2010 Legislative Update

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2010 – 2011 Budget

- Tax revenues are greatly reduced and budget cuts were required in most areas.
- Extreme cuts originally proposed for UGA College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences were averted
- Budget reduced across the board 22.1% over 2 years (includes 4-H and Cooperative Extension Service)
- UGA CAES will sell land used for research and some extension service offices.

2010 Legislative Update

- State budget
- Water
- Transportation
- Tax reform
- Service fee increases
- Cell phone/texting
- Safety belts

2010 - 2011 Budget

- Counting on new revenue:
  - $96 million in user fees updated by legislation (HB 1055);
  - $229 million in hospital provider fees;
  - $23.5 million from legislation implementing streamlined sales tax collections and
  - $40 million in expected new collections from the hiring of new fraud agents and auditors in the Department of Revenue.

SB 370 - Water Stewardship Act

- Comprehensive water conservation legislation is the result of broad-based cooperation among various ag interests
- This law protects agriculture while helping promote water stewardship practices.
- Critical to critical to water planning and negotiations with Florida and Alabama.
- Creates new outdoor water use rules
- Indoor and outdoor water use mandates

MALTA congratulates Hall County Extension Agent Billy Skaggs

Winner of the MALTA Education Award for “North Georgia Turfgrass Field Day 2009”
Outdoor Water Use Rules 6/1/2010

- The urban ag sector gains permanent assurance that water providers must get approval from Georgia EPD to be more restrictive or less restrictive than state outdoor water use regulations.
- It allows outdoor water use every day of the week, except for a six hour period during the heat of the day (10 am - 4 pm).
- New landscapes, recreation areas, water efficient irrigation systems and others listed in the legislation are excluded from any usage prohibitions.

Outdoor Water Use Rules 6/1/2010

- Persons may irrigate outdoors daily for purposes of planting, growing, managing, or maintaining ground cover, trees, shrubs, or other plants only between the hours of 4 p.m. and 10:00 a.m.
- Except for the uses/types of irrigation listed below, irrigation is not allowed between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Outdoor Water Use Rules 6/1/2010

- ALLOWED ANY TIME:
  - Irrigation of athletic fields, golf courses, or public turf grass recreational areas;
  - Installation, maintenance, or calibration of irrigation systems;
  - Hydroseeding.
  - Use of water withdrawn from private water wells or surface water by an owner or operator of property if such well or surface water is on said property.
  - New rules are for LANDSCAPE USE only

OUTDOOR WATER USE GUIDELINES

- ALLOWED ANYTIME
  - Irrigation of new and replanted plant, seed, or turf in landscapes, golf courses, or sports turf fields during installation and for a period of 30 days immediately following the date of installation;
  - Drip irrigation or irrigation using soaker hoses;
  - Handwatering with a hose with automatic cutoff or handheld container (includes chemical applications);
  - Irrigation of horticultural crops held for sale, resale, or installation;
Georgia's Urban Agriculture (Green) Industry

HB 277 - Georgia Transportation Act
- 2012 - Georgia voters will vote on "a one percent regional transportation sales tax for the purpose of transportation projects and programs for a period of ten years." The newly generated tax money would then be used to fund a set list of road projects
- All products that currently have a state and local sales tax exemption will be exempt from this tax
  - fuels used for irrigation
  - commercial use fertilizers
  - pesticides, farm equipment
  - off-road diesel and fuels used in manufacturing and processing

HB 1405 - Tax Reform
- Creates 2010 Special Council on Tax Reform and Fairness
- Sets up a process for a thorough study of the state's current revenue structure.
- Recommendations will be submitted to Lt. Gov and Speaker of the House 1/11.
- MALTA and other urban ag groups have partnered with Georgia Agribusiness Council to study impact of the various tax exemptions that benefit agriculture.

HB 1055 - Service fee increases
- This bill increased fees for licenses, registrations, fees and registrations including agriculture product registrations and licensing
- Pesticide applicator, contractor and dealer licenses
- Pesticide contractor license increased from $15 to $55 annually
- Commercial pesticide applicator license increased from $25 to $90 annually
- Have recently learned that Dept. of Ag is proposing increase in fees for Plant Protection Division.

Laws regarding cell phone use - effective July 1, 2010:
- SB 360: Text messaging banned for all drivers. Using a wireless telecommunications device to write, send or read any text based communication is prohibited. Fines up to $150 plus points on license.
- HB 23: Cell phone use prohibited for all drivers under 18 (who have a provisional license). They may not talk, text, or listen to a cell phone, regardless of whether a hands-free device is attached. Fines up to $150 plus possible license suspension.

SB 458: Seatbelt use in pick-up trucks - effective July 4, 2010:
- Seatbelts are required to be worn when driving on Georgia roads, including pick-up trucks.
- The legislation excludes motorcycles, motor driven cycles, off road vehicles and pickup trucks being used in connection with agricultural pursuits (farm operations).

What's Ahead for the Industry?
- Businesses need to be well versed in water regulation
- Active participants in trade associations
- Seek certification to set apart from inexperienced businesses - may be requirement
- Education - employees, consumers, media, legislators, regulators, suppliers!
- Promote environmental benefits of landscape - not just beautification!
  - Reduce heat load
  - Reduce soil erosion - #1 water pollutant
MALTA is metro Atlanta and Georgia's premier landscape organization for professionals involved in the landscape design, construction, and maintenance industry. MALTA promotes professionalism, adherence to industry standards and education. MALTA serves as a consumer and industry resource for residential and commercial clients. MALTA is YOUR path to professionalism ... Join today!

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What is industry doing today?

- Advocating for industry
  - Federal Level - President, legislators
  - State Level - Governor, legislators, regulatory agencies (EPD)
  - Local Level - cities, counties, water systems

- Education
  - At all levels and to all stakeholders

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