

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2020 SESSION

CHAPTER 492

An Act to amend and reenact § 10.1-1183 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the Department of Environmental Quality; policy statement.

[H 1164]

Approved March 27, 2020

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 10.1-1183 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 10.1-1183. Creation of Department of Environmental Quality; statement of policy.

There is hereby created a Department of Environmental Quality by the consolidation of the programs, functions, staff, facilities, assets and obligations of the following agencies: the State Water Control Board, the Department of Air Pollution Control, the Department of Waste Management, and the Council on the Environment. Wherever in this title and in the Code of Virginia reference is made to the Department of Air Pollution Control, the Department of Waste Management or the Council on the Environment, or any division thereof, it shall mean the Department of Environmental Quality.

It shall be the policy of the Department of Environmental Quality to protect *and enhance* the environment of Virginia in order to promote the health and well-being of the Commonwealth's citizens, residents, and visitors in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. The purposes of the Department are:

1. To assist in the effective implementation of the Constitution of Virginia by carrying out state policies aimed at conserving the Commonwealth's natural resources and protecting its atmosphere, land and waters from pollution.

2. *To address climate change by developing and implementing policy and regulatory approaches to reducing climate pollution and promoting climate resilience in the Commonwealth and by ensuring that climate impacts and climate resilience are taken into account across all programs and permitting processes.*

3. To coordinate permit review and issuance procedures to protect all aspects of Virginia's environment.

~~3.~~ 4. To enhance public participation in the regulatory and permitting processes.

4. 5. To establish and effectively implement a pollution prevention program to reduce the impact of pollutants on Virginia's natural resources.

~~5.~~ 6. To establish procedures for, and undertake, long-range environmental program planning and policy analysis, *including assessments of emerging environmental challenges.*

~~6.~~ 7. To conduct comprehensive evaluations of the Commonwealth's environmental protection programs.

~~7.~~ 8. To develop uniform administrative systems to ensure coherent environmental policies.

~~8.~~ 9. To coordinate state reviews with federal agencies on environmental issues, such as environmental impact statements.

9. 10. To promote environmental quality through public hearings and expeditious and comprehensive permitting, inspection, monitoring and enforcement programs, and provide effective service delivery to the regulated community.

~~10.~~ 11. To advise the Governor and General Assembly, and, on request, assist other officers, employees, and public bodies of the Commonwealth, on matters relating to environmental quality and the effectiveness of actions and programs designed to enhance that quality.

~~11.~~ 12. To ensure that there is consistency in the enforcement of the laws, regulations, and policies as they apply to holders of permits or certificates issued by the Department, whether the owners or operators of such regulated facilities are public sector or private sector entities, including the development of electronic recordkeeping and document transmittal systems that encourage the use of electronic methods in performing the Department's business as a means of furthering both resource conservation and transaction efficiency. To serve that end, wherever used in this chapter or in other statutory or regulatory provisions that the Department administers, (i) "certified mail" means electronically certified or postal certified mail, except that this provision shall apply only to the mailing of plan approvals, permits, or certificates issued under the provisions of this chapter and those of the Air Pollution Control Law (§ 10.1-1300 et seq.), the Virginia Waste Management Act (§ 10.1-1400 et seq.), and the State Water Control Law (§ 62.1-44.2 et seq.), and only where the recipient has notified the Department of his consent to receive plan approvals, permits, or certificates by electronic mail, and (ii) "mail" means electronic or postal delivery. Any statutory provisions requiring use of "certified mail" to transmit special orders or administrative orders pursuant to enforcement proceedings shall mean postal certified mail.

13. To ensure the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, faith, disability, or income with respect to the administration of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.