
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5523

AN ACT CONCERNING A TRIBAL WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES ADVISORY COUNCIL.

SUMMARY

This bill creates the Connecticut Tribal Wildlife and Fisheries Advisory Council to (1) make recommendations to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) on how state conservation plans and policies can integrate tribal ecological knowledge and stewardship practices and (2) promote sustainable natural resource use consistent with state conservation goals. (The advisory council's work does not apply to lands held in federal trust for a tribe or to reservation lands, which remain under tribal jurisdiction.)

The bill also requires the DEEP commissioner to give free hunting and fishing permits to any enrolled member of a federally- or state-recognized tribe for lawful activities conducted off reservation lands. The bill specifies that any activities conducted are subject to state conservation goals, seasons, and species protections. It also requires the commissioner to give tribal members access to conservation education and hunter and firearms safety programs.

Lastly, the bill requires the Department of Agriculture commissioner to prioritize tribal meat, fish, and aquaculture processing facilities for technical assistance, U.S. Department of Agriculture certification support, and eligibility for state or federal infrastructure funding programs. This prioritization must support tribal food sovereignty, local food systems, and community-based economic development.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

CONNECTICUT TRIBAL WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES ADVISORY COUNCIL

Under the bill, the advisory council includes the following 23

members:

1. two members each from and selected by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, Mohegan Tribe, Eastern Pequot Tribe, Golden Hill Paugussett Tribe, and Schaghticoke Tribe;
2. the DEEP commissioner or her designee;
3. one member each from DEEP's wildlife, fisheries, and forestry divisions, appointed by the DEEP commissioner;
4. one member from the Department of Agriculture (DoAg);
5. one member from DoAg's Bureau of Aquaculture;
6. one member from the Connecticut Agriculture Experiment Station;
7. one member from Connecticut Sea Grant;
8. one member from the University of Connecticut Native American and Indigenous Studies Department; and
9. the Environment Committee's chairpersons and ranking members or their designees.

The bill requires the advisory council's tribal members to develop and distribute to all other members written meeting procedures. Meetings must be held at the tribal members' discretion, and nontribal members must attend quarterly, at the tribal members' invitation.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 24 Nay 10 (03/18/2026)