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IACCB & INHF Legislative Report - February 8, 2014

1 message

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The Capitol Report

February 8, 2014

This legislative report for the Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation comes out every two weeks during the legislative session, but you don't have to wait for two weeks to check on the status of bills of interest. The IACCB and INHF Bill Trackers are updated daily - bookmark the following links to keep up with daily action on bills of interest:

- [Click here for the IACCB Bill Tracker.](#)
- [Click here for the INHF Bill Tracker.](#)

Friday, February 7, marked the end of the fourth week and the 26th Session day of the 2014 Legislative Session. If legislators stick to the compressed timeline they established for the 2014 session, then we could be nearly one-third of the way through the session. The pace of the past two weeks certainly indicates that legislative leadership intends to attempt a short session. Best laid plans...

While discussions occur behind the scenes about the framework for the budget, the spotlight right now is clearly on preparation for the funnel deadline on February 21st. By that date, any bill not dealing with taxes or spending will have to emerge from committee in order to remain alive for the session. Accordingly, the typical day at the Capitol consists of anywhere from 15-25 full committee meetings and 40-60 subcommittee meetings.

For example, on Thursday, the House alone had 32 subcommittees on bills, 10 full committee meetings and 6 joint appropriations committee meetings with the Senate. The Senate had those same 6 joint meetings, along with 16 subcommittees on bills and 8 full committee meetings.

Additionally, legislators see a pile of new bills introduced every day. The piles will get much smaller as the funnel deadline comes and goes, however, right now is a very heavy time for bills to be introduced. On Thursday, the pile went down to 36 new bills, from 55 on Wednesday, 40 on Tuesday and 48 on Monday.

From an issue standpoint, we are not seeing much movement from where

we started in that the budget will be the main piece of legislative work this session. The recent court decision to force the reopening of the Toledo Juvenile Home is an issue that will now need to be addressed by legislators. Prospects for the gas tax still remain unclear.

Recreational Trail Liability

Legislation ([SF 2063](#) and SSB 3147) to limit a local government's liability from claims on recreational trails has been introduced in the Senate. IACCB and INHF are registered in support of this proposal. A subcommittee meeting on SSB 3147 has been set for this Thursday, where supporters will try to convince at least two of the three subcommittee members to advance the legislation to full committee. The subcommittee on SSB 3147 consists of Senators Steve Soddors of State Center, Matt McCoy of Des Moines and Charles Schneider of West Des Moines. Note that Senator Soddors is the author of the other bill, SF 2063.

Major General Timothy Orr with the Iowa National Guard delivered his Condition of the guard address to the Legislature this week. If you're interested, you can view the speech [HERE](#).

Budget Presentations

In preparation for the upcoming budget decisions on what will be funded in the Fiscal Year 2015 budget (which begins July 1, 2014), the seven Joint Appropriations Subcommittees of the Legislature are having a series of presentations from some of the entities they typically fund.

Since all seven subcommittees meet at the same time every day and in separate locations, it is difficult for any concerned citizen to keep track of all of the presentations. Fortunately, the Legislative Services Agency in recent years has done a very good job of ensuring that meeting notes and handouts distributed at meetings are posted to the Legislative website in a timely manner. (For example, you can access handouts from meetings of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee by clicking [HERE](#).)

A few notes from some presentations to the Agriculture and Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee recently:

Good Earth State Park

Governor Branstad included in his FY 2015 budget request \$2 million toward the establishment of the Good Earth State Park in Northwest Iowa. South Dakota has begun investing \$5 million per year in the project, developing 600 acres on its side of the border. If Iowa gets involved, the park could become the first joint State park in the nation. The handouts from that presentation are available [HERE](#) and [HERE](#). Note the area is referred to in the handouts as the Blood Run National Historic Landmark, a name derived from the color of the Big Sioux River.

Iowa Parks Foundation

The Governor's budget also includes \$2 million for the Iowa Parks Foundation. At their presentation, they talked about Iowa's 1920 plan for parks being the first in the nation, and wanting to build on that as the 100-year anniversary of that plan nears. That presentation can be found [HERE](#).

Iowa Water Quality

Iowa Agriculture Secretary Bill Northey and Iowa Department of Natural Resources Director Chuck Gipp appeared last week before a joint meeting of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources committees to discuss Iowa's water quality initiative.

Secretary Northey noted that eight watershed projects, encompassing over 605K acres, received \$4.1 million in state funding and doubled that amount in private investment. He pointed out that \$2.8 million in state funds to farmers for the planting of cover crops and other conservation practices went very quickly.

Northey told legislators the department is requesting \$6.65 million to fund more watershed projects and \$1 million to encourage conservation in cities. While legislators were largely complimentary of the efforts, there were some concerns voiced about the need to be able to set goals and benchmarks in order to be able to measure outcomes.

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Legislative Resource Links

IACCB Website

[IACCB Bill Tracker](#)

INHF Website

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