

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 1995 SESSION

CHAPTER 356

An Act to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 28.2-203.1, relating to crab fishery management plans.

[S 908]

Approved March 18, 1995

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 28.2-203.1 as follows:

§ 28.2-203.1. Blue crab fishery management plan.

A. The Commission shall prepare, in consultation with the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, other educational institutions and representatives of industry and interested parties, and then implement a blue crab fishery management plan. The plan shall build upon previously developed plans, including consideration of plans adopted by the multi-state Chesapeake Bay Program, and shall be consistent with the standards for fishery conservation and management set out in § 28.2-203. The plan shall be designed to reverse any fishing practices, environmental stress and habitat deterioration negatively impacting the short and long term viability and sustainability of the crab stock in Virginia waters. The Commission shall consider the economic impact to Virginia of proposed legislative and regulatory changes. The protection of spawning stock, nursery areas and habitat shall be of prime consideration in the plan. At a minimum the plan shall include, but not be limited to:

- 1. Measures to protect and enhance crab habitat and nursery areas.*
- 2. Suggested measures to assure water quality conditions necessary for blue crab survival and reproduction, including identification of areas where water quality is such that onshore mechanisms for water quality protection are needed to protect and restore crab populations and habitat areas.*
- 3. A review of current and proposed regulations and restrictions relating to: (i) winter dredging; (ii) commercial licensing; (iii) spawning stock; (iv) nursing sanctuaries; (v) submerged aquatic vegetation; (vi) peeler and soft shell crabs; (vii) size limits; (viii) the use of cull rings and the use of crab pots; and (ix) time of day restrictions and closed seasons.*
- 4. Recommended legislative changes if necessary to implement the plan.*

B. The Commission shall, on or before December 1 of each year, report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the progress and implementation of the blue crab fisheries management plan.