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## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 399

Offered February 28, 2014

*Commending the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality.*

Patrons—Lopez, Bulova, Carr, Dance, Davis, Herring, Hester, Hope, James, Keam, Kory, Krupicka, McQuinn, Minchew, Morrissey, Plum, Rasoul, Scott, Simon, Surovell, Toscano, Tyler, Ware and Watts; Senators: Barker, Edwards, Favola, Garrett, Howell, Marsh, Puckett, Ruff, Saslaw, Stuart, Vogel, Wagner, Watkins and Wexton

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality was formed on April 1, 1993, to provide services to protect and enhance the Commonwealth's environment, and all Virginians have benefitted from the agency's significant environmental successes since its inception; and

WHEREAS, the consolidation of the Commonwealth's air, water, and land protection agencies into the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has improved environmental protection efforts and resulted in cleaner air, water, and land; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth's air is cleaner—ozone levels have dropped significantly, the number of high-ozone days statewide has dropped 71 percent, and levels of major air pollutants have decreased 42 percent since 1980, despite more stringent national standards for air quality; and

WHEREAS, the amount of nitrogen entering the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries from point sources has decreased below the Commonwealth's 2011 target of 21.4 million pounds, and the concentration of bacteria has declined significantly in the last 20 years at many stream locations; and

WHEREAS, significant improvements to water quality have been made through the Commonwealth's investments in municipal wastewater treatment plants, sanitary sewers, storm water sewers, septic systems, animal waste structures, and other aquatic and agricultural management systems; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth has been meeting the goal of "no net loss" of wetlands since 2002 with more than 3,500 acres being protected through conservation and other means required in permits; and

WHEREAS, since the drought of 2002, the Commonwealth has achieved 100 percent compliance with new regulatory submission deadlines for local and regional water supply plans and achieved successful regionalization of water supply planning, with 97 percent of all localities participating in a regional plan; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth's land is cleaner due to DEQ's judicious solid waste management, including recycling, reduction, storage, and treatment of waste; new landfill designs, standards, and monitoring practices reduce waste, better protect soil and groundwater, and allow for the conversion of waste to energy; and

WHEREAS, the statewide recycling rate has increased from 32.2 percent in 2005 to 41.5 percent in 2012; and

WHEREAS, DEQ has led efforts to reduce the number of leaking underground petroleum tanks and overseen the removal of more than 23 million abandoned tires, and the number of tire piles has dropped from more than 1,300 abandoned sites to fewer than 130 due to an aggressive cleanup effort; and

WHEREAS, since 1996, through DEQ's Voluntary Remediation Program, more than 3,400 acres at 275 contaminated sites have been cleaned up and converted from abandoned scrap yards and rail yards into office complexes, medical facilities, or other projects that enhance communities; and

WHEREAS, a great deal of pollution is being treated and prevented through DEQ's permitting, inspections, enforcement, resource management, and planning programs; and

WHEREAS, despite significant challenges, including a steady increase in population, increases in the number of federal rules and regulations, and decreases in financial resources, DEQ has made significant improvements to the Commonwealth's environment; and

WHEREAS, DEQ and its dedicated staff continue to work with all Virginians to meet these challenges, and they remain vigilant to ensure the environment is protected for generations to come; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality on the occasion of its 20th anniversary in 2013; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the agency's commitment to protecting the environment and serving the people of the Commonwealth.

INTRODUCED

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