

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 23-154—sHB 6811

Environment Committee

Transportation Committee

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

SUMMARY: This act (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. (Federal law does not allow either of these practices.)

Under prior law, people who registered boats in Connecticut, and out-of-state boaters who operated on Connecticut waters, had to pay an annual Connecticut AIS fee of \$5 and \$20, respectively. In-state boaters paid the fee when they registered a vessel with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), while out-of-state boaters paid the fee to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). In separating the fee from state boat registrations, the act removes DMV's involvement from the AIS fee collection process.

The act 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 act, 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). 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 operating a vessel on inland state waters without an AIS stamp or decal, as applicable, commits an infraction and must be fined up to \$85.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2024

AIS STAMP

The act 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

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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 act'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.