

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 51

BY SENATOR HEWITT

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To re-establish the Lower Pearl River Basin task force to study the conditions, needs, issues, and funding relative to the flood protection and preservation of the Lower Pearl River Basin and to recommend any action or legislation that the commission deems necessary or appropriate.

WHEREAS, the state of Louisiana has been endowed with natural beauty that draws countless sportsmen and tourists every year and should expend the necessary resources to preserve its most important sanctuaries; and

WHEREAS, the Lower Pearl River Basin is located in east-central and southwest Mississippi and in the southeastern part of Louisiana, and drains an area of eight thousand seven hundred sixty square miles; and

WHEREAS, the basin contains one of the least-altered and pristine swamps in the United States of America, covering an area of over seventy thousand acres, and supports nearly one hundred forty types of fish and forty species of freshwater mussels, making it one of the most species-rich river systems in the world; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to preserve this valued and treasured ecosystem, a comprehensive plan should be created and instituted that will provide the financial, political, and scientific resources necessary to keep the Lower Pearl River Basin ecosystem in its pristine and natural state and should be based on the latest scientific, biological, hydrological, and geological data; and

WHEREAS, areas adjacent to the Pearl River and its tributaries have experienced a higher frequency of flooding in recent years; and

WHEREAS, activities in the state of Mississippi with regard to the portion of the Pearl River within its borders may affect the flow and level of the river in Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, the flood protection and efficient use of this important resource will depend on a comprehensive plan; and

WHEREAS, since its creation, the task force accomplished several important steps in protecting the future of the basin, including facilitating the removal of the log jam on the Pearl River near Bogalusa, advocating for the Watershed Initiative and the need for watershed modeling for the Pearl River and other watersheds statewide, coordinating Louisiana's technical response on the draft environmental impact statement for the One Lake project in Jackson, Mississippi, as it impacts the Lower Pearl River, and working with Louisiana's delegation to the United States Congress to amend federal legislation to address Louisiana's documented concerns with the One Lake project.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby re-establish the Lower Pearl River Basin task force to study and make recommendations to the legislature and federal agencies on the development of a long-term comprehensive master plan to address flood control and drainage issues, while preserving the Lower Pearl River Basin ecosystem.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force created shall consist of the following nine members:

(1) One member of the Senate appointed by the president, whom shall serve as chairperson.

(2) One member of the House of Representatives appointed by the speaker.

(3) The secretary of the Department of Natural Resources or his designee.

(4) The secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries or his designee.

(5) The secretary of the Department of Environmental Quality or his designee.

(6) The secretary of the Department of Transportation and Development or his designee.

(7) The executive director of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority or his designee.

(8) The parish president of Washington Parish or his designee.

(9) The parish president of St. Tammany Parish or his designee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that such study should focus on the area of protection, riverine flooding, drainage, the potential creation of an authority to manage the area, financing for such an authority, long-term projects for the preservation and maintenance of the area, and any future needs of the area.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of the task force shall serve without compensation, except per diem or expense reimbursement to which they may be individually entitled as members of their respective constituent organization.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force may conduct such meetings at such times as it may deem necessary or convenient to enable it to exercise fully and effectively its powers, perform its duties, and accomplish the objectives and purposes of this Resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall consider the feasibility of creating a multi-state compact with the state of Mississippi, a development district, or management authority within the state of Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall make a report of its findings and recommendations, with suggestions for proposed legislation, if any, to the House Committee on Transportation, Highways and Public Works, Senate Committee on Transportation, Highways and Public Works, House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment, and Senate Committee on Natural Resources by February 1, 2021.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that if the task force deems it necessary to continue its study, it may do so until the task force terminates on April 1, 2022.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES