



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:		
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Section 1	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
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ENV *Joint Favorable*