

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 18

BY SENATOR MORRISH

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the office of coastal protection and restoration and the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to jointly study shoreline protection, effects on marine species diversity and habitat quality, and economic and other ecosystem service values of the Sabine Reef.

WHEREAS, a joint study is needed to determine ecosystem service values associated with approximately fifteen hundred acres of vertical oyster reef structures known as the Sabine Reef in Sabine Lake; and

WHEREAS, the coastal area has dramatically changed with twenty-three hundred square miles of documented land loss since the 1930's due to subsidence, changes in river management, and other natural causes and events that threaten the sustainability of the coastal ecosystem and dependent uses; and

WHEREAS, oyster reefs provide shoreline protection, wave attenuation, improvements to water quality, and improved habitat diversity for wildlife populations, including oysters, shrimp, crabs, commercial and recreational fish species, and birds; and

WHEREAS, the Sabine Reef is approximately fifteen hundred acres that have not been harvested since 1966 due to water quality problems in the area and may be the largest remaining vertical reef in North America; and

WHEREAS, in March 2011, the United States Food and Drug Administration issued a health clearance for the Sabine Reef from previous water quality issues and management decisions regarding the future of the reef; and

WHEREAS, the commercial oyster industry is requesting that the Sabine Reef be opened to harvest, citing the challenges associated with the Deepwater Horizon oil leak incident and subsequent impacts to the commercial harvesting and processing of oysters; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's Comprehensive Master Plan for Sustainable Coastal Ecosystems requires integration and consideration of all state coastal actions and policies; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission, in recognition of numerous stakeholders' interest and concerns regarding management of the Sabine Reef, has established an advisory committee to identify issues to be considered and make recommendations.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request that the office of coastal protection and restoration and the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to jointly study shoreline protection, effects on marine species diversity and habitat quality, and economic and other ecosystem service values of the Sabine Reef located in Sabine Lake and report their findings and recommendations to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and the House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment by February 1, 2012.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the executive director of the office of coastal protection and restoration and the secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES