



THE FARM POST

The Official Publication of the Pike and Scott County Farm Bureaus

Vol. 9 No. 7

April 2015

Farm Bureaus Say No to GBECL Transmission Line

At their meetings in March, the Pike and Scott County Farm Bureaus' Boards voted to oppose the Grain Belt Express Clean Line (GBECL) transmission line which is slated to run through the two counties. The Farm Bureau does not want GBECL to be granted either public utility status or eminent domain authority from the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC).

Grain Belt Express Clean Line filed its application with the ICC on Friday, April 10. The company seeks an order from the ICC to grant GBE-

CL a 'certificate of necessity' which is of great concern to the organization. Using the expedited review method significantly constricts regulatory oversight and review and restricts landowner rights to object to route revisions.

The Boards stated in reasons to oppose the project that GBECL is not a public utility, has not shown how the project will benefit the State of Illinois and that the company has not proposed the most direct route from proposed wind farms in Kansas to energy markets to the east.

The Pike and Scott County Farm Bureaus will assist its members who oppose the GBECL project, work with groups of land owners opposing the GBECL project, provide the good offices of the Farm Bureau to achieve the desired outcomes and seek Illinois Farm Bureau's opposition to the GBECL project.

Farm Bureau will continue to assist its members in providing information on easements and other aspects of the project. More information can be found at www.tworiversfb.org.

Pass TPA Now

American Farm Bureau Federation urges Congress to pass Trade Promotion Authority to give U.S. negotiators the leverage they need to keep America competitive in the international marketplace. TPA lets Congress consult on trade agreements, but also requires up or down votes without amendments that could jeopardize years of negotiations with foreign governments.

"America's farmers and ranchers exported more than 152 billion dollars' worth of farm goods last year," AFBF President Bob Stallman told Congress. "That's a testament not just to their hard work and productivity, but the benefits of opening new markets around the globe, too."

"Farmers and ranchers need access to new markets around the world. The U.S. is on the verge of completing ambitious trade negotiations from Europe to Asia, but we cannot move forward unless barriers such as high tariffs and non-scientific standards are addressed," Stallman said. "We must forge deals that knock down those trade barriers. Getting there means giving the president the Trade Promotion Authority necessary to reach those market-opening agreements."

Congress and the administration must continue to shape and set priorities based on actual business conditions. TPA will give Congress the authority to provide valuable oversight to the trade agreement process while the administration represents our priorities before other countries. Having TPA in place before the next set of agreements reaches the table will ensure that our best interests are represented. Congress needs to pass TPA now to keep agricultural trade going forward tomorrow.



THE PIKE AND SCOTT COUNTY FARM BUREAUS

OUR MISSION is to lead our members in their pursuit of prosperity. We will advance programs and public policies that promote a strong agricultural economy and benefit our members and their communities.

Congressman Schock Resigns

Amid a continuing deluge of revelations on campaign, personal, and office finances, Congressman Aaron Schock (IL-18) announced on March 17 that he will resign from the U.S. House of Representatives on March 31, 2014.

Schock's departure is a big blow to his constituents in the 18th Congressional District. First elected to Congress in 2008, Schock has been a strong supporter of agriculture and rural issues. He was a valued spokesman on river issues such as levees, flood control, flood fighting, and river transportation.

Among his other honors, Schock was awarded Illinois Farm Bureau's Friend of Agriculture on numerous occasions.

We have worked closely with Congressman Schock and his Washington, D.C. and district staff who have always exemplified professionalism and interest in our issues. They have shown subject matter knowledge and appreciation of our interests. They have worked to resolve our concerns and to help advance legislation that we have requested.

On April 6, Illinois elections officials set the primary for July 7 and the general election for September 10. This a change from earlier dates announced by Governor Rauner. Illinois' law did not comply with the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act enacted to allow military personnel serving overseas enough time to mail in ballots.

The Pike and Scott County Farm Bureaus wish the best to Congressman Schock and thank him for being there for our members on so many occasions.

SENATE CONFIRMS NELSON AS ILDOA CHIEF

The Illinois Senate voted yesterday to confirm Philip Nelson as the Director of the Illinois Department of Agriculture. The fourth-generation grain and livestock farmer was appointed by Governor Bruce Rauner in January.

"I've been in agriculture my entire life, both as a farmer and a professional working to promote the industry," Nelson said. "I realize that there is a lot of work to do, such as strengthening our transportation infrastructure, increasing exports, and serving our customers in a timely manner. My priority is to listen and work with producers and stakeholders to make sure we are supporting our number one industry and ultimately working to turnaround Illinois' economy."

Nelson previously served as the President of the Illinois Farm Bureau. Additionally, he was president of the companies that make up COUNTRY Financial, Illinois Agricultural Service Company, the IAA Foundation, and served on the Coordinating Committee of GROWMARK, Inc. He operates a farm near Seneca, growing corn, soybeans, and alfalfa and runs a cow-calf operation.

AFBF Says WOTUS Rule Would Disregard Exemptions

The proposed Waters of the U.S. Rule, "unless dramatically altered," will result in potential Clean Water Act liability and federal permit requirements for a tremendous number of commonplace and essential farming, ranching and forestry practices nationwide, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation.

In testimony, AFBF General Counsel Ellen Steen told a House Agriculture subcommittee that the WOTUS rule will create enormous uncertainty and vulnerability for farmers and ranchers nationwide.

"It is impossible to know how many farmers, ranchers and forest landowners will be visited by [EPA] enforcement staff or will be sued by citizen plaintiffs' lawyers – and it is impossible to know when those inspections and lawsuits will happen," Steen said. "But what is certain is that a vast number of common, responsible farming, ranching and forestry practices that occur today without the need for a federal permit would be highly vulnerable to Clean Water Act enforcement under this rule."

According to AFBF's general counsel, several statutory exemptions demonstrate a clear determination by Congress not to impose Clean Water Act regulation on ordinary farming and ranching activities. However, agency and judicial interpretations over the past several decades have significantly limited the agricultural exemptions that have traditionally insulated farming and ranching from Clean Water Act permit requirements.

"Much of the remaining benefit of those exemptions would be eliminated by an expansive interpretation of 'waters of the United States' to cover ditches and drainage paths that run across and nearby farm and pasture lands," Steen testified. "The result would be wide-scale litigation risk and potential Clean Water Act liability for innumerable routine farming and ranching activities that occur today without the need for cumbersome and costly Clean Water Act permits."

Steen explained that because ditches and ephemeral drainages are ubiquitous on farm and ranch lands – running alongside and even within farm fields and pastures – "the proposed rule will make it impossible for many farmers to apply fertilizer or crop protection products to those fields without triggering Clean Water Act 'pollutant' discharge liability and permit requirements."

"A Clean Water Act pollutant discharge to waters of the U.S. arguably would occur each time even a molecule of fertilizer or pesticide falls into a jurisdictional ditch, ephemeral drainage or low spot – even if the feature is dry at the time of the purported 'discharge,'" Steen told the subcommittee. For this reason, farmers' options under the rule are limited.

According to Steen, "they can either continue farming, but under a cloud of uncertainty and risk, they can take on the complexity, cost and equal uncertainty of Clean Water Act permitting or they can try to avoid doing anything near ditches, small wetlands, or stormwater drainage paths on their lands. It's a no-win situation for farmers and ranchers."

The U.S. EPA estimates that nearly a million comments were received on their proposed WOTUS rule with over 60% of the substantive comments being negative toward the rule.

HOWDY!

by Blake E. Roderick

ON TAKING PRIVATE PROPERTY

We are significantly late in getting the April edition of *The Farm Post* to you this month. Unfortunately, there have been many other issues that have consumed the time necessary to get this issue out.

I've said before that my career has been circumscribed by Water, Wind, and Wildlife. This past month seems to have been all about water and wind.

It is really amazing how many water issues are deluging, sorry the pun, this country at the same time.

First and foremost is the issue of Waters of the United States. Hundreds of you participated in efforts to Ditch the Rule. Hopefully, your voice was heard in Washington, D.C.

Gina McCarthy has announced that the US EPA and Corps of Engineers completed their work on the WOTUS rule. Early in April, the agencies submitted the proposed rule to the White House (Office of Management and Budget) to give their stamp of approval before imposing the rule on the regulated community...that means you.

Ms. McCarthy stated in a blog attempts to assure the public that the new rule will refine the definition of WOTUS.

The current definition considers a WOTUS as being navigable. The new definition will attempt to remove that qualification significantly expanding federal regulation of water on private property.

This winter we've been working to keep the administration from imposing new FEMA rules that could have significant impact on towns, counties, drainage districts, and those with flood insurance.

The Obama administration issued an Executive Order to implement the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard. In short, the FFRMS will redefine the level of protection required to be a certified levee (100-year protection). The rule will put in jeopardy flood insurance, flood

protection and activities on private property in river areas.

Additionally, FEMA developed this new rule in secret without input by local governments or those who will be impacted.

Not only will the new standard apply to new or substantially improved federal installations, it could impact a much broader range of federal activities beyond simple facilities construction or improvements. It could impact permit issuance and emergency flood preparation, response and recovery programs administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, USDA agricultural subsidies, federal highway aid, U.S. DOT TIGER grants, HUD CDBG grants and loan guarantees.

Again, as with the WOTUS rule, FFRMS impacts what you can do on your private property. In fact, it could take away rights you already enjoy.

Finally, we've been monitoring the Grain Belt Express Clean Line high voltage direct current transmission line for the past couple of years.

The project wants to take wind generated electricity from Kansas through Missouri and Illinois. Ostensibly, the power will be integrated into the 'grid' serving the eastern states. Converting stations are slated to be built in Missouri and Illinois to provide electricity to area electric markets.

The company is a merchant company and not a standard utility as we know it. The HVDC line will be built by GBECCL investors but will be operated by another company.

To get electricity from Kansas to Indiana, GBECCL will have to cut through prime farmland, timber and pasture in Pike and Scott counties. The proposed route runs about 52-miles through the two counties. The proposed and alternate routes impact over 250 private property

owners in our counties.

To make the project work, the private company will need the power to take land from private property owners.

Your organization has come out in opposition to the project and will work to keep GBECCL from getting utility status and the power of eminent domain from the Illinois Commerce Commission.

Stay tuned and with your help and continued support, we'll keep working on protecting your private property rights.



the AG AGENDA

Bob Stallman
President, American Farm Bureau

The Ag Economy Needs Full Immigration Reform

Much of the country is thawing out from a long winter. Farmers are making plans for the coming season, and in some regions crops are already in bloom. A big question for many farmers is whether they'll have enough workers to harvest those crops. Well, Congress has been busy making plans too. In the last few weeks, the buzz around immigration has picked up on Capitol Hill. Unfortunately, the plans Congress has in mind stop short of what agriculture needs, and would do farmers more harm than good.

The House Judiciary Committee recently pushed forward so-called e-Verify legislation that would require workers to present a more secure form of identification before they could be hired. Congress, in short, seems ready to require stricter enforcement of immigration laws without first repairing the broken immigration system that exists today.

We agree: worker documentation does need to be brought into the 21st century to secure our borders. But stopping there would cripple agricultural production the United States. Effective immigration reform must address our current workforce and create a new guest worker program to meet future needs. Agriculture supports millions of jobs both on and off the farm. No farmer should have to leave fruit to rot or plow up fields simply because he can't find ready and willing workers.

An enforcement-only approach ignores the rest of our immigration problems and threatens to devastate the farm economy. Farmers and ranchers are careful to follow the federal government's requirements for checking employment documents, and will continue to do so. But e-Verify by itself puts the onus on farmers and ranchers who are already hard pressed to find skilled workers.

The fallout would harm the entire economy. Farm Bureau estimates that food production would fall by \$30 billion to \$60 billion in the U.S. if the government implements a strict enforcement-only employment verification system.

As food demand grows, farmers will respond with increased production. The problem is our current immigration laws all but guarantee it won't be on our soil, because most Americans are simply not willing to take these jobs. Consumers, meanwhile, should expect their grocery bills to increase 5 to 6 percent.

Washington has a long tradition of granting special carve-outs and exemptions to laws that fall unevenly on some sectors, but that won't solve the problem we face. Farmers and ranchers aren't looking for an exemption: We need a solution. That solution may not be a quick fix, but it can and must be done. We need a new, flexible visa program that allows foreign-born workers to enter the U.S. legally. Skilled laborers currently working in agriculture also need a way to earn an adjustment in status and stay working here, on American farms. Farm Bureau is committed to continuing our work with Congress to reform our immigration system. We must not only secure our borders: We must secure the future of agriculture. Key to getting that job done is ensuring a stable workforce.

"THE FARM POST (USPS 432-460) is published monthly by the Pike and Scott County Farm Bureaus, PO Box 6, Pittsfield, IL 62363."

Periodicals Postage Paid at Pittsfield and Winchester and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to THE FARM POST, PO Box 6, Pittsfield, IL 62363.

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STUDY CONFIRMS AG IS CRITICAL TO STATE'S WELL-BEING

A new study of agriculture in Illinois shows agriculture is a critical component of Illinois' overall economic well-being, contributing about \$120.9 billion of total economic output — more than several other Illinois industries, including the financial, transportation and construction industries.

The study, commissioned by the Illinois Livestock Development Group (ILDG) with cooperation from Illinois Corn Marketing Board (ICMB), Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB), and Illinois Soybean Association (ISA), was conducted by Decision Innovation Solutions (DIS) of Urbandale, Iowa. The analysis is based on a combination of datasets from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2012 Census of Agriculture and the IMPLAN modeling system.

"We're happy to have the opportunity to partner with so many of Illinois' commodity groups to have this study done," said Jim Fraley, coordinator, ILDG. "It really confirms what farmers and farm organizations have long asserted — that Illinois agriculture is integral to our state's economy. Agriculture is so closely connected to a large set of related industries that a jolt to any one of them would have significant negative effects."

Key findings in the study include:

- In 2012, production agriculture and agriculture-related industries accounted for 432,831 jobs, or about 1 in every 17 jobs in Illinois.

- Twenty-four of Illinois' counties derive at least one third of their total output from agriculture and agriculture-related industries.

- Twelve of Illinois' counties derive at least one fifth of their total jobs from agriculture and agriculture-related industries.

- Crop farming is a significant part of agriculture's economic contribution. Statewide output attributed to crop production and further processing is more than \$56.7 billion and is responsible for 197,353 jobs.

- Livestock farming also is a significant part of agriculture's economic contribution. Statewide output attributed to livestock production and further processing is \$14.1 billion and is responsible for 52,124 jobs.

The study also includes information about Illinois output by industry, Illinois jobs by industry, and Illinois total value added by industry. Additionally, the analysis includes information regarding which counties and Illinois Congressional districts derive the largest share of the jobs and economic output from agriculture and related industries. All of the information is expressed as both numbers and percentages.

The total contribution to the county economy from agriculture is 38.3% in Pike and 39.2% in Scott.

Pass Trade Promotion Authority Now, American Farm Bureau's Stallman Tells Congress

American Farm Bureau Federation President Bob Stallman has urged Congress to pass Trade Promotion Authority to give U.S. negotiators the leverage they need to keep America competitive in the international marketplace. TPA lets Congress consult on trade agreements, but also requires up or down votes without amendments that could jeopardize years of negotiations with foreign governments.

Stallman, a beef and rice farmer from Columbus, Texas, testified before the House Committee on Agriculture.

"America's farmers and ranchers exported more than 152 billion dollars' worth of farm goods last year," Stallman said. "That's a testament not just to their hard work and productivity, but the benefits of opening new markets around the globe, too."

"Farmers and ranchers need access to new markets around the world. The U.S. is on the verge of completing ambitious trade negotiations from Europe to Asia, but we cannot move forward unless barriers such as high tariffs and non-scientific standards are addressed," Stallman said. "We must forge deals that knock down those trade barriers. Getting there means giving the president the Trade Promotion Authority necessary to reach those market-opening agreements."

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Mythbusting GMOs

By Jessica Wharton

The population is growing and many ask how it will be possible to feed 9 billion to 10 billion people by 2050. Owen Paterson, member of the British Parliament and former Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs of the U.K., is posing a different question, however: "How do we feed them well?"

Addressing the Annual South African Agricultural Biotechnology Industry ISAAA Media Conference last month, Paterson advocated for the use of biotechnology in Africa prior to dispelling four popular GMO myths.

He began by saying, "South Africa is the leader on this continent, with 2.7 million biotech hectares planted. But other nations are catching up. In Burkina Faso, 70 percent of all cotton in the country is now insect-resistant Bt cotton, a GMO... and field trials are underway in Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria and Uganda on a broad range of new crops, from biotech bananas to maize to cowpeas."

Paterson then tackled the first of four myths head on, correcting the idea that farmers are tricked by big, profit-hungry, biotech companies into needlessly paying more for GM seeds over traditional, non-biotech seeds. Instead, findings show that biotech crops have "increased crop

yield overall by 22 percent, increased farmer profits by 68 percent and reduced chemical pesticide use by 37 percent."

The second myth asserts that the only way to actually help the environment is to abandon modern agriculture technology and embrace purely organic farming. Paterson refutes this idea saying that all of modern agriculture, including GMOs, nitrogen fertilizer and modern pesticides, has "probably done more to save natural habitats, support biodiversity and save endangered species than all the other environmental, NGO [non-governmental organization] and U.N. conservation activities put together."

He continued dispelling the myth by referencing glyphosate, which NGOs "so love to criticize." While glyphosates are indeed bad for weeds, the toxicity to animals is less than vinegar to humans — "something to think about next time you dress your salad."

Continuing along those lines, the third myth questions how safe it really is for humans to eat GM products. Unfortunately, anti-GMO campaigners continue to question the safety of eating genetically modified foods despite "the universal opinion of every independent scientific institution globally that GMOs are as safe as any other food."

Everyone values safe food — farmers and consumers alike.

But many believe that biotech crops only benefit farmers and offer no consumer benefits. Paterson corrected this fourth myth by looking at the environmental, economic and nutritional benefits GM crops offer. Biotechnology increases protection of wild lands by focusing on sustainability and offers less expensive foods to consumers, but it also plays a large role in finding cures and preventing many ailments that developing nations still encounter. Paterson also outlined the public health benefits of developing more affordable, nutrient-rich foods like golden rice.

Golden rice is enhanced with vitamin A producing beta-carotene and was created for the purpose of fighting vitamin A deficiency. The inventors donated the technology for use in the public sector in developing countries to benefit the poor worldwide. "Vitamin A deficiency is the principal cause of childhood blindness globally, affecting 500,000 children annually of which half die within a year or two," Paterson noted.

So "how do we feed the growing population well?" Thanks to tools like biotechnology, farmers and ranchers are leading the way in not just answering that question but in stepping up to get the job done.

Jessica Wharton is a communications assistant at the American Farm Bureau Federation.

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Stay Alert for Spring Planting!

This time of year poses a high risk of injury for farmers as fatigue, stress and pressure build as they spend as much time as they can in the fields. Not only are hours long and the workload heavy, but farmers also have to deal with equipment breakdowns and weather-related issues. Staying safe during planting is challenging.

Contact with machinery presents the biggest risk for both injuries and fatalities but there are ways to avoid them and stay sharp.

- Eat balanced meals
- Set realistic work priorities
- Consider hiring help for the busy weeks of planting; don't try to do it all yourself
- Stay well-hydrated to maintain awareness
- Get a good night's sleep
- Be as rested as you can be; if necessary shut down for a few minutes and take a nap. Even a 20 minute break with a short nap can really help improve alertness.
- Take a short walk; it's unhealthy to sit for long periods of time.
- Always have your cell phone on your person; see it as a safety feature
- Remember to share the roads safely with vehicles as well as farm equipment

A Few Tasty Reasons to Reconsider GMOs

By Dr. Steve Savage

Pests are nothing new: They have often disrupted agriculture in the past. However, two unique aspects of our times exacerbate such risks.

With ever-increasing global travel and commerce, new exotic pathogens, weeds and insects are spread around the world at a faster rate than ever before. Additionally, as climate changes, pests are often able to thrive in new places or at different times of year than in the past, creating much more difficult control issues.

Greater risk of pest threats is particularly problematic for many of our favorite luxury food and beverage crops. But keeping up the quality of these perennial crops depends on complex factors. You can't just breed a new pest-resistant variety because it is so hard to maintain the quality and each generation of seed takes years to produce. Conventional genetic solutions would take decades at best, and the new pest challenges don't give us that luxury.

Florida Orange Juice-- The Florida juice industry has largely moved to providing more not-from-concentrate, premium orange juice because of competition for frozen juice coming from Brazil. Now, the whole Florida industry is in serious decline because of a new bacterial disease spread by a new, exotic insect vector. Farmers have funded research that

may have found a GMO solution, but whether they will get to use it is up to brand-sensitive juice marketing companies.



Bananas--The 1930s hit song "Yes, We Have No Bananas" was actually about "Panama Disease" (*Fusarium oxysporum*) which wiped out the previous banana of commerce (the Gros Michel variety). Fortunately, a new banana called the Cavendish was found in Vietnam. It was resistant to the disease and also suitable for shipping (most bananas are not). Now there is a new strain of the same pathogen called *Fusarium Tropical Race 4*, which is destroying the Cavendish in Asia and recently in Australia and Mozambique. It is probably only a matter of time before someone inadvertently transports this pathogen to the Americas. There has been some work on a so-

lution, but nothing close to what would be needed to protect the future supply of this popular fruit or the jobs of a great many people involved in growing and shipping it.

Chocolate--Cacao, the bean chocolate comes from, gets attacked by many pests, but two in particular have been spreading throughout Central and South America leading to dramatic declines in production. The diseases are called Witch's Broom and Frosty Pod, and according to leading researchers, Frosty Pod alone "presents a substantial threat to cacao cultivation worldwide."

Major confectionary companies - like Nestle, Mars and Hershey's - have funded genome sequencing, but on their websites they imply or state outright that they won't be pursuing genetic engineering solutions. Once again, the people at the most risk here are small-scale farmers, particularly those in Africa, should these pathogens make it there from the Americas.

Why GMOs?

Modern genetic engineering approaches could

be very logical ways to protect these particular crops. Also, with these crops it would be feasible to maintain separate GMO and non-GMO options. "Identity preservation" is the norm for crops like this because their value and quality justify the cost of keeping records and using different equipment. There may be consumers who will never trust the science, and in a wealthier society they can continue to buy a non-GMO option. What does not make sense is that a vocal minority has already compromised the future supply for everyone. You can't get back more than a decade of potential progress just by throwing money at a problem in a crisis. What makes even less sense is that the people who would lose the most in these pest-driven scenarios are often the hard-working people who provide us with these luxuries.

This column was adapted with permission from a post by Dr. Steve Savage on the Applied Mythology blog. Savage is a consultant with Savage & Associates.

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