HLS 19RS-616 ENGROSSED

2019 Regular Session

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HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 31

BY REPRESENTATIVE MARCELLE

WATER/RESOURCES: Urges and requests the commissioner of conservation to study the necessity of declaring an area of groundwater concern or critical area of ground water concern in the Baton Rouge area

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2	To urge and request the commissioner of conservation to study, outline the requirements,
3	and make recommendations as to the necessity of an area of groundwater concern
4	or a critical area of groundwater concern declaration in the Baton Rouge area to limit
5	saltwater intrusion and protect regional groundwater supplies for the future and to
6	submit a report of the study no later than February 15, 2020.
7	WHEREAS, the four hundred fifty thousand people living in East Baton Rouge
8	Parish are dependent on local groundwater resources from the Southern Hills Aquifer for
9	safe drinking water; and
10	WHEREAS, major industries in East Baton Rouge Parish also use these groundwater
11	resources for commercial purposes to secure jobs and economic growth for the region; and
12	WHEREAS, the main supplier of safe drinking water in East Baton Rouge Parish is
13	the Baton Rouge Water Company, a privately-owned utility regulated by the Louisiana
14	Public Service Commission; and
15	WHEREAS, as many as ninety thousand people in Ascension Parish also draw their
16	safe drinking water from groundwater from East Baton Rouge Parish through the Baton
17	Rouge Water Company's subsidiary, Ascension Water Company; and
18	WHEREAS, the United States Geological Survey (USGS), through numerous
19	scientific studies and models, has identified serious water level declines and saltwater
20	intrusion in Baton Rouge aquifers; and

1	WHEREAS, the USGS has identified large groundwater withdrawals for public
2	supply and industrial use in East Baton Rouge Parish as the cause of water level declines and
3	saltwater intrusion; and
4	WHEREAS, the USGS has stated that if groundwater withdrawals in Baton Rouge
5	continue into the future at historic rates, saltwater intrusion will continue to occur; and
6	WHEREAS, the office of conservation has stated in a previous report to the
7	legislature that without "publicly released plans for major groundwater pumpage reductions
8	from the users in East Baton Rouge" groundwater use rates at the "present level or along a
9	slightly upward trend seems a logical assumption, with all attendant consequences"; and
10	WHEREAS, the chief financial officer of the Baton Rouge Water Company stated
11	in open testimony at a Louisiana Public Service Commission hearing in 2013 that, "Our
12	long-term solution, obviously, is the treatment plant with water from the Mississippi"; and
13	WHEREAS, it is expected that the costs of such a transition from groundwater to
14	surface water will be borne by the customers of the Baton Rouge Water Company, which
15	are the people of East Baton Rouge Parish and Ascension Parish; and
16	WHEREAS, such a transition likely will entail a sacrifice of drinking water quality
17	and could result in costly and hazardous situations commonly associated with a change of
18	drinking water source, as seen in Flint, Michigan, and elsewhere; and
19	WHEREAS, the legislature affirms its desire to see all actions necessary be taken to
20	maintain groundwater as the main source of safe drinking water for the public in East Baton
21	Rouge Parish and surrounding parishes; and
22	WHEREAS, the Capital Area Ground Water Conservation Commission (CAGWCC)
23	is charged with the regional management of groundwater resources in the Baton Rouge area;
24	and
25	WHEREAS, since its creation in 1974, the CAGWCC has never adopted a
26	comprehensive management plan for local groundwater resources; and
27	WHEREAS, the commissioner of conservation has the statutory authority to prevent
28	or alleviate damaging saltwater movement or water level decline and loss of sustainability
29	in the state's aquifers and to determine areas of groundwater concern and designate critical
30	areas of groundwater concern; and

1	WHEREAS, groundwater sustainability is defined in law as the development and use
2	of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained for the present and future time without
3	causing unacceptable environmental, economic, social, or health consequences; and
4	WHEREAS, the office of conservation has stated in a previous report to the
5	legislature that such "unacceptable effects on sustainability" already exist in East Baton
6	Rouge Parish; and
7	WHEREAS, the CAGWCC is mandated by R.S. 38:3076 to work in conjunction with
8	the commissioner of conservation in his responsibilities.
9	THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby
10	urge and request the commissioner of conservation to study, outline the requirements, and
11	make recommendations as to the necessity of an area of groundwater concern or a critical
12	area of groundwater concern declaration in the Baton Rouge area to limit saltwater intrusion
13	and protect regional groundwater supplies for the future.
14	BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study shall include recommendations that
15	provide for the role and necessary actions required of the Capital Area Ground Water
16	Conservation Commission in any plan to preserve and manage the groundwater resources
17	of the Baton Rouge area.
18	BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the commissioner of conservation shall submit
19	a report of the study no later than February 15, 2020, to the governor, the House Committee
20	on Natural Resources and Environment, the House Committee on Municipal, Parochial and
21	Cultural Affairs, the House Committee on Health and Welfare, the Senate Committee on
22	Environmental Quality, the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, the Senate Committee
23	on Local and Municipal Affairs, and the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare.
24	BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the
25	commissioner of conservation.

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DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HCR 31 Engrossed

2019 Regular Session

Marcelle

Urges and requests the commissioner of conservation to study and outline the requirements, and make recommendations as to the necessity of an area of groundwater concern or a critical area of groundwater concern declaration in the Baton Rouge area and to submit a report of the study to the governor and oversight committees no later than Feb. 15, 2020.