

N.C. delegation works to block EPA regulations

U.S. Sen. Richard Burr and U.S. Rep. Bob Etheridge are playing key roles in Washington to stop the Environmental Protection Agency from establishing greenhouse gas regulations under the Clean Air Act.

EPA's work on these regulations presents a serious threat to North Carolina agriculture.

Two resolutions of disapproval were recently introduced in the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of

Representatives to block EPA's regulatory effort. These resolutions—introduced by Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Rep. Ike Skelton (D-MO)—would invalidate EPA's endangerment finding regarding greenhouse gases.

Burr serves on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee with Murkowski.

"Any effort to broadly regulate carbon emissions will have a large impact on our economy," Burr

said. "Any such action should be determined by Congress, not an agency rulemaking. That's why I joined with Senator Murkowski and a bipartisan group of Senators to introduce the resolution disapproving of such action by the EPA."

Etheridge, a member of the influential House Ways and Means Committee, also explained his support.

"I signed on to this resolution because I believe that we need to take responsible action on this issue," Etheridge said, "but Congress, not unelected, though well-meaning, folks in federal agencies should be making important policy decisions. I will continue to work with my colleagues—both Republicans and Democrats alike—to support common sense solutions and to do right by the people of North Carolina."

Ensuring that Congress, not EPA, crafts any climate change regulations is a top priority for Farm Bureau. However, climate legislation must not weaken U.S. agriculture.

The House passed climate legislation on a narrow vote last summer. Farm Bureau opposed the bill because it would increase production costs and failed to address carbon emissions in countries, such as China and India. The Senate may debate its own climate bill this summer.

Harding's narrative sets tone for Farm Bureau Safety Conference

North Carolina Farm Bureau's April 8 Farm Equipment/Motor Vehicle Roadway Safety Conference started with a true story about the worst case scenario as a way to emphasize the purpose of the event—to save farmers' lives.

Shawn Harding, president of Beaufort County Farm Bureau and a member of the State

Board of Directors, recounted the events of the day his brother and business partner, Todd Harding, died as the result of a farm equipment/motor vehicle accident.

"That morning at 7 o'clock everything was fine and by 9 o'clock my life was totally different and has been since that time," Harding said.

The Harding brothers graduated from North Carolina State University in the mid-1980s and returned home to farm after losing their father to cancer. They operated a successful tobacco farm for more than a decade and raised their families. Todd had a wife and three young children at the time of the accident—Oct. 20, 1999. He was 32 years old.

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**Shawn
Harding**

FEEP helping farmers save money

In October 2008, North Carolina Farm Bureau and the North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission partnered to help the state's farms become more energy efficient.

The result was North Carolina's Farm Energy Efficiency Project (FEEP).

At around the same time, Caswell County Farm Bureau Members V. Mac Baldwin, and son Craig, had been searching for a way to save money while also keeping their human employees warm.

Mac heard about FEEP during a meeting and ended up installing a single biomass heater on the family's Caswell County operation. It provides enough heat to warm the offices and workspaces of the farm's six chicken egg laying houses. The living quarters of the farm's 75,000 chickens, however, are heated with a completely separate source.

Baldwin's application to FEEP brought a solution and a \$20,000 grant to carry out the renewable energy efficiency project.

"We're always looking for ideas to reduce cost. If we can lower the energy demand, then that's money in the bucket," Baldwin said. "I'm very thankful for Farm Bureau orchestrating this project and getting it out into the field for us. We're thrilled with it!"

For farms like Baldwin's that received FEEP grants, the first thing that happened was an on-site energy audit conducted by a



Mac Baldwin, right, and son Craig.

professional engineer.

Farmers could then take the information gained from the audit and use it to the benefit of the farm and the environment.

"With a grant like this, certainly, we measure success in several different ways," said Paul Sherman, Air & Energy Programs Director at NCFB, who also oversees the FEEP project. "One is just the increased awareness that farmers have of their energy usage on the farm, and that leads to the second part of increasing profits on the farm."

Indeed, results thus far have revealed an average \$16,000 in energy savings for the more than 50 farmers who have received FEEP grants.

"That's our end goal," Sherman said. "We want to help farmers put a little more money in their pockets and be more sustainable, so they can stay on the farm longer and improve the quality of rural North Carolina by continuing to farm."

Poll shows wrong assumptions of HSUS

Farmers in North Carolina are aware of the threat to agriculture posed by the Humane Society of the United States, but a new poll shows the word is not reaching the public.

The study found that 71 percent of Americans polled believe HSUS is an "umbrella group" for local humane societies; 63 percent think their local humane society is affiliated with HSUS; and, 59 percent falsely believe HSUS gives most of its money to local cat-and-dog organizations.

In addition, Charity Navigator called out HSUS for not fulfilling its purpose. The charity watchdog group stated HSUS gives less than 1 percent of collected donations to hands-on pet organizations yearly, and gave HSUS a grade of "C-."

Instead of caring for the cats and dogs it spotlights in its advertisements, HSUS has been focusing its efforts on circumventing Ohio voters who approved a multi-stakeholder Livestock Care Standards Board. HSUS is pursuing a ballot measure to set the livestock handling standards the board will follow and enforce.

In Missouri, HSUS is backing a ballot initiative that cracks down on dog breeders, but the measure would also open the door to regulation on all animal care.

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North Carolina Farm Bureau (NCFB) is the unified, statewide Voice of Agriculture®. Working through our grassroots organizations to enhance and strengthen the lives of rural North Carolinians, we strive to build strong, prosperous agricultural communities. We are a private, non-profit, grassroots organization that has been actively promoting farm and rural issues since 1936 through legislative and policy initiatives, member services, field representation, agricultural education, public relations and other programs.

North Carolina Farm Bureau
5301 Glenwood Ave.
Raleigh, NC 27612
(919) 782-1705
www.ncfb.org | leader@ncfb.org

Growth increases farm road hazards

“A pickup came up behind him and wanted to pass. We believe the pickup shielded the tractor from the dump truck’s view,” Harding said.

Todd was not one to pull the tractor off the road onto the curb, Harding said. But, this time, he had pulled over to let the truck pass. That’s when the dump truck collided with the tractor.

“The driver of the dump truck had a poor driving record—many, many citations and probably shouldn’t have been on the road. He was cited and charged with misdemeanor death by vehicle and convicted,” Harding said. “In my opinion, it was speed and not being aware of equipment of the road.”

Harding said his participation in NCFB’s Young Farmers and Ranchers Program may have saved the family farm. It was during YF&R functions that Harding realized he and his brother needed to plan for a worst case scenario.

“As bad as the accident was, it could have been a lot worse from the standpoint of the business,” Harding said. “Because of that (planning), Todd was able to take care of his family. Also, I was able to continue to farm.”

Harding said the state’s continued urbanization makes the Safety Conference and continued similar efforts more important than ever. He suggested highway safety efforts should focus on a particular objective.

“The goal, I think, is to get people to see not just a tractor on the road, but a father, a husband, a person. That’s the goal I’d like to see,” Harding said. “It’s something that we need to make people aware of to save lives.”

To help combat the danger of the increased traffic associated with population growth, North Carolina Farm Bureau sponsored a Farm Equipment/Motor Vehicle Roadway Safety Conference April 8 in Raleigh.

“We have some young folks who are the future of agriculture in North Carolina,” said Robin Tutor, interim director of the North Carolina Agromedicine Institute. “If we can help plant the seeds with them in agricultural safety and health then hopefully we will be able to reap the benefit down the road.”

Eric Rodgman, of the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center, presented some eye-opening statistics about farm-vehicle crash incidents and what causes them.

During 2008, in North Carolina, there were 232 crashes, leading to three fatalities and 73 injuries, involving farm vehicles. Wake County had the most crashes, with 54, while Robeson and Sampson tied for second with 49 each.

The majority of wrecks occurred on state secondary routes or state routes, and in areas where the posted speed limit for other vehicles involved was 55 mph or higher. More than 50 percent of wrecks occurred when a driver tried to make a left turn, or when they were rear-ended.

Whether the farm-vehicle driver or the other vehicle driver was at fault, inattention was a factor on both sides. Non-farm car or truck drivers at fault were likelier to have been speeding, and farm-vehicle operators at fault were likelier to have failed to yield.

N.C. State University Profes-

sor Michael Schulman and the Me, Myself, I and Others Foundation’s Theresa Costello, revealed that tractors were the farm vehicles involved in 62 percent of crashes, and almost half the time a farm vehicle collided with a passenger car.

Farmers surveyed said the two biggest changes that could improve safety would be to widen roads and educate non farm vehicle drivers.

Caswell County Farm Bureau member V. Mac Baldwin said the meeting was worthwhile and educated him about ways to make his farm transport safer.

“That’s why I’m here,” said Baldwin, motioning toward his grandson, Steven. “We’re trying to get him off to a good start.”

Baldwin said he planned to go home and reroute tractors and mix wagons off the busy highway near his property.

Wilson County Ag Extension agent Norman Harrell talked about Be Seen and Be Safe, a regional farm vehicle safety program offered in 2004 by his agency and the North Carolina Highway Patrol.

The program focused on three key ways to keep farmers and non-farm drivers safe on the roads: Improve visibility, improve education and follow the law.

Furthermore, the group used a grant to give out safety kits to people who attended Be Seen and Be Safe workshops, which were offered in English and in Spanish.

He also encouraged farmers to get the new, more reflective slow-moving vehicle emblem for their vehicles. The latest version has a number of S276.5 or higher at the bottom.

Ag commission highlights NC's top industry



From left to right, N.C. Rep. Dewey Hill, NCFB Board of Directors Member Mickey Simmons and N.C. Sen. Bob Atwater.

The North Carolina General Assembly's Agriculture and Forestry Awareness Study Commission spent March 23 in Columbus County to highlight the importance of the state's largest industry, which accounts for more than \$70 billion annually.

The event, hosted by Southeastern Community College in Whiteville, highlighted the importance of agricultural exports, regulatory issues for agricultural exports and interstate commerce, the strategic plan for North Carolina's research stations, the agricultural biotechnology program at Southeastern Community College, and updates on the forest products industry.

N.C. Rep. Dewey Hill, a native of Columbus County, and N.C. Sen. Bob Atwater, who both chair their chambers' respective ag committees, co-chaired the meeting.

"We've got some of the best things going," Hill said. "Agriculture and agribusiness is big business."

North Carolina Farm Bureau Board of Directors Member Mickey Simmons, who is also President of Carteret County Farm Bureau, was appointed to the

commission by Gov. Bev Perdue.

N.C. Ag Commissioner Steve Troxler spoke to Simmons and others on the commission about the importance of exports.

"Never forget that we're an agricultural state—just not any old agricultural state, but one of the key agricultural states in the nation and the world," he said.

With the recession and the associated decline in the consumption of many agricultural commodities, Troxler said the importance of the state's agriculture cannot be stressed enough.

"Where would we be without a bedrock industry like agriculture?" Troxler asked.

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Gene Cross, who heads the Plant Industry Division, described the ongoing war his department fights against invasive species.

"For us, protecting agriculture and forestry in our state is something that we do every day," Cross said. "Our role is to expedite and open up trade overall for commodities. Our goal, however, is to prevent the movement of invasive species."

Among other species, Cross

described the losing battle against the imported fire ant, but also highlighted successful programs in his department such as the gypsy moth campaign.

But, he said that despite successes, the department has to do things different to keep up the war against destructive pests, including funding.

"We can't keep doing what we've been doing before and expect to keep pace with the number of movements that are occurring in North Carolina," he said.

Edward Pitzer, Director of NCDA&CS's Research Stations Division discussed the process that went into developing the comprehensive strategic plan.

"We have something different here in North Carolina that they don't have in any other state—and that's the unique partnership that we have between the department of agriculture and the university system," Pitzer said.

With 52,000 farmers in North Carolina who produce more than 80 different commodities, Pitzer said the research stations are streamlining their efforts to support research that values diversity, while increasing productivity, profitability and sustainability in North Carolina and worldwide.

"We've seen a lot of advances in agricultural research," Pitzer said, "and they provide not only opportunities for new and emerging industries, they provide opportunities for us all as far as growth within our rural communities."

There are 18 agricultural research stations in North Carolina. Twelve stations are funded by NCDA&CS and six stations are funded by North Carolina State University. However, all stations are managed by the NCDA&CS division.

Short session starts May 12

The North Carolina General Assembly reconvenes at noon on May 12 and has announced plans to work quickly to make it a true short session.

The legislature will focus on reconciling the current-year budget and passing a 2010-11 budget by July 1.

"They're really talking about being in town just a few weeks," said NCFB senior policy director Mitch Peele.

At last report, Senate members intended to start work on Gov. Bev Perdue's spending plan, expected May 5, with a goal of approving a budget by May 20. The House would pass its budget by June 10, with reconciliation to start the next day.

With state revenues continuing to lag, state lawmakers might face a \$790 million budget deficit. House and Senate budget writers had originally predicted the shortfall might be as much as \$1.2 million.

State lawmakers will also need to find \$391 million, or about 2 percent, to cut from the current 2009-10 budget, but officials say money held in reserve is likely to cover that deficit.

Department heads were asked to turn in cuts from 3 to 7 percent. In addition to the budget work, committee and commission reports are expected from several groups that have continued to meet since the long session ended last September.

NCFB has participated in several of the study commissions, including ones on climate change, offshore energy exploration and water and wastewater infrastructure.

Health care law "Top 10" list

On March 23, President Obama signed health care legislation into law. The new law makes significant changes to our health care delivery system and insurance markets. The following list is a summary of the provisions that could impact N.C. farmers:

1. Establishes national prevention and wellness strategy designed to promote personal fitness and preventative care.
2. Requires most U.S. citizens and legal residents to have health insurance through their employer or as individuals.
3. Helps individuals and small businesses to compare insurance products and buy coverage through state exchanges.
4. Businesses employing less than 50 full-time employees per year are not required to provide health insurance to their employees.
5. Seasonal workers who work less than 120 days per year are exempt from the law's employer insurance mandate.
6. Provides some people who buy health insurance as individuals with credits to offset the cost of their premiums.
7. Provides insurance coverage tax credits to small businesses that employ 25 employees or less and pay an annual average wage of \$50,000 or less.
8. Establishes an essential benefits package for all insurance plans; prohibits coverage exclusions based on pre-existing conditions, and provides coverage for children up to 26 years old for all individuals and group insurance policies.
9. Provides incentives to physicians and other health care providers to offer health care services in rural areas.
10. Reduces out-of-pocket expenses associated with the Medicare prescription medicine program by closing the program's coverage gap.

New hunting regulations adopted

New regulations adopted by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission expand opportunities for deer hunting, bear hunting and more.

Also, governments and non-profits will be allowed to conduct organized hunts, with permission, where unlicensed hunters are allowed to participate.

New rules ensure that Disabled Sportsmen Program participants have the same access to privileges as Disabled Access Permit holders.

The either-sex deer season on Jordan Game Land has been

increased to the maximum season and there will be a new either-sex deer season on Sandy Mush Game Land, as well as a new Ashe County land called Pond Mountain.

Where bears are concerned, the season in Hertford County and on an 8,000 acre portion of Chowan Swamp Game Land is extended to two weeks, with the same dates as Gates and Bertie counties.

The new rules will be printed in the North Carolina Inland Fishing, Hunting and Trapping Regulations Digest for 2010-11.

FIELDNOTES

by Larry Wooten, NCFB President

Farm offense and defense

Most of us know the saying that the best defense is a good offense, and vice versa.

But for farmers operating in today's agricultural climate, it's a good idea to have both sides working well.

The state's farmers certainly need a good defense from the endless lineup of legislative activity by groups that don't have agriculture's or rural North Carolina's best interests at heart.

Growers also need a good defense from the wide-variety of other policy issues that could impact their livelihoods, such as present-use value taxation, estate tax, H-2a reform and environmental regu-

lations that are among the nation's toughest.

Farm Bureau is a strong line of defense for farmers in the legislative arena. Our policy experts have been working the General Assembly halls and following the activities of special legislative commissions in anticipation of the upcoming short session, which convenes at noon on May 12.

In addition to a good defense against misdirected legislative and regulatory efforts, what farmers will need to be successful in the future includes an innovative offense. Again, Farm Bureau is a strong source for this approach.

One example of taking the initiative and running a good offense is the Farm Energy Efficiency Project (FEEP). See the article about farmer Mac Baldwin on page 2 for more about this project.

It is just one case in point of what Farm Bureau can accomplish when it takes the initiative, develops a plan and follows through on the effort. Farmers participating in FEEP have saved an average of \$16,000 on energy costs.



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Farm Bureau and 29 other ag organizations sent a letter to U.S. Senate leaders calling for estate tax relief of \$5 million per person with a 35 percent tax rate.

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North Carolina Farm Bureau
5301 Glenwood Ave. (27612)
P.O. Box 27766
Raleigh, NC 27611

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