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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 226

Offered January 14, 2004

Requesting the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, in consultation with the appropriate state and federal natural resource management agencies, local governments, and interested parties to study the natural aquatic resources associated with available water resources. Report.

Patron—Morgan

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, it is the Commonwealth's policy to conserve, develop, and utilize its natural resources; and

WHEREAS, it is the Commonwealth's policy to protect its atmosphere, lands, and waters from pollution, impairment, or destruction, for the benefit, enjoyment, and general welfare of the people of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, to uphold the commitments of Article XI of the Constitution of Virginia as it applies to water allocation, it is necessary to identify areas of potential use conflicts and review current policy; and

WHEREAS, economic development to support projected population increases, especially in the Coastal Plain, will require additional fresh water sources; and

WHEREAS, sources of fresh water can be problematic if accompanied by concerns for potential impacts to natural aquatic resources; and

WHEREAS, it is in the Commonwealth's best interest to prepare for water allocation in an informed manner; and

WHEREAS, it is in the Commonwealth's best interest to promote both resource sustainability and water planning efficiency; and

WHEREAS, sea level is rising due to climate change and land subsidence in Virginia's Coastal Plain; and

WHEREAS, sea-level rise is resulting in changes to the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem due to shifts in seasonal salinity distributions; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science is the designated scientific advisor to the Commonwealth on matters concerning marine and estuarine science and policy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, in consultation with the appropriate state and federal natural resource management agencies, local governments, and interested parties study the natural aquatic resources associated with available water resources.

In conducting its study, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science shall: (i) evaluate the potential for changes to estuarine fresh water supplies due to sea-level rise, land subsidence, and climate change; (ii) assess the potential impacts to aquatic ecosystems associated with these changes; (iii) estimate the minimum instream flow requirements for estuarine living resources; (iv) evaluate strategies for water sources; (v) critique Virginia's environmental management and policy as it relates to water allocation; and (vi) assess any other significant and related issues identified by the Institute.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Institute for this study, upon request.

The Institute shall complete its meetings for the first year by November 30, 2004, and for the second year by November 30, 2005, and the Institute shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a document for each year. The executive summaries and reports shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports no later than the first day of the next Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

INTRODUCED

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