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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 677

Offered January 11, 2017

Prefiled January 10, 2017

Requesting the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to study the current and potential impact of zebra and quagga mussels in Virginia waters and propose strategies, campaigns, and necessary state actions to protect Virginia waters from zebra and quagga mussel infestation. Report.

Patron—Poindexter

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, zebra mussels are a freshwater bivalve native to the Caspian and Black Seas and the Sea of Azov of Eastern Europe; and

WHEREAS, quagga mussels are a subspecies in the same family as zebra mussels; and

WHEREAS, zebra mussels have spread rapidly through watersheds in the eastern and central United States since their discovery in North America in 1988; and

WHEREAS, zebra mussels are an invasive species with potential to cause massive harm to Virginia wildlife, ecology, and fisheries; and

WHEREAS, the economic impact of zebra mussels on industries, businesses, and communities in the United States is estimated to have been more than \$5 billion between 1993 and 1999; and

WHEREAS, zebra mussels were documented in Virginia as early as 2002, in close proximity to Lake Manassas and the Occoquan Reservoir, which serves as the primary source of water for more than one million Virginians; and

WHEREAS, the infestation of zebra mussels in Lake Manassas and the Occoquan Reservoir is estimated to cost local water treatment facilities between \$500,000 and \$850,000 annually for chemicals and system maintenance; and

WHEREAS, zebra mussels are highly adaptable, have few natural predators native to Virginia, and can survive out of water for up to seven days; and

WHEREAS, zebra mussels can attach themselves to pipes, boat hulls and engines, native mussels, and virtually any hard surface; and

WHEREAS, zebra mussels can filter as much as one liter of water per day, removing phytoplankton and suspended particulate, which are important food sources for fish, oysters, and other freshwater species; and

WHEREAS, the Director of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has established a program of education for boaters and other members of the public to include cleaning and draining guidelines, designated dry times, and public outreach for the prevention of infestation of zebra mussels and other nonindigenous aquatic nuisance species; and,

WHEREAS, Virginia has no formal strategy for the prevention, containment, and elimination of zebra and quagga mussels; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries be requested to study the current and potential impact of zebra and quagga mussels in Virginia waters and propose strategies, campaigns, and necessary state actions to protect Virginia waters from zebra and quagga mussel infestation.

In conducting its study, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) shall (i) review current scientific documentation of infestations of zebra and quagga mussels in North American waters; (ii) identify waters in Virginia that are potentially vulnerable to an infestation of zebra or quagga mussels; (iii) assess the potential impact, economically, ecologically, or otherwise, from an infestation of zebra or quagga mussels in Virginia waters; (iv) analyze scientifically accepted methods of prevention, reduction, removal, or extermination of zebra and quagga mussels; (v) propose strategies, campaigns, and necessary state actions to protect Virginia waters from zebra and quagga mussel infestation.

Technical assistance shall be provided to DGIF by the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, and the Department of Motor Vehicles. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to DGIF for this study, upon request.

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2017, 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 2018

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59 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.