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**HOUSE BILL NO. 1126**

Offered January 14, 2026

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

Patron—Clark

Committee Referral Pending

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

**1. § 1.** *That the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources (the Secretary) shall, in order to protect Virginia's native migratory fish and address the concerning decline in population of such fish in the James River and Chesapeake Bay, convene a work group of stakeholders. The work group shall include representatives from the Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Wildlife Resources, the Marine Resources Commission, Virginia recognized tribes, owners and operators of surface water withdrawals, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, fisheries and aquatic ecology experts, and other relevant stakeholders deemed necessary by the Secretary.*

**§ 2.** *The work group shall (i) evaluate the cumulative ecological impacts of surface water withdrawals excluded from the Virginia Water Protection Permit requirements under Article 2.2 (§ 62.1-44.15:20 et seq.) of the Code of Virginia on aquatic organisms and freshwater systems; (ii) identify how state agencies address particular needs of fish that are listed as threatened or endangered under the federal endangered species list or the Virginia Species of Greatest Conservation Need list; and (iii) develop recommendations for (a) updating the regulations regarding surface water intakes excluded from the Virginia Water Protection Permit requirements to meet protective standards, (b) reviewing a statewide inventory of unpermitted surface water intake structures, and (c) assessing the feasibility of installing measures to reduce aquatic organism mortality. The Department of Environmental Quality shall provide technical assistance to the work group, including gathering and reporting information on existing design of surface water intakes and protective measures.*

**§ 3.** *The Secretary shall report the findings and recommendations of the work group to the Chairs of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources and House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources by October 1, 2027.*