UGA to hold groundbreaking for turfgrass research facility June 24

FROM STAFF REPORTS

State, industry and University of Georgia officials will take shovel to soil at 2 p.m. June 24, as they officially break ground on three new turfgrass research and education facilities. The largest of the facilities will be on Higgins Road in Griffin, just west of the main parking lot, where the ceremony will take place.

UGA campuses in Athens and Tifton will house additional structures.

The UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences supports Georgia’s $7.8 billion turfgrass industry with 10 faculty members who focus primarily on turf along with an additional eight researchers who have involvement in turf-related projects. UGA turf scientists conduct research, educate industry professionals and train students in support of all of the state’s turf-related industries.

“With the backing of the turf industry and generous support from the governor and legislature, we will finally have facilities that are equal to the quality of our faculty involved in turfgrass research, education and extension,” said J. Scott Angle, the college’s dean and director. “Our programs will also assure that the turf industry is an economic engine for Georgia during this time.”

The ceremony will include remarks from University System of Georgia Chancellor Hank Huckaby, UGA President Jere W. Morehead, Angle, Rep. Terry England (R-Auburn), Regent Tommy Hopkins, Sod Atlanta President Ken Morrow and UGA doctoral student Becky Grubbs.

The event is free and open to the public, with a reception immediately following the ceremony.

During the 2014 legislative session, Gov. Nathan Deal and the Georgia General Assembly appropriated funds for a statewide turfgrass facilities enhancement project. Turfgrass is one of Georgia’s top crops, providing 87,000 full- and part-time jobs and 17 percent of the state’s farm gate value.

“The potent combination of world-class faculty and facilities assures that Georgia will remain an intellectual leader in turfgrass for decades to come,” Angle said.

The Griffin facility — which will house seven turfgrass scientists, their staff, postdoctoral research associates, visiting scientists and graduate students — will include modern laboratories, offices, conference and classroom space and a greenhouse complex.

On the Tifton campus, antiquated facilities will be replaced with new greenhouses to support UGA’s expanding warm-season turf breeding program.

At the Athens campus, greenhouses and a combination classroom and office complex will be built to support undergraduate teaching and research programs.

The goal of the new facilities is to enhance the college’s undergraduate and graduate education programs, enable turf scientists to conduct high-level research and allow the college to retain and recruit top scientists in support of Georgia’s turf industry.

For more information on UGAs turfgrass programs, see www.georgiaturf.com.