
OLR Bill Analysis

HB 5216

AN ACT CONCERNING THE SAFETY CAPACITY AT GARDNER LAKE STATE PARK.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) commissioner to develop and publicly post the capacity limit of Gardner Lake State Park (in Salem) by January 31, 2025. Under the bill, she must use the following factors when determining the capacity limit:

1. the number of visitors and swimmers that can be supervised safely given the park and lifeguard staffing levels;
2. the park's parking and public restroom capacity;
3. pedestrian and vehicular traffic on any highway without a sidewalk leading to the park that threatens, or is reasonably likely to threaten, pedestrians' public safety or impede emergency vehicles using the highway due to the high volume of parked or moving vehicles; and
4. the commissioner's authority to use the number of vehicles entering the park as a proxy for the number of park visitors.

The bill also (1) requires the DEEP commissioner to coordinate with municipal and state law enforcement to implement traffic control efforts to minimize public safety concerns on local roads and state highways outside the park and (2) allows her to close the park to new entrants when it reaches the capacity limit.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 34 Nay 0 (03/08/2024)