



General Assembly

February Session, 2026

**Raised Bill No. 5525**

LCO No. 2492



Referred to Committee on ENVIRONMENT

Introduced by:  
(ENV)

**AN ACT CONCERNING A RAPID RESPONSE PROGRAM FOR CERTAIN AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES.**

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

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) For the purposes of this  
2 section, "rapid response" means a systematic effort to eradicate, contain  
3 or control a potentially invasive nonnative plant species introduced into  
4 an ecosystem while the infestation of such ecosystem remains localized,  
5 including actions that address both: (1) Novel introductions into a  
6 waterbody, and (2) satellite infestations of previously established  
7 populations, including small, localized infestations in areas of a  
8 waterbody where such species has not yet become established. "Rapid  
9 response" includes the application of species-specific factors, including,  
10 but not limited to, reproductive rates of a species, the ability of vectors  
11 to transmit such species and the likelihood and mechanisms of spread.

12 (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 22a-339i of the general  
13 statutes, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection shall  
14 expedite any permitting associated with rapid response actions for  
15 aquatic invasive species to enable the timely containment of such

16 species and reduce the risk of further spread within and between  
17 waterbodies, provided priority expedition shall be given to permits for  
18 the containment of hydrilla.

19 (c) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 22-79a of the general  
20 statutes, the Office of Aquatic Invasive Species shall identify new  
21 introductions of aquatic invasive plant species to the state and  
22 coordinate and conduct rapid response efforts to any such new  
23 population in any waterbody in the state.

24 (d) Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (2) of subsection  
25 (h) of section 22a-62 of the general statutes, any rapid response herbicide  
26 treatment undertaken pursuant to the provisions of this section shall not  
27 require the provision of two individual notices to each owner of  
28 waterfront property on a privately owned lake or pond.

29 (e) (1) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections (a) to (d),  
30 inclusive, of this section, rapid response actions for hydrilla shall be  
31 considered time-sensitive and any hydrilla populations identified for  
32 rapid response pursuant to this section shall be spot treated with an  
33 appropriate herbicide on or before the next occurring September  
34 fifteenth.

35 (2) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections (a) to (d), inclusive,  
36 of this section, rapid response actions for newly introduced aquatic  
37 invasive plant species shall be considered time-sensitive when any such  
38 species demonstrate seasonal reproduction, including the formation or  
39 release of propagules, larvae, spores or other viable life stages. Any  
40 control effort of such species, whether chemical, mechanical or  
41 biological, shall be timed in accordance with the best available science  
42 to occur prior to or during key reproductive periods to minimize  
43 establishment and secondary spread.

44 (f) The Office of Aquatic Invasive Species shall assist rapid response  
45 efforts related to newly discovered hydrilla and newly introduced  
46 aquatic invasive species identified in state waterbodies by mapping the

47 extent and location of such populations and documenting the presence  
48 and locations of relevant threatened and endangered species within a  
49 scientifically determined radius, established in consultation with the  
50 Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Natural  
51 Diversity Data Base program, while determining the sensitivity of such  
52 species to proposed herbicide treatments and other containment or  
53 eradication methods.

54 (g) (1) There is established an Interagency Aquatic Invasive Species  
55 Task Force that shall include members from the Department of Energy  
56 and Environmental Protection, the Office of Aquatic Invasive Species,  
57 state institutions of higher education, municipal officials,  
58 representatives from private land and waterbody associations,  
59 environmental conservation advocacy organizations or any other  
60 organization, as deemed necessary and appointed by the Commissioner  
61 of Energy and Environmental Protection and the director of the Office  
62 of Aquatic Invasive Species.

63 (2) Such task force shall develop a state rapid response protocol for  
64 hydrilla. Such protocol shall clearly define the roles, responsibilities,  
65 response actions and required timeframes for the Department of Energy  
66 and Environmental Protection and the Office of Aquatic Invasive  
67 Species. In developing such protocol, the task force shall establish a  
68 coordinated framework for interagency response that identifies lead  
69 and supporting functions throughout the response process and outlines  
70 next steps to contain or eradicate new hydrilla populations. Such steps  
71 shall include, but not be limited to, public education and outreach,  
72 containment strategies, treatment methods and associated timelines and  
73 any additional actions deemed necessary by the Department of Energy  
74 and Environmental Protection and the Office of Aquatic Invasive  
75 Species. Such protocol may serve as a template for responding to future  
76 introductions of new aquatic invasive species. Under any such protocol,  
77 (A) the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection shall issue  
78 expedited permits for rapid responses, and (B) the Office of Aquatic  
79 Invasive Species shall be authorized to coordinate or conduct treatment

80 within the same season once such expedited permitting occurs. The  
81 Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Office of  
82 Aquatic Invasive Species shall monitor progress and track outcomes of  
83 such rapid response protocol to a specific population and waterbody.

84 (3) Such task force shall develop a state-wide aquatic invasive species  
85 management plan for public reference. The task force shall consult with  
86 the Invasive Plants Council, established pursuant to section 22a-381 of  
87 the general statutes, in developing such management plan and may  
88 engage additional entities, including, but not limited to, the Connecticut  
89 Federation of Lakes. Such management plan shall include, but not be  
90 limited to, a discussion of the applicability of boat washing stations to  
91 the prevention and management of aquatic invasive species.

92 (h) Notwithstanding any provision of the general statutes, the  
93 Department of Public Health shall condition a permit to the Department  
94 of Energy and Environmental Protection to conduct treatment of an  
95 aquatic invasive species in an area not less than two hundred feet from  
96 a public drinking watershed.

97 (i) The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection shall  
98 install signs at all waterbodies and boat ramps in the state to educate the  
99 public about the presence of hydrilla. Such signs shall include a photo  
100 of such plant and provide instructions on how to prevent the spread of  
101 such plant, including cleaning boats and other water equipment. The  
102 department shall coordinate and provide technical assistance to  
103 municipalities and private property and waterbody associations or  
104 marinas to install such signs in municipal waterbodies and at municipal  
105 boat ramps. The department shall expedite any permitting or approval  
106 process for any municipality or private association or marina to install  
107 any such sign.

108 (j) (1) The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection shall  
109 develop a plan to construct boat washing stations at all state boat ramps.  
110 Such plan shall provide for the phase-in of the construction of such boat

111 washing stations and provide for the maintenance of such boat washing  
112 stations and the hiring and training of aquatic invasive species stewards.

113 (2) The department shall provide technical assistance to  
114 municipalities, upon request, for the planning and construction of boat  
115 washing stations at municipal boat launches.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section

**Statement of Purpose:**

To establish a rapid response program and protocol for the elimination and containment of hydrilla and other aquatic invasive species in the state.

*[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]*