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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

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A N A C T

RELATING TO FISH AND WILDLIFE -- COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

Introduced By: Senators Sosnowski, Valverde, DiMario, Gu, Britto, and Pearson

Date Introduced: January 31, 2025

Referred To: Senate Environment & Agriculture

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 20-4 of the General Laws entitled "Commercial Fisheries" is hereby
2 amended by adding thereto the following sections:

3 **20-4-15. Commercial dock space set aside for use by commercial seafood industry.**

4 (a) “Commercial dock space” means a docking space or area used as part of a business,
5 including a dock extending from residential property if one or more mooring spaces at the dock are
6 rented for a fee and there are more than ten (10) mooring spaces or slips. A dock maintenance fee
7 charged by a property owners association to its members is not a basis to classify a dock as
8 commercial. Commercial dock space does not include dock or port space under DEM management
9 or on state-owned property.

10 (b) All applications for renovations to “commercial dock space”, as defined in this section,
11 and for new commercial dock space shall be reviewed by DEM in order to determine whether there
12 shall be requirements for a set aside or for a preference for commercial fishing industry use at the
13 commercial dock space.

14 (c) The DEM, in conjunction with the CRMC, may utilize the technical assistance and
15 funding of the LASA (RI Local Agriculture and Seafood Act) program and/or the commercial dock
16 space preservation fund to ensure that applications for renovations to, and applications for new,
17 commercial dock space are reviewed for inclusion of a set aside or a preference for dock space for
18 commercial fishers in order to assure the long-term economic prosperity of Rhode Island’s seafood
19 industry.

1 (d) The DEM shall determine the need for dock space for commercial fishers in the area of
2 the commercial dock space, including the historical need of commercial fishers for space in the
3 area being developed or renovated and shall make a determination of whether space should be set
4 aside or given a preference for use by the commercial fishing industry.

5 (e) The CRMC shall implement the DEM determinations for any Rhode Island commercial
6 dock space within CRMC jurisdiction.

7 (f) The DEM shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary for the administration of
8 this section which shall include commercial fishing activity requirements in order to obtain use of
9 the commercial dock space set aside for the seafood industry pursuant to this section.

10 (g) Commercial dock owners who are required to provide a set aside or a preference for
11 commercial fishing activity pursuant to this section shall annually file a report to the DEM on a
12 form provided by the DEM.

13 **20-4-16. Commercial dock space preservation fund.**

14 (a) A commercial dock space preservation fund is established under the jurisdiction of the
15 DEM.

16 (b) The purpose of the fund is to preserve, maintain or obtain commercial dock space for
17 use by commercial fishers.

18 (c) The fund shall consist of:

19 (1) Money appropriated in the state budget to the fund or otherwise made available to the
20 fund;

21 (2) Money made available to the fund through federal programs or private contributions;

22 (3) Repayments of principal and interest from loans made from the fund;

23 (4) Proceeds from the sale, disposition, lease, or rental of collateral related to financial
24 assistance provided under this chapter; and

25 (5) Any other money made available to the fund.

26 SECTION 2. Section 2-25-7 of the General Laws in Chapter 2-25 entitled "The Rhode
27 Island Local Agriculture and Seafood Act" is hereby amended to read as follows:

28 **2-25-7. Use of funds.**

29 (a) A non-profit entity, ~~or~~ small or beginning farmer or commercial fisher may apply to the
30 department of environmental management for a grant to be used to fulfill the purposes of the
31 program as stated in subdivisions 2-25-5(3) and 2-25-5(4). Any grant disbursed under this program
32 shall not exceed twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) per year. Applications for grants authorized
33 under this section shall:

34 (1) Provide a brief summary of the nonprofit entity or small or beginning farmer's or

1 [commercial fisher's](#) mission, goals, history, programs, and major accomplishments, success stories
2 and qualifications;

3 (2) Briefly describe the proposed project or program, the capacity to carry out the program
4 and who will benefit from the program;

5 (3) Describe the expected outcomes and the indicators of those outcomes;

6 (4) Outline the timeline to be used in the implementation of the program or project; and

7 (5) Provide a program or project budget.

8 (b) The funds shall also be used by the department to provide administrative and technical
9 support of the program, and to leverage program funds with other potential federal, state or
10 nonprofit funding sources, and shall serve to develop, implement and enforce when appropriate
11 food safety related standards and programs related to local agriculture and seafood in coordination
12 with the Rhode Island department of health and appropriate federal agencies.

13 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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RELATING TO FISH AND WILDLIFE -- COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

1 This act would establish commercial dock space to be used as part of a business and not
2 under DEM management or on state-owned property. Applications for renovations and new
3 commercial dock space would be reviewed by DEM. The act would also create a commercial dock
4 space preservation fund established under DEM jurisdiction and would include commercial fishers
5 as eligible for grants to be used to fulfill the purposes of chapter 25 of title 2.

6 This act would take effect upon passage.

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