

Citrus Administrative Committee

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CITRUS ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE SEEKS TO INCREASE DIVERSITY

LAKELAND – The Citrus Administrative Committee, which administers Florida’s fresh citrus marketing order, is trying to get women, minorities and persons with disabilities to participate in its nomination process this spring.

It acknowledges it has a tough job, because members of the committee, except the public member and alternate, must be fresh citrus growers or work for fresh citrus shippers. There is little diversity among growers and packinghouse personnel in the Florida citrus industry.

An U.S. Department of Agriculture official last year withheld approval of the committee’s nominees for several months because the committee lacked diversity. The official urged the committee to make greater efforts to increase the participation of women, minorities and people with disabilities in the nominating process. The USDA is especially interested in getting input from small business and organic growers, so the committee might represent all interests in the Florida citrus industry.

The Citrus Administrative Committee sets minimum grades and size standards for Florida citrus that is shipped interstate and exported to assure an orderly market for the fruit. It is overseen by the USDA, which must approve the nominees for committee membership. The committee has nine grower members and eight shipper members, and there is an alternate for each of those positions.

Despite the difficulty in creating diversity on the committee, its manager, Duke Chadwell, said the committee has two women serving on the committee one as a grower and the other a shipper and the two public members are women. There is also a grower with a disability currently on the committee. “We’re working within the citrus industry to increase diversity on the committee,” he said.

Paul Genke, a shipper and Chairman of the Citrus Administrative Committee for the 2009-2010 season, said while it’s tough to find the kind of people the USDA wants to be nominated, the committee, will attempt do so. “We are working within the industry to find them, identify them and mentor them,” he said.

Chadwell and Genke are urging any interested and qualified women, minorities or persons with disabilities to call Chadwell at (863) 682-3103. The fax number is (863) 683-9563, and the email address is Duke@citrusadministrativecommittee.org.

Nomination meetings for grower members of the committee will be held in May and early June and those interested should contact Chadwell prior to that date. Shipper member nominations are scheduled to be held on June 10th and those interested in those positions should contact Chadwell by mid May.

Membership on the committee is a volunteer job, but members are paid for their travel to meeting, usually about two times a year.

Chadwell said a woman, minority or disabled person who didn’t feel comfortable serving as a voting committee member could be nominated as an alternate. Alternates are also encouraged to attend meetings and are paid mileage for attending. “Serving as an alternate would be an excellent opportunity for someone to be mentored and learn enough to later become a voting member of the committee,” he said. As part of its effort to identify and recruit more diverse nominees, the Citrus Administrative Committee will produce a poster and display in citrus packinghouses, county extension offices, Farm Bureau offices and citrus industry offices.

For more information, contact Duke Chadwell at (863) 683-3103.