

STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

June 1, 2011
9 AM to 12:00 PM

*FDACS, Division of Plant Industry, Doyle Conner Auditorium,
1911 S.W. 34th Street, Gainesville, FL 32608*

Jeff Woods opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He turned the meeting over to Carlos Suarez via speaker phone. Carlos was attending the Gulf Coast Initiative meeting in Pensacola, Florida, that was being held with other agencies. He was representing NRCS at this meeting. He encouraged everyone to view the downsizing in all agencies as an opportunity. He thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting.

Food Safety Concerns on Florida Croplands was the topic that Mike Brown from the Florida Tomato Exchange discussed with the group. He showed a power point of FDA's "Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables". He requested consideration on making available under EQIP practices to help minimize food safety concerns by preserving wildlife and continuing use of agricultural land for fresh fruit and vegetables. Specialty crops, especially leafy vegetables are at risk of being contaminated by wildlife (wild hogs deer, etc). He stressed that a program for specialty crops would yield long term benefits.

Water Control Structure Needs on Non-Managed Flatwood Citrus was addressed by Mike Ziegler. The top issue of selling produce outside of Florida is food safety. The non-managed citrus groves are hosts for diseases and pests that thrive on citrus and the number of acres will double each year on these lands. The availability of citrus plants is limited due to the canker rule. There are 400,000 acres of non-managed groves and 100,000 of the acres are owned by developers and not managed. It was explained that the Programs are voluntary and certain eligibility requirements had to be met in order for applicants to participate. The necessary practices to assist the citrus producers are already available under EQIP.

Darrell Smith from FDACS – Suwannee River Partnership introduced Jon Dinges, Director of Water Supply and Resource Management. He presented information on the water assessment, statutory requirements, water use demand projections, and assessments of current projected resource impacts from regional groundwater consumption. They are in discussion with SJRWMD on how the drawdown on the aquifer can be minimized. The groundwater used in the SJRWMD area is impacting the aquifer levels and spring flows in the SRWMD basin. They requested continued support through the EQIP program to assist Agricultural producers with water conservation improvements. They would also like to revisit MIL partner agreement that was once in place with the RC&D.

Dr. Katherine Milla, from FAMU discussed the FAMU-COAST-WAM Model Highlights. She showed examples of applications of NASA's Coastal on-line assessment and synthesis Tool

(COAST) for implementation of Agricultural Best Management Practices. She also discussed the Gulf of Mexico Alliance that has been formed by Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.

Cooper McMillan from South Dade SWCD discussed Cost –Share Program for In-Vessel Composting to convert sludge to composting. It has a low energy use but cost share at the current time is only for small and high size units. The South Dade SWCD is requesting support through EQIP for cost share using in-vessel composting for additional sizes of drums with mixers, grinders, and conveyors. Composters are currently available for dead animal disposal. They want them made available for other Agricultural operations such as, nurseries, tropical fruit growers, etc. They have researched this type of operation and found that there is a demand for the project.

Rosalind Moore, NRCS Wetland Specialist and NEPA Coordinator discussed Categorical Minimal Effect Exemption that is part of the Wetland Conservation Provisions “Swampbuster”. The provision provides for two types of exemptions relating to wetland violations. She provided a brochure on Conserving Natural Resources in Florida.

Ken Morgan, NRCS Program Specialist discussed financial assistance programs for FY 2011 and FY 2012

Tom Weber, NRCS Acting Assistant State Conservationist for Easement Programs reported on the Easement Program in Florida.

In closing Jeff Woods reminded everyone that the purpose of the committee is for members to provide input on the prioritization of nature resource issues and the implementation of the conservation programs for the current and following year. Overall it was a good meeting with engaging questions from the audience.