

**To: Members of the Environment Committee**

**Fm: Jim McAlister**, Chair, Candlewood Watershed Initiative, and Committed Lake Advocate

I applaud the efforts of the Committee in framing and raising S. B. No. 446 to help prevent and contain the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) within the inland waters of CT. This Bill is long overdue, particularly given the damage that is already occurring from AIS infestations, the speed with which AIS spread, and the vulnerable nature of our cherished waterways and lakes.

Experience in other states nationwide underscores the challenge, the difficulty in keeping these species at bay, and daunting the investment required to accomplish this task. It also drives home the message that spending on prevention is a great deal smarter and infinitely cheaper than inviting infestation and its costly aftermath.

I endorse the provisions of this draft Bill but would **recommend the broadening of its Section 1 grant capabilities to include partial funding (% TBD) of the cost of boat wash/decontamination stations/facilities and their staffing**, where judged appropriate, to help ensure that vessels and their trailers suspected of carrying, or contaminated with, AIS are cleaned before allowed entry into CT's un-infested waters. This is particularly important for large water bodies such as Candlewood Lake that attract robust transient boat activity that can easily transmit and infect otherwise 'clean' waters.

Two other points that may be beyond the scope of this particular Bill but which will help determine its effectiveness. First, **the money allocated for AIS prevention and control must be sufficient to accomplish the task**. While any dollar amounts will be helpful, the experience of other states -- and the tenuous situation we now find ourselves in -- would suggest an annual allocation in the \$5-10M range, and that is on the light side.

Second, **there should be provision for an ongoing funding mechanism**, ideally drawn from user sources/revenues, so that a sustained effort may be made to control and contain the advance of AIS. Modest or sporadic at-will allocations won't accomplish the task and will simply up the ante as these insidious species overtake our vital waters. This we cannot allow to happen.

My thanks for your efforts on this legislation and the consideration of my comments. Bottom-line, I would urge your approval, enhanced by the refinements above to the extent possible. Our waters are too important to be ignored or given a short shrift financially.

Jim McAlister

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