

# COALITION OF CONNECTICUT SPORTSMEN

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## ***Testimony presented to the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE***

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

by Robert T. Crook, Director/Lobbyist

02/04/15

It is rare that the Coalition of CT Sportsmen would oppose a bill having ANY impact on sportsmen. However, as an over 65 hunter, trapper and inland and marine fisherman myself, and having had the previous lifetime and annual renewal license, the current annual renewal is preferable. The Coalition has received positive sportsmen input supporting the same position on many visits to clubs and conversing with individuals. All understand and prefer the current computerized system and most >65 eligible support annual renewal.

Compiling accurate statistical data is an important DEEP mandate, and the previous ‘permanent’ license detracts from the DEEP’s ability to collect the proper and needed statistics. The annual >65 license issuance, allows the DEEP to determine if a license is ‘active’, where under the ‘lifetime’ issuance when a licensee passed away or moved out of state, no license end could be determined resulting in inaccurate data. In 2009, with introduction of the Online Sportsmen Licensing System, a simple solution was incorporated. A person 65 years or older, continues getting their hunting and fishing licenses free, but must obtain them annually. The DEEP online system can be accessed at home, hundreds of state locations - Libraries, any “vender’s” (e.g. Town Hall, local sporting goods dealer), and all willing to provide help.

All first-time license holders including those >65 are assigned a DEEP conservation ID number which they use throughout their lifetime for all their sporting licenses. There is simply no more convenient or cost effective method available to collect this essential information. Without the annual requirement for seniors, DEEP would be required to conduct a costly survey of seniors to determine their activity status, likely to prove a greater imposition on a senior’s time than simply renewing their license, or opt to disregard the >65 licensees. Finally, the currently electronic licensing system, provided by an outside vendor, was designed and programmed to manage licenses/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 reentry by staff, or reprogramming of the system, both at significant cost to the state.

The cliché ‘If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it’ applies. The current system works well and has been accepted and applauded by the vast majority of licensees. Any minor inconvenience, including those over age 65, is quite small.

Thank you.