

# Senate Ways and Means Committee

*Sonja Caldwell 271-2117*

**HB 1477-FN**, relative to the permitting and regulation of anchored seasonal floating platforms on public waters.

**Hearing Date:** April 15, 2026

**Members of the Committee Present:** Senators Lang, Murphy, Sullivan, Rosenwald and Fenton

**Members of the Committee Absent :** None

**Bill Analysis:** This bill restricts anchored seasonal platforms on public waters to adjacent shorefront property owners, requires permits with identification and a \$50 fee, exempts certain government and conservation uses, and imposes fines for noncompliance.

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**Sponsors:**

Rep. J. MacDonald

Rep. Crawford

Rep. Damon

Rep. Darby

Rep. Ebel

Rep. Hamblen

Rep. Rung

Rep. Walker

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**Who supports the bill:** 89 individuals signed in support.

*Full sign in sheets available up on request to [sonja.caldwell@gc.nh.gov](mailto:sonja.caldwell@gc.nh.gov)*

**Who opposes the bill:** 7 individuals signed in opposition.

**Who is neutral on the bill:** 3 individuals were neutral.

**Summary of testimony presented:**

**Rep. John MacDonald**

- The bill would require a registration fee of \$50 on floats, rafts, and inflatables, which would be similar to existing registration requirements for other privately owned property anchored or placed in New Hampshire's public waters such as docks and moorings.
- The revenue from this fee would be equally divided between the Navigation Safety Fund, which would administer the program, and the Cyanobacteria Mitigation Loan and Grant Fund.
- The Cyanobacteria Mitigation Loan and Grant fund was established in 2023 with a \$1 million grant, which has since shrunk to \$200,000. The fund is in need

of a new revenue stream. The representative explained that this fund is available for use by all municipalities, community water systems and nonprofit lake, river, and watershed associations. The fund can be used to provide grants and loans for watershed remediation, storm water management, education, and lake treatments.

- Rep. MacDonald stated that an estimated 12,500 shorefront properties in the state that would have an anchored seasonal platform of some kind. This fee would raise \$625,000 a year from these individuals.
- Rep. MacDonald stated that this was not a new tax but instead a user fee for those engaged with specific public water services or facilities.
- Rep. MacDonald stated that these types of platforms were often expensive, with one example costing more than \$7,000, and another, \$1,900.

Sen. Rosenwald asked how the bill defined the term “adjacent” relative to distance to the shoreline. She asked if the floating object in question could be placed 150 feet away from the shoreline.

Rep. MacDonald answered that the Marine Mature would likely not allow for such an object to be placed as far away as 150 feet.

Sen. Rosenwald asked if it was possible that this bill might be ignoring issues with other invasive species.

Rep. MacDonald answered that he often received calls from individuals asking what the state was doing to address beach closures from cyanobacteria, and that this bill would give the state the opportunity to affirm that they were taking action by allocating the proper funding towards the issue. Rep. MacDonald also stated that many with lakefront property worry about their property value depreciating.

Sen. Sullivan asked whether there was a plan to address lake health as a whole rather than to only mitigate existing issues.

Rep. MacDonald stated that this issue concerned many of his constituents and that he could not speak for the actions of other representatives. He stated that he looked at the lake as being a public property and that other such properties, like state parks and beaches, often charge fees to maintain their services.

Sen. Sullivan stated that individuals living on these properties already pay more in taxes based on where they live. She asked if part of those taxes could be used to address these issues.

Rep. MacDonald stated that the property owners on these sites only owned what was behind the highwater mark on shore, and that anything after that was owned by the state. He explained that he was working with the lake association and the Marine

Patrol to create bills to address these issues that have not been addressed by the state budget.

**Tim Dunleavy, Department of Safety Marine Patrol**

- The department did not take a position on this bill.
- The Marine Patrol currently regulates seasonal platforms since the legislature granted them that authority a few years ago, after the practice suddenly became more popular.
- The Marine Patrol currently relies on the estimate of DES for 12,000 of these platforms statewide, with 5,000 moorings on just 8 larger bodies of water.

Sen. Fenton asked if an individual that moved their platform onto their beach every night would still need to get that platform registered.

Mr. Dunleavy answered that he believed that it would need to still be registered if it was placed on public waters.

Sen. Fenton asked if an individual with their platform attached to an existing dock would still need to get that platform registered.

Mr. Dunleavy answered that it would not need to be registered in such case, as the platform would need to have its own anchoring system and tackle. He stated that very few of these devices were easy to anchor and remove, and that he found it unlikely that an individual would do that on a daily basis.

Sen. Rosenwald asked why the state currently only regulated eight lakes.

Mr. Dunleavy answered that when the legislature adopted the mooring permit program, they identified the larger 5 bodies of water first, and left it up to the public to decide whether they wanted their body of water beyond those first 5 to be part of the program. Three bodies of water have been successfully added via petition.

Mr. Dunleavy stated that some of the issues that bring these petitions to light are when individuals who do not own property on or near a body of water can access that body of water by crossing public property. That individual could then drop a mooring wherever they might like as long as it does not present a hazard to navigation. They could put it in front of someone else's property as long as that property owner still had access to and from their dock. Before the mooring program was enacted, there was a cemetery in Laconia that had several hundred feet of frontage on Paugus Bay and was being used for parking by individuals who then dropped moorings on Lake Winnepesaukee creating a huge mooring field.

Sen. Rosenwald asked how close he would consider "adjacent" for the purposes of this bill.

Mr. Dunleavy answered that it has to be determined on a case-by-case basis. He explained that 150 feet from shore was a known distance for boaters due to speed regulations. Some individuals might try to put devices in front of their property to push boating traffic further away from their frontage. He stated that some lakes feature very shallow waters for a distance up to 300 or 400 feet that would not be safe for the jumping or diving off of one of these platforms. Mr. Dunleavy stated that the intent behind “adjacent” was to make sure that these devices were within the boundaries of shorefront property owners and not encroaching on another individual’s use of the public waters.

Sen. Lang asked about the process for the existing moorings that are regulated.

Mr. Dunleavy stated that individuals who want a mooring go through an application process and must provide a one-time \$125 fee for the first year, evidence that they are the shorefront property owner, and that they had justification or a legitimate purpose for the mooring itself. The purpose of mooring permits are to prevent the undue proliferation of moorings on public waters. These permits cost an additional \$25 each following year. The permit is good for the life of the ownership of the property.

Sen. Lang asked what the process was for a homeowner with a traditional seasonal platform currently.

Mr. Dunleavy explained that the process he had just described only applied to a traditional white and blue stripe mooring to attach a boat. Currently, there is no application process or fee for seasonal platforms. This bill would establish a fee for those platforms.

Sen. Murphy asked him to estimate what percentage of lakefront property owners have a seasonal platform or would qualify under the previous bill dealing with mooring fees.

Mr. Dunleavy answered that this was a difficult question, but that he would estimate that around 25-30% of residents have inflatables now on account of their ease. Mr. Dunleavy stated that on the unregulated bodies of water they likely see a higher concentration of moorings because it doesn’t require shorefront property ownership.

**Andrea LaMoreaux, New Hampshire Lakes**

- NH Lakes is in support of the bill.
- Ms. LaMoreaux stated that the senators had heard from many constituents from the lake community that felt that this bill was reasonable and were willing to pay the fee it would compel.
- In reference to the question concerning a comprehensive plan to address lake health, Ms. LaMoreaux stated that the state’s work with local communities for the management of invasive species was primarily funded via user fees and boat registrations.

- Ms. LaMoreaux stated that the Cyanobacteria plan was created by a diverse stakeholder group that identified a number of ways to get at addressing the cyanobacteria issue in the state. Many of those recommendations said increased funding was needed, and there is not an overarching source of funds available. The members of the public that use these lakes and who pay attention and understand the seriousness of the problem are willing to pay these reasonable users fees.

**David Neils and Amy Smagula, Department of Environmental Services**

- Mr. Neils was responsible for authoring the 2023 cyanobacteria plan that was produced.

Sen. Sullivan asked if there was a program to fine individuals with lakefront property that use fertilizer.

Ms. Smagula answered that the Shoreline Protection Act regulates a lot of activities that take place within the protected buffer of lakes, ponds, and rivers, and that fertilizer use, tree removal and the quantity of that removal, and development were regulated. She explained that violations of these protections could result in fines; explaining that no fertilizers were allowed to be used within 25 feet of the high-water mark of surface water.

Ms. Smagula explained that cyanobacteria is a visible symbol that something is wrong with a given lake, and that many activities that seek to address cyanobacteria also focus upon fertilizer use, tree removal, erosion, and general runoff.

**Tim Dunleavy, Department of Safety Marine Patrol**

Senator Rosenwald asked about the other half of this fee's revenue that would be directed to the Navigation Safety Fund. She asked if this was generally funded and if this was the unit that puts out navigation safety buoys.

Mr. Dunleavy stated that they were not generally funded in any way, and that the fund primarily earned its revenue from boat registrations and boating education fees. He stated that the portion of that fund, which was the umbrella fund from which their operating budget came, would support enforcement and the administration of issuing the permits to include the cost of the permits. He stated that there was currently one position processing 5,000 mooring permits annually. He stated that they would anticipate the need for up to two more employees to administer that program knowing that the number of seasonal platforms is much greater. The navigation safety fund includes enforcement, a boating education program, and maintenance of the navigation aids such as lights, no wake signs, and buoys.

Senator Rosenwald stated that there was no authorization in the bill for his department to hire more individuals.

Mr. Dunleavy understood and stated that the fiscal note indicated they would need up to two more anticipated individuals for this program and those positions would be funded by the navigation safety fund, not general fund dollars.

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Date Hearing Report completed: April 17, 2026