



March 15, 2019

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This Week at the Statehouse

Legislative Update - Week Ten

The House took up the budget this week and passed a \$9.3 billion in state money early Wednesday morning. The Senate will take up the budget in April.

Priority Issue: Dams Safety Program: The Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee gave a favorable report as amended by the subcommittee to [S. 107](#) - the dam safety program bill. The next step is for S. 107 to be placed on the calendar for consideration by the full Senate. It is important to contact your Senator to tell them to support S. 107 because:

- S. 107 protects the citizens of South Carolina by focusing resources on the dams that pose the most risk by prioritizing the highest hazard dams first.
- S. 107 addresses the high financial burden dam owners face by the reclassification of their dam's hazard level with a one-time refundable tax credit. This will help dam owners make the required repairs and modifications to their dams to protect people and downstream development.

(SN - GP) Dams and Reservoir. South Carolina Farm Bureau supports reasonable standards concerning the construction, inspection, maintenance, and repair of all high risk pond dams.

Issue: Deer Tag System

With unanimous support, the Fish, Game, and Forestry Subcommittee gave a favorable report on [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. This bill is a product of a compromise between SCFB and SCDNR. 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 bill seeks to simplify the deer tag system while still providing ample opportunities to harvest does in South Carolina. The bill will head next to the full Senate Fish, Game, and Forestry Committee for consideration.

(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 Senate gave second reading to [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. It is important to contact your Senator in support of this bill so that it receives third reading.

SCFB supports the Department of Agriculture regulating hemp in South Carolina.

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New Bills of Interest

Introductions of Interest This Week

[H. 4245 \(Word version\)](#) -- Reps. Ligon, Kirby, Ott, Hewitt, Atkinson, Hiott, Hixon and Pope: A BILL TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING ARTICLE 5 TO CHAPTER 17, TITLE 47 SO AS TO PROVIDE IT IS UNLAWFUL TO ADVERTISE, SELL, LABEL, OR MISREPRESENT AS "MEAT" OR "CLEAN MEAT" ALL OR PART OF A CARCASS THAT IS CELL-CULTURED MEAT/PROTEIN, OR IS NOT DERIVED FROM HARVESTED PRODUCTION LIVESTOCK OR POULTRY, AND TO PROVIDE A PENALTY.

[S. 647 \(Word version\)](#) -- Senator Martin: A BILL TO AMEND SECTION 12-6-3750(A) OF THE 1976 CODE, RELATING TO A NONREFUNDABLE TAX CREDIT FOR PROCESSING DONATED DEER FOR CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTION, TO INCLUDE WILD HOGS.

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Congressional Report

National News

The President's fiscal 2020 budget request was released Monday. The budget request proposes \$20.8 billion for USDA which would amount to a decrease of \$3.6 billion (approximately 15%). This is part of a total budget request that would trim all non-military programs by a combined 5 percent.

Earlier this week, President Ott on behalf of the SC Farm Bureau Federation, along with numerous agricultural organizations, signed a letter to Congressional Budget and Appropriations leaders requesting that they reject any cuts to vital farm policy programs.