



VERMONT LEGISLATIVE
Joint Fiscal Office

1 Baldwin Street • Montpelier, VT 05633-5701 • (802) 828-2295 • <https://jfo.vermont.gov>

Fiscal Note

May 21, 2026

Chris Rupe, Associate Fiscal Officer

S.223 – An act relating to water quality of the waters of Vermont

As Reported by the Committee of Conference¹ⁱ

Bill Summary

This bill would create a 16-member Water Quality, Lake Classification, and Antidegradation Study Group. The Study Group would be required to submit a report with its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly on or before December 15, 2026.

The Study Group created by this bill would cost up to approximately \$21,500 to the General Assembly in fiscal year 2027.

Fiscal Impact

Per diem compensation and expense reimbursement for the Study Group is expected to cost up to approximately \$21,500 to the General Assembly in fiscal year 2027.

Background and Details

Section 1 of the bill would create a 16-member Water Quality, Lake Classification, and Antidegradation Study Group. The Study Group would be charged with evaluating various elements of Vermont's water classification designations, antidegradation requirements, and regulatory frameworks. The Study Group would then present recommendations to the General Assembly on legislative or policy changes to strengthen environmental protection, provide regulatory certainty, and support public uses of State waters.

The Study Group would be comprised of:

- three current members of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- three current members of the Senate, appointed by the Committee on Committees;
- the Secretary of Natural Resources or designee;
- a Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) water quality scientist or technical staff member, appointed by the Secretary of Natural Resources;
- two persons representing businesses, industries, or development that interact with water quality permitting, including the State antidegradation policy, use of high quality waters, and water classification, one of whom shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House and one of whom shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees;

¹ *The Joint Fiscal Office (JFO) is a nonpartisan legislative office dedicated to producing unbiased fiscal analysis – this fiscal note is meant to provide information for legislative consideration, not to provide policy recommendations.*

- two persons representing nonprofit environmental advocacy groups, one of whom shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House and one of whom shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees;
- one person representing the Federation of Vermont Lakes and Ponds, appointed by the Governor;
- one person representing the Green Mountain Water Environment Association, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- one person representing the Memphremagog Watershed Association, appointed by the Speaker of the House; and
- one person representing the Lake Champlain Citizen’s Advisory Committee, appointed by the Committee on Committees.

The Study Group would have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) and the legal and drafting assistance of the Office of Legislative Counsel. The Secretary of Natural Resources would be required to call the first meeting of the Study Group to occur on or before August 1, 2026. The Study Group would be required to submit a report to the General Assembly on or before December 15, 2026, and would cease to exist on February 15, 2027.

Legislators and members of the Study Group who are not State employees would be entitled to per diem compensation and expense reimbursement for not more than eight meetings. These costs (up to approximately \$21,500 in fiscal year 2027) would be paid from the budget of the General Assembly. The bill does not include an appropriation for this purpose.

ⁱ The full fiscal note history is available on the fiscal tab of the bill page on the General Assembly website and can be pulled up through a bill number search on the JFO page.