

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 124

BY SENATOR LAMBERT

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the United States Army Corps of Engineers to consider additional water diversion projects to help manage high water issues on the Mississippi River in addition to the large scale water diversion projects such as the Bonnet Carré and Morganza spillways.

WHEREAS, May 28, 2019, marked the one hundred forty-fourth consecutive day with the Mississippi River in Baton Rouge at or above flood stage, breaking the record established during the Great Flood of 1927; and

WHEREAS, the 1927 flood was the catalyst that prompted the construction of the federal levee system for the Mississippi River; and

WHEREAS, these continuous high water marks on the Mississippi River have forced the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and area levee districts into a continuous flood-fight mode since late October; and

WHEREAS, the Bonnet Carré Spillway has been opened twice this year for a total of fifty-nine days as of May 28, 2019, and three times in the last four years, to relieve pressure on the New Orleans area levees; and

WHEREAS, these frequent extended openings of the Bonnet Carré Spillway have diverted as much as two hundred thousand cubic feet per second of freshwater into Lake Ponchartrain, negatively impacting saltwater fisheries, crab population, and oyster beds; and

WHEREAS, the planned opening of the Morganza Spillway could have a devastating impact on people, property, and wildlife in the Atchafalaya Basin; and

WHEREAS, the National Weather Service's Lower Mississippi River Forecast Center indicates that the current record-setting flood stage duration could last well into late June, possibly even into July; and

WHEREAS, the continuous high water on the Mississippi River has increased river currents, negatively affecting navigation and making marine commerce more dangerous; and

WHEREAS, the continuous high water on the Mississippi is causing stress to the levee system protecting millions of Louisianians; and

WHEREAS, the hypoxia, or bottom area of low oxygen, in Louisiana coastal waters west of the Mississippi River known as the "Dead Zone" is approximately the size of Delaware, measuring two thousand seven hundred twenty square miles; and

WHEREAS, additional, smaller, more consistent, controlled, and predictable diversion would reduce the need of resorting to such drastic measures as opening the Bonnet Carré and Morganza spillways; and

WHEREAS, implementing multiple mid-range diversion from the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans could alleviate the stress on Louisiana's levee system, assist marine navigation by decreasing river currents during high water events, and restore wetlands with sediment currently carried off the Continental Shelf.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby request the United States Army Corps of Engineers to consider additional water diversion projects to help manage high water issues on the Mississippi River in addition to the large scale water diversion projects such as the Bonnet Carré and Morganza spillways.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Colonel Michael Clancy, New Orleans District Commander, United States Army Corps of Engineers.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES