



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

April 7, 2026

The Honorable Evan P. Shanley  
Chairman  
House Committee on State Government and Elections  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

**RE: H 7915 An Act Relating to Waters and Navigation – Regulation of Boats**

Dear Chairman Shanley,

Thank you for providing the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) the opportunity to comment on H 7915, which would establish a new fee to provide funding for lake management activities. This letter is not intended as a position in support of or opposition to the bill, but offers technical comments intended to provide clarity in the bill.

H 7915 proposes to require that motorboat owners pay a \$5.00 biennial fee when registering their vessel with DEM (or a \$2.50 fee if registering their motorboat on an annual basis) to be deposited in a new restricted receipt account also created by the legislation. Any funds deposited in the account could be used for the purposes of the Freshwater Lake Management Program established under R.I. Gen. Laws § 46-33. Those purposes include DEM activities related to lake management such as field surveys and mapping to document the presence of aquatic invasive species in freshwaters, development of guidance and technical assistance to lake associations and other private entities, and the provision of lake management grants for projects carried out by eligible entities such as lake associations and municipalities.

In recent years, states attempting to assess additional fees in conjunction with their boating registration program have been found by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) to be non-compliant with federal law. DEM shared H 7915 with the USCG and we were told that the legislation would not comply with federal regulations because additional fees cannot be tied to the issuance of a boat registration. A finding of non-compliance with federal regulations on this matter could lead to a loss of significant federal funding the state receives each year for boating safety.

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 Ryan Mulcahey, DEM Director of

Legislative Affairs, at [ryan.mulcahey@dem.ri.gov](mailto:ryan.mulcahey@dem.ri.gov) should you have any additional questions or wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terrence Gray". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T".

Terrence Gray, P.E.  
Director

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