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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 164

Offered January 9, 2002

Prefiled January 9, 2002

Proclaiming support for the commercial production of genetically sterile Crassostrea ariakensis within guidelines and parameters established by the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences, pursuant to the Institute's November 28, 2001 Statement of the Commercial Aquaculture Use of Crassostrea ariakensis in the Chesapeake Bay, and support for continued restoration efforts of Virginia's native oyster.

Patrons—Pollard; Senator: Chichester

Referred to Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources

WHEREAS, in 1995 the General Assembly through House Joint Resolution 450 directed the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences to begin research on non-native oyster species for possible use in the Chesapeake Bay; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences, by following the international protocol for the introduction of non-native species, has learned that Crassostrea ariakensis is a fast-growing, disease-resistant oyster with significant market potential; and

WHEREAS, diseases of MSX and dermo have devastated the landings of oysters in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, prior to the 1980's, annual oyster harvests averaged nearly one million bushels per year, and since 1990 the average annual oyster harvest has been less than 50,000 bushels and in steady decline as evidenced by a total harvest of only 2,000 bushels in 2001; and

WHEREAS, in 1985, the oyster industry's dockside value was $7,141,000; and

WHEREAS, in 1994, the oyster industry's dockside value was only $812,387; and

WHEREAS, Virginia's oyster industry is the only national oyster industry without a ready-stock of available oysters; and

WHEREAS, restoration efforts of Crassostrea virginica are showing promise, but it will likely be many years before a disease-resistant strain of Virginia's native oyster can be successfully grown for commercial markets; and

WHEREAS, the genetic breeding of triploids has proven to be a highly effective control against normal reproductive function when applied to oysters; and

WHEREAS, other protocols to prevent reproduction can further substantially lessen the degree of a non-intended introduction of breeding stock so that the risk of such introduction is extremely low; and

WHEREAS, Virginia's oyster industry will likely not survive without some Virginia-grown stock for market use; and

WHEREAS, any adult oyster, whether native or non-native, filters more than fifty gallons of water per day and therefore is ecologically beneficial; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Seafood Council has specifically endorsed the responsible use of genetically sterile Crassostrea ariakensis with proper aquaculture protocol developed by the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences, on November 28, 2001, released a statement indicating that development of a protocol for the commercial aquaculture of triploid strains of Crassostrea ariakenis can be accomplished with proper partnering of scientific evaluation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly proclaim its support for the commercial production of genetically sterile Crassostrea ariakensis within guidelines and parameters established by the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences, pursuant to the Institute's November 28, 2001 Statement of the Commercial Aquaculture Use of Crassostrea ariakensis in the Chesapeake Bay, and support for continued restoration efforts of Virginia's native oyster; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the General Assembly requests continued feedback from the various stakeholders in these endeavors so that any legislative action needed to encourage non-native aquaculture or native restoration may be identified.