



HOUSE BILL 841: Shellfish Leasing Study.

2025-2026 General Assembly

Committee:	House Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House	Date:	May 5, 2025
Introduced by:	Rep. Carson Smith	Prepared by:	Chris Saunders
Analysis of:	First Edition		Staff Attorney

OVERVIEW: *House Bill 841 would direct the North Carolina Collaboratory (Collaboratory) to study shellfish aquaculture regulations to make recommendations for a statewide framework to balance economic development, environmental protection, and public access to coastal waters. The Collaboratory would be directed to submit an interim report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources by December 1, 2025, and a final report, including any recommendations for legislative or regulatory changes, by May 1, 2026.*

BILL ANALYSIS:

House Bill 841 would direct the Collaboratory to study shellfish aquaculture regulations to ensure a balanced approach between economic development, environmental protection, and public access to coastal waters. In conducting the study, the Collaboratory would be required to consult with the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, the Marine Fisheries Commission, and other stakeholders, including shellfish growers, commercial and recreational fishermen, property owners, and coastal area local governments. The Collaboratory would be directed to evaluate all of the following factors:

- The effectiveness of existing regulations and permitting governing shellfish aquaculture leases.
- The history and policy bases for current permanent and temporary moratoriums and whether to lift or modify existing moratoriums or enact additional moratoriums on shellfish aquaculture leases.
- Best practices from other states for managing shellfish aquaculture.
- The economic impact of shellfish aquaculture expansion on coastal economies and tourism.
- Potential and actual conflicts between shellfish aquaculture operations and other coastal uses.
- Environmental considerations around shellfish aquaculture in various coastal habitats.
- Regulatory, permitting, and environmental impact differences between bottom and column leases.
- The role of local governments in shellfish aquaculture leases.

The study would make recommendations for a statewide framework on the regulation and permitting of shellfish aquaculture that benefits the industry and the State while mitigating user conflicts. The Collaboratory would be directed to submit an interim report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources by December 1, 2025, and a final report, including any recommendations for legislative or regulatory changes, by May 1, 2026.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This act would be effective when it becomes law.

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