



**House Bill No. 5525**

**Public Act No. 26-65**

***AN ACT CONCERNING A RAPID RESPONSE PROGRAM FOR CERTAIN AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES.***

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

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) (1) For the purposes of this section, "rapid response" means a systematic effort to eradicate, contain or control hydrilla or other aquatic invasive plant species introduced into an ecosystem while the infestation of such ecosystem remains localized and includes actions that address novel introductions into a waterbody.

(2) The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station's Office of Aquatic Invasive Species shall set criteria for newly discovered aquatic invasive species and hydrilla populations discovered within the most recent three-year period, including satellite populations of such hydrilla populations to qualify for rapid response pursuant to this section and shall publish and maintain a page on such agency's Internet web site that lists such eligible species. Such office shall notify the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection when any new species is added to such list.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 22a-339i of the general statutes, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection shall

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expedite any permitting associated with rapid response actions for the aquatic invasive species specified in subdivision (2) of subsection (a) of this section, to enable the timely containment of such species and reduce the risk of further spread within and between waterbodies, provided such priority expediting shall be given to permits for the containment of hydrilla.

(c) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 22-79a of the general statutes, the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station's Office of Aquatic Invasive Species shall identify new introductions of aquatic invasive plant species to the state and may coordinate and conduct rapid response efforts to any such new population in any waterbody in the state.

(d) (1) Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (2) of subsection (h) of section 22a-66a of the general statutes, any rapid response herbicide treatment undertaken pursuant to the provisions of this section shall not require the provision of two individual notices to each owner of waterfront property on a privately owned lake or pond. One such notice by telephone, personal notification or by leaving a conspicuous notice on an entry door of the home located on such property shall be made not less than twenty-four hours prior to such treatment.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of this subsection and subsections (a) to (c), inclusive, of this section, any rapid response actions for newly introduced aquatic invasive plant species shall be timed in accordance with the best available science to occur prior to or during key reproductive periods to minimize establishment and secondary spread of such aquatic invasive plant species.

(e) (1) The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station's Office of Aquatic Invasive Species shall assist rapid response efforts related to newly discovered hydrilla and newly introduced aquatic invasive

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species identified in state waterbodies by mapping the extent and location of such populations and documenting the presence and locations of relevant threatened and endangered species within a scientifically determined radius, as established in consultation with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Natural Diversity Data Base program, while determining the sensitivity of such species to proposed herbicide treatments and other containment or eradication methods.

(2) The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station's Office of Aquatic Invasive Species, in consultation with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, shall develop a state rapid response protocol for hydrilla. Such protocol shall clearly define the roles, responsibilities and response actions for the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station's Office of Aquatic Invasive Species and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Additionally, such protocol shall establish a coordinated framework for interagency response that identifies lead and supporting functions throughout the response process and that outlines next steps to contain or eradicate new hydrilla populations. Such steps may include public education and outreach, containment strategies, treatment methods and associated timelines and any additional actions deemed necessary by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station's Office of Aquatic Invasive Species. Such protocol may serve as a template for responding to future introductions of new aquatic invasive species. Under any such protocol, (A) the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection shall issue expedited permits for rapid responses, and (B) the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station's Office of Aquatic Invasive Species shall be authorized to coordinate or conduct treatment within the same season, in accordance with the provisions of subdivision (2) of subsection (d) of this section, once such expedited permitting occurs. The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station's

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Office of Aquatic Invasive Species shall monitor progress and track outcomes of such rapid response protocol to a specific population and waterbody.

(3) The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station's Office of Aquatic Invasive Species, in consultation with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, shall develop a state-wide aquatic invasive species management plan for public reference and may consult other entities, including, but not limited to, the Invasive Plants Council, established pursuant to section 22a-381 of the general statutes through a public comment period.

(f) Notwithstanding any provision of the general statutes, the Department of Public Health shall coordinate with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to provide conditions for permits to conduct treatment of an aquatic invasive species within a public water supply watershed or within two hundred feet of a public water supply well.