
OLR Bill Analysis

HB 5222 (as amended by House "A")*

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NO-WAKE ZONE ON THE PAWCATUCK RIVER.

SUMMARY

This bill allows the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to use funds available for stormwater infrastructure to acquire conservation easements along streams and rivers in the state, regardless of any state law requiring otherwise. The DEEP commissioner may set the percentage of stormwater infrastructure funds that may be used for this purpose. The property owner of an acquired conservation easement must keep native trees, shrubs, and herbaceous cover along the stream or river instead of lawn, golf courses, and athletic fields (i.e., a “vegetated condition” buffer).

The bill also creates a “slow-no-wake” zone for boating vessel operators on the Pawcatuck River, which is near the Rhode Island border, between Pawcatuck Rock (red marker No. 16) and Graves Neck (red market No. 6). It makes a violation of the zone an infraction, and requires the DEEP commissioner to administer the provision.

“Slow-no-wake” is defined in DEEP boating safety regulations. It means that a vessel must (1) produce no more than a minimum wake and (2) not go faster than six miles per hour over the ground unless a higher speed is needed to maintain steerage in strong currents. In no case can the vessel’s wake be strong enough to cause injury to people or damage to vessels or structures (Conn. Agencies Regs., § 15-121-A1(j)).

*House Amendment “A” adds the provisions on conservation easements and vegetated condition buffers.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except for the slow-no-wake provisions, which are effective July 1, 2024.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 34 Nay 0 (03/08/2024)