HLS 24RS-3759 ORIGINAL

2024 Regular Session

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HOUSE STUDY REQUEST NO. 7

BY REPRESENTATIVE COATES

ENVIRONMENT: Requests the House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment study wetland assimilation projects

A STUDY REQUEST

2 To the House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment to study wetland 3 assimilation projects and to report its findings to the House of Representatives prior 4 to the convening of the 2025 Regular Session. 5 WHEREAS, wetland assimilation projects, where treated wastewater is discharged into natural wetlands, are presented as a method to improve and nourish wetlands in a state 6 7 of deterioration and decay through prevention of the intrusion of saltwater into freshwater 8 habitats while providing nutrients to accelerate growth of vegetation and such projects have 9 the additional benefit of providing a cost-savings to municipalities as they modify their 10 wastewater treatment systems; and 11 WHEREAS, prolonged or excessive nutrient loading may adversely affect the 12 assimilation area, with organic decomposition and loss of root matter contributing to 13 decreasing soil stability and shearing outcomes that are contrary to other efforts engaged in 14 by the state of Louisiana in its coastal protection and restoration efforts; and 15 WHEREAS, healthy freshwater wetlands benefit from dry periods and seasonal high 16 and low water flow but continuous discharge of municipal wastewater into freshwater marsh 17 or forested wetlands can cause ponding, reduced plant growth rates, reduced regeneration 18 rates, and undesirable shifts in species composition resulting in loss of wetland values; and 19 WHEREAS, several organizations active in Louisiana's conservation and coastal protection efforts have expressed concerns about the long-term overall impacts of wetland 20 21 assimilation projects and the continued approval of such projects without an independent HLS 24RS-3759

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1 review of the true outcomes of such projects and the cumulative impacts of a multitude of

- 2 such projects; and
- WHEREAS, an in-depth review of the overall and long-term benefits, risks, and
- 4 hazards of these projects and an independent analysis of current projects that have
- 5 observable wetland habitat deterioration is necessary to determine whether assimilation
- 6 projects meet the program goal of benefitting wetlands.
- 7 THEREFORE, the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana requests
- 8 the House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment to study wetland assimilation
- 9 projects and to report its findings to the House of Representatives prior to the convening of
- the 2025 Regular Session.

DIGEST

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HSR 7 Original

2024 Regular Session

Coates

Requests the House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment to study wetland assimilation projects and to report its findings to the House of Representatives prior to the convening of the 2025 R.S.