

Upstate Forever

Conservation Legislative Alert 5/31/11

Welcome to Upstate Forever's weekly Legislative Alert. We are committed to keeping you updated on the status of conservation- and planning-related legislation in the South Carolina General Assembly. We also make it easy for you to take action with a few clicks of your mouse.

The General Assembly adjourns for the year on June 2.

This week's legislative news:

Chronic Sewage Polluters. This bill was placed on the Senate contested calendar last week after Sens. [Jake Knotts](#) and [Phillip Shoopman](#) attached objections to [H.3617](#) coming up for debate. **Background:** Rep. Mike Pitts' (Laurens) "three strikes" legislation ([H.3617](#)) would require any utility with three spills over 5,000 gallons each in one calendar year to undergo an audit to improve its operations. Most of South Carolina's water utilities have an excellent performance record; of the 531 municipal waste treatment systems in South Carolina, 334 operate successfully without any discharges of untreated sewage or chronic pollution. Of the remaining 200, however, there are 53 that have produced 5,216 discharges of almost 100 million gallons of either untreated or only partially treated sewage into public waterways over the last ten years. This record demonstrates that only a handful of chronic polluters are giving the utility sector a bad name. These chronic polluters hurt South Carolina businesses and threaten public health. The bill passed the House unanimously in May and was approved by the Senate Medical Affairs Committee.

Phosphates Ban. Last week, Sen. [Harvey Peeler](#) pulled [H.3470](#) out of the Medical Affairs Committee to have it placed on the Senate calendar. The bill did not come up for debate and was placed on the contested calendar after Sen. [Jake Knotts](#) attached an objection. **Background:** [H.3470](#) by Rep. Mike Pitts (Laurens) would prohibit the use, sale or manufacture of dishwashing detergents containing phosphates. Phosphate detergents are already banned in 15 states because they are major source of phosphorus in lakes and rivers, which kills fish and lowers recreational revenues and home values. The bill passed the House unanimously in May.

SC Conservation Bank Funding. The House and Senate will work this week to reconcile their two versions of the FY2011-2012 budget. **Background:** Since 2004, the [SC Conservation Bank](#) has leveraged public and private revenues to protect over 140,000 acres of forestlands and wetlands, nearly 10,000 acres of farms, and over 1,200 acres of urban parks and historic sites - at an average price of only \$534 per acre. This land is protected and easements help landowners continue to use their land as originally intended. The House passed the FY2011-12 budget the week of March 15, including \$750,000 to cover the [SC Conservation Bank's](#) operational expenses as well as a portion of its \$3 million dollars in outstanding grants. The Senate version of the budget includes \$2 million in funding for the Bank.

ABC Recycling. Last week, an amendment to [S.461](#) was approved exempting establishments from the recycling plan if an audit finds that the recycling costs add up to more than 14% of regular waste disposal costs. On Tuesday, the Senate voted 31-9 to approve second reading of the bill. After raising concerns about the bill, Sens. [Lee Bright](#) (Spartanburg) and [Glenn McConnell](#) (Charleston) attached their names in objection to allowing third reading, which the bill needs in order to pass the Senate this year. S.461 is on the contested calendar. **Background:** In 2009 the recycling industry created 1,354 new jobs, \$6.5 billion in economic impact, and over \$300 million in capital investments in South Carolina. The Alcohol Beverage Container (ABC) Recycling Bill is a major 2011 priority for the conservation community. The bill by Sen. Ray Cleary (Georgetown) would require bars and restaurants serving alcohol to start recycling their plastic, glass, aluminum containers and cardboard boxes by 2013 (with three extra years allotted to implement glass recycling, and exceptions for those in underserved areas). The bill also calls for these establishments to develop recycling plans guided by DHEC. Permit applications or renewals would be given a 10% discount for 8 years if there is a recycling plan that does not include glass and a 25% discount for applications and renewals that have a recycling plan including glass. This legislation is predicted to grow the recycling sector by 12 percent annually and create over 36,000 jobs in five years. It costs local governments significantly less to recycle our trash (\$30 a ton) than to send it to a landfill (\$50 a ton) or to incinerate it (\$75 a ton). So recycling legislation offers our state a win-win-win by boosting our economy, helping the environment, and lowering taxes.

Saluda River Trout Moratorium. We oppose [S.800](#), introduced by Sen. Phil Shoopman (Greenville), which would impose a moratorium on permits for a federally-funded trout enhancement project (with which *Upstate Forever* is involved) on the South Saluda River in Greenville County. This project will not disturb the river's flow or public recreation opportunities, and the public would continue to have foot access. **A fact sheet about the project is available [here](#).** The Senate Fish Game and Forestry Subcommittee (Sens. [Chip Campsen](#)-Chair, [Mike Fair](#), [Greg Gregory](#), [John Land](#), [Shane Martin](#), [Vincent Sheheen](#) and [Danny Verdin](#)) again postponed its meeting last week.

Upstate Forever is among three dozen conservation organizations statewide, representing more than 45,000 members, that have banded together to develop the [2011 Common Agenda](#) of legislative priorities for this session:

Clean and Green Means Jobs

Recycling, clean water and green power all mean jobs to South Carolinians. Our state's natural resources can produce the jobs to keep our families employed here.

- Jobs in Clean Water
 - Ban on phosphorus detergents, which damage water quality
 - "Three strikes" bill to audit chronic sewage polluters
- Jobs in Green Energy
 - Incentives to spur private sector investment
- Conservation Bank: Investing in our Future
 - Remove provision ending SC Conservation Bank in 2012 and "death clause" that strips program of its entire budget
- Let's Not Waste an Opportunity
 - \$3 solid waste tipping fee increase to fund recycling programs
 - Requirement for bars and restaurants to recycle
- Enriching our Economy by Supporting our State Agencies

- Restore funding to core natural resource agencies to enable our state to manage our land and water assets for both public recreation and private sector growth.

More great resources for conservationists:

[Conservation Voters of South Carolina](#)

[SC Coastal Conservation League](#)

For a directory of Upstate legislators, click [here](#).

For SC House and Senate information, click [here](#).

Don't know which district you are in? Click [here](#).

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