

2021 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 88

BY REPRESENTATIVES MARCELLE AND FREIBERG

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the commissioner of conservation to adopt any necessary rules and regulations in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, by 2026, to limit the withdrawal of groundwater by commercial or industrial facilities to five million gallons of groundwater per day, and to monitor and enforce those rules as it relates to the Southern Hills Aquifer.

WHEREAS, the people living in East Baton Rouge Parish are dependent on local groundwater resources from the Southern Hills Aquifer for safe drinking water; and

WHEREAS, major industries in East Baton Rouge Parish also use these groundwater resources for commercial purposes to secure jobs and economic growth for the region; and

WHEREAS, the main supplier of safe drinking water in East Baton Rouge Parish is the Baton Rouge Water Company, a privately-owned utility regulated by the Louisiana Public Service Commission; and

WHEREAS, as many as ninety thousand people in Ascension Parish also draw their safe drinking water from groundwater in East Baton Rouge Parish through the Baton Rouge Water Company's subsidiary, Ascension Water Company; and

WHEREAS, the United States Geological Survey (USGS), through numerous scientific studies and models, has identified serious water-level declines and saltwater intrusion in Baton Rouge aquifers; and

WHEREAS, the USGS has identified large groundwater withdrawals for public supply and industrial use in East Baton Rouge Parish as the cause of water-level declines and saltwater intrusion; and

WHEREAS, the USGS has stated that if groundwater withdrawals in Baton Rouge continue into the future at historic rates, saltwater intrusion will continue to occur; and

WHEREAS, the office of conservation has stated in a previous report to the legislature that without "publicly released plans for major groundwater pumpage reductions from the users in East Baton Rouge" groundwater use rates at the "present level or along a slightly upward trend seems a logical assumption, with all attendant consequences"; and

WHEREAS, the commissioner of conservation has the statutory authority to prevent or alleviate damaging saltwater movement or water-level decline and loss of sustainability in the state's aquifers and to determine areas of groundwater concern and designate critical areas of groundwater concern; and

WHEREAS, groundwater sustainability is defined in law as the development and use of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained for the present and future without causing unacceptable environmental, economic, social, or health consequences; and

WHEREAS, the office of conservation has stated in a previous report to the legislature that such "unacceptable effects on sustainability" already exist in East Baton Rouge Parish; and

WHEREAS, without limiting the industrial withdrawal of groundwater from the Southern Hills Aquifer, such "unacceptable effects on sustainability" and damaging saltwater movement and water-level decline will continue.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the commissioner of conservation to adopt any necessary rules and regulations in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, by 2026, to limit the withdrawal of groundwater by any commercial or industrial facility to five million gallons of groundwater per day, and to monitor and enforce those rules.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the commissioner of conservation.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES