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SENATE BILL NO. 1021

Offered January 12, 2011

Prefiled January 11, 2011

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 62.1-44.15:5.01 and 62.1-44.15:20 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Virginia Water Protection Permits; multiagency review; urgent public health need.

Patron—Puckett

Referred to Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 62.1-44.15:5.01 and 62.1-44.15:20 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 62.1-44.15:5.01. Coordinated review of water resources projects.

A. Applications for water resources projects that require an individual Virginia Water Protection Permit and a Virginia Marine Resources permit under § 28.2-1205 shall be submitted and processed through a joint application and review process.

B. The Director and the Commissioner of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, in consultation with the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Department of Historic Resources, the Department of Health, the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and any other appropriate or interested state agency, shall coordinate the joint review process to ensure the orderly evaluation of projects requiring both permits.

C. The joint review process shall include, but not be limited to, provisions to ensure that: (i) the initial application for the project shall be advertised simultaneously by the Department of Environmental Quality and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission; (ii) project reviews shall be completed by all state agencies that have been asked to review and provide comments, within 45 days of project notification by the Department of Environmental Quality and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission; (iii) the Board and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission shall coordinate permit issuance and, to the extent practicable, shall take action on the permit application no later than one year after the agencies have received complete applications; (iv) to the extent practicable, the Board and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission shall take action concurrently, but no more than six months apart; and (v) upon taking its final action on each permit, the Board and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission shall provide each other with notification of their actions and any and all supporting information, including any background materials or exhibits used in the application.

D. If requested by the applicant, the Department of Environmental Quality shall convene a preapplication review panel to assist applicants for water resources projects in the early identification of issues related to the protection of beneficial instream and offstream uses of state waters. The Virginia Marine Resources Commission, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Department of Environmental Quality shall participate in the preapplication review panel by providing information and guidance on the potential natural resource impacts and regulatory implications of the options being considered by the applicant. However, the participation by these agencies in such a review process shall not limit any authority they may exercise pursuant to state and federal laws or regulations.

E. *Where the Department of Environmental Quality has identified a project as having an urgent public health need, any state agency asked to review and provide comments in accordance with clause (ii) of subsection C shall provide such comments within 45 days of project notification by the Department of Environmental Quality and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission or be deemed to have approved the project with no further opportunity to provide comment. The Department of Environmental Quality shall identify a project as having an urgent public health need if:*

1. *Any funds for the project have been allocated from the Virginia Water Quality Improvement Fund (§ 10.1-2128 et seq.);*

2. *The project is being constructed or directed by an authority established pursuant to the Virginia Water and Waste Authorities Act (§ 15.2-5100 et seq.); and*

3. *The completion of the project will (i) provide safe drinking water in locations where such water is not readily available or (ii) mitigate the pollution of residential drinking water sources.*

§ 62.1-44.15:20. Virginia water protection permit.

A. Except in compliance with an individual or general Virginia Water Protection Permit issued in accordance with this article, it shall be unlawful to:

INTRODUCED

SB1021

- 59 1. Excavate in a wetland;
60 2. On or after October 1, 2001, conduct the following in a wetland:
61 a. New activities to cause draining that significantly alters or degrades existing wetland acreage or
62 functions;
63 b. Filling or dumping;
64 c. Permanent flooding or impounding; or
65 d. New activities that cause significant alteration or degradation of existing wetland acreage or
66 functions; or
67 3. Alter the physical, chemical, or biological properties of state waters and make them detrimental to
68 the public health, animal or aquatic life, or to the uses of such waters for domestic or industrial
69 consumption, or for recreation, or for other uses unless authorized by a certificate issued by the Board.
70 B. The Board shall, after providing an opportunity for public comment, issue a Virginia Water
71 Protection Permit if it has determined that the proposed activity is consistent with the provisions of the
72 Clean Water Act and the State Water Control Law and will protect instream beneficial uses.
73 C. Prior to the issuance of a Virginia Water Protection Permit, the Board shall consult with and give
74 full consideration to the written recommendations of the following agencies: the Department of Game
75 and Inland Fisheries, the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Virginia Marine Resources
76 Commission, the Department of Health, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and any
77 other interested and affected agencies. Such consultation shall include the need for balancing instream
78 uses with offstream uses. Agencies may submit written comments on proposed permits within 45 days
79 after notification by the Board. If written comments are not submitted by an agency within this time
80 period, the Board shall assume that the agency has no comments on the proposed permit *and, if the*
81 *permit is for a project identified as having an urgent public health need pursuant to subsection E of*
82 *§ 62.1-44.15:5.01, shall be deemed approved with no further opportunity to comment by any such*
83 *agency.*
84 D. Issuance of a Virginia Water Protection Permit shall constitute the certification required under
85 § 401 of the Clean Water Act.
86 E. No locality may impose wetlands permit requirements duplicating state or federal wetlands permit
87 requirements. In addition, no locality shall impose or establish by ordinance, policy, plan, or any other
88 means provisions related to the location of wetlands or stream mitigation in satisfaction of aquatic
89 resource impacts regulated under a Virginia Water Protection Permit or under a permit issued by the
90 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers pursuant to § 404 of the Clean Water Act. However, a locality's
91 determination of allowed uses within zoning classifications or its approval of the siting or construction
92 of wetlands or stream mitigation banks or other mitigation projects shall not be affected by the
93 provisions of this subsection.
94 F. The Board shall assess compensation implementation, inventory permitted wetland impacts, and
95 work to prevent unpermitted impacts to wetlands.