

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 24-10—HB 5222

Environment Committee

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NO-WAKE ZONE ON THE PAWCATUCK RIVER AND AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF CERTAIN RIPARIAN BUFFERS

SUMMARY: This act 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 act 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 marker No. 6). It makes a violation of the zone an infraction, and requires the DEEP commissioner to administer the provision.

Under DEEP boating safety regulations, a vessel in a “slow-no-wake” zone 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)).

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