

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 14-190—sHB 5417 (VETOED)

Environment Committee

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A SEASON FOR THE TAKING OF GLASS EELS

SUMMARY: This act eliminates the specific statutory ban on, and \$250 maximum fine for, taking or trying to take glass or elver eels from state waters (see BACKGROUND).

Existing regulations, unaffected by the act, prohibit possessing American eels fewer than nine inches in length, regardless of life-cycle stage (Conn. Agencies Reg., §§ 26-142a-8a, as amended by Declaration of Regulation Change 14-03 & 26-159a-4, as amended by Declaration of Regulation Change 14-02). This effectively bans taking elver and glass eels because these eels are smaller than the minimum size for taking.

By eliminating the specific penalty, the act applies other existing penalties to taking glass or elver eels. If taken for recreation, the violation is an infraction. Taking for commercial purposes is punishable by a maximum fine of \$250 for a first offense and is a class D misdemeanor for a subsequent offense (see Table on Penalties) (CGS §§ 26-159a & 26-186).

The act also authorizes the energy and environmental protection commissioner, if the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) allows a harvest of glass and elver eels, to establish harvest restrictions and a limited access permit system for their taking by July 1, 2015. It allows the permit system to determine permit eligibility through a random draw and requires the system to remain in effect until the commissioner adopts regulations.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2015

BACKGROUND

Glass and Elver Eels

Glass eels and elver eels are not distinct species, but rather life-cycle stages of the American eel species. Glass eels are a juvenile stage where the eel is translucent. They gain pigmentation as they move from the Atlantic continental shelf into rivers and become elver eels, which are also a juvenile stage. Elver eels eventually become immature adult stage yellow eels, which take years to mature into full grown adult silver eels.

ASMFC

Connecticut is a member of ASMFC, a coastal fishing compact of 15 states. Under the compact, member states must comply with ASMFC's interstate fishery management plans. The U.S. Commerce Department imposes fishing

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

moratoriums on states that fail to comply with the plans.

ASMFC currently bans glass eel fishing in all member states except Maine and South Carolina and requires states to adopt a nine-inch minimum size limit for taking American eels.

OLR Tracking: KLM/TB:DC:PF:am