

2020 First Extraordinary Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 24

BY REPRESENTATIVE WHEAT

COASTAL RES/WETLANDS: Urges and requests the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority to work with the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to develop integrated coastal protection projects aimed at preserving and maintaining healthy estuarine and essential fish habitat in and around Lake Pontchartrain

1 A RESOLUTION

2 To urge and request the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority to work with the
3 Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to develop integrated coastal protection
4 projects aimed at preserving and maintaining healthy estuarine and essential fish
5 habitat in and around Lake Pontchartrain.

6 WHEREAS, the Lake Pontchartrain Basin comprises over ten thousand square miles
7 of land in southeast Louisiana and Mississippi; and

8 WHEREAS, the Lake Pontchartrain Basin is one of the largest estuarine systems in
9 the Gulf of Mexico containing over twenty-two essential habitats and encompassing both
10 rural and urban land use in the most densely populated region in Louisiana, including metro
11 New Orleans and the state capital, Baton Rouge; and

12 WHEREAS, the Lake Pontchartrain Basin is the heart of the region's commercial and
13 recreational fisheries and the center of southeastern Louisiana's unique cultural heritage, and
14 the estuary's habitats provide important ecological, cultural, and economic benefits to the
15 entire region; and

16 WHEREAS, estuaries and coastal waters provide an essential habitat for seventy-five
17 percent of America's commercial fish catch and eighty to ninety percent of the recreational
18 fish catch while at the same time, estuaries protect landowners from flood waters and act as
19 storm buffers, guarding residential areas from hurricanes; and

1 WHEREAS, in 2019 high water in the state's rivers, particularly the Mississippi
2 River, created a situation where the Bonnet Carré Spillway, located on the southwestern
3 edge of Lake Pontchartrain, was open for one hundred twenty-two days diverting large
4 amounts of fresh water into the brackish water of Lake Pontchartrain; and

5 WHEREAS, the Bonnet Carré Spillway was opened in 2016, 2018, 2019, and again
6 in the spring of 2020, dumping fresh water into Lake Pontchartrain each time and causing
7 extreme damage to the freshwater fisheries of the lake; and

8 WHEREAS, while acknowledging the necessity of operating the spillway for flood
9 control as it was intended, we must also look at efforts to mitigate the damages done to the
10 estuary and restoring the fisheries impacted by that operation; and

11 WHEREAS, past efforts to preserve and develop estuarine habitat have included the
12 establishment of rock jetties to protect the shoreline which have the added benefit of
13 harboring small fish and acting as a nursery for many species of fish and the establishment
14 of artificial reefs through deploying reef balls that encourage the biodiversity and
15 environmental quality of the lake through supplementing hard substratum; and

16 WHEREAS, efforts such as these would be of great benefit to the northwestern areas
17 of the lake, the areas most directly affected by the influx of fresh water into the lake; and

18 WHEREAS, under the 2019 Fisheries Disaster funding from the National Oceanic
19 and Atmospheric Administration, Louisiana has been allocated \$58 million for fisheries
20 recovery, some of which could be used by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the
21 Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority to improve essential fish habitat in Lake
22 Pontchartrain, particularly in the western portion of the lake which is the portion first
23 affected by the influx of fresh water from the Mississippi River; and

24 WHEREAS, in addition to the ecological aspects of the Pontchartrain Basin, there
25 has been an increase in human population surrounding the lake which has increased the
26 possibilities of flooding along the lakeshore with a concordant increase in economic impacts
27 from such flooding, some of which could be mitigated through preservation and
28 development of more estuarine habitat; and

29 WHEREAS, more frequent high water incidents are affecting the quality of life and
30 having negative economic impacts on the residents and businesses located around the lake,

1 impacts that could be mitigated through the implementation of thoughtful, scientifically-
2 based integrated coastal protection projects coordinated between the Coastal Protection and
3 Restoration Authority and the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries; and

4 WHEREAS, Lake Pontchartrain is not frequently thought of in terms of coastal
5 restoration but clearly lies in the coastal zone and is struggling with the same difficulties and
6 adversity from the same set of factors as the rest of coastal Louisiana in the efforts to
7 preserve and maintain both the ecological health of the area and the protection of the
8 residents and businesses that reside near and benefit from the lake.

9 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the
10 Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Coastal Protection and Restoration
11 Authority to work with the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to develop integrated
12 coastal protection projects aimed at preserving and maintaining healthy estuarine and
13 essential fish habitat in and around Lake Pontchartrain.

14 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the
15 chairman of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority and secretary of the
16 Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

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)]

HR 24 Original

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