

News



Spring - 2008



“Gulf” County Planners Focus on AG & Rural Lands

Many “Gulf Citrus” leaders predicted back in the mid-80s that mounting pressures from the rapidly growing urban areas of the region’s coastal counties would lead to initiatives to “protect” and “preserve” the rural and agricultural lands of Southwest Florida. Those “early” prognosticators had clear crystal balls...as today, all five counties...Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee are facing some form of land use review and/or planning initiative! The focus of these efforts is principally on the “private” rural and agricultural lands on which “the planners” base their future hopes for environmental preservation, “rural character,” AG “protection” and economic development!

Front and center are the words “stewardship” and “sustainability.” And, these discussions, although county-specific, are heavily influenced by national, state, regional and local individuals from government, the environment and consulting firms. The state agency most influencing the discussions is the Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA).

GCGA recently reviewed the key planning activities from the past and those currently underway from “county” and “statewide” perspectives.

Collier County

Most of the aggressive action regarding rural land use has taken place since the late 1990’s. It began with the legal challenges by environmentalists to Collier County’s Growth Management Plan. In 1999, when

Collier County was faced with the State Administration Commission’s “Final Order” leaders in government, agriculture, business and the environment came together to address the contentious issues framed in “the Order”. The County Commission “officially” appointed a 14-member citizens’ committee and tasked it with resolving the key issues, primarily natural resources protection and “density levels” in the rural, eastern part of the county. After a 3-year “public” process and 33 meetings, the “Collier County Rural Land Stewardship Area (RLSA) Overlay” was created and adopted in 2003. It was hailed as a “win-win” by Governor Jeb Bush, the Florida Cabinet and DCA! It had four “goals”: 1) To protect agricultural activities, to prevent the premature conversion of AG land to non-agricultural uses; 2) To direct incompatible uses away from wetlands and upland habitat; 3) To enable the conversion of rural land to other uses in appropriate locations; and 4) to discourage urban sprawl, and encourage development that utilizes creative land use planning techniques.

Collier’s Rural Land Stewardship Area (RLSA) Overlay became Florida’s first effort of providing “incentives” to private landowners who “voluntarily” set aside environmentally sensitive lands for the rights to intensify land uses in other areas. Nearly 200,000 rural acres, containing prime environmental acreage, were placed under the RLSA. This “pioneering” effort was recog-

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President's Message

As I complete my third term as president of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association, I would like to express my gratitude to the GCGA board members for the faith, confidence and cooperation that they provide to me and our staff! The association's leaders are truly "team players" and provide excellent "stewardship" of our organization's resources! As we prepare for GCGA's 22nd Annual Meeting on June 4th, please know that I am very appreciative of the leadership opportunities that have been bestowed upon me! And, I certainly wish to thank all the members and staff for their tremendous support. It is a special privilege for me to represent such an effective "grower" organization!

This year, I had the honor of participating in festive ceremonies recognizing two key industry and GCGA leaders, Hugh English and Norm Todd. Hugh was inducted into the Florida Agriculture Hall of Fame. And about a month later, Norm was inducted into the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame. I am proud to congratulate these "lifetime" leaders for their achievements and also thank their families for providing the support necessary for them to serve our agricultural industry! While this top level of recognition is publicly celebrated, from my perspective it also should serve as a "reminder" that many of our veteran leaders are completing their careers and will be providing new "leadership opportunities" to others in our industry.

As a graduate of UF/IFAS' Wedgworth Leadership Institute, I am pleased to note that many younger leaders are "stepping up" and getting involved in leadership roles in many citrus and agricultural organizations! They, along with members of the next generation from traditional agricultural families, hold the key to



David Wheeler

the future successes of our organizations. Our industry organizations need to "recruit" and motivate these prospective new leaders who will bring creative and innovative ideas to the table. As the issues facing the production of our food and fiber grow more complex, new technologies and management tactics will need to be applied to our operations. The upcoming generation, which has been educated in the latest practices at key land-grant colleges and universities, such as the University of Florida, will certainly be given "the challenges" of keeping our agricultural businesses profitable.

We at GCGA are fortunate that many of our local "younger" leaders are volunteering to serve on our board or on our operational committees. In addition, we are definitely and extremely pleased that many of the "Gulf Citrus" veteran leaders are "volunteering" to help lead our organization into the future! In the coming months, and through the "Long Range Planning Committee," chaired by George Austin, the association leadership is gearing up to develop a long-range plan to guide the organization into the future. Based on the recently conducted study of the "Future of Agriculture In SW Florida" by the Lutgert College of Business, Florida Gulf Coast University, the association's leaders will provide a plan to "re-position" and "re-vitalize" the resources of our organization. We will encourage creative thinking and concepts to enable "Gulf Citrus" to continue to provide the level of leadership and representation necessary to sustain agriculture in Southwest Florida.

I encourage our leaders and members to become involved in this process. As I see it, "GCGA" is a progressive and very effective grower organization. WE need to keep it that way!

GCGA Luncheon Issues: "Water", "Research"

Gulf Citrus Growers Association member luncheons recently focused on two of the key issues facing growers in Southwest Florida's "gulf" production region: water allocations and management and citrus research dealing with "greening" and "canker."

Leading into the record drought last fall, GCGA organized a member meeting centered on the citrus/agricultural issues related to the severe water shortage in the region. Speakers for the program included three of Florida's leading experts on AG water issues including Tom MacVicar of MacVicar, Federico & Lamb; Chuck Aller, Director of Agricultural Natural Resources Management, Florida Department of Agriculture and Chip Merriam, Deputy Executive Director for Water Resources, South Florida Water Management District. The speakers addressed the water shortage, future water supply, consumptive water use permitting, water quality/total maxi-



mum daily loads (TMDLs) and best management practices from the agricultural perspective.

At the February 6th meeting the focus was on Florida's citrus research issues. John Jackson, Director of the Florida Citrus Industry Research Coordinating Council (FCIRCC), presented the latest information regarding the industry's key initiatives related to citrus "Greening" and "Canker." Jackson pointed out the unprecedented challenges to research from both the complexity of the bacterial diseases crippling our citrus and from the budget shortfalls at both the federal and state levels.

Gulf Citrus Growers Association 2007-2008 Board of Directors

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Wade Timpner, Secretary
Callie Walker, Treasurer
Don Barwick
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Joe Hilliard, II
John Hoffman
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Publisher's Statement

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GCGA Elections Scheduled for 2008-09 Directors



2007-2008 Gulf Citrus Growers Association Board of Directors

(Standing L to R) Ron Hamel, Wayne Simmons, Joe Hilliard, II, Mike Murphy, David Wheeler, Wade Timpner, Emmett Evans, III and Don Barwick. (Seated) John Hoffman, Carey Soud, Callie Walker, Mark Colbert and Steve Smith. Paul Meador absent from photo.

Elections for "county" citrus grower representatives to serve on the 2008-2009 Gulf Citrus Growers Association's Board of Directors have been scheduled for May 15th and 16th. GCGA Secretary Wade Timpner, who serves as chairman of the association's nominating committee, reminds voting members that each of the five counties within the GCGA membership will elect at least one director at its respective annual meeting. Based on the association's current "grower" membership, Charlotte, Glades and Lee counties will each elect one director, Collier will elect three (3) directors and Hendry will elect five (5).

The date, time and location of each of the "County" annual meetings to elect GCGA directors and conduct business are listed below. The two "at-large" directors will be formally elected at the "Gulf Citrus" annual meeting set for June 4th in LaBelle. The 13-member board will also be "officially" seated at the organization's annual meeting.

Directors' Elections

Thursday, May 15th

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 16th

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

Wednesday, June 4th

Annual Meeting (Two at-large)
10:30 a.m. Townsend AG Center; LaBelle



GCGA 2007-2008 Board of Directors & Counties of Representation

Charlotte County

Emmett Evans, III
Evans Properties, Inc.

Collier County

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

Glades County

David Wheeler
Wheeler Farms, Inc.

Hendry County

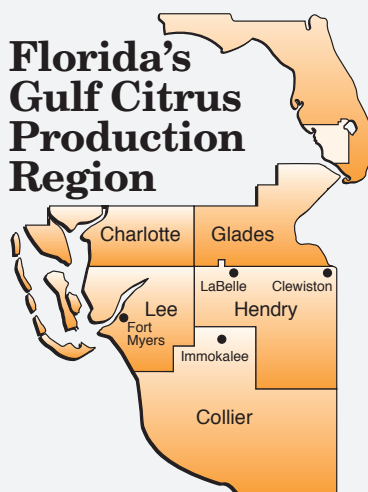
Mark Colbert
Duda Farm Fresh Foods
Joe Hilliard, II
Hilliard Brothers, Inc.
Wayne Simmons
LaBelle Fruit Co. LLC
Steve Smith
Alico, Inc.
Carey Soud
Soud Family Partnership

Lee County

Wade Timpner
George Austin, Inc.

At-Large Seats

Don Barwick
Heller Brothers Packing
Corp.
Callie Walker
English Brothers



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.

8th Annual GCGA "Country Gala" Creates Excitement!

When the thoughts of a good ole fashioned fun-filled evening come to mind... the 8th Annual "Country Gala" held March 29th at the LaBelle Civic Center would have to rank at the top of the list! From the warm "local hometown" atmosphere to the best tastin' steaks this side of heaven, this year's "Gala" provided a much-needed positive social event for members of the citrus family and their friends and guests to get together and celebrate! This year's Gala also broke another "record" from the financial perspective.

Over 300 "country" and "city" folks enjoyed the action-packed Saturday evening soiree' generating financial support for the Gulf Citrus Growers Association's community and governmental relations programs

throughout the region. This year, 64 companies supported the "Country Gala" as sponsors for the event. Additionally, over 36 local donors contributed outstanding raffle and auction items adding to the financial success of the event. The "Country Gala" has grown to become the association's number one "fun-raising" activity of the year! "Our organization is very fortunate to merit the incredible level of support it has had from this single event," said Ron Hamel, executive vice president of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association. "We are especially proud that the Hendry County Cattlemen's Association continues to join with us for the evening and prepare the best steaks in Southwest Florida," he added. He also

singled-out "auctioneer" Jack Burges of First Capital Realty for his eight years of continual leadership on the silent and live auctions which have become one of the most fun and exciting parts of the evening.

"We are truly blessed with an increasing number of volunteers who keep the 'Gala' running smoothly throughout the evening. From our 'set-up' days and throughout the entire event, these folks handle the many details that make this event so much fun and financially beneficial. We could not host such an exciting event without all the volunteers," said Hamel. "We, the staff and GCGA board, would like to thank all those who contributed to the success of this year's "Country Gala," he added.



The 2008 Country Gala Highlights

Top Left: Over 300 folks joined in the evening's fun and festivities!

Top Middle: Wade and Becky Timpner and "Gulf Citrus" President David Wheeler (center) "visit" during the reception.

Top Right: Kristi English (left) draws winning ticket #0073...and Ron Hamel presents the \$1000 GCGA check to Louise Rimes of LaBelle.

Second Left: GCGA "Thanks" Jack Burges "auctioneer extraordinaire" for his eight years of enthusiastic support!

Second Right: The bucket raffle and auctions are "special attractions" and help generate revenue for GCGA community and government relations efforts.

Third Left: The Cattlemen's steaks... and all the trimmin's were scrumptious!!!

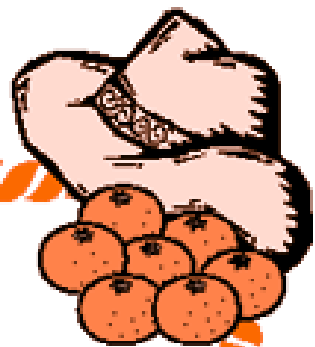
Third Right: Everett Loukonen (left) "networks" with Dr. Calvin Arnold, USDA.

Bottom: The "official" greeting gals made the evening's festivities fun!

Gulf Citrus thanks WilsonMiller for these photos!

Thanks

to our
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Sanibel Harbour Resort & Spa ♦ Soud Family Partnership ♦ Southwest Capital Bank
T & M Portable Restrooms ♦ 'Tween Waters Inn ♦ The Veranda ♦ Tim Lewis ♦ Wade Timpner



22nd GCGA Annual Meeting Scheduled for LaBelle

The board of directors of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association has scheduled the organization's twenty-second annual meeting for Wednesday, June 4, 2008 at the Dallas Townsend Agricultural Center in LaBelle. The meeting will begin at 10:30 a.m., and will include a member luncheon.

Through "Gulf Citrus" the region's citrus growers continue to focus their collective efforts to address the key local and regional issues having impact to the "bottom lines" of their operations ... including land use, water management, taxation, and pest/diseases. The association serves as the "growers' voice" in Southwest Florida in communications

with elected officials, civic and community organizations and the mass media.

"Special Guest" & Speaker Steve Seibert Executive Director Florida Century Commission

The annual meeting will include committee updates and reports on several of the issues facing growers, as well as the annual election of two "at-large" directors to serve for the 2008-09 year. Following the elections, the 2008-09 board and officers will be "officially" seated. The

program will also feature annual recognitions of key individuals who have supported the industry.

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association's Scholarship Foundation will hold its annual meeting in conjunction with the GCGA session. Reports from the foundation's officers will be presented to the membership of both organizations.

GCGA members will be receiving an invitation letter to attend the 22nd annual meeting, along with an enclosed RSVP card. Although there is no charge for the luncheon, members are encouraged to "register" to attend the meeting. Please return the "card" or call the office at (863) 675-2180 to RSVP!

2008 Citrus Expo Set for August 20 & 21, Planning Underway

With the hope of breaking the all-time citrus grower attendee record set in 2007, the Citrus Expo Steering Committee has been meeting and planning the event for August 20-21, 2008!

As recently reported by Gary Cooper of Southeast AgNet/*Citrus Industry Magazine*, the number of exhibitor reservations for the tradeshow section of the 17th annual Citrus Expo has surpassed the halfway mark, and is well ahead of schedule. Cooper urges those companies contemplating exhibiting at the tradeshow to contact Citrus Expo "headquarters" at (www.CitrusExpo.net) and obtain the needed forms and information to register. Last year's tradeshow "sold out" with over 150 exhibitors, hosting more than 2,200 attendees for the two day event.

The 2008 Citrus Expo Steering Committee recently unveiled the theme: "Seeking Profitability Through Interim Innovations" for this year's event. The theme was selected following input from committee members as well as suggestions from the industry throughout Florida, and aptly describes the mood of growers and industry for the seminar sessions scheduled for August 20th and 21st. Over the next few weeks, the committee will be putting the sub-sections together and contacting the speakers for each subject to be presented at the seminars.

This year's Steering Committee includes Ron Hamel and Norm Todd from Gulf Citrus Growers Association; Ray Royce and Bobby Barben from Highlands County Citrus Growers Asso-



ciation; Barbara Carlton and Rowdy Bateman from Peace River Valley Citrus Growers Association; Jerry Newlin from Florida Production Managers' Association; Drs. Harold Browning and Tim Spann from the UF/IFAS Citrus Research and Education Center, Lake Alfred, and Dr. Bob Rouse from UF/IFAS Southwest Florida Research and Education Center, Immokalee; Richard Buker, Helena Chemical; Robert Murray, Wegdworth's, Inc.; and Rachel Walters, Bayer CropScience. The Steering Committee also includes Gary Cooper, Robin Loftin and Dave Herndon from the staff of Southeast AgNet/*Citrus Industry Magazine* which organizes and operates Citrus Expo.

Gulf Citrus Growers Association's members can access pre-registration and other information on the 2008 Citrus Expo on-line through the association's website:

www.gulfcitrus.org! There is a direct link to Citrus Expo on the home page!

The Annual Gulf Citrus Expo Banquet will be held the evening of August 20th at the Harborside Event Center in downtown Ft. Myers. Invitations will be sent out in July and reservations can also be made through the GCGA offices at (863) 675-2180.

Citrus Expo is organized and operated by *Citrus Industry Magazine* and Southeast AgNet Radio Network. The event includes representatives from Gulf, Highlands and Peace River Valley Citrus Growers Associations, Florida Citrus Production Managers' Association and the University of Florida/IFAS Research and Education Centers. A large portion of Expo proceeds are donated annually to support citrus research and to the regional grower association programs.

“Gulf” County Planners Focus on AG & Rural Lands

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nized by 1000 Friends of Florida and the Council for Sustainable Florida for its creative strategy to “smart growth.” The Collier RLSA Overlay uses “stewardship credits” as the “currency” for increasing land use densities in areas suitable for development. The “credits” are based on environmental values with “key environments” bringing the most “credits”! The firm, WilsonMiller, worked with private land owners and the committee to create the concept. Today, the new town of Ave Maria is being established under the Collier RLSA program, and is the first new development in the county since the program’s adoption. The second project called Big Cypress is currently going through the process.

Presently, the Collier County RLSA program is undergoing its “mandatory” 5-year review. The county commission recently appointed the “Rural Lands Stewardship Area Review Committee” which is meeting monthly to evaluate the program in meeting the Goal, Objectives and Policies as outlined in the Future Land Use Element of the Growth Management Plan. Ron Hamel, executive vice president of GCGA, was elected chairman. Tom Jones of the Barron Collier Companies also serves, along with other community leaders. Its activities are governed by the Florida Government in the Sunshine Law and meetings are open to the public. County Manager Jim Mudd is quick to point out that the Collier program is not subject to the requirements of the State of Florida’s RLSA program established in 2001 under s. 163.3177(11)(d)8, F. S.

Hendry County

Meanwhile, in rural Hendry, one of Florida’s top agricultural counties, DCA has put up funds to conduct a study related to the county’s future land use planning. The County Commission has hired the RWA Consulting firm to conduct the rural/AG lands study. Public workshops have been held in efforts to inform land owners and other citizens, as well as to gather input from all sectors of the community. On March 18th, the “Gulf Citrus” Board and Governmental Affairs Committee held a “special session” with county planner Vince Cautero and the RWA “study team” to get “first hand” knowledge and to communicate the concerns of citrus/AG land owners. County planners told the group that the study was to provide for the “long-term” planning of rural and agricul-

tural lands, while respecting private property rights. In the words of Bob Mulhere, RWA principal planner, this study will assist Hendry County to address the key issues facing its rural and AG lands, as well as serve as a basis for the county’s “Comp Plan” goals, objectives and policies that can be incorporated in the ongoing Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) process which is mandated by DCA. To date, GCGA and individual land owners are actively engaged in the study which should be completed this summer.

Lee County

In Southeastern Lee County the primary focus is on the 83,000 acres in the Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource Area (DR/GR). The Lee County “Smart Growth Committee” and recently formed DR/GR Steering Committee are in the middle of creating a long-range land use plan for the area. The 15-member steering committee recommended and the Lee Commission approved nearly \$700,000 to launch a public planning process for the “DR/GR,” and the consulting firm Dover, Kohl & Partners is on the job. Workshops were conducted April 16-18 in Ft. Myers with hundreds participating. On April 18th, a special session was organized by Lee County’s planning staff and Dover/Kohl to discuss the findings of the workshops. Ron Hamel and Dr. John Dunckelman, UF/IFAS’ Southwest Florida Research and Education Center participated in the discussion related to “sustaining” agriculture lands. Hamel reiterated his previous input and that of Dr. Fritz Roka, ag-economist...that the future success of agriculture is in a farm’s profitability. The AG leaders all cautioned that “flexibility” and “incentives” are key tools. Once again the debate is centered on maintaining the necessary natural resources and rural values...while allowing for free-market economic opportunities and respecting private property rights.

Charlotte County

In Charlotte County the “front page” story is the 73,000 acre Babcock Ranch which the state purchased in 2006. Since the purchase, state agencies and land planners are “wrangling” with how to manage the property. These discussions are being held at the “Cabinet” level and Florida’s Agriculture Commissioner Charlie Bronson feels strongly that Babcock should be managed as a “working ranch.” According to the deal, Babcock Ranch Management LLC will be allowed to manage for 10

years. However, state agencies are engaged in developing plans for the ranch which calls for land use restrictions.

“Babcock” is not the only planning exercise going on in the county. The county’s Agricultural & Natural Resources Advisory Committee (ANRAC) members have been reviewing Land Development Regulations (LDRs), an “East County Plan” and proposed “Comp Plan” amendments geared to the rural and AG lands. The ANRAC is also studying Rural Land Stewardship programs. Committee Chair Al Cheatham continues to express concerns that many concepts promoted by county and state planners add restrictions to land use which are counter-productive to achieving desired goals of “sustaining” farm operations.

Glades County

Lykes Ranch with 258,633 acres has been engaged in discussions regarding the creation of a Rural Land Stewardship Area in this rural county. County manager Wendell Taylor is monitoring this effort.

State of Florida

Florida’s initial statute has been amended four times since passed in 2001! It is clear that the state legislature and governmental agencies are wrestling with a “statewide” RLSA initiative which can serve as a “template” for the counties.

Currently, DCA Secretary Tom Pelham is expressing his “concerns” with the “effectiveness” of the state’s and Collier County’s RLSA efforts to meet their goals. Secretary Pelham has initiated rulemaking to re-address the goals of conserving agri-lands and enhancing rural economies. Workshops are being held to discuss his concerns and develop new rules. DCA has also issued its first annual report to the Florida Legislature on the RLSA program.

The Florida House of Representatives Environmental & Natural Resources Council has also been studying the “Conservation/Preservation” of agricultural lands and has presented an update to the Committee on Agribusiness chaired by Rep. Denise Grimsley in January 2008. Commissioner Charlie Bronson recently wrote a “guest column” circulated to statewide media promoting “tweaking” the state’s Florida Forever program . . . to include a “line-item” in its budget to purchase development rights on rural property. Bronson claims that such an approach would keep a portion of Florida’s desirable “conservation” lands in farming and ranching. Stay tuned!

The Future of Agriculture in Southwest Florida

Business leaders from the five county area were recently "briefed" on the future of agriculture in one of United States' fastest "growing" regions! Hosted by The Chamber of Southwest Florida and sponsored by Alico, Inc., Barron Collier Companies, Collier Enterprises and "Gulf Citrus" the presentations featured an economic overview of agriculture's impact in the region.

Dr. Fritz Roka, UF agricultural economist, reported that the region's agricultural production generates nearly one-billion dollars in farm gate sales annually on about 1.5 million acres. Dr. Roka added that using "an economic multiplier" the total contribution to the regional economy is more than \$1.4 billion annually.

Drs. Howard Finch and Stuart Van

Auken, both "Alico Chairs" at the Lutgert College of Business, Florida Gulf Coast University, discussed their study, "Ag Business in SW Florida: Present and



Future." The study, compiled recently following personal interviews with the region's major agricultural executives, noted that the future should be bright! "There shouldn't be a question mark regarding the future of agriculture in this region," said Dr. Finch. "In fact, the

importance of Southwest Florida's agricultural industry to the state as a whole... is expected to grow," he added. The study cited several reasons to support this finding including geographical location, greater development pressures in Central, Eastern and Southeast Florida and the types of crops grown in this region.

However, Drs. Roka, Finch and Van Auken noted the "challenges" facing the farmers. They claimed pests and diseases; labor availability and costs; development pressures, water management and global trade deals were issues impacting agriculture's future.

Presentations regarding the economic impact and "future" of agriculture in the region have become a major initiative for the Gulf Citrus Growers Association.

GCGA Leaders Inducted into AG & Citrus Halls of Fame

Two outstanding citrus grower leaders have recently been inducted into two of Florida agriculture's Halls of Fame.

On February 12th at the Florida State Fair in Tampa, Hugh M. English was inducted into the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame. English was recognized for his years of steadfast leadership to the state's citrus and vegetable industries including his service as president of "Gulf Citrus" and the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association. He also served as chairman of the Florida Citrus Commission and on the Board of the South Florida Water Management District.

Norman Todd, the "Godfather" of the Box Tax" was inducted into the Florida



Citrus Leaders Recognized!

Their service to Florida's citrus industry continues! Hugh English (left) awards Norman Todd (right) his induction plaque as a member of the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame. English was recently inducted into the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame and in 2000 was welcomed into the Citrus Hall!

Citrus Hall of Fame on March 7th in a ceremony at Florida Southern College. Todd's list of leadership positions included President of the Florida Citrus Production Managers, chairman of UF/IFAS' Citrus Extension Committee and chairman of the FDOC/Citrus Research Advisory Committee.

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