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VIRGINIA'S PROPOSALS FOR COASTAL
RESOURCES MANAGEMENT: STATUS REPORT

The Department of Commerce and Resources' effort to develop a plan for coastal resources management ends its third year beset with problems. Struggles in the state government for control of the effort, coupled with difficulties in complying with complex federal regulations, have hampered the development of a final plan which will qualify for federal funding. Much of the original plan is currently being redrafted after severe criticism by local government planners at public hearings held in the fall of 1977. A plan is expected to be ready for submission to the General Assembly when the legislature convenes in January of 1978.

The impetus behind the Virginia plan is the federal Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, 16 U.S.C. secs. 1451-64 (Supp. II 1972). The Act provides for up to a 2/3 federal funding for the administration of final programs which meet statutory and regulatory requirements. The primary object of the Act is to coordinate local, state, and federal regulation in the nation's coastal zones. A lack of comprehensive planning for coastal resource management in the past has resulted in the haphazard development of these ecologically fragile areas.

One of the major problems in developing the Virginia plan lies in the proper allocation of regulatory control between local and state government. Local planners are apprehensive about the amount of control that the plan would give the state in local affairs. However, some measure of state control over administration of the plan is necessary for federal approval. After criticism of the original proposals at last fall's public hearings, it appears that the final plan may call for local regulation of small scale developments, e.g. those under \$10,000, with state regulation of larger development.

Another major problem is a lack of sufficient information dealing with the impact of particular kinds of land use on coastal ecologies. Much of the existing information concerning the coastal zone is descriptive of Virginia's coastal zone; for example, studies have shown the types of fish and wildlife encountered in coastal areas, and their breeding habits. However, there is a lack of information regarding how particular kinds of land use will affect this wildlife. Thus, attempts to establish a regulatory system to prevent adverse environmental impacts become all the more difficult.

Time is becoming an important consideration in Virginia's effort because the state is currently in its final year of eligibility for federal funding of the planning process. Much of the future direction of the Virginia plan will depend on the reactions to the proposals when they are submitted to the General Assembly in 1978. Portions of the plan not approved by the Assembly in the 1978 session will be redrafted and resubmitted in 1979; the entire plan will then be submitted for federal approval. Should the final plan be federally approved, the state will be eligible for funding of up to 2/3 of the cost of its administration.