Weekly Legislative Report -- Special Session

November 13-17, 2018

Governor Nathan Deal called a Special Session of the Georgia General Assembly which convened on Tuesday, November 13 and adjourned on Saturday, November 17. Only the two subjects specified in the Governor’s official “call” were available for consideration by the legislators – emergency relief for residents in 28 southwest Georgia counties devastated by Hurricane Michael and legislative approval of a July executive order that removed the sales tax on jet fuel.

The emergency relief bill, HB 1 EX, passed easily in both houses and totaled $270 million in state funds. It provides:

- $69 million in emergency relief to local and state agencies
- $69 million for debris removal
- $55 million to assist farmers facing substantial crop losses and damage
- $40 million to rebuild and help spur economic growth
- $20 million to address recovery and cleanup efforts of timberlands
- $9 million for damaged state facilities
- $8 million to replace damaged firefighting equipment

The General Assembly also approved HB 4 EX, which provides $200 million worth of transferable, 100% refundable, income tax credits to timber and pecan farmers. The pecan industry served as just one gauge of the severity of the damage done by Michael. Commissioner of Agriculture Gary Black said that the pecan business, which suffered $360 million in immediate losses, “has been vaporized from southwest Georgia.” He went on to note, “We are the No. 1 pecan-producing state in the nation, but we may not be able to say that again for a generation, if ever.”

More than a million baby chicks were corralled and buried in pits because their houses had been so damaged they could not be fed. Appropriations Chairman Jack Hill (R-Reidsville) told Senators that 3.2 million acres of timber received “catastrophic damage” totaling $763 million in losses. He also pointed out that the state is obligated to provide a 25% match for federal funds that are provided through FEMA.

Sen. Dean Burke (R-Bainbridge), who represents the extreme southwest corner of the state, has established the “South Georgia Disaster Relief Fund” through the Community Foundation of South Georgia with the primary purpose of helping people whose homes were severely damaged in the disaster. Burke told his colleagues that he fears many residents will be forced to move out of the region because of a lack of available housing. He cited one constituent who still does not have electricity more than five weeks after the storm. Those wishing to contribute can find the Disaster Relief Fund in red type on the following web site: https://www.cfgsa.net/donations.htm.

House Speaker David Ralston said he expects the General Assembly will consider more legislation to help the area when it convenes in regular session in January.

Article submitted by Mathews & Maxwell, Inc. Governmental Affairs Consultants
**Save the Date**

* Dates, times, and locations are subject to change. The information below was true at the time of printing. Please call the contact listed to confirm.

### January

1. **Southwest Georgia Regional Commission** Closed for New Years Holiday.


31. **Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting.** 181 East Broad Street, Camilla, Georgia. Council dinner at 6:30pm. Business meeting at 7:00pm. For more information call Heather White at (229)522-3552 or email hwhite@swgrc.org.

31. Deadline for Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Council appointment letters for 2019. If you have any questions please contact Heather White 229-522-3552 x1602 or hwhite@swgrc.org.

### February


28. **Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting.** 181 East Broad Street, Camilla, Georgia. Council dinner at 6:30pm. Business meeting at 7:00pm. For more information call Heather White at (229)522-3552 or email hwhite@swgrc.org.

### March

6–8. **Newly Elected Officials Institute in Tifton.** Register on the GMA website; [https://www.gmanet.com/Training-Events/Calendar-Of-Events](https://www.gmanet.com/Training-Events/Calendar-Of-Events)

28. **Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Meeting.** 181 East Broad Street, Camilla, Georgia. Council dinner at 6:30pm. Business meeting at 7:00pm. For more information call Heather White at (229)522-3552 or email hwhite@swgrc.org.
Staff News

Rural Leader Magazine recognized leaders from small rural communities. The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission’s own planner Kimberly Brooks was named as one of their 40 Under 40! She was honored at Albany Technical College’s Kirkland Conference Center on September 7, 2018.

Kimberly Brooks has a Masters Degree in Public Administration and a Bachelors of Arts Degree in Political Science and a minor in History from Albany State University. She is a Certified Housing Counselor through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. She has been with the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission for four years. Kimberly is a life-long resident of Mitchell County.
Approximately $1 Billion in timber losses in Georgia.

“\textit{The meter started at $1\ billion\ and\ jumped\ quickly\ to\ nearly\ $3\ billion}$”,
\textit{\textquoteleft\textquoteright\Unfortunately,\ we\ are\ quite\ unsure\ where\ it\ is\ going\ to\ stop.\textquoteright\}

\textit{Georgia Agricultural Commissioner Gary W. Black}

Estimated loss of Georgia peanut growers.

It is being estimated that the loss of cotton revenue will be $300 million—
1.3 million customers across 5 states were without power on Friday as the hurricane traveled inland.

According to a Georgia Power press release on October 17, 2018 99 percent of the more than 385,000 of their customers had their power restored. They had more than 5,800 personnel mobilized as well as assistance from other utility companies from Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania and Texas.

Georgia’s estimated loss of Pecan Trees is $560 million dollars. It takes about seven years for a tree to begin producing marketable pecans.

Estimated loss of the Fall Produce crops in Georgia is $480 million dollars. This comes after a difficult spring harvest.
For 38 years, FEMA's mission remains: to lead America to prepare for, prevent, respond to and recover from disasters with a vision of "A Nation Prepared."

On April 1, 1979, President Jimmy Carter signed the executive order that created the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). From day one, FEMA has remained committed to protecting and serving the American people. That commitment to the people we serve and the belief in our survivor-centric mission will never change.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

FEMA can trace its beginnings to the Congressional Act of 1803. This act, generally considered the first piece of disaster legislation, provided assistance to a New Hampshire town following an extensive fire.

In the century that followed, ad hoc legislation was passed more than 100 times in response to hurricanes, earthquakes, floods and other natural disasters.

FEMA Region 4's mission, background, leadership and contact information.

FEMA Region IV: AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN

William B. Long is currently the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. He was confirmed in this position Jun 2017. Mr. Long has more than 16 years of experience assisting and supporting local, state, and Federal Governments with building emergency management and public health preparedness programs.

Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law 100-707, signed into law November 23, 1988; amended the Disaster Relief Act of 1974, Public Law 93-288. It created the system in place today by which a presidential disaster declaration of an emergency triggers financial and physical assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The Act gives FEMA the responsibility for coordinating government-wide relief efforts.

It is designed to bring an orderly and systemic means of federal natural disaster assistance for state and local governments in carrying out their responsibilities to aid citizens.
The Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency coordinates the state’s preparedness, response and recovery efforts to disasters. As part of the Office of the Governor, GEMA/HS operates under the authority of the Emergency Management Act of 1981. GEMA/HS works with local, state and federal governments, in partnership with the private sector and faith-based community, to prevent and respond to natural and man-made emergencies. In addition, GEMA/HS employees are on 24-hour call statewide to assist local authorities when disaster strikes.

The mission of the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency is to facilitate the protection of life and property against man-made and natural disasters by directing the state's efforts in the areas of prevention, preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery.

The vision of the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency is to create a safer Georgia by providing strong leadership and promoting excellence.

Planning, preparation and training are essential when dealing with different types of disasters. GEMA/HS develops and maintains a comprehensive state emergency plan to ensure mitigation and preparedness, appropriate response and timely recovery from natural and man-made hazards which may affect residents of Georgia. All actions undertaken by emergency management focus on the protection of lives and property, with special sensitivity toward victims and their families. GEMA/HS encourages education and training to prepare the citizens of Georgia to respond to an emergency or disaster in the most cost-efficient manner.

When disaster strikes and local governments need assistance, they call GEMA/HS. The agency works with local, state, federal, volunteer and private agencies to respond to disasters or emergencies that require a coordinated response.

The agency's Public Assistance Division is responsible for administering the millions of federal dollars that communities are eligible for in the wake of disasters. The division works closely with local governments to ensure that reconstruction and rebuilding programs are completed to reduce the risk of further losses.

Mr. Homer Bryson is the director of the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency. He was appointed by governor Nathan Deal on December 1, 2016. He has a law enforcement background with the Department of Natural Resources and other agencies. Mr. Bryson oversaw 100 Georgia State law enforcement detail assigned to help with Hurricane Katrina.

Q1. What number do I call to reach a public information officer?
A1. Call 1-800-TRY-GEMA (879-4362) and ask to speak to a public information officer. The PIO on duty will be paged.
Clerks Gather at the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission
For Lunch and Learn

On November 27th City and County Clerks gathered at the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission (SWGRC) for a Clerk’s Lunch and Learn.

Barbara Reddick, SWGRC Planning Director, told the clerks about the Community Home Improvement Program (CHIP). There were many questions answered and everyone left with more knowledge about the program and how it can help their community as well as the process to apply. Ms. Reddick then explained to the group about Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and how they are used to help the communities and the application process.

Executive Assistant, Heather White, and Dougherty County Clerk Jawahn Ware discussed the Georgia Open Records Act. Each clerk in attendance received the most up to date information form both the Georgia Municipal Association and from ACCG. After much discussion it was agreed that it is time to arrange Open Records and Meetings training.

Ms. White showed the clerks the SWGRC Website and the Clerk’s Resources area. She discussed the process of making appointments to the SWGRC Council.

The next clerk’s meeting will be held in February at a date yet to be determined. It is very important for Clerks to attend this one hour lunch and learn not only to learn materials that are presented but also to make valuable connections with one another so that they can communicate when they have questions about their day to day work challenges.
Georgia Department of Agriculture Photos from Hurricane Michael Damage

BEFORE

AFTER

Damage
According to David Hartman, the Georgia House Budget and Policy Analyst from the Georgia House Budget and Research Office, damages in Georgia statewide are estimated to total around $22,040,210 from Hurricane Michael.

### Statewide Damage Estimate Total: $22,040,210

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Photo contributed by the Georgia Department of Agriculture
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| Department of Transportation        | Total         | $750,000  |

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Chart contributed generously by David Hartman Budget and Policy Analyst of the Georgia House Budget and Research Office with assistance of Betsy Theroux Director of Media Services

Seminole County Parks after the hurricane, photos compliments of Kim Hatcher of Georgia Department of Natural Resources Parks, recreation and Historic Sites Division
Miller County and the City of Colquitt hosts the December 2018
SWGA Regional Commission Council Meeting

Miller County and the City of Colquitt hosted the December meeting of the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Council. A delicious meal was served after a welcoming statement from Colquitt City Manager Corey Thomas. The meeting was held in the newly renovated Colquitt State Theater on the square.

Audit Committee Chairman Danny Palmer gives his Audit Committee report to the Council.

Nick Valenti of Valenti, Rackley and Associates briefs the Council on FY18 Audit.
2018 Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Celebrates Perfect Attendance

Donnie Baggett is the 2018 Thomas County Non-Public appointee to the SWGRC. He has served on the Council for 5 years and has served on the Personnel Committee, Transportation Committee, and Dwight Hickman is the 2018 Lee County City appointee to the SWGRC. He has served on the Council for 4 years and has served on the Community Development Committee, Nathaniel Keaton is the 2018 Mitchell County Additional appointee to the SWGRC. He has served on the Council for 3 years and has served on the Community Development committee and the Transportation Committee, Al Hutchins is the 2018 Early County City appointee to the SWGRC. He has served on the Council for 13 years and has served on the Personnel Committee, Human Resources Committee, and Bylaws Committee.

Four members of the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Council were lauded for their 100% meeting attendance during the December 2018 Council Meeting in Colquitt, Georgia. The four Council members being celebrated were Donnie Baggett, Dwight Hickman, Nathaniel Keaton and Al Hutchins. The Regional Commission meetings are held each month, the last Thursday of the month at 6:30pm. The weather challenges of Southwest Georgia this year and the destructive path left by Hurricane Michael has made it particularly difficult for Council to balance community obligations and maintain their commitments to serve on the Council.
Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Council Report Hurricane Michael Impact on their Counties at the October Council Meeting

**Baker County**  Baker County Council Members were unable to attend the meeting.

**Calhoun County**
Charlie Williams from Calhoun County. He stated that Calhoun County fared fairly well because they were not considered as part of the declared disaster area.

**Colquitt County**
County’s Paul Nagy said that their infrastructure fared well and the roadways were cleared by the Monday after the storm. He stated that agriculture took a big hit.

**Decatur County**
Steve Brock from Decatur County gave his portion of the briefing. He stated there was 100% power outage. As of the night of the meeting there is 99% of power restored. He said there was damage to infrastructure and a big hit to agriculture. He stated that FEMA, GEMA and other agencies are working hard to get everything straightened out.

**Dougherty County**
Anthony Jones from Dougherty County stated that over 50% of the population was hit. Many trees down and the Pecan industry took a big hit. The Corps of Engineers are taking over clean up of debris. This area was just hit by tornadoes and were beginning to recover from that before this storm hit. He urged everyone to go on line and get a FEMA number right away. Small Business Association is working with people with low interest rates as well. Anthony Jones asked everyone to keep up with volunteer hours to report to FEMA.

**Early County**
Jeffery Haynes gave the report for Early County. He said they have infrastructure damage. 85% of the electricity is restored. One of the most crucial impacts were when they went house to house and there were many elderly who had not eaten for two days and had no water. Everyone has come together and volunteered and have looked after one another.

**Grady County**
Jim Sellers of Grady County said most everyone was out of power. Whigham was with electricity after only 3 days. Some homes were destroyed when trees fell on them. He found there was mobilization before the storm to get everything cleaned up too quickly after the storm before any documentation could be done. This was an issue because they need to seek help with reimbursement of expenses and needed photographs and hours of workers documented.
Lee County

Dwight Hickman of Lee County spoke of people being without power for as much as 10 days and a few more time. Totally destroyed Pecan orchards. Many cotton crops and peanut crops were picked right before the storm. There will be a 20 – 30 percent of the crop in peanuts and cotton about 40%.

Miller County

Carlos Williams of Miller County stated they had resources on the ground quickly. 100% of Miller County was without power. 90% of power has been restored.

Mitchell County

Danny Palmer reported on Mitchell County. He stated that Mitchell County got hit pretty hard but they got their power on by the middle of last week. He said there was a lot of trees and a lot of debris. No injuries.

Seminole County

Tracie Beard of Seminole County stated they had 100% power outage, some are still out, most out for 10 days. There was one fatality. Everyone has been working together. There has been no lack of food because everyone has been feeding those needing food. Everyone has been checking on the elderly.

Terrell County

Jack Powell of Terrell County stated there were some losses on houses. The pecan farms had large losses and the county had a lot of debris

Thomas County

Ken Hickey spoke for Thomas County. He said they lost about 90% of their power. Pecan trees and cotton crops were lost. Cotton was about a 50% loss. Thomas County public works had 210 people on the ground working the night of the storm.

Worth County

Fred Dent of Worth County said there were a lot of trees down. There was 100% power outage. He was about 4 days out of power. Agriculture took a hit, especially the cotton.
City of Arlington selected for state housing program

Only five Georgia communities were selected to receive assistance with their housing needs through the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH), a public-private initiative that helps communities strategically grow their economies through housing-related solutions.

The City of Arlington Georgia joins four other communities in our region as GICH communities. This three-year program will begin in February 2019. The communities were recognized at the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) annual fall conference in LaGrange, GA. Through training and technical instruction delivered during a series of conferences, community housing teams design and implement strategies to enhance their economies as well as the quality of life for their citizens.

During these sessions, each team will work with and receive continuous feedback from a facilitator or housing professional, as well as engage in cross-community collaboration.

The GICH teams consist of about 12 members, and include representatives from local government and businesses, nonprofit housing organizations and the public housing authority. Teams may also include members of local faith-based organizations and churches, development authorities, chambers of commerce, school systems, major employers and law enforcement.

Since the program’s inception in 2005, 70 Georgia communities have benefited from the GICH program.

Some of the resulting strategies undertaken by communities include revitalizing distressed neighborhoods and subdivisions, developing multi-family apartments through tax credits, updating codes and ordinances, creating a land bank authority, writing an urban redevelopment plan, conducting a housing assessment, and launching community clean-up programs.

Each year, GICH communities are selected to participate in the initiative through a competitive process. Communities are selected based on need and a demonstrated commitment to community improvement. Any city, county or public housing authority in Georgia is eligible to apply on behalf of a community housing team. Applications are due in August. For more information about GICH contact Kim Skobba at kskobba@uga.edu.
Congratulations to PlanFirst Designees

“Two Communities in Region 10 Receive Designation”

The City of Sylvester and Colquitt County communities received designation as PlanFirst communities. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs recognizes and rewards communities that clearly demonstrated an established pattern of successfully implementing their local Comprehensive Plan. Any size community is encouraged to apply, provided it has a history of public involvement with development of the plan, active engagement in plan designation is awarded to local governments on an implementation, and proven progress with achieving the community’s stated vision or goals. PlanFirst individual basis. Applications are due May 15 of each year.

The PlanFirst Program Incentive Package includes access to funding and permits from state agencies, assistance from GA DCA and Regional Commissions to develop the Local Comprehensive Plan. During the three-year designation period, in addition PlanFirst Designee get statewide recognition, and free attendance for two representatives at any Community Planning Institute event along with other incentives.

Congratulations to Sylvester and Colquitt County and we encourage other communities to join them!
Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Welcomes New Interns!

Shanique Daniels from Moultrie, Georgia is interning at The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission! She has a Business and Technology Diploma from Southern Regional Technical College. Shanique would like to return to college to earn an associates degree in business and continue to grow and advance in the business world. Shanique and her husband and children reside in Moultrie.

Stacey is a retired educator and is currently serving as a part-time intern at Southwest Georgia Regional Commission. She has a Bachelor of Science in Education from the University of Georgia, Masters of Business Administration, Masters of Educational Leadership, and a Specialist in Educational Leadership from Georgia College and State University. Stacey served as a business education teacher, instructional technology specialist for Georgia Department of Education, High School Assistant Principal and Elementary Principal during her 30 year career as an educator. After her career in education in Bibb County where she raised her son, she moved back home to retire and be near her family. She enjoys her retirement baking cookies, gardening, drawing and volunteering. Stacey lives in Mitchell County with her husband Yale and stepson.
2018 Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Council

**Baker County**
- Chris Moore
- John Spann
- Eddie Hopkins

**Calhoun County**
- Charlie Williams
- Deidre Evans-Severson
- Bennie Watts Jones

**Colquitt County**
- Paul Nagy
- Ferrell Ruis
- **Vacant**
- Preston Jimmerson

**Decatur County**
- Steve Brock
- Kregg Close
- Revonn Miller
- Billy Poppell

**Dougherty County**
- Anthony Jones
- B.J. Fletcher
- Freddie Grimsley
- Raymond Breaux
- Matt Reed

**Early County**
- Jeffery Haynes
- Al Hutchins
- Freddie Speight

**Grady County**
- Keith Moye
- Jim Sellers
- Joe Walden

**Lee County**
- Dennis Roland
- Dwight Hickman
- Chad Griffin
- Glenda Battle

**Miller County**
- Allen Worsley
- Carlos Williams
- Jayme Smith

**Mitchell County**
- Ben Hayward
- Danny Palmer
- Nathaniel Keaton

**Seminole County**
- Brenda Peterson
- Mitchell Blanks
- Tracie Beard

**Terrell County**
- Ernest Johnson
- Ed Wade
- Jack Powell

**Thomas County**
- Ken Hickey
- Terry Scott
- Donnie Baggett
- Elaine Mays

**Worth County**
- Fred Dent
- Charles Jones
- Karen Rackley

**Governor’s Appointment**
- Courtney Brinson
- Norma Gilpatrick

**Lt. Governor’s Appointment**
- Vacant

**Speaker of the House Appointment**
- Vacant

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Chamber of Commerce Listings

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<td>Terrell</td>
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December 2018  Volume 18 Issue 3
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