

National Wildlife Federation

Name Pascagoula River and Gulf of Mexico Water Protection

Date May 16, 2008

Description Number: 2008-03

WHEREAS, the Pascagoula River is the last unimpeded major river system in the contiguous 48 states and is uniquely representative of the early southeastern landscape; and

WHEREAS, the River system's bottomland forests, marshes, savannas and aquatic habitats support rare and spectacular wildlife such as the Gulf sturgeon and 23 threatened or endangered species; and

WHEREAS, more than 250 species of birds use its extensive north-south forested corridor as a critical area for foraging and resting during intercontinental migrations; and

WHEREAS, the Pascagoula River is utilized extensively as a natural resource by citizens throughout the region and beyond for fishing, hunting, ecotourism, water sports, bird watching, and as an inspiration for other cultural endeavors; and

WHEREAS, the Pascagoula River, its associated estuary and the Gulf of Mexico serve as nurseries and habitats for commercial and recreational fin- and shellfisheries that provide jobs and have important economic impacts for Mississippi's coastal counties; and

WHEREAS, activities that alter the functional dynamics of this floodplain river ecosystem and associated flora and fauna also impact local citizens; and

WHEREAS, the Strategic Petroleum Site at Richton proposes to take 50 million gallons of water per day for a five-year period from the upper reaches of the Pascagoula River; and

WHEREAS, extractions of such large volumes of water from the Pascagoula River (up to 25% of seasonal flow) will have harmful effects on this pristine southern river ecosystem, its renewable living resources, and human interactions with these resources; and

WHEREAS, transport of nearly 80 billion gallons of hyper-saline water (brine) from the Strategic Petroleum Site at Richton for approximately 100 miles of pipeline to the Gulf of Mexico off the State of Mississippi increases the risk of catastrophic pollution of the Pascagoula River ecosystem as well as harm to the state's coastal marshes, marine species and their essential habitats, and near shore marine environments, including a treasured National Seashore; and

WHEREAS, this discharge of brine will have a negative impact on commercial and recreational fisheries that contribute significantly to the region's cultural and socio-economic well-being, particularly during the lengthy recovery from Hurricane Katrina;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Wildlife Federation in the annual meeting assembled May 14-17, 2008 in Keystone, Colorado calls upon the U.S. Department of Energy to address seasonal aspects of flow reduction resulting from its proposed water withdrawal from the

Pascagoula River with a principal focus on determining impacts to floral, faunal, sociological, and economical dynamics of this incomparable river system; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the National Wildlife Federation calls upon the U.S. Department of Energy to evaluate and pursue alternatives to the Strategic Petroleum Site project at Richton as per the guidelines of the National Environmental Policy Act that fully address potential impacts to the cultural, social, socio-economic, biological, and anthropologic values associated with the Pascagoula River ecosystem, its associated estuary and Gulf of Mexico. Results of this evaluation of need, alternative site selection, design and construction methods must be presented to the Governor of Mississippi, all state and federal natural resource agencies, and the general public.