

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6384

AN ACT CONCERNING AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES' EFFECTS ON LAKES

Title: AND RELATED FUNDING.

Vote Date: 3/12/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/10/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Dorinda Borer, 115th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Draw down Lake Beseck three feet during even number years and six feet during odd numbered years during late fall and early winter. The drawdown is designed to balance various usages of the lake to include recreational, lakefront infrastructure, fisheries and other habitat concerns as raised by Lake Beseck Environment Committee.

Waterways in Connecticut have become overwhelmed by invasive aquatic species. Fees generate from the Aquatic Invasive Species Stamp Act account can be dispersed from the Connecticut Lakes, Rivers and Ponds Preservation account as grants to municipalities and not-for-profit organizations in accordance with CGS 14-21aa.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

**Gregory J. Bugbee, Principal Investigator, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station
Invasive Aquatic Plant Program**

Studies by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station Invasive Aquatic Plant Program have shown:

- *Winter lake drawdown is a method of controlling lake weeds that is effective, cost efficient, and does not rely on chemical weed killers.*
- *Studies on lakes that utilize winter draw down, such as Candlewood Lake, finds that optimal vegetation control occurs when the sediment can dry and freeze. In a typical*

winter this may or may not occur, but chances increase with the length of time the lake is drawn down particularly during January.

Supports the request to change statute to draw down Lake Beseck.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Edward Bailey, First Selectman, Town of Middlefield

Lake Beseck is owned by the state of Connecticut and is deemed a recreational area. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) "has very little oversight or active management" of the lake. The town of Middlefield has provided significant personnel and monetary resources to oversee Lake Beseck. Middlefield has employed a limnologist for the last 8 years. Summer 2020, the aquatic plant population elicited significant complaints from the community regarding recreational activities.

The lake is maintained by DEEP in accordance with statute and the statute needs to be amended for the recommended draw downs for Lake Beseck as recommended by the limnologist to address aquatic invasive species.

Denis Raap, First Selectman, Town of Litchfield

Bantam lake is an important to the Litchfield community and visitors for many recreational activities. HB6384 requires DEEP to report on the Stamp Program to determine if revenues generated are enough to provide grants to municipalities and not-for-profits to eradicate aquatic invasive species.

HB6497 requests DEEP to develop recommendations for "additional means for funding projects to control or eradicate aquatic invasive species by municipalities and lake authorities".

Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns

The Aquatic Invasive Species Stamp Act created a user fee fund approach to respond to invasive aquatic species that impact water quality, recreational use and property values.

HB66384 requires DEEP to report annually the amount of revenues generated and the success of help to municipalities and lake authorities. HB6384 requires DEEP to identify other potential funding mechanisms to create a sustained effort in the fight of invasive aquatic species.

James Berardino, Director Legislative Advocacy, Connecticut Council of Small Towns

In support of Ed Bailey, First Selectman, Middlefield, Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) requests the statute be amended to allow the six-foot draw down of Lake Beseck.

The Environment Committee received in excess of 15 testimonials in support of HB6384.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None

Reported by: Steve Smith`

Date: 3/23/2021