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**HOUSE BILL NO. 2034**

Offered January 13, 2025

Prefiled January 7, 2025

A *BILL to direct the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources to establish a policy task force to develop strategies to protect existing tidal and nontidal wetlands and restore, create, and plan for the persistence of such wetlands in the Commonwealth and to develop mechanisms to incorporate such strategies into appropriate plans, including the Virginia Flood Protection Master Plan and the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan, to address impacts from human activities and climate change; report.*

Patrons—Simonds, Carr, Clark and Shin

Referred to Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. § 1.** *That the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources shall establish a policy task force to develop (i) strategies to protect existing tidal and nontidal wetlands and restore, create, and plan for the persistence of such wetlands in the Commonwealth and (ii) mechanisms to incorporate such strategies into appropriate plans, including the Virginia Flood Protection Master Plan and the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan, to address losses and adverse impacts from human activities and climate change. The task force shall (a) evaluate existing policies regarding wetlands protection, restoration, creation, and mitigation in the Commonwealth and other states; (b) recommend policy changes necessary to accelerate tidal and nontidal wetland identification, restoration, creation, protection, and adaptation areas where such wetlands can persist in the landscape for the Virginia Flood Protection Master Plan and the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan; and (c) explore emerging science and innovation to ensure wetland health and survival. The task force shall report its initial findings and recommendations to the Chairs of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources and House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources by December 1, 2025 and shall update its report at least every two years. The task force shall not meet less than twice annually to evaluate emerging science, policy, and best practices and, if necessary, develop additional findings and recommendations. Membership of the task force shall include relevant representatives of nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, federal government, local governments or regional planning commissions, industry, and state entities including the Chesapeake Bay Commission, Department of Wildlife Resources, Department of Environmental Quality, Marine Resources Commission, Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science.*

INTRODUCED

HB2034