

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 172

BY SENATORS WHITE AND HEWITT

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Department of Transportation and Development, in consultation with other state agencies, to study construction or maintenance impacts, including channelization, dredging, and clearing and snagging activities, upon river basins and water transmission, and provide recommendations to establish, implement, and enforce floodplain management plans for each watershed in Louisiana.

WHEREAS, during the last eighteen months the state of Louisiana and its citizens have experienced numerous major flooding events; and

WHEREAS, on February 5, 2016, President Obama declared a state of emergency in seven Louisiana parishes affected by damage from thunderstorms and flooding from the Mississippi River; and

WHEREAS, that declaration provided federal funds to supplement the state and local response efforts in the areas affected by flooding between December 28, 2015, through February 1, 2016; and

WHEREAS, on March 9, 2016, Governor Edwards declared a state of emergency in response to a strong upper level storm that brought heavy rainfall, flash flooding, river flooding, and damaging winds; and

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2016, President Obama declared a major disaster existed in Louisiana and ordered federal aid to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the area affected by severe storms and flooding that began on March 8, 2016; and

WHEREAS, thirty-seven parishes were listed under the federal major disaster declaration; and

WHEREAS, in the March flooding event, more than twenty-one thousand households had verified losses according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and another six thousand one hundred forty-three structures flooded, including businesses, churches, and schools; and

WHEREAS, in August 2016, Louisiana experienced the worst natural disaster in the country since Hurricane Sandy as a slow moving system produced up to 20 inches of rainfall in some areas of the state, providing more than seven trillion gallons of new surface water; and

WHEREAS, rivers rose rapidly and inundated homes, roads, and businesses within hours, and more than a half dozen river gauges set new record highs, in some cases by as much as six feet; and

WHEREAS, in the August flooding event, more than ninety-one thousand households had verified losses according to FEMA; and

WHEREAS, the March and August flooding events combined to impact one hundred ninety-three thousand families across fifty-six of the sixty-four parishes; and

WHEREAS, when the state and political subdivisions are contemplating a construction or maintenance project that may impact a waterway, the entities must consider the flooding impacts the project may have on the waterway, other local political subdivisions, or other waterways, both upstream and downstream; and

WHEREAS, existing practices across varying levels of government do not provide for comprehensive floodplain management that is necessary to properly address drainage issues as land is developed; and

WHEREAS, one of the missions of the Department of Transportation and Development is to manage the water resources of the state and to implement projects related to statewide flood control.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Department of Transportation and Development, in consultation with other state agencies, to study construction or maintenance impacts, including channelization, dredging, and clearing and snagging activities, upon river basins and water transmission, and provide recommendations to establish, implement, and enforce floodplain management plans for each watershed in Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) shall seek input and advice from the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency

Preparedness, the office of community development within the division of administration, the Water Institute of the Gulf, local political subdivisions, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the DOTD, in collaboration with the referenced entities, shall report their initial findings and recommendations to the senate and house committees on natural resources and the senate and house committees on transportation, highways and public works not later than June 1, 2018, and the report shall contain, at a minimum, recommendations for any statutory or regulatory changes and any fiscal considerations. The final report shall be submitted to the committees not later than February 1, 2019.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE