

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 47

BY SENATORS WALSWORTH, RISER AND THOMPSON

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to maintain its current hours of operations at its four locks and dams on the Ouachita River.

WHEREAS, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ("Corps") has announced plans to reduce its hours of operations for the Ouachita River navigation project; and

WHEREAS, the project maintains the Ouachita River's navigational capabilities and has been in force since the 1920s; and

WHEREAS, officials at the Ouachita River Valley Association predict that reducing the hours of operations will mark the beginning of the end of navigation on the Ouachita River ("river"); and

WHEREAS, the Corps' proposal would reduce the current twenty-four hour, seven days a week operation on the river's four locks and dams to an eighteen hour, seven days a week operation at the Jonesville and Columbia locks and dams in Louisiana and a sixteen-hour Friday, Saturday and Sunday schedule at the Felsenthal and H.K. Thatcher locks and dams in Arkansas; and

WHEREAS, Corps' officials declare that it costs about ten million five hundred thousand dollars annually to operate the river's navigational system but the total budget for the current fiscal year was only a little over seven million dollars and that the Corps cannot afford to continue the current level of operation; and

WHEREAS, oil businesses in Arkansas have already abandoned river traffic in favor of a pipeline because of the uncertainty over the future of dredging operations by the Corps and public officials in southern Arkansas say at least four economic development prospects have been lost during the past year because of concerns over the river's navigability; and

WHEREAS, D&J Construction in West Monroe, which has shipped rock to its river yard for nearly three decades, and Ouachita Terminals, which is trying to develop waterborne containers to develop the water side of the Greater Ouachita Port, both maintain that shipping companies are not going to make a substantial investment to establish lines to the Greater Ouachita Port if the river is no longer navigable; and

WHEREAS, if the Corps cuts back its operations, industries like Graphic Packaging in West Monroe would no longer have access to the millions of gallons of water it pulls from the river each day to run its operations; and

WHEREAS, officials in Monroe and West Monroe insist that cutting the Corps' operations would produce small savings, while such reductions on the river could lead to the abandonment of two hundred sixty million dollars in infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, many in Louisiana view the reduction of the Corps' operations on the river with great concern and say that the entire project, along with millions in business dollars and jobs, would be lost in less than a decade.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to maintain its current hours of operations at its four locks and dams on the Ouachita River and find a funding source for continuing its current level of operations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Colonel Jeffrey R. Eckstein, district commander for the Vicksburg District, U.S. Corps of Engineers.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE