

2015 Regular Session

HOUSE STUDY REQUEST NO. 5

BY REPRESENTATIVE BARROW

WATER/RESOURCES: Requests the House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment to study the sustainability of the aquifers supplying drinking water to the Capitol Area Region

1 A STUDY REQUEST

2 To the House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment to study the sustainability
3 of the Southern Hills Aquifer System supplying water to the Capital Area Region,
4 and to report its findings to the House of Representatives prior to the convening of
5 the 2016 Regular Session.

6 WHEREAS, Article IX Section 1 of the Constitution of Louisiana declares that the
7 "natural resources of the state, including ... water ... shall be protected, conserved, and
8 replenished insofar as possible and consistent with the health, safety, and welfare of the
9 people. The legislature shall enact laws to implement this policy"; and

10 WHEREAS, the Southern Hills Aquifer System underlies the parishes of East and
11 West Baton Rouge, East and West Feliciana, and Livingston and is the major source of
12 drinking water for the Capital Area Region; and

13 WHEREAS, not only does the Southern Hills Aquifer System provide drinking water
14 for the Capital Area Region, there are numerous industrial facilities that withdraw potable
15 water from the aquifer system for their industrial processes; and

16 WHEREAS, the concern about the sustainability of the aquifer system has been
17 growing recently and has resulted in many activities, discussions, studies, and public
18 hearings; and

1 WHEREAS, a freshwater-saltwater interface is located at the Baton Rouge Fault,
2 across which abrupt changes in water levels occur, where aquifers south of the fault
3 generally contain saltwater and aquifers north of the fault contain freshwater; and

4 WHEREAS, the office of conservation and the Capital Area Groundwater
5 Conservation Commission, using the United States Geological Survey Water Resources
6 research and data, have worked together to study the Southern Hills Aquifer System and to
7 develop management regimes and policies that are conducive to the sustainability of the
8 aquifer system and to minimize the effects of saltwater intrusion into the system; and

9 WHEREAS, in the spring of 2012, the office of conservation, at the request of the
10 Capital Area Groundwater Conservation Commission and the Baton Rouge area legislative
11 delegation, held public hearings on the issue of saltwater encroachment in the fifteen
12 hundred foot sands and two thousand foot sands of the Southern Hills Aquifer System, where
13 information was provided that supported the fears that the aquifer system is not sustainable
14 due to the saltwater encroachment which resulted in the commissioner of conservation taking
15 action to have certain groundwater well owners provide information as to their current and
16 projected withdrawal volume; and

17 WHEREAS, even with all the focus and increased activity towards protection and
18 conservation of the Southern Hills Aquifer System, particularly as a drinking water source,
19 there remains concern about the sustainability of the aquifer system and a desire to see
20 further action in order to preserve the necessary drinking water for the population of the
21 Capital Area Region.

22 THEREFORE, the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana requests
23 the House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment to study the sustainability of
24 the Southern Hills Aquifer System supplying water to the Capital Area Region, and to report
25 its findings to the House of Representatives prior to the convening of the 2016 Regular
26 Session.

DIGEST

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HSR 5 Original

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Barrow

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