
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5143

AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN OFFICE OF AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes an Office of Aquatic Invasive Species within the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES). The CAES board of control must determine the office's staffing within available resources. The bill enumerates the office's responsibilities (see below), including coordinating research efforts for aquatic invasive species (AIS) control and eradication. However, the bill prohibits the office from issuing permits or fines.

The bill also requires the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to (1) establish a public education program about its "clean, drain, and dry" technique for boaters to use before leaving a boat launch and (2) install signs about the technique at each state boat launch. Under the bill, DEEP must do these within available resources.

Lastly, the bill establishes a separate, non-lapsing General Fund account called the "save our waterways account" for funding AIS control and eradication efforts in the state. The account (1) may receive funds from private or public sources, including the federal and any municipal government, and (2) must contain all money the law requires to be deposited in it.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2022

OFFICE OF AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

Under the bill, the Office of Aquatic Invasive Species must do the following:

1. coordinate research efforts in the state associated with AIS control and eradication to reduce duplication of efforts and costs;

2. be a repository for statewide data on the health of rivers, lakes, and ponds in relation to the presence of AIS;
3. regularly survey the health and ecological viability of the state waterways in relation to the presence and threat of AIS;
4. educate the public about aquatic invasive plants and steps the public can take to reduce the plants' impact;
5. advise municipalities on AIS management; and
6. be a liaison among organizations and state agencies (such as DEEP, Department of Agriculture, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Connecticut Federation of Lakes and Ponds Associations, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, municipal inland wetlands commissions, Connecticut River Conservancy, and councils of governments) for AIS control and eradication issues.

The bill requires the office to coordinate its efforts and responsibilities with the state's Invasive Plants Council. (By law, the Invasive Plants Council, among other things, publishes a list of invasive or potentially invasive plants; researches the control of invasive plants; and educates the public on problems with invasive plants (CGS 22a-381a).)

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 31 Nay 0 (03/04/2022)