

For October 2021 Delta Sierran

### **Legislature Regular Session**

This year's Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature left much to be desired, but then environmentally that is mostly true every year.

#### Good news!

One ray of sunshine that we hope to see come to fruition soon is the creation of the Outdoor Conservation Study Group whose objective is to study conservation funding mechanisms and programs. The Legislation - **HCR 55** - was authored by Representative Jerome Zeringue with the stated purpose of protecting Louisiana's "blessed with abundant fish and wildlife species and globally important lands and waters."

In case you think that our Legislature has suddenly actually had an awakening and realize the vital importance of saving our precious resources which "provide important habitats, improve the quality of drinking water, and support commercial and recreational activities..." – Uh, no.

There's money involved. In fact, big money; the Federal government has been giving other states, including our neighbors, funding for years to allow them to purchase and protect such habitats. As HCR 55 further states: "Louisiana is missing opportunities for matching funds available through public and private sources that could be used to conserve important lands and waters in urban and rural areas throughout our state."

The Study Group's first meeting is in early October. We will be attending and watching closely to see how the group, who's exact makeup remains unknown, actually pursues their directive. The Governor was allowed to appoint three members from the NGO community, but the Delta Chapter was not approached. We intend to stay abreast of the progress of this committee and will suggest potential areas of interest, however. Please contact us via your group or any ExCom member if you have suggestions for properties that might qualify.

**HCR37** by Representative Stephanie Hilferty was sent to the Secretary of State for enforcement. HCR 37 urges and requests the Department of Environmental Quality to implement measures to prevent the release and discharge of preproduction plastic from facilities into the waters of the state of Louisiana! The "nurdle" release on the Mississippi River instigated this good piece of legislation.

#### ---- And more good news!

**SB129** by Senator Fred Mills was signed by the Governor to become Act 98. It creates and provides for the Community Drinking Water Infrastructure Sustainability Act with which Rep. Mills hopes to help clean up drinking water supplies and infrastructure.

**SCR27** by Senator Patrick Page Cortez was sent to the Secretary of State for implementation. It memorializes Congress to reauthorize the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area program.

**HB26** and multiple other oil and gas giveaways – Good because they failed!

Representative Danny McCormick worked hard this past session to help the poor oil and gas industry profit just a few million more each year by the avoidance of severance taxes. For those of you not familiar with this tax it is the state tax imposed on the extraction of non-renewable natural resources that are intended for consumption in other states. The intended purpose is to pay citizens of the state for the resources that are permanently removed and therefore no longer available to help the state with future debts or needs. In other words, Rep. McCormick doesn't want the oil and gas industry to pay for

the oil and gas they profit greatly from in resale. HR 26 sailed through the House and Senate (ah, yes – who do they work for?), but thank goodness, was vetoed by the Governor.

Multiple House bills – only good because they didn't make it!

Representatives Phillip DeVillier and Jean-Paul Coussan also authored several bills each to help the poor oil and gas industry; they failed to get through the process, thank goodness. But watch these boys in future sessions – they love their fossil fuels!

Another “good” because they didn't happen are:

**HB149** by Representative Larry Frieman. It was vetoed by the Governor, which was a smart move as the bill was to restricting the Governor's powers in times of emergency declarations.

**SB203** by Senator Bodi White thought that having certain groundwater district commissioners restricted by provisions of the Code of Governmental Ethics was too hard on them. SB 203 flew through our so ethical legislature, but was vetoed by the Governor. Why can't a commissioner collect a paycheck from the company he's supposed to be regulating, huh? Why?!

Some not so good and outright bad bills that passed:

**HB239** by Representative Neil Riser was signed by the Governor to become Act 190. It's a bill to supposedly help protect our cypress forests on state properties, but is somewhat poorly worded and those who really want to protect cypress worry that it doesn't go far enough.

**SB97** by Representative Eddie Lambert was signed by the Governor to become Act 460. The Act provides for advanced recycling facilities and processes for the conversion of certain recovered materials (plastics). Definitely not the kind of recycling we want in Louisiana. It sounds good, but historically is a toxic and faulty process.

**SB8** by Senator Barrow Peacock was signed by the Governor to become Act 385. This and other bills put forward this session are attacks on the EV/hybrid and solar industries. Our progressive Legislature, always looking for a way to keep us in the dark ages. SB8 accelerates the sunset date for the tax credit for the conversion of alternative fuel vehicles. Other bills worked on limitations to solar development.

**HB113** by Representative Foy Gadberry was signed by the Governor to become Act 272. This is a break with the State Ethics Code. Act 272 now allows the spouse of a public servant to be employed by a person who has or who is seeking a business or financial relationship with the agency of the public servant under specified circumstances. Senator Sharon Hewitt suffered some indignities last year when it was revealed that a bill she was pushing hard also happened to give her husband a nice boost with the companies he represented. I guess they don't want her being embarrassed anymore as she has her sights lined up on the 2023 governor's race.

**SCR20** by Senator Barrow Peacock was sent to the Secretary of State. The Senate Concurrent Resolution expresses Louisiana's love and support for trade agreements between the United States and Taiwan, and celebrates the anniversary of the federal Taiwan Relations Act, and sister state relationship between Taiwan and Louisiana. Read: WE LOVE FORMOSA PLASTICS – DO WHATEVER YOU WANT HERE IN LA!

Sad news:

HB88 by Representative C. Denise Marcelle never made it out of House Natural Resources. No surprise there – it the bill to protect the drinking water supplies of the Southern Hills Aquifer, which provides drinking water to the citizens of Baton Rouge and east to the Pearl River. Pretty much every citizen living in BR or the Florida Parishes gets their drinking water from this aquifer, but so do the big industries along the Mississippi River. In fact, the draw down in the Baton Rouge area is so heavy that the aquifer is

beginning to suck in saline waters on that side. But you know, industry likes nice clean water, too, so even though many of them are located ON the Mississippi River, they only dump wastes into it, and continue to suck millions of gallons of potable water from the aquifer. Doesn't seem sensible, right? Call your legislator and gird your loins for the 2022 Legislative Session.