

**ATTENDEES:** Art Darling/Sunshine State Milk Producers  
Jim Handley/Florida Cattlemen's Association  
Ray Scott/FL Dept of Agriculture  
Andy LaVigne/FL Citrus Mutual

Doug Bournique/Indian River Citrus Growers  
Tom Hurley/Becker Holding Company  
Michael Moore/CH2M HILL  
Wendy Stacy/CH2M HILL  
Evans Evans/CH2M HILL

**FROM:** Evans Evans/CH2M HILL

**DATE:** March 22, 2004; Conference Call  
9:00 AM-10:00 AM (*Eastern Time*)

**Subject:** **Ag Appropriations Requests, U.S. Congress**

## INTRODUCTIONS

Craig Evans

This is a summary of the call. You may listen to an audio of the entire 53-minute call at [ftp://ftp.ch2m.com/pub/Ag\\_App\\_Mtg](ftp://ftp.ch2m.com/pub/Ag_App_Mtg)

## PURPOSE OF CALL

Craig Evans:

- Background to provide information on what's been done by Stewardship America, Inc. and CH2M HILL, Inc. regarding ag appropriations requests in U.S. Congress;
- Description of proposed earmarks (see <http://privatelands.org/earmarks.htm>);
- Door has been opened; discussion on whether it is sensible to capitalize on this opportunity and move forward; exchange of information and ideas;
- Discussion of opportunities and threats,
- Discussion of how to proceed,
- Suggestions for next steps,
- Need for coordination,
- Opportunities for developing support outside of Florida

**Background – Request #1:** Ag appropriations request is outgrowth of Florida's Rural Lands Stewardship Program (chapter 163.3177(11)(d), F.S.), which has been successfully implemented in Collier County and is under serious consideration as a land use option for rural landowners in the 5-county Indian River Citrus growing region and as a means of facilitating a "landowner friendly" approach to providing Eglin Air Force Base with a 1,000 square mile flyway.

Rural Land Stewardship Council was formed two years ago, is made up of 29 individuals (see [http://privatelands.org/download/RLSC\\_3-2004\\_Council\\_Members.pdf](http://privatelands.org/download/RLSC_3-2004_Council_Members.pdf)), has been working to use state legislation and Collier County example to fit needs and opportunities

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in other Florida counties (14 counties have shown interest to date, but lack funding to move forward).

Strong interest in program also has been shown by counties outside Florida – Georgia Governor Purdue has set up a commission to create a statewide land conservation plan; Johnson County, NC has contracted with CH2M HILL to take first steps toward establishing a Rural Lands Stewardship Program in the state’s fastest growing county; interest and requests also have come from California, Texas and Ohio; hence, pilot programs for these states have been added to the request (both to benefit these states, and to gather votes from members of Congress in these states to improve chances of getting requests approved).

Amendments to Florida’s Rural Lands Stewardship Program, to improve the way the program works, and to allow it to be applied on a regional basis, have been drafted by a subcommittee of the Rural Lands Stewardship Council, headed up by Chuck Littlejohn. The amendment is being included as part of Senator Geller’s urban infill bill

Two water management districts – South Florida and St. Johns River – have been contacted and asked to help with funding to kick off planning for Rural Lands Stewardship Areas in Treasure Coast/Indian River Citrus growing region. Initial response has been positive.

More details on Rural Lands Stewardship Program, the Rural Lands Stewardship Council and pending state legislation are available at <http://privatelands.org/rural/index.htm>

**Background – Request #2:** Began as earmark to support project being carried out in Great Lakes region by CH2M HILL in cooperation with local partners in 8 states; sought tie-in for Florida through Suwannee River Water Management District (called Jerry Scarborough and he expressed strong interest) after discussing possible earmarks with Francis Gibbs from Rep. Crenshaw’s office during farm tour in Florida, sponsored by Florida Farm Bureau Federation in February. Added Pinellas, Hillsborough and Pasco counties because of difficulties of issues in this area that could be addressed by Integrated Water shed Planning approach being proposed for Great Lakes area; also to tie in Rep. Young’s district.

**Background – Request #3:** Outgrowth of conversations over last 1-1/2 years with cow/calf producers and dairy operations in Okeechobee Drainage Basin; contains elements of ideas suggested by John Folks, FDACS, during Farm Bill negotiations, and innovative CAFO management tool developed by CH2M Hill’s global leader for Agricultural Operations John Dickey as a result of working with pork producers and livestock operations in Colorado, Texas and California.

Approach to request was outlined by senior official at USDA, who cited request in last year’s emergency farm bill to allow dairy producers in Chico Basin of California to work together, by packaging requests and payments from EQIP from 10 producers, to carry out a \$4.5 million nutrient management program on a regionwide basis. Hence, there is an existing precedent for this request.

Request would provide opportunity for producers in several areas of the county to use existing EQIP funding, but to “package” payments together to create regional projects of 16,000 to 25,000 acres each. Area targeted in Florida for this pilot approach to packaging EQIP funding would be (1) cow/calf and (2) dairy operations in Okeechobee Basin. Other key “hot spot” areas also are included in request -- mouth of Mississippi River to install

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NMDs to cleanse water flowing into Gulf and reduce hypoxia in Gulf of Mexico, CAFO operations in Texas and California, and one of the irrigation districts in the Klamath Basin of Oregon, which is under an environmental mandate to improve quality of water flowing into Klamath River. Including these high-profile project areas across the U.S. should help with passage of request.

**Why is CH2M HILL involved:** CH2M HILL is pursuing a new initiative to make a major commitment to Rural Land issues such as sprawl, land owner equity, exploring new sources of revenue and cash flow for Agriculture: Has launched a new initiative call “The Landscape Conservation Initiative,” made up of 17 programs. For details, go to [www.privatelands.org](http://www.privatelands.org). Projects involving the Landscape Conservation Initiative already are being carried out by landowner with 2.1 million acres of rural lands in 4 states and 66 counties. A total of 15 states are targeted for pilot projects.

### **COMMENTS, talking points**

Handley: What are specifics of dollars and appropriations question?

Evans: 3 separate requests (details at <http://privatelands.org/earmarks.htm>),

1<sup>st</sup> request provides money for planning on regional basis (100,000 acres or more), using Florida’s Rural Lands Stewardship Program as a template. Maintains landowner equity, accommodates development in discreet, clustered patters, provides new revenues for ag operations, uses development money to maintain equity for all landowners and to pay for open space and habitat protection through easement that pays premium of 1.1x to 3x over market value of property for development.

2<sup>nd</sup> request Integrated Watershed Planning – (1) addresses competition for water between growing communities and water sources; (2) recognizes the relationships between stormwater, water supply, and wastewater planning; and (3) demonstrates effectiveness of incentive based zoning, pollutant trading, resource transfer, and banking mechanisms that can help implement best practices on a large scale.

3<sup>rd</sup> request Allows producers to band together to “package” EQIP applications and payments to:

- Pilot new, innovative nutrient management approach that fosters joint federal, state and industry planning effort;
- Reduce off-site impacts of ag operations to greatly improve water quality;
- Reduce flow of nutrients into the Gulf of Mexico and address hypoxia in Gulf;
- Remove phosphorus, trace chemicals and heavy metals from sediments, suspended solids and dissolved compounds in lakes, streams and other water bodies.

Darling: #3 request gets down to producers.

Handley: Are we competing? Applications are running out of dollars

Evans: Request does not give funding priority. Pilot project provides more leverage, could attract more EQIP dollars to complete a pilot project.

Discussion on CA prototype (Chino Basin); attention to fact that it must be clear there is no intention to take away funding from pot.

Discussion on Okeechobee focus; Watershed Planning. How to get programs in FL.

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Additional talking points: Need to coordinate with World Wildlife Fund, Nature Conservancy. Governor's Washington office.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

1. **Produce** list of folks who should be "In the loop". Highlight key contacts in Florida, in DC and in other states. Create listserve so each person on list can communicate with entire group.

2. **Circulate** list for input -- who needs to be added? Who needs immediate contact? (For example, be sure Governor's Washington DC office is on list and is contacted and brought up to speed on this initiative.)

3. **Set** up teleconference between Ray Scott, Great Lakes Group and Jerry Scarborough to discuss Request #2, Integrated Watershed Planning more thoroughly.

4. **List** members of Congress and staff who will be key to moving these requests forward -- starting with Florida Congressional offices and moving through Congressional offices for other states who will benefit from earmarks and should be asked to co-sponsor/support requests

5. **Create** a "step process"

- Where we are now
- Offices we are working with
- What is being done
- What needs to be done
- Description of amendments proposed to Farm & Ranch Land Protection Program; what needs to be done to help legislative process; who has to be contacted to give heads up about proposal (key: Chairman Goodlette, House Agriculture Committee and major supporters of F&RLPP, such as Sen. Leahy; point out benefits of amendment; ensure they do not see it as a threat to program)
- List of key things that have to be checked off in process
- List of who else in major areas of U.S. will support this

6. Michael Moore, CH2M HILL: **Follow** up with IFAS to find out status of "matrix" describing use of Farm Bill programs in Florida; review to see if other programs can be added to matrix

7. **Update** Niles Glasgow on all requests; discuss request for \$650,000 in EQIP funding for ground and surface water; Nile's intent for this. (CE will be meeting with Niles on Friday, March 26.)

8. CE to **contact** Charlie Garrison in DC re: dairy proposals and David Raskey, SWFWMD re: Pinellas, Hillsborough, Pasco county portion of Request #2.

9. Ray Scott to **provide** group with more information on:

- Status of World Wildlife Fund program/concept in working with cow/calf operations in Okechobee Drainage Basin
- EMS progress in putting conservation plans on the ground
- Latest CREP proposal
- Details on earmark requests being supported by FDACS
- Expedited planning process in Suwannee

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