

South Carolina Farm Bureau Legislative Update - Week 16 April 28, 2023



Into the Short Rows . . .

As we wrapped up a busy week sixteen, our eyes are trained on finishing this year's legislative race. The remaining two weeks of this General Session have a number of topics of interest still hanging in the balance. As a reminder, all bills filed this year will maintain their ability to be acted upon next legislative session beginning January 2024.

First, a HUGE Thank You to our members who answered the *Call to Action* last week related to the Senate's DHEC Restructuring Bill. We are facing a pivotal juncture with this initiative and our members reaching out and sharing their concerns with Senators provided valuable information in making an informed decision that can ultimately affect future generations of farmers and ranchers. It made a difference!

We must eliminate red tape and reduce the discrepancies in statewide water policy while increasing government efficiency. THANK YOU TO OUR MEMBERS during this vital step.

This week's highlights include a recap of the DHEC reform bill, the SC Grain and Cotton Producers Guaranty Fund, the illegal transportation of feral hogs, federal activity and a glimpse into next week's busy schedule.

Highlights of the Week

DHEC Restructuring – Consolidation of Statewide Water Functions

S. 399, co-sponsored by **Senate Finance Chairman Harvey Peeler** (Senate District 14 -Cherokee, Spartanburg, Union and York) and **Senate President Thomas Alexander** (Senate District 1 - Oconee and Pickens), focuses on DHEC reform and increasing government efficiency while creating separate health and environmental state agencies, including moving all statewide water functions into one agency.

South Carolina Farm Bureau continues to be supportive of government efficiency and single agency water being housed in the newly created Department of Environmental Services. Earlier this year, SCFB President Harry Ott testified on the importance of this

bill and why we support the certainty and efficiency it would create, as well as its focus on environmental efforts.

After much discussion this week, the bill received unanimous support by a Senate Medical Affairs subcommittee and subsequently full committee. SCFB is supportive of S. 399 as currently drafted and now heads to the full Senate for action.

We will continue to report on the bill's progression as we near the end of session.

House Agriculture Committee Addresses Illegal Transportation of Hogs

The House Ag Committee led by **Chairman Bill Hixon** (House District 83 - Aiken and Edgefield) presided over a hearing related to Senate bill 449 this week on the illegal transportation of feral hogs. This bill eliminates the sunset provision currently in law. The full committee passed the bill out favorably and it now heads to the full House for action. SCFB supports eliminating the sunset provision.

During the committee meeting, **SC Department of Natural Resources Big Game Program Coordinator Charles Ruth** testified in support of the bill and championed the law as a deterrent to these illegal activities.

Grain and Cotton Producers Guaranty Fund Clarification Language Progresses to the House Floor

Senate bill 603 was heard this week in the full House Ag Committee and passed on for further consideration by the House. The bill would clarify the pro rata determination for producers that participate in the SC Grain and Cotton Producers Guaranty fund and allow for producers that participate in the fund to be reimbursed at a higher rate than those that had limited participation. SCFB supports this needed clarification to protect those farmers that participate in the fund.

Federal Update

On Tuesday, [Rep. Ralph Norman](#) (SC-05) and Chairman of the [House Committee on Agriculture](#), [Glenn "GT" Thompson](#) (PA-15), introduced a resolution of disapproval under the [Congressional Review Act](#) (CRA) to oppose the Department of Labor's H-2A Adverse Effect Wage Rates rule that was finalized on [February 28th](#).

[Senator Tim Scott](#) (R-SC) and [Senator Ted Budd](#) (R-NC) are leading a companion effort to disapprove the rule in the Senate.

"By helping to introduce this House Joint Resolution, Congressman Norman is standing up for SC farmers over DC bureaucrats. The H2A Program is vital to the success of American agriculture and our food supply, and this rule will make it impossible to get the labor farmers need to provide us the food, fuel, and fiber we all rely on," **said President Harry Ott, South Carolina Farm Bureau.**

Farmer of the Week



Rachael Sharp of Sharp & Sharp Certified Seed in Allendale was our featured *Farmer of the Week* in Columbia this week! Rachael is the manager of her family's farm where they specialize in certified seed, meaning they must meet specific standards prescribed by law for germination and purity. The Sharps grow corn, soybeans, wheat, peanuts, cotton and oats on their 100-year-old farm.

An attorney by trade, Rachael earned her law degree from USC in 2012 and practiced law for a few years before realizing her heart and her passion was the farm and agriculture. Since her return, Sharp & Sharp has seen tremendous advancement in their operation improvements and she was selected as the 2022 SC Farm Bureau Achievement Award winner.

Rachael is an outstanding representative of agriculture in South Carolina and we are proud to call her our ***South Carolina Farm Bureau Farmer of the Week***.



Looking Ahead to Next Week



Working Ag Lands Preservation Act to Move Forward

The full Senate will have the opportunity to take action on **H. 3951**, the "Working Agricultural Lands Preservation Act" bill next week. The bill establishes the "South Carolina Working Farmland Protection Program" to provide permanent protection to strategically significant working farmland properties. The bill also creates a fund for qualifying projects to receive financial support which complements the work of the existing SC Conservation Bank.

South Carolina continues to see an unprecedented amount of working agricultural property lost to development or other non-ag related purposes. SCFB will continue to advocate for H. 3951 and the protection of our farmlands.