

2007 Session – Week 3

We have completed the third week (of nine) of the 2007 Session. There were no hearings on our legislation (blue crab and funding strategies), but the House Conservation and State Lands Committee, chaired by Rep. Kendrick, held a workshop on two proposed constitutional amendments affecting the agency - HJR 1297, pertaining to FWC's rule challenges, and HJR 79, creation of a Department of Interior. Most of the 1½ hour meeting was spent on FWC's rule challenges. There was a lot of testimony, much of it negative. We greatly appreciate Lane Stephens of the Allied Sportsmen's Association and Julie Wraithmell of Audubon who stood up in support of the agency's due process procedures. There was no vote taken on either legislation, so in effect, both remain in committee. Furthermore, this was the last scheduled meeting of the Conservation and State Lands Committee, so it is anticipated that they will stay in committee until the end of Session.

Although there were no committee hearings on FWC's bills, the Revenue Estimating Conference met, Saturday, March 24, to analyze numerous bills, including FWC's package. The Revenue Estimating Conference is the group that meets several times every year to project economic forecasts affecting State revenues, appropriations, and policy making. They meet during Session to analyze the revenue impacts of individual bills that could affect the State's budget. The information is used by the fiscal committees in both the House and Senate; so before those committees consider our legislation, they need the revenue projections. The Revenue Estimating Conference accepted (and complimented) all of our methodologies in determining the projected revenues for recreational license fee increases, snook/waterfowl/turkey permit fee increases, voluntary donations when buying recreational licenses/permits, and the proposed commercial blue crab endorsement and trap tag fees.

Regarding the budget, both House and Senate appropriations committees are drafting their respective budgets. Sandy Wilson's attached report shows what each side has funded for FWC, so far. We have a long way to go, though, before the budget is finalized. Both the House and Senate must pass their respective budgets, which we anticipate to occur during the week of April 9. Because they traditionally are different, a Conference Committee will be appointed to develop a consensus budget. We expect the consensus budget to be passed by both chambers during the last week of Session, which ends Friday, May 4.

2007 Session FWC Legislation

SB 1980, SB 1982/PCB ENRC 07-07 – Senate Committee on Environmental Protection and Conservation/House Environment and Natural Resources Council

SB 1980 authorizes up to 10% of revenues generated from the manatee, panther, and bass specialty license plates to be used for **marketing** and increases the fee for the turtle specialty license plate from \$17.50 to \$23.00.

The legislation authorizes endorsement, trap tag, and trap retrieval fees for the **blue crab effort management program**, including: hard shell endorsement fee of \$125.00, soft shell endorsement fee of \$250.00, displaced netters endorsement fee of \$125.00, incidental take endorsement fee of \$25.00, trap tag fee of \$.50/each, trap retrieval fee of \$10.00 per trap retrieved, except endorsement holders would be exempt for the first five traps; \$25.00 of each endorsement fee except incidental take is directed to the trap retrieval program. It waives blue crab fees for the 2007-08 license year, waives replacement trap tag fees in a disaster for the blue crab, spiny lobster, and stone crab fisheries, and authorizes a per trap retrieval fee of \$10.00 for the **black sea bass** fishery. It authorizes criminal penalties up to a 3rd degree felony and administrative fines up to \$5000.00 for violations of blue crab laws, and authorizes up to \$5000.00 in administrative fines for counterfeit trap tag violations of **spiny lobster** laws. It requires FWC to publish its due process procedures in rule and deletes legislative intent that FWC has "full constitutional" authority over marine life. SB 1980 was referred to the committees on Environmental Protection and Conservation, Governmental Operations, Finance and Taxation, and General Government Appropriations. It passed out of Environmental Protection and Conservation, and will be heard next in Governmental Operations.

SB 1982 encompasses FWC's **funding strategies** proposals including: allowing FWC to collect voluntary donations when hunting and fishing licenses are sold to be transferred to the Wildlife Foundation of Florida; increasing resident annual hunting license fees from \$11 to \$15.50, saltwater fishing and freshwater fishing license fees from \$12 to \$15.50; increasing the resident annual combination hunting and freshwater fishing license fee from \$24.00 to \$31.00, combination freshwater and saltwater fishing license fee from \$24.00 to \$31.00, and combination hunting, freshwater and saltwater fishing license fee from \$34.00 to \$46.50; increasing the resident 5-year hunting licenses from \$55.00 to \$77.50, and 5-year saltwater and freshwater fishing licenses from \$60.00 to \$77.50; increasing the resident sportsman's license fee from \$71.00 to \$79.00, and gold sportsman's license fee from \$87.00 to \$98.50; increasing non-resident saltwater fishing 3-day license fees from \$5 to \$15.50, creating a freshwater fishing 3-day license fee at \$15.50; increasing non-resident saltwater and freshwater 7-day license fees from \$15.00 to \$28.50; and increasing non-resident annual saltwater and freshwater fishing license fees from \$30.00 to \$45.50. The military gold sportsman's license and non-resident hunting licenses would remain at current prices since they were last changed in 2005 and 2003, respectively. It increases the waterfowl permit from \$3.00 to \$10.00, the resident turkey permit from \$5.00 to \$10.00, and the snook permit from \$2.00 to \$10.00; it also clarifies how all snook revenues may be spent – law enforcement, management, research, stock enhancement, and public education, and requires an annual report be sent to the Senate, House, and Governor. Amended out of the options FWC submitted was the repeal of the saltwater shoreline exemption, so the current exemption remains. SB 1982 was referred to committees on Environmental Protection and Conservation, Finance & Taxation, and General Government

Appropriations. It passed out of Environmental Protection and Conservation, and will be heard next in Finance and Taxation.

PCB ENRC 07-07 encompasses FWC's **funding strategies** proposals including: increasing the resident annual hunting license fee from \$11 to \$17.50, saltwater fishing and freshwater fishing license fees from \$12 to \$17.50; increasing the resident annual combination hunting and freshwater fishing license fee from \$22.00 to \$34.00, combination freshwater and saltwater fishing license fee from \$24.00 to \$34.00, and combination hunting, freshwater and saltwater fishing license fee from \$34.00 to \$50.50; ; increasing resident 5-year hunting license fees from \$55.00 to \$78.50, and 5-year saltwater and freshwater fishing license fees from \$60.00 to \$78.50; increasing the resident annual license fee to take fur-bearing animals from \$25.00 to \$26.00; increasing the resident sportsman's license fee from \$71.00 to \$80.00, the annual sportsman's license fee for a resident who is 64 years of age or older from \$12.00 to \$13.00, and the gold sportsman's license from \$87.00 to \$99.50; increasing the military gold sportsman's license fee from \$18.50 to \$19.50; increasing non-resident saltwater fishing 3-day license fees from \$5.00 to \$17.50, creating a freshwater fishing 3-day license fee at \$17.50; increasing non-resident saltwater and freshwater 7-day license fees from \$15.00 to \$30.50; increasing the non-resident 10-day hunting license fee from \$45.00 to \$46.00; increasing the non-resident annual saltwater and freshwater fishing license fees from \$30.00 to \$47.50; and increasing the non-resident annual hunting license fee from \$150 to \$151.00. Fees were increased \$1.00 from the options that FWC submitted to assist the agency with its funding shortfalls, and were increased another \$1.00 for every hunting and fishing license or combination thereof, the proceeds of which would be specifically directed for youth hunting and fishing programs. The legislation increases the waterfowl permit from \$3.00 to \$10.00, the resident turkey permit from \$5.00 to \$10.00, and the snook permit from \$2.00 to \$10.00; however, only 20% of snook revenues must be used for snook programs, the other 80% is not designated. FWC submitted another option - repeal of the saltwater shoreline exemption - but it was not picked up, so the current exemption remains. The legislation repeals current law that specifies recreational saltwater fishing license fees be used for administration, information, education, law enforcement, research, management, and fisheries enhancements; and also repeals the direction to the Legislature to appropriate annually to FWC an amount of General Revenue that equals what was appropriated to the Dept. of Environmental Protection during 1998-99 Fiscal Year to be used for saltwater fisheries programs. The legislation authorizes up to 10% of revenues generated from the manatee, panther, and bass specialty license plates to be used for **marketing** and increases the fee for the turtle specialty license plate from \$17.50 to \$23.00. The legislation authorizes endorsement, trap tag, and trap retrieval fees for the **blue crab effort management program**, including: hard shell endorsement fee of \$125.00, soft shell endorsement fee of \$250.00, displaced netters endorsement fee of \$125.00, incidental take endorsement fee of \$25.00, trap tag fee of \$.50/each, trap retrieval fee of \$10.00 per trap retrieved, except endorsement holders would be exempt for the first five traps; \$25.00 of each

endorsement fee except incidental take is directed to the trap retrieval program. It waives blue crab fees for the 2007-08 license year, waives replacement trap tag fees in a disaster for the blue crab, spiny lobster, and stone crab fisheries, and authorizes a per trap retrieval fee of \$10.00 for the **black sea bass** fishery. It authorizes criminal penalties up to a 3rd degree felony and administrative fines up to \$5000.00 for violations of blue crab laws; and authorizes up to \$5000.00 in administrative fines for counterfeit trap tag violations of **spiny lobster** laws. The legislation requires FWC to adopt its due process procedures into rule and changes statutory intent regarding FWC's authority over marine fish. The legislation was recommended by the Conservation and State Lands Committee and will be heard next in the Environment and Natural Resources Council.

2007 Session Legislation of Interest

HJR 79/SJR 2170, Department of Interior - Rep. Needelman/Sen. Baker
This legislation would place on the ballot, at the next general election or a special election, the creation of a new Cabinet office of the Commissioner of the Interior, creates a Department of Interior, and abolishes FWC. The Commission of Interior and the Department would have responsibilities for conserving and protecting the State's natural resources and scenic beauty, including fish and wildlife. If approved by the voters, the Commissioner would be elected in the 2010 election for a 2-year term to begin January 1, 2011, followed by subsequent 4-year terms. The creation of the Department of Interior would take effect July 1, 2011, at which time FWC would go out of existence. HJR 79 was referred to the Environment and Natural Resources Council, Conservation and State Lands Committee, and Policy and Budget Council. It was workshopped in the Conservation and State Lands Committee, March 21. SJR 2170 was referred to the committees on Environmental Preservation and Conservation, Governmental Operations, General Government Appropriations, and Rules.

HB 159/SB 678, Law Enforcement Salary Incentives – Rep. Brandenburg/Sen. Wise

This legislation increases the incentives for full-time officers to get college degrees, when they are in positions that do not require 4-year or advanced degrees. For a community college degree, the monthly incentive increases from \$30.00 to \$75.00; for a bachelor's degree, the monthly incentive is increased from \$50.00 to \$95.00; however, the maximum aggregate monthly amount increases from \$130.00 to \$175.00. HB 159 was referred to the Safety and Security Council, Homeland Security and Public Safety Committee, and Policy and Budget Council. SB 678 was referred to the committees on Criminal Justice, Governmental Operations, and General Government Appropriations.

HB 299/SB 1486, Florida Springs Protection Act – Rep. Boyd/Sen. Oelrich

This legislation creates the Florida Springs Commission for the purpose of identifying protection, restoration, and preservation strategies for Florida's

springs. The Commission is made up of agency heads of the departments of Agriculture & Consumer Services, Community Affairs, and Environmental Protection; FWC's executive director; representatives from a water management district's governing board; a regional planning council, the Florida Chamber of Commerce, the Florida Association of Community Developers, the American Water Works Association, the Florida Home Builders Association; 3 gubernatorial appointees; 3 Senate President appointees; and 3 Speaker of the House of Representatives appointees. DEP's Secretary will serve as chair and all state agencies are directed to assist the Commission. The Commission shall assess existing conditions of Florida's 1st and 2nd magnitude springs, GIS map them, and recommend strategies for protecting them, including the development of an overall model springs protection plan and individual ones. The Commission sunsets July 1, 2011. HB 299 was referred to the Environment and Natural Resources Council, Conservation and State Lands Committee, and Policy and Budget Council. It passed out of the Conservation and State Lands Committee, March 21, and is now in the Environment and Natural Resources Council. SB 1486 was referred to the committees on Environmental Protection and Conservation, Community Affairs, and General Government Appropriations.

SB 548/HB 1069, Protection of Seagrasses – Sen. Bennett/Rep. Kendrick
SB 2178, Restoration of Seagrass Beds – Sen. Bennett

SB 548 and HB 1069 create penalties for careless operation of vessels outside of a marked channel that result in seagrass scarring. Both bills create a non-criminal infraction, including increased fines for repeat offenders, when seagrass scarring occurs in an aquatic preserve due to careless operation of a vessel outside a marked channel. All fines are directed to be used for implementation, administration, and enforcement of the law, restoration, and education. SB 548 was referred to the committees on Environmental Protection and Conservation, Transportation, Judiciary, and General Government Appropriations. It passed out of Environment Protection and Conservation, and is scheduled in Transportation, March 27. HB 1069 was referred to the Environment and Natural Resources Council, Conservation and State Lands Committee, and Policy and Budget Council. It passed out of Conservation and State Lands, March 14.

HB 719/SB 2176, Inland Navigation Districts – Rep. Peterman/Sen. Bennett

This legislation excludes rights-of-way of navigation channels, the channel of the Intracoastal Waterway, and other public navigation channels designated by inland navigation districts from aquatic preserves. It also authorizes inland navigation districts to use sovereign submerged lands to construct, maintain, and operate public navigation channels, including rights-of-way and the channel of the Intracoastal Waterway. Inland navigation districts are authorized to work with nonmember counties that have the Intracoastal Waterway within their boundaries in fulfilling inland navigation district responsibilities. HB 719 was referred to the Environment and Natural Resources Council and the Committee on Conservation and State Lands. SB 2176 was referred to the committees on Environmental Preservation and Conservation and Community Affairs.

HB 759/SB1856, Artificial Reefs – Rep. Holder/Sen. Bennett

This legislation expands FWC's artificial reef grant program to specifically secure and place MARAD and Navy decommissioned ships in Florida. It establishes the USS General Hoyt Vandenberg as a pilot project. Funding was amended out of both bills, but requests for future State funding for a matching grant is anticipated when a local government has proven it has 67% of the total cost of securing, environmental preparation and cleaning, and placement of a decommissioned vessel. FWC is required to promulgate rules adopting procedures for the program. The USS Hoyt Vandenberg is established as a pilot project to fund its preparation and deployment as an artificial reef. The legislation requires FWC to submit annual reports to the Governor and Legislature detailing expenditure of funds and success of projects. HB 759 was referred to the Environment and Natural Resources Council, Conservation and State Lands Committee, and Policy and Budget Council. It passed Conservation and State Lands, March 21. SB 1856 was referred to the committees on Environmental Preservation and Conservation, Commerce, Community Affairs, Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations. It passed Environmental Preservation and Conservation, March 22.

HB 767/SB 1988, Vessel Sound Devices – Rep. Snyder/Sen. Crist

This legislation prohibits, when on a vessel, the amplification of sound from a radio, compact disc, tape player, instrument, or other electronic device when the sound is plainly audible from 100 feet or more from the vessel, within 100 feet from a shoreline, or louder than necessary in areas adjoining churches, schools, or hospitals. Exemptions apply to law enforcement, sound signals in compliance with navigation rules, certain commercial vessels, and regattas or other marine events. It creates a non-criminal infraction for violating the law. HB 767 was referred to the Environment and Natural Resources Council and Conservation and State Lands Committee. SB 1988 was referred to the committees on Environmental Preservation and Conservation and Community Affairs. It was temporarily postponed at the March 14 meeting of Environmental Preservation and Conservation.

HB 957/SB 2082, Environmental Permitting – Rep. Williams/Sen. Bennett

This legislation creates legislative intent to streamline environmental permitting between and among state and federal agencies. It authorizes the Dept. of Environmental Preservation (DEP) to obtain from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issuance of an expanded state general programmatic permit or regional permits for water/wetland activities that will cause only minimal adverse environmental effects; directs the DEP to seek issuance or take action only when conditions are at least protective of existing state law; adds slash pine and gallberry to the list of state species, which will facilitate issuance of a general permit. It authorizes DEP and the water management districts to implement a voluntary statewide programmatic general permit for all dredge and fill activities impacting 5 acres or less of wetlands/surface waters. If an applicant seeks to use such a permit, he/she consents to the landward-most delineation of wetlands/surface water and to applicable federal wetland regulatory criteria. It exempts agriculture and silviculture lands that were

converted from non-wetland pine flatwoods and requires DEP to provide training to state and local governments. HB 957 was referred to the Environment and Natural Resources Council and the Environmental Protection Committee. It passed out of Environmental Protection and Conservation, March 14. SB 2082 was referred to the committees on Environmental Preservation and Conservation, Governmental Operations, and General Government Appropriations.

HB 973/SB 2592, Springs License Plate – Rep. Boyd/Sen. Argenziano

This legislation creates a new specialty license plate entitled, "Protect Florida Springs", with a fee of \$25.00. HB 973 directs funds generated to the Wildlife Foundation of Florida to be used for reimbursement for startup costs, up to 25% of revenues for administrative and marketing costs, at least 55% of revenues shall be used for a competitive grant program with highest priority given to community-based springs programs and projects for education, outreach, and conservation. A nine-member advisory granting committee will recommend projects to the Foundation for grant awards. The advisory granting committee will be made up of one representative each from FWC, Dept. of Environmental Protection, Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Dept. of Health, Dept. of Community Affairs, two citizens, and two representatives from nonprofit stakeholder groups. Remaining funds shall be distributed by the Foundation to fund springs education, outreach, and conservation. SB 2592 distributes funds generated to the Wildlife Foundation of Florida to be used as follows: the first \$60,000 to be given to Wildlife Trust of Florida as reimbursement for costs incurred in the development and approval process; up to 15% may be used for marketing; up to 10% may be used for administrative costs; at least 55% shall be used for grants for projects related to education, outreach, and springs protection; up to 20% shall be distributed to Wildlife Trust of Florida for grants and support of the organization's springs conservation and research activities, educating teachers and students, development of educational opportunities and materials, development of new technologies, springs enhancement and restoration, and implementation of programs that protect and manage Florida's springs. HB 973 was referred to the Economic Expansion and Infrastructure Council, the Committee on Infrastructure, and the Policy and Budget Council. It was passed in the Committee on Infrastructure, March 19. SB 2592 has been referred to the committees on Transportation, and Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations.

HB 997/SB 1858, Automated Telephone Answering Systems, State Agencies – Rep. Williams/Sen. Bennett

This legislation requires all state agencies that use automated telephone answering systems to make available in the first minute of any telephone call a menu option that allows the caller to reach an employee who is trained to answer basic questions or who can direct the caller to someone who can respond to the caller during regular hours of operation. Agencies have until January 1, 2008, to implement the requirement. Each state agency shall provide at least 2 telephone lines to handle the requirement and shall monitor on-hold time with the goal of an average on-hold time of 5 minutes or less per

call. During nonoperational hours, automated telephone answering systems may be used exclusively. The State Technology Office (STO) shall adopt rules by January 1, 2008, requiring each state agency to submit an annual written report to the STO by July 1, describing actions taken to comply with the law, documenting average on-hold time, and a plan to reduce on-hold time if it exceeds 5 minutes; the STO also must submit an annual report to the Governor, President, and Speaker by Sept. 30. Agencies must implement the provisions within existing resources. No cause of action is authorized in favor a person due to the failure of a state agency complying with the law. HB 997 was referred to the Government Efficiency and Accountability Council, Audit and Performance Committee, and the Policy and Budget Council. SB 1858 was referred to the committees on Governmental Operations, Commerce, and General Government Appropriations.

HB 1003/SB 1676, Law Enforcement Off-Road Vehicles – Rep. Pickens/Sen. Oelrich

This legislation allows law enforcement agencies to operate all-terrain vehicles on any street, road, or highway while carrying out official duties; however, they must be marked and may be equipped with special warning lights, signaling devices, or other approved equipment on law enforcement vehicles. HB 1003 was referred to the Economic Expansion and Infrastructure Council and the Infrastructure Committee. It passed out of the Infrastructure Committee, March 8. SB 1676 was referred to the committees on Transportation and Criminal Justice. It passed out of the Transportation Committee, March 13.

HB 1033/SB 2078, Agency Inspectors General – Rep. Bean/Sen. Bennett

This legislation prohibits agency employees from preventing the agency's Inspector General from carrying out his/her responsibilities related to audits or investigations. It requires the Chief inspector General in the Governor's Office to adopt policies and procedures for reviewing an agency's Inspector General's investigative report including offering those substantially affected by such a report an opportunity to challenge the report in writing or to seek review by the Chief Inspector General, identifying the entities and individuals who can write a response, providing a review process by the Chief Inspector General, allowing the Chief Inspector General to independently investigate an agency's Inspector General's report/investigation, and exemptions from the review process for certain types of investigations, among others. HB 1033 was referred to the Government Efficiency and Accountability Council, the Audit and Performance Committee, and the Policy and Budget Council. SB 2078 was referred to the Governmental Operations Committee.

HB 1243/SB 1616, Driving/Boating Under the Influence – Rep. Harrell/Sen. Aronberg

This legislation increases the penalty for driving or boating under the influence (DUI/BUI). It repeals the maximum time a defendant may be placed on probation (1 year) for the 1st violation; it deletes the timeframe (within 10 years) for a 3rd violation; and creates a minimum mandatory penalty for a 4th or subsequent violation of imprisonment for not less than 2 years, allowing for

reduced incarceration when the defendant attends a residential drug or alcohol abuse treatment program. It requires the impoundment or immobilization of all vehicles owned by the individual for 120 days to run concurrently with revocation of his/her driver's license; and requires the impoundment or immobilization for 120 days of the vessel that was operated by or in the control of the individual or any one vehicle registered in the defendant's name. HB 1243 requires the individual's fingerprints and social security number to be affixed to all written judgments of guilty. SB 1616 was amended to require only the individual's fingerprints be affixed to all written judgments of guilty. HB 1243 was referred to the Safety and Security Council, the Homeland Security and Public Safety Committee, and the Policy and Budget Council. It passed out of the Homeland Security and Public Safety Committee, March 21. SB 1616 was referred to the committees on Transportation, Criminal Justice, Judiciary, and Criminal and Civil Justice Appropriations. SB 1616 passed the Transportation Committee, March 20.

HJR 1297/SJR 2528, FWC Rule Challenges – Rep. Needelman/Sen. Baker

This legislation would place on the ballot, at the next general election or special election, an amendment to the Constitution that requires FWC to establish in its due process procedures a rule challenge process that follows the Administrative Procedures Act; establishes that in a rule challenge, the burden of proof shall be on FWC to show that a preponderance of the evidence that the rule is supported by competent and substantial evidence and that the evidence demonstrates the rational basis for the rule; and that FWC rules shall not be based on speculation unsupported by evidence or empirical data. HJR 1297 was referred to the Environment and Natural Resources Council and the Conservation and State Lands Committee. It was workshopped, March 21. SJR 2528 has been referred to the committees on Environmental Preservation and Conservation, Governmental Operations, General Government Appropriations, and Rules.

HB 1505/SB 2766, Reptiles of Concern – Rep. Poppell/Sen. Posey

HB 1505 requires the Commission to establish a list of "reptiles of concern" for those reptiles requiring additional regulation for capture, possession, transportation, or exhibition due to their nature, habits, status, or potential to impact humans or the environment. It establishes a \$100.00 license for anyone capturing, keeping, possessing, or exhibiting reptiles of concern, but authorizes the Commission to reduce the fee if there is general compliance with the law that results in reduced costs for FWC. Those who have to have a \$100.00 venomous reptile license and who meet the requirements for reptiles of concern do not have to pay the fee for their reptile of concern license. Bonds for exhibiting venomous reptiles are increased from \$1000.00 to \$10,000.00, and bonds for exhibiting Class I captive wildlife are established at \$10,000.00. The legislation establishes a penalty structure from a non-criminal infraction to a 3rd degree felony, for violation of captive wildlife laws, including increased penalties for repeat offenders. It authorizes \$75,000 to be used by FWC to administer the program. HB 1505 was referred to the Environment and Natural Resources Council, Conservation and State Lands

Committee, and the Policy and Budget Council. It passed out of the Conservation and State Lands Committee, March 21.

SB 2766 requires the Commission to establish a list of regulated reptiles for those requiring regulation for possession, transportation, or exhibition. It establishes a \$100.00 license for anyone keeping, possessing, or exhibiting a regulated reptile, and requires a \$10,000.00 bond for anyone exhibiting regulated reptiles. It requires the Commission to establish, by rule, a reporting system for those possessing regulated reptiles, including the acquisition, possession, transfer, and disposition of a regulated reptile. It establishes a 1st degree misdemeanor for anyone violating regulated reptile laws and for knowingly releases or through gross negligence allows a regulated reptile to escape. SB 2766 was referred to the committees on Environmental Preservation and Conservation, and General Government Appropriations.

Other Bills of Interest, But Without Companions

Bills that have been introduced in one chamber, but do not have a companion in the other chamber, have very little chance of passing the Legislature, unless amended into another bill (in both houses). The following bills are of interest to FWC, but have no companions:

HB 417, State Website – by Rep. Scionti

This legislation requires the State's website for government products, services, and information to be provided in English and Spanish. HB 417 was referred to two councils and one committee.

SB 1802, Changing Date of Fiscal Year – Sen. Posey

This bill changes the date of the State's fiscal year from July 1-June 30 to Oct. 1-Sept. 30. This would be consistent with the Federal Government's fiscal year. SB 1802 was referred to four committees.

SB 2106, Dept. of Public Safety – Sen. Baker

This legislation creates a Dept. of Public Safety comprised of the Florida Highway Patrol and FWC's Boating and Waterways Section. SB 2106 was referred to five committees.

SB 2178, Restoration of Seagrass Beds – Sen. Bennett

This legislation creates a pilot program for the restoration of seagrass beds in Brevard, Lee, Monroe, and Pinellas counties to be administered by the Dept. of Environmental Protections. SB 2178 was referred to the committees on Environmental Preservation and Conservation, Community Affairs, and General Government Appropriations. It passed Environmental Preservation and Conservation, March 22.