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1 **HOUSE BILL NO. 1126**

2 Offered January 14, 2026

3 Prefiled January 14, 2026

4 *A BILL to convene a work group to evaluate the cumulative ecological impacts of unpermitted surface water*  
5 *withdrawals on aquatic organisms and freshwater systems to protect Virginia's native migratory fish;*  
6 *report.*

7 Patron—Clark

8 Committee Referral Pending

9 **Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**10 **1. That the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources (the Secretary) shall, in order to protect**  
11 **Virginia's native migratory fish and address the concerning decline in population of such fish in the James**  
12 **River and Chesapeake Bay, convene a work group of stakeholders. The work group shall include**  
13 **representatives from the Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Wildlife Resources, the**  
14 **Marine Resources Commission, Virginia recognized tribes, owners and operators of surface water**  
15 **withdrawals, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, fisheries and aquatic ecology experts, and**  
16 **other relevant stakeholders deemed necessary by the Secretary.**17 **2. The work group shall (i) evaluate the cumulative ecological impacts of surface water withdrawals**  
18 **excluded from the Virginia Water Protection Permit requirements under Article 2.2 (§ 62.1-44.15:20 et seq.)**  
19 **of the Code of Virginia on aquatic organisms and freshwater systems; (ii) identify how state agencies address**  
20 **particular needs of fish that are listed as threatened or endangered under the federal endangered species list**  
21 **or the Virginia Species of Greatest Conservation Need list; and (iii) develop recommendations for (a)**  
22 **updating the regulations regarding surface water intakes excluded from the Virginia Water Protection Permit**  
23 **requirements to meet protective standards, (b) reviewing a statewide inventory of unpermitted surface water**  
24 **intake structures, and (c) assessing the feasibility of installing measures to reduce aquatic organism**  
25 **mortality. The Department of Environmental Quality shall provide technical assistance to the work group,**  
26 **including gathering and reporting information on existing design of surface water intakes and protective**  
27 **measures.**28 **3. The Secretary shall report the findings and recommendations of the work group to the Chairs of the**  
29 **Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources and House Committee on**  
30 **Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources by October 1, 2027.**

INTRODUCED

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