



February 10, 2021

Honorable Christine Cohen, Co-Chair
Honorable Dorinda Borer, Co-Chair
Honorable Derek Slap, Vice-Chair
Honorable Joseph P. Gresko, Vice-Chair
Honorable Craig Miner, Ranking Member
Honorable Stephen G. Harding, Ranking Member
Committee on the Environment
General Assembly
State of Connecticut

RE: Proposed House Bill 6384, An Act Concerning Aquatic Invasive Species' Effects on Lakes and Related Funding

Dear Co-Chairs Cohen and Borer, Vice-Chairs Slap and Gresko, and Ranking Members Miner and Harding:

The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, the Mystic Aquarium, and the Beardsley Zoo are not-for-profit institutions whose missions are tied to inspiring people to protect the natural world on land, in Long Island Sound, and across the global ocean. We are among the State's largest family attractions, together attracting about 1.5 million visitors a year, and we are leaders in conservation and education.

We write as accredited zoological and aquatic institutions in support of Proposed House Bill No. 6384 for its stated efforts "to examine, address and decrease the effects of invasive aquatic species on the state's lakes."

Non-native to an ecosystem, invasive species pose serious environmental and economic threats to their "new" habitats. Invasive species have been shown to have a significant impact on water infrastructure at the federal level.¹ Of note, two species (Asian clam, *Corbicula fluminea*, and zebra mussel, *Dreissena polymorpha*) are responsible for hundreds of millions of dollars in damages in the United States alone.² This is concerning as both of those above noted species are present in Connecticut waters, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.³

Each of our institutions are actively involved with research and conservation projects locally (and beyond) to better understand and protect the environment. For example, Connecticut's Beardsley Zoo works with its youth program (Conservation Discovery Corps) on invasive plant species removal along ponds and waterways. This allows for a healthy riverine habitat for birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. In addition, the Zoo assists DEEP on monitoring invasive insect species. Meanwhile, Staff at The Maritime Aquarium are actively monitoring for invasive species that can affect the function of Connecticut freshwater and marine systems. In 2018, these researchers identified the Chinese mitten crab, *Eriocheir sinensis*,⁴ which has since been witnessed many times particularly in the Housatonic River, and is responsible for infrastructure damages of over \$100 million in countries where they have invaded.⁵ The presence of invasive species in Connecticut is a concern for all three of our organizations.

Proposed H.B. 6384 promises more resources to projects covering aquatic invasive species. Given the need to better understand and control invasive species and mitigate their negative impacts, this collective group strongly supports the proposed bill.



Sincerely,



Jason Patlis
President and CEO
The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk

Dr. Stephen Coan
President and CEO
Mystic Aquarium

Gregg Dancho
Director
Beardsley Zoo

¹ Vissicelli M. 2018. Invasive species impacts on federal infrastructure. National Invasive Species Council Secretariat, Washington, DC

² Connelly NA, O'Neill CR, Knuth BA, Brown TL. 2007. Economic Impacts of Zebra Mussels on Drinking Water Treatment and Electric Power Generation Facilities. *Environmental Management* 40:105–112. DOI: 10.1007/s00267-006-0296-5.

³ U.S. Geological Survey. 2021. Nonindigenous Aquatic Species Database, Gainesville, FL. <http://nas.er.usgs.gov>, 8 February 2021

⁴ Hudson DM, Schaefer-Padgett S, Christie BL, Harris R. 2019. First-record of introduction of *Metacarcinus magister* Dana, 1852 (Crustacea: Decapoda: Cancridae) and range extension of *Eriocheir sinensis* Milne-Edwards, 1853 (Crustacea: Decapoda: Varunidae) in the Long Island Sound. *BiolInvasions Records* 8(2):400-409. DOI: 10.3391/bir.2019.8.2.21

⁵ Gollasch S (2011) NOBANIS – Invasive Alien Species Fact Sheet – *Eriocheir sinensis*. Online Database of the European Network on Invasive Alien Species – NOBANIS. <http://www.nobanis.org> (accessed 3 September 2018)



General Assembly

January Session, 2021

Raised Bill No. 6384

LCO No. 2675



Referred to Committee on ENVIRONMENT

Introduced by:
(ENV)

AN ACT CONCERNING AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES' EFFECTS ON LAKES AND RELATED FUNDING.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 22a-339h of the general statutes is repealed and the
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2021*):

3 On or before November 1, [2006] 2020, the Commissioner of Energy
4 and Environmental Protection shall enter into an agreement with the
5 town of Middlefield and the Lake Beseck Association regarding a
6 schedule for annual water level draw downs of Lake Beseck. Water level
7 draw downs shall be three feet during even-numbered years with
8 completion achieved by December first of such year and maintained
9 until March first of the following year. Water level draw downs shall be
10 six feet during odd-numbered years achieved by November first of such
11 year and maintained until [December] January thirty-first of such year;
12 a three-foot water level draw down shall be maintained thereafter until
13 March first of the following year. Such water level draw downs are
14 designed to balance the various concerns of the lake community,
15 including: Recreational needs, preservation of lakefront infrastructure,

16 fisheries habitat and other natural resource concerns.

17 Sec. 2. (*Effective from passage*) Not later than October 1, 2021, the
18 Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall submit a
19 report, in accordance with section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the
20 joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of
21 matters relating to the environment on the amount of revenue collected
22 from the Aquatic Invasive Species fees authorized pursuant to section
23 14-21bb of the general statutes and the number, value and purpose of
24 any grants to municipalities and not-for-profit organizations awarded
25 from the Connecticut Lakes, Rivers and Ponds Preservation account in
26 accordance with section 14-21aa of the general statutes. The
27 Commissioner of Motor Vehicles shall provide the Commissioner of
28 Energy and Environmental Protection with any information necessary
29 to perform the requirements of this section. Such report may include any
30 recommendations from the Commissioner of Energy and
31 Environmental Protection on additional means for funding projects to
32 control or eradicate aquatic invasive species by municipalities and lake
33 authorities.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>October 1, 2021</i>	22a-339h
Sec. 2	<i>from passage</i>	New section

Statement of Purpose:

To examine, address and decrease the effects of invasive aquatic species on the state's lakes.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]