance; **Jeff Campbell**, Campbell Insurance; **Julie Forrest**, Stallings Crop Insurance, Corp.; **Rachel Walters**, Bayer CropScience; **Richard Woodruff**, WilsonMiller, Inc.; **Robert Murray**; **Sarah Markle**, Valent USA; **Sonya Carns**, Ag-Tronix, Inc. and **Bernadette Rashford**, GCGA.

This year’s “Gulf Classic” featured a \$1000 cash prize drawing for registered golfers, a 50-50 putting contest, individual “special hole” prizes and “awards” for the first, second and third place teams.

This year’s “first place” winning team was sponsored by Car Two and included **John Paul**, **Mike Halloran**, **Eddie Rodriguez** and **Aaron Dressel**. Winning “second place” was the Orange Co. team, comprised of **Buddy Strickland**, **Jerry Newlin**, **Charlie Christopherson** and **Grant Erickson**. Coming in “third place” was the H&H Harvesting team including **Wesley Hansen**, **Joey Walker**, **Mike Keelan** and **Joe Strouse**.

Winners of the 14th Annual “Gulf Classic” individual awards were as follows:

Most Accurate Drive, **Jim Boncosky**; Longest Drive, **Drew Duda** and **Mike Moore**; Longest Putt, **Eddie Rodriguez**; Closest to the Pin, **Miller Couse** and **Wade Timpner** and Putting Contest, **Sam Carns**.



First Place Team Sponsored by Car Two!

L to R: Eddie Rodriguez, Mike Halloran, Aaron Dressel and John Paul comprised the foursome of the winning “Car Two” team.



Orange Co. Foursome Places Second!

L to R: Grant Erickson, Charlie Christopherson, Buddy Strickland and Jerry Newlin represented “Orange Co.”.



Blakesley Wins \$1000 Cash Grand Prize!

Randy Blakesley of Wallace International Trucks, Inc. was the lucky winner of the “Gulf Classic’s” first \$1000 cash prize for participating golfers in the tournament. Sonya Carns presents the “big bucks” at the luncheon.



2010 Gulf Classic Tournament Sponsors

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

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Citrus ExpoSM/Citrus Industry Magazine

Gulf Citrus Growers Association

Visors

Bayer CropScience

50/50 Putting Contest

Scotts Professional Horticulture

Closest to the PIN

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& Technology, Inc.
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Longest Drive

Car Two
Valent USA

Longest Putt

Florida Citrus Management, Inc.

Most Accurate Drive

Heller Brothers

Tee/Green

Agri-Property Consultants, Inc.
Ag-Tronix, Inc.
Brown and Brown Insurance
Chemtura Corporation
Culligan Water
Custom Citrus Care, Inc.
DeSoto AutoMall

Evans Properties, Inc.

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Tranex, Inc. dba Valencia

Harvesting (Tee)

Valent USA

Wedgworth’s, Inc.

Wheeler Brothers, Inc.

WilsonMiller, Inc.

GCGA Actively Engaged in Water, Land & Environmental Issues

During past several months, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association has continued to represent its members on key issues related to water management, habitat protection and land use.

Water Supply Planning

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is well into its 5-year revision of the Lower West Coast Water Supply Plan, which is mandated by state law. The plan links the water supply needs of "legal users" (agricultural and urban) and the natural systems to the surface and ground water supplies in the region.

Working closely with the Florida Department of Agriculture's Office of Water Policy and UF/IFAS/SWFREC staff in the region, GCGA leaders have been interacting with the SFWMD's planning staff to assure that ample water supplies are available for AG out to 2030.

Due to the "misperception" that agricultural use will decline in the region, the association's "team" has had to redouble its efforts to educate the district's planners that AG will remain a viable and sustainable land use in Southwest Florida. Special meetings and conference calls have been held to address these concerns and we are making progress. GCGA will remain engaged throughout the process.

EPA's Nutrient Criteria

The association, through its participation in the Florida Water Quality Coalition, continues to collectively push for "scientifically-based" and "achievable" water quality standards as opposed to EPA's proposed numeric nutrient criteria. GCGA has signed on to coalition letters to Florida's Congressional delegation,

testified at EPA hearings and other joint efforts aimed at delaying EPA's actions until accurate "science" and "economics" are properly considered.

Gulf Citrus BMPs

GCGA, FDACS and UF/IFAS cooperatively work to implement "Gulf Citrus" BMPs in the region. As the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) continues its efforts in the Caloosahatchee River Basins regarding TMDLs and BMAPs, it is imperative that citrus growers/agriculturalists continue to implement the BMPs that have been adopted by rule for their commodities.



Vote NO on #4

The association is participating in the "Vote NO on 4" campaign which is being implemented to defeat Amendment 4! GCGA is spreading the word to vote "No On 4" through its newsletters, mailings, e-mails, yard signs and other messaging in rural Southwest Florida.

Panther "Partnership"

Through GCGA, the region's landowners are building a "partnership" with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wild-

life Service to develop "incentives" for protecting Florida panther habitat. Dr. Jack Payne, UF/IFAS' senior vice president, whose professional background is in natural resources management, has agreed to participate in the effort. The goal is to find innovative ways to "incentivize" landowners and protect habitat for the panther, while also protecting private property rights. The group plans to get back together this fall.

AG/Rural Lands

GCGA leaders are actively engaged in the various county land planning initiatives that are underway. Charlotte, Hendry and Lee planners are in the process of updating their COMP plans, and are discussing various agricultural/rural land "protection" options. Working with the respective "advisory committees" and with landowners, GCGA leaders continue to have input into the counties' planning processes.

Food Safety/GAPs

Florida citrus (fresh and processed fruit) producers are drafting a "Good Agricultural Practices" (GAPs) document in response to new regulations from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration related to the "food safety" of produce. GCGA leaders are working with other citrus groups to draft a consensus document that reflects "grower" input.

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