

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2007 RECONVENED SESSION

CHAPTER 879

An Act to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 28.2-1200.1, relating to the conveyance of state-owned bottomlands.

[H 2782]

Approved April 4, 2007

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 28.2-1200.1 as follows:

§ 28.2-1200.1. Conveyance of state-owned bottomlands.

A. In order to fulfill the Commonwealth's responsibility under Article XI of the Constitution of Virginia to conserve and protect public lands for the benefit of the people, the Commonwealth shall not convey fee simple title to state-owned bottomlands covered by waters. However, the Commonwealth may grant a lease, easement, or other limited interest in state-owned bottomlands covered by waters pursuant to § 28.2-1208 or as long as the property is used by a governmental entity for the performance of a governmental activity, as defined in §§ 28.2-1300 and 28.2-1400.

B. The Commonwealth may convey fee simple title to specified parcels of state-owned bottomlands that have been lawfully filled. For the purpose of this section, "lawfully filled" means the deposit of fill was (i) authorized by statute, (ii) pursuant to valid court order, (iii) authorized or permitted by state officials pursuant to statutory authority subsequent to July 1, 1960, or (iv) under apparent color of authority prior to July 1, 1960. In the absence of information to the contrary, it may be presumed that state-owned bottomlands filled prior to July 1, 1960, were filled under apparent color of authority and, it may also be presumed, that all of the fill on the specified parcel was lawfully authorized if a substantial portion of the fill on such parcel was authorized. Properties not qualified under clauses (i) through (iv) of this subsection shall not be eligible for conveyance under this section.

C. Except as provided in subsection D, the grantee shall compensate the Commonwealth in an amount commensurate with the property interest being conveyed, which shall be considered equivalent to 25 percent of the assessed value of the specified parcel, exclusive of any buildings or other improvements. The assessed value shall be established as the average of the local real estate tax assessments for the most recent 10 years available for the specified parcel. If no such assessments are available for the specified parcel, then the assessed value shall be calculated as the percentage, by square footage or acreage, that the specified parcel represents of the larger parcel for which such assessments are available.

D. If the Commission determines that unique circumstances exist, the Commission may allow the grantee to compensate the Commonwealth in an amount less than 25 percent of the assessed value of the specified parcel. Any such determination by the Commission shall be justified in writing and shall not be subject to judicial review.

2. That the provisions of this act shall not affect any litigation that is pending on the effective date of this act.