

Louisiana Legislation on Unmanned Aerial Systems

July 20, 2015

Senator Bret Allain, Vice-Chairman, Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture and Rural Development

2014 - Senate Concurrent Resolution 124

- ❖ Established the Agriculture Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Study Group to study the use and application of drones for agricultural purposes and make recommendations on potential legislation
- ❖ The Study Group membership included a broad spectrum of stakeholders from our public university agriculture programs, the FAA, the commissioner of agriculture, the chair and vice-chair of the House and Senate Agriculture committees, agriculture aviation groups, state police, and various other agriculture interest groups, including Farm Bureau and the Louisiana Forestry Association

The study group concluded the following:

- ❖ The potential value of unmanned aerial system use in agriculture could reach into the billions
- ❖ The study group was optimistic about the potential uses for unmanned aerial systems in the agriculture sector
- ❖ There is much confusion regarding federal regulations and the application of these rules to commercial agriculture
- ❖ The FAA needed to strongly consider the agriculture industry's concerns when drafting new rules
- ❖ This technology has the potential to deliver a new level of accountability and precision to agriculture
- ❖ Unmanned aerial system must be clearly defined
- ❖ Specific safety guidelines must be established and liability issues addressed

The study group findings also included many benefits for producers including:

- ❖ Identifying pest infestations
- ❖ Spotting water and drainage issues
- ❖ Assessing and increasing crop yields
- ❖ More effectively managing the use of chemicals
- ❖ Reducing input costs
- ❖ Applying precision agriculture methodologies

The Study Group submitted an official letter of public comment to the FAA regarding the special rule for model aircrafts on Sept. 23, 2014.

- ❖ The letter indicated that unmanned aerial systems should be regulated separately from remote control, civil, or commercial aircraft
- ❖ States should be given authority to develop additional regulatory policies beyond the general operation guidelines set by the FAA

2015 – Senate Bill 183

- ❖ Louisiana adopted pro-active legislation which provides for state guidelines governing the use of unmanned aerial systems
- ❖ Authorizes the operation of unmanned aerial systems in accordance with regulations established by the Louisiana Commissioner of Agriculture, except as prohibited by federal law
- ❖ The bill establishes safety and accountability measures for the use of unmanned aerial systems in agricultural commercial operations
- ❖ Provides for license and registration requirements with the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry

2015 – Senate Bill 183

- ❖ Data obtained through the use of an unmanned aerial system must be used solely in the course of conducting a generally accepted agricultural commercial operation, or in conjunction with an agricultural research, extension program, or initiative conducted by a Louisiana university
- ❖ Data obtained remains the property of the legal owner of the property where the data was collected, unless written approval is given for other uses
- ❖ Authorizes civil penalties for violations
- ❖ The Department of Agriculture and Forestry is currently drafting regulations which will become effective upon final disposition of the new FAA rules