

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2012 SESSION

CHAPTER 595

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 28.2-101 and 29.1-109 of the Code of Virginia, relating to jurisdiction of the Marine Resources Commission and the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

[H 238]

Approved April 4, 2012

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 28.2-101 and 29.1-109 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 28.2-101. Jurisdiction of Commission.

The jurisdiction of the Commission shall include the Commonwealth's territorial sea and extend to the fall line of all tidal rivers and streams except in the case of state-owned bottomlands where jurisdiction extends throughout the Commonwealth. The Commission shall have jurisdiction over all commercial fishing and all marine fish, marine shellfish, marine organisms, and habitat in such areas. *In waters of the Albemarle and Currituck watersheds, the Commission's fisheries management jurisdiction is limited to the recreational and commercial harvest of blue crabs.* The Commission's jurisdiction shall also include the power to exercise regulatory authority over all structures and improvements built or proposed by riparian property owners in the Potomac River appurtenant to the shore of the Commonwealth. The Commission shall exercise such regulatory authority in the Potomac River consistent with the provisions of Subtitle III (§ 28.2-1200 et seq.), and all regulations, guidance, and policies adopted thereunder.

§ 29.1-109. Department of Game and Inland Fisheries; Director.

A. The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries shall exist to provide public, informational and educational services related to this title, and to serve as the agency responsible for the administration and enforcement of all rules and regulations of the Board, the statutory provisions of this title, and related legislative acts. The Department shall employ scientific principles and procedures, as developed, researched, recognized and accepted within the bounds of comprehensive professional wildlife resource management, in the management of the Commonwealth's wildlife and natural resources.

B. The Board shall appoint a Director, subject to confirmation and reconfirmation every four years by the General Assembly, to head the Department and to act as principal administrative officer. In addition to the powers designated elsewhere in this title, the Director shall have the power to:

1. Enforce or cause to be enforced all laws for the protection, propagation and preservation of game birds and game animals of the Commonwealth and all fish in the inland waters thereof. Inland waters shall include all waters above tidewater and the brackish and freshwater streams, creeks, bays, including Back Bay, inlets, and ponds in the tidewater counties and cities. *In waters of the Albemarle and Currituck watersheds, the management of the recreational and commercial harvest of blue crabs shall rest with the Marine Resources Commission.*

2. Initiate prosecution of all persons who violate such laws, and seize and confiscate wild birds, wild animals and fish that have been illegally killed, caught, transported or shipped.

3. Employ persons necessary for the administrative requirements of the Board and to designate the official position and duties of each. The salaries of all such employees shall be as provided in accordance with law.

4. Perform such acts as may be necessary to the conduct and establishment of cooperative fish and wildlife projects with the federal government as prescribed by acts of Congress and in compliance with rules and regulations promulgated by the Secretary of the Interior.

5. Make and enter into all contracts and agreements necessary or incidental to the performance of his duties and the execution of his powers, including, but not limited to, contracts with the United States, other state agencies and governmental subdivisions of the Commonwealth.

6. When practicable, consult with, and keep informed, wildlife and boating constituent organizations so as to benefit Virginia's wildlife and natural resources and accomplish the Department's mission.

2. That the regulations adopted by the Marine Resources Commission pertaining to marine and brackish fish that are not currently regulated by the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries in the waters of the Albemarle and Currituck watersheds shall remain in full force and effect in those watersheds until regulations adopted by the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries pertaining to those species become effective.