HLS 19RS-1013 ENGROSSED

2019 Regular Session

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HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 42

BY REPRESENTATIVE ZERINGUE

ENVIRONMENT/WATER: Urges and requests the Department of Environmental Quality to study the overall impacts of wetland assimilation projects prior to approval of additional such projects

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2 To urge and request the Department of Environmental Quality to study the overall impacts 3 of wetland assimilation projects prior to approval of additional such projects. 4 WHEREAS, wetland assimilation projects, where treated wastewater is discharged 5 into natural wetlands, are presented as a method to improve and nourish wetlands in a state 6 of deterioration and decay through prevention of the intrusion of saltwater into freshwater 7 habitats while providing nutrients to accelerate growth of vegetation and such projects have 8 the additional benefit of providing a cost-savings to municipalities as they modify their 9 wastewater treatment systems; and 10 WHEREAS, most of the wetland assimilation projects permitted to date have used 11 waste stabilization ponds that discharge into natural wetland systems, which have been 12 inappropriately deemed equivalent to secondarily treated effluent standards despite not 13 meeting alternative state requirements; and 14 WHEREAS, although the Department of Environmental Quality has noted that 15 wetland assimilation projects are designed for the assimilation of wastewater effluents, and 16 not for the treatment of effluent, nine of the eleven permitted projects allow for higher 17 discharge of biological oxygen demand (BOD) and total suspended solids (TSS) than for 18 facilities discharging into surface waters; and 19 WHEREAS, prolonged or excessive nutrient loading may adversely affect the 20 assimilation area, with organic decomposition and loss of root matter contributing to

1 decreasing soil stability and shearing outcomes that are contrary to other efforts engaged in 2 by the state of Louisiana in its coastal protection and restoration efforts; and 3 WHEREAS, healthy freshwater wetlands benefit from dry periods and seasonal high 4 and low water flow but continuous discharge of municipal wastewater into freshwater marsh 5 or forested wetlands can cause ponding, reduced plant growth rates, reduced regeneration 6 rates, and undesirable shifts in species composition resulting in loss of wetland values; and 7 WHEREAS, several organizations active in Louisiana's conservation and coastal 8 protection efforts have expressed concerns about the long-term overall impacts of wetland 9 assimilation projects and the continued approval of such projects without an independent 10 review of the true benefits of such projects and the cumulative impacts of a multitude of such 11 projects, and those organizations have requested an in-depth review of overall long-term 12 benefits of these projects and an independent analysis of current projects that have 13 observable wetland habitat deterioration that may not meet the program's goals to benefit 14 wetlands. 15 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby 16 urge and request the Department of Environmental Quality to study the overall impacts of 17 wetland assimilation projects prior to approval of additional such projects and to provide a 18 comprehensive program evaluation report in consultation with the Department of Natural 19 Resources, the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, and the Department of Health to the 20 House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment and the Senate Committee on 21 Natural Resources by February 1, 2020. 22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the

DIGEST

secretary of the Department of Environmental Quality.

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

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Urges and requests the Dept. of Environmental Quality to study the overall impacts of wetland assimilation projects prior to approval of additional such projects and to submit a report by Feb. 1, 2020.