

Schooner Ernestina-Morrissey could be transferred to Mass Maritime Control

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The House passed legislation Monday that would transfer control of the historic Schooner Ernestina-Morrissey from the Department of Conservation and Recreation to the Massachusetts Maritime Academy, and designate the ship as Massachusetts' official state vessel.

Passed by the Senate last September, the bill would set up an advisory board to oversee the schooner, including designees from Mass. Maritime, the Office of Travel and Tourism, and the Executive Office of Education. The bill (S 2328) would allow Mass. Maritime to use the schooner for educational and training purposes and charge fees to passengers on excursions or tours. Ernestina-Morrissey's home port would be New Bedford – for at least 90 days per year on a three-year rolling average, the legislation stipulates.

The ship was first launched in 1894 and was used for fishing expeditions before Arctic explorer Robert Bartlett purchased the vessel. Later on, the ship ferried passengers and cargo between the United States and Cape Verde before coming to Massachusetts in 1970 as a gift of the Cape Verdean people.