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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 339

Offered January 20, 1997

Requesting the Departments of Game and Inland Fisheries and Agriculture and Consumer Services to study their aquaculture permitting programs.

Patrons—Hanger; Delegate: Deeds

Referred to the Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, Virginia freshwater aquaculture producers grossed over \$5.2 million in sales in 1995, thus positively contributing to Virginia's rural and economic development, resulting in agricultural diversification and increased quality of the food supply and recreation; and

WHEREAS, the wild freshwater fishery in Virginia provided the Commonwealth over \$460 million in economic benefits in 1995, with \$404.2 million provided by native or naturalized warm water species, and \$55.2 million provided by trout species; and

WHEREAS, aquaculture represents a new and expanding economic opportunity for Virginia agricultural and seafood industries, just as recreational fishing has provided a constantly expanding market for the equipment, food, lodging, fuel, tourism and other goods and services industries for the entire 20th century; and

WHEREAS, aquaculture, by definition, is the cultivation of aquatic animals and plants for the production of food for consumers and for the production of fish to stock private or public waters; and

WHEREAS, the products of this industry are a result of research and time-tested husbandry which have developed aquaculture for food production and the support of the recreational fishing industries, as well as for protecting the integrity of valuable natural fishery resources; and

WHEREAS, farm-raised fish and fish eggs may be purchased from private sources outside the control of resource management officials, held in confinement on private property, taxed as private property, and sold to the food processing industry or to persons who release them into the waters of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the National Aquaculture Act of 1980 and Virginia Aquaculture Development Act of 1992 legally recognize aquaculture as an agricultural activity, with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services established as the lead agency for aquaculture, while the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries remains responsible for the protection of all wildlife resources; and

WHEREAS, the current public perception that all fish raised in aquaculture facilities are considered to be wildlife has caused numerous problems relating to issues of fish ownership; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Virginia Departments of Game and Inland Fisheries and Agriculture and Consumer Services be requested to study their aquaculture permitting programs. They are also requested to determine the advisability and procedures for exempting aquaculturists who produce and sell farm-raised native and naturalized fish species from permits and fees required by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The Departments shall appoint an advisory committee of individuals selected from the Virginia Fish Farmers Association, the Virginia Trout Farmers Association, the Virginia Council of Trout Unlimited, and the Virginia Wildlife Federation to assist with this study.

The Departments shall complete their work in time to submit their findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1998 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

INTRODUCED

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