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FYSA- Media Monitoring Report for DR 4241 SC 01/29/16

NEWS CLIPS

SOUTH CAROLINA-DR-4241

Friday, January 29, 2016

Issues:

- None.

Summary:

- The last three disaster recovery centers in South Carolina will close permanently this evening at 6 p.m.
- State lawmakers are working on getting aid for farmers impacted by the historic floods of 2015.
- South Carolina's soybean industry is looking to rebound from a calamitous year in 2015.
- Greenwood County commissioners unanimously approved adopting FEMA's equipment rates for repair work resulting from damage.
- The South Carolina senate unanimously approved Christy Hall as the permanent director of the SCDOT.
- There were fewer natural disasters in the U.S. in 2015 but the events that did occur were still significant, including the epic flooding in South Carolina
- A USC economic expert says last year's flooding will have both positive and negative effects on the local and state economies.

Analysis:

None

Floods

Disaster Recovery Centers In S.C. Set To Close (The Free Times)

House Leader Hopes To Give Farmers Relief Ahead Of Budget (Associated Press)

Last year's soggy soybeans hopefully are a thing of the past (The Newsstand/Clemson University Media Relations)

CPW Adopting FEMA Equipment Rates (Greenwood Index-Journal)

South Carolina Senate Approves Hall as New Director of DOT (Associated Press)

Despite Fewer Natural Disasters in 2015, Damaging Events Still Significant (Claims Journal)

Local economy appears steady (The Easley Progress)

Floods

Disaster Recovery Centers in S.C. Set To Close (The Free Times)

By Chris Trainor

[Columbia \(SC\) Free-Times](#), January 28, 2016

The final three disaster recovery centers, established in the wake of October's devastating floods, are set to close this week.

Centers in Columbia, Kingstree and Sumter will close up shop on Friday, according to The State. At the height of the crisis there were 32 federal recovery centers set up in South Carolina. FEMA has approved \$84 million in disaster relief for South Carolina residents and the Small Business Administration has approved more than \$140 million in low-interest loans to help businesses recover.

House Leader Hopes To Give Farmers Relief Ahead Of Budget

By Shelli Adamczyk

[WACH-TV Columbia \(SC\)](#), January 28, 2016

COLUMBIA, SC (WACH) – There could be some aid to farmers who suffered from October's flooding. State lawmakers are doing something to get them some help as soon as possible.

Thursday, a House panel worked on getting some help for farmers impacted by the flooding.

The "South Carolina Farm Aid Fund" would provide financial assistance to farmers who lost more than 40 percent of their crops.

The amendment to the bill would also create a seven member Farm Aid Board.

State agriculture officials estimate farmers in the state suffered almost \$400 million in losses.

FEMA and the Small Business Administration money does not apply to farmers.

Last month, Governor Nikki Haley said she will not seek additional aid from the federal government to help the industry.

Right now, the measure doesn't have a specific dollar amount attached to it, but lawmakers hope to have an estimate in the next several weeks.

"The longer we wait the more difficult it's going to be for them to actually get in the business to make money to mediate the damages and pay back the bills they already owe," Representative Brian White said.

Dean Hutto's crops at his R. Berry Hutto farm took a big hit from flood waters last October.

There is still standing water in the field on his Orangeburg County farm.

"I lost all of my cotton. I didn't get to harvest any of it, I harvested about 20 percent of my peanuts and I harvested about 80 percent of my soy beans, but what I harvested with the soy beans they were damaged," Hutto said.

Hutto is one of thousands of farmers in the state seeking help from the government.

"It is a viable industry and we need to continue to have that and take care of the folks that are so desperately trying to work in it," said Rep. White.

House Leader Hopes To Give Farmers Relief Ahead Of Budget (Associated Press)

[Associated Press](#), January 28, 2016

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — The state House's budget leader says South Carolina farmers devastated by last fall's flooding shouldn't have to wait until the Legislature passes a budget to get some help.

Ways and Means Chairman Brian White says legislators can go ahead and designate some of the state's surplus money to help farmers survive last year's losses. But he's not yet proposing an amount.

Legislation that would distribute aid advanced Thursday to White's full committee. The question is how much.

Agriculture Commissioner Hugh Weathers says farmers need help quickly so they can pay down last year's loans and plant for the next harvest season. He says last fall's torrential rains wiped out \$330 million worth of crops at harvest time. An additional \$45 million was lost because farmers couldn't plant winter crops.

Last year's soggy soybeans hopefully are a thing of the past (The Newsstand/Clemson University Media Relations)

Jim Melvin, Public Service Activities

January 28, 2016

FLORENCE — Like most commodity crops in South Carolina, soybeans took a soaking in 2015, hanging helplessly from their stems above ground that was too saturated for heavy harvest equipment to navigate.

Of the 475,000 planted acres in South Carolina, at least 15 percent were entirely lost, with much of the rest taking big hits in quantity and quality. As if early October's historic storm wasn't bad enough, rain continued to fall with frustrating regularity well into December, effectively extending flood conditions for more than two months after the original deluge had expended its final drop.

Ironically, a stubborn summer drought and withering heat wave had already diminished the soybean crop even before the storms blanketed the state in the fall.

So, as beleaguered farmers attempt to recover from last year's unprecedented calamities, what's in store for soybean growers in 2016?

"When the drought came, much of the soybean crop was hit hard, with stunted growth and reduced pod set," said Benjamin Fallen, a renowned soybean breeder at Clemson University's [Pee Dee Research and Education Center](#) near Florence. "This affected yield, but the overall quality of the crop was still relatively okay. Then the floods came and damaged the quality. A lot of the farmers who were finally able to harvest were penalized when they took their crop to the local grain dealer. The beans had sat out for too long. It was a worst-case scenario."

Soybeans in South Carolina are usually planted between the middle of May and the middle of June. But with acreage throughout the state still soaked and boggy, many low-lying fields remain smothered by standing water. If the excessive rainfall of 2015 extends into 2016's spring and summer, growers will be in for another wearisome struggle.

"If we could get some dry weather this winter, that would be ideal," Fallen said. "The ground really needs to dry out. Instead, we're continuously getting rain about once a week. If it goes on like this, planting in May and June is going to be very difficult."

Assuming the fields finally do return to normal over the winter, soybean growers will then hope for seasonable rains to reappear in the spring. But the timing of spring rain is more critical than its intensity. If growers plant their seeds when it's too dry, the seeds won't begin to develop. But with a little rain, they will grow into large, hardy plants.

"There's a relatively short window between the time you plant the beans and the time they germinate," Fallen said. "If it's real hot during the spring, they'll just sit in the ground and bake. You either need to have good moisture already in the ground from a previous rain, or a little rain from the skies to prompt them to germinate." Once the heat of summer arrives, farmers will be rooting for weekly rains that drop an inch or two at a time. This will keep the beans growing at a healthy pace. Another drought would wreak further havoc.

"Three to five inches a week during the summer is about how much water most of the soil around here can store," Fallen said. "Any time you experience drought, the plants either suffer or become stagnant. There is only a certain window of time within which soybeans grow vegetatively, and then you have a certain amount of time that they grow reproductively. All of this is crucial to the end product."

Soybeans are harvested as early as the middle of September and as late as the middle of December. During that lengthy three-month stretch, soybean growers will hope for mostly dry conditions.

"At this point, soybeans don't need any more moisture," Fallen said. "Cooler, drier weather makes for a good soybean harvest. If it gets hot and humid, or if it rains, this can cause seed quality issues."

Before joining the faculty of Clemson University in 2013, Fallen already had extensive experience at several major universities as a plant breeder whose research focused on genetic solutions to improving crop production. At the Pee Dee REC, he has been working feverishly over the past several years breeding soybean varieties that he has acquired from around the nation and world. His goal is to produce higher-yielding soybeans with improved composition that will make them healthier to eat, better suited to be used as biofuels, more resistant to insects and disease and more tolerant to drought.

“I’ve been focusing on building a breeding program that will produce 21st-century soybeans for South Carolina,” said Fallen, who is working in collaboration with scientists from Clemson’s [Advanced Plant Technology Program](#). “I really want to do more molecular work, but first I needed to build the fieldwork foundation.” Fallen is helping farmers get the most bang for their buck while also enhancing the quality of their product. Clemson University hopes to receive \$2.5 million from the South Carolina Legislature that will help expand its research and outreach programs even further. Meanwhile, Fallen’s fingers are crossed that 2016 will be a rebound year for the S.C. soybean industry. “If the weather cooperates – and I sure hope it does – I think we can have a good year,” Fallen said. “Because last year was about as bad as it gets.”

CPW Adopting FEMA Equipment Rates (Greenwood Index-Journal)

By Colin Riddle

[Greenwood \(SC\) Index-Journal](#), January 28, 2016

In the light of the recent flooding, Greenwood Commissioners of Public Works decided to take a page out of the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s book.

The commissioners unanimously approved adopting FEMA’s equipment rates Thursday for repair work resulting from damage.

From recent discussions with FEMA during the historic flood that devastated the Midlands, CPW staff reviewed equipment rates billed for work completed from the result of damage.

Equipment rates are part of the three-pronged billing for damage repair costs, which includes labor and materials.

“Our rate has not changed in some number of years,” CPW Manager Steve Reeves said.

Any changes in equipment rates from FEMA would result in a change for CPW, according to Reeves.

Each rate covers all costs eligible under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act for ownership and operation of equipment, including depreciation, overhead, all maintenance, field repairs, fuel, lubricants, tires, OSHA equipment and other costs incidental to operation, according to FEMA.

In other business:

– Commissioners approved sending the remaining balance of \$10,000 budgeted for CPW Cares, a matching donation program for Greater Greenwood United Ministry. CPW already sent a check for \$6,368.78, which includes a match to \$3,184.39 in donations. An additional \$10,000 is budgeted for later in the year.

– Commissioners approved quarterly fund transfers from the 2010 and 2014 bond construction funds into the general operating account for reimbursement of approved construction projects. The 2010 bond construction fund closed out with a final transfer of about \$1.1 million, and the 2014 fund saw a transfer of more than \$590,000.

– A change order was approved to provide \$32,720 for additional galvanized pipe replacement along Lites Street. Staff told commissioners the project was budgeted for in-house, however, contractors are already in the area and need to do the work to close out the project.

– Membership dues in the amount of \$1,256 for the Greenwood Chamber of Commerce were approved by the commissioners.

South Carolina Senate Approves Hall as New Director of DOT (Associated Press)

[Associated Press](#), January 28, 2016

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — South Carolina senators have made Christy Hall the permanent director of the state Department of Transportation.

The Senate on Thursday unanimously approved Gov. Nikki Haley’s appointment of Hall.

Lawmakers have been almost universal in their praise for Hall, who took over the agency last summer for the second time on an interim basis and had to deal with the massive floods in October that damaged more than 500 roads and bridges across South Carolina.

Hall was also interim director in February 2014 when an ice storm knocked over hundreds of trees and power lines, closing roads. She has spent more than two decades with the agency, most recently as chief engineer.

Hall’s next assignment may be figuring out how to handle additional money lawmakers are trying to give for roadwork.

Despite Fewer Natural Disasters in 2015, Damaging Events Still Significant (Claims Journal)

January 29, 2016 – Claims Journal

A downward trend in U.S. natural hazard events in 2015 resulted in decreased damage and loss totals for the year, according to the latest CoreLogic Natural Hazard Risk Summary and Analysis report.

The annual report noted that despite the reduction in frequency, there were still record-setting events within the individual hazard categories that caused significant damage. The report reviews annual hazard activity in the U. S. including events for wildfire, flooding, hurricanes, wind, hail, tornadoes, earthquakes and sinkholes.

Highlights from the analysis include:

Wildfire

- Wildfire activity for 2015 was the worst in recorded history with over 3.5 million more acres burned in 2015 than the yearly average of 6,579,250 from the previous 15 years (2000-2014).
- The three most destructive wildfires of 2015 include:
 - *The [Valley Fire](#) in northern California which burned 76,000 acres and destroyed 1,307 homes with \$925 million in insured losses.
 - *The Butte Fire in northern California which burned 70,000 acres and destroyed 475 homes with \$225 million in insured losses.
 - *The Okanogan Complex Fire in north central Washington which burned 133,000 acres and destroyed 73 homes with \$8 million in insured losses.
- Before 2004, a single year of wildfires had never burned more than eight million acres. Since then, seven of the last 12 years (2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2011, 2012 and 2015) have surpassed eight million acres burned.

Flood

At \$2.86 billion, total flood loss in 2015 was equivalent to that of 2014, but still well below the 30-year average of \$7.96 billion.

- Based on the snapshot statistics from the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Storm Event Database, property losses from flash flood events in the first nine months of 2015 were more than 15 percent higher than the losses from riverine floods.
- For flash flood loss totals, Texas ranked first with property losses totaling more than \$309 million. This was followed by New York with almost \$14 million in property losses and Ohio with more than \$7 million.
- For riverine flood loss totals, Nebraska ranks first with property losses totaling more than \$213 million. This was followed by Ohio with more than \$13 million in property losses and West Virginia with more than \$8 million.
- **South Carolina was hit with record-setting, 1,000-year rainfall fueled by Hurricane Joaquin which led to riverine and flash flooding in 22 counties and caused \$1.5 billion worth of damage, including \$587 million in agricultural losses, \$181 million in insurance claims and \$35 million in tourism losses.**

Atlantic Hurricane

- Hurricane activity in the Atlantic was below normal for 2015 with only 11 named storms, seven of which never grew stronger than a tropical storm. Of the four storms that were categorized as hurricanes, two were Category 1 and the other two grew into Major hurricanes: Danny, a Category 3, and Joaquin, a Category 4.
- Even though no hurricanes made landfall in 2015 and no substantial wind or storm-surge damage occurred, storm-related precipitation from Tropical Storm Ana, Tropical Storm Bill and Hurricane Joaquin resulted in record-setting inland flooding.

Wind

- Severe wind activity was relatively low in 2015 with only 0.2 percent of the continental U.S. affected by wind speeds of 80 mph or greater.
- 2015 had the lowest number of annual recorded wind speeds of 65 mph or greater since 2006 when wind data collection began.
- 1,584,102 square miles, or 31.5 percent, of the continental U.S. experienced wind events of 60 mph or greater in 2015.

Hail

- Hail activity for 2015 was slightly above average with 369,691 square miles, or 7.4 percent, of the continental U. S. impacted by severe hail, defined as 1 or greater.
- On June 15, multiple storms produced large hail and heavy rainfall across the far southern and southwestern Chicago metro area. Giant hail was observed near Minooka, IL, and the biggest hail reported measured 4.75 inches — the largest documented hail stone in Illinois since at least 1961.
- For hail sizes in which damage becomes prevalent – greater than 1.5 – 2015 recorded the eighth lowest hail fall in the last 10 years.

Tornado

- Tornado activity was slightly above average in 2015 with 1,252 recorded tornadoes. This total includes the 948

- tornadoes that have been verified through September 2015, as well as an additional 238 tornadoes preliminarily logged from October-December.
- On April 9, 2015, an EF4 tornado travelled more than 30 miles through Rochelle and Fairdale, Ill., destroying scores of homes, killing two people and injuring multiple others.
- With 76 confirmed tornadoes, Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas experienced the most tornado activity in 2015. This is the most on record for North and Central Texas since 1950 when the National Weather Service began tracking tornado activity.

Earthquake

- With a total of 1,196 earthquakes of magnitude 3.0 or greater, 2015 was characterized by a slightly higher-than-average number of earthquakes; however, none produced significant damage or losses.
- Oklahoma experienced four times more earthquakes than both California and Oregon, two states that traditionally have the greatest seismic hazard activity in the U.S. Although earthquakes in Oklahoma occur more frequently, the majority are of smaller magnitude ($M < 4.0$) than those in California.
- There has been an increase in the number of earthquakes in the central U.S. caused by induced seismicity which is defined as not related to naturally occurring (tectonic) activity. Induced earthquakes in the U.S. can occur as a result of hydraulic fracturing or wastewater injection associated with natural gas exploration. This could explain why earthquake activity in Oklahoma, Kansas and northern Texas has increased in recent years.

Sinkhole

Sinkhole activity was low in 2015 with 2,206 new sinkhole events recorded across the U.S.

- At the state level, Florida recorded the highest number of sinkhole events in 2015, with 2,206 new sinkholes added in 2015 for the top 10 counties in that state. The total number of sinkholes in the CoreLogic database for Florida is 28,159.
- The low-level sinkhole activity for the year could be related to the absence of land-fall hurricanes. Land-fall hurricanes bring significant rain which increases erosion of the subsurface layers and increases sinkhole probability.

Local economy appears steady (The Easley Progress)

First Posted: 8:52 am - January 29th, 2016

By **D. C. Moody** - dmoody@civitasmedia.com

EASLEY — 2015 was the sixth consecutive year of jobs expansion in South Carolina, making for a slow but steady recovery, especially in the Upstate of South Carolina.

Douglas P. Woodard of the Darla Moore School of Business at the University of South Carolina was the guest speaker at the Jan. 21 annual State of the Economy lunch sponsored by the Greater Easley Chamber of Commerce. The event was held at Tri-County Technical College's Easley campus.

The outlook, according to Woodard, is bright.

Woodard provided numbers concerning job growth across the Palmetto State and the Upstate. His research interests are regional economic development and international competitiveness.

“The truth is this was the sixth consecutive year of (jobs) expansion in South Carolina, all after the market crash of 2009 and following one of the worst recessions,” Woodard said. “It has been a slow recovery with mild expansions in the economy both statewide and at the local level. In 2015, the Upstate led the other regions in South Carolina with a 3 percent growth in jobs and Anderson County leading with 3.5 percent.”

The assumption is that Charleston and its surrounding areas have seen the largest growth, but Woodard explained following the initial expansion with Boeing's aircraft facility, there has been a slowdown and the Upstate had been growing steadily.

Woodard discussed the 6.8 percent of jobs lost following the economic downturn of 2009-2010 and the 7.2 percent recovery that took place through 2015.

Agriculture and textiles continue to be sluggish in recovering but Woodard attributed a portion of the textiles slow growth to automated processes replacing humans on the jobs in question.

Construction saw the largest growth in jobs in 2015 posting a 7.5 percent increase, followed by professional/business at 6.3 percent, and accommodation/food industry at 5.6 percent.

Woodard also explained the flood that struck South Carolina in 2015 would have an economic impact as the areas affected will begin to repair and/or rebuild. According to Woodard there was an estimated \$1-1.5 billion in damage due to the floods and construction, among other industries, should see a short-term growth as a result.

He also stated there would be a positive and negative effect.

“There will be an increase in the economic activity due to the flooding. It will result in a boost over the short run but will most likely be a loss in the long run,” Woodard said. “The loss will come from a loss of total wealth in the long run for the businesses and individuals hit by it. The challenge will be to replace the loss in wealth and maintain any job growth which came out of the flood.”

Woodard’s overall outlook for the state was a positive one, and should all things remain the same, the growth in the Upstate concerning jobs should remain steady considering the investment currently taking place in the region, the presence of an inland port in Greer, and the infrastructure available to companies looking to locate or relocate.

While Woodard did not have numbers specific for Pickens County available, he did agree participation in regional economic efforts were key to improved development.