

1 SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 28

2 INTRODUCED BY M. BLASDEL

3
4 A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF
5 MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY OF EROSION ALONG THE FLATHEAD RIVER.
67 WHEREAS, the Flathead River originates in the MacDonald Range in southeastern British Columbia
8 before flowing south to Montana and emptying first into Flathead Lake and eventually into the Clark Fork River;
9 and10 WHEREAS, the three forks of the Flathead River and other tributaries comprise the Flathead River
11 basin watershed, which drains 8,587 square miles; and12 WHEREAS, the Flathead River is important for the natural and economic life of the Flathead Valley;
13 and14 WHEREAS, economists estimate significant fiscal impacts associated with the Flathead River and
15 Flathead Lake, including shoreline property values of \$6 billion to \$8 billion, nature-based tourism that
16 comprises roughly 20% of the \$7.8 billion local economy, and ecological services, such as water supply and
17 purification and flood and drought mitigation, that contribute more than \$20 billion in benefits to human society;
18 and19 WHEREAS, the lower Flathead River in Flathead County is bordered by private lands of agricultural,
20 ecological, and economic importance; and21 WHEREAS, the Flathead Lake Biological Station lists erosion as negatively impacting water quality on
22 Flathead Lake; and23 WHEREAS, the total maximum daily load report for Flathead Lake identifies suspended sediments,
24 caused by streambank erosion, to be a major contributor to phosphorus and nitrogen loading of Flathead Lake;
25 and26 WHEREAS, the Flathead-Stillwater watershed restoration plan identifies streambank erosion as a
27 major concern and calls for a significant reduction in streambank erosion; and

28 WHEREAS, many landowners and agricultural producers have recently reported substantial increases

1 in streambank damage due to erosion; and

2 WHEREAS, recreational use of the Flathead River has increased, including boat use, which causes
3 streambank erosion; and

4 WHEREAS, decreases in water quality have led federal and state agencies to classify Flathead Lake
5 as "impaired" due to human-caused increases in nutrients and sediment, requiring a long-term plan for water
6 quality protection; and

7 WHEREAS, excessive erosion to Flathead River streambanks endangers important agricultural lands,
8 water resources, riparian vegetation, and aquatic systems.

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10 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF
11 THE STATE OF MONTANA:

12 That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee or statutory
13 committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to review issues of erosion
14 along the Flathead River, including:

- 15 (1) compiling existing data on the causes and impacts of erosion on the Flathead River;
- 16 (2) determining the impacts of recreational boat use to streambanks on the lower Flathead River and
17 how to lessen those impacts; and
- 18 (3) examining information gaps and collecting additional data, as necessary.

19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the assigned interim committee include the participation of
20 stakeholders in this study process, including the Flathead Conservation District, Flathead River Commission,
21 Flathead Basin Commission, Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI
22 TRIBES, THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE OR GLACIER NATIONAL PARK, THE CITIES AND TOWNS IN THE FLATHEAD RIVER
23 BASIN, and at least two members of the public representing recreational and agricultural groups.

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the study is assigned to staff, any findings or conclusions be
25 presented to and reviewed by an appropriate committee designated by the Legislative Council.

26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review
27 requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2022.

28 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions,

1 comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 68th Legislature.

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