2018 LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

Lawmakers concluded Florida's 2018 legislative session on Sunday, March 11th. Lasting two days longer than the scheduled 60 days, the extension seemed an appropriate ending to a unique and challenging session. Of the 3,250 bills filed, only 194 passed both chambers, marking a historical low. Significant budget cuts to programs and projects serve as stark reminders of the degree of difficulty and competition in securing each dollar in the budget.

During session, members of the Association's Board of Directors and its leadership program, Forestry Forward, visited Tallahassee to participate in a variety of events: a legislative reception, Board meeting and meetings with legislators and staff at the capitol.

While at the capitol, the group was recognized on the House floor by Rep. Halsey Beshears, R-Monticello. Photos from the events can be found on the Association's Flickr account at www.Flickr.com/FloridaForestryAssociation/albums.

The policy arena offered a mixed array of proposals. Below you will find information about bills important to forestry that passed and failed during the 2018 legislative session:

### Bills That Passed

**Tax Package/Forestry Tag:** HB 7087 by Sen. Kelli Stargel and Rep. Paul Renner - Possibly the one bright spot in the budget was the tax package, which was approved on Sunday afternoon before the House and Senate adjourned. Even as a bright spot, the allotment was trimmed from a robust $380 million dollars down to a roughly $168 million package, with a mere $97 million being permanent and recurring dollars.

HB 7087 contains several refunds/rebates for agricultural producers to aid recovery from hurricane damage, including more than $25 million in temporary tax relief for farmers and ranchers impacted by Hurricane Irma in 2017.

The tax relief included the following items of interest to the forest industry:

- A refund for sales taxes paid on building materials used to repair non-residential farm buildings between Sept. 10, 2017 and May 31, 2018;
- A refund for state and local fuel taxes imposed on motor fuel and diesel used for the transportation of agricultural products from the farm to a processing facility between Sept. 10, 2017 and June 30, 2018;
- The retention of Greenbelt classification for agricultural land not in production due to hurricane damage, for up to five years as long as the land is not used for a non-agricultural use; and
- An expansion of permitted travel for holders of restricted forestry and agriculture tags to include all intrastate travel or 150 miles if hauling into neighboring states.

**DACS:** SB 740 by Sen. Kelli Stargel; HB 553 by Rep. Jake Raburn - As this legislation moved through the process, several good policy amendments, many of which were the substance of a separate bill SB 1608 by Sen. Denise Grimsley, were added, including language to streamline the process for the Florida Department of Transportation (DOT) to handle movement of forestry products during a declared emergency. Specifically, the bill authorizes DOT to use a 60-day order when appropriate as opposed to the current two-week renewals; it also encourages the department to accept electronic verification for shipping of agricultural products during an emergency declaration.

Among other things, the bill also allows for a five-year extension for Greenbelt protection on ag lands that are not being used for agricultural production as a result of a natural disaster for which a state of emergency is declared and which halts agricultural production.

**State Assumption of Federal 404 Permits:** SB 1402 by Sen. David Simmons and HB 7043 by Rep. Holly Raschein - This legislation allows the state to assume the authority to implement the Federal 404 wetlands program. Don't let the title water you down; this legislation is a very big win. Under current law the Army Corp of Engineers has jurisdiction over federal wetlands impacts. This legislation authorizes the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to enter into Memoranda of Understandings with the Environmental Protection Agency, the Army Corp and US Fish and Wildlife to issue 404 permits. At a minimum, this action will allow landowners to deal...
with one state agency as opposed to the alphabet soup of federal and state agencies, resulting in quicker answers to permit authorization or denial.

Young Farmers and Ranchers: SB 872 by Sen. Grimsley and HB 645 by Rep. Raburn - This legislation provides grant funding to assist young and beginning farmers and ranchers while also supporting students pursuing agricultural careers.

Taxes & Fees: HJR 7001 by House Ways and Means Committee - If passed by voters in November’s general election, this proposed state constitutional amendment would require a supermajority vote of the legislature to raise any new state tax or fee.

Bills That Failed

Black Bears: Among other things, this proposed legislation would have prohibited prescribed burns during the month of February on land designated by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission as habitat in which female black bears are likely to be denning.

Disposable Plastic Bags: Proposed legislation would have allowed certain coastal communities to initiate pilot programs to regulate or ban disposable plastic bags within their boundaries.

Tree Removal: Proposed legislation would have created a preemption of local government authority to regulate tree and debris removal.

Fracking Ban: Proposed legislation would have enacted a statewide fracking ban for oil exploration.

Many thanks go to all the legislators and their staffs for their hard work and dedication in serving the citizens of Florida. Much appreciation also goes to our members and partnering groups who met with their representatives and senators to discuss our issues. Your membership matters and your voice counts!

MIKELL INDUCTED INTO FLORIDA AGRICULTURAL HALL OF FAME

Longtime Association member and former State Forester Harold Mikell was officially inducted into the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame on Tuesday, February 13, 2018.

“This is a well-deserved honor,” said Association Executive Vice President Alan Shelby. “Mr. Mikell has been a true force in the forest industry and has created a legacy of leadership and innovation.”

More information, including a fantastic video produced by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, can be found on the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame website, www.FloridaAgHallofFame.org.

Photos from the event can be found on the Association’s Flickr account at www.Flickr.com/FloridaForestryAssociation/alums.

OWENS NAMED FWC LAND STEWARD OF THE YEAR

At its February meeting, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) recognized Association member George C. Owens as the 2017 Florida Land Steward of the Year.

Owens was honored for managing his property with exemplary land stewardship through his innovative use of silviculture practices. The Owens Farm, maintained by the family for over 100 years, is known as one of the most renowned silviculturists in the southeastern United States.

DAUZAT APPOINTED TO SOFTWOOD LUMBER BOARD

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue has announced the appointment of Association member Caroline Dauzat of Rex Lumber to the Softwood Lumber Board as a representative of the U.S. South region.

Other appointments include:

Fritz R. Mason, Peachtree City, Ga. (U.S. South)
Adrian Blocker, Seattle, Wash. (U.S. West)
Eric J. Cremer, Spokane, Wash. (U.S. West)
Ted Seraphim, B.C. Canada (Canada West)
Don Demens, B.C. Canada (Canada West)
Hugues Simon, Quebec, Canada (Canada East)
Jack P. Jordan, Sr., Mt. Gilead, N.C. (U.S. South)

“I appreciate the time and expertise that these individuals have agreed to provide,” said Perdue. “The work these boards accomplish in maintaining and expanding existing markets and developing new markets are vital to their industry, as well as to the general economy of the United States.”

LEWIS TAKES HELM OF SAF

Longtime Association member Dave Lewis has begun his term as president of the Society of American Foresters. Lewis is Vice President and a principal of Southern Forestry Consultants, Inc., a full-service forestry consulting firm founded in 1987. He manages the Monticello office and also serves as a principal in SFC’s sister company, Southern Forestry Realty, Inc.

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Two regional membership meetings are held each year in an effort to reach more members close to home. These great informal gatherings have become annual favorites for members to get together and talk about issues of importance, with plenty of time allowed for networking.

This year’s events were held at Dee Dot Timberlands in Jacksonville, FL, and at Coastal Plywood Company’s Magnolia Lodge in Gadsden County, FL. Farm Credit and ArborGen Inc. sponsored the meetings.

Thank you to our hosts, sponsors and attendees for continuing to make our membership meetings so successful. Be sure to look for the location near you in 2019! Photos from the events can be found on the Association’s Flickr account at www.Flickr.com/FloridaForestryAssociation/alums.

US REP. AL LAWSON JOINS WORKING FORESTS CAUCUS

We are excited to announce that Florida’s Rep. Al Lawson, D-Tallahassee, has joined the Working Forests Caucus in the US House of Representatives!

The caucus was formed during the 114th Congress to advocate for working forests across the United States. These include highlighting the economic, environmental, and social benefits of private working forests, and supporting policies to promote this renewable resource.

Other Florida members in the caucus are Reps. Vern Buchanan, R-Sarasota; Neal Dunn, R-Panama City; John Rutherford, R-Jacksonville; and Ted Yoho, R-Gainesville.

BOARD NOMINATIONS

Do you have someone you would like to recommend for consideration to serve on the Association’s Board of Directors? If so, please send their name, title, company and contact information to Whitney Hough (850.222.5646 or Whitney@ForestFla.org).
TIMBER HARVESTING EQUIPMENT PROGRAM

The College of Central Florida’s Timber Harvesting Equipment Program is currently accepting applications for its next class, based out of its Chiefland campus.

The eight-week noncredit program is designed to increase the number of workforce ready employees for the timber industry in North Central Florida. Selected students will participate in five weeks of classroom instruction followed by three weeks of field instruction with hands-on experience.

The 2018 session begins May 29. Applications are due by April 20. Selected participants will receive full scholarships to cover tuition and fees.

More information can be found online at http://www.cf.edu/community/locations/levy/timber-harvesting-equipment.html.

2018 FLORIDA FORESTRY TEACHERS’ TOUR: SPONSORS NEEDED

The Florida Forestry Teachers’ Tour (FFTT) is an annual event that gives the Florida Forest Service and the forest industry the opportunity to share forestry’s story with educators from around the state. Teachers take back the information and insights they learn in this four-day hands-on experience and incorporate them into their curriculum during the school year.

This year’s tour will be held June 19-22, based in Fernandina Beach, FL.

Sponsors are vital to the success of this program! Each $500 sponsorship allows one teacher to participate at no cost to him/herself beyond travel to and from Fernandina Beach. To become a sponsor, contact Whitney Hough (850.222.5646 or Whitney@ForestFla.org) or simply send your check, payable to the Florida Forestry Foundation, to P.O. Box 1696, Tallahassee, FL 32302.

A list of current sponsors can be found on the Association’s website at www.FloridaForest.org/Programs/Teachers-Tour.

SAVE THE DATES!

2018 Annual Meeting
August 28-30, 2018
Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort
Amelia Island, FL

The Board of Directors Meeting will be held on site August 29, beginning at 4:15 PM.

HUNTING FOR WAYS TO SAVE?

If you’re ready to talk turkey about saving money on hunting lease liability insurance, contact our partners at Outdoor Underwriters, Inc., about reduced rates for Association members.

Timberland liability and fire damage insurance for standing timber are also available.

Contact Mike Branch (Mike@ForestFla.org or 850.222.5646) for more information.

PLANNED GIVING, BEQUESTS AND CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS

Consider making a gift of a lifetime to support the future of Florida’s working forests by naming the Florida Forestry Association or Florida Forestry Foundation as a beneficiary in your will, charitable trust, life insurance policy, estate plan or retirement plan.

Please contact Alan Shelby at 850.222.5646 for more information.

FLORIDA NRCS OFFERS SIGN-UP FOR APALACHICOLA-CHATTahoochee-FLINT RIVERS PROJECT

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications from agricultural producers until April 30 for a project that enhances climate resiliency.

The Climate Resiliency for the Alabama, Florida, and Georgia project in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint and Ochlockonee River Basins is led by the Flint River Soil and Water Conservation District. The project area covers more than 15 million acres in eastern Alabama, western Georgia and the Florida panhandle.

NRCS will provide financial and technical assistance to eligible farmers and landowners toward conservation practices that improve natural resources in 11 Florida counties through the Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP).

Producers in the following counties are encouraged to apply: Bay, Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Jackson, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Wakulla and Washington.

For more information, contact your local NRCS office.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS!

The success of any organization is highly dependent on an engaged membership. An easy and effective way to be active in the Association is through our committees: Government Relations, TREETAPAC, Environmental, Steering and Communications.

To learn more about the Association’s committees and their missions, please visit the Association’s website at www.FloridaForest.org/Programs/Committees.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 24, 2018
10 AM
Executive Committee Meeting
PotashCorp
White Springs, FL

June 27-28, 2018
8 AM
Master Logger Initial Two-Day Training
Lake City, FL

July 31, 2018
10 AM
Executive Committee Meeting
Location TBD

May 1, 2018
23rd Annual Golf Classic for Log A Load for Kids
Chipley, FL

August 2, 2018
8 AM
Master Logger CLE Training
DeFuniak Springs, FL

August 28-30, 2018
Annual Meeting
Omni’s Amelia Island Plantation Resort
Amelia Island, FL

October 11, 2018
8 AM
Master Logger CLE Training
Gainesville, FL

October 25, 2018
24th Annual Tommy Usher Golf Classic for Log A Load for Kids
Chiefland, FL

December 6, 2018
8 AM
Master Logger CLE Training
Lake City, FL

December 13, 2018
8 AM
Master Logger CLE Training
Blountstown, FL