

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 26-60—sHB 5332

Environment Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN BOATING REGULATIONS

SUMMARY: This act makes several changes to Connecticut's boating laws, including:

1. requiring anyone operating a recreational motorboat to prohibit people in the boat from sitting on the boat's gunwale (top edge or rim) with their legs hanging outside or standing on the gunwale while the boat is underway at greater than slow-no-wake speed (the slowest speed necessary to maintain steering control without creating a wake);
2. prohibiting personal watercraft (such as jet skis) and jetted articulated vessel owners from knowingly allowing anyone, rather than only people younger than 16 as under prior law, to operate their boat without the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)-issued certificate required to do so;
3. prohibiting owners from allowing their boat, other than a boat registered in Connecticut, another state, or with the federal government, on state waters unless the owner's current and valid contact information is legibly printed on or attached to the boat in a way DEEP prescribes (generally, smaller boats, such as kayaks, do not require registration and would be subject to this provision);
4. amending motorboat and waterskiing restrictions on North Stonington's Wyassup Lake;
5. increasing the minimum and maximum fines that generally may be imposed for abandoning a boat; and
6. allowing state and municipal law enforcement agencies to recover a broader range of costs for removing abandoned boats.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

WYASSUP LAKE

Prior law limited operating motorboats on Wyassup Lake to the period from the Saturday before Memorial Day to September 15 annually. The act removes this restriction, allowing motorboats to be operated year-round, but imposes other restrictions during this period. Specifically, under the act, from the Saturday before Memorial Day through September 15 annually, motorboats may be operated on Wyassup Lake at speeds above eight miles per hour between 11:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., and waterskiing is permitted.

However, regardless of these conditions, the act prohibits waterskiing at any time between the islands within the lake and its east shore.

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

ABANDONED BOATS

The act increases, from between \$300 and \$500 to between \$750 and \$1,000, the minimum and maximum fines that generally may be imposed for abandoning a boat. Existing law allows any party with standing to recover unpaid expenses resulting from a boat abandonment from the person who abandoned it. The act also explicitly allows state and municipal law enforcement agencies with standing to recover associated environmental remediation costs and costs related to the boat's recovery, including legal or court costs.

Generally, someone seeking to recover costs associated with removing an abandoned boat must file a notarized notice of abandoned vessel with DEEP and pay a \$20 filing fee. The act specifies that the notarization and the filing fee are not required if the party seeking to recover costs is the state, a municipality, or a state or municipal law enforcement agency.