

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 61

BY SENATOR HEWITT AND REPRESENTATIVES GAROFALO AND WHITE

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 determines is 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 the southeastern part of Louisiana and in east-central and southwest Mississippi, and drains an area of 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.

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 appointed by the president of the Senate, who shall serve as chairperson.

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

(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 the 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 the 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 meetings at times as it may determine are 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 Senate Committee on Natural Resources, the Senate Committee on Transportation, Highways and Public Works, the House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment, and the House Committee on Transportation, Highways and Public Works, by July 1, 2025, and upon submission of the report, the task force shall cease to exist.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES