



House of Representatives

File No. 737

General Assembly

February Session, 2026

(Reprint of File No. 437)

House Bill No. 5525
As Amended by House Amendment
Schedule "A"

Approved by the Legislative Commissioner
April 28, 2026

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:

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

7 (2) The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station's Office of
8 Aquatic Invasive Species shall set criteria for newly discovered aquatic
9 invasive species and hydrilla populations discovered within the most
10 recent three-year period, including satellite populations of such hydrilla
11 populations to qualify for rapid response pursuant to this section and
12 shall publish and maintain a page on such agency's Internet web site
13 that lists such eligible species. Such office shall notify the Department of

14 Energy and Environmental Protection when any new species is added
15 to such list.

16 (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 22a-339i of the general
17 statutes, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection shall
18 expedite any permitting associated with rapid response actions for the
19 aquatic invasive species specified in subdivision (2) of subsection (a) of
20 this section, to enable the timely containment of such species and reduce
21 the risk of further spread within and between waterbodies, provided
22 such priority expediting shall be given to permits for the containment of
23 hydrilla.

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

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

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

45 (e) (1) The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station's Office of

46 Aquatic Invasive Species shall assist rapid response efforts related to
47 newly discovered hydrilla and newly introduced aquatic invasive
48 species identified in state waterbodies by mapping the extent and
49 location of such populations and documenting the presence and
50 locations of relevant threatened and endangered species within a
51 scientifically determined radius, as established in consultation with the
52 Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Natural
53 Diversity Data Base program, while determining the sensitivity of such
54 species to proposed herbicide treatments and other containment or
55 eradication methods.

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

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

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

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

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	October 1, 2026	New section

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact: None

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

The bill requires the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (AES) to establish criteria for aquatic invasive species to qualify for rapid response, and to complete various duties related to rapid responses including developing a state rapid response protocol for hydrilla. This does not result in a cost as the AES has the staff and expertise necessary to complete the requirements contained within the amendment.

House "A" strikes the underlying bill and its associated fiscal impact, eliminating an annual cost of up to \$100,000 to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and a potential savings to various municipalities.

The Out Years

State Impact: None

Municipal Impact: None

OLR Bill Analysis**HB 5525 (as amended by House "A")******AN ACT CONCERNING A RAPID RESPONSE PROGRAM FOR CERTAIN AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES.*****SUMMARY**

This bill outlines certain rapid response actions and associated timeframes to eradicate, contain, or control hydrilla or other aquatic invasive plant species introduced into an ecosystem or waterbody, while the infestation remains localized. It also requires the Connecticut Agriculture Experiment Station's Office of Aquatic Invasive Species (OAIS), in consultation with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), to develop a state rapid response plan for hydrilla.

Under the bill, OAIS must set rapid response qualification criteria for (1) newly discovered aquatic invasive species and (2) hydrilla, including satellite populations, discovered within the last three years. OAIS must list qualifying species on the agency's website and notify DEEP when a new species is added.

The bill also requires OAIS, in consultation with DEEP, to develop a publicly accessible statewide aquatic invasive species management plan. To do so, OAIS may consult other entities, including the state's Invasive Plants Council, through a public comment period.

*House Amendment "A" (1) requires OAIS to set rapid response qualification criteria for aquatic invasive species and hydrilla and publish a list of qualifying species on its website; (2) adds notification requirements for treatments under the bill; (3) requires OAIS, rather than an interagency aquatic invasive species task force, to develop the hydrilla rapid response protocol and statewide aquatic invasive species

management plan; and (4) allows, rather than requires, OAIS to (a) include certain steps in the rapid response protocol and (b) consult other entities when developing the management plan. It also removes requirements for DEEP to install hydrilla education signs and construct boat washing stations at boat ramps.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

RAPID RESPONSE ACTIONS AND TIMEFRAMES

The bill requires OAIS to identify new introductions of aquatic invasive plant species, including hydrilla. In doing so, OAIS must (1) map the extent and location of these populations and (2) document the presence and location of relevant threatened or endangered species within a scientifically determined radius set in consultation with DEEP's Natural Diversity Data Base program. OAIS must also determine how sensitive any identified threatened or endangered species is to proposed herbicide treatments and other containment or eradication methods. The bill allows OAIS to coordinate and conduct rapid response actions for any new population in a Connecticut waterbody.

Under the bill, any rapid response actions for newly introduced aquatic invasive plant species must be timed, based on best available science, to occur before or during key reproductive periods to minimize their establishment and secondary spread.

The bill requires (1) DEEP to expedite permitting for rapid response actions for aquatic invasive species that OAIS identifies as qualifying, as well as hydrilla, and (2) the Department of Public Health to coordinate with DEEP to provide conditions for permits to treat aquatic invasive species in a public supply watershed or within 200 feet of a public water supply well. It also exempts any rapid response herbicide treatment from existing provisions requiring two individual notices to privately owned lake or pond waterfront property owners. Instead, the bill requires that notice be made by telephone, personal notification, or conspicuous posting on a home's entry door at least 24 hours before the treatment.

HYDRILLA RAPID RESPONSE PROTOCOL

The bill requires OAIS, in consultation with DEEP, to also develop a state rapid response protocol for hydrilla. The protocol must define the roles, responsibilities, and response actions for OAIS and DEEP. The protocol must establish a coordinated framework for interagency response that identifies lead and supporting functions and outlines next steps to contain or eradicate hydrilla. The steps may include (1) public education and outreach, (2) containment strategies, (3) treatment methods and associated timelines, and (4) any additional actions DEEP and OAIS determine are necessary.

Under the protocol, DEEP must issue expedited permits for rapid responses, and OAIS must be authorized to coordinate or conduct treatment within the same season the expedited permitting occurs. Additionally, OAIS must monitor the protocol’s progress and track outcomes in a specific population and waterbody. The protocol may also serve as a template for responding to future introductions of other aquatic invasive species.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 34 Nay 0 (03/18/2026)