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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 37

Offered January 14, 2026

Commending the Friends of Dyke Marsh.

Patron—Surovell

WHEREAS, for 50 years, the Friends of Dyke Marsh has supported the preservation, restoration, and enhancement of Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, a 480-acre freshwater tidal wetland on the Potomac River in Fairfax County and one of the last freshwater tidal marshes in the Washington, D.C., area; and

WHEREAS, in 1959, the United States Congress designated Dyke Marsh as an "irreplaceable wetland" and added it to the National Park System "so that fish and wildlife development and their preservation as wetland wildlife habitat shall be paramount"; and

WHEREAS, Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve is currently managed by the U.S. National Park Service as a unit of the George Washington Memorial Parkway; and

WHEREAS, the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve has diverse habitats of open water, tidal, narrowleaf cattail marsh, and deciduous swamp forest, that are home to at least 300 species of plants, thousands of arthropods, 38 fish, 25 reptiles, 22 amphibians, and more than 294 species of birds, including 40 species of marsh-breeding birds; and

WHEREAS, Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve is one of the most significant temperate, climax, riverine, narrowleaf cattail marshes in the National Park System, a remnant of marshes that once lined the Potomac River; and

WHEREAS, Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve faces many challenges, including erosion, pollution, climate change, trash, runoff, invasive species, and noise; nearly half of the marsh's original 650 acres of wetland were undermined or destroyed by commercial dredging, which fundamentally destabilized the delicate wetland hydrology and ecology; and

WHEREAS, in the mid-1970s, several Northern Virginia residents and other stakeholders became increasingly concerned about human and natural threats to the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve and began to organize a community group to preserve the marsh and advocate for its survival; and

WHEREAS, the Friends of Dyke Marsh, a partner of the U.S. National Park Service, was officially incorporated in 1976 to preserve, restore, and stabilize this valuable wetland ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, the Friends of Dyke Marsh supports full restoration and stabilization of the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, helps garner public support, works with officials at all levels of government, and works to secure funding for restoration and stabilization; and

WHEREAS, the Friends of Dyke Marsh sponsors scientific studies, educational programs, stewardship activities, nature walks, trash cleanups, and invasive plant control work; the organization also conducts biological surveys and organizes engaging activities for the public; and

WHEREAS, after the U.S. Geological Survey determined that the marsh was in a net erosional state and could be completely gone by 2035 without action, the U.S. National Park Service prepared a marsh restoration plan in conjunction with the Friends of Dyke Marsh and local officials; and

WHEREAS, as part of the plan, the U.S. National Park Service constructed a breakwater in 2020 to replicate the promontory removed by past dredging and built rock sills in 2022 to help provide a buffer against storms, stem erosion, and encourage sediment accretion; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, the National Park System includes many natural treasures, recreational resources, scenic seashores, and historical monuments, grounds, and structures; in 2024, spending by more than 332,000 park visitors resulted in a \$56.3 billion benefit to the nation's economy; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. National Park Service will commemorate its 110th anniversary in 2026, providing a historic opportunity to strengthen public and governmental commitment to the National Park System and to continue protecting and restoring the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Friends of Dyke Marsh on the occasion of its 50th anniversary in 2026; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Friends of Dyke Marsh as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the organization's ongoing commitment to supporting the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve and preserving the Commonwealth's valuable natural resources.