

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 132

By Holt

A RESOLUTION supporting the reestablishment of native species on coal-mined lands in Tennessee.

WHEREAS, the State of Tennessee seeks to forge a responsible relationship between natural resource development - as a driver of employment, taxes, and induced economic activity - and environmental stewardship; and

WHEREAS, the State of Tennessee desires to facilitate the successful development of Tennessee's coal reserves to provide energy independence for the United States of America and provide reliable, affordable energy for our citizens; and

WHEREAS, the State of Tennessee operates an environmentally-sensitive coal mining program that protects water quality through a mandated stream buffer zone; and

WHEREAS, modern mining methods and reclamation practices serve as fertile ground for the reintroduction of native species once so prevalent in the forests of Appalachia; and

WHEREAS, the coal mining industry is actively involved in efforts to reestablish the American chestnut tree that once ruled the forests of Appalachia; and

WHEREAS, reclaimed coal mines have facilitated the reintroduction of more than 400 elk into Tennessee through industry-supported efforts, including the planting of special vegetation and cooperative wildlife management agreements with landowners; and

WHEREAS, reclaimed coal mines offer the opportunity for the development of outdoor recreational activities, such as all-terrain vehicle and horseback riding trails and Tennessee's first and only public elk viewing area, Hatfield Knob Wildlife Viewing Area, which draw in and promote tourism; and

WHEREAS, reclaimed coal-mined lands offer a chance to reestablish a diverse variety of native plant and animal species in the State's coalfields; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee contains an enormous amount of biodiversity in plant and animal species; and

WHEREAS, the State of Tennessee has established a number of references for identifying native species at risk, threatened, or endangered; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee's natural beauty draws tourists from around the region, country, and world, and the reestablishment of native species can continue to improve tourism opportunities along with environmentally-desired outcomes; and

WHEREAS, certain native plant and animal species are being threatened by both natural and manmade influences; and

WHEREAS, public-private partnerships bring about opportunities for the State to complete projects for the public good while accessing private funds; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that the Department of Environment and Conservation and the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement are encouraged to work together with the purpose of studying the feasibility of reestablishing plant and animal species native to Tennessee's coalfield areas. The goal of this cooperation shall be to encourage appropriate reclamation methods of coal mined lands in order to maximize the reestablishment of native species and to promote the environmental stewardship of reclamation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an enrolled copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Commissioner of Environment and Conservation and the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement.