



## Capitol Connection E-Newsletter- June 2015

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### **2015 Legislative Leadership Conference Moves to Jekyll Island**

This year, the Legislative Leadership Conference is moving to Jekyll Island in Glynn County! Attending county officials will have the opportunity to enjoy the scenic views of Georgia's coast while engaging in legislative advocacy discussions and completing training courses in the ACCG Lifelong Learning Academy. The 2015 Legislative Leadership Conference will take place on October 7 through October 9 at the Jekyll Island Convention Center.

#### *Don't Forget to Appoint Your County Voting Delegate*

Each county will need to designate a voting delegate to vote on behalf of their specific county for the approval of the final Amended County Platform, the official document that guides ACCG's legislative advocacy efforts. Click [here](#) to obtain the voting delegate form. Once completed, all forms

Please continue to monitor your email as well as the ACCG website for forthcoming conference details.

### **Save the Date for Policy Committee Meetings**

ACCG Policy Committee Meetings are approaching soon so be sure to mark your calendars and save the date for the meeting(s) you wish to attend. Policy committee meetings allow county officials to discuss policy issues they feel should be included in the County Platform, the document that guides ACCG's legislative advocacy efforts.

The meetings will begin on August 18 and run through September 2 (\*please monitor the ACCG website for any changes and/or updates). Each meeting will take place from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. with lunch provided at 12 p.m.

Click [here](#) to view the schedule of policy committee meetings.

Any questions or concerns regarding the meetings may be directed to ACCG Legislative Policy Coordinator Ines Owens at (404) 522-5022 or [iowens@accg.org](mailto:iowens@accg.org).

### **Waters of the U.S. Rule Announced**

On May 27, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) announced their final Clean Water Act Rule: Definition of Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule, which would increase the number of streams and wetlands that are protected under the Clean Water Act (CWA). The rule will take effect in 60 days after its publication in the Federal Register.

For more information, click [here](#).

Please contact ACCG Associate Legislative Director Todd Edwards with any questions or concerns regarding this information. He can be reached at (404) 522-5022 or [tedwards@accg.org](mailto:tedwards@accg.org).

### **Georgia Supreme Court Rules on Marshland Buffers**

On June 15, the Georgia Supreme Court issued its decision reversing the court of appeals in the Grady County [marshland] buffer case. At issue was interpretation of OCGA §12-7-6 (b) (15) (A) which states as follows: *“There is established a 25 foot buffer along the banks of all state waters, as measured horizontally from the point where vegetation has been wrested by normal stream flow or wave action....”*

The Court held that there is no buffer if there is no wrested vegetation – in other words, the buffer exists along state water in places where vegetation has been wrested from the bank by streamflow or wave action. This decision does not affect coastal marshland buffers, which were addressed by SB 101 this past legislative sessions, but applies to all other state wetlands. Taking SB 101 and the Supreme Court decision together, the net effect is that buffers will be enforced in Georgia as they always had been prior to April 2014, with the exception that the rules for coastal marshlands have been clarified by SB 101.

To read the Supreme Court ruling on the Grady County marshland buffer case, click [here](#).

EPD is in the process of amending its existing rules to implement SB 101, coastal marshland buffers. The rules are currently in a stakeholder process, which you can read about [here](#).

All questions regarding this matter can be directed to ACCG Associate Legislative Director Todd Edwards. He can be reached at (404) 522-5022 or [tedwards@accg.org](mailto:tedwards@accg.org).

### **Grant Information from Congressman Austin Scott's Meetings**

Last month, Congressman Austin Scott hosted grant workshops in Warner Robins/Houston County and Valdosta/Lowndes County. The workshops advised county officials and departments of the state and federal grant funds available to them. For further information on the available grants, the presentation by representatives from the Middle Georgia Regional Commission during the Houston County meeting is listed below. Also, below is the comprehensive grant booklet outlining the state funds counties may pursue.

[Middle Georgia Regional Commission Presentation](#)

[State Financial Assistance Programs](#)

### **Proposed Rule Changes from the Georgia Department of Revenue**

The commenting periods for two proposed rule adoptions (significant to county governments) from the Georgia Department of Revenue (DOR) are now open. County officials have until **Friday, June 26 at 10 a.m.**, to submit comments on the proposed rules for the State Hotel-Motel Fee and the Alternative Ad Valorem Tax on Apportionable Vehicles to DOR.

Click [here](#) to review the notice on the State Hotel-Motel Fee.

Click [here](#) to review the notice on the Alternative Ad Valorem Tax on Apportionable Vehicles.

Please contact ACCG Legislative Director Clint Mueller at (404) 522-5022 or [cmueller@accg.org](mailto:cmueller@accg.org) if you have any questions.

### **Georgia Forestry Commission Holds Public Comment Period for Updated Timber Harvesting Activity Form**

Pursuant to House Bill 199, updates have been made to the Timber Harvesting Activity Form and will go into effect July 1, 2015. A 30-day public comment period opened on June 16, 2015, for all interested parties who would like to provide input on the updated form. Feedback will be accepted via email and during six public hearings throughout the state. To view the current and updated form and find details on how to provide feedback, click [here](#).

### **Revised Impact Analysis on HB 170, 2015 Transportation Funding Act**

The Transportation Funding Investment Act of 2015 contains many provisions that impact counties. To keep counties abreast of the changes they will face as a result of this legislation, ACCG is providing county officials with an impact analysis on HB 170.

Click [here](#) to review the analysis in its entirety and to obtain further information on HB 170 and its impact on counties.

Please contact ACCG Legislative Director Clint Mueller ([cmueller@accg.org](mailto:cmueller@accg.org)) or ACCG Associate Legislative Director Shaun Adams ([sadams@accg.org](mailto:sadams@accg.org)) with any questions.

### **Georgia Department of Revenue Releases Prepaid Local Motor Fuel Tax Bulletin**

The Georgia Department of Revenue (DOR) has released its latest prepaid local motor fuel tax bulletin with the new average retail prices of motor fuels going into effect of July 1, 2015. The bulletin shows a reduction in the average retail price for motor fuels highlighted by gasoline decreasing in price from \$2.599 to \$2.35 per gallon and a drop in diesel from \$3.16 per gallon to \$2.549 per gallon.

The official bulletin from the Georgia Department of Revenue can be viewed [here](#).

Please contact ACCG Associate Legislative Director Shaun Adams at (404) 522-5022 or [sadams@accg.org](mailto:sadams@accg.org) if you have any questions.

### **Former State Rep. and House Transportation Chairman Jay Roberts Appointed to Serve as GDOT Planning Director**

In May, Gov. Nathan Deal appointed former state Rep. and House Transportation Chairman Jay Roberts to serve as planning director of the Georgia Department of Transportation. Roberts was critical in working to pass HB 170, the major transportation bill of the 2015 session. Roberts was very instrumental in working to ensure county governments were considered throughout the entire legislative process.

The official news release regarding his appointment can be found [here](#).

### **State Rep. Christian Coomer Named House Transportation Committee Chair**

State Rep. Christian Coomer (R-14) was recently named as the chairman of the House Transportation Committee. Rep. Coomer will replace former Rep. Jay Roberts in the leadership position as Roberts assumes his new role of planning director with the Georgia Department of Transportation.

The Atlanta-Journal Constitution news article announcing the appointment can be accessed [here](#).

Visit [Rep. Coomer's page](#) on the Georgia House of Representatives website to learn more about him.

### **2015 Wage and Salary Survey**

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) is currently collecting surveys from counties to include in their 2015 Wage and Salary Report. Each year, DCA surveys counties and cities to provide detailed wage and salary information including job descriptions, number of

employees, scheduled work hours per week and the starting and maximum salaries for more than 150 positions. This information can be used to compare employment levels, salary ranges, and jobs provided by your county to other counties and cities across the state.

Click [here](#) to submit the 2015 Wage and Salary Survey. The deadline to submit this year's survey is June 30, 2015.

#### **ACCG Webinar on Cell Tower Siting Set for August 4**

ACCG will host a webinar on Tuesday, August 4 on the topic of cell tower siting from 9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m., that will provide members with a better understanding of federal and state laws/regulations governing cell tower siting, recent changes to those laws, recent case law, and how to shape effective local ordinances and decision making in the cell tower/equipment siting process.

There will be three presentations from former Cobb County assistant attorney Joseph B. Atkins, attorney at law; David C. Kirk, FAICP, partner at Troutman Sanders LLP, with a background in representing wireless companies on cell tower siting issues and litigation; and ACCG Associate Legislative Director Todd Edwards.

An overview of the topic of discussion will be provided through a power point presentation and webinar attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions at the end.

Click [here](#) to register.

Please contact ACCG Legislative Policy Coordinator Ines Owen at (404) 522-5022 or [iowens@accg.org](mailto:iowens@accg.org) if you have any questions.