



# House of Representatives

General Assembly

**File No. 486**

January Session, 2023

Substitute House Bill No. 6811

*House of Representatives, April 11, 2023*

The Committee on Environment reported through REP. GRESKO of the 121st Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

## ***AN ACT CONCERNING REVISIONS TO THE VESSEL REGISTRATION AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES FEE.***

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

1 Section 1. Section 14-21bb of the general statutes is repealed and the  
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2024*):

3 (a) Any person who [registers a vessel or renews a vessel registration  
4 pursuant to section 15-144 and who intends to operate or allow such  
5 vessel to be operated on the waters of the state shall concomitantly, in  
6 addition to the remittance of any fee required pursuant to section 15-  
7 144, pay an] operates a vessel on the inland waters of the state that is  
8 required to display a registration decal, issued by this state or another  
9 state, shall possess an individual Aquatic Invasive Species Stamp. The  
10 fee [of five] for such stamp shall be seven dollars. [The Commissioner of  
11 Motor Vehicles shall cause all revenues collected pursuant to this  
12 section to be deposited in the Connecticut Lakes, Rivers and Ponds  
13 Preservation account established in section 14-21aa.] The Department of  
14 Energy and Environmental Protection shall issue such stamp through

15 the On-line Sportsmen Licensing system of the department. Any such  
16 stamp shall be valid for the calendar year in which it was issued.

17 (b) [Any] Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of this  
18 section, any person who [intends to operate or allow a vessel to be  
19 operated on the inland waters of the state that is registered in another  
20 state shall, prior to such operation, pay an] owns a vessel that is required  
21 to display a registration decal, issued by this state or another state, may  
22 purchase a vessel Aquatic Invasive Species Decal in lieu of the  
23 requirement of subsection (a) of this section that each person who  
24 operates such vessel obtain an individual Aquatic Invasive Species  
25 Stamp. Any person who operates a vessel bearing a valid vessel Aquatic  
26 Invasive Species Decal shall be deemed to have met the requirements of  
27 subsection (a) of this section while operating such vessel. The fee [of] for  
28 such vessel Aquatic Invasive Species Decal shall be twenty dollars, [to]  
29 provided the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection [.  
30 Such fees shall be paid annually and such payment shall be valid until  
31 the last day of December of such year.] may charge an additional fee of  
32 not more than five dollars for the production, processing and mailing of  
33 such decal. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection  
34 shall issue such decal through the On-line Sportsmen Licensing system  
35 of the department. Any such decal shall be valid for the calendar year in  
36 which it was issued. Any such vessel Aquatic Invasive Species Decal  
37 shall be permanently affixed to the vessel for which it was purchased  
38 approximately amidship on the port side of the vessel either on the hull  
39 of the vessel or at the operator's station and in such a manner as to be  
40 visible to law enforcement officers approaching by vessel from the port  
41 side of such vessel.

42 (c) The provisions of subsections (a) and (b) of this section shall not  
43 be construed to apply to the operator of any vessel that is numbered  
44 pursuant to section 15-145, provided such number bears the suffix of  
45 "DL", "XP", "MS" or "YB" and displays a current registration validation  
46 decal.

47 (d) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall

48 cause all revenues collected pursuant to this subsection to be deposited  
49 in the Connecticut Lakes, Rivers and Ponds Preservation account  
50 established in section 14-21aa.

51 (e) Any person who operates a vessel on the inland waters of the state  
52 in violation of the provisions of this [subsection] section shall have  
53 committed an infraction and shall be fined not more than eighty-five  
54 dollars.

|   |                 |         |
|---|-----------------|---------|
| This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections: |                 |         |
| Section 1   | October 1, 2024 | 14-21bb |

**ENV**      *Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

**OFA Fiscal Note**

**State Impact:**

| Agency Affected                                   | Fund-Effect       | FY 24 \$ | FY 25 \$  |
|---|-------------------|----------|-----------|
| Department of Energy and Environmental Protection | GF - Revenue Gain | None     | See Below |

Note: GF=General Fund

**Municipal Impact:** None

**Explanation**

The bill is expected to result in a revenue gain, starting October 1, 2024, as it alters the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) fees paid by boaters to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) into the Connecticut Lakes, Rivers and Ponds Preservation account. The agency uses these funds to restore and rehabilitate lakes, rivers, and ponds, including the eradication of AIS.

Currently, boaters pay vessel registration fees for the eradication of AIS by DEEP. These fees are currently: (1) \$5 for residents and (2) \$20 for nonresidents. The bill creates a new \$7 AIS stamp for individuals and a \$20 AIS decal for vessels, regardless of residency status, to be issued by DEEP. The bill also allows DEEP to charge an additional fee per decal of up to \$5 for producing, processing, and mailing.

The annualized amount of the revenue gain under the bill, beginning in FY 25, depends on the number of boaters who obtain the \$7 individual stamp and the \$20 vessel decal. The three-year average annual revenue from the existing fees is \$483,540. A few scenarios below show the potential annualized revenue gain under the bill:

- If all current boaters with a registered vessel purchase the \$7 stamp - \$180,585
- If 70% of current boaters with a registered vessel purchase the \$20 decal and 30% purchase the stamp - \$1,043,948

***The Out Years***

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to the number of AIS stamps and decals issued.

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**OLR Bill Analysis****sHB 6811*****AN ACT CONCERNING REVISIONS TO THE VESSEL REGISTRATION AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES FEE.*****SUMMARY**

Beginning October 1, 2024, this bill (1) decouples the collection of the state Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) fee, which certain boaters pay, from the boat registration process and (2) eliminates a two-tiered fee schedule based on a boater's state residency. (The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) learned during a federal audit that federal law does not allow either of these practices.)

Under current law, people who register boats in Connecticut, and out-of-state boaters operating on Connecticut waters, must pay an annual Connecticut AIS fee of \$5 and \$20, respectively. In-state boaters pay the fee when they register a vessel with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), while out-of-state boaters pay the fee to DEEP. In separating the fee from state boat registrations, the bill removes DMV's involvement from the AIS fee collection process.

The bill creates a \$7 AIS stamp for individuals and a \$20 AIS decal for vessels, with a limited exception for marine dealers, engine manufacturers, and surveyors. A person must comply with the law by getting a stamp or a decal, either of which is valid for the calendar year in which it is issued. Under the bill, DEEP is required to collect AIS stamp and decal fees through the same system that it uses for boating, hunting, and fishing licenses (i.e., the online sportsmen licensing system). As under current law, AIS fees fund the Connecticut Lakes, Rivers and Ponds Preservation account, which the DEEP commissioner uses to restore and rehabilitate lakes, rivers, and ponds in the state, including by eradicating AIS, among other purposes (CGS § 14-21aa).

Anyone who operates a vessel on inland state waters without an AIS stamp or decal, as applicable, commits an infraction and must be fined up to \$85. (This is the same penalty under current law for not paying

AIS fees.)

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2024

**AIS STAMP**

The bill establishes an AIS stamp for an individual who operates a vessel that is required to display a registration decal (issued by this or another state) on inland state waters. An AIS stamp is \$7 and is valid for the calendar year in which it is issued. (The stamp follows the person, not the vessel.)

**AIS DECAL**

Instead of purchasing an individual AIS stamp, a person who owns a vessel that must display a registration decal (issued by this or another state) may purchase an AIS decal for the vessel. The decal must be permanently placed on the vessel in the middle of the port side (i.e., left side) at the hull or the operator’s station so that it is visible to law enforcement approaching on the port side.

An AIS decal is \$20, and the DEEP commissioner may charge an additional fee of up to \$5 for producing, processing, and mailing it. An AIS decal is valid for the calendar year in which it is issued, and it covers anyone who operates that vessel. (The decal follows the vessel, not the person.)

**EXCEPTION**

The bill’s AIS stamp and decal provisions do not apply to anyone operating a vessel that is registered as a marine dealer, engine manufacturer, or surveyor, as long as the vessel is numbered under state law (CGS § 15-145) with a suffix of DL, XP, MA, or YB and has a current registration decal displayed.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute  
Yea 33 Nay 0 (03/24/2023)