



Legislative Update Week 7

2020 Legislative Update-Week 7

The Senate and House calendars are posted for the last two weeks of the 2020 legislative session and only the senior most committees will be meeting next week. All other subcommittees have already met for the last time so the vast majority of the 3,065 bills filed this session will meet a silent demise. The bills that have passed out of their referred committees are being debated by the full House and Senate chambers. For a list of bills presented to and signed by the Governor so far this session please refer to the “Bill Actions” link on the SCCF Legislative Tracker webpage.



This week the following bills were heard:

Florida Forever

SB 332 – Land Acquisition Trust Fund by Senator Stewart passed 9-0 out of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Ag., Env. & Gen. Govt. and has one last stop in the full Appropriations Committee. This bill calls for secured annual funding of \$100 million per year for the Florida Forever program. The Appropriations Committee meeting notice has been posted and **SB 332** is not included but that agenda may be amended before they meet next Tuesday. The House version, **HB 849** by Rep. Altman did not make it on to the agenda of its first referred committee.

Endangered and Threatened Species

SB 680 – Shark Fins by Sen. Hutson was scheduled to be heard in its last referred committee this Wednesday but the Rules Committee ran out of time to hear the full agenda. Senate Rules does meet one more time next Monday, 3/2/20 and **SB 680** is item #45 out of 62 bills on that agenda. This bill bans the sale, export and import of shark fins in Florida with exceptions for current FL fisheries permit holders. The House version, **HB 401** has passed out of its referred committees and is on the Second Reading Calendar to be debated by the full House within the next two weeks.

Environmental Fines and Enforcement

HB 1091 – Environmental Enforcement by Rep. Fine was heard in its final stop

in House State Affairs and passed with a vote of 23-0. This bill increases fines and penalties for environmental violations which haven't been revised since 2001. The bill is designed to increase compliance of all environmental laws but was discussed as essential in light of the large number of sewage spills occurring due to unmaintained and deteriorating wastewater infrastructure. The debate during this bill related to how the taxpayer, not necessarily the offending utility, would be responsible for paying the increase in fines. Rep. Fine stated that this would put the pressure on the elected local officials to focus on the importance of fixing and maintaining their wastewater infrastructure. He cited that in the last week alone, there were 60 spills in 29 Counties in Florida with two of those raw sewage spills in the multi thousand gallon range. Rep. Fine stated that we couldn't afford NOT to pass this legislation for the sake of public health, water quality and the economic viability of tourism in our state. The Senate version, **SB 1450** by Sen. Gruters passed out of Senate Appropriations on Thursday with less debate but no less support by a vote of 17-0. Both bills move to the full chambers for discussion and vote.

Water Quality

HB 1343 – Environmental Resource Management by Rep. Payne passed out of its last referred committee, State Affairs, by a vote of 15-7. This bill closely compares to **SB 712** – Water Quality Improvements and contained the same package of amendments passed in the Senate last week including restrictions on future springs consumptive use permits for the bottling industry and preemptions on local governments to grant legal standing for the natural environment known as the “rights of nature”. Elements of the bill that were debated related to the number of cabinet votes needed to approve Governor Department Head appointees. House State Affairs Committee Chairman, Rep. Ingoglia stated some of these areas of debate will be fixed on the House floor. The bill sponsor, Rep. Payne, stated that while this bill wasn't a home run, it was certainly a base hit for water quality and we should be happy with the progress made in this bill. Both the Senate and House version will be debated on the Chamber floors as soon as next week.

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