

2021 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 82

BY REPRESENTATIVE MINCEY

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development to coordinate a comprehensive assessment and study relative to managing, mitigating and adapting future flood risks in Livingston Parish.

WHEREAS, on April 5, 1983, rain began to fall in Livingston Parish and would continue to fall for fifty hours; and

WHEREAS, the 1983 flood would become the worst in history with homes and businesses flooded; and

WHEREAS, the Comite River crested at 29.7 feet and the Amite River crested at 41.5 feet a day later; and

WHEREAS, damage in Livingston Parish would reach eighty-three million eight hundred thousand dollars; and

WHEREAS, thirty-three years later in August 2016, historic flooding devastated South Louisiana after slow moving rains deposited more than thirty inches of rain in Livingston Parish; and

WHEREAS, the Amite River at Denham Springs crested at 46.20 feet; and

WHEREAS, ninety-four percent of the population of Livingston Parish was affected negatively by the 2016 flood; and

WHEREAS, ninety-four percent of the housing structures of Livingston Parish were affected negatively by the 2016 flood; and

WHEREAS, ninety-nine percent of the businesses of Livingston Parish were affected negatively by the 2016 flood; and

WHEREAS, sixteen elementary, junior high, and high school campuses were affected negatively by the 2016 flood; and

WHEREAS, this time the damage to Livingston Parish totaled at eight hundred million dollars; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana is regularly impacted by flooding throughout the state, and extreme water events have increased in both frequency and magnitude; and

WHEREAS, flooding after a rain event is not only related to the amount and intensity of rainfall received, but is also closely tied to land use, as well as policy and infrastructure decisions; and

WHEREAS, the median walls erected along Interstate 12 in Livingston Parish contributed to the risk of flooding in some areas by impairing the natural flow of water accumulating along the Interstate 12 corridor; and

WHEREAS, nothing has been done to increase the natural flow of water that could potentially accumulate as a result of the existing median wall along the Interstate 12 corridor; and

WHEREAS, multiple programs designed to mitigate and reduce flood risk are managed by different state agencies, local entities, and political subdivisions; and

WHEREAS, currently flood plains are impacted by actions and decisions made by a wide variety of people, laws, and regulatory bodies, including private landowners, municipalities, parish leaders, zoning laws, building codes, statewide regulations, and federal requirements. Existing practices across varying levels of government do not currently provide for the flood plain management that is necessary to properly address drainage issues as land is developed, including in the Amite River Basin; and

WHEREAS, the increasing frequency and extent of flood events demands heightened levels of coordination, information sharing, and response among state agencies and other stakeholders in order to more closely align resources and programs designed to protect communities from flooding and manage flood plains and watersheds effectively; and

WHEREAS, the state of Louisiana is committed to increasing community and regional resilience to flooding by managing, mitigating, and adapting to future flood risk; and

WHEREAS, the widespread disaster caused by the Great Flood of 2016 revealed how susceptible Louisiana's landscape is to flooding, particularly in Livingston Parish within the Amite River Basin; and

WHEREAS, the greatest impact of the Great Flood of 2016 was within the Amite River Basin located primarily in Livingston Parish and as such it is imperative to move forward with management of the Amite River Basin before the next flood event; and

WHEREAS, Livingston Parish's recovery from the Great Flood of 2016 is a result of the resilience and determination of its citizens; and

WHEREAS, a study of the management of the Amite River Basin would assist in the development of an overall scheme of management for all of the watershed identified in Louisiana by the Louisiana Watershed Initiative; and

WHEREAS, nothing in this House Concurrent Resolution is intended nor may be construed to impact any pending litigation in any way; and

WHEREAS, this Resolution, the required report, and all documentation, consideration, and discussion in relation thereto shall not be produced, introduced, or mentioned in any pending litigation; and

WHEREAS, the study would also assure that management of the Amite River Basin moves forward in an accelerated manner such that flood mitigation grant funds resulting from the Great Flood of 2016 could be used to implement projects in the watershed expeditiously and ahead of the next flood event in an effort to protect the safety and welfare of the citizens living and working in the Amite River Basin.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Department of Transportation and Development to coordinate a comprehensive assessment and study relative to managing, mitigating, and adapting future flood risks in Livingston Parish specifically as it relates to the median walls erected along the Interstate 12 corridor.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this comprehensive assessment and study on managing, mitigating, and adapting to flood risks in Livingston Parish shall include input from the following:

- (1) The Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority.
- (2) The Louisiana Water Resources Research Institute.

- (3) The Council on Watershed Management.
- (4) The Louisiana Office of Community Development.
- (5) The United States Army Corps of Engineers.
- (6) State and local political subdivisions in Livingston Parish.
- (7) Any additional stakeholders considered relevant by the Department of Transportation and Development.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department's study shall additionally accomplish the following:

- (1) Provide an assessment of the historical, existing and planned hurricane storm damage reduction, flood protection and drainage infrastructure and projects within Livingston Parish that clearly depicts which communities are protected by that infrastructure given hydrologic conditions.

- (2) Provide an assessment of which communities are currently providing funding for the operations and maintenance of associated flood protection and drainage infrastructure in Livingston Parish and which communities are not.

- (3) Develop overall strategies to promote and maintain the management of the Amite River Basin within Livingston Parish.

- (4) Develop engineering solutions to improve natural water flow along the Interstate 12 corridor with existing median walls which may additionally or alternatively include engineering solutions to retrofit existing median walls to improve the natural water flow along the Interstate 12 corridor.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study shall also include the following:

- (1) A review of the history of flood events in the Amite River Basin.
- (2) Use of the latest and most scientifically-reliable available data and technology.
- (3) Projection of costs associated with the recommended solutions.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Transportation and Development shall submit an update on the progress made with respect to the study to the legislature no later than sixty days prior to the 2022 Regular Session.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Transportation and Development shall submit a report of its study and recommendations for any statutory, rule,

regulation, or policy changes relative to management of the Amite River Basin to the legislature no later than sixty days prior to the 2023 Regular Session and deliver copies of the report to the president of the Senate, the speaker of the House of Representatives, the Senate Natural Resources Committee, the Senate Transportation, Highways and Public Works Committee, the House Natural Resources and Environment Committee, the House Transportation, Highways and Public Works Committee, the Louisiana Office of Community Development, the Council on Watershed Management, the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, and the secretary of the Department of Transportation and Development.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the Department of Transportation and Development.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE