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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 597

Offered January 9, 2019

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Requesting the Department of Environmental Quality to study the economic impacts of litter on fishing, farming, and water quality in urban streams. Report.

Patrons—Krizek, Kory and Lopez

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, fishing and farming are crucial components of Virginia's economic and cultural heritage; and

WHEREAS, litter, from various sources, has been known to cause environmental damage to economically important species of fish and shellfish in Virginia waters; and

WHEREAS, litter, from various sources, has been known to cause environmental damage to keystone species, those species in an ecosystem that play a crucial role in the way an ecosystem functions, such that a small number of keystone species can have a huge impact on the environment; and

WHEREAS, litter, from various sources, has been known to contaminate soil, affecting the productivity and quality of agricultural, aquacultural, and silvicultural lands; and

WHEREAS, the full economic impact of litter on farming and fishing operations in Virginia is unknown; and

WHEREAS, the water quality of urban streams correlates strongly to the public health as a source of drinking water and recreation and as a component of wastewater treatment; and

WHEREAS, litter, from various sources, has been known to degrade water quality, particularly in urban streams, which are vulnerable to litter from a wide range of sources; and

WHEREAS, the full economic impact of litter as a source of contamination in urban streams is unknown; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Environmental Quality be requested to study the economic impacts of litter on fishing, farming, and water quality in urban streams.

In conducting its study, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) shall (i) gather and review new and existing data on litter contamination in Virginia water and soil; (ii) identify species, industries, waters, lands, and any other component of Virginia's economy that has been affected by litter from any source; (iii) calculate, or if calculation is impossible, estimate the economic impact of litter from any source on the components listed in clause (ii); (iv) analyze scientifically accepted and commercially viable methods of litter prevention, abatement, management, and removal from any source; and (v) propose strategies, campaigns, and necessary state actions to protect the economy of the Commonwealth from harm caused by litter and promote Virginia's economic welfare.

Technical assistance shall be provided to DEQ by the Department of Health, the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to DEQ for this study, upon request.

The Department of Environmental Quality shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2019, 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 2020 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

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