

Agricultural and Green Industry Advisory Committee

MEETING DATE – DECEMBER 01, 2020

LIAISON REPORT – JACK BISPHAM

Florida Agricultural Best Management Practices Update

Mr. Christopher Pettit, director of Office of Agricultural Water Policy, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, introduced himself and Ms. Kim Shugar, Deputy Director of Office of Agricultural Water Policy, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Ms. Shugar provided background as well as updates to Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' (FDACS) Best Management Practices (BMP) program. She explained the Clean Waterways Act requires implementation verification site visits every two years for properties enrolled in the BMP program as well as demonstrate compliance with BMP record keeping requirements. Ms. Shugar also discussed FDACS' BMP research and cost share program as well as the research plan component to Senate Bill 712 and updates to BMP manuals.

Mr. Williams asked whether there is a difference in the reporting process if in a Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) area versus outside of a BMAP. Ms. Shugar explained the site visits are required for all producers enrolled in the BMP program regardless of location.

Ms. BJ Jarvis asked how long the comment period will be open for rulemaking. Ms. Shugar said comments are needed as soon as possible as commenting period has ended.

Mr. Mac Carraway asked whether the legislature has had any conversations with FDACS regarding the direction of the BMP program that might influence legislation in the next session. Ms. Shugar said FDACS has not had any specific conversations with legislature.

Mr. Travis Council commented the agriculture industry has some concern and comments on the manual and the rule and intend to discuss with FDACS soon.

Mr. Alan Jones asked whether the budget reduction is scheduled for the next budget session. Ms. Shugar explained the request to cut 8.5 percent from the budget is requested of all state agencies and is for this fiscal year due to COVID.

Mr. Jonathan Brown expressed his concern that BMP nutrient values do not give growers the opportunity to produce sod. He explained there is a huge difference with covering ground with vegetation versus being able to lift sod.

Mr. Jones identified leaching opportunities and suggested FDACS allow additional fertilizer applications following extreme drought and flood events.

ePermitting Replacement Project

Ms. Eryn Worthington, project manager, and Ms. Jillian Garrage, business analyst, provided an update of the District's new ePermitting program. Ms. Worthington identified the District's current ePermitting system, which is becoming outdated, and explained the process in identifying and implementing the new ePermitting system. Ms. Garrage provided a walkthrough of the new Environmental Resource Permit application and exemption process, as well as a view from a smart phone.

Mr. Williams asked whether the new system is live. Ms. Worthington explained the external application portal is currently in live production but has only been released to a testing pilot group. She added that staff expect it to be live to everyone in late spring.

Remote Meeting Discussion

Mr. Michael Molligan, Employee and External Relations division director, discussed the introduction of remote meetings during COVID and explained the committee has the pleasure to decide whether to continue holding meetings remotely post-COVID.

Mr. Williams suggested remote meetings encourage better participation and does not feel a hybrid option would work well. Mr. Carraway agreed, and suggested to send a letter to non-participants that express the importance of these meetings. Mr. Molligan explained an outreach effort was recently done for all committees.

Ms. Jarvis suggested electronic meetings are nice and convenient, and expressed the significance of in-person networking.

Announcements and Other Business

Mr. Williams identified the District's 2020 Regional Water Supply Plan (RWSP) and suggested the agricultural industry believes there is a discrepancy in projected irrigated crop land. Mr. Williams said Governing Board member Joel Schleicher wanted to hear what industry leaders are seeing and what they think might happen with trends. Mr. Williams suggested there will be a higher demand for food with more people coming into the state, but also an increase with green industry as more houses are needing to be landscaped. He noted the Cattleman's Association should provide feedback but were not present at today's meeting, and he opened the discussion to committee members.

Mr. Hisey suggested On Top of the World is seeing water use trends going down and industry should prepare itself for more efficient irrigation systems.

Ms. Jarvis said Dr. Nick Place, dean and director of UF/IFAS extension, is stepping down from his position and a search committee is currently looking for a replacement.