

Steve Plant  
CT Cultured Oysters  
202 S. Anguilla Road  
Pawcatuck, CT 06379  
[stevepalnt@CT-Oysters.com](mailto:stevepalnt@CT-Oysters.com)

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Dear Members of the State of CT Legislature:

I would like to express my full support to the adoption of a 6mph speed limit throughout the Mystic River channel down to the mouth past the Noank Shipyard. I am an oyster farmer going on 10-years, with a number of active shellfish beds in the lower estuary in the vicinity of Sixpenny Island. Being on the water regularly, I witness literally dozens of events throughout the boating season that support the adoption of this speed limit.

Chief among these is in regard to boating safety. The section of river between Starport Marine and The Noank Village Boatyard mooring field (near Sixpenny Island) is one of those spots where boats feel at liberty to increase speed significantly. It is also a natural choke point in the channel. So at the same time as the boater in the 50-ft Sportfisherman wants to "open her up", there are a group of kayakers looking to cross that channel! I cannot count the number of "near misses" I witness every year. Even without these "close calls", the wakes thrown by larger vessels are not only a hazard to safety, but are discourteous to all sized vessels. The reality is... the section of river in which the majority of higher speed takes place is so small, that the actual timesaving for a boater in getting out into open water is insignificant.

On a purely selfish note... I would prefer lower speeds from an aquacultural standpoint too! Big wakes thrown by many of the larger vessels are actually large enough to wash oyster seed (juvenile oysters) off the beds and up onto the shore! While I have adjusted to the realities, and changed my normal planting depths accordingly over the years, it would still make my job a lot easier to not have to deal with this "man made" disruption. Additionally... these wakes get so large and frequent during weekends in peak season, that they also greatly increase turbidity and shoreline agitation. Given that we are trying to protect these estuary environments, especially during those benign weather months when many species reproduce, it seems a natural thing to do.

In summary... the Mystic Estuary is VERY crowded during the peak boating season. And it will only get more so as the years pass. A reduced speed throughout would increase both the safety and civility that all boaters deserve to truly enjoy a wonderful resource.

Sincerely:

Stephen J. Plant

PROPOSED BILL NO. 5476