



CANDLEWOOD LAKE AUTHORITY

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Public Hearing – March 2, 2012

Environment Committee

**Testimony Submitted by the Candlewood Lake Authority
Larry Marsicano, Executive Director**

In Support of

H.B. No. 5259 – AN ACT REQUIRING THE INSPECTION OF VESSELS AND VESSEL TRAILERS FOR AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

The raised bill aims to make important modifications and improvements to legislation which was passed and put into effect in June of 2003. That legislation, Section 15-180 from Chapter 268 – Boating, is entitled *Transporting vessel or trailer without inspecting for and properly removing and disposing of vegetation* and states that *no person shall transport a vessel, as defined in section 15-127, or any trailer used to transport such vessel, in the state without first inspecting such vessel for the presence of vegetation and properly removing and disposing of any such vegetation from such vessel or trailer.*

Since the fall of 2010 Lakes Lillinonah, Zoar and Housatonic of western Connecticut have all become infected with the aquatic invasive animal zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*). Before that, introductions and establishment of zebra mussel colonies had occurred at East Twin and West Twin Lakes of Salisbury, CT. This particular nuisance freshwater mollusk can cause extensive ecological, recreational and commercial damage by their establishment of dense, reef like colonies that can form on all hard substrates in some lakes. Like invasive plants, these organisms can be transported and introduced in other lakes as “hitchhikers” on boats and trailers moving from inland water resource to another. This is one of the primary reasons the current law should be amended to include “aquatic plants and invasive species” (which includes animals like zebra mussels) instead of just the phrase “vegetation”.

An introduction of an invasive animal species like zebra mussels into a lake like Candlewood Lake could have very serious repercussions and expedite further spread due to the high volume of visitors which visit, boat in Candlewood, and leave for other waters or the Candlewood resident who temporarily takes his boat out of Candlewood to visit another waterbody. Because of that, the Candlewood Lake Authority (CLA) assembled a Zebra Mussel Task Force comprised of a diverse set of stakeholders including the CT DEEP. The work of the Task Force resulted in a public report that included a set of recommendations which included supporting regulatory measures to discourage the further spread of zebra mussels. That report can be found on the CLA’s website at www.candlewoodlakeauthority.org and provides details the life history,

spread across North America, and damage this aquatic invasive animal can cause, as well as a set of recommendations.

The proposed bill looks to improve upon on good legislation making it illegal to transport vessels in the State without first inspecting, removing, and disposing of aquatic vegetation and aquatic invasive species. This can be accomplished with some minor modifications and is practical as species like zebra mussels can be readily detected on trailers and boat hulls.

The Candlewood Lake Authority fully supports HB 5259 as another step the State of Connecticut can take to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.