

PABC Journal



OTT ELECTED FARM BUREAU PRESIDENT

Harry L. Ott, Jr., a row crop farmer from Calhoun County, was elected the sixth President of the SC Farm Bureau Federation (SCFB). He will serve as Farm Bureau's representative on the PABC Board.

Mr. Ott comes to SCFB from the USDA Farm Service Agency where he has served as SC State Executive Director since July 1, 2013. Before being appointed to his position at FSA by the Obama administration, he was a member of the SC House of Representatives for 15 years representing District 93, which covers parts of Calhoun, Lexington, and Orangeburg Counties. While in the House he served as Minority Leader, on the House Ways and Means Committee, and on the Public Utilities Review Committee.

(cont. on pg. 3, see Harry Ott)

SENATE PASSES \$400 MILLION ROAD BILL

After weeks of stalled debate, the SC Senate approved \$400 million in recurring revenue from the state's General Fund to the state's Highway Fund.

The plan, which does not include a gas tax increase, now goes to the House, which passed road funding legislation last session that included a 10 cents gas tax increase and a reduction in the state income tax.

The new Senate plan includes reforms to the SC Department of Transportation (SCDOT) and the State Transportation Infrastructure Bank (SIB). Under this plan, the Governor will appoint eight SCDOT commissioners, one from each Congressional District and one-at-large that would serve as chair. Commissioners will continue to serve the four-year staggered terms now in place. The SCDOT Commission would appoint

the Secretary of SCDOT. Both the Commission and the Secretary would have to be confirmed by the Senate. The State Infrastructure Bank would submit all road construction projects to the SCDOT commission for final approval.

According to the SCDOT, with the \$400 million, 95% of South Carolina's interstate miles could be improved to good condition. Primary routes, which carry almost half of the state's traffic, would see less change as only 35% of primary road mileage would improve to good condition. SCDOT maintains that it would take \$1.2 billion more each year to bring the entire system up to good condition.

"Although it is not a long-term fix, I commend the Senate for taking action and providing much needed money to start

improving our roads," Cathy Novinger, CEO of PABC, said.

Recently, PABC participated in a press conference, coordinated by its Infrastructure Group, which called on Senators to end the debate and move forward on passing road funding. PABC's Infrastructure Group, which has been working on strategies to pass infrastructure funding legislation, includes: SC Alliance to Fix Our Roads, SC Farm Bureau, SC Forestry Association, SC Chamber of Commerce, SC Trucking Association, SC Manufacturers Alliance, Carolinas AGC, American Council of Engineering Companies of SC and the SC Economic Development Association.

The House must now decide to negotiate changes or adopt the Senate plan.

BOARD RE-ELECTS CURRENT OFFICERS FOR 2016

The PABC Board recently re-elected the current slate of officers for another term.

Ronnie Summers, South Carolina Divisional President for AgSouth Farm Credit Bank, was re-elected chairman. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture from Clemson University, and also graduated from the Georgia Southern Agribusiness School and the University of SC Banking School.

Randy Brown was re-elected Vice Chairman. He is the Plant Manager of Perdue Farms Incorporated in Dillon, SC. Mr. Brown is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Pembroke with a degree in Business Management.

Fred West was re-elected Secretary/Treasurer. He is Vice President of Amick Farms and a graduate of the University of SC with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration.

Legislative Update

SENATE FINANCE APPROVES SC FARM AID FUND LEGISLATION

The Senate Finance Committee approved the House passed H.4717, the “South Carolina Farm Aid Fund” bill, which was introduced in response to the catastrophic agricultural losses suffered from the historic flood in October 2015. The bill sets up a state grant program for farmers with significant losses due to the flood.

Grant funds would only go to the hardest-hit farmers and would be limited to crop production expenses and losses. Farmers can apply for grants up to \$100,000 each. They must verify their significant loss of at least 40% total agricultural commodity loss.

The Senate Finance Committee amended the bill to put the SC Commissioner of Agriculture in charge of the application process, instead of a Board.

EMINENT DOMAIN

The Senate passed the Eminent Domain bill, S. 858. This legislation contains language of requirements for private pipeline companies to go through a permitting process with both the Public Service Commission and DHEC before the power of eminent domain would be exercised. However, an adopted amendment to the bill basically clarifies that petroleum pipelines do not have the power of eminent domain.

The bill is now in the House Judiciary Committee.

TORT REFORM

The Senate Judiciary Committee carried over S. 281 and S. 282. S.281 is the Court Transparency Act which addresses Phantom Damages and seatbelt admissibility. S. 282 is the Liability Reform Act which addresses punitive damages and the CDL Protection Act, which addresses limiting the liability of companies employing Commercial Drivers’

License holders, contracted or not contracted. This legislation would ensure such “direct negligence claims” serve their intended purpose and are not used simply to fault the employer based on the employee’s action.

WORKERS COMPENSATION

The Senate passed S. 975, the Workers Compensation Commission Chairman Reappointment bill, which addresses the Governor appointing the chairman of the Commission.

DESPITE SUPPORT, OBAMA ADMINISTRATION BARS OIL DRILLING IN THE ATLANTIC REGION

The Obama Administration has announced it will bar drilling in the Atlantic Ocean. This comes as a major reversal of a proposal by the administration last year that included a plan to open up a large portion of the Atlantic Coast for drilling.

Recently, Cathy Novinger, CEO of Palmetto Agribusiness Council, was invited to attend a meeting at the Department of Interior with Abby Hopper, Director of the U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and Janice Schneider, Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the upcoming release of the plan known as the 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing (Five Year) Proposed Program. Invitees included a representative from Virginia and North Carolina, as well as representatives from various national associations supporting Atlantic coastline energy exploration and drilling. Mrs. Novinger said she thought the meeting was encouraging since it was announced that they had received 600,000 requests to begin the first steps of exploring the energy resources in the Atlantic region. “Although PABC has not endorsed offshore drilling, we do support finding out what resources are off the coast of South Carolina,” she commented. PABC supports exploring all types of energy sources and believes environmentally responsible exploration of South Carolina’s coast line is part of a comprehensive energy strategy.

“Even with a majority of SC Congressional delegation support, we find ourselves at an immediate roadblock,” Mrs. Novinger said. “It behooves me as to how can we prepare a national strategic energy plan without knowing what resources could be available off our shores.”

Positive Early Outlook for SC Peach Crop

South Carolina peach farmers are looking forward to an excellent peach crop in 2016 in spite of the challenges they faced last year. Favorable growing conditions have given growers a positive outlook for a fruitful crop of everyone's favorite summer-time treat.

After delays from heavy rains in the fall, growers immediately began working on the upcoming season. Planting new trees, installing irrigation lines, and pruning established orchards keep South Carolina growers busy year round. Countless hours of hard work are required in the fall and winter to set up ideal conditions for the spring and summer.

"We are off to a good start for the 2016 peach crop," said Matt Forrest, President of the SC Peach Council and co-owner of Dixie Belle Peaches. "After a late start to winter, we now expect to accumulate more than enough of the necessary chill hours and are anticipating a normal bloom date in a few weeks."

With an unusually warm fall, growers have been monitoring weather stations daily.

Peach trees require between 600-1000 chill hours, depending on variety, to overcome dormancy. Farmers choose plant varieties that coincide with their location based on these figures to ensure the highest quality fruit.

"Although we had a late start to our winter season, once the cold temperatures arrived, we have been in an excellent position to accumulate chill hours with very consistent temperatures and highs in the 50's and lows in the 30s," said Chalmers Carr, president of Titan Farms.

"We are well-beyond the minimum chill hours necessary and look forward to a great spring leading into an even better peach season."

As the top peach producing state on the East Coast, and second in the nation only to California, South Carolina represents a large percentage of the nation's peach crop.

Cox Industries Founder Honored

William B. (Bill) Cox, Sr. has been inducted into the SC Business Hall of Fame.

Mr. Cox is the founder and former CEO and President of Cox Industries of Orangeburg, SC which was recently named the U.S. Small Business Administration's SC Family Business of the Year in 2013. Cox Industries is a founding member of PABC. Mr. Cox's son, Bill, Jr. served as a PABC Board member and now grandson, Mikee Johnson, serves on the Board.

The company has 14 manufacturing facilities and 30 distribution yards employing some 450 individuals in 22 states. Annual sales are more than \$250 million.

Mr. Cox is a pioneer in lumber treatment and creating new industry standards. He is a member of the SC Housing Hall of Fame and is a recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Pile Drivers Association

SCE&G DONATES \$25,000 TO PLANT IT FORWARD

SCE&G President Keller KISSAM presented a check for \$25,000 to Plant It Forward South Carolina to help flood-affected farmers at a recent press conference at the State House. Commissioner Hugh Weathers, Farm Bureau President Harry Ott and Cathy

Novinger, representing SC Advocates for Agriculture, accepted the donation.

Plant It Forward South Carolina is an initiative of the SC Advocates for Agriculture (a 501(C) 3 organization) to help respond to the devastating losses to

farmers from the historic floods in October 2015. South Carolina farms suffered an estimated direct crop loss of more than \$376 million.

For more information about donating to the fund, visit: www.plantitforwardsc.org

Governor Proclaims March As Prescribed Fire Awareness Month

Governor Nikki Haley has proclaimed March 2016 Prescribed Fire Awareness Month in South Carolina. A coalition of state, federal and non-governmental land management organizations under the umbrella of the South Carolina Prescribed Fire Council requested the proclamation to raise awareness of the essential role that fire plays in both the stewardship of our natural resources and the protection of lives and property.

Prescribed, or controlled, burning is the skilled application of fire under planned weather and fuel conditions to achieve specific forest and land management objectives. Controlled burning is an ancient practice, notably used by Native Americans for crop management, insect and pest control, and hunting habitat improvement, among other purposes. The practice continues today under the direction of land managers who understand the appropriate weather conditions, fuel loads and atmospheric conditions for conducting such burns. These carefully applied fires are an important toll to reduce wildfires, maintain wildlife habitat, and keep the more than 13 million acres of forested land in South Carolina healthy and productive.

Daryl Jones, SC Forestry Commission Forest Protection Chief, said about 500,000 acres are prescribed burned every year in South Carolina, but at least one million acres should be burned annually.

HARRY OTT

(cont. from pg. 1)

Mr. Ott is also a former President of the Calhoun County Farm Bureau and a former member of the SCFB State Board of Directors from Calhoun County. In addition, he has served as Chair of the Calhoun County Development Commission.

A 1974 graduate of Clemson University, Mr. Ott resides near St. Matthews with his wife Linda. He and his brother produce cotton, corn, and peanuts.

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PABC OFFICERS

Ronnie Summers, Chairman
Randy Brown, Vice-Chairman
Fred West, Secretary-Treasurer

STAFF

Cathy B. Novinger, CEO

PABC Welcomes New Board Representatives



Chuck Claunch is the new PABC Board representative for Duke Energy. Mr. Claunch serves as the Director for State Government Affairs and is in the Columbia office.



Brian Hungerford is the new PABC Board representative for Wells Fargo. Mr. Hungerford is Vice President and Senior Relationship Manager in the Greenville office.

SAVE THE DATE! PALMETTO PALATE July 21, 2016 701 Whaley, Columbia, SC

SC Farm Bureau will host its annual Palmetto Palate at 701 Whaley in Columbia on July 21. The event will bring in chefs from local restaurants and team them up with farmers from across the state to help forge new relationships between farm and table.



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