AN ACT

To amend and reenact R.S. 17:201 and to repeal R.S. 17:200 and 202 through 220 and R.S. 36:651(E)(2), relative to the Louisiana Environmental Education Commission; to abolish the commission and its functions; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

Section 1. R.S. 17:201 is hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows:

§201. Legislative findings. Environmental education

A. It is in the public interest that a comprehensive and balanced environmental education initiative be undertaken that will result in environmentally literate citizens who will effectively and constructively solve existing environmental problems, prevent new ones, and maintain a sustainable environment for future generations. The appropriate audiences for environmental education include formal education, business, government, nonprofit organizations, and citizens.

B. Characteristics of an environmentally literate citizenry must include:

(1) An understanding of the right of every person to own, control, use, enjoy, and dispose of private property, subject only to reasonable regulation.

(2) An understanding that the Louisiana Constitution requires the use of a balancing process in environmental protection decisions in which environmental costs and benefits must be given full and careful consideration along with economic, social, and other factors.
Ecological literacy, including a basic understanding of ecological principles and concepts and their application, the cause and effect relationship between human health and the environment, and the economics of that relationship.

Civic literacy, including a basic understanding of the decisionmaking processes of governments, business, and other social, political, and economic institutions impinging upon environmental issues.

Mathematical, technological, and scientific literacy, including an understanding of the basic concepts of mathematics and science to evaluate environmental problems and make sound decisions regarding their resolution.

Personal and social action skills, including developing and using skills such as problem solving, risk analysis, and integrating diverse perspectives to understand and contribute to decisionmaking processes.

Attitudes, including the expression of care for other humans, present and future, and for other components of the environment. These attitudes also affect understanding of ecology and civic responsibility.

Motivation for action, including the commitment to act for a healthy environment based on one's attitudes, knowledge, and skills.

The legislature declares that it is the intent of this Subpart Section to create a balanced statewide environmental education program for the purpose of identifying the needs and setting priorities for environmental education within the state.

B. As used in this Section, the following terms have the following meanings unless the context requires otherwise:

(1) "Department" means the state Department of Education.

(2) "Section" means the environmental education section located within and acting through the department.

C.(1) There is hereby created, within the department, the environmental education section which shall perform responsibilities relative to education as provided for in this Section. Subject to the appropriation of funds, staff may be
employed under the direction and control of the state superintendent of education and
in accordance with policies of the department.

(2) The section shall implement the provisions of this Section relative to
environmental education, including the following:

(a) Implement, administer, and evaluate a grants program benefitting
kindergarten through twelve students, graduate researchers, professional
development, and other initiatives supporting environmental education.

(b) Promote and aid in the establishment and assessment of elementary and
secondary school environmental education programs.

(c) Promote and aid in the development of preservice and in-service
environmental education programs for environmental educators, formal and
nonformal, through cooperation with the Board of Regents and the state's colleges
and universities.

(d) Cooperate with state and federal agencies and the private sector in
developing, promoting, conducting, and evaluating programs of environmental
education.

(e) Function as an environmental education clearinghouse by reviewing and
recommending environmental education resources, establishing an electronic
capacity to disseminate databases of environmental education information, formal
and informal, networking with interstate and federal programs, and cooperating with
state and federal agencies and organizations in the development and distribution of
an environmental education newsletter.

(f) Promote the development of cooperative environmental education
initiatives with the private sector.

(g) Initiate, develop, implement, assess, and market nonformal
environmental education programs; assess environmental education curricula;
promote state government and private sector policy that is consistent with the
environmental education strategic plan; and coordinate nonformal environmental
education with elementary, secondary, and postsecondary environmental education programs.

(h) Coordinate environmental education conferences to assist in the dissemination, development, and achievement of the state's environmental education goals.

D. The section may accept, administer, and make use of federal, state, local, and private appropriations, public and private grants, and donations, and when it is deemed appropriate and feasible, to accept nonmonetary funding in the form of services or equipment for use in connection with any of the programs or purposes of this Section.

E. Preservice teacher education developed pursuant to Subparagraph (C)(2)(c) of this Section shall consist of the following components:

(1) Definition of the environmental education competencies that teacher candidates are expected to acquire.

(2) Definition of the acceptable approaches that can be used to develop the competencies.

(3) A timeline for implementing the required preservice education programs at colleges and universities.

F. In-service teachers shall develop the same environmental education competencies specified for preservice teachers as follows:

(1) School districts shall be encouraged to develop environmental staff development plans and seek matching funds for implementation of these plans from the state grants program.

(2) The Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the Louisiana Department of Health, the office of state parks within the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Department of Education shall develop and publicize environmental education teacher in-service
or professional internships related to their mission and shall be encouraged to
develop such programs if they do not exist.

G. Postsecondary education institutions shall implement programs that
encourage environmental literacy and provide opportunities for environmental
stewardship among the student population.

H.(1) Nonformal education refers to education conducted outside of
traditional formal education systems.

(2) All state agencies conducting nonformal environmental education
programs shall:

(a) Identify target audiences and programs.

(b) Promote coordination and communications between the agencies
conducting environmental education activities.

(c) Conduct a periodic review of nonformal environmental education offered
by the department throughout the state.

(d) Maintain an inventory of its environmental education materials,
programs, and resources.

Section 2. R.S. 17:200 and 202 through 220 and R.S. 36:651(E)(2) are hereby
repealed in their entirety.

DIGEST

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)]

HB 82 Original 2023 Regular Session Edmonston

Abstract: Abolishes the Louisiana Environmental Education Commission.

Present law creates the La. Environmental Education Commission. Requires the
commission to:

(1) Develop, review, approve, and transmit a plan for environmental education to the
governor, the legislature, and the public.

(2) Advise and assist the state superintendent of education and other state agencies on
policies and practices needed to provide environmental education.

(3) Serve as a forum for the discussion and study of problems that affect the
environment and environmental education.

CODING: Words in struck through type are deletions from existing law; words underscored
are additions.
(4) Assist and obtain information from various sources to coordinate the environmental education programs of federal and state agencies.

(5) Investigate establishing an environmental education grant program.

(6) Develop a curriculum framework for environmental education.

(7) Participate in the development of guidelines for incorporating environmental education into teacher education requirements.

(8) Maintain an inventory of nonformal education programs.

Proposed law abolishes the commission and its functions.

(Amends R.S. 17:201; Repeals R.S. 17:200 and 202-220 and R.S. 36:651(E)(2))