[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 5504

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

222nd LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED SEPTEMBER 10, 2026

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SYNOPSIS

Expands and changes membership of Aquaculture Advisory Council.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As reported by the Assembly Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee on September 17, 2026, with amendments.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 9/24/26)

AN ACT changing membership of the Aquaculture Advisory Council and amending P.L.1997, c.236.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. Section 5 of P.L.1997, c.236 (C.4:27-5) is amended to read as follows:

5. a. There is established in the Department of Agriculture an Aquaculture Advisory Council which shall consist of **[**13**]** 18 total members, including 15 voting and **[**two**]** three non-voting members **[**. The voting members shall include the Secretary of Agriculture, who shall serve as chairman, the Commissioner of Environmental Protection, the Commissioner of Commerce and Economic Development, the Commissioner of Health and Senior Services, the director of the Aquaculture Technology Transfer Center, the director of the Aquaculture Training and Information Center, the executive director of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, or their designees, who shall serve ex officio, and six citizens of the State, to be appointed as follows: two by the President of the Senate, one of whom shall be a representative from recognized aquaculture organizations or an operator of an aquaculture farm and one of whom shall be a representative of the seafood industry; two by the Speaker of the General Assembly, one of whom shall be a representative of recognized aquaculture organizations or an operator of an aquaculture farm and one of whom shall be a representative of farmers; and two by the Governor from the public at large. The chairman of the Marine Fisheries Council and the chairman of the Fish and Game Council shall serve ex officio and as non-voting members.**]**, as follows:

(1) seven members, or their designees, shall serve as ex-officio voting members, including:

(a) the Secretary of Agriculture;

(b) the Assistant Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife;

(c) the executive director of the Business Action Center in the Department of State;

(d) the Commissioner of Health;

(e) the director of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station;

(f) the executive director of the New Jersey Sea Grant Extension Service; and

(g) a member of the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture, chosen by the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture;

(2) three members, or their designees, shall serve as ex-officio non-voting members, including:

(a) the project coordinator of the Shellfish Project in the

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.
Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:
[1]Assembly AAN committee amendments adopted September 17, 2026.

Department of Health;

(b) the assistant commissioner of Water- Resource Management in the Department of Environmental Protection; and

(c) the assistant commissioner of watershed and land management in the Department of Environmental Protection; and

(3) eight members, who are residents of the State, shall serve as voting public members, including:

(a) three representatives of the aquaculture industry appointed by the President of the Senate, who shall include: one clam farmer, one oyster farmer, and one representative of nursery and hatchery interests or any other aquaculture interest;

(b) three representatives of the aquaculture industry appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, who shall include: one clam farmer, one oyster farmer, and one representative of nursery and hatchery interests or any other aquaculture interest; and

(c) two members appointed by the Governor, who shall include: one member of the public at large, and one member of an academic institution with knowledge, expertise, and experience in aquaculture industry operations.

b. The term of office of each public member shall be three years [1]**[**; except that of the first members to be appointed, one appointed by the Governor, one by the President of the Senate and one by the Speaker of the General Assembly shall be appointed for a term of two years, and the remaining two members shall be appointed for a term of three years**]**[1]. Each member shall serve until a successor has been appointed and qualified, and vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments for the remainder of the unexpired term. A member is eligible for reappointment to the council.

c. A majority of the membership of the advisory council shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of advisory council business.

d. Members of the advisory council shall serve without compensation, but shall be entitled to reimbursement for expenses incurred in attendance at meetings to the extent funds are available therefor.

e. The advisory council shall act in an advisory capacity to the department and other State agencies on aquaculture matters. The advisory council shall assist the various departments in the evaluation of proposed and existing rules and regulations and the development of policies mandated by provisions of **[**this act**]** P.L.1997, c.236 (C.4:27-1 et al.). The advisory council shall seek to ensure that aquaculture market development activities and policies reflect the changing needs and characteristics of the aquaculture industry. The advisory council shall review the Aquaculture Development Plan and update the plan as appropriate, but no less frequently than every five years.

(cf: P.L.1997, c.236, s.5)

2. This act shall take effect immediately.