SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 48

A RESOLUTION URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR AND SECRETARY GALE NORTON TO RECONSIDER THE RULE REGARDING PERSONAL WATERCRAFT USE WITHIN THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM.

WHEREAS, in September 1998, the National Park Service proposed regulations that would prohibit personal watercraft (PWC) use in units of the National Park System unless a determination was made that such use is appropriate based on that unit's enabling legislation, resources and values, other visitor uses and overall management objectives; and

WHEREAS, this proposed rule was posted in the Federal Register with a sixty-day comment period and the final rule was adopted and became effective on April 20, 2000; and

WHEREAS, the final rule allowed for a two-year grace period to evaluate the impact of personal watercraft use; and

WHEREAS, Superintendent Eubanks of the Gulf Islands National Seashore has announced that, based upon the information currently available, the Seashore intends to allow the regulation prohibiting the use of personal watercraft within the boundaries of the Seashore to go into effect on April 22, 2002; and

WHEREAS, continued access by personal watercraft owners and their families in our national parks is extremely important and clearly intended by the National Park Service rule; and

WHEREAS, personal watercraft owners and their families should be allowed to enjoy the beautiful scenery and recreational opportunities at our lakes and seashores regardless of whether they choose to do so on a personal watercraft or other type of boat; and
WHEREAS, access by personal watercraft to our national parks is also vital to local economies and small businesses nationwide; and

WHEREAS, some national parks are banning personal watercraft outright without examining options to allow for their continued use and without the open and transparent process envisioned by the National Park Service rule; and

WHEREAS, owners of personal watercraft should not be discriminated against and singled out on navigable waters where motorized boating is allowed; and

WHEREAS, Mississippi's barrier islands are unique in the fact that the mode of transportation used for access to the islands is predominantly by watercraft and cannot be accessed by automobiles; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature is deeply concerned about the negative economic impact these unilateral bans on personal watercraft will have on the State of Mississippi:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby urge the Department of Interior and Secretary Gale Norton to reconsider the rule regarding the use of personal watercraft within the National Park System.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be furnished to Secretary Gale Norton, Superintendent Eubanks of the Gulf Islands National Seashore, and the Mississippi congressional delegation.