

# **Florida Agriculture and Natural Resources Awareness Project** *An Action Plan for the Lake County Extension Service Campaign*

## **KEY MESSAGE:**

### **“Solutions For Your Life: Agriculture & Natural Resources In Lake County”**

#### **Executive Summary**

Because of a need for agriculture and natural resources awareness in Lake County, the industry has recently been faced with various challenges. These challenges include negative attitudes toward the industry’s environmental and water conservation practices, an increase in urbanized areas and the urbanized use of land, and a lack of knowledge about the economic impact that the agriculture and natural resources industry has on Lake County, in Central Florida, and in Florida in general. In order for the Lake County Extension Service to address these challenges, an awareness campaign has been developed to specifically target key county policy decision makers. The University of Florida Extension Service has a key communications and marketing message established, which is “Solutions For Your Life.” This campaign remains consistent with that key message while expanding to address the specific challenges mentioned.

#### **Section 1: Understanding ANR in Florida & Lake County**

##### ***Presence***

Lake County was carved out of Orange and Sumter Counties in July 1887 and has a rich agricultural history. Agriculture and natural resources in Lake County has been known for producing traditional agricultural products, and today, it has diversified and is known for its non-traditional agricultural products as well. From consistent citrus production in the early 1900’s, Lake County’s agricultural production has transformed into a huge nursery/landscape and forestry area. With more than 180,000 acres of the 610,000 acres in Lake County being farmland and approximately 108,000 acres being pine forest, diverse wildlife is provided habitat and food sources, and residents are provided with food, water-recharge areas, erosion control, and the beauty of natural areas.

##### ***Economic Impact***

Lake County’s agriculture and natural resources industry has a combined output impact of 1,093 million dollars, provided more than 10,497 jobs, and provides a value-added impact of 539.9 M dollars. This economic impact can be broken down as follows:

- Nursery, Greenhouse, & Landscape Services – 331.9 M, 3,995 jobs
- Forestry, Wood & Paper Product Manufacturing – 154.9 M, 1,200 jobs
- Fruit and Vegetable Farming & Processing – 310.4 M, 2,051 jobs
- Agricultural Inputs & Services – 81.1 M, 1,358 jobs
- Mining – 79.9 M, 668 jobs
- Livestock, Dairy, & Animal Products Manufacturing – 74.8 M, 795 jobs
- Other Agriculture – 60 M, 430 jobs
- **Data Source:** Economic Impacts of Agriculture and Natural Resource Industries in Lake, Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties in Central Florida, 2004. Source: MIG, Inc., *Implan* data for Florida Counties, Compiled by Alan Hodges, University of Florida, Dec 6., 2006., 2002 Agricultural Census

##### ***Issues***

Lake County’s agriculture and natural resources industry is presently facing several challenging issues. These include:

- Showing the public and key political and community leaders that the industry is committed to environmental stewardship

- Showing the public and key political and community leaders that the industry is committed to water conservation and quality
- Urbanization and land use -- Housing developments being put in where ag areas were and where ag areas were looked down upon
- Proving the economic impact of the industry to the county
  - For example, homeowners are not aware that they have to have significant income from their land to classify as agriculture land use for property tax purposes (i.e. one cow or goat will not classify them as agricultural land use)

## **Section II: Building A Plan for Awareness**

### ***Review of Current Programming***

Lake County Extension Service is not currently leading any agriculture and natural resources awareness projects, although they assist with the following projects led by other organizations:

- “Leadership Lake” program currently offers a farm tour, but extension office does not. Leadership Lake participants included community leaders and elected officials.
- Soil & Water Conservation office has someone hired to do community outreach including visiting 3<sup>rd</sup> graders in area schools in the county (reached over 24,000 students this last year).
- Farm Bureau has done some Ag In the Classroom essay contests, etc.
- FL Yards & Neighbors has a person who has some programming funded through the individual cities.

With the exception of Leadership Lake, all of the previously listed projects are directed toward youth and the general public.

### ***Developing the Campaign Plan***

To develop the campaign plan, a non-formal focus group was done with Lake County Extension Service agents and staff. After reviewing the economic impact of the agriculture and natural resources industry, the issues challenging the industry in Lake County, and the extent of current awareness programming in the county, the group began to discuss target audiences for future agriculture and natural resources awareness programming, as well as some goals and objectives.

### ***Needs Assessment***

There are two groups of people to assess for finding out what the needs are for agriculture and natural resources programming in Lake County. The first group is the agents and staff of the Lake County Extension Service. The second group is key community leaders and public/elected officials in Lake County. For these two groups, a formal needs assessment of extension agents and staff at a statewide level was completed, and a non-formal needs assessment of Lake County extension agents and staff was completed via focus group. No needs assessment or survey was taken of Lake County’s key community leaders and public/elected officials, which will be a factor in the continued development of this comprehensive plan. This needs assessment or survey will need to be completed to gain an accurate measure of campaign objectives vs. outcomes.

As for the formal needs assessment of extension agents and staff completed at a statewide level, the summary is as follows:

- The needs assessment was completed by 186 agents
- Key findings:
  - Development/population increase, water quality/use and land value are the top three issues facing counties across Florida
  - The top barriers to effectively communicating messages about agriculture and natural resources to the public, government, clientele, and media are:
    - access to information/materials/media/key stakeholders

- consistency/clarity/impact in message delivery
- competing interests/priorities
- an overall lack of interest, knowledge, and awareness
- Most agents (89.4%) would be either somewhat or very likely to use agricultural/natural resource programs designed to raise awareness among clientele and stakeholders.
- Almost all (98%) would like to see information produced in a “fast fact” format (i.e. via brochures, Power Points, locally relevant and practical fact sheets)
- Most (85.1%) would be either somewhat or very likely to use a Florida agricultural/natural resource awareness website that provides up-to-date information

As for the non-formal needs assessment, the following information was collected at the focus group of Lake County extension agents and staff:

- Orange, Lake, and Seminole have worked on a joint Economic Impact Brochure put together using Alan Hodges data. Brochure was almost complete, but never went to print.
- Local government and press wants to see economic impact
- There was some concern and issues with how the current data (from Alan Hodges) was compiled and grouped as far as different aspects of different industries, as well as the age of the data
- When discussing the four issues that should be focused on for fact sheets:
  - Environmental Stewardship
    - Emphasize BMPs, IMP programs, and other things that have had a positive impact on the environment
    - Conservation Easements – Show total acres in all 4 counties
  - Water Conservation & Quality – including using data from their Mobile Irrigation Lab showing comparisons of the gallons of water saved
  - Urbanization & Land Use – Housing developments being put in where ag areas were and where ag areas were looked down upon
    - Would like to find data showing pollution from ag vs. pollution from residential
    - Would like to show green space value and mention conservation
  - Economic Impact Sheet
    - Taxes – Homeowners aren’t aware that they have to have significant income from their land to classify as ag (i.e. one cow or goat won’t do it)
    - Also show comparison of tax revenue vs. expenditures for ag classification vs. residential/commercial use
- When discussing developing a county fact sheet:
  - Overwhelming approval of needing a key message
  - Wanted the nursery/greenhouse industry to be represented well in photographs
- When discussing target audience for comprehensive awareness plan:
  - Group felt civic organizations were not really a target audience because of lack of key decision makers being involved.
  - It was recommended to add participants in the Leadership Lake program because it was an elite group of alumni and participants.
- When discussing best delivery methods for our key message:
  - Group agreed face-to-face meetings would be most successful, though requiring more time & resources.
  - A display in the display area of the local county government building was mentioned.

### ***Campaign Goal***

To raise the awareness of the following agriculture and natural resources issues among key community leaders and public/elected officials in Lake County:

- Economic impact of agriculture and natural resources in Lake County
- Economic impact of agriculture and natural resources in Central Florida

- Economic impact of agriculture and natural resources in Florida
- Environmental stewardship efforts of the agriculture and natural resources industry in Lake County and Central Florida
- Water quality and conservation efforts of the agriculture and natural resources industry in Lake County and Central Florida
- Urbanization and land use impacts on the agriculture and natural resources industry in Lake County and Central Florida

### ***Campaign Objectives***

1. Survey Lake County’s key community leaders and public/elected officials to measure their awareness of the economic impact of, the environmental stewardship efforts of, the water quality and conservation efforts of, and the urbanization and land use impacts on agriculture and natural resources in Lake County.
2. Raise awareness of the economic impact of agriculture and natural resources in Lake County among Lake County’s key community leaders and public/elected officials by 5%
3. Raise awareness of the environmental stewardship efforts of agriculture and natural resources in Lake County among Lake County’s key community leaders and public/elected officials by 5%
4. Raise awareness of the water quality and conservation efforts of agriculture and natural resources in Lake County among Lake County’s key community leaders and public/elected officials by 5%
5. Raise awareness of urbanization and land use impacts on agriculture and natural resources in Lake County among Lake County’s key community leaders and public/elected officials by 5%

### ***Campaign Audiences***

- Primary:
  - Lake County Board of County Commissioners
  - Respective city council members
  - Public/elected county and city officials, including tax collector, property appraiser, clerk of court, supervisor of elections, superintendent of schools, and city/town mayors
  - Leadership Lake participants and alumni
- Secondary:
  - Chamber of Commerce staff
  - Other key community decision makers including school principals, business leaders, etc.
- Tertiary:
  - Government or political office staff members
  - General public

### ***Role of Agents, Staff & Volunteers During Campaign***

- County Extension Director (CED) will be responsible for all contact with members of primary audience, and will coordinate and oversee contact with all audiences.
- Other agents and staff members will be responsible for making contact with members of the secondary audience, as well as assist the CED as directed with his/her responsibilities. Other agents and staff will also be responsible for coordinating contact between volunteers and the tertiary audience.
- Volunteers will make contact with tertiary audience and report to extension agents and staff members to assist them as directed with other audience contact.

### ***Strategies***

- Use “Solutions For Your Life” key message on all materials and resources
- One-on-one meetings, as time and monetary resources allow
- Small group meetings (i.e. board meetings, etc.)
- Use of the following materials and resources:
  - Fast fact sheets

- Data to support information on fast fact sheets
- Power Point presentation
- Informational displays in key areas of government buildings

### ***Tactics***

**Objective #1:** Survey Lake County’s key community leaders and public/elected officials to measure their awareness of the economic impact of, the environmental stewardship efforts of, the water quality and conservation efforts of, and the urbanization and land use impacts on agriculture and natural resources in Lake County.

- Develop an electronic survey and send via e-mail.
- Compile results and adjust tactics for the other four objectives based on results.

**Objective #2:** Raise awareness of the economic impact of agriculture and natural resources in Lake County among Lake County’s key community leaders and public/elected officials by 5%

- Use the Lake County fast fact sheet to show the dollar impact and jobs created by various agriculture and natural resource industries in Lake County during one-on-one or small group meetings. Explain the data and ask questions leading the audience member to conclude that the agricultural and natural resources industry does have an economic impact on Lake County.
- Use Power Point presentations in small group meetings to show the dollar impact and jobs created by various agriculture and natural resource industries in Lake County during one-on-one or small group meetings. Explain the data and ask questions leading the audience members to conclude that the agricultural and natural resources industry does have an economic impact on Lake County.
- Use desired information on a display set up in a selected location

**Objective #3:** Raise awareness of the environmental stewardship efforts of agriculture and natural resources in Lake County among Lake County’s key community leaders and public/elected officials by 5%

- Use the Environmental Stewardship fast fact sheet to show the steps being taken by agriculture and natural resource industries in Lake County to take care of our environment and preserve it for future generations during one-on-one or small group meetings. Explain the data and ask questions leading the audience member to conclude that the Lake County agricultural and natural resources industry does practice environmental stewardship.
- Use Power Point presentations in small group meetings to show the steps being taken by agriculture and natural resource industries in Lake County to take care of our environment and preserve it for future generations during one-on-one or small group meetings. Explain the data and ask questions leading the audience members to conclude that the Lake County agricultural and natural resources industry does practice environmental stewardship.
- Use desired information on a display set up in a selected location

**Objective #4:** Raise awareness of the water quality and conservation efforts of agriculture and natural resources in Lake County among Lake County’s key community leaders and public/elected officials by 5%

- Use the Water Quality & Conservation fast fact sheet to show the steps being taken by agriculture and natural resource industries in Lake County to preserve water quality and to conserve water during one-on-one or small group meetings. Explain the data and ask questions leading the audience member to conclude that the Lake County agricultural and natural resources industry does take steps to preserve water quality and to conserve it.
- Use Power Point presentations in small group meetings to show the steps being taken by agriculture and natural resource industries in Lake County to preserve water quality and to conserve water during one-on-one or small group meetings. Explain the data and ask questions leading the audience members to conclude that the Lake County agricultural and natural resources industry does take steps to preserve water quality and conserve water.
- Use desired information on a display set up in a selected location

**Objective #5:** Raise awareness of urbanization and land use impacts on agriculture and natural resources in Lake County among Lake County’s key community leaders and public/elected officials by 5%

- Use the Urbanization & Land Use fast fact sheet to show the impact of urbanization and land use on agriculture and natural resource industries in Lake County during one-on-one or small group meetings. Explain the data and ask questions leading the audience member to conclude that the Lake County agricultural and natural resources industry is impacted by urbanization and land use.
- Use Power Point presentations in small group meetings to show the steps being taken by agriculture and natural resource industries in Lake County to who the impact of urbanization and land use on agriculture and natural resource industries in Lake County during one-on-one or small group meetings. Explain the data and ask questions leading the audience members to conclude that the Lake County agricultural and natural resources industry is impacted by urbanization and land use.
- Use desired information on a display set up in a selected location

### ***Campaign Outcomes***

- The five campaign objectives should be met.
- Decisions being made by key community leaders and elected/public officials will be well-thought out with any impact on Lake County’s agriculture and natural resources industry being considered.
- Decisions being made on policies affecting Lake County agriculture and natural resources will have a positive implication for Lake County’s agriculture and natural resources industry

### ***Campaign Implementation Plan***

The materials and resources that will be used to carry out this campaign will need to be developed first, then they will need to be test marketed before being using with the target audience. A website with the resources attached and available for download will be available at [www.FloridaAgInfo.com](http://www.FloridaAgInfo.com) for extension agents and staff to access when they are ready to acquire these resources. Electronic resources will need to be printed as needed by county agents and staff. A communications plan summary for each of our three audiences has been developed below and will need to be carried out by campaign staff, extension agents, extension staff, and volunteers using a predetermined timeline. A follow-up evaluation will need to be conducted to measure objectives versus outcomes of the campaign.

### ***Evaluation Plan***

Once the Lake County Extension Service has carried out the campaign using the materials and resources listed, an evaluation will need to be completed to measure the campaign objectives versus the campaign outcomes, thus measuring the effectiveness of this campaign. A follow-up survey will be sent out to the targeted audiences measuring their awareness of the agriculture and natural resources industry in Lake County. Those results will be compared to results from the initial survey that was taken. This survey should measure the effectiveness of specific messages, delivery methods, and overall message in respect to the desired campaign outcomes.

## **Section III: The Communications Plan**

### ***Summary For Each Audience***

- **Primary:** Lake County Board of County Commissioners, Respective city council members, Public/elected county and city officials (including tax collector, property appraiser, clerk of court, supervisor of elections, superintendent of schools, and city/town mayors), Leadership Lake participants and alumni
  - Refer to ***Tactics*** section above
- **Secondary:** Chamber of Commerce staff, Other key community decision makers including school principals, business leaders, etc.
  - Refer to ***Tactics*** section above
- **Tertiary:** Government or political office staff members, General public

- Refer to *Tactics* section above

### ***Timeline for Each Audience***

- **Primary:** Lake County Board of County Commissioners, Respective city council members, Public/elected county and city officials (including tax collector, property appraiser, clerk of court, supervisor of elections, superintendent of schools, and city/town mayors), Leadership Lake participants and alumni
  - Complete Tactics for Objective #1 by December 2007
  - Complete Tactics for Objectives #2 - #5 by August 2008
  - Complete Evaluation by December 2008
- **Secondary:** Chamber of Commerce staff, Other key community decision makers including school principals, business leaders, etc.
  - Complete Tactics for Objective #1 by December 2007
  - Complete Tactics for Objectives #2 - #5 by August 2008
  - Complete Evaluation by December 2008
- **Tertiary:** Government or political office staff members, General public
  - Complete Tactics for Objective #1 by December 2007
  - Complete Tactics for Objectives #2 - #5 by August 2008
  - Complete Evaluation by December 2008