



Connecticut Department of
**ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION**

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Public Hearing – February 4, 2015
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Robert J. Klee
and by Deputy Commissioner Susan Whalen

**House Bill No. 5026 – AN ACT CONCERNING PROVIDING PERSONS AGE SIXTY-FIVE OR OLDER WITH
PERMANENT FISHING LICENSES**

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding **House Bill No. 5026 – AN ACT CONCERNING PROVIDING PERSONS AGE SIXTY-FIVE OR OLDER WITH PERMANENT FISHING LICENSES**. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) welcomes the opportunity to offer the following testimony.

DEEP has concerns about the proposal eliminating the existing requirement to renew fishing licenses annually for anglers age 65 and older. An annual fishing license requirement is the most cost-effective method available to collect essential data on fishing participation. Accurate counts on the number of anglers is needed for natural resource management, agency planning and for federal Sport Fish Restoration Program funding. Complete and accurate annual license-holder data, including name, address and telephone number, is essential for conducting the surveys needed to determine angler activity levels and total annual harvest. These data are needed to ensure our natural resources are being sustainably managed and to meet angler needs.

Because such surveys are so critical to science-based natural resource management, federal marine fisheries law (Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, also known as the Sustainable Fisheries Act) has mandated since 2009 that states collect marine angler names, addresses and telephone numbers on an annual basis. In fact, DEEP is expected to provide NOAA Fisheries with monthly updates to support data analysis to determine fishing activity and catch. Failure to comply with this mandate would cause our state to lose its exemption from the National Angler Registry, meaning all Connecticut anglers (age 16 and older) fishing in either marine waters or in our major rivers would need to individually enroll annually in the Registry at a cost of \$15.00 each year. Currently, a resident marine waters fishing license is just \$10.00 for those ages 16 to 64, and it's free for anglers age 65 or older.

Fortunately, with the establishment of an online licensing system in 2009, it is also very easy and convenient for anglers to renew their licenses each year. Anglers can visit any one of nearly 200 license vendors in the state, including town halls, commercial vendors and agency offices. Or they can simply go on-line from home using any computer or hand-held device with internet access. Each first-time license holder is assigned a

conservation ID number which they use throughout their lifetime for all their sporting licenses. Having this ID number allows sportsmen to easily look up all of their past licenses and renew them as needed to meet their particular outdoor plans each year. There is simply no more convenient or cost effective method available to collect this essential information.

We believe that any minor inconvenience for anglers, including those over age 65, to renew those licenses they intend to use in the current year is quite small. Without such a requirement for seniors, the agency would be compelled to conduct costly extensive surveys of senior sportsmen to determine their activity status. Further, such a survey would likely prove a greater imposition on a senior's time than simply renewing their license at their convenience.

Finally, the currently electronic licensing system, provided by an outside vendor, was designed and programmed to manage licenses and permits on an annual (calendar year) basis. Managing extended licenses (valid for multiple years) for a relatively large block of license holders would require extensive manual re-entry by staff, or reprogramming of the system, both at significant cost to the state.

In summary, this bill would increase costs to many Connecticut anglers, including seniors, as they would need to participate in the National Angler Registry at a fee of \$15.00 annually, reduce the quality of data concerning angler participation used to manage the state's recreational fisheries, and increase costs to the state by requiring extensive reprogramming of the online licensing system.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal. If you should require any additional information, please contact Robert LaFrance, DEEP's Director of Governmental Affairs, at 860.424.3401 or Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov (or, Elizabeth McAuliffe, DEEP Legislative Liaison, at 860.424.3458 or Elizabeth.McAuliffe@ct.gov).