



RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

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February 29, 2024

The Honorable David A. Bennett
Chairman
House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: H 7516 An Act Relating to Agriculture and Forestry – Protection of Trees and Plants Generally

Dear Chairman Bennett,

Thank you for providing the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) the opportunity to comment on H 7516, which would require DEM to manage freshwater non-native and invasive aquatic plants. DEM has concerns with this legislation primarily related to a lack of resources to implement its provisions.

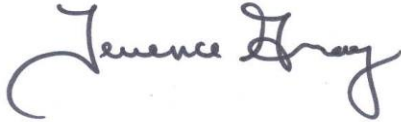
Aquatic invasive plants pose a threat to Rhode Island's freshwater resources by disrupting the ecosystem and creating nuisance conditions. Among the common aquatic invasive plants found in Rhode Island are fanwort, variable milfoil, and water chestnut. More information about the types of aquatic invasive plants found in Rhode Island and the freshwater resources impacted can be found online at <https://dem.ri.gov/environmental-protection-bureau/water-resources/research-monitoring/aquatic-invasive-species-1>.

While we agree that this issue should be addressed, DEM does not have sufficient resources to treat the many lakes, ponds, and rivers that are impacted by aquatic invasive plants. Treatment of impacted waterbodies, whether using herbicides or physical removal of the plants, is a resource-intensive process that must occur over multiple years for benefits to occur. DEM has typically attempted to work with municipalities and local associations to provide technical assistance and, in some instances, funding to address the problem. Most recently, the grant application period for financial assistance available through the Narragansett Bay and Watershed Restoration Fund closed earlier this month. DEM hopes to award a portion of this funding for use in addressing aquatic invasive plants in the coming months.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments on this legislation and would be pleased to make ourselves available as needed. Please feel free to contact Susan Forcier, DEM Deputy

Director for Environmental Protection, at susan.forcier@dem.ri.gov should you have any additional questions or wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Terrence Gray". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.

Terrence Gray, P.E.
Director

cc: Members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
The Honorable Kathleen Fogarty
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, House Policy Director