



General Assembly

Substitute Bill No. 5523

February Session, 2026



**AN ACT CONCERNING A TRIBAL WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES
ADVISORY COUNCIL.**

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 Advisory Council. Said
3 advisory council consists of the following members who voluntarily
4 agree to serve on such advisory council: (1) Two members from and
5 selected by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, (2) two members
6 from and selected by the Mohegan Tribe, (3) two members from each of
7 the following tribes, as selected by each respective tribe: (A) The Eastern
8 Pequot Tribe, (B) the Golden Hill Paugussett Tribe, and (C) the
9 Schaghticoke Tribe, (4) the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental
10 Protection, or the commissioner's designee, (5) one member each from
11 the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Wildlife
12 Division, Fisheries Division and Forestry Division, as appointed by the
13 Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection, (6) one
14 member from the Department of Agriculture, (7) one member from the
15 Bureau of Aquaculture of the Department of Agriculture, (8) one
16 member from the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, (9) one
17 member from Connecticut Sea Grant, (10) one member from the Native
18 American and Indigenous Studies Department at The University of
19 Connecticut, and (11) the chairpersons and ranking members of the joint

20 standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of
21 matters relating to the environment, or their designees.

22 (b) The tribal members of the advisory council shall develop written
23 procedures for meetings, at such members' discretion, which shall be
24 distributed to all members of the advisory council. Nontribal members
25 of such advisory council shall attend meetings on a quarterly basis, at
26 the invitation of the tribal members.

27 (c) Such advisory council shall: (1) Make recommendations to the
28 Department of Energy and Environmental Protection on how state
29 conservation plans and policies can integrate tribal ecological
30 knowledge and stewardship practices, and (2) promote the sustainable
31 use of natural resources consistent with state conservation goals.

32 (d) Nothing in this section shall be construed to apply to lands held
33 in federal trust for any tribe or to reservation lands, which remain under
34 tribal jurisdiction.

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

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

42 (c) The commissioner shall also provide access to conservation
43 education, hunter safety and firearms safety programs to such tribal
44 members.

45 Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) The Commissioner of
46 Agriculture shall prioritize tribal meat, fish and aquaculture processing
47 facilities for technical assistance, United States Department of
48 Agriculture certification support and eligibility for state or federal
49 infrastructure funding programs. Such prioritization shall support tribal

50 food sovereignty, local food systems and community-based economic
51 development.

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

ENV *Joint Favorable Subst.*