



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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JB PRITZKER
GOVERNOR

August 20, 2021

To the Honorable Members of
The Illinois State Senate,
102nd General Assembly

Today I veto Senate Bill 1770 from the 102nd General Assembly, which exempts construction within a 6-mile radius of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers confluence from the provisions of the Interagency Wetland Policy Act of 1989. My administration is a strong proponent of the Alexander-Cairo Port District project that falls within this radius. However this bill would unnecessarily turn the determination of appropriate wetland mitigation over to the Federal Government by severely restricting the State of Illinois' involvement in the process.

The Interagency Wetland Policy Act of 1989 ("IWPA") was established to provide coordination between state agencies in the protection from and mitigation of wetlands losses in the state. Without maintaining the IWPA jurisdiction, the State would not be able to fold potential required mitigation into existing partnership-based wetland restoration projects near the site of the Alexander-Cairo Port. Even were a project in the area designated by this bill to be exempt from the IWPA, federal mitigation regulations would still apply, however without the State's involvement and input. Importantly, the residents of Cairo and Alexander County that undoubtedly will be impacted by this major economic development project would be further away from having their voices heard.

The Alexander-Cairo Port District project remains a key priority of my administration. Millions of dollars have been provided toward this project through the Rebuild Illinois capital plan. Just this month, I joined local officials, labor leaders, and other key stakeholders at the Port District site to celebrate the signing of a project labor agreement. And senior officials in my administration meet on a regular basis with Port District officials to ensure that we continue to take positive steps forward on a regular basis to make this project a reality in a responsible manner. The Alexander-Cairo Port District represents a unique opportunity to bring more economic investment to Southern Illinois and my administration is committed to continue to work with the local community to move this critical project forward.

To move this project forward, we must ensure Illinois has a seat at the table in determining how to best mitigate any potential impacts on community wetlands. For example, in recent years we have seen increased flooding in this region. In the area of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers confluence, there are opportunities to restore wetlands that could reduce flooding and reestablish critical

ecosystems. Maximizing these opportunities will require State input, which is made possible through the IWPA.

Therefore, pursuant to Section 9(b) of Article IV of the Illinois Constitution of 1970, I hereby return Senate Bill 1770, entitled "An Act concerning State government," with the foregoing objections vetoed in its entirety.

Sincerely,

Governor JB Pritzker