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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 35

Offered January 8, 2020

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Requesting the Department of Environmental Quality to study the Albemarle-Pamlico Watershed in Virginia. Report.

Patrons—Convirs-Fowler, Davis, Askew and Rasoul

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the greater Albemarle-Pamlico Watershed (the Watershed) consists of more than 30,000 square miles of land and water occupying 16 counties in Virginia and 36 counties in North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, the Watershed contains the Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system, the largest lagoonal estuarine system in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Watershed in Virginia stretches from Roanoke eastward to Virginia Beach and includes the Roanoke, Chowan, and Pasquotank River basins; and

WHEREAS, the Roanoke drainage within the Watershed is known for hosting the most distinctive communities of freshwater fish on the Atlantic Slope of the United States; and

WHEREAS, the ecology of the Watershed contains a diversity of species and a variety of valuable natural resources; and

WHEREAS, population growth and development now threaten the Watershed's health; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Environmental Quality be requested to study the Albemarle-Pamlico Watershed in Virginia. Such study shall form an appropriate basis for the launch of a roundtable planning process for the future of the Watershed.

In conducting its study, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) shall collect and analyze (i) land-use and demographic data, including information about storage of toxins and bio-wastes; (ii) stormwater and related data, including maps of completed agriculture best management practices, maps of conserved lands and existing riparian buffers in comparison to the need for buffers, and baseline data on stormwater and wastewater issues, treatment in rural areas, and access to state programs designed to assist with stormwater and wastewater retrofits; (iii) groundwater data, including rainfall data and future projections, threats to drinking water supplies, scientifically grounded data on the role that conserved forests play in water management, and groundwater supply, quality, and sustainability data; (iv) information on previous major storms, including the paths such storms followed and the effects they had on affected communities; and (v) distribution and population data on key species of flora and fauna, including endangered and threatened species and species of concern.

Technical assistance shall be provided to DEQ by the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Marine Resources Commission, and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to DEQ for this study, upon request.

The Department of Environmental Quality shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2021, 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 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

INTRODUCED

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