ENROLLED

Regular Session, 2011

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 168

BY REPRESENTATIVE THIBAUT

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Department of Natural Resources, in conjunction with the Pointe Coupee Parish Police Jury, to assume the role of lead local project sponsor for the False River Aquatic Resources Ecosystem Restoration Project.

WHEREAS, False River, an oxbow lake formed from a bend in the Mississippi River is located in Pointe Coupee Parish; and

WHEREAS, False River, a lake well known for its natural scenic beauty, is an important natural resource that supports an abundance of recreational activities, including fishing, swimming, waterskiing, boating, birding, and waterfowl hunting; and

WHEREAS, these scenic and recreational opportunities are critical components necessary to the economic well-being of the region surrounding the lake and, indeed, to the state as a whole; and

WHEREAS, water quality issues arising from a variety of causes, including increased runoff from the development of the surrounding land, increased discharge of wastewater as a result of that increased development, and the sediment and nutrient content of runoff from agricultural development including an estimated twenty-eight thousand tons of silt deposited annually into the lake, have impacted and continue to threaten and degrade the value of this valuable resource and the economic activity that is dependent upon the lake; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to address these issues, in 2001, the United States Army Corps of Engineers began the "False River Aquatic Resources Ecosystem Restoration Project" which ". . . would enhance and restore the False River ecosystem by enhancing fisheries and wildlife habitat, addressing sedimentation and associated water quality issues in False River. . ."; and

WHEREAS, although it began in 2001 with an allocation of ten thousand dollars which resulted in the Project Restoration Plan being completed and submitted to the Corps' Mississippi Valley Division for approval in August 2002, the required preliminary ecosystem study by the Corps went unfunded from 2003 through 2009 and therefore has been stalled; and

WHEREAS, the Corps recently announced an allocation of four hundred thousand dollars for the project, an amount that represents the total sum necessary to complete the preliminary ecosystem study for the False River Ecosystem Restoration Project; and

WHEREAS, although the extreme riverine flooding experienced in Louisiana during the spring of 2011 necessitated the temporary reassignment of personnel working to complete the report, once again delaying the release of the preliminary findings by at least three months, the Corps has announced that the preliminary finds are on schedule to be released in July with the final report to be released in February 2012; and

WHEREAS, the final report is expected to include recommendations for how best to restore the lake and should provide an estimated cost for those restoration efforts; and

WHEREAS, so far, funding for this project has come from the Corps' Continuing Authority Program, a limited funding source that puts the False River project in competition with other projects and which will necessitate a thirty-five percent funding match from the local sponsor; and

WHEREAS, recent estimates of the potential local match hover around the two point five million dollar range; and

WHEREAS, while it is essential to conduct a careful, deliberate, scientific study to develop a sound and lasting solution to the deterioration of the False River ecosystem, it is also essential that the Corps finish their study as expeditiously as possible in order to preserve, protect, and enhance the resources now and for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, although there are many state and local agencies, including the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Health and Hospitals, and the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, with expertise, knowledge, and resources essential to identify and evaluate the problems present in the False River ecosystem, the Department of Natural Resources and the Pointe Coupee

Parish Police Jury have been designated as the local sponsors for the "False River Aquatic Resources Ecosystem Restoration Project"; and

WHEREAS, it is important that the designated local sponsors of the project bring together all the appropriate state and local governments together with all the various stakeholders interested in the restoration of False River to identify the problems, determine solutions, and implement remedies to restore, preserve, and enhance the health and sustainability of the False River ecosystem.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Department of Natural Resources, in conjunction with the Pointe Coupee Parish Police Jury, to assume the role of lead local project sponsor for the "False River Aquatic Resources Ecosystem Restoration Project" and to coordinate other state agencies, local governmental agencies, and stakeholder groups in order to help expedite the efforts by the United States Army Corps of Engineers to restore the False River ecosystem.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Natural Resources and the Pointe Coupee Parish Police Jury seek input and advice from other state agencies, including but not limited to the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Health and Hospitals, and the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, to assist the United States Army Corps of Engineers as it conducts the study of the False River ecosystem and to provide assistance and support for the implementation for the restoration plans recommended in the report to be issued by the Corps in January 2012 and that those agencies provide such assistance, input, and support.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the secretary of the Department of Natural Resources, the Pointe Coupee Parish Police Jury, the commissioner of agriculture and forestry, and the secretaries for the departments of environmental quality, health and hospitals, and wildlife and fisheries.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE