

2021 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 26

BY REPRESENTATIVE COUSSAN

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) to conduct a study to determine the final destination of oyster shells removed from Louisiana waters and submit a written report of its findings to the House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment not later than January 5, 2022.

WHEREAS, oysters contribute to healthy estuarine ecosystems by providing habitat for a variety of commercially and ecologically important species; and

WHEREAS, oysters are a valuable commodity owned by the state of Louisiana on its leased water bottom and public oyster seed grounds throughout the coastal area; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana oysters are a commercially valuable species that have an economic impact of more than three hundred million dollars annually; and

WHEREAS, oyster reefs protect the coast against storm surge while simultaneously reducing coastal erosion; and

WHEREAS, natural oyster reefs in the Northern Gulf of Mexico have steeply declined from historic levels by fifty to eighty-five percent and are further threatened by climate change impacts and changing conditions in the ecosystem including changes in salinity, land loss, flooding events, hurricanes, and storm events; and

WHEREAS, the oyster population and their harvest is recognized as culturally, economically, and environmentally valuable by ongoing work by the Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group, the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration (RESTORE) Council and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation including the P&J Oyster Company and numerous oyster lease holder families; and

WHEREAS, oyster reefs, as shoreline protections, are recognized as an important method of restoration and protection against land loss as identified in the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority Coastal Master Plan and the LDWF Oyster Management Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana's (CRCL) Oyster Shell Recycling Program has prevented nearly ten million pounds of shell from entering landfills through recycling shell from New Orleans metro area restaurants since 2014; and

WHEREAS, recycled shell collected from shucking houses and restaurants is currently being used by the CRCL, the LDWF, and oyster farmers to rebuild oyster reefs for protection, habitat improvements, and harvest-related activities; and

WHEREAS, oyster shells are a valuable commodity owned by the state of Louisiana that should not be wasted; and

WHEREAS, oyster shell is a superior substrate for use in remote setting, clutching, and reef restoration activities; and

WHEREAS, oyster shell is also a valuable substrate for projects to build coastal resilience; and

WHEREAS, a study to determine how much shell is diverted to landfills or transported out of state has not been conducted in the past sixteen years.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to conduct a study to determine how many oyster shells are recycled or reused, transported out of state, or go into Louisiana landfills.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study shall determine what steps the agency recommends to further divert shells from landfills and into Louisiana waters to benefit the coastal ecosystem, coastal restoration, and protection, and to encourage oyster reef propagation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries shall submit a written report of its findings to the House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment and the Senate Committee on Natural Resources not later than January 5, 2022.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE