



FLORIDA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

PINES AND NEEDLES

May-June 2008

Volume 63, Issue 1



Rediscover Bay Point! Join us for the 2008 Annual Meeting, September 3-4!

'08 Session Comes In For Quiet Landing!

Without a lot of fanfare, the 2008 Legislative Session adjourned "Sine Die," on Friday May 2nd. Clouded by the recent economic downturn and a \$4 billion revenue shortfall there was not much cause for celebration this year. Looking back, it's what the legislature didn't pass this year that turned out to be the real win for Florida's forest industry.

Legislation That Passed

Renewable Energy – HB 7135 by Reps Mayfield and Kreegel Directs DEP to develop a cap and trade proposal for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and allowing the sale of credits for reductions, with legislative ratification; directs the Public Service Commission to develop a renewable portfolio standard for electric utilities (by 2/1/09), with legislative ratification; creates the Florida Energy and Climate Commission within the Office of the Governor; requires improved energy efficiency in new state buildings; creates a renewable fuel standard mandating 10 percent ethanol blended gasoline by 12/31/10; requires legislative ratification before Florida can adopt the California auto emission standards; and directs Department of Agriculture and DEP to conduct an economic analysis of providing financial incentives to new users of woody biomass, as it relates to wood supply, prices, existing markets, and sustainability (by 3/1/10).

Ad Valorem Taxation / Greenbelt – HB 909 by Rep. Nehr Provides that no minimum acreage be required to qualify for the greenbelt agricultural assessment; changes the makeup of the value adjustment board to include two non-governmental citizen members; provides legislative intent language which eliminates a property appraisers presumption of correctness, when an appraisal is contested.

Florida Forever Successor Program – SB 542 by Sen. Saunders Provides for the continuation of the Florida Forever land purchase program through the year 2020 and increases bonding authority from \$3 to \$5.3 billion. The bill also provides funding for the purchase of perpetual conservation easements on working Ag lands through the Rural & Family Lands Program.

Fees & Assessments – SB 1702 by Sen. Alexander This legislation increases many fees and assessments, among them is a fire assessment fee paid by each county to the state for wildland fire protection. Each County is required to pay the state 3-cents per acre for privately owned burnable acres. This fee was increased from 3 to 7 cents per acre.

Property Rights Day – HR 9157 Designates April 24, 2008 as "Property Rights Day" in Florida.

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Plum Creek CEO to headline Annual Meeting

Rick Holley, President and CEO of Plum Creek, will keynote this year's Annual Meeting on Wednesday, September 3 at Bay Point. Holley will speak on a variety of topics including practicing sustainable forestry, continuous improvement in the timber business, alternative energy opportunities and national issues shaping forest policy. Plum Creek practices sustainable forestry on more than 601,000 acres in 22 Florida counties and is the second largest landowner in the sunshine state. They are the largest and most geographically diverse landowner in the nation, with approximately 8 million acres in 18 states.



On the Same Page!

Simplifying the growing demands on the Association is the challenge facing twenty-two Association past, current and future leaders. FFA President Jack Vogel appointed a Visioning Committee this week to begin a four-month exercise to help formulate a plan to help diversified forestry interests focus on the same goals. Vogel has tapped Mike Gaff and Bryan Olmert to chair the Committee. Input will be provided by all segments of the membership. A series of conference calls and a workshop is scheduled for the summer. The results will be shared with members in a town hall meeting at the Annual Meeting.

Leading the process will be Joe Calhoon, business and organizational strategist and co-creator of the Priority Advantage business operating system. Calhoon is recognized in private business and non-profit trade groups for helping develop leaders, engage members and accelerate growth. He will be leading the Association work team and be the featured speaker at the Awards Breakfast on September 3. He is co-author of *Prioritize! - A System for Leading Your Business and Life on Purpose*.

Official Publication of the Florida Forestry Association
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Budget Issues

DOF	Agency Request	Final Compromise
Firefighting Equipment	\$6 M (GR)	\$4 M (TF)
Firefighter Pay Increase	\$1.2 M (GR)	\$0
Aircraft Acquisition	\$418,000	\$0

UF/IFAS

While any cut is difficult, the UF/IFAS received a proportional cut of 6-percent from the previous year, which is much lower than was anticipated a few months ago.

Legislation That Failed to Pass

Truck Weight Increase – Legislation was amended by the Association, to increase truck weights for agriculture and forestry loads from 80 to 84,000 pounds. Subsequently, a written request was made to the Governor urging an Executive Order be issued to increase the truck weights in light of the skyrocketing price of fuel.

Ag Industry Bill – Legislation was filed and supported by the Association, which included language making the Ag Lands Practices Act retroactive; and provided an exemption for Silviculture from local government stormwater permits, fees or assessments.

Private Property Rights – Legislation was filed and supported by the Association, to streamline the process of a private property owner to file a claim under the Bert Harris Private Property Rights Protection Act.

Public Lands Management – Legislation was filed and supported by the Association, to consolidate the management of all public lands under the DOF.

Springs Protection Act – Legislation was filed to create the FL Springs Stewardship Task Force, charged with identifying the spring sheds of the 33 first magnitude springs, encouraging BMPs in these areas and reporting to the legislature.

Sales Tax Exemptions – Legislation was filed and recommendations were made to review and repeal certain sales tax exemptions to help offset the budget shortfall, many of which greatly benefit the agricultural and forest industries.

Overweight Truck Penalties – As part of the Governor's recommended balanced budget, he encouraged the legislature to increase overweight fines, from 5-cents up to 58-cents per pound, to help offset the budget shortfall.

Severance Tax on Timber – Recommendations were made citing a former study conducted by the Office of Program Policy and Government Accountability (OPPAGA), to adopt a severance tax on timber harvesting as a way to help offset the budget shortfall.

FLORIDA FOCUS

PHIL GORNICKI
Environmental Forester

Alachua County is investigating the need for a new storm water program. A stakeholder committee assembled by Alachua County Public Works is meeting this spring to consider the need for a new storm water program in the county. The Association and Rayonier both have representatives on the committee. Concerns center around perceptions of increasing problems with both storm water volumes and water quality. The recommendation of the stake holder group could ultimately range from "no new program is needed" to "yes, a program is needed that could include new regulations, permitting requirements, fees, etc." To date, most discussion has centered on urban-related issues, but some strong concerns have been expressed regarding nutrient (i.e. fertilizer) levels in storm water run-off.

The Florida Farm Bureau has announced a new program to assist owners of farms, ranches and forest in registering eligible properties and practices for carbon credits with AgraGate, a climate credit company. AgraGate collects credits from farmers and forest owners and combines the credits in sizeable pools. The credits are then sold on the Chicago Climate Exchange with proceeds returned to the grower or producer. The Association is considering a partnership with Farm Bureau to educate landowners on the growing carbon credit market and will be participating in the upcoming workshops offering this service. For more information on the educational seminars please call Florida Farm Bureau at 352.374.1544.

David Still, the new Director of the Suwannee River Water Management District addressed members of the Association's Environmental Committee during its April meeting in Lake City. Although many in the forest community are already familiar with the 14-year veteran of the District, the meeting served as a good opportunity for our members to reacquaint themselves with David in his new role. During his presentation, David stressed the importance of the forestry business to the Suwannee River Water Management District. He also spoke about the benefits of hydrological restoration work on silvicultural lands and the possibility of cooperative projects between the District and private landowners that could include government cost shares for undertaking restoration work.

The development of a state-wide bear management plan was discussed by Thomas Eason of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) during the Association's Environmental Committee's April meeting. Thomas outlined FWC's effort to develop a plan with the stated goal of maintaining sustainable black bear populations in suitable habitats throughout Florida for the benefit of the species and people. Thomas explained how the proposed plan divides the state into seven "bear management units" (Eglin, Apalachicola, Big Bend, Osceola, Ocala, Glades/Highlands, and Big Cypress), each with its own specific target for bear numbers. FWC is interested in new cooperative agreements with private landowners to expand bear habitat, and may consider incentives to help achieve this goal. The draft plan is scheduled for completion this May. A six-month stakeholder engagement process will follow.

Florida's Tree Farm Committee continues to be very active, recently conducting its third meeting of the year. The group, chaired by Barry Hartley (GP), has already conducted a training session for tree farm inspectors, with another in the works for later in the year. Required inspections of tree farms are more than 50% complete, and the Committee is now turning its attention to the selection of this year's "Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year". Selection of the "Outstanding Tree Farm Inspector" will soon follow. In addition, a new District 1 Chairman for Florida (panhandle region) was recently introduced: Shawn Cooper of American Forest Management. The Committee will meet again in August.

Go Sight-seeing!



www.floridaforest.org

Forestry Trade Show

Florida's top forestry businesses will be at the Florida Forestry Association Trade Show, September 3-4, at the Marriott Bay Point Golf & Spa Resort, Panama City Beach. Both exhibitors and attendees will benefit from this prime opportunity where vendors meet important key decision-makers and day-to-day users of forestry products and services. For more details or to reserve space, contact Debbie Bryant at 850.222.5646 or debbie@forestfla.org. Early registration is recommended due to limited space on the Trade Show floor.

Plan now to see these exhibitors at the Association's Annual Meeting:

Agrotain International
American Forest Management
ArborGen, LLC SuperTree Seedlings
Association of Consulting Foresters
BASF
Blanton's Logleaf Container Nursery
CellFor
Division of Forestry
Environmental Services, Inc.
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Florida Project Learning Tree
Florida Tree Farm Program
International Forest Company
JAXPORT
Marden Industries, Inc./SUPERTRAK, INC.
ORBIS GIS Inc.
Plum Creek Timber Company
Red River Specialties, Inc.
Ring Power Corporation
School of Forest Resources & Conservation, UF/IFAS
Smurfit-Stone Container Enterprise

Silent Auction!

Plans are also underway for the Florida Forestry Association's 2008 Silent Auction (our 22nd!) Members are encouraged to participate by making a donation towards this important annual fundraiser (details and donor forms have been mailed). All auction donors are recognized in the Annual Meeting Program and promotional materials.

Landowner Opportunities!

Details and printable announcement/directions online at: www.sfrc.ufl.edu/extension/florida_forestry_information/events_calendar/index.html

MAY 29 – Silviculture BMPs. Liberty County Extension Center, Bristol, FL. Contact Roy Lima at 850.414.9934.

JUNE 11 - Integrated Forest Vegetation Workshop, UF-IFAS North Florida Research and Education Center, Quincy. Contact 850-875-7142 to enroll.

JUNE 17 - Forest Stewardship Polycom Videoconference: Survive the Changes- Greenbelt Update and New Enterprises for Landowners. Nine locations across Florida. Contact Chris Demers, [HYPERLINK "mailto:cdemers@ufl.edu"cdemers@ufl.edu](mailto:HYPERLINKmailto:cdemers@ufl.edu) for more information.

SEPT 16 – Silviculture BMP's. Clay County Extension Center, Green Cove Springs, FL. Contact Roy Lima at 850.414.9934.

NOV 5 – Silviculture BMP's. Marion County Extension Center, Ocala, FL. Contact Roy Lima at 850.414.9934.

Farm to Fuel '08

Florida's premiere renewable energy event – Farm to Fuel Summit - is set for July 30-August 1. Commissioner Charles Bronson will host this year's event at the Rosen Shingle Creek in Orlando. This will be the third Farm to Fuel Summit, designed to help Floridians take the next step in promoting the production, distribution, and use of renewable energy from Florida-grown crops, agricultural wastes and residues, and other biomass. Visit www.floridafarmtofuel.com for more information.

Farm Bill Almost a Reality

The US House and Senate overrode the President's veto of the Farm Bill before adjourning for Memorial Day, but a legislative glitch sent the bill back to the floor for round two. Both the House and Senate voted to pass the bill again. A whole section of the bill on trade policy was inadvertently dropped from the version the President vetoed. Lawmakers said they would take up the farm law's trade section as a separate bill and pass it after their Memorial Day break. Round three is slated when Congress returns on June 2.



Regardless of the procedural issues still in play, forestry interest are encouraged about these provisions included in the bill:

- Greatly increased access to conservation programs (such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program) for non-industrial, private forest landowners.
- Directs States to set priorities for the conservation of private forests, allowing the allocation of some Forest Service State & Private Forestry funds through a competitive process.
- Allows extensions and other types of flexibility to purchasers of Federal timber who have been impacted by steep declines in solid wood markets.
- A one-year version of the TREE Act, which provides a maximum 15 percent corporate tax rate on qualified timber gain for regular tax and AMT purposes. Timber must be held more than 15 years to qualify. It also includes a number of REIT modernization provisions, also for a one-year period from date of enactment.
- Tax deductions for landowners who take steps to conserve habitat for species listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act. These provisions provide for the first time incentives associated with taking affirmative steps to protect listed species on private land.
- A new, \$1.01 per gallon production tax credit for cellulosic ethanol. A study is also included to determine the tax credit's impact on regional agricultural and silvicultural capabilities of commercially available forest inventories, the selling price of forest products and the maximum amount of biofuels production capable on U.S. forests.
- New grants and loan guarantees for demonstration and production scale biorefineries. The bill allows for consideration of the impacts of new biomass demand on existing facilities as well as the potential for new markets and rural economic development. In addition, existing wood and paper facilities will be eligible for these grants.

Pines & Needles

We invite comments and suggestions. Let us know what you think by writing us at:
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by phoning us at: (850) 222-5646;
emailing: info@forestfla.org;
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Editor - Jeff Doran

Pines & Needles (ISSN 1091563x) (USPS 014-757) is published bimonthly by the Florida Forestry Association, 402 East Jefferson Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32301. Subscriptions through membership only at an annual cost of \$5 per member. Periodicals Postage Paid rate at Tallahassee, Florida. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Pines & Needles, P.O. Box 1696, Tallahassee, Florida 32302.

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