

EXTENSION

Comings & Goings

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DEAN FOR EXTENSION

2011 Sustainable Floridians Pilot Launch in Pinellas County

Pinellas County is one of seven counties in the State of Florida to pilot the newly developed Sustainable Floridians volunteer training program. Pinellas County will offer the 7-week training program to residents in April and September and all participants will receive free registration, books, and materials for the 4 hour class – a package valued \$500! Each week, a new module will be introduced and discussion and homework exercises will assist with providing a forum for education and informed citizen actions. Participants receive an energy conservation kit and a rain barrel as part of the materials for the Energy and Water Modules. Pinellas County recently hosted an Open Orientation event for the April class to be held at Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center and had more than 40 registered attendees.

The class size for the pilot class was increased from 12 participants to 30 participants due to the overwhelming interest from the audience. Pinellas County is requiring all participants to complete the 7-week training, and donate 30 volunteer hours in the first year and every year thereafter to remain certified. Pinellas County will continue to work with these certified volunteers to extend the sustainability mission of the Extension Service. (Contact: Ramona Madhosingh-Hector, Urban Sustainability Agent - ramona.m.hector@ufl.edu)

Opening a Dialogue on Numeric Nutrient Criteria

On Friday, April 8, 2011 UF Researchers used an innovative approach to address stakeholder concerns regarding an emerging and complex issue. Seventy-seven participants attended a workshop to introduce stakeholders to a team of UF Researchers and Extension

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Specialists who specialize in Numeric Nutrient Criteria (NNC) related information, to provide possible answers to questions about the NNC and to gather information from participants on NNC information gaps and strategies for addressing those gaps. The workshop was designed as a two way conversation between experts and stakeholders. Because the NNC is a contentious issue, the workshop was facilitated by Florida Sea Grant Agents from the South Central District. Participants included county and city employees working in utilities, environmental services, public works, storm/waste water, as well as consultants and lawyers. The day began with 10 min. presentations from five UF departments including Soil and Water Science, Agricultural and Biological Engineering, Food and Resource Economics, a private law firm representing Levin School of Law and Civic and Coastal Engineering researchers.

Presentations were followed by a question and answer session and an exercise to identify gaps in knowledge about the NNC and how to implement the new rule. Participants then voted on which gaps in knowledge were of highest priority to address. Response to the workshop was overwhelmingly positive and the UF team plans to continue the conversation through a series of webinars, online question and answer capabilities and possibly future workshops. The team goal is to be available for and responsive to stakeholder needs surrounding a difficult issue by continuing the conversation initiated at this workshop. (Contact: Joy Hazell - jhazell@ifas.ufl.edu)

A Great Day for a Festival

More than 900 folks enjoyed a spectacular Florida spring day as they came out for the Florida-Friendly Family Festival. While shaded by the heritage oak trees at the Manatee County Extension Office, crowds gathered for the festival that featured a variety of fun activities, eco-workshops and entertainment that appealed to children of all ages. The festival offered a wide array of interactive demonstrations, ideas, workshops and exhibits to highlight our environment and demonstrate ways that families can conserve in and around their homes. Festival goers gleaned energy and water conservation tips from the many exhibitors on site. Hands on activities focused on recycling and were

hosted by 4-H clubs of Manatee County. The Book Mobile shared stories with environmental themes with the crowd. The North River Kiwanis Club cooked hamburgers and hot dogs that were served on compostable plates. Volunteers were on hand at the waste station to educate everyone on how dispose of their garbage. Plates and napkins went in the compost bin, meat scraps in the trash and the chip bag in the recycle bin. Drinks were served in reusable cups and discounts were given to those who returned with their cup for a refill. Of those surveyed at the event, 90% reported that they found a new way to conserve water and 100% reported they would be trying a newly learned conservation tip at home or in their office. (Contact: Michelle Atkinson - michelleatkinson@ufl.edu)

Hillsborough Garden Goodies

Renewed interest in home gardening and the current economy have increased opportunities to teach 4-H and home-schooled youth how to grow a vegetable garden. FCS, Urban Horticulture and 4-H Agents developed and co-taught this educational project. Inter-departmental, county and external grant funding provided materials and related costs. Weekly meetings were split between educational lessons and gardening activities. Seventy-eight percent began composting after participating in this project. Sixty-five percent have undertaken gardening activities with little to no parental prompting. Fifty-seven percent are now assisting with home food preparation. Ninety-five percent reported tasting at least one new vegetable. Based on survey results, heightened knowledge about vegetable gardening processes and food preparation/nutrition resulted in significant increases in children's knowledge and ownership in home gardening and food preparation projects. (For more intensive survey results contact: Lynn Barber or Mary Keith - labarber@ufl.edu, mkeith@ufl.edu)

Workshop on the Half-Shell

South-Central District Sea Grant Extension Agents in partnership with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission held a 1-day workshop focusing on restoration strategies for bay scallops in southwest Florida. The workshop was hosted by Tampa Bay Watch at their facility in Terra Verde, Florida. The objectives of the workshop were to: increase information exchange and networking among various entities involved in bay scallop restoration and monitoring programs; increase the ability of resource managers to plan and evaluate bay scallop restoration and monitoring programs; insure that a uniform and objective message regarding bay scallop population and recovery is conveyed to the general public; and enhance existing restoration and monitoring programs. The workshop format included a morning presentation session followed by an afternoon strategic planning session. Thirty-four scientists from federal, state and local governments, academia, private organizations and industry attended. An end-of-workshop survey instrument was used to determine if workshop objectives were met. 100% of survey respondents (n=23) indicated the workshop provided a good forum for information exchange regarding bay scallop monitoring and restoration. 100% of respondents also indicated the workshop was a good opportunity to network with other entities involved in bay scallop monitoring and restoration. Finally, 96% of respondents indicated the workshop made steps towards developing a plan to maintain and enhance bay scallop restoration and monitoring programs. A major outcome of the workshop was the development of a regional bay scallop working group. This group will further develop restoration/outreach strategies identified during the workshop. (Contact: Betty Staugler - staugler@ufl.edu)

Large Scale On-Farm Production Trials Pave The Way For Change

Columbia County peanut producers have adopted numerous changes in their production and management practices after seeing the consistent advantages demonstrated in large on-farm trials conducted here in their own backyard. As recent as four years ago, over 85% of the total peanut acreage was planted in one variety in Columbia and surrounding counties. The risk of having an environmental or biological event that could result in widespread crop loss is quite high in such mono-cultural systems and disease pressure was building annually. In an effort to address these concerns, a coordinated multi-year educational program of variety trials and crop protectant comparisons were developed between UF/IFAS Peanut Breeder, Extension Plant Pathologist, Extension Nematologist and local growers. The educational programs were delivered through grower production meetings, large on-farm trials, educational twilight tours of the trials during the growing season and publication of the production trial data for all growers. The programmatic effort was initiated in 2005. Through the generation and presentation of large scale on-farm trial data, area producers have learned that peanut variety selection can reduce the yield losses sustained from selected crop pests. Depending on the severity of the pest population in a given field it may eliminate or reduce the need for utilizing crop protection chemicals which in turn reduces the cost of production for the grower.

On-farm peanut variety trials and associated educational programs during the past five years in Columbia County have demonstrated the value of varietal selection to help manage pest problems in peanuts. From 2008 to 2010 the acreage planted with newer genetically pest resistant varieties increased from 650 to more than 3960 acres of the 4100 acres of peanuts in the county (15% to 99%). In the last 3 years production acreage has shifted from having more than 85% of the crop planted in one variety to now having a well diversified mix of six varieties. This diversity lessens the risk of having an environmental or biological event that could result in widespread crop loss due to lack of genetic resistance or physiological tolerance of one variety.

So, what is the pay-off?

Through adoption of selected varieties and pest management strategies, local peanut producers have lessened the risk of yield loss while concurrently reducing the use of pesticides associated with nematode, viral and fungal diseases in these crops. This in-turn helps reduce the input costs of production and provides greater competitiveness for producers in the marketplace while reducing the impacts of pesticides in the environment.

The area best suited for peanut production in Columbia County is in the Ichetucknee Basin. The statewide initiative to protect Florida springs and springsheds and reduce nitrate concentrations in the associated groundwater is well known. Expansion of peanut production in the Ichetucknee Basin has tremendous benefits to the water quality issue due to the fact we produce the crop with approximately one-tenth the N fertilizer that is typically applied to other row crops. This substantially reduces agriculture's contribution to the current trend of elevated nitrate concentrations in the basin springs.

Additionally, the introduction and adoption of a peanut nematode immune variety in 2009 has eliminated the use of chemical fumigants and contact nematicide use in peanuts in the county. The economic savings are \$157,000 in production costs and elimination of more than 55,000 pounds of chemicals applied in the Ichetucknee Basin. This program is shared as a multi-county educational programmatic effort for the peanut producers in North Central Florida and has resulted in similar shifts in variety adoptions in the surrounding counties as well.

(Contact: William D. "Bill" Thomas)

Who let the dogs out?

Companion animals positively influence growth and development of youth. Research shows there are eight key elements in companion animal projects that contribute to a positive youth development experience.

"Pets foster positive psychological development of

children (Melson, 2003) who show enhanced empathy, self-esteem, cognitive development and greater participation in social and athletic activities."

Research shows children with dogs are more physically fit and do better in school. Dog owners (children) exercised 55 more minutes per day. Pet owners had 18% better school attendance, an equivalent of 3 weeks of school (2006 anthro zoology.org)

Implications for 4-H? Youth obesity, a national epidemic, and linking pet ownership to obesity educational programs may be effective. Pet ownership may impact school graduation rates.

In 2009 the State 4-H Dog Project Committee concluded there was a need for better educational experiences for youth in the Dog project. County adult volunteers needed stronger support than most counties could provide. This resulted in:

1. Two Florida 4-H Youth Dog Conferences
2. Educational activities added to State Fair 4-H Dog Show
3. Training seminars and more project information for volunteers.



Photo: Though wheelchair bound, Danny was still able to participate in obedience training and other conference activities, gaining new skills and self-confidence.

4. State Dog Project website
5. Development of dog quiz bowl and skill-a-thon

An average of 55 youth and 21 volunteers taught 21 different educational topics at the Conferences.

Evaluation revealed significant impact on youth in building self-esteem, developing empathy and generosity, and learning skills for cooperation. There were no behavior issues or non-inclusive groups.

Two examples show this impact. One mother attributed her daughter's improvement in grades, better interpersonal communication skills and increased self-esteem to the 4-H dog program. The mother of a child with cerebral palsy, autism and is wheelchair bound: "The conference was great! Michael was talking about it on his communicator to his speech therapist. Danny has had a new attitude since the conference and is learning the skills to communicate in a calm manner in all aspects of his life. As a direct impact of the experience at the conference, he has made some new friends at school this year. He has been walking some of the neighbors' little dogs and in finding them a pleasure."

Florida 4-H has let the dogs out, and that is a good thing!

(Contact: Bill Heltemes - whelteme@ufl.edu)

Dairy Risk Practice Leads to Dairy Risk Management

Volatility in price paid per 100 lbs of milk to dairy producers in Florida has gone to extremes the past 3 years from a high of \$26.77 in September, 2007, to a low of \$14.17 in March, 2009. This volatility reeks hectic with farm business planning and in 2009 resulted in many producers going deep into their equity reserves.

Teaming up with Dr. John Van Sickle from the Food Resource and Economics Department, a Dairy Risk Management class was begun in Mayo, Florida, in February, 2009, and has been on-going. This program introduced dairy producers to the Chicago Mercantile Exchange via a futures market teaching tool Dr. Van Sickle has developed called FACTsim (Financial and Agricultural Commodity Trading Simulation). This simulation program allowed the dairy producers to make futures and options trades with real time market data, and "practice" (not real) money. The dairy group also

formed a team to compete in the Southern Extension Marketing Committee Trading Competition, which is designed to help producers learn about risk management and options. The dairy team finished third in last year's competition and hopes to improve their standing in 2011.

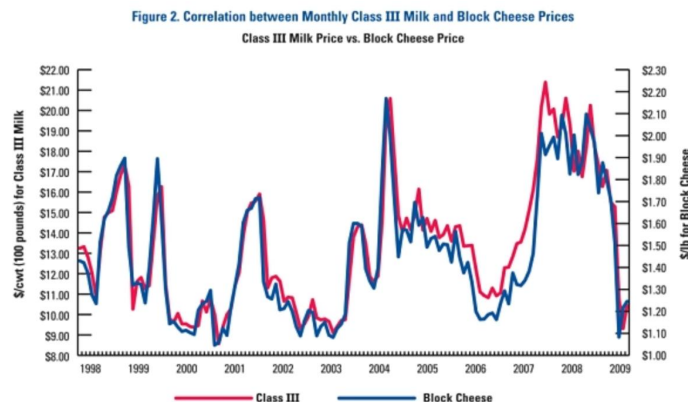


Figure: Using the futures market for risk management is the main theme of the Dairy Risk Management program, however, information learned is also useful for "booking" (pre-purchasing) feed and farm financial planning.

One dairy producer is now successfully hedging milk, soybeans, corn and other commodities related to dairy to control both their input costs and the price they are receiving for their milk. Other producers are posed to do so when market and financial resources both permit. Meanwhile, the dairy risk management participants have been using their knowledge to pre-purchase feed at opportune times to save substantially on their feed bills. (Contact: Mary Sowerby - meso@ufl.edu)

Have you heard the buzz? Beekeeping is back!

Honeybees provide pollination services to more than 90 million acres of commercial crops grown in the US. The significance of the honey bee is especially important now that populations are declining. The USDA recently reported that general colony loss levels in 2009 were 29% and increased to 34% in 2010. In order to sustain bee populations there is a need to recruit and train new beekeepers and to develop a support system for these individuals.

Four beginning beekeeper shortcourses were delivered to help prospective beekeepers get their start in

beekeeping. Ninety-one percent of attendees (n=158) indicated they had the knowledge needed to successfully start their own colony. A follow-up survey revealed that 42% of participants made practice changes in their operations or started a new beekeeping operation. State records reveal that 39 attendees registered new colonies with FDACS. This represents 91 new bee colonies that harvested over 800 lbs of honey in Duval County during 2010.

Additionally, with the help of a group of volunteers, an educational forum was organized as well as a support network for local beekeepers. As a result, the Jacksonville Beekeepers Association was formed and has grown to one of the largest associations in the state with 103 members. The monthly meetings were attended by 776 individuals in 2010. Furthermore, these individuals have volunteered more than 450 hours educating people about the importance of honeybees at public events. This group also helped establish and manage two educational hives at Extension's Urban Gardening facility.



Photo: Volunteer Kent Wooldridge explains the different parts of the hive body to participants of the beekeeper shortcourse. A hands-on hive demonstration is provided to willing participants.

This multifaceted approach was able to grow the number of beekeepers and provide a support system for beginning and advanced beekeepers. This program is also a great opportunity to reach audiences that have previously not utilized the Extension Service. The agent would like to thank Ray Zerba for his help and guidance in developing this program. (Contact: Brad Burbaugh - brad784@ufl.edu)

Urban Gardening Program in Demand in Weak Economy

Have rising food costs gotten your attention? The Urban Gardening Program is seeing first-hand the effects through a 27% increase in community gardening participation. Currently the program works with 26 sites with varying levels of support ranging from managing the site to providing educational support.

Jacksonville was one of 16 cities selected in 1977 to receive federal funds to teach low income people how to produce their own vegetables, thereby improving their economic condition and eating habits. The program is still providing that service although funding has been drastically cut. Participants include 713 in community gardens, 779 in home gardens, and 970 growing in containers, for a total of 2,462. Square footage of gardens planted includes 275,275 for community gardens, 69,244 for home plots, and 78,305 for container gardens for a total of 422,824, (an increase of 49% compared with 2009) times three gardening seasons= 1,268,472 sq ft. (29.12 acres). Estimating 1 pound of produce per square ft. x \$2/pound = \$2,536,944.00 in crop value to local families.



Photo: Families at Metro North Community Garden join together to plant potatoes in the common garden area.

One great example of a new garden is Metro North Community Garden. The garden was planned to help revive a dying community where crime is on the rise and is a catalyst to bring the neighborhood together. In fall 2010 they broke ground and turned a vacant lot covered with weeds and trash into a productive garden. The 700 sq. ft. garden offers ten raised beds for ten families

(100% meet 2010 HHS poverty guidelines) as well as a common garden area. (Contact: Terry DelValle - tbrite@ufl.edu)

Paying it Forward

The majority of volunteers in Nassau County 4-H are parents of youth involved in the program. As a young agent in Nassau County, I have worked diligently with teens who have served numerous hours in the community marketing the 4-H program at elementary schools, community festivals, etc. These individuals have completed service projects and partnered our organization with others throughout the community such as the American Cancer Society, The Council on Aging, etc. These youth have planned day camp programs for cloverbud aged 4-H members and offered trainings related to project book requirements, the standards of excellence program and more!

These youth, who typically we as 4-H agents invest numerous hours in, eventually graduate and move on to college educations, careers, and we can only hope to one day see them again involved in our program as an agent or parent of a 4-H member. In the past 3 years, graduating 4-H youth have done something that is not considered the norm for volunteerism. In Nassau County, five alumni are serving as club co-leaders, two alumni are serving as members of the Nassau County 4-H advisory board, and three alumni will be serving on the Florida 4-H state camping staff this summer. These young people are all either enrolled in college and/or engaged in the work force.

According to the bureau of labor statistics in 2010, adults between the age of 35-44 were most likely to engage in volunteer roles, and adults in their early twenties were the least likely to engage in volunteer opportunities. These young individuals are an asset to the Florida 4-H program, as they have obviously enjoyed their experiences as youth and want to share these opportunities with others. They have such vast knowledge from attending State Executive boards, National 4-H Congress, national-level judging competitions and more. They know the terminology in our newsletters and can explain it to parents who may

find the opportunities overwhelming and perhaps a “foreign language.” Although these individuals may not have the depth of life experiences from travel or have yet obtained human parenting skills, they have talents that greatly benefit youth in Nassau County 4-H.



Photo: 4-H Volunteer Lisa Anders assists 4-Hmember Eric Byrd in Chevron community pride environmental education project.

Thanks to these young people developing a sense of belonging and generosity as a result of being active in the Nassau County 4-H program, they are now paying it forward. (Contact: Amanda Thien - athien@ufl.edu)

Eliminating Barriers to Commercial Production of the Sunray Venus

The growth of the Florida hard clam aquaculture industry is a dramatic success story. However, the industry is built on a single species. The sunray venus, a native species, was commercially fished in Florida during the 1970s and is now being evaluated as a potential new aquaculture species to diversify the industry. During the past four years, research and extension faculty along with industry partners have evaluated the aquaculture and market potential of the sunray venus with funding from Florida Sea Grant. Field trials have shown sunray venus can be grown on an experimental basis using techniques similar to those for hard clam culture. Consumer acceptance has been evaluated in local Florida markets. Currently, we are developing the technology with industry alongside to

target information gaps and potential barriers to commercialization of this species and to reduce the potential for failure. In February, we presented current information to 100 growers and wholesalers at an industry workshop. Eighteen industry partners were identified who will participate in determining production performance of the sunray venus at existing commercial lease areas. Further, over the past three months, five local wholesalers have facilitated an assessment of product attributes by shipping sunray venus harvested from field trials to 21 “downstream” wholesalers accompanied with a survey. To date, responses are providing vital information on existing market channels and distribution standards. The sunray venus was introduced at the International Boston Seafood Show in March to a wide range of buyers. More than 250 visitors who sampled sunray venus were asked to provide their reaction. At least 50 expressed interest in purchasing product when it becomes commercially available. Both studies demonstrate strong market acceptance of this new product and will help industry better understand its market development potential. Diversifying the clam industry by developing farming technology and markets for other bivalve species and products may mitigate production and market risk, thereby enhancing economic stability and growth of the industry. (Contact: Leslie Sturmer - lnst@ufl.edu)



Photo: Leslie Sturmer, aquaculture extension agent, (left) and John Stevely, marine agent, (right) provide samples of sunray venus clams and information to interested buyers at the International Boston Seafood Show in March 2011.

New Faculty

Please welcome the following new faculty:

Elizabeth Carnahan (lcarnahan@ufl.edu), Sea Grant/Marine Science EA I, Pinellas County, 4/1/2011

Nicole Snelling (snellingn@ufl.edu), 4-H, CTSY EA II, Hillsborough County, 4/25/2011

We would also like to welcome Amanda Thien (athien@ufl.edu) into her new position as Nassau County 4-H EA I.

Resignation

We would like to wish the following faculty the best of luck in their future endeavors:

Angelina Toomey, 4-H Youth Development EA I, Sumter County, 4/4/2011

Retirement

After many years of service and dedication William Thomas (Columbia County Ag Extension Agent IV) has retired. We want to thank him for all of his contributions to UF/IFAS Extension.

Extension Comings and Goings is a monthly newsletter of the Office of the Dean for Extension via e-mail and on the Extension web site at <http://extadmin.ifas.ufl.edu>. If you have any suggestions or would like to submit your own recognition or short article of interest, please send them to Liz Rossen at lizann@ufl.edu.
