

LOUISIANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Stuart J. Bishop
Chairman

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Vice Chairman

Committee on Natural Resources and Environment

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Wednesday, November 8, 2017

Mr. Chad Courville, Chairman
Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
P.O. Box 9800 / 2000 Quail Drive
Baton Rouge, LA 70898

Re: Inclusion of Sterlet Sturgeon on the list of approved Domestic Aquatic Organisms

Dear Chairman Courville and members of the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission:

On behalf of the members of the House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment, I write to request that the Commission postpone implementation of the rules adding Sterlet Sturgeon in the approved list of "Domesticated Aquatic Organisms" and implementing "Rules and Regulations on Importation, Culture, Disposal and Sale of Sterlet Sturgeon in Louisiana".

The Commission adopted the Notice of Intent for these two rules at the August 3, 2017, Commission meeting and published that notice along with the proposed rules in the Louisiana Register on August 10, 2017. The Notice of Intent stated that public comment would be received until Friday, September 29, 2017. Final adoption of the rules was considered and approved at the last Commission meeting (October 5, 2017) and presented to our committee on October 16th for legislative oversight.

We fear that there is a rush to implementation that may not be necessary and may result in ill-advised decisions. The time line for the Notice of Intent gave the public less than two months for the public to comment on the proposed rules. And, although public comment was allowed at Commission meetings, the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries did not hold any public hearings specific to this issue. Even in that short of a time period, the Commission received nine comments on the Notice of Intent. Only one was in support of the proposal. The remaining comments were opposed to the proposals. The comments in opposition to the proposals were unified in their concerns about the impacts of an accidental release of a non-native species of fish into the habitat of Louisiana's native sturgeon.

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We, as a committee, agree with the concerns expressed about accidental release of non-native species into our watershed. There have been too many instances where non-native species have been introduced into a biome and serious damage to the native species has resulted. Examples include the zebra mussel, the reticulated python, and the Asian carp. The negative impacts of each of these non-native species are broad-based and well-known.

The committee, therefore, asks that the Commission reconsider their adoption of these rules relative to aquaculturing of Sterlet Sturgeon, postpone implementation of these rules, re-open the period of public comment, and allow the department's biologists to thoroughly examine the questions surrounding the impacts of an accidental release into Louisiana's biome prior to any future adaption or implementation of the rules.

Sincerely,



Representative Stuart J. Bishop
Chairman

SJB/sk

cc: Members of the House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment
Secretary Jack Montoucet