



South Carolina State Legislative Weekly Update - April 23, 2021

The General Assembly returned to the Capitol this week for their fifteenth week of the legislative session to continue their work for the state. There are three weeks remaining in this annual session.

Second Reading on Illegal Transportation of Feral Hogs

The **Feral Hog Transportation Bill, House Bill 3539**, was debated on the Senate floor this week, and received second reading by a vote of 45-1. It is anticipated that the bill will receive third reading next week. If passed, the bill will head to Governor McMaster's desk for signature. SC Farm Bureau Government Relations team is deeply engaged and working to push this crucial legislation.

Feral hogs are responsible for \$115 million in damage statewide each year and have been a growing problem for farmers. The Feral Hog Transport Bill gives law enforcement the tools needed to identify and prosecute individuals illegally transporting feral hogs. While it is currently illegal in South Carolina to transport feral hogs, it is very difficult to prove hogs are wild. This legislation would require individuals to obtain proper identification of the animals to prove their origin. An amendment was adopted that created additional documents that can be used for identification of hogs during transportation. More information on this priority issue can be found [here](#).

House Passes South Carolina COVID-19 Liability Immunity Act

Senate Bill 147, the South Carolina COVID-19 Liability Immunity Act, passed the House and will now make its way to Governor McMaster's desk for signature.

The bill provides necessary, targeted, and temporary liability relief for businesses, healthcare providers, educational institutions, and other entities who have followed and continue to follow public health guidance during the pandemic.

Favorable Senate Vote on Clemson PSA Asian Longhorn Beetle Regulations

Asian Longhorn Beetle Regulations passed the Senate Ag Committee this week. The regulations define the quarantine area and process for containing and eradicating the Asian Longhorn Beetle. Outreach and educational efforts to inform the public about quarantines have already ensued and will continue. Additionally, any person, business, or entity regularly engaged in the possible movement of regulated articles, such as nurseries, landscapers, and arborists, will be contacted by the ALB program and entered into a compliance agreement, which will indicate their understanding of the new regulation and provide them with direct contact to program officials.

Senate Prepares for Budget Debate Next Week

The full South Carolina Senate will begin budget deliberations on the state budget next week. Earlier this month the SC Board of Economic Advisors provided updated revenue projections that exceeded anticipated figures by 8.5%. Once the Senate has settled on their version of the budget, it will be sent back to the House for consideration.

Coastal Flooding

A joint meeting of the Senate Agriculture, Natural Resources Committee and House Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Environmental Affairs Committee to hear testimony from Duke Power and Cube regarding coastal flooding - specifically in the Horry and Georgetown areas. The committees heard from Mark Gross, VP of Operations for Cube Hydro Carolinas - Yadkin, Jeff Lineberger,

Water Strategy Director for Duke Energy, and Ken Rentiers of DNR. Gross described the four electric generating projects they manage along the Pee Dee River Basin. These four projects built between 1917 and 1962; and, have been operating since. He addressed issues specific to flooding in Horry County and explained that Yadkin is not designed for flood management or mitigation. These dams were constructed for generating electricity, not for flood control. Gross explained, "What has been happening is unprecedented rainfall in the past couple of years. Plus, urban development has resulted in quicker runoff - land does not absorb as much as it used to." He explained their water release triggers and federal regulations.

Congressional News

National News

Immigration: The Biden administration announced it will provide an additional 22,000 H-2B seasonal visas for non-agricultural seasonal guest workers due to high labor demand. H-2-B visas help to hire foreign workers in seafood processing and forestry-related jobs, among others.

Growing Climate Solutions Act: Senate Agriculture Chair Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) and Sens. Mike Braun (R-Ind.), Lindsay Graham (R-SC.) and John Boozman (R-Ark.) reintroduced their Growing Climate Solutions Act on Tuesday, a bill that would help farmers gain access to voluntary carbon markets. The act establishes a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) technical assistance and certification program to assist producers and forest owners seeking to participate in voluntary carbon markets. Sens. Stabenow and Braun are joined by 34 cosponsors of the bill, including Senate Agriculture Committee Ranking Member John Boozman (R-Ark.) and 12 other committee members, demonstrating that bipartisan, common ground can be found on climate policies.

"As Americans, we have the ability to come up with climate solutions that can benefit our economy and our way of life," said Senator Graham. "The United States has long been a leader in innovation. This legislation is an opportunity to put our knowledge and can-do spirit to work to promote business opportunities for the agriculture industry while promoting the protection of our environment."