



SENATE BILL 257: 2026 Appropriations Act, Sec. 12.21: Coastal Reserve Agency Authority.

2025-2026 General Assembly

Analysis of: S.L. 2026-41, Sec. 12.21

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Section 12.21 of S.L. 2026-41 (Senate Bill 257) specifies that the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) administers the Coastal Reserve System (System) subject to: (i) use standards adopted by the Coastal Resources Commission (CRC); and (ii) permits and orders issued by the CRC concerning activities allowed in the System. For components of the System that are also dedicated nature preserves, DEQ serves as primary custodian. The Secretary of Natural and Cultural Resources must monitor these preserves and retain authority to report alleged violations of an approved management plan or articles of dedication, triggering a mediation process coordinated by the Department of Administration. If mediation is unsuccessful, the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources has standing and a right of action in superior court to enforce the articles of dedication.

The System was established "for the purpose of acquiring, improving, and maintaining undeveloped coastal land and water areas in a natural state." Prior to the change made by this section, the statutes provided that the System was administered by DEQ, but DEQ was directed to consult with and seek the ongoing advice of the CRC concerning activities allowed in the System.

This section became effective July 1, 2026.

Kara McCraw
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