

TESTIMONY ON RAISED BILL NO. 136

An Act Regulating the use of Jet Articulated Vessels and Custom Water Skiing Devices

John A. Elsesser, Town Manager, Town of Coventry

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Good morning. I appreciate the opportunity to address the Committee on Environment on Raised Bill No. 136 pertaining to Jet-Articulated vehicles.

As Town Manager of Coventry, one of my duties is to serve as a caretaker of Coventry Lake, which we proudly boast of as being one of the cleanest lakes in the State. Each year we spend local funds to test for water quality, use best management practices for land use and have crafted a shared-use plan to promote all types of recreational uses – from the UConn Crew Team drills to water skiing.

Last summer we experienced several things for the first time. Jet-articulated vehicles, commonly called flyboards, suddenly appeared on our lake. We discovered the flyboards were being rented from the State boat launch without State permission or knowledge. While all admit they look like fun, we had concerns for the safety of the lake and people using it, so we contracted with Dr. Kortmann of Eco-Systems Consulting Service to conduct what we believe is the first examination of potential effects of the use of flyboards on a thermally stratified inland lake. I am submitting this study for your consideration.

We tested the environmental effects of flyboard use at 3 different locations at different depths of 11, 20 and 30 feet. Our concern with flyboards is that unlike other aquatic recreational devices the propulsion stress is downward which can stir up the bottom waters and soils.

The report's findings did indicate the impacts were significant. The downward thrust changed the water chemistry even down to 27-foot depths. Interestingly enough the impacts were less in the shallow waters, maybe due to bottom plant protection.

Additional study is needed to determine the impacts during different seasons and conditions. We also have grave concerns that the flyboard hoses could lead to cross-contamination by invasive aquatic species. While we have nothing but anecdotal circumstantial evidence, the area of the flyboard use just became contaminated with a very aggressive invasive species called Hydrilla which could ruin the lake. I am also submitting a report on Hydrilla in Coventry Lake conducted by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

So I support Raised Bill No. 136 since at minimum it pushes the impact of flyboard uses out of the shallows and makes their use safer, but I urge the State to immediately follow up and conduct the recommended second-phase study of flyboard use on inland lakes since this legislation may not go far enough. I further urge that this Committee request the State move quickly to address the Hydrilla invasion of Coventry Lake. The State's own report suggests quarantining Coventry Lake as one alternative to address the problems of contamination by Hydrilla.

Thank you for your time.