



Legislative Update Week 10 2020 Session Ends

Week 10 Legislative Update – 2020 Session Ends

The Florida legislature arrived at *Sine Die* Thursday afternoon officially ending the 2020 legislative session after passing a record \$93.2 billion dollar budget. At a post session press conference state leaders said they have a healthy budget reserve to deal with potential revenue implications from the Covid-19 Pandemic but they are prepared to come back to Tallahassee to meet again if the need arises.



The usually crowded FL tradition of celebrating *Sine Die* with a handkerchief drop had to be done this year by two lone employees standing 6 ft. apart. *Sine Die* is Latin for “without day” and indicates adjournment without scheduling a further meeting day. The handkerchief drop at *Sine Die* is a tradition started when the leaders of the House and Senate devised a way to signal to each other in the rotunda between the chambers (before cell phones of course) to mutually pound the gavel in each house and formally end the session.

The following highlights action from the 2020 Legislative session:

Budget: Everglades Restoration and Florida Forever Funding – The Everglades received \$327 million for restoration projects from the Legislature. The Florida Forever Land Acquisition Program received \$100 million which is an improvement over the FY 19-20 allocation of \$33 million but falls far short of the \$300 million the program received annually prior to 2014.

Passed: Water Quality – The vehicle for the Governor’s Blue Green Algae Task Force Recommendations was **Senate Bill 712** by Mayfield. After a strong start, the bill was weakened through amendments. The final bill contains a number of water quality initiatives which can be built upon including addressing waste water treatment facility infrastructure, septic tank regulations and increased fines. A major failing of the bill is in not addressing agricultural pollution through the demonstrably ineffective Best Management Program (BMP) that sets no pollution limits and provides agriculture a presumption of compliance with water quality standards even though they are generally the greatest source of excess nitrogen and phosphorus pollution.

Passed: Endangered and Threatened Species - SB 680 – Shark Fins by Sen. Hudson bans the import/export and sale of shark fins in Florida but it exempts current Florida Fisheries permit holders. The Senate originally included an exemption for current shark fisheries permits until 2025 but the House removed that limit. The bill also calls for a FL Fish and Wildlife impact study on the issue to be completed by December 31, 2021.

Passed: Growth Management – SB 410 by Sen. Perry, this bad growth management bill had several late filed amendments added that would essentially preempt local government land use policy decisions with no regard for a county’s infrastructure, restraints or capacity. This bill ignores the link between properly managed growth, water supply and water quality and supports land owner defenses that are already provided for in current state and federal law.

Passed: Environmental Fines and Enforcement – HB 1091 by Rep. Randy Fine raises fines and penalties on environmental violations up to 150% from current levels. This bill would become effective July 1, 2020.

Failed: Sea Level Rise and Resiliency – SB 7016 by Sen. Lee and supported by Gov. DeSantis would have created the Statewide Office of Resiliency and the Statewide Sea-Level Rise Task Force. The bill passed the full Senate but was not considered in the House.

As of today, many of the bills that passed have not yet been presented to the Governor for his signature. According to Article III, Section 8 of the Florida Constitution – the Governor has 15 days to either sign or fail to veto any bills presented to him once session has adjourned.

SCCF’s Legislative Tracker has an updated table on the outcome of bills we were tracking this session. Also check the Tracker for updates on the Governor’s action on the bills presented to him.

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