

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 115

BY SENATOR THOMPSON AND REPRESENTATIVE ANDERS

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To establish the Lake Providence Watershed Council and to provide for its membership and responsibilities.

WHEREAS, Lake Providence, an oxbow lake formed from a bend in the Mississippi River, is located in East Carroll Parish; and

WHEREAS, Lake Providence is a lake well known for its natural scenic beauty and for the fact that it is an important natural resource that supports an abundance of recreational activities, including fishing, swimming, waterskiing, boating, birding, and waterfowl hunting; and

WHEREAS, these scenic and recreational opportunities are critical components necessary to the economic well-being of the region surrounding the lake and to the state as a whole; and

WHEREAS, Article IX, Section 1 of the Constitution of Louisiana declares that the "natural resources of the state, including ... water ... shall be protected, conserved, and replenished insofar as possible and consistent with the health, safety, and welfare of the people. The legislature shall enact laws to implement this policy."; and

WHEREAS, the aquatic habitat of Lake Providence has been in a state of decline due to a variety of causes, including runoff from the development of the surrounding land, shoreline modifications and development, and the sediment and nutrient content of runoff from agricultural development being deposited annually into the lake; and

WHEREAS, these causes have negatively impacted and may continue to threaten and degrade the value of the lake as a valuable resource for wildlife habitat and as a source of economic activity that stimulates the surrounding area and should allow for the increased enjoyment of the lake; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Louisiana deserve to have a restored and sustainable Lake Providence and an essential step in that process is development and agreement on a practicable plan with achievable goals and measurable milestones of achievement for how best to restore and sustain the lake, along with an estimation of cost for those restoration efforts; and

WHEREAS, it is essential to conduct a careful and deliberate scientific study to develop a sound and lasting solution to the deterioration of the quality of the Lake Providence watershed and that action based on the recommendations developed in this study be implemented as expeditiously as possible in order to preserve, protect, and enhance these resources now and for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, there are several state and local agencies, including the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Health and Hospitals, and the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, with expertise, knowledge, and resources essential to identify and evaluate the problems present in the Lake Providence watershed; and

WHEREAS, it is important that the appropriate state and local governments work together with all the various stakeholders interested in the restoration of Lake Providence to identify the problems, determine solutions, and implement remedies to restore, preserve, and enhance the health and sustainability of the Lake Providence watershed; and

WHEREAS, to achieve the goal of a restored Lake Providence watershed as quickly and completely as possible, it is necessary to bring together the various government interests, as well as nongovernmental stakeholder organizations who possess specialized knowledge or whose members represent resource users in the Lake Providence watershed.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby create the Lake Providence Watershed Council, whose membership shall be as follows:

(1) The commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry or his designee within the department.

(2) The secretary of the Department of Environmental Quality or his designee within the department.

(3) The secretary of the Department of Health and Hospitals or his designee within the department.

(4) The secretary of the Department of Natural Resources or his designee within the department, who shall serve as vice chair of the council.

(5) The secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries or his designee within the department, who shall serve as chair of the council.

(6) The state senator from Senate District 34.

(7) The state representative from House District 21.

- (8) Two members to be selected by the senator from Senate District 34.
- (9) Two members appointed by the representative from House District 21.
- (10) Two members appointed by the East Carroll Parish Police Jury.
- (11) One member appointed by the East Carroll Parish Sheriff.
- (12) One member appointed by the mayor of the city of Lake Providence.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of the Lake Providence Watershed Council shall not be entitled to receive any salary, per diem, expenses, mileage, or other emollients of the office for their service on this commission, outside of any that they may be entitled to by virtue of their service in another public office.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the council shall, at the proper time, contact the following federal resource agencies to solicit their views and input with respect to completing the study requested by this Resolution:

- (1) United States Army Corps of Engineers.
- (2) United States Fish and Wildlife Service.
- (3) United States Geological Survey.
- (4) National Resources Conservation Service.
- (5) United States Department of Agriculture.
- (6) National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration.
- (7) United States Environmental Protection Agency.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of the Lake Providence Watershed Council shall meet as often as necessary to deliberate and produce a report that will identify, review, and evaluate management strategies to facilitate the goal of improving the aquatic habitat of Lake Providence; to provide recommendations for the optimal management and protection of the resources within the Lake Providence watershed, including but not limited to the following:

(1) The study of impacts and potential impacts to water quality, excess nutrient and sediment run-off management, shoreline modification management, watershed conservation measures, and innovative habitat restoration methodology.

(2) Coordination of federal, state, and local efforts to improve and protect water quality; surface water resource management and protection policies; recommendations for the optimal management and protection of the natural resources in the Lake Providence watershed.

(3) Recommended changes to current procedures and practices to make the management and protection of the natural resources in the Lake Providence watershed more efficient, comprehensive, and sustainable.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the report shall be submitted to the House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment and the Senate Committee on Environmental Quality no later than May 1, 2016, and that unless the Lake Providence Watershed Council is extended by further action of the Louisiana Legislature, it shall cease to exist December 31, 2016.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the commissioner of agriculture and forestry, the secretary of the Department of Environmental Quality, the secretary of the Department of Health and Hospitals, the secretary of the Department of Natural Resources, and the secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the East Carroll Parish Police Jury, the East Carroll Parish Sheriff, and the mayor of the city of Lake Providence.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES