



A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY OF EROSION ALONG THE FLATHEAD RIVER.

WHEREAS, the Flathead River originates in the MacDonald Range in southeastern British Columbia before flowing south to Montana and emptying first into Flathead Lake and eventually into the Clark Fork River; and

WHEREAS, the three forks of the Flathead River and other tributaries comprise the Flathead River basin watershed, which drains 8,587 square miles; and

WHEREAS, the Flathead River is important for the natural and economic life of the Flathead Valley; and

WHEREAS, economists estimate significant fiscal impacts associated with the Flathead River and Flathead Lake, including shoreline property values of \$6 billion to \$8 billion, nature-based tourism that comprises roughly 20% of the \$7.8 billion local economy, and ecological services, such as water supply and purification and flood and drought mitigation, that contribute more than \$20 billion in benefits to human society; and

WHEREAS, the lower Flathead River in Flathead County is bordered by private lands of agricultural, ecological, and economic importance; and

WHEREAS, the Flathead Lake Biological Station lists erosion as negatively impacting water quality on Flathead Lake; and

WHEREAS, the total maximum daily load report for Flathead Lake identifies suspended sediments, caused by streambank erosion, to be a major contributor to phosphorus and nitrogen loading of Flathead Lake; and

WHEREAS, the Flathead-Stillwater watershed restoration plan identifies streambank erosion as a

major concern and calls for a significant reduction in streambank erosion; and

WHEREAS, many landowners and agricultural producers have recently reported substantial increases in streambank damage due to erosion; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the assigned interim committee include the participation of stakeholders in this study process, including the Flathead Conservation District, Flathead River Commission, Flathead Basin Commission, Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, the National Park Service or Glacier National Park, the cities and towns in the Flathead River basin, and at least two members of the public representing recreational and agricultural groups.

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review

requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2022.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions, comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 68th Legislature.

- END -

I hereby certify that the within bill,
SJ 28, originated in the Senate.

Secretary of the Senate

President of the Senate

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2021.

Speaker of the House

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2021.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 28

INTRODUCED BY M. BLASDEL

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