

News



Spring – 2010



Gulf Citrus Guards Growers' Water Fronts

Since the mid-80s, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association (GCGA) has ranked water “quantity” and “quality” issues at the top of its working “agenda”! In fact, the initial documents of “Gulf Citrus” noted that the newly forming association would advocate for “fair and workable water regulations,” and for the “fair allocation of water resources”!

A review of GCGA’s history shows its continual commitment to addressing the water issues impacting SW Florida’s citrus growers...for nearly 25 years! From its years of involvement in the South Florida Water Management District’s (SFWMD) water supply planning efforts and in the district’s consumptive use permitting processes ... to its participation in the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s (FDEP) water quality initiatives, and its recent public opposition to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) proposed “unrealistic” water quality rules for Florida... “Gulf Citrus” has effectively represented the region’s citrus growers with credibility and integrity!

Over the years, GCGA’s efforts have been lead by a “team” of dedicated leaders, informed staff and key associate members who have expertise in water management. Leaders such as Hugh English, Dallas Townsend, Bernie Lester, Tom Jones, Ed English, Joe

Marlin Hilliard, Joe Hilliard, Rick Dantzler, John R. Alexander, Pete Coultas, Mark Colbert, Ray March, Irene Quincey, Steve Lamb, Tom MacVicar, Tommy Perry and Bob Howard have “volunteered” thousands of hours to assure “balanced” water policy for the region’s growers, farmers and ranchers. The association’s founding president, Hugh English, served on the Governing Board of the SFWMD. Leaders from the Florida Department of Agriculture’s Office of Water Policy including Chuck Aller, Rich Budell and Rebecca Elliott have also been engaged. As have University of Florida/IFAS extension faculty members Dr. Brian Boman, Dr. Ed Hanlon, Dr. Mongi Zekri and Gene McAvoy.

Dealing with the “flood” of water issues...takes ever-vigilant AG “lifeguards,” who keep constant “watch” on the agencies making and updating the rules, regulations and policies. The association’s “team” members have changed over the years, but their mission remains focused. Here is an update on GCGA’s current water management efforts!

EPA’s Quality Criteria

Since EPA recently stepped in to “preempt” the FDEP’s efforts to set “scientifically based” water quality

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President's Message

It has been my distinct honor to serve as President of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association for the 2009-2010 year, and to work alongside a very talented "team." Our association's Board of Directors earns the trust that **you**, the membership, place in this elected body. It continues to provide thoughtful and strategic leadership. The GCGA staff members, Ron and Bernadette, are diligent stewards of the Board's direction. It truly has been a pleasure working with each of you "as a team," and "as individuals" to lead "Gulf Citrus." GCGA has prospered even in times of adversity...and we remain a financially strong organization despite the challenges that have come our way.

Today, **Sustainability** is a hot topic in land use planning, and in the agricultural and environmental intellectual marketplace. From my seat, it is difficult to see through the cloud of uncertainty that is rampant among agricultural investments. There is an old saying that, "capital will always seek a market rate of return," and land that has been in agricultural production for many generations does not have to continue. We often accuse the second or third generations of "selling out" because of greed or because they don't have what it takes to work the land. But, maybe those generations are smarter than we give them credit for!



Carey Soud

Uncertainty continues to be an agricultural investment's greatest foe. What uncertainty? How about cap and trade; immigration reform; numeric nutrient water quality standards; citrus "greening," "canker" and "black spot"; health-care reform (or maybe not); "globalization" with lower production costs abroad; land use legislation; federal taxation (estate, income, and capital gains). And the list goes on and on. Are higher returns on equity achievable in other countries, sectors or industries? It is **that pursuit** that gets us up, out of bed... and adds a measure of "excitement" to our routine.

What is it that makes this industry, the GCGA organization, and our country

excel and prosper? It's the people! Not our natural resources, but our individual resourcefulness! Never have I seen that "fleshed out" more...than in the lives of those I have had the privilege to work with at "Gulf Citrus" for the past 20 or so years. Those like Bernie Lester, Hugh English, George Austin, Greg Carlton, Bryan and Victor Beer etc., etc. Sorry, that I can't name all those who have contributed in this limited space! It is the people...their risk-taking, intelligence, hard work, passion, and discipline that makes this organization and our country prosper. They have added a measure of **certainty** to an **uncertain** marketplace.

**What is it that
makes this industry, the
GCGA organization, and our
country excel and prosper?
It's the people!**

It is also our "goodness" that God has looked down upon and blessed us with an overflowing prosperity. We are a very blessed organization and a nation under God. My prayer is that we will see many more blessings and better times in the years ahead. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to lead GCGA!

GCGA Leads in Charlotte Tax Reductions

Through the efforts of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association's Charlotte County grower members, citrus growers throughout the county received re-calculations of their grove valuations and lower ad valorem taxes for the 2009 year.

"This is an excellent example of what citrus growers can accomplish by working together and through an association like 'Gulf Citrus,'" said Ron Hamel, executive vice president of GCGA. "Based on the economic evaluation of our efforts, which were successful in having the Charlotte County Property Appraiser's Office reduce the value of base citrus land from \$4,309 to \$1,831...a reduction of \$2,478 per acre, and applying the 2009 millage rate of 15.7577...the average tax reduction was typically about \$39

per acre," added Hamel. "This is a real significant savings for **all** citrus growers in the county."

The communications efforts to work with the Charlotte County Property Appraiser's Office agricultural staff and representatives of the Florida Department of Revenue's AG appraisal staff were lead by Cliff Bowen, Jerry Beasman, Emery Smith and Fred Walters, along with Ron Hamel.

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association is in the process of re-organizing its Tax Committee. GCGA President Carey Soud is currently seeking volunteers to serve on the committee which will be working closely with growers and county property appraisers' agricultural staff to ensure that the property data is accurate and the assessments are fair and equitable.

Gulf Citrus Growers Association 2009-2010 Board of Directors

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Callie Walker, Treasurer
Don Barwick
Mark Colbert
Emmett Evans, III
Joe Hilliard, II
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Paul Meador
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Gulf Citrus Growers Schedules 2010-11 Directors Elections



2009-2010 Gulf Citrus Growers Association Board of Directors

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

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association's board of directors has scheduled the series of "county elections" for citrus grower representatives to serve on the 2010-2011 association board. This year's county elections will be held on May 20th and 21st.

Wade Timpner, GCGA Secretary and chairman of the nominating committee, notes that each of the five counties in the association is entitled to at least one director to serve on the board. The county directors will be elected by the attending citrus grow-

ers during each county's "annual meeting" and according to GCGA's by-laws.

All communications, including the schedules, the by-laws information regarding county elections and the participation forms and ballots will be sent to each voting citrus grower member of the association a couple of weeks prior to the elections. Based upon the association's current "grower" membership, Charlotte, Glades and Lee counties will each elect one director. Collier will elect three (3),

and Hendry five (5) directors.

Ballots to elect the two (2) "At Large" directors will also be sent out with the voting schedule and detailed information.

This year, the GCGA board has recommended that the association's two "At Large" directors be elected by ballot. So please make sure to vote for these directors with the "official" ballot labeled "At Large" that will be part of our election mailing to voting members.



Dates, Times and Locations 2010 County Annual Elections

Directors' Elections

Thursday, May 20th

Charlotte County (One director)
8:30 a.m. Charlotte Commission Chambers;
Port Charlotte

Hendry County (Five directors)
2:00 p.m. Gulf Citrus Offices; LaBelle

Friday, May 21st

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 2nd

24th Annual Meeting; LaBelle

GCGA 2009-2010 Board of Directors and 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.

Hendry County

Mark Colbert
Duda Products, Inc.
Joe Hilliard, II
Hilliard Brothers
of Florida, LTD.
Wayne Simmons
LaBelle Fruit Co. LLC
Steve Smith
Alico, Inc.
Carey Soud
Soud Family Partnership

Glades County

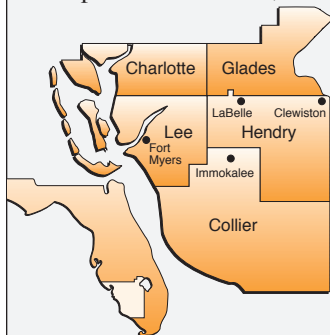
David Wheeler
Wheeler Farms, Inc.

Lee County

Wade Timpner
George Austin, Inc.

At-Large Seats

Don Barwick
Heller Brothers
Packing Corp.
Callie Walker
English Brothers



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.

Folks Frolic at GCGA's 10th Annual "Country Gala"



2010 GCGA "Country Gala"

Top Left: Gala attendees honor America with the opening pledge to the flag.

Top Middle: For the 10th year, Auctioneer Jack Burges "challenged" bidders to raise funds for GCGA's community programs.

Top Right: Many thanks to the Hendry County Cattlemen's Association for their scrumptious steaks!

2nd Left: Citrus Commissioner Mike Taylor won the fishin' rod & reel during the raffle.

2nd Right: The 2010 Gala featured "the best" auction and raffle items to date.

3rd Left: Sonya Carns (left) congratulates Sara Fera on her bucket raffle prizes!

Bottom Left: Carole Bowen is the lucky winner of the \$1000 cash prize drawing. The "Gala" Rule is "ya gotta be present to win"!

Bottom Middle: Go Gators! Callie Walker presents the "official" Fightin' Gators football helmet signed by the entire 2008 NCAA National Championship football team to Sam Carns, winning bidder of the collector's item!

Bottom Right: Over 300 folks made the 10th Annual "Country Gala" a grand success! "Ya'll Come Back in 2011"!



The Gulf Citrus Growers Association's 10th Annual "Country Gala" was an evening packed with fun, food and festivities! Over 300 headed to the LaBelle Civic Center on Saturday evening April 10th to enjoy the annual "Gulf citrus celebration." The "Gala," which brings together folks from the "city" and "country," has grown to become GCGA's most successful event to support its community outreach and governmental affairs efforts.

Funds are raised for these programs through sponsorships, ticket sales and auction proceeds from the "Gala."

This year's "Country Gala" was supported by 72 generous "sponsors" including 10 platinum, 29 gold and 33 silvers! In addition, over 60 local businesses and resorts donated raffle and auction items.

"It is very inspiring for 'Gulf Citrus' to receive such excellent support from our regional business community for this fun-filled event, which enables the association to enhance its community/governmental outreach in Southwest Florida," said Ron Hamel, executive vice president of GCGA. "Each year, we go out into our regional community to garner support for this event, and the response has been very positive...year after year. Our association is truly blessed with generous supporters."

One of the exciting "features" of the evening is the special "cattlemen's cut" ribeye steaks cooked to perfection by the Hendry County Cattlemen's Association! Adding to this dining pleasure...are all the "tasty treats" prepared by Peggy Hampton to accompany those steaks.

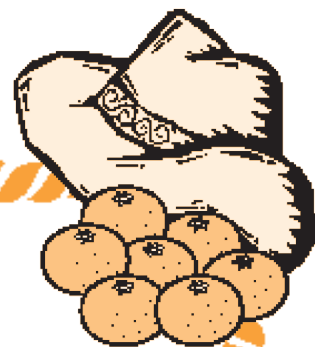
Folks are still raving about that fantastic meal served this year!

Veteran "Gala" auctioneer Jack Burges, did his usual "outstanding" job of "challenging" bidders and "entertaining" the crowd. This year's auction was anchored by some of the finest items ever including "first-class" resort packages, fishin' trips and plenty of Florida "Gator" collectors' items! Both the "silent" and "live" auctions were very successful again this year bringing top dollar.

Please review and thank all the GCGA "Country Gala" sponsors and contributors that are published on the adjoining page five (5). The association would also like to thank ALL the volunteers who worked to make the 10th Annual "Country Gala" a success.

Thanks

to our
**Country Gala
Sponsors!**



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Gulf Citrus Guards Growers' Water Fronts

continued from page one

standards for Florida's water bodies, GCGA, a member of a recently formed coalition of agriculture, business and utility groups, has worked diligently through the coalition to oppose the EPA's "unrealistic" numeric nutrient criteria. Through two, three-site cycles and 12 public hearings... "Gulf Citrus," and many coalition members, testified against EPA's proposed standards.

"We (GCGA) are here to express our 'opposition' to EPA's proposed numeric nutrient criteria as currently drafted," said Ron Hamel at the April 13th session in Ft. Myers.

"We feel that EPA's approach does not consider Florida's 'unique and complex' surface waters." Hamel also expressed concerns regarding the criteria for South Florida's canals, where EPA's proposed phosphorus levels are well below levels needed to grow profitable crops. He further called EPA's economic cost analysis "unrealistic," and cited an "in depth" study, recently conducted by UF/IFAS and the FDACS' Water Policy Office, on the "total" estimated costs for the BMPs "required" to meet EPA's standards. Hamel stated that the more detailed AG study estimated that BMP costs for "citrus" to comply would be over a half billion dollars. GCGA urged EPA to work with Florida's agencies and credible scientists before forcing "unrealistic" and "unattainable" water quality standards on the state at costs to agriculture, businesses, utilities and citizens in the billions.

At the urging of the Florida Water Quality Coalition, the Florida's Congressional delegation, including Tom Rooney (R) District 16, has been engaged in EPA's process. The coalition has also briefed the Florida Legislature and several Constitutional Officers which have also expressed concerns. EPA initially set October 2010 as its target date to adopt rules setting the federal water quality standards. Its efforts are aimed at settling a lawsuit filed by Florida enviro-groups under the Clean Water Act.

TMDLs, BMAPs, etc.

Prior to EPA's recent action on water quality criteria in Florida, the FDEP was conducting technical meetings and work-

shops in the "Gulf" region to establish Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) and implement Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs) for the Everglades West

are covered by the "Gulf," "Peace River" or Lake "O" programs. GCGA, FDACS and UF/IFAS staffs are following up with all growers to increase BMP usage.



Coast and Caloosahatchee River basins. GCGA participated in the initial FDEP meetings, and is engaged in this process. It is FDEP's intentions to divide the basins into watersheds and assign "fair share" allocations of "pollutant loadings." Although FDEP is working on these efforts, public meetings have been put on temporary hold due to EPA's actions. GCGA has put a "working group" together to address TMDLs and BMAPs issues. Regarding water quality, the FDEP is also developing a Statewide Stormwater Quality Rule, and will be seeking public comment through workshops in May.

Gulf Citrus BMPs

In 2003, GCGA lead the development of a Best Management Practices (BMP) Manual for "citrus" in the region. For over two years, it coordinated meetings and workshops with citrus growers, UF/IFAS extension, FDACS' Office of Water Policy, the SFWMD, the FDEP and enviro-groups to prepare the "Gulf Citrus" BMP Manual. In early 2006, GCGA hosted the manual's "official" release ceremony and launched its implementation. The "manual" was adopted by rule under the Florida Watershed Restoration Act, after its unveiling by Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson. Today, about 100,000 acres of citrus out of a possible 130,000 in the 5-county region are enrolled in citrus BMP programs. Over \$300,000 in state-sponsored "cost/share" funding has been matched and invested in the BMPs by citrus growers. Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry and Lee counties

are covered by the "Gulf," "Peace River" or Lake "O" programs. GCGA, FDACS and UF/IFAS staffs are following up with all growers to increase BMP usage.

With a completed "Notice of Intent" (NOI) filed with FDACS, and adherence to the BMP Manual's protocols, citrus growers are operating under a "Presumption of Compliance" with state water quality standards, according to the FDACS' Office of Agricultural Water Policy. "Recent actions by FDEP and EPA in water quality make the Gulf Citrus BMP Manual a necessity for growers," said Ron

Hamel, GCGA's vice president. "Gulf Citrus encourages growers to participate."

Lower West Coast Supply

The SFWMD began its five-year update of the Lower West Coast Water Supply Plan, which governs the district's water allocations. The plan's update is mandated by the FDEP under state water policy. It requires the SFWMD to identify all water sources in the planning region, determine the "supply" needs of legal users (including agriculture), calculate the enviro-needs, and initiate conservation measures. GCGA has been asked by the SFWMD's staff to lead a unified effort to calculate the future water supply demands.

Working through UF/IFAS' Southwest Florida Research & Education Center and the region's multi-county agents, GCGA coordinated a presentation on Southwest Florida Agriculture for the district's Lower West Coast Water Supply Plan regional workshop in March. The 30-minute "power point" presentation included: Dr. Fritz Roka on the economic benefits; Dr. Mongi Zekri on citrus; Gene McAvoy on vegetables, cattle and sugarcane and Dr. John Duncelman on UF/IFAS' and the SWFREC's support activities. Each presentation included water management techniques including BMPs, and promoted the importance of irrigation water. Julie Carson of SWFREC's staff assisted in the effort. GCGA has also put together an "AG-team" to project water supply demands to 2030, and will be following up with SFWMD's staff on AG irrigation needs for the future.

Citrus “Greening” and Psyllid Battles Continue

As Florida’s first growing region to launch an area-wide spray program to suppress the Asian citrus psyllid to slow the spread of HLB/ “greening,” the Gulf Citrus Growers Association coordinated “Round 2” of the program at the end of 2009 and the start of 2010. Once again, GCGA’s Production and Research Committee worked through its “Psyllid Suppression Team” including UF/IFAS scientists, FDACS/DPI area staff and citrus grower leaders to implement the initiative. The regional assault on the psyllid included both aerial and ground sprayings which were coordinated throughout the “Gulf” region.

Dr. Phil Stansly, UF/IFAS’ entomologist based at the Southwest Florida Research & Education Center in Immokalee, continues to strongly promote the benefits of an area-wide dormant spray program. “We continue to see a steady trend of declining psyllid populations throughout this area since 2006,” says Dr. Stansly, who has been a strong catalyst in pulling together the area wide effort. “Dormant sprays are most effective when applied area wide, coordinated and timed correctly,” he adds.

Following the completion of “Round

2” of the “Gulf” area wide psyllid suppression effort, growers were surveyed. Dr. Stansly reports that 73,180 acres were treated aerially at least once during the period compared to 72,916 the previous season. The average number of sprayings was 1.3. Additionally, he estimated that at least 30,000 acres were covered by ground applications. The “materials” used most in “Round 2” were “Imidan” for the earlier sprays, while “Mustang” and “Danitol” were used in the later treatments.



Both Aerial and Ground Sprays Were Used Against Psyllids in “Round 2”!

A recent report from the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences, requested by the FDOC, regarding a strategic plan to control “greening” and other diseases of citrus... encouraged the creation of “citrus management areas” within the state. It also suggested other “high priority” actions

including integrating efforts to improve insecticide control of the Asian citrus psyllid. “Growers seem to be working in the right directions to address “greening” and fight psyllids here in the region,” says Ron Hamel. “We have had excellent ‘buy-in’ and leadership from our growers and from all the members of our ‘psyllid suppression team’ from the start,” Hamel added.

Scientists at the SWFREC in Immokalee have also been engaged in research focused on foliar nutrients for mitigating

the effects of greening. They continue to give “encouraging” results as to the effectiveness of this practice, and are actively collecting data. Regarding the removal of symptomatic trees, they report that there are few situations in SW Florida where removal can still be considered an economic option for reducing inoculum levels.

Research Underway at SWFREC Regarding SAR in Citrus

The research study entitled, **“Program to Screen Compounds that Promote System Acquired Resistance (SAR) in Citrus against Greening (HLB) and Canker”** is now underway at UF/IFAS’ Southwest Florida Research and Education Center (SWFREC) in Immokalee. Dr. Robert C. Ebel, citrus physiologist, reports

that many logistical details have been addressed including modifying a greenhouse, procuring the potted citrus trees and developing the lab procedures needed to verify those compounds that promote systemic acquired resistance (SAR).

As part of the federal USDA 2009 Specialty Crop Block Grants funding

package, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association, working with IFAS’ Dr. Ebel, received a \$274,908 grant to conduct the research. “Early in April, GCGA requested from its members, including its associates, compounds/products that are purported to promote SAR in citrus,” said Mark Colbert, chairman of GCGA’s Production and Research Committee. “The association is pleased to report that several companies have answered our request for products and have also provided backup information for this research initiative. Over 20 products have been submitted to date,” Colbert added.

As indicated, the GCGA Production and Research Committee, working with Dr. Ebel will review the products, including their supportive information, and will prioritize the materials for the “screening” research project. The goal of GCGA and Dr. Ebel is to begin testing within a month. The two-and-a-half year study is expected to better identify those commercial products that assist growers in their efforts to battle “greening” and canker.

Citrus Black Spot Discovered in Collier

During a routine survey requested by a citrus grower in early March, an inspector from the FDACS Division of Plant Industry’s Citrus Health Response Program (CHRP) identified a suspected infection of citrus black spot on Valencia oranges in a Collier County grove. Citrus black spot is a fungal disease marked by dark necrotic blotches on the rinds of the fruit. The disease causes early fruit drop, reduces crop yields and can render highly blemished fruit unmarketable.

Initial laboratory analysis by FDACS/DPI confirmed the black spot finding, and subsequent testing at USDA’s Beltsville,

MD lab confirmed Florida’s findings. Citrus black spot has long been on “the radar” of AG officials. The find marks the first report of the pathogen in North America. Until this find, the nearest known infections were in Argentina and Brazil.

Federal and state officials, as well as citrus industry organizations and growers are aggressively addressing this current situation to limit the spread of the disease.

The greatest risk of spread lies in the inoculum of fallen, decomposing citrus leaves. Spores are discharged into the air during the onset of warm, wet weather, mostly during the late spring and summer.

24th "Gulf Citrus" Annual Meeting Set for June 2nd

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association's board of directors has scheduled the organization's 24th annual meeting for Wednesday morning June 2nd at the Dallas Townsend Agricultural Center in LaBelle. The session will begin at 10:30 a.m. with the business update from the leadership and the "annual luncheon" will follow.

The association's 24th annual meeting will feature reports and highlights on several issues and activities that the leadership is addressing on behalf of the mem-

bership. The 2010-2011 board of directors and officers will be "officially seated" for the coming season.

One highlight of this year's meeting is the recognition of 13 GCGA "**associate members**" who have supported the organization for 20 years. Other individual leaders will also be recognized for their service to the association.

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association's Scholarship Foundation will also hold its annual meeting on June 2nd in conjunc-

tion with the GCGA session. Reports from the foundation's officers will be presented and any annual business of the "foundation" will be conducted.

Members of "Gulf Citrus" will be receiving 24th annual meeting invitation letters along with **RSVP** cards for the luncheon. Although there is no charge for the meal, members are encouraged to "register" to attend. Please return the "card," e-mail or call the GCGA office at (863) 675-2180 to register.

Mechanical Harvesting Efforts Continue In "Gulf" Region

The technologies and logistics linked to the advance of mechanical harvesting of citrus continue to be "refined" in groves within the "Gulf Citrus" production region. Many of the 35,600 acres harvested mechanically during the 2008-09 season, along with the 9.5 million boxes of

fruit were from Southwest Florida.

Harvesters, industry leaders and scientists who are committed to advancing the technology agree that the use of an abscission compound will greatly enhance the effort. Recently, FDOC's scientific research director Dan King reported that the

application for the experimental use permit (EUP) for the abscission agent CMNP has been submitted to EPA for use on up to 9000 acres of Florida citrus. It is anticipated that the EUP will be issued by July 2011. The application for full registration of CMNP should be submitted in the summer of 2010 by AgroSource, Inc., who has been retained under contract by FDOC.

The UF/IFAS Citrus Mechanical Harvesting & Abscission Team held its annual Spring Field Day on April 21st at the Southwest Florida Research and Education Center in Immokalee. Dr. Fritz Roka reported that 46 attendees were updated on the key subjects including the "transitions" needed by industry to adopt mechanical harvesting technology.



The Oxbo Canopy Shaker System In Operation

Attendees of the UF/IFAS Mechanical Harvesting Field Day on April 21 saw the Oxbo canopy shaker system in action at CPI's Ranch One Grove hosted by Mike Murphy.

Gulf Citrus appreciates
the support of



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