

House Resolution 529

By: Representatives Knight of the 130th, Rhodes of the 120th, Corbett of the 174th, Dubnik of the 29th, and LaRiccica of the 169th

A RESOLUTION

1 Expressing concern regarding the National Park Service's Special Resource Study of the
2 Ocmulgee River Corridor; reaffirming support for the constitutionally protected right to hunt
3 and fish in Georgia; and asserting Georgia's primacy in the management of the state's fish
4 and wildlife resources; and for other purposes.

5 WHEREAS, the practices of hunting and fishing as well as the taking of wildlife are valued
6 parts of the cultural heritage of the State of Georgia that serve an essential role in the state's
7 economy and in funding the state's conservation programs and perform an important role in
8 the ecological management of certain natural communities within this state; and

9 WHEREAS, the Constitution of the State of Georgia enshrines and preserves the right for
10 Georgians to hunt and fish as outlined in the Bill of Rights, Section I, Paragraph XXVIII; and

11 WHEREAS, the ownership of, jurisdiction over, and control of all wildlife declared to be in
12 the State of Georgia is, in its sovereign capacity, to be controlled, regulated, and disposed of
13 in accordance with laws and regulations of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources
14 (DNR); and

15 WHEREAS, DNR is the leading agency in the acquisition, management, and restoration of
16 conservation lands in Georgia; and

17 WHEREAS, DNR is staffed by professionals with proven expertise in wildlife conservation,
18 land management, cultural and archaeological preservation, recreation management, and
19 natural resource education; and

20 WHEREAS, DNR is unmatched in providing prolific recreational and educational
21 opportunities for the public across 64 state parks and historic sites, encompassing more than
22 84,000 acres and more than 285 wildlife management areas (WMA); DNR further manages
23 public fishing areas and boating access sites that encompass more than 1.2 million acres, all
24 while equally conserving the natural and cultural resources of these sites; and

25 WHEREAS, in 2019, through S. 47, the United States Congress directed the secretary of the
26 interior to establish a special resource study of the Ocmulgee River Corridor between Macon
27 and Hawkinsville, Georgia; and

28 WHEREAS, the Department of the Interior, National Park Service (NPS), has defined a
29 study area and is conducting a special resource study to determine the efficacy of establishing
30 a national park unit in the State of Georgia along a 50 mile stretch of the Ocmulgee River
31 between Macon and Hawkinsville, Georgia; and

32 WHEREAS, DNR holds jurisdiction over and manages multiple properties within the defined
33 study area corridor, including Echeconnee Creek WMA, Ocmulgee WMA, and Oaky Woods
34 WMA; and

35 WHEREAS, some NPS units have enabling legislation that allows limited hunting
36 opportunity on lands owned by the NPS, and by default, hunting is routinely prohibited on
37 NPS lands; and

38 WHEREAS, fishing is generally allowed in NPS units and is typically governed by state
39 fishing regulations; and

40 WHEREAS, NPS does not regulate land uses or activities such as hunting, trapping, or
41 fishing on private lands within park boundaries because its primary mission is the
42 preservation of natural and cultural resources.

43 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
44 the members of this body urge the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to remain the
45 primary authority for all purposes of wildlife management and regulation in the case that a
46 national park unit is established in the study area between Macon and Hawkinsville, Georgia.

47 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of this body insist that all lands operated
48 by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources shall be managed to provide hunting,
49 fishing, and other appropriate wildlife recreational opportunities following sound principles
50 of wildlife management without influence of conflicting goals set forth by the National Park
51 Service.

52 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of this body urge the National Park Service
53 to have enabling legislation that establishes hunting and fishing as the primary uses of any
54 lands within a newly established or expanded National Park Service unit between Macon and
55 Hawkinsville, Georgia.

56 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
57 and directed to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to the
58 secretary of the interior of the United States, the director of the National Park Service of the
59 United States, the United States House Committee on Natural Resources chairperson, the
60 United States Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources chairperson, and each
61 member of the Georgia Congressional Delegation.