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# Proposed Pearl River dam project making waves on the Coast

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By Steve Phillips [CONNECT](#)

BILOXI, MS (WLOX) - Tuesday morning, the Commission on Marine Resources heard from both sides of a controversial flood control project in Jackson. That project involves building a dam on the Pearl River.

Supporters say it's needed to prevent future flooding in Jackson, but opponents downstream worry about the impact on the seafood industry.

The CMR passed a resolution in January opposing the flood control project on the Pearl River. Commission members fear that building another dam will disrupt the freshwater flow into the Mississippi Sound, hurting the growth of oysters and shrimp.

"We ask that you all wait until you see the draft environmental impact statement before making final decisions about what we're doing in Jackson," said attorney Keith Turner, who represents the Rankin-Hinds Flood Control District.

He says project opponents are spreading misinformation.

"That this project is going to turn the water off on the Pearl. That it's going to do tremendous damage to the Mississippi Coast, to the fisheries, and it's completely wrong. They have no documents, no data to support that," said Turner.

Turner also takes issue with those who say the main purpose is to create high dollar, lakefront real estate.

"They're completely wrong. I hate to tell them that flood protection is the primary goal of the project. Any benefits that may come because the communities decide to do some of those things afterwards, they may see light of day, but our project is focused on flood protection," Turner said.

The Gulf Restoration Network's Andrew Whitehurst praised the CMR for its resolution opposing the project.

"It's good. It's a great example of an agency discharging its mission to protect the coastal zone," said Whitehurst, as he addressed the CMR board.

"Staff and commission will sit, review the facts of potential impacts to the Mississippi Sound and make decisions then. Right now, it's a little early," said DMR Executive Director Jamie Miller.

CMR Chairman Richard Gollott says he will consider the findings of the environmental impact statement.

"But everything I see so far, it wouldn't be good to limit the amount of water coming into the Pearl. I think we have some real problems on the Pearl that maybe needs to be worked out," said Gollott.

Turner says after the initial environmental impact statement is released this summer, there will be a series of meetings for public input, including one on the Coast.

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