BMP Funding Available for Hillsborough and Pinellas Nurseries

By, Jemy Hinton, Suncoast BMP Implementation Team Leader, Gulf Coast REC

Ornamental containerized nurseries in Hillsborough and Pinellas counties have an extra incentive to implement water quality best management practices (BMPs). The Hillsborough Soil and Water Conservation District in cooperation with the University of Florida IFAS, the Florida Department of Agriculture, the South West Florida Water Management District, Florida Farm Bureau, Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association and the Tampa Bay Wholesale Growers are providing cost-share funding for participating growers. Nurseries can receive reimbursements up to $25,000 at 85% cost share for implementing best management practices such as conversion to micro-irrigation, erosion control, fertilizer and chemical reduction minimization or leachate reduction; practices that otherwise may be economically unfeasible.

The Hillsborough Pinellas Container Nursery BMP program is part of an aggressive voluntary effort by the agricultural community to attain Tampa Bay total maximum daily loading (TMDL) goals.

Several bay area nurseries have already signed a Notice of Intent (NOI) with the Florida Department of Agriculture to implement BMPs and are filling out applications for the cost-share funding. Nurseries in Hillsborough or Pinellas counties interested in the cost-share program may contact Jemy Hinton with the University of Florida at jwh@ufl.edu or (813) 478-6630. The application deadline for this cost-share opportunity is March 15, 2007.