



**Substitute House Bill No. 7174**

**Special Act No. 25-12**

***AN ACT CONCERNING RIPARIAN AREAS.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a working group within the legislative branch to identify where and how protection of vegetated riparian buffers in the state can be incorporated into statutes and regulations in order to improve the health of and protect the resources of the state's watercourses consistent with private property rights, to respond to the projected impacts on watercourses that are listed in the recommendations of the Governor's Council on Climate Change and to meet the goals for the health of Long Island Sound,. In undertaking its work, the working group shall: (1) Review riparian buffer protection in other states, (2) examine the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's resources that are currently dedicated to its Inland Wetland and Watercourses program, (3) determine implications of existing case law on the protection of riparian buffers, (4) make recommendations to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection for any changes to inland wetlands and watercourses regulations, identify if and how the further protection of vegetated riparian buffers should be incorporated into statutes and regulations, and make recommendations for attendant legislation.

(b) Not later than thirty days after the effective date of this section,

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the cochairpersons of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the environment, in consultation with the ranking members of said committee, shall jointly select two cochairpersons for such working group. Not later than forty-five days after the effective date of this section, the cochairpersons of such working group shall select the membership of such working group which shall include, but not be limited to: (1) One representative of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the Department of Transportation and the Office of Policy and Management, (2) a representative of homebuilders, (3) two representatives of environmental advocacy organizations working on water-related issues and climate change, (4) a representative of cold water anglers, (5) two representatives of municipal inland wetland commissions, one of whom shall represent a town with a population of more than fifteen thousand, and one of whom shall represent a town with a population of less than fifteen thousand residents, (6) a representative of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association, (7) one representative from a council of governments, (8) a representative of the water utilities, (9) a representative of an organization that represents the marine trades in the state, (10) a representative of the Connecticut Farm Bureau, or its designee, (11) a certified forester in this state, and (12) a representative of realtors in this state.

(c) The cochairpersons of such working group shall convene such working group not later than sixty days after the effective date of this section. The administrative staff of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the environment shall serve as administrative staff of the working group. Not later than January 15, 2026, the working group shall submit a report on its findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the environment, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes. The working group shall terminate on the date that it

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submits such report or January 15, 2026, whichever is later.

Governor's Action:

Approved June 24, 2025