

1 WHEREAS, the National Drought Mitigation Center has categorized a substantial
2 portion of Louisiana's parishes as being in an "exceptional drought" state for extended
3 periods of time which causes trees to weaken and become more susceptible to various issues,
4 especially to pests and diseases; and

5 WHEREAS, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Ips
6 beetles and other types of beetles and pests are prevalent in the south, usually attacking
7 weakened, dying, or recently felled trees and fresh logging debris; and

8 WHEREAS, research conducted in the southeastern U.S. revealed that pines are
9 sensitive to droughts, and trees damaged from a drought may take several years to fully
10 regain their health and vigor, which may worsen forest conditions or increase the risk of
11 infestations of beetles and other pests; and

12 WHEREAS, natural disasters, such as prolonged droughts, sometimes result in high
13 numbers of dead and weakened trees on private properties near right-of-ways, resulting in
14 dangerous conditions despite good preventative measures; and

15 WHEREAS, these trees not only contribute to the beetle infestation in this state but
16 also create danger to people and infrastructure when not removed and handled promptly; and

17 WHEREAS, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality has created
18 regulations for tree removal in certain situations which may burden arborists or other tree
19 removal specialists as well as private citizens who may bear the costs associated with tree
20 removal; and

21 WHEREAS, many infested trees are on private properties near public right-of-ways
22 and roads; however, local and municipal entities are unable to cut or remove such trees on
23 private properties due to current legal restrictions despite the danger to homeowners,
24 utilities, and person traveling upon public roads and right-of-ways.

25 WHEREAS, the interests of the citizens of the state of Louisiana would be served
26 by the creation of a commission to study and recommend rules and actions to address items
27 and issues including, but not limited to, the following:

28 (1) Forest devastation caused by beetle infestation.

1 (2) Problems related to dead, weakened, or infested trees on private properties
2 near power lines and other issues and effects on public right-of-ways caused by the danger
3 and effects of such trees.

4 (3) Possible suspension of certain regulations by the Department of
5 Environmental Quality during emergency situations caused by natural disasters.

6 (4) Possible suspension of any law or regulation prohibiting a public entity from
7 entering a private property to cut or remove dangerous, infested trees that may pose a danger
8 to the public and to infrastructure.

9 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby
10 create the Louisiana Emergency Beetle Commission, whose membership shall be as follows:

11 (1) The commissioner of the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, or
12 his designee.

13 (2) The chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture,
14 and Rural Development, or his designee.

15 (3) The chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture,
16 and Rural Development, or his designee.

17 (4) One member appointed by the commissioners of the Louisiana Public Service
18 Commission.

19 (5) One member appointed by the executive director of the Louisiana Forestry
20 Association.

21 (6) A representative of the Police Jury Association of Louisiana, appointed by the
22 president of the association.

23 (7) A representative of the Louisiana Municipal Association, appointed by the
24 president of the association.

25 (8) The secretary of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, or his
26 designee.

27 (9) The commissioner of the Louisiana Division of Administration, or his designee.

28 (10) A representative from the office of the governor, appointed by the governor.

29 (11) The executive director of Louisiana Loggers Association, or his designee.

30 (12) The state representative for House District 27.

1 (13) The commissioner of the Louisiana Department of Insurance, or his designee.

2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of the House of Representatives
3 shall advocate to support the Congressional bill, S.3838 of the 118th Congress (2024), also
4 known as the Emergency Beetle Response Act of 2024 and request the Louisiana
5 Congressional Delegation support this Resolution and all other Congressional instruments
6 that address the solutions and remedies of this dangerous and growing beetle infestation
7 issue.

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission shall also focus its study on
9 raising public awareness on beetle infestation, the dangers associated with it, and making
10 recommendations on prevention or remediation.

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that members of the commission shall serve without
12 compensation, except per diem or expense reimbursement to which they may be individually
13 entitled as members of their constituent organizations.

14 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission shall convene its first meeting
15 no later than August 1, 2024, at the call of the state representative representing House
16 District No. 27, and the commission shall hold such meetings as may be necessary to fulfill
17 its duties.

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that at the first meeting, the commission shall elect
19 a chairman and other officers as it deems appropriate.

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Agriculture and Forestry shall
21 provide staff assistance to the commission upon the request of the chairman.

22 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission shall submit a report of its
23 findings and recommendations of rules and actions on or before January 15, 2025, to the
24 House Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture, and Rural Development, the Senate
25 Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture, and Rural Development, the
26 commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, and the David R. Poynter
27 Legislative Research Library.

28 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the
29 commissioner of the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HCR 52 Original

2024 Regular Session

Mike Johnson

Creates the La. Emergency Beetle Commission to study and recommend rules and actions to address forest devastation caused by beetle infestation, problems related to dead trees on private properties near power lines and other issues and effects on public right-of-ways caused by the danger and effects of such dead trees, and to consider whether certain regulations by the Dept. of Environmental Quality may be suspended during emergency situations caused by natural disasters.

Provides for the following members:

- (1) The commissioner of the La. Dept. of Agriculture and Forestry, or his designee.
- (2) The chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture, and Rural Development, or his designee.
- (3) The chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture, and Rural Development, or his designee.
- (4) A representative appointed by the commissioners of the La. Public Service Commission.
- (5) One member appointed by the executive director of the La. Forestry Association.
- (6) A representative of the Police Jury Association of La., appointed by the president of the association.
- (7) A representative of the La. Municipal Association, appointed by the president of the association.
- (8) The secretary of the La. Dept. of Environmental Quality, or his designee.
- (9) The commissioner of the La. Division of Administration, or his designee.
- (10) A representative from the office of the governor, appointed by the governor.
- (11) The executive director of the La. Loggers Association, or his designee.
- (12) The state representative for House District 27.
- (13) The commissioner of the La. Dept. of Insurance, or his designee.

Requires the commission to advocate in support of the Congressional bill, S. 3838 of the 118th Congress of 2024, also known as the Emergency Pine Beetle Response Act of 2024, and to request the La. Congressional Delegation to support such Act as well as any other Congressional instrument that address the issue of beetle infestation.

Requires the commission to also focus its study on raising public awareness on beetle infestation, the dangers of it, and making recommendations on prevention or a remediation plan.

Requires members of the commission to serve without compensation, except per diem or expense reimbursement to which they may be individually entitled to.

Requires the commission to convene its first meeting no later than Aug. 1, 2024, at the call of the state representative representing House District No. 27, and the commission to hold such meetings as may be necessary to fulfill its duties. Requires the commission to elect a chairman and other officers as it deems appropriate at the first meeting.

Requires the Dept. of Agriculture and Forestry to provide staff assistance to the commission upon the request of the chairman.

Requires the commission to submit a report of its findings and recommendations of rules and actions by Jan. 15, 2025, to the House and Senate Committees on Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture, and Rural Development, the commissioner of the Dept. of Agriculture and Forestry, and the David R. Poynter Legislative Research Library.