



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



Public Hearing – February 23, 2011  
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Amey Marrella  
Department of Environmental Protection

**Committee House Bill No. 5300 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE SPEED LIMITS OF  
BOATS ON THE MYSTIC RIVER**

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Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding Committee House Bill No. 5300 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE SPEED LIMIT OF BOATS ON THE MYSTIC RIVER. The Department of Environmental Protection (Department) strongly supports this bill, which modifies the provisions of section 15-16 by removing an impediment to the enforcement of speed law on the Mystic River.

Committee House Bill No. 5300 enhances public safety by eliminating the difficulty of enforcing the speed limit on the Mystic River. The obstacle is found in the controlling statute, section 15-16, which is an artifact of 1949 and was last modified in 1961. The statute is well intended, but the penalty mechanism requires the forfeiture of cash to the state, which in turn requires involvement of the Office of the Attorney General. This arcane penalty system discourages law enforcement from imposing this section and seeing the penalty through to completion.

The Department, in consultation with various local officials and with the support of regional legislators, has proposed regulations that will make much of the Mystic River a "Slow-No-Wake zone" under one overarching and enforceable regulation. These regulations have been approved by the Attorney General's office and are now awaiting consideration by the Regulations Review Committee. Even with this approval, however, the implementation of approved regulations will be impeded by the existing law, which has primacy, unless conflicting speed controls on the Mystic River are removed from section 15-16, as this bill proposes to do.

Alternatively, the Department would also support a bill that repeals section 15-16 in its entirety, because this section of law is equally unenforceable on all of the waterways under its jurisdiction. Should repeal of this section be realized, speed control on these waterways would generally default to existing regulations, which are universally taught in Connecticut Safe Boating classes and universally enforced throughout the state. The default regulations impose a "Slow-No-Wake Zone" when within 200 feet for personal watercraft (PWC) and 100 feet for boats other than PWC of a shore, dock, pier, float or anchored or moored vessel (unless approaching such for waterskiing takeoff or landing).

In short, this proposal removes the final impediment to the implementation of currently proposed regulations that are more enforceable and suitable than the current law. The Department

supports its passage, but would also welcome the opportunity to work with the proponents of the bill to repeal all of section 15-16.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal. If you should require any additional information, please contact the Department's legislative liaison, Robert LaFrance, at 424-3401 or [Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov](mailto:Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov).