



Legislative Update - Week 6

2020 Legislative Update – Week 6

We are more than half way through the 2020 Legislative session and the expectation is that the House and Senate Budget Conferees will be named shortly. The members of the Budget Conference Committee will begin to hammer out the differences between the House and the Senate budget of which there is currently a \$1.5 billion dollar difference. The Senate has recommended a \$92.8 billion dollar budget to the House's \$91.4 billion dollar budget recommendation. The Governor has recommended a \$91.5 billion dollar budget.



Florida Forever

The Governor's budget for Florida Forever, the State's land acquisition program, includes \$100 million dollars. The Senate budget includes \$125 million and the House budget is at \$20 million.

This week the following bills were heard:

Endangered and Threatened Species

SB 680 – Shark Fins by Sen. Hutson was heard in Sen. Commerce and Tourism Committee on Tuesday, 2/18. The Senate adopted the same bill weakening amendment as the House version approved last week. The amendment exempts currently valid Federal Shark fisheries permit holders from the export and sale prohibitions of the bill until Jan. 2025. The last stop for this bill will be in the Senate Rules Committee. The House version, **HB 401** has been added to the second reading calendar to be debated by the full House as early as next week.

Environmental Fines and Enforcement

SB 1450 - Environmental Enforcement by Sen. Gruters passed its second committee, the Sen. Appropriations Subcommittee on Criminal and Civil Justice, this week by a vote of 7-1. 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. One amendment was added to the bill which creates a process to test sewer lines and notify homeowners of their responsibility of line failures on their property between the street and their house. The Senate bill will be heard next in the full Appropriations Committee, which is its last stop before it reaches the full Senate. The House version, **HB 1091**, has passed two of its referred committees and will be heard in House State Affairs next.

Water Quality

SB 712 – Water Quality Improvements by Sen. Mayfield passed out of Senate Appropriations on Thursday by a vote of 20-1. The no vote came from Sen. Lee who vehemently objected to one unrelated element of the late filed amendment to the bill that changed the number of cabinet members needed to confirm the Governor’s appointee for DEP Secretary. There were other elements added to the bill in a strike-all amendment filed less than a day before the meeting including stronger rules for approvals of consumptive use permits from springs which would impact bottled water companies and a preemption of local government’s ability to grant legal standing to any part of the natural environment, better known as the “rights of nature”. There are many elements of the bill that do strengthen current law to address sources of pollution that have caused Florida’s water quality crisis such as transferring the permitting responsibility of approving septic tanks to the Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP) from the Dept. of Health (DOH). This will allow for DEP to consider human health AND water quality when granting permits and could include requirements to install advanced septic tank technology to protect nearby water sources. SCCF sent an action alert asking for stronger pollution control measures for both agricultural best management practices and the land application of biosolids. Find a link to the alert on the SCCF Legislative tracker. This bill will be debated next by the full Senate and we anticipate more amendments will be filed.

SCCF Legislative Tracker

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