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The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Senate Legislative Services. The keyword, summary, 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)]

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DIGEST

SB 97 Reengrossed

2025 Regular Session

Pressly

Present law provides for the jurisdiction and responsibilities of the Dept. of Transportation and Development and the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority concerning flood control, navigation, water resource management, and related infrastructure.

Proposed law creates the Coordinated Use of Resources for Recreation, Economy, Navigation, and Transportation Authority (the authority) as the primary entity responsible for integrated flood control, risk reduction, navigation, water resource management, and infrastructure projects specifically within the upland areas of the state, excluding areas under the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority.

Present law allows political subdivisions and port, navigation, and levee districts to pursue projects that are independent of the annual plan but consistent with the master plan.

Proposed law maintains present law and provides that establishment of the authority does not affect the powers and responsibilities of any political subdivision, port, or navigation or levee district, including an entity's authority as a local sponsor under a federal program. Further allows such entities to pursue projects that are independent of the annual plan but consistent with the master plan.

Proposed law establishes an appeals process for project excluded from the annual plan and a 60-day deadline for the authority to decide appeals.

Proposed law details the authority's jurisdiction, encompassing comprehensive integrated planning, prioritization, and implementation of flood protection, infrastructure development, economic advancement, navigation enhancement, and recreational improvement projects that are coordinated for efficiency. It explicitly grants the authority the power to manage water resources, ensure flood risk mitigation, and promote sustainable economic and recreational development.

Proposed law establishes the Coordinated Use of Resources for Recreation, Economy, Navigation, and Transportation Authority Board (the board), consisting of no more than 16 gubernatorial appointees, representing the Red River Waterway district, the office of multimodal commerce, statewide flood protection (chief resiliency officer), Dept. of Economic Development, North Louisiana Economic Partnership, Dept. of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism, ports located in upland parishes, up to two levee boards, executive branch members from local governments in upland parishes, Dept. of Agriculture and Forestry, and industry representatives, specifically the executive directors of the Red River Valley Association and Ouachita River Valley Association, and the Tensas Basin Levee District. Proposed law limits the board's composition to no more than two port directors and one levee board member.

Proposed law details the board's responsibilities, including developing, approving, and overseeing master and annual plans. Plans developed by the board require submission and approval by the House and Senate Committees on Natural Resources and Environment and the House and Senate Committees on Transportation, Highways, and Public Works. Legislative committees have the authority to approve, disapprove, or request revisions. Plans are subject to comprehensive public hearings, input from local authorities, and formal publication in the Louisiana Register and official parish journals.

Proposed law outlines comprehensive procedural guidelines for plan submission, legislative committee reviews, amendments, and final adoption. Plans must include clear justifications, projected public and private benefits, implementation schedules, and detailed monitoring and maintenance strategies.

Proposed law provides the executive director of the authority significant administrative and operational responsibilities, including oversight of project execution, budget management, personnel administration, and reporting requirements to both the board and the legislature annually. The executive director is appointed by the governor or, if not appointed, the director of public works may serve as executive director. Proposed law allows the executive director authority to employ personnel, delegate responsibilities, approve project plans, specifications, and budgets, and ensure compliance with the authority's master and annual plans.

Proposed law grants extensive powers to the authority to enter into contracts, partnerships, and cooperative agreements with federal, state, local governments, and private entities, allowing the acceptance and management of federal grants and matching funds. The authority is also empowered to administer infrastructure projects, perform detailed evaluations, and coordinate all related funding applications.

Proposed law does not apply to private projects that do not utilize public funds.

Proposed law allows emergency projects under authority jurisdiction to proceed under a declared emergency immediately upon written certification of the governor.

Proposed law mandates collaboration between the authority and the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, especially concerning statewide flood protection strategies. It specifies rigorous standards for project assessment, independent reviews, and transparent operations, including broadcasting and archiving board meetings.

Proposed law introduces an infrastructure priority program managed by the authority, designed to systematically evaluate, prioritize, and fund infrastructure projects submitted by political subdivisions, with explicit application criteria and a detailed public review process.

Proposed law is subject to appropriation of funds by the legislature.

Effective August 1, 2025.

(Amends R.S. 38:2(A)(2) and (3), 5.1, 6, 32(B)(3), 84(A) and (B), 111, 112, 214(C), and R.S. 49:214.6.6(A)(intro para) and (C), 220.41(D), 220.42(B)(5) and (7); adds R.S. 38:90.2(D), 214(D), 2351-2361, and R.S. 49:214.6.3(A)(5), 214.6.6(A)(5), 220.42(B)(9) and (10))

#### Summary of Amendments Adopted by Senate

##### Committee Amendments Proposed by Senate Committee on Natural Resources to the original bill

1. Makes technical amendments.
2. Specifies that nothing in the Chapter changes the authority of a political subdivision, port, or navigation or levee district that is a local sponsor under a federal program.
3. Defines "integrated" for coordination of planning, funding, construction and operation of projects for efficiency.
4. Specifies that nothing in the Chapter applies to private projects not utilizing public funds.
5. Provides that entities may pursue projects independent of the annual plan but consistent with the master plan.
6. Provides that nothing in the Chapter diminishes or impairs the authority of port commissions or levee, drainage, or navigation districts in the upland area.
7. Provides an appeals process for projects excluded from the annual plan and a 60-day decision deadline.
8. Provides that emergency projects may proceed immediately under a declared emergency with the governor's certification.

##### Senate Floor Amendments to engrossed bill

1. Makes technical amendments.
2. Increases board membership to 16, with members nominated from up to 2 levee boards.
3. Adds the Tensas Basin Levee District to board membership.
4. Makes Act subject to appropriation of funds.