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### SART Conference Is A Hit With Attendees



*Craig Fugate, Florida Director of the Division of Emergency Management, addressed SART on the opening day of the state-wide conference. His message was to be prepared to act quickly and responsibly.*

With an excellent schedule of speakers and presentations, the first state-wide Florida SART Conference seemed to be a true hit with attendees right from the opening gavel. “It was just excellent,” said Florida ESF 17 Coordinator Joe Kight. “We had about 225 individuals registered and discussed everything from the possibility of pandemic influenza to how to manage stress in the aftermath of a disaster response. The conference fully met our objectives to inform, educate and to promote participation in SART activities.”



*Charles Bronson, Florida Commissioner of the Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Services, addressed the SART conference during the outdoor luncheon.*

Held from May 30 to June 1 at the TradeWinds Island Resort in St. Petersburg Beach, the conference was sponsored by:

- American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
- Humane Society of the United States
- Florida Farm Bureau Federation
- Florida Cattlemen’s Association

- Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association
- SunBelt Milk Producers
- Florida Nursery Growers & Landscape Association



*The SART conference provided an opportunity for networking (l-r): Tom Holt, David Perry and Paul Gibbs.*

Highlighting the conference were presentations by Craig Fugate, Director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management, and a luncheon speech by Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services Commissioner Charles Bronson. Fugate emphasized that effective response, the kind of response that promoted quick recovery following an emergency, had to be rapid and targeted. That, of course, means being prepared and it is in this vein that he commended SART's efforts. Bronson reviewed Florida's disaster-preparedness efforts and emphasized the benefits of including many points of view in planning.

### SART Conference Highlight



*With a slight overcast to keep the outdoor luncheon cool, Florida Commissioner of Agriculture & Consumer Services Charles Bronson (right) spoke to the 2007 SART Conference about the continuing importance of a viable agricultural sector to Florida's economy. Tim Manning, the USDA's Farm Service Agency Dispute Resolution Coordinator for Florida, co-chaired the conference, which garnered terrific attendee reviews.*

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## NEW Workbook! Creating an Effective County SART 12 Steps to Success

A new SART training and development manual is available on line on the Florida SART home page at [www.flsart.org](http://www.flsart.org). Titled *Creating an Effective County SART: 12 Steps to Success* this 44-page workbook is designed to begin where the SART

message in the initial Florida manual, *Creating A County SART* ends, says primary author Greg Christy.

The new 12-step workbook leads progressively through a dozen steps in the formation of an effective multi-agency coordination group.

1. Operate as a multi-agency coordinating group
2. Establish regular meetings with agendas
3. Work with the county ESF-17 coordinator
4. Review and update your county ESF-17 plan
  - a. Analyze the threats
  - b. Perform an animal and agricultural census
  - c. Prepare a support profile
  - d. Develop a concept of operations
  - e. Perform follow-up analysis
  - f. Immediately implement what you learn
5. Develop an active outreach and recruitment effort
6. Promote awareness of your County SART
7. Support and utilize the Florida SART website
8. Provide training for County SART members
9. Become NIMS compliant
10. Develop a regional context and contacts
11. Identify and obtain ESF-17 equipment and supplies
12. Take time to enjoy the process

Among all of the training and learning and networking opportunities that a County SART affords, Christy maintains, the one that cannot be overlooked is #12 – to enjoy building your county team.

“We tend to get so buried in the potential for disasters that we sometimes overlook the glue that binds us,” he says. “After all, 99 percent of our time is spent studying and talking and brainstorming ... and only one percent actually responding. I think the more we enjoy the process, the more effective we’ll be when the time comes to actually jump in and respond.”



NOTE: Christy ([christg@doacs.state.fl.us](mailto:christg@doacs.state.fl.us)) and co-author Rick Sapp ([rsa5@cox.net](mailto:rsa5@cox.net)) invite everyone in the SART community to comment on the workbook. “The more

comments we have to work from” Christy says, “the better this workbook will be. So please look it over and send us your ideas. In the end, the goal is not to have a great workbook, although that would be nice; the goal is to provide a thought-provoking document, maybe one that can give just the right inspiration or a single good idea at just the right time to help move a county process along. Strong, agile community-based organizations are the goal.”

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## Awards Presented At Conference

Several individuals were recognized for leadership and exceptional service during the 2007 Florida SART Conference at the TradeWinds Resort in St. Petersburg May 30-June 1. “These individuals typically seek no recognition or reward, other than the personal satisfaction they receive from their efforts,” said Joe Kight, Florida ESF 17 Coordinator. On behalf of the SART program, Joe recognized “one individual from each of the four distinct partnership groups that form the SART family: federal, state, local/county and volunteer partners.” Florida Commissioner of Agriculture & Consumer Services Charles Bronson spoke during the luncheon and assisted in the brief awards ceremony. Florida State Veterinarian and Chief of the Division of Animal Industry Tom Holt read the awards as follows:



Martha Wagaman

“Our first recipient, Gilchrist County’s Martha Wagaman, served as our Resource Unit Leader for Hurricane Frances, Resource Unit Leader and Plans Section Chief for Hurricane Ivan; and Plans Section Chief in Hurricane Jeanne and Hurricane Dennis. She also was the Planning Section Chief for our Incident Management Team in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and assisted with Hurricane Katrina.

She also has found time to work with counties as they develop their County SART teams.” Wagman was formerly with USDA, Veterinary Services and is now part of the Department of Health.



Joan Dusky

“The next award recipient, the University of Florida’s Joan Dusky, has embraced the SART concept and provided the assets of her organization in the form of equipment, facilities and manpower in time of need. Her guidance also assisted in the development in our award-winning SART Web site. Dr. Dusky has directed IFAS into a position of national leadership in the area of emergency awareness response and recovery for agriculture.”



*Craig Engelson  
accepted the award  
for Bill Armstrong.*

The third award was presented to Hillsborough County ESF 17 Coordinator Bill Armstrong. “Bill has truly been there from the beginning,” the recognition certificate read. “He was part of the original group that developed the old Animal Annex to ESF-11, entitled Animal Issues, which made Florida the first state to recognize the importance of having animal issues addressed in the state Emergency Response Plan. From there, Hillsborough County became one of the leading examples of developing a county animal response team. Bill Armstrong from Hillsborough County Animal

Control is synonymous with SART.” (Craig Engelson of Brevard County Animal Services accepted the award in Armstrong’s absence.)

Raquel Aluisy of United Animal Nations-Emergency Animal Rescue Service was next recognized a volunteer who “stepped forward and promoted SART. As an Emergency Animal Responder, both in the state and nationally, she successfully shifted the mind-set of many organizations. She worked to prevent independent actions and self-deployment of well-intended citizens and helped establish utilization of the NIMS response system. She has served on numerous national committees, but still finds the time to assist Florida counties in develop an animal response team plan. (See [www.chaart.org/index.shtml](http://www.chaart.org/index.shtml)).



Raquel Aluisy

In addition to the above awards, FDACS’s Joe Kight presented a SART leadership award to USDA/FSA Dispute Resolution Coordinator Tim Manning. “Tim provides a level of leadership for the Florida SART program – including work with the state advisory board – that surpasses expectations. We all honor his effort and his dedication,” Kight says.

Kight also recognized Liz Wang, now a member of the Texas Veterinary Medical Association, Jiannong Xin, Associate in IFAS Information Technology at the University of Florida, and Greg Christy (not present for picture, but “on loan” from FDACS to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security) for vision in the development of the SART Internet site including this *SART Sentinel* Newsletter.



*Joe Kight (left) and Tim Manning*



*Joe Kight (left) with Liz Wang and Jiannong Xin*



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### **Straight from the conference podium ....**

"As a responder in an emergency situation, remember that you must take care of yourself first. Unless you do that, there's a good chance that you won't be in a position to help anyone else.

"Of course, you'll need to watch out for downed power lines, precarious tree limbs, flooding, sinkholes, dangerous animals, and other natural hazards. However, also be aware that the people you come in contact with could be dangerous or have anti-government feelings, including criminals, members of organized hate groups, animal rights extremists, environmental activists, and the mentally ill.

"Unfortunately, you won't have the luxury of running background checks, and you could come face-to-face with dangerous people you know little or nothing about. Just keep in mind that not everyone will think you're wonderful, even though you're there to help. Even the victims can hurt you. In emergency situations, when people have suffered loss and are under great stress, many of them do things they wouldn't normally do. Sometimes good people do bad things.

"The bottom line is that violence often is predictable, so to have the best chance of protecting yourself be continually aware of your surroundings and watch for signs of pending aggression."

Tom Ackerman, Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge  
USDA Office of the Inspector General, Criminal Investigations

## FSA Loan Assistance Due to Freeze!



The Farm Service Agency (FSA) says that qualified farm operators in nine north Florida counties are eligible for emergency U.S. Department of Agriculture loans because of the record setting cold temperatures and freezing conditions from April 6-9. Affected Florida counties – Baker, Columbia, Gadsden, Hamilton, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Madison and Nassau – border the 152 Georgia counties designated primary natural disaster areas.

"Unpredictable weather puts farmers at risk," said FSA State Executive Director, Kevin L. Kelley. "Our programs act as a safety net to help farmers continue to produce a dependable and affordable food supply."

Affected, qualified farmers have eight months from May 18, 2007, the date of the declaration, to apply for loans to help cover part of their actual losses. FSA Emergency Loans currently carry an interest rate of 3.75 percent. Farmers can use the funds to overcome physical losses (to repair or rebuild essential farm buildings), clean debris or prepare land for replanting, or to replace livestock, supplies and harvested crops on hand or in storage that were lost. Farmers can also apply loan funds toward production losses to recover a portion of losses on growing crops that were destroyed.

Interested farmers may contact their local USDA Service Centers for information on eligibility requirements and application procedures for these and other programs. Additional information is available at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov> or by contacting Mike Graham, Farm Loan Chief (352) 379-4541 or Cynthia Portalatin, Public Affairs (352) 379-4562.

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**Seen, but not heard: editor and mediator needed ... fast!**



That sneaky SART Advisory Board is at it again, "Meering" together in the Blue Heron room. (Photo by the Editor)



*This is surely one tough neighborhood in rural Volusia County. (Photo by the Editor)*

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*Todd Campbell of the University of Tampa with a captured Nile monitor. "Eradication is the only viable answer," Campbell says, "and there is no time like the present."*

## Exotic Update: The Nile Monitor

Reports are in and they are not good.

According to [www.MyFWC.com](http://www.MyFWC.com), the Nile monitor was first discovered wild in Florida in 1990. A self-sustaining, breeding lizard population has apparently been established in Lee County – the Ft. Myers-Cape Coral area – for more than 10 years; individual sightings (without self-sustaining populations at this time) have been verified in Alachua, Broward, Collier, Dade, DeSoto and Orange.

The Nile monitor is a fresh water species, but it tolerates brackish and fouled or contaminated water. A native of Africa, males may grow to 7 feet in length and can run up to 18 mph! It is described as hardy with an aggressive temperament, a powerful bite, sharp claws and lashing tail. Not your



back yard bug-eater, this is a lizard with an attitude and researchers describe it as “very smart.”

According to Melissa Kaplan’s Herp Care Collection web site (quoting a report for the San Diego Herpetological Society by Mark Baumann) at <http://www.anapsid.org/nile.html>, “With a lot of patience, frequent handling, and a well stocked first aid kit, Nile monitors can be tamed.” And this from a site that loves (not loathes) reptiles!

MyFWC.com even notes that the monitor “... is the second most commonly sold African monitor species in the United States (Faust 2001), despite the fact that its large adult size and nervous disposition make it a difficult pet to keep.” This presumably accounts for their established presence in Florida. People enjoy them as small pets (in the same manner as kittens and puppies), but once they become large, and of breeding size and age, their naturally aggressive nature becomes a problem and owners, because they are gentle at heart and cannot locate a herp lover who will take the adult, turns the animal loose in a nearby canal or stream. The other possibility for the established population – assuming the lizard did not swim across the Atlantic Ocean – is intentional release, which would truly be a crime.

Consider that this new resident of the Sunshine State eats almost anything that does not eat it first: fish and tortoises, pelicans and sea turtles, cats, dogs and perhaps – this has Not been documented – small children.

"They're not limited by anything and they're definitely breeding," says Todd Campbell, an assistant professor and ecologist at the University of Tampa, who was quoted in 2004 for <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Publications/ZooGoer/2005/3/reptilefeature.cfm>. "We've caught only 80. There are probably in the high hundreds or thousands out there. They are currently highly localized in the Cape Coral area, but we've also had sightings in some troublesome places, such as nearby Pine Island. If they breed there, they would be very difficult to eradicate."

With the possibility that the Nile monitor lizard can spread throughout the U.S. southeast, surviving frost and cold weather in underground burrows, the National Zoo site suggests that located lizards must be “immediately eliminated.” [For additional information read [http://static.ut.edu/public\\_info/Lizard-Tales.cfm](http://static.ut.edu/public_info/Lizard-Tales.cfm).]

### **Straight from the conference podium ....**

“If you are going to change the outcome [in a disaster situation], you have to be in fast. Do not be afraid of making a wrong decision. If you wait until all the assessments and evaluations are done, you’re already wrong. You have one hour to reestablish contact and begin to secure the affected area; then, you have 72 hours to make a difference.”

Craig Fugate, Director  
Florida Division of Emergency Management

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### **About the SART Sentinel**

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*The SART SENTINEL* is an E-mail newsletter prepared monthly by Rick Sapp and the members of the Florida State Agricultural Response Team. Past issues of the *Sentinel* are archived on the Florida SART Web Site, [www.flsart.org](http://www.flsart.org).

If you have a story or photo that you would like to have considered for publication in *The SART SENTINEL*, please contact the Editors.

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