



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 87

February Session, 2026

Substitute House Bill No. 5153

House of Representatives, March 19, 2026

The Committee on Environment reported through REP. PARKER of the 101st Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR REVISIONS TO DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION RELATED STATUTES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Subsection (c) of section 7-131d of the 2026 supplement to
2 the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu
3 thereof (*Effective from passage*):

4 (c) Grants may be made under the protected open space and
5 watershed land acquisition grant program established under subsection
6 (a) of this section for restoration or protection of natural features or
7 habitats of, or for repurposing for urban agricultural use on, open space
8 already owned by a (1) distressed municipality, as defined in section 32-
9 9p, (2) targeted investment community, as defined in section 32-222, (3)
10 municipality, provided such open space is located in an environmental
11 justice community, as defined in section 22a-20a, or is immediately
12 adjacent to a United States census block group described in subdivision
13 (1) of subsection (a) of section 22a-20a, or (4) nonprofit land conservation

14 organization, provided such open space is located in a distressed
15 municipality, targeted investment community or environmental justice
16 community or is immediately adjacent to a United States census block
17 group described in subdivision (1) of subsection (a) of section 22a-20a.
18 Such restoration or protection may include, but need not be limited to,
19 (A) wetland, wildlife or plant habitat restoration or restoration of other
20 sites to a more natural condition, (B) urban agricultural use, or (C)
21 replacement of vegetation. The total amount of grants made pursuant to
22 this subsection shall not exceed twenty per cent of the total amount of
23 grants made pursuant to the open space and watershed land acquisition
24 grant program in any fiscal year.

25 Sec. 2. Subsection (c) of section 7-131g of the general statutes is
26 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from*
27 *passage*):

28 (c) Notwithstanding the provisions of [subdivision (3) of subsection
29 (c) of] subparagraph (C) of subdivision (1) of subsection (d) of section 7-
30 131d, any land that is the subject of the execution or recording of a
31 conservation easement or restriction [that resulted from a federally
32 funded land conservation program, municipal conservation grant
33 program or a private conservation grant program,] prior to the
34 recording of a permanent conservation easement described in
35 subsection [(e)] (f) of section 7-131d [,] shall not be construed to
36 constitute land that has already been committed for public use,
37 provided:

38 (1) Such prior conservation easement or restriction is executed [after
39 the execution of the grant agreement for a grant to preserve such land
40 under the provisions of this section] or reserved not more than six
41 months prior to the application deadline for the grant round under
42 which the acquisition of the state's interest in such land will be funded,
43 (2) at the time of the recording of the permanent conservation easement
44 required pursuant to subsection [(e)] (f) of section 7-131d, any
45 nonfederal holder of any such prior easement subordinates such
46 holder's interests in the land to the interests of the state [,] in form and

47 substance satisfactory to the Commissioner of Energy and
48 Environmental Protection, and (3) [such other federal funds, municipal
49 grant funds or private grant funds are used as matching funds for a
50 grant issued under this section, and (4)] the Commissioner of Energy
51 and Environmental Protection determines, based on all pertinent
52 circumstances, that the conveyance of such other conservation easement
53 or restriction, in combination with the acquisition of the state's interest
54 under this section, constitutes one concurrent acquisition of property or
55 interests therein.

56 Sec. 3. Subsection (d) of section 22a-202 of the 2026 supplement to the
57 general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu
58 thereof (*Effective from passage*):

59 (d) On and after July 1, 2022, the Commissioner of Energy and
60 Environmental Protection shall establish and administer a program to
61 provide rebates or vouchers to residents, municipalities, businesses,
62 nonprofit organizations and tribal entities located in this state when
63 such residents, municipalities, businesses, organizations or tribal
64 entities purchase or lease a new or used battery electric vehicle, plug-in
65 hybrid electric vehicle or fuel cell electric vehicle. The commissioner, in
66 consultation with the advisory board, shall establish and revise, as
67 necessary, appropriate rebate levels, voucher amounts and maximum
68 income eligibility for [such] prioritized rebates or vouchers. The
69 commissioner shall prioritize the granting of rebates or vouchers to (1)
70 residents [of environmental justice communities, residents] having
71 household incomes at or below three hundred per cent of the federal
72 poverty level, and (2) residents who participate in state and federal
73 assistance programs, including, but not limited to, the state-
74 administered federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program,
75 state-administered federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance
76 Program, a Head Start program established pursuant to section 10-16n
77 or assistance provided by Operation Fuel, Incorporated. Any such
78 rebate or voucher awarded to [a] an income-qualified resident [of an
79 environmental justice community] shall be in an amount not less than
80 two hundred per cent [more than] of the standard rebate level or

81 voucher amount. The commissioner, in consultation with the advisory
82 board, may additionally prioritize the granting of rebates or vouchers to
83 non-income-qualified residents of environmental justice communities
84 over other non-income-qualified residents. An eligible municipality,
85 business, nonprofit organization or tribal entity may receive not more
86 than ten rebates or vouchers a year, within available funds, and not
87 more than a total of twenty rebates or vouchers, except the
88 commissioner may issue additional rebates or vouchers to an eligible
89 business or nonprofit organization that operates a fleet of motor vehicles
90 exclusively in an environmental justice community. On and after July 1,
91 2022, and until June 30, 2027, inclusive, a battery electric vehicle, plug-
92 in hybrid electric vehicle or fuel cell electric vehicle that is eligible for a
93 rebate or voucher under the program shall have a base manufacturer's
94 suggested retail price of not more than fifty thousand dollars.

95 Sec. 4. Subsection (d) of section 22a-201d of the general statutes is
96 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from*
97 *passage*):

98 (d) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall
99 establish and administer a grant program for the purpose of providing
100 [matching] a portion of the funds necessary for municipalities, school
101 districts and school bus operators [to submit federal grant applications
102 in order] to maximize federal or other funding or financing for the
103 purchase or lease of zero-emission school buses and electric vehicle
104 charging or fueling infrastructure. Applications for such grants shall be
105 filed with the commissioner at such time and in such manner as the
106 commissioner prescribes. The commissioner shall give preference to
107 applications concerning the purchase or lease of a zero-emission school
108 bus that will be operated primarily in an environmental justice
109 community. The commissioner shall determine the amount a
110 municipality, school district or school bus operator shall be required to
111 provide to match such grant.

112 Sec. 5. Subdivision (4) of section 25-231 of the general statutes is
113 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from*

114 *passage*):

115 (4) "Major state plan" means any of the following: The plan for
116 development of outdoor recreation adopted pursuant to section 22a-21,
117 the state-wide solid waste management plan adopted pursuant to
118 section 22a-228, the state-wide plan for the management of water
119 resources adopted pursuant to section 22a-352, the state-wide
120 environmental plan adopted pursuant to section 22a-8, the historic
121 preservation plan adopted under the National Historic Preservation
122 Act, 16 USC 470 et seq., the state-wide facility and capital plan adopted
123 pursuant to section 4b-23, the state's consolidated plan for housing and
124 community development prepared pursuant to section 8-37t, the water
125 quality management plan adopted under the federal Clean Water Act,
126 33 USC 1251 et seq., and any plans for managing forest resources
127 adopted pursuant to section 23-20; [and the Connecticut River Atlantic
128 Salmon Compact adopted pursuant to section 26-302;]

129 Sec. 6. Section 26-86a of the 2026 supplement to the general statutes
130 is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective*
131 *October 1, 2026*):

132 (a) The commissioner shall establish by regulation adopted in
133 accordance with the provisions of chapter 54 standards for deer
134 management, and methods, regulated areas, bag limits, seasons and
135 permit eligibility for hunting deer with bow and arrow, muzzleloader
136 and shotgun, except that no such hunting shall be permitted on Sunday
137 unless it is conducted on private lands pursuant to section 26-73, as
138 amended by this act. No person shall hunt, pursue, wound or kill deer
139 with a firearm without first obtaining a deer permit from the
140 commissioner in addition to the license required by section 26-27.
141 Application for such permit shall be made on forms furnished by the
142 commissioner and containing such information as he may require. Such
143 permit shall be of a design prescribed by the commissioner, shall contain
144 such information and conditions as the commissioner may require, and
145 may be revoked for violation of any provision of this chapter or
146 regulations adopted pursuant thereto. As used in this section,

147 "muzzleloader" means a rifle or shotgun of at least forty-five caliber,
148 incapable of firing a self-contained cartridge, which uses [powder,] a
149 projectile, including, but not limited to, a standard round ball, mini-
150 balls, maxi-balls and Sabot bullets, [and wadding] loaded separately at
151 the muzzle end, and "rifle" means a long gun the projectile of which is
152 six millimeters or larger in diameter. The fee for a firearms permit shall
153 be nineteen dollars for residents of the state and sixty-eight dollars for
154 nonresidents, except that any nonresident who is an active full-time
155 member of the armed forces, as defined in section 27-103, may purchase
156 a firearms permit for the same fee as is charged a resident of the state.
157 The commissioner shall issue, without fee, a private land deer permit to
158 the owner of ten or more acres of private land and the husband or wife,
159 parent, grandparent, sibling and any lineal descendant of such owner,
160 provided no such owner, husband or wife, parent, grandparent, sibling
161 or lineal descendant shall be issued more than one such permit per
162 season. Such permit shall allow the use of a rifle, shotgun, muzzleloader
163 or bow and arrow on such land from November first to December thirty-
164 first, inclusive. Deer may be so hunted at such times and in such areas
165 of such state-owned land as are designated by the Commissioner of
166 Energy and Environmental Protection and on privately owned land
167 with the signed consent of the landowner, on forms furnished by the
168 department, and such signed consent shall be carried by any person
169 when so hunting on private land. The owner of ten acres or more of
170 private land may allow the use of a rifle to hunt deer on such land
171 during the shotgun season. The commissioner shall determine, by
172 regulation, the number of consent forms issued for any regulated area
173 established by said commissioner. The commissioner shall provide for
174 a fair and equitable random method for the selection of successful
175 applicants who may obtain shotgun and muzzleloader permits for
176 hunting deer on state lands. Any person whose name appears on more
177 than one application for a shotgun permit or more than one application
178 for a muzzleloader permit shall be disqualified from the selection
179 process for such permit. No person shall hunt, pursue, wound or kill
180 deer with a bow and arrow without first obtaining a bow and arrow
181 permit pursuant to section 26-86c. "Bow and arrow", as used in this

182 section and in section 26-86c, means a bow with a draw weight of not
183 less than forty pounds. The arrowhead shall have two or more blades
184 and may not be less than seven-eighths of an inch at the widest point.
185 No person shall carry firearms of any kind while hunting with a bow
186 and arrow under this section and section 26-86c.

187 (b) Any person who takes a deer without a permit shall be fined not
188 less than two hundred dollars or more than five hundred dollars or
189 imprisoned not less than thirty days or more than six months or shall be
190 both fined and imprisoned, for the first offense, and for each subsequent
191 offense shall be fined not less than two hundred dollars or more than
192 one thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than one year or shall be
193 both fined and imprisoned.

194 Sec. 7. Subsection (b) of section 26-91 of the 2026 supplement to the
195 general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu
196 thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

197 (b) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection may
198 authorize any municipality, homeowner association, [or] nonprofit
199 land-holding organization or corporate entity approved by the
200 commissioner under the provisions of this section to take resident
201 Canada geese at any time or place using any method consistent with
202 professional wildlife management principles. Any such municipality,
203 homeowner association, [or] nonprofit land-holding organization or
204 corporate entity shall submit to the commissioner, for the
205 commissioner's review and approval, a plan that describes the extent
206 and degree of the nuisance or ecological damage and the proposed
207 method of taking. Such plan shall include prohibitions against feeding
208 of such geese and requirements that landscaping in the area is managed
209 in a way to be less hospitable to geese, utilizing native plantings. Prior
210 to the implementation of such plan, the municipality, homeowner
211 association, [or] nonprofit land-holding organization or corporate entity
212 shall provide notice of such plan to abutting landowners of such place
213 where the plan will be implemented. Such plan shall not authorize the
214 use of a snare.

215 Sec. 8. Section 26-73 of the 2026 supplement to the general statutes is
216 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October*
217 *1, 2026*):

218 Notwithstanding any provision of this chapter, Sunday shall be a
219 closed season except for hunting on private property and for the
220 purpose of trapping under the provisions of this chapter. Sunday shall
221 be a closed season for the hunting of migratory birds. The possession in
222 the open air on Sunday of any implement for hunting shall be prima
223 facie evidence of hunting. No provision of this section shall be construed
224 so as to affect any provision of section 26-31, 26-48, 26-52 or 27-35.
225 Artificially propagated birds designated by the commissioner may be
226 shot on Sundays on licensed private shooting preserves subject to such
227 regulations of the commissioner as may apply to such private shooting
228 preserves, provided permission so to shoot has been obtained from the
229 town or towns within which such licensed private shooting preserves
230 are located. [Any] Except for any person that hunts with a private land
231 turkey hunting permit or a Connecticut Resident Game Bird
232 Conservation Stamp issued without a fee pursuant to regulations
233 adopted pursuant to sections 26-66 and 26-27b, any person who hunts
234 deer or turkey on private property pursuant to this section shall: (1)
235 Have the written permission of the private property owner where such
236 hunting is conducted, and (2) carry such written permission upon his or
237 her person during the hunting. No person shall hunt on Sunday on
238 private property pursuant to this section within forty yards of a blazed
239 trail open to the public, including, but not limited to, Connecticut blue
240 blazed trails and federally designated and regulated trails.

241 Sec. 9. Section 26-302 of the general statutes is repealed. (*Effective from*
242 *passage*)

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>from passage</i>	7-131d(c)
Sec. 2	<i>from passage</i>	7-131g(c)
Sec. 3	<i>from passage</i>	22a-202(d)

Sec. 4	<i>from passage</i>	22a-201d(d)
Sec. 5	<i>from passage</i>	25-231(4)
Sec. 6	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	26-86a
Sec. 7	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	26-91(b)
Sec. 8	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	26-73
Sec. 9	<i>from passage</i>	Repealer section

ENV *Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact: None

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

The bill makes various changes to statutes related to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) that are clarifying, procedural and technical. These changes do not result in a fiscal impact.

The Out Years

State Impact: None

Municipal Impact: None

OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5153

AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR REVISIONS TO DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION RELATED STATUTES.

SUMMARY

This bill makes various unrelated changes to Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) statutes, including:

1. expanding eligibility for Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program (OSWA) and Charter Oak open space grants;
2. changing the requirements for prioritizing rebates and vouchers issued under the Connecticut hydrogen and electric automobile purchase rebate (CHEAPR) program;
3. modifying DEEP funding requirements when giving grants for zero-emission school buses and related infrastructure;
4. removing Connecticut from the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Compact;
5. amending the definition of “muzzleloader” in the context of deer management;
6. allowing DEEP to authorize corporate entities to take resident Canadian geese;
7. modifying the requirements for certain people to hunt on Sundays; and
8. making technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except the sections on muzzleloaders, Canadian geese, and Sunday hunting are effective October 1, 2026.

§§ 1 & 2 — OSWA GRANTS

Land Nearby EJs

OSWA, which DEEP administers, generally gives state grants to municipalities, land trusts, and water companies to buy land to be preserved as open space or water supplies in perpetuity, as applicable. Current law allows DEEP to award grants to certain municipalities and land trusts to restore or protect open space land they already own.

Under existing law, grants may be made under the program for open space already owned by (1) distressed municipalities, (2) targeted investment communities, (3) municipalities, if the open space is in an environmental justice community (EJC), and (4) nonprofit land conservation organizations, if the land is in a distressed municipality, targeted investment community, or EJC. The bill expands grant eligibility for municipalities and nonprofit land conservation organizations to target open spaces that are immediately adjacent to EJs.

By law, an “environmental justice community” is (1) any U.S. census block group, as determined by the most recent census, for which at least 30% of the population are not institutionalized and have an income below 200% of the federal poverty level or (2) a distressed municipality (CGS § 22a-20a).

Grant Eligibility Exemption for Public Use Land

Under existing law, land that is considered already committed for public use is ineligible for OSWA grants or the Charter Oak open space grant program, with some exceptions. Under current law, any land that is already encumbered by a conservation easement that resulted from a federally funded land conservation program, municipal conservation grant program, or a private conversation program, is generally considered committed to public use unless: (1) the prior encumbrance is

executed after the grant agreement's execution; (2) at the time of the recording of grant easement, any nonfederal holder of prior easements subordinates its interest in the land to DEEP's interest; (3) federal, municipal, or private grant funds are used as matching funds; and (4) the DEEP commissioner determines, based on all relevant information, that transfer of the other conservation easement and the acquisition constitute one concurrent acquisition of property or property interest.

The bill (1) expands this eligibility authorization to all conservation easements or restrictions, rather than those that resulted from federal, municipal, or private programs and (2) removes the matching funds requirement.

The bill also expands the timing requirement for eligibility. Instead of requiring the prior encumbrance to be executed after the grant agreement's execution, the bill instead requires the prior encumbrance to be executed or reserved at least six months before the application deadline for the OSWA grant round.

Lastly, the bill requires nonfederal holders of encumbrances to subordinate their land interest to DEEP's interest in a way that satisfies the DEEP commissioner.

§ 3 — CHEAPR REBATE ELIGIBILITY

By law, the CHEAPR program gives rebates and vouchers to residents, municipalities, businesses, nonprofits, and tribal entities that buy or lease new or used battery electric vehicles, plug-in hybrid vehicles, and fuel cell electric vehicles. CHEAPR rebate and voucher amounts are set administratively by DEEP, subject to certain statutory parameters.

Under current law, DEEP must prioritize the rebates or vouchers to residents (1) of environmental justice communities, (2) with household incomes at or below 300% of the federal poverty level, or (3) who participate in specified state and federal assistance programs. Current law also requires the rebate or voucher amounts for environmental justice community residents to be at least triple the standard amount.

The bill (1) eliminates the requirement that the rebates and vouchers be prioritized for residents of environmental justice communities and (2) requires the rebate or voucher amounts for income-qualified residents be at least double the standard amount. Under the bill, in consultation with the CHEAPR advisory board, the DEEP commissioner may also prioritize granting rebates or vouchers to non-income qualified residents of EJC communities over other non-income qualified residents.

§ 4 — ZERO-EMISSION SCHOOL BUS AND INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS

Current law requires the DEEP commissioner to administer a grant program to give matching funds necessary for municipalities, school districts, and school bus operators to maximize federal funding when submitting federal grant applications for purchasing zero-emission school buses and electric vehicle charging or fueling infrastructure.

The bill reduces this obligation and requires DEEP to give just an unspecified portion of the funds necessary for the above entities to maximize any federal funding or other funding or financing for those purposes.

§§ 5 & 9 — CONNECTICUT RIVER ATLANTIC SALMON COMPACT REPEAL

The bill repeals a statute creating the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission and, therefore, removes the state from the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Compact. The compact was a collaboration between the federal government, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont to promote the restoration of the Anadromous Atlantic salmon to the Connecticut River Basin. Congressional authorization for the commission expired in 2023 and the commission is now defunct. It has since been replaced by the Connecticut River Migratory Fish Restoration Cooperative, which Connecticut has joined.

§ 6 — MUZZLELOADER DEFINITION

By law, no person may hunt, pursue, wound, or kill deer with a

firearm (including muzzleloaders) without getting a deer permit from the DEEP commissioner, in addition to other licensure requirements. By law, DEEP must adopt regulations for the standards of deer management and methods, regulated areas, bag limits (numerical limits), seasons, and permit eligibility for hunting deer with a bow and arrow, muzzleloader, or shotgun.

The bill changes the definition of “muzzleloader” to include all rifles and shotguns of at least forty-five caliber, that (1) cannot fire a self-contained cartridge, (2) use a projectile, and (3) are loaded separately at the muzzle end. Under current law, muzzleloaders must use powder and wadding as well.

§ 7 — CORPORATE CANADIAN GEESE TAKING

By law, the DEEP commissioner may authorize municipalities, homeowner associations, or nonprofit land-holding organizations to take (kill) resident Canadian geese at any time or place using any method consistent with professional wildlife management principals. The bill extends this authorization to include corporate entities, who must follow the existing authorization process.

To be authorized, an entity must submit a plan for the DEEP commissioner’s review and approval describing the (1) extent and degree of the nuisance or ecological damage caused by the geese, and (2) proposed method of taking. Additionally, the plan (1) must include prohibitions against feeding geese; (2) must require that landscaping in the area be managed using native planting, so it is less hospitable to geese; and (3) may not authorize snares. Before executing its plan, the entity must inform abutting landowners of where the plan will be implemented.

§ 8 — SUNDAY HUNTING REVISIONS

Under current law, any person who hunts on private property on Sundays must get and carry written permission on them while they hunt. The bill (1) exempts people that hunt with a private land turkey hunting permit or a Connecticut Resident Game Bird Conservation

Stamp issued without a fee from having to do so, and (2) specifies that only people who hunt deer or turkey on Sundays must get and carry written permission.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 33 Nay 0 (03/04/2026)