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This Week at the Statehouse

Legislative Update - Week Six

Issue: Deer Tag System

The House Agriculture Wildlife Subcommittee continued to discuss [H. 3750](#) this week - a bill that would seek to modify the doe tag system by getting rid of the eight date-specific antlerless deer days. Working with SCDNR, SCFB suggested an amendment to the bill which was accepted by House members. With a big game license, hunters will now receive two antlerless deer tags that can be used at any time with the option of purchasing four more additional antlerless deer tags. If a hunter purchases the four additional antlerless deer tags, then SCDNR will provide two additional antlerless deer tags to be used in game zones 3 & 4 free of charge to the purchaser which will be handled administratively by SCDNR. This compromise amendment seeks to simplify the deer tag system while still providing ample opportunities to harvest does in South Carolina. The full House Agriculture Committee met and gave a favorable report on H. 3750. We thank House agricultural members for helping farmers and hunters have the tools necessary to better manage the deer herd in South Carolina.

(S-A) 1. Deer and Wildlife Issues - When South Carolina farmers' viability is threatened due to wildlife damage, they should be allowed to deal with the wildlife like any pest that threatens a crop. Understanding that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is charged by the State of South Carolina to manage certain species of wildlife, SC Farm Bureau will work with DNR and other appropriate agencies to make sure that the farmer's livelihood is protected and our game animals are managed properly. We support a reasonable limit on antlered bucks and a deer tagging program for all deer that will enhance the management of the deer herd in South Carolina. The farmers should continue to use depredation tags to control deer herds as well as work with DNR in educating hunters to harvest the proper number of does. We also support funding for DNR to help educate landowners and farmers in dealing with wildlife issues on their property. If the DNR cannot control the wildlife damage and the farmer's livelihood is put in jeopardy by wildlife managed and owned by the state, then the state should create an indemnity bond to compensate farmers for the burden of feeding the state's wildlife. Further, maximum effort should be made to deal with damage from non-game species as well.

The Department of Natural Resources should evaluate and localize our state's deer population zone by zone and work to reduce the total population in our state where the herd is at controllable levels and it is again viable to grow crops profitably.

Issue: Hemp

The House Agricultural committee met this week to discuss [H. 3449](#) - The SC Department of Agriculture's plan to regulate hemp in South Carolina. With the passing of the 2018 Farm bill, hemp is now a recognized commodity under federal law and states are required to submit a plan to USDA for approval as to how they will regulate the crop. H. 3449 details how SCDA will move forward with a program that would open up the ability for more growers to grow hemp without an acre limit. H. 3449 was given a favorable report by the Committee.

Priority Issue: Dams Safety Program

GR Staff continue to educate members of the Senate of the importance in passing [S. 107 - The Dams & Safety Program Bill](#). It is important to contact your senator to tell them to support S. 107 because it is a common sense bill that

improves safety within the same safety program, concentrates DHEC's limited resources on our significant and high hazard dams, and provides much needed relief of the financial burden placed on dam owners facing repairs from reclassification due to encroaching urban sprawl into rural areas. Please contact your senator today to share this important message!

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Funding for the Agriculture Department, FDA and other agencies expires at the end of the week. The House-Senate spending package was released February 13 around midnight. It includes \$23 million billion in discretionary funding for USDA and the FDA, however it does not include a supplemental disaster relief package. We continue to explore both state and federal options for funding.

The WOTUS replacement rule is set to be published February 14 in the Federal Register, kicking off a 60-day public comment period.