

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 21-12—sHB 6384
Environment Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES EFFECTS ON LAKES AND RELATED FUNDING, CERTAIN GROUP FISHING EVENTS AND ELIMINATING THE SEASON LIMITATION FOR THE TAKING OF TROUT

SUMMARY: This act primarily does the following:

1. provides for a longer six-foot draw down period of Lake Beseck in odd-numbered years;
2. requires the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) commissioner to report to the Environment Committee on (a) the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) fee revenue and (b) grants from the Connecticut Lakes, Rivers and Ponds Preservation account;
3. increases the number of participants allowed under a group fishing license from 50 to 100 people per event; and
4. prohibits the state from having a closed trout sport fishing season.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except the Lake Beseck draw down provision is effective October 1, 2021.

LAKE BESECK DRAW DOWN

The act provides for a longer six-foot draw down period of Lake Beseck in odd-numbered years. By law, in these years the draw down must be achieved by November 1. The act requires it to be maintained until January 31, instead of December 31 as under prior law.

The act requires DEEP to enter into an agreement by November 1, 2021, with Middlefield and the Lake Beseck Association about the lake's annual water level draw downs.

REPORTING FROM DEEP

The act requires the DEEP commissioner to submit a report to the Environment Committee by October 1, 2021, on the (1) amount of revenue collected from the AIS fee (see **BACKGROUND**) and (2) number, value, and purpose of any grants to municipalities and nonprofit organizations from the Connecticut Lakes, Rivers and Ponds Preservation account. The commissioner may include recommendations for additional ways to fund municipalities' and lake authorities' AIS control or eradication projects.

The act requires the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) commissioner to give the DEEP commissioner any information necessary to complete the report.

GROUP FISHING LICENSE

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The act increases the number of participants allowed under a group fishing license from 50 to 100 people per event. By law, DEEP may issue a group fishing license to a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization to conduct up to 50 group fishing events per year for qualified individuals (e.g., disabled veterans and certain people receiving services from the departments of Children and Families, Developmental Services, Mental Health and Addiction Services, and Social Services).

TROUT FISHING

The act prohibits the state from having a closed trout sport fishing season. (DEEP regulations previously closed trout fishing in most lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams from March 1 to 6:00 a.m. on the second Saturday in April (Conn. Agencies Regs. § 26-112-45(m)).) The act does not limit DEEP's existing authority to regulate the method and manner of taking trout (CGS §§ 26-111 & 26-112).

BACKGROUND

AIS Fee

By law, owners of registered vessels (i.e., generally, any type of watercraft except a seaplane) must pay an annual AIS fee. The fee is \$5 for in-state vessels (payable to DMV when registering a vessel) and \$20 for out-of-state vessels (payable to DEEP) (CGS § 14-21bb). DMV and DEEP must deposit the fee proceeds in the Connecticut Lakes, Rivers and Ponds Preservation account. DEEP must use the account for various purposes, including allocating grants to state and municipal agencies and nonprofit organizations to conduct research and provide public education on managing the state's lakes, rivers, and ponds (CGS § 14-21aa).