

## House Resolution 1369

By: Representatives Gardner of the 57<sup>th</sup>, Buckner of the 137<sup>th</sup>, Smith of the 70<sup>th</sup>, Hogan of the 179<sup>th</sup>, Stephens of the 164<sup>th</sup>, and others

## A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing, March 27, 2020, as the 50th anniversary of the Coastal Marshland Protection  
2 Act; and for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, Georgia's coast has five federal wildlife refuges, 13 state wildlife management  
4 areas, 14 barrier islands, 100 linear miles of coastline and sand beaches, 3,400 miles of tidal  
5 shoreline, and 350,000 acres of salt marsh; and

6 WHEREAS, in May 1968, the Kerr-McGee extraction company asked the State of Georgia  
7 to make available 72,000 acres of marshlands, estuaries, and offshore ocean bottoms near  
8 Savannah for mining phosphate it found 100 feet below the ocean floor; and

9 WHEREAS, Governor Lester Maddox ordered the University System of Georgia to complete  
10 a first-ever environmental impact study of the proposal and responded to a loud "NO" vote  
11 from Georgians by turning down the mining proposal; and

12 WHEREAS, the bid for mining rights showed there was no law on the state's books that  
13 would protect its fragile coastal environment; and

14 WHEREAS, a small number of Georgia scientists working from the University of Georgia  
15 Marine Institute on Sapelo Island proved to the world that the ecological systems of 500,000  
16 acres of the state's marshlands were producing nutrients that spawned and sustained marine  
17 life along the coastline; and

18 WHEREAS, Representative Reid Harris of Brunswick was able to lead a state-wide  
19 movement to determine how the state would use its coastal resources for the next 50 years;  
20 and

21 WHEREAS, he received significant support from state department heads like George Bagby  
22 of the Commission on Fish and Game and R.S. Rock Howard of the Water Quality Control  
23 Commission; and

24 WHEREAS, a broad array of Georgians that included sportsmen, scientists, garden club  
25 members, newly roused environmentalists, students, media outlets, and fledgling  
26 environmental organizations testified at nine public hearings and wrote scientific analyses  
27 and citizen letters; and

28 WHEREAS, they recognized the coast as a valuable resource for tourism, recreation, and  
29 fisheries rather than heavy industry; and

30 WHEREAS, the Coastal Marshlands Protection Act, which provided the first comprehensive  
31 regulation of the use of the marshlands of any state along the Atlantic coast, was passed in  
32 its final form on February 9, 1970, and signed into law by Governor Maddox on March 27,  
33 1970.

34 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that  
35 the members of this body recognize the legislators, the state department heads, and the  
36 citizens of Georgia who spoke for the protection of the coastal environment 50 years ago.

37 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in the face of current threats from sea rise and powerful  
38 storms, the House of Representatives commends the diligent efforts of the state's scientists,  
39 the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Coastal Resources Division, the state's river  
40 keeper organizations, and the environmental organizations that continue to preserve the  
41 coastal environment and the economic benefits, recreational opportunities, and aesthetic  
42 beauty that it provides to every Georgian.

43 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized  
44 and directed to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to the  
45 public and the press.