

FTGA Picks New Executive Director

Experienced Exec Brings Impressive Credentials to Post

The Florida Turfgrass Association has named Casey Wohl Pace as the organization's new executive director. She will manage the 900-member organization's daily operations, develop relationships with allied associations, serve as the industry's spokesperson, and direct the strategic long-term direction of the association.

Wohl Pace previously worked for Florida Citrus Mutual as director of public affairs. In this capacity, she served as chief of staff and assisted the CEO in directing all activities of the statewide association comprising 10,000 citrus-grower members. She focused on issues such as international trade, pest and disease, labor as well as legislative and regulatory affairs. She has extensive experience in association management, industry representation, public affairs advocacy, media relations, crisis communications, reputation management, grassroots communication, issues management, strategic planning, fundraising and special events.

Prior to joining Florida Citrus Mutual, she worked for the Florida Phosphate Council.

"The FTGA is very pleased to announce the hiring of Casey Wohl Pace as our executive director," said FTGA President Matt Taylor, CGCS, "The past few years have seen tremendous growth in the FTGA and our industry, and Casey will be a great addition to our organization as we continue that growth."

Wohl Pace has a master's degree in agricultural communications from the University of Florida and a bachelor's degree in environmental policy from Rollins College. She is a native of Sebring, where her family is in the agriculture and real estate business, and she currently serves as president of the Agriculture Institute of Florida.

Meet Casey Wohl Pace

Editor's Note: Ms. Pace's resume should provide FTGA and FGCSA members with a quick, concise look at the skills and experience she brings to the her new role as executive director of the FTGA.

QUALIFICATIONS SUMMARY

Highly-accomplished executive with an eight-year career in public relations, industry representation, public affairs advocacy and association management. Core areas of expertise include association management, media relations, crisis communications, reputation management, grassroots/legislative communication, issues management, strategic planning, fundraising and special events.

KEY CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- Developed and managed all external and internal communication during 2004 Florida hurricane season. Public relations efforts resulted in extensive and prolonged media coverage highlighting citrus damage, federal hurricane disaster assistance for citrus growers of more than \$400 million, and a press conference featuring President George W. Bush in a central Florida citrus grove.
 - Developed and managed public relations and membership communications for two-year, \$7-million Citrus Tariff Preservation Campaign. Executed media and industry communications strategy at international trade negotiation meeting in Miami.
 - Spearheaded communications component for lobbying efforts that secured \$550 million in state and federal funding for a citrus disease eradication and compensation program.
 - Established and managed successful grassroots advocacy campaign to maintain the orange on the Florida automotive license plate despite the Florida Cabinet's effort to replace the graphic.
- Created and oversaw all facets of the industry's first statewide, three-day annual conference, hosting 300 attendees, high-ranking political speakers and raising more than \$130,000.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- **Florida Citrus Mutual, Lakeland** (April 2003-March 2006)

Director of Public Affairs

Served as chief-of-staff and assisted CEO in directing all activities of national/international trade association comprised of 10,000 citrus grower members, an annual budget of \$4.5 million and 16 employees with four direct reports. Appeared on behalf of CEO and managed his communications outreach. Developed and oversaw programs and strategic initiatives that advocated membership's interests on trade, legislative and regulatory matters at all levels of government.

Media Relations – Developed and managed all aspects of the association's media relations efforts including press conferences, media tours, editorial board meetings, opinion editorial placement, letter-to-the-editor campaigns, press releases and white paper development. Media contacts/interviews include CNBC, FOX, ABC, NBC, CBS, USA Today, Associated Press, Reuters, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, as well as local, state and trade media.

Reputation Management - Served as industry spokesperson for Florida's citrus growers on local, state, national and international levels in print, television and

radio mediums. Represented industry during two-year communications outreach campaign with Miami-Dade business community and media.

Strategic Planning - Developed and implemented the association's comprehensive strategic plan to establish goals and provide direction for the board of directors, members and staff.

Fundraising - Reinvigorated the organization's federal political action committee (PAC), raising more than \$50,000 in first year. Coordinated political fundraisers for several members of Congress and state elected officials. Developed and managed Allied Membership, raising more than \$30,000 per year.

Crisis Communications/Issues Management – Oversaw all public and media relations activities relating to many high profile industry issues, including citrus damage during the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons, citrus canker controversy, Tropicana patent dispute, federal anti-dumping case and the citrus tariff preservation effort.

• **Florida Citrus Mutual, Lakeland** (*August 2000-March 2003*)

Manager of Public Affairs

Instituted a proactive and aggressive media relations strategy, which positioned association as key media contact for the \$9.1 billion Florida citrus industry. Managed one direct report in the area of governmental relations. Secured more than \$500,000 in state and federal grants to fund public relations outreach activities. Oversaw all membership communications activities including weekly newsletter, website, printed material, Annual Report, membership recruitment materials, etc. Developed and managed the public affairs department budget.

• **Florida Citrus Mutual, Lakeland** (*January 2000-August 2000*)

Public Affairs Specialist

Developed and managed the Florida Citrus Industry Grassroots Network, designed to increase industry political activity and accomplish state and national legislative goals. Recruited more than 600 members and designed network's communications strategy and components.

• **Florida Phosphate Council, Lakeland** (*July 1998-December 1999*)

Communications Coordinator

Served as chief communications liaison for association's external and internal outreach efforts, including media, membership, local and state elected officials, state and federal agencies, and public/private interest groups. Advised the association president and industry officials on sensitive



Casey Wohl Pace

and emerging issues. Developed all communications correspondence, printed material and reports, and oversaw the public relations budget.

AWARDS

- Florida Public Relations Association Community Service Award, 2004
- Florida Public Relations Association Golden Image Award (Public Affairs Campaign), 2002
- Florida Public Relations Association Golden Image Award (Specialty Item), 2004
- The Showalter Group's Political Involvement Innovation Award, (Grassroots Campaign), 2002
- University of Florida Outstanding Agriculture Communications Alumnus, 2005

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- Agriculture Institute of Florida, President
- American Society of Association Executives
- Florida Public Relations Association, Past Chapter President
- Florida Society of Association Executives
- Junior League of Greater Lakeland
- University of Florida Agriculture Education & Communications Dept. Advisory Committee
- University of Florida Wedgworth Leadership Institute, Alumni

EDUCATION

- University of Florida, M.A. – Agricultural Communications, 1998
- Rollins College, B.A. – Environmental Policy, 1996