



General Assembly

February Session, 2026

Raised Bill No. 5523

LCO No. 2477



Referred to Committee on ENVIRONMENT

Introduced by:
(ENV)

AN ACT CONCERNING TRIBAL COMANAGEMENT OF WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES.

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

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) There is established a
2 Connecticut Tribal Wildlife and Fisheries Commission. Said
3 commission shall consist of the following members: (1) Two members
4 from the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, (2) two members from the
5 Mohegan Tribe, (3) two members each from the Eastern Pequot Tribe,
6 the Golden Hill Paugussett Tribe and the Schaghticoke Tribe, (4) the
7 Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection, or the
8 commissioner's designee, (5) one member each from the Department of
9 Energy and Environmental Protection's Wildlife Division, Fisheries
10 Division and Forestry Division, as appointed by the Commissioner of
11 Energy and Environmental Protection, (6) one member from the
12 Department of Agriculture, (7) one member from the Bureau of
13 Aquaculture of the Department of Agriculture, (8) one member from the
14 Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, (9) one member from
15 Connecticut Sea Grant, (10) one member from the Native American and
16 Indigenous Studies Department at The University of Connecticut, and

17 (11) the chairpersons and ranking members of the joint standing
18 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters
19 relating to the environment, or their designees.

20 (b) The commission shall: (1) Develop recommendations for tribal-
21 state comanagement agreements concerning wildlife and fisheries
22 resources on state lands and waters; (2) integrate tribal ecological
23 knowledge with state conservation science; (3) advise the Commissioner
24 of Energy and Environmental Protection on conservation practices,
25 species management and habitat stewardship; and (4) promote the
26 sustainable use of natural resources consistent with state conservation
27 goals.

28 (c) Nothing in this section shall be construed to apply to lands held
29 in federal trust for any tribe or to reservation lands, which remain under
30 tribal jurisdiction.

31 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) The Commissioner of
32 Energy and Environmental Protection shall provide, at no cost, hunting
33 and fishing permits to any enrolled member of a federally or state-
34 recognized tribe identified in subsection (b) of section 47-59a of the
35 general statutes for lawful activities conducted off reservation lands.

36 (b) Any activities conducted pursuant to this section shall remain
37 subject to state conservation goals, seasons and species protections.

38 (c) The commissioner shall also provide access to conservation
39 education, hunter safety and firearms safety programs to such tribal
40 members.

41 Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) The Commissioner of
42 Agriculture shall prioritize tribal meat, fish, and aquaculture processing
43 facilities for technical assistance, United States Department of
44 Agriculture certification support and eligibility for state or federal
45 infrastructure funding programs. Such prioritization shall support tribal
46 food sovereignty, local food systems and community-based economic

47 development.

48 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) The Commissioner of
49 Energy and Environmental Protection, in consultation with the
50 Connecticut Tribal Wildlife and Fisheries Commission, established
51 pursuant to section 1 of this act, shall develop procedures for
52 implementing comanagement agreements authorized pursuant to
53 section 1 of this act.

54 (b) The Commissioners of Energy and Environmental Protection and
55 Agriculture shall coordinate to ensure clarity in enforcement and
56 administration of activities conducted pursuant to this section and
57 sections 1 to 3, inclusive, of this act.

58 (c) Any tribal member who acts in accordance with any permit,
59 agreement or authorization issued pursuant to this section or sections 1
60 to 3, inclusive, of this act shall not be subject to any enforcement action
61 or penalty for such lawful activity.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 4	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section

Statement of Purpose:

To establish a cooperative framework between the state and Native American tribes for the shared stewardship of wildlife and fisheries resources and expand conservation participation for tribal members, while supporting tribal food sovereignty and resource management infrastructure.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]