

# Legislative Report - Week 9

March 10, 2023



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March 10th stands as the halfway point of this year's General Session. As we review a very busy week, we anticipate fast-paced activity in the coming weeks with an eye on May's finish line. We also continue to encourage our members and the larger community to be active participants in all areas of government – through voting, grassroots initiatives, engaging neighbors in conversation, serving on action committees, or serving as an elected official. All components are vital to strongly advocate for agriculture.

## Weekly Highlights

### ***Senate Ag Committee Passes Grain and Cotton Guaranty Fund Clarification Language to the Full Senate***

**Senate Ag Committee Chairman Wes Climer** (Senate District 15 - York County) filed a bill, Senate Bill 603, this week that would clarify the pro rata determination for producers that participate in the SC Grain and Cotton Producers Guaranty Fund. The bill would allow for producers that participate in the fund to be reimbursed at a higher rate than those that had limited participation. The bill was heard by both a Senate Ag subcommittee and full Committee this week and was passed on to the full Senate for consideration.

### ***House Ag Subcommittee Addresses Illegal Transportation Issues***

A **House Ag subcommittee led by Rep. Bill Chumley** (House District 35 - Greenville and Spartanburg Counties) presided over the subcommittee hearing discussing Senate Bill 449 this week on the illegal transportation of feral hogs. This bill clarifies language to eliminate the sunset provision related to the current law. The subcommittee voted unanimously to pass the bill and it now heads to the full House Ag Committee for action.

### ***Full Senate Ag Committee Hears Child Food and Nutrition Study Bill***

The Senate Ag and Natural Resources Committee heard and passed H. 3312 this week which creates the Child Food and Nutrition Services Study Committee. The bill, authored by **Rep. Patrick Haddon** (House District 19 - Greenville County) directs the study committee to evaluate and provide recommendations to the General Assembly on transferring the South Carolina Farm to School Program, the Emergency Food Assistance Program, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, and various food and dairy safety programs from the Department of Education to the Department of Agriculture. The bill now goes to the full Senate for further action.

### ***Alien Ownership of Real Property***

**Senate Majority Leader Shane Massey** (Senate District 25 - Aiken, Edgefield, Lexington, McCormick and Saluda Counties) presided over a hearing on two bills, Senate Bill 392 and Senate Bill 576, that would change existing law related to land ownership by foreign controlled adversaries. Current law limits any alien or corporation controlled by aliens to own or control more than 500,000 acres of land. Both bills would limit ownership to less than 1,000 acres of land as well as change additional definitions and the effective date. The bill was heard in a Senate Judiciary subcommittee with multiple citizens testifying on their specific concerns. The subcommittee took no action on the bill but SCFB anticipates additional meetings on this subject soon.

### ***Agricultural Regulations***

The House Regulations and Administrative Procedures Committee, led by **Chairman Jeff Bradley** (District 123 - Beaufort and Jasper counties), met on SC DHEC regulations related to the clarification of no discharge permits for animal facilities. This continues to be a priority for SC Farm Bureau and GR staff will continue to advocate for the agricultural sector on this important issue.

## New Introductions

### *DHEC Reorganization*

House Speaker **Murrell Smith** (House District 67 - Sumter County), Ways and Means Committee Chairman **Bruce Bannister** (House District 24 - Greenville County) and Ways and Means Subcommittee Chairman **Bill Herbkersman** (House District 118 – Beaufort) introduced a bill that would split DHEC into two separate agencies without any additional restructuring. The newly created Department of Health would be headed by a director selected by the Board of Public Health and the Department of Environmental Services would be headed by a director appointed by the Governor. As the bill is currently written, there would be no single agency for water in South Carolina. SCFB will continue to strongly advocate to ensure this provision is included in the final version.

## National Update

This week in Washington, the House Rules Committee placed House Resolution 27 on the calendar for debate by the full House of Representatives. The bill provides formal congressional disapproval of the rule submitted by the Dept. of the Army, Corps of Engineers, Dept. of Defense and the Environmental Protection Agency relating to the "Revised Definition of 'Waters of the United States'" or WOTUS.

Congressman Ralph Norman (SC District 05), a member of the House Rules Committee and co-sponsor of the bill, spoke out publicly against WOTUS and its negative impact on farmers, specifically referring to farmers in his own district.

[Click here to listen to Congressman Norman's comments.](#)

Congressmen Jeff Duncan (SC District 03) and Joe Wilson (SC District 02) are also co-sponsors of the bill. The Senate has introduced a similar resolution, which both Senators Lindsey Graham and Tim Scott have co-sponsored.

## Farmer of the Week



### **Trey McMillan**

#### **Lowcountry Oyster Company – Charleston, SC**

Trey McMillan is the owner and founder of Lowcountry Oyster Company in Charleston County. Trey founded Lowcountry Oyster, or “LowCo”, in 2017 and ensures sustainable mariculture farming practices are at the core of what he does.

In addition to operating LowCo, Trey serves as Vice President of the South Carolina Shellfish Growers Association and is the state representative for the East Coast Shellfish Growers Association. To add to his growing responsibilities, Trey and his wife, Deja, are expecting their second child in a few days.

Trey is an outstanding representative of the diverse fields of agriculture and agribusiness South Carolina possesses, and we are proud to call him our **South Carolina Farm Bureau Farmer of the Week**.



House Ag Committee  
Chairman Bill Hixon  
(Edgefield) and Trey McMillan.



Rep. Randy Ligon (Chester), Trey, and Rep. Patrick Haddon (Greenville).



**With House Majority Leader Davey Hiott (Pickens).**



**With Rep. Russell Ott (Calhoun).**



**(L-R) Matt Cornwell, Sen. Josh Kimbrell (Spartanburg), Senate Ag Committee Chairman Wes Climer (York), and Trey.**



**With Sen. Marlon Kimpson (Charleston).**

## Looking Ahead to Next Week



### House Budget Debate Begins

Budget deliberations begin in earnest on the House floor beginning Monday, March 13. The House has stated their goals for the state continue to focus on reducing taxes and increasing reserves, improving South Carolina roads, as well as recruitment, retention, and development of workforces. GR staff will be supporting agricultural interests within this year's budget bill.

### Government Restructuring – S.399

Testimony begins next week on Senate Finance Committee **Chairman Harvey Peeler** (Senate District 14 - Cherokee, Spartanburg, Union and York Counties) and **Senate President Thomas Alexander** (Senate District 1 - Oconee and Pickens Counties) joint bill focusing on DHEC reform and increasing government efficiency while creating separate health and environmental state agencies, including moving all statewide water into one agency.

The bill received overwhelming support last year from the Senate and is slated to receive testimony from all interested parties, including SC Farm Bureau, in a series of hearings in the coming weeks. SCFB is supportive of government efficiency and single agency water and will keep you abreast of progress on S.399.