

THE TICKER

A Weekly Public Affairs Update for the PFPA Membership

PRODUCED BY:

PENNSYLVANIA FOREST PRODUCTS ASSOCIATION

“YOUR CAPITOL INSIDER”



Monday, July 13, 2015

Reported by: Paul Lyskava, PFPA Executive Director

PA Has No State Budget

The GOP-led General Assembly sent Governor Wolf a budget by July 1. The \$30.18 billion budget was an increase of about \$1 billion over last year. There were no increased taxes as part of the plan. The plan included an additional \$100 million for basic education items and \$41 million for higher education.

Governor Wolf promptly vetoed the entire state budget.

The state continues to operate and state workers continue to get paid. State subcontractors and grantees may begin to see an impact on their state revenues this week.

The GOP-led budget included funding for the Department of Agriculture's Hardwoods Development Council, which was not part of the Governor's budget. It did not currently include sales and use tax relief for the purchase of logging equipment. The GOP budget also funded DCNR and BoF near the levels called for by Governor Wolf.

The Governor vetoed the GOP-led budget because it lacked his proposed changes to revenue, including a new gas Severance Tax; increase in the Personal Income Tax; and increase and expansion of the sales and usage taxes; a new bank tax and additional tobacco taxes.

The State Senate will be in Harrisburg this week to explore the possibility of securing an override of the Governor's veto. They will need to secure 32 Senate votes, which would require some Democrats to vote against the Governor.

The General Assembly and Governor will have to continue to work on an agreeable budget. With state employees still getting paid and state services still open at this time, there is little pressure for the two sides to reach a compromise during the next month.

USDA Extends Checkoff Comment Period

The USDA has announced recently that the comment period for the supplemental notice to amend the 2013 proposed rule for a Hardwood Lumber and Hardwood Plywood Promotion, Research and Information Order (Order) has been extended to September 7, 2015.

The Rule can be found on the Federal Register. Comments can be filed through September 7 at the link below, or search "Hardwood Lumber" on the Federal Register:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2015/07/01/2015-16184/hardwood-lumber-and-hardwood-plywood-promotion-research-and-information-order-extension-of-comment>

The proposed Hardwood Checkoff would be an industry-funded, national research and promotion program for hardwood lumber and hardwood plywood that would be administered by a board of industry members selected by USDA. Once approved by the USDA as a final rule, industry will vote whether to establish the Hardwood Checkoff.

Congressman Glenn Thompson - Working for Industry

It was a busy week with forestry issues in the U.S. House last week. On Thursday, the U.S. House approved the Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2015, a comprehensive bill aimed at expediting and improving forest management activities, including those occurring in the ANF.

The bill will provide the Forest Service with more authority to collaborate with private sector on management activities; allow states to help fund projects; and allow for the use of additional categorical exclusions on projects.

Congressman Thompson (PA-5) was a co-sponsor of the bill and he managed the debate on the bill on the House floor.

Also last week, Rep. Thompson was able to add an amendment into the proposed FY 2016 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, which would prevent NLEB from being moved up to an endangered species for one year. USFWS just finished collecting comments on the current NLEB threatened species listing, and a final determination is expected by USFWS by the end of the year. Other pro-forestry provisions are also included in the bill. Unfortunately, amendments related to the Confederate Flag have resulted in this appropriations bill being tabled for the rest of this year.

PFPA News

- PA SFI is looking for a logging operation in Westmoreland County that will be active in late September where we can hold an Advanced Logger Rescue Training. This full-day training is offered through the PA State Fire Academy and teaches participants how to handle an "in-woods" rescue from the time of the accident until the victim is at a level-1 trauma center. The class is offered in mixed groups with both Fire/EMS personnel along with professional timber harvesters so that both of these groups can get a better idea of their role and how their unique expertise/background can contribute to a rescue effort. We need a timber harvest that has equipment and an operator on site and where 6 to 12 trees can be felled by the instructor to set up different scenarios/demonstrations. The logging crew would be able to participate in the training at no charge and would be guaranteed space in the class (worth 2 years of PA SFI continuing education credit). Due to the instructor's availability, the class will be held on Sunday, Sept. 27th.
- The PA SFI Office will be closed for vacation - July 20-24.

“DYK” – Did You Know? — 277 bald-eagle nests have been documented in PA this year, with nesting eagles present in at least 58 of the state's 67 counties. - *PA Game Commission*