



May 7, 2021

South Carolina State Legislative Weekly Update - May 7, 2021

In the Short Rows; Sine Die Next Thursday, May 13

As the environment intensifies with the impending end of the normal annual session, the General Assembly returned to the Capitol this week for their seventeenth week of the legislative session to continue their work for the state. There is one week remaining in this annual session before Sine Die, defined as the end of an annual legislative session, and it looms large over the General Assembly while members search for legislative vehicles to push initiatives across the goal line.

Illegal Transportation of Feral Hogs Bill

The **Feral Hog Transportation Bill**, [House Bill 3539](#), passed the Senate and received a concurrence vote of 112-0 by the SC House of Representatives this week. Unexpectedly, the House vote was reconsidered and amended to include language related to a DNR enforcement issue. The amended bill has been sent back to the Senate for consideration.

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](#).

Commissioner Hugh Weathers Updates Senate on the State of Agriculture

Commissioner Weathers updated the Senate Ag Committee on the State of Agriculture in South Carolina. The commissioner touched on various topics including Certified SC Grown, response to COVID through local farmer markets and direct-to-consumer outlets, complexity of supply chain and the economic engine of agriculture.

Agribusiness is South Carolina's largest industrial sector, contributing over \$46 billion to the state's economy and supporting over 245,000 jobs. South Carolina's top ten commodities are broilers, turkeys, corn, cattle, soybeans, cotton, eggs, peanuts, greenhouse nurseries and tobacco. There are nearly 25,000 farms in South Carolina amounting to nearly 5 million acres of farmland. Two-thirds of the land in the state is covered by forests.

The Certified SC program is an exciting cooperative effort among farmers, processors, wholesalers, retailers and the South Carolina Department of Agriculture (SCDA). The Certified SC brand and label help consumers easily identify goods that are grown and harvested or raised right here in the Palmetto State. Buying local not only means people are taking home fresher, tastier foods, it also means they are supporting our state's farmers. More information related to Certified SC Grown program can be found [here](#).

SC Forester Scott Phillips Updates Senate on the State of SC Forestry

Scott Phillips, SC State Forester, provided an update to Senate Ag Committee on the State of SC Forestry in South Carolina. Phillips shared information including that "South Carolina is blessed with a rich diversity of forest resources. Comprising approximately 12.9 million acres, these forests range from hardwood coves in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains to maritime forests along the Atlantic Coast.

Along with this diversity come myriad benefits that these forests provide as well as a range of challenges that threaten their function and existence.

One of the most tangible benefits is the economic impact of forestry, contributing over \$21 billion to the state's economy and providing nearly 100,000 jobs. South Carolina's forests also provide recreational opportunities for her citizens, diverse habitat for numerous wildlife species, and scenic beauty for all to enjoy. In addition, trees sequester carbon, provide for clean air and water, contribute to the health of our citizens, and mitigate the impacts of flooding and stormwater.

The state's forests also face many challenges. Some of these are biological, such as attacks by insects and diseases, while others are weather-related, such as drought and storms. Still other perils are due to human activity, the most notable of which are wildfires and conversion of forestland to other uses."

For additional information related to SC Forestry please visit their website [here](#).

DHEC Reform S.2

Senate Medical Affairs Special Subcommittee met and has heard testimony from representatives from DHEC, DMH, DNR, DAODAS, Department of Agriculture and Department of Veterans Affairs explaining the responsibilities of the agencies. It is expected that the Special Subcommittee will hear from additional entities, including SC Farm Bureau, in the future.

Governor McMaster Addresses Labor Shortage; Return to Pre-pandemic Unemployment Program

Governor Henry McMaster identified that "South Carolina's businesses have borne the brunt of the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Those businesses that have survived-both large and small, and including those in the hospitality, tourism, manufacturing, and healthcare sectors-now face an unprecedented labor shortage" while citing "This labor shortage is being created in large part by the supplemental unemployment payments that the federal government provides claimants on top of their state unemployment benefits. In many instances, these payments are greater than the worker's previous pay checks. What was intended to be short-term financial assistance for the vulnerable and displaced during the height of the pandemic has turned into a dangerous federal entitlement, incentivizing and

paying workers to stay at home rather than encouraging them to return to the workplace.

These federal entitlements pose a clear and present danger to the health of our State's businesses and to our economy. Since the Biden administration and Congress appear to have little to no comprehension of the damage being done and no appetite to terminate the federal payments, the State of South Carolina must take action." directed South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce (DEW) to "terminate the State of South Carolina's participation in the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program, the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program, the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) program, the Mixed Earner Unemployment Compensation (MEUC) program, the Emergency Unemployment Relief for Governmental Entities and Non-profit Organizations program, and the Temporary Federal Funding of the First Week of Compensable Regular Unemployment for States with No Waiting Week program, effective June 30, 2021."