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HOUSE BILL NO. 389

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled January 12, 2026

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Article 1 of Chapter 2 of Title 28.2 a section numbered 28.2-208.4, relating to Marine Resources Commission; fisheries climate adaptation plan; report.

Patron—Askew

Committee Referral Pending

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Article 1 of Chapter 2 of Title 28.2 a section numbered 28.2-208.4 as follows:

§ 28.2-208.4. Fisheries climate adaptation plan; report.

A. The Commission, in collaboration with the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, shall develop and maintain a fisheries climate adaptation plan that utilizes the best available science to consider climate-driven impacts to Virginia fisheries and aquaculture and identifies adaptive management strategies and research needs necessary to safeguard the economic and environmental health of Virginia fisheries. To aid in the development of such plan, the Commission shall convene a technical advisory committee that includes representatives from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science Eastern Shore Lab, the Virginia Seafood Agricultural Research and Extension Center at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, the Shellfish Growers Association of Virginia, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Virginia Waterman's Association, the Virginia Seafood Council, the James River Association, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Life Sciences and Sustainability, the Virginia Climate Center at George Mason University, the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program, a rural coastal planning district commission, the Institute for Coastal Adaption and Resilience at Old Dominion University, and the Friends of the Rappahannock.

B. The fisheries climate adaptation plan developed pursuant to subsection A shall include:

1. A summary of environmental changes associated with climate change, including changes in water temperature, acidification, rainfall patterns, wind, and deoxygenation;

2. A review of management actions previously taken by the Commission and other fisheries management bodies along the Atlantic coast to prepare for and adapt Virginia fisheries to climate change;

3. The impacts of climate change on fish and fish habitats, including oyster reefs, submerged aquatic vegetation, and tidal marshes;

4. The impacts of climate change on marine ecosystems, fishery resources, and coastal communities, including seafood landing facilities;

5. Identification of knowledge and funding gaps needed for fisheries management bodies to prepare and adapt fisheries for the impacts of climate change;

6. Recommendations for how the Commission can better prepare fishing and aquaculture industries and coastal communities for the impacts of climate change;

7. Identification of fisheries that may develop or contract as a result of climate change;

8. A socioeconomic baseline assessment of Virginia fishing industries and coastal communities, including employment data, economic value, dependence on fisheries, and regional vulnerability to climate change impacts;

9. Recommendations for how such plan and future updates to such plan should inform fisheries management decisions, including consideration of environmental, economic, and community impacts; and

10. Recommendations for how the General Assembly can enhance the capacity of the Commission to take the management and scientific actions necessary to address climate change impacts to protect and enhance Virginia fisheries.

C. The Commission shall (i) update the plan developed pursuant to this section at least once every three years and (ii) submit a report detailing such plan to the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources, the Chairs of the House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources, and the Chief Resilience Officer by December 1, 2026, for the initial plan and by December 1 in any year in which such plan is updated.

INTRODUCED

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