



VERMONT LEGISLATIVE  
**Joint Fiscal Office**

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## Fiscal Note

February 24, 2026

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

As recommended by the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy, Draft 3.1<sup>1</sup>

#### **Bill Summary**

**T**his bill, as recommended, would create an 11-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 approximately \$14,000 to the General Assembly in fiscal year 2027.*

#### **Fiscal Impact**

Per diem compensation and expense reimbursement for the Study Group is expected to cost approximately \$14,000 to the General Assembly in fiscal year 2027.

#### **Background and Details**

This bill, as recommended, would create an 11-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:

- Two current members of the House of Representatives, who shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- Two current members of the Senate, who shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees;
- The Secretary of Natural Resources or designee;
- A Department of Environmental Conservation water quality scientist or technical staff member, appointed by the Secretary of Natural Resources;

<sup>1</sup> *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 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;
- 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; and
- One person representing the Federation of Vermont Lakes and Ponds, appointed by the Governor.

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 8 meetings. These costs for both legislative and non-legislative members of the Study Group would be paid from the budget of the General Assembly at an expected cost of approximately \$14,000 in fiscal year 2027.

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<sup>i</sup> 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.