

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 626

To direct the Secretary of the Interior to study the suitability and feasibility of designating sites in the Lower Mississippi River Area in the State of Louisiana as a unit of the National Park System, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 17, 2009

Ms. LANDRIEU introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of the Interior to study the suitability and feasibility of designating sites in the Lower Mississippi River Area in the State of Louisiana as a unit of the National Park System, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Lower Mississippi
5 River National Historic Site Study Act of 2009”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds that—

1 (1) the Lower Mississippi area located south of
2 New Orleans, Louisiana, which is known as
3 “Plaquemines Parish”, has great historical signifi-
4 cance;

5 (2) from the earliest Spanish explorers traveling
6 along the banks of the Lower Mississippi River in
7 the 1500’s, to Robert de LaSalle claiming all of the
8 land drained by the Lower Mississippi River in
9 1682, to the petroleum, fisheries, and transportation
10 industries of today, the area is one of the most
11 unique areas in the continental United States;

12 (3) while, in 1699, the area became the site of
13 the first fortification on the Lower Mississippi River,
14 known as “Fort Mississippi”, it has since been home
15 to 10 different fortifications, more than a dozen
16 light houses, and several wildlife refuges, quarantine
17 stations, and pilot stations;

18 (4) of particular interest to the area are—

19 (A) Fort St. Philip, originally built in
20 1749, at which, during the Battle of New Orle-
21 ans, the British navy was blocked from going
22 up river and a victory for the Colonial Army
23 was ensured; and

24 (B) Fort Jackson, built across from Fort
25 St. Philip at the request of General Andrew

1 Jackson and partially constructed by famous
 2 local Civil War General P.G.T. Beauregard,
 3 which was the site of the famous Civil War bat-
 4 tle known as the “Battle of the Forts”, which
 5 is also referred to as the “night the war was
 6 lost”;

7 (5) the area is—

8 (A) at the end of the longest continuous
 9 river road and levee system in the United
 10 States; and

11 (B) a part of the River Road highway sys-
 12 tem;

13 (6) lower Plaquemines Parish is split down the
 14 middle by the Mississippi River, surrounded on 3
 15 sides by the Gulf of Mexico, and crossed by numer-
 16 ous bayous, canals, and ditches;

17 (7) Fort Jackson and Fort St. Philip are lo-
 18 cated on—

19 (A) an ancient Head of Passes site; and

20 (B) 1 of the most historic areas on the
 21 Lower Mississippi River known as
 22 “Plaquemines Bend”;

23 (8) the modern Head of Passes is only 21 miles
 24 south of Fort Jackson and Fort St. Philip where the

1 Mississippi River splits into a bird foot delta to trav-
 2 el the last 20 miles to the Gulf of Mexico;

3 (9) there are numerous geological features that
 4 are unique to a large river mouth or delta that could
 5 make a national park in the area a particularly in-
 6 triguing attraction;

7 (10) the coastal erosion, subsidence, river hy-
 8 draulics, delta features, fresh, salt, and brackish
 9 water marshes, and other unique features of the
 10 area could be an effective classroom for the public
 11 on the challenges of protecting our river and coastal
 12 zones;

13 (11) the area includes the beginning of the Mis-
 14 sissippi River flyway, which is—

15 (A) 1 of the most pristine eco-sites in the
 16 United States; and

17 (B) the site of 2 national wildlife refuges
 18 and 1 State wildlife refuge;

19 (12) the area is culturally diverse in history,
 20 population, industry, and politics;

21 (13) many well-known characters lived or per-
 22 formed deeds of great notoriety in the area;

23 (14) in the area, Creoles, Europeans, Indians,
 24 Yugoslav, African-Americans, and Vietnamese all
 25 worked together to weave an interesting history of

1 survival and success in a very treacherous environ-
 2 ment;

3 (15) the area has tremendous tourism potential,
 4 particularly for historical tourism and eco-tourism,
 5 because of the location, pristine ecosystems, and
 6 past indifference of the local government to promote
 7 tourism in the area; and

8 (16) since Hurricane Katrina, the local govern-
 9 ment in the area has—

10 (A) passed a resolution strongly supporting
 11 a national park study; and

12 (B) shown an interest in developing tour-
 13 ism in the area.

14 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

15 In this Act:

16 (1) STUDY AREA.—

17 (A) IN GENERAL.—The term “Study
 18 Area” means the Lower Mississippi River area
 19 in the State of Louisiana.

20 (B) INCLUSIONS.—The term “Study Area”
 21 includes Fort St. Philip and Fort Jackson, the
 22 Head of Passes, and any related and supporting
 23 historical, natural, cultural, and recreational re-
 24 sources located in Plaquemines Parish, Lou-
 25 isiana.

1 (2) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” mean
2 the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Di-
3 rector of the National Park Service.

4 **SEC. 4. STUDY.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 18 months after
6 the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary, in con-
7 sultation with the State of Louisiana and interested
8 groups and organizations, shall complete a special re-
9 source study that—

10 (1) evaluates—

11 (A) the national significance of the Study
12 Area; and

13 (B) the suitability and feasibility of desig-
14 nating the Study Area as a unit of the National
15 Park System, to be known as the “Lower Mis-
16 sissippi River National Park”;

17 (2) includes cost estimates for the acquisition,
18 development, operation, and maintenance of the
19 Study Area; and

20 (3) identifies alternatives for management, ad-
21 ministration, and protection of the Study Area.

22 (b) CRITERIA.—In conducting the study under sub-
23 section (a), the Secretary shall use the criteria for the
24 study of areas for potential inclusion in the National Park

1 System under section 8(c) of Public Law 91–383 (16
2 U.S.C. 1a–5(c)).

3 **SEC. 5. REPORT.**

4 On completion of the study under section 4, the Sec-
5 retary shall submit to the Committee on Natural Re-
6 sources of the House of Representatives and the Com-
7 mittee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate
8 a report that describes—

9 (1) the findings and conclusions of the study;

10 and

11 (2) any recommendations of the Secretary.

12 **SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

13 There are authorized to be appropriated such sums
14 as are necessary to carry out this Act.

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