



RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
235 Promenade Street, Room 425
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

May 19, 2026

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

RE: H 8522 An Act Relating to Fish and Wildlife – Reciprocal Enforcement of Fishing Laws

Dear Chairman Bennett,

Thank you for providing the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) the opportunity to comment on H 8522, which would provide for reciprocal enforcement of boating and fishing laws on waters lying between Rhode Island and Connecticut. DEM has concerns with this legislation.

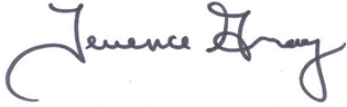
H 8522 would require that Environmental Police Officers employed by the DEM Division of Law Enforcement enforce the boating and fish and game laws of both Rhode Island and Connecticut on waters located between the two states. DEM's review indicates that this would include the Pawcatuck River, Beach Pond, Bailey Pond, Little Narragansett Bay, Smith Pond, Killingly Pond, Peck Pond, Wakefield Pond, and potentially other, smaller waters such as brooks and streams running between the two states.

We are concerned that there are logistical challenges to DEM's officers enforcing Connecticut law on that state's portions of these waterbodies. For example, certain charges may require that the arresting officer(s) appear in court to testify regarding the incident and it would be unusual for Rhode Island officers to testify in a Connecticut court in such circumstances. Furthermore, law enforcement requires a deep familiarity with the laws and regulations being enforced. DEM's officers are well-versed with Rhode Island law but are not trained to know Connecticut law. For example, Connecticut requires boaters operating a vessel on inland waters to have a valid aquatic invasive species sticker whereas Rhode Island has no such requirement.

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 Jason McNamee, Deputy Director

for Natural Resources, at jason.mcnamee@dem.ri.gov should you have any additional questions or wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Terrence Gray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Terrence Gray, P.E.
Director

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