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## SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 96

Offered January 9, 2008

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*Requesting the Board of Forestry to study the provision of ecological services incentives to private landowners. Report.*

Patrons—Ticer, Barker and Petersen; Delegates: Bulova, Caputo, Marsden, Scott, J.M. and Watts

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, Virginia's 15 million acres of forestland covers two-thirds of the Commonwealth's land area and provides valuable ecological services that help purify air and mitigate climate change, protect our watersheds, provide food and cover for wildlife, provide products for Virginians' daily needs, and afford recreational opportunities for its citizens; and

WHEREAS, almost 80 percent of Virginia's forestland is owned by private individuals and small corporations that desire to provide stewardship of these lands and the ecological services these lands offer; and

WHEREAS, as Virginia's population continues to increase, the resulting losses of forestland will have an undesirable effect on our environment and economic well-being; and

WHEREAS, Senate Joint Resolutions 75 (2004) and 367 (2005) requested the Board of Forestry to study incentives and disincentives to private landowners to hold, preserve, and utilize their forestland; and

WHEREAS, on May 22, 2007, Governor Kaine announced that Virginia had joined the Climate Exchange and will work with other states and Indian tribes to develop a common accounting system to track and reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and

WHEREAS, the contribution of forest carbon to such exchanges through accounting for the carbon currently sequestered in standing trees and capable of being sequestered by the future growth of trees is underdeveloped at present; and

WHEREAS, in May 2007, the Department of Forestry established the Ecosystem Services Working Group to study and advise the Department and the Board on how forest landowners can be compensated for the benefits their lands are currently providing society free-of-charge, by utilizing existing and developing market-based approaches, such as climate exchanges and registries, forest certification, and regulatory approaches, such as environmental resource banking, development forest cover retention requirements, and cap and trade systems; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Board of Forestry be requested to study the provision of ecological services incentives to private landowners.

In conducting its study, the Board of Forestry shall continue the work of its Ecosystems Services Working Group and coordinate its work with Virginia local governments to produce a study with recommendations of how the Commonwealth and its localities can collaborate in providing incentive programs that utilize both governmental and market-oriented approaches to compensate forest landowners for the ecological services their forestlands produce. In addition, the study shall evaluate how the Department of Forestry and local governments can collaborate in the development and implementation of incentive programs to assist local forest landowners, particularly small acreage forest landowners, to receive appropriate compensation for the ecological services their forest perform to the benefit of the Commonwealth.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Board of Forestry for this study, upon request. The Board shall involve representatives of the forest management and products industry, local governments and nongovernmental organizations, universities, and the public in its deliberations. The collaborative work of these parties and the Board shall be facilitated by a third party.

The Board of Forestry shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2008, and shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and report 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 2009 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

INTRODUCED

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