

H.999/S.563 An Act responding to the threat of invasive species

Sponsored by Senator Patricia Jehlen and Representative David Rogers

Once an invasive species enters an ecosystem, it dominates the area, taking up resources and choking out native species.

An infestation ruins habitat, scenic value, and decimates local plant and animal populations.

Recent invasive species that have impacted Massachusetts include:

- Water Chestnut - covers lakes and impoundments. In 2018, 130 acres of Pepperell Pond were 100% covered.
- Zebra Mussels - clog boat engines, create sharp debris on beaches, and create an obnoxious odor.
- Gypsy Moth - caused 923,000 acres of defoliation in Massachusetts forests.
- Asian Longhorned Beetle - destroys trees. The City of Worcester had to remove 29,000 infested trees since 2008.



THE PROBLEM

Invasive species are expensive to eradicate, and municipalities often do not have the technical expertise to manage them. The Massachusetts Invasive Plant Advisory Group has identified 66 invasive plants that pose a threat to our ecosystems. Accessing guidance and resources from the State's current offerings is confusing, tedious, and inconclusive.

Responding to invasive species requires monitoring and quick action at the sign of first threat. Climate change will only bolster conditions for invasive species outbreaks - Massachusetts needs to have a coordinated response.

THE SOLUTION

- The bill would create a centralized office dedicated to controlling both terrestrial and aquatic invasive species by combining existing resources like the Massachusetts Invasive Plant Advisory Group, DCR's Aquatic Invasive Management Plan.
- Municipalities, groups of municipalities, state agencies, and non-profit organizations would be able to apply for grant funding for eradicating invasive species, provided that they present a management plan to the State, through a new Invasive Species Trust Fund.
- A new State Coordinator would provide guidance and direction on handling invasive species to municipalities, including help on identifying state and federal funding.

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