

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 66

BY SENATOR CROWE

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the United States Coast Guard to gather the information learned during the 2011 Mississippi River floods, report their findings to the legislature, and incorporate such findings into updated plans for possible future flooding conditions on the lower Mississippi River.

WHEREAS, in April 2011 major Midwest storms dropped record levels of rainfall in the upper Mississippi River Basin which combined with springtime snowmelt to cause the Mississippi River to swell to record levels and lead to backwater flooding on major tributaries of the river; and

WHEREAS, the United States Army Corps of Engineers has been granted the authority to utilize certain flood control features that help maintain the river's levels and predicted crests during periods of high water; and

WHEREAS, in May 2011 the Corps opened the spillways at the Bonnet Carre and Morganza structures and adjusted flow diversion rates at the Old River Control Structure in order to lower the dangerously high river levels; and

WHEREAS, such efforts did effect the slow lowering of the river's level and were considered successful, however; these massive diversions of fresh river water into saltwater bodies such as Lake Pontchartrain can be expected to have some adverse impact on fish, wildlife and persons living in the areas where diverted water is introduced; and

WHEREAS, the ultimate effects on such industries as oyster fishing and on the fragile marshes and wetlands of south Louisiana have yet to be determined, and facts should be gathered and determinations and findings compiled in order to better protect the safety and well-being of the people of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, despite the fact that the United States Coast Guard has been granted the authority to control vessel traffic on the river and enforce safety standards in the public interest, barges in tow, tugboats and other working vessels did experience significant difficulties operating safely in the extreme flood conditions, and bridges and dock facilities were the subject of several collision incidents; and

WHEREAS, a failure of a working vessel on the river during extreme flood conditions could have catastrophic results if it impacted the levee and damaged it badly enough to cause a breach and massive flooding; and

WHEREAS, the issue of massive deposits of silt, mud, sand and debris into Lake Pontchartrain, the Atchafalaya Basin and the marshes and in particular, the entire Southwest Pass where ocean going vessels require certain water depths to traverse the Mississippi River must be addressed by the Corps in the aftermath of the floods, and plans must be developed and funding streams determined and established without delay in order to begin the process of recovery for the region.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request that the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the United States Coast Guard issue a report on their findings of the facts on the impact of the 2011 Mississippi River floods on the state's fish, wildlife, citizens, marshes and wetlands to the Legislature of Louisiana prior to the convening of the 2012 Regular Session.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the U. S. Army Corps and the U. S. Coast Guard examine closely the impact on property, industry, and threats to the safety and well-being of citizens forced to evacuate to higher ground to avoid the flood waters, as well as the present conditions of the flood control structures used during the event and compile that data into a report to the Legislature of Louisiana prior to the convening of the 2012 Regular Session.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Corps determine the effects of massive deposits of silt, mud, sand and debris from the diversion of river water into Lake Pontchartrain, the Atchafalaya Basin, the marshes, and in particular, the entire Southwest Pass and that plans be developed and funding streams established without delay in order to begin the recovery process for the region.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the New Orleans District of the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the United States Coast Guard Eighth District.

---

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

---

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES