



**Testimony of Save the Sound,  
a bi-state program of Connecticut Fund for the Environment,  
before the Environment Committee on March 20, 2015**

*in support of:*

**H.B. 6034 – AA Authorizing Bow & Arrow Hunting on certain private property on Sundays**

*and regarding:*

**H.B. 5722 – AA Authorizing the taking of Oysters that are two and one-half inches in length**

Dear Sen. Kennedy, Rep. Albis, and members of the Environment Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments today. On behalf of CFE/Save the Sound, I would like to submit the following testimony:

**H.B. No. 6034 – Authorizing bow and arrow hunting on certain private property on Sundays**

CFE/Save the Sound supports Sunday bow and arrow hunting on private property to protect public health, support ecological biodiversity, and increase opportunities for sportsmen. Since 1975, when we held our first deer hunting season, hunting has been one of many effective tools used to manage high deer population and limit its damaging effects. Opening Sunday to bow hunting will continue this trend.

Connecticut's deer population continues to increase as they thrive in our suburban and rural communities, open farmlands, and protected forests. High deer population and population density have significant negative impacts on public health and ecological biodiversity. Deer play a vital role in tick lifecycles and the spread of Lyme disease, although they cannot be infected. Additionally, deer browsing and grazing can substantially alter the biodiversity and composition of forests and grasslands, making it difficult for birds and other wildlife to secure food and shelter.

Hunting is also a major recreational activity in Connecticut. Tens of thousands of hunters spend millions of dollars annually, resulting in funding for conservation, business opportunities, job growth, and tax revenue. Forty-two other states allow Sunday hunting. This has led to positive economic gains with rising equipment and license sales. The same will be said for Connecticut should this bill pass.

Finally, opposition to Sunday Hunting has raised concerns over hikers' & nature walkers' safety if bow hunting is expanded. H.B. 6034 seeks to open only private lands and would require written permission from the land owner. Ideally, hikers would not be traversing through private property anyway, but still, this bill requires bow hunters to keep a forty-yard distance from blazed hiking trails. Also, not a single non-hunter has been shot by a bow and arrow since deer hunting began in Connecticut in 1975.

**H.B. No. 5722 – Authorizing the taking of certain oysters that are two and one-half inches in length**

As written, CFE/Save the Sound cannot support H.B. 5722. Currently, the Department of Agriculture restricts the taking of oysters smaller than three inches. This bill would reduce that limit to two and one-half inches, but only for those oysters raised in cages. We believe this would create an unenforceable rule. There is no way for DoAG (which houses the Bureau of Aquaculture) or DEEP to know if an oyster was raised in a cage or not, or monitor the shipment of cage-raised oysters. This bill will create an opportunity for harvesters of non-cage oysters to enter the market illegally. A tracking and labeling system might solve this problem but could prove tricky to manage and burdensome for small shellfish operations.

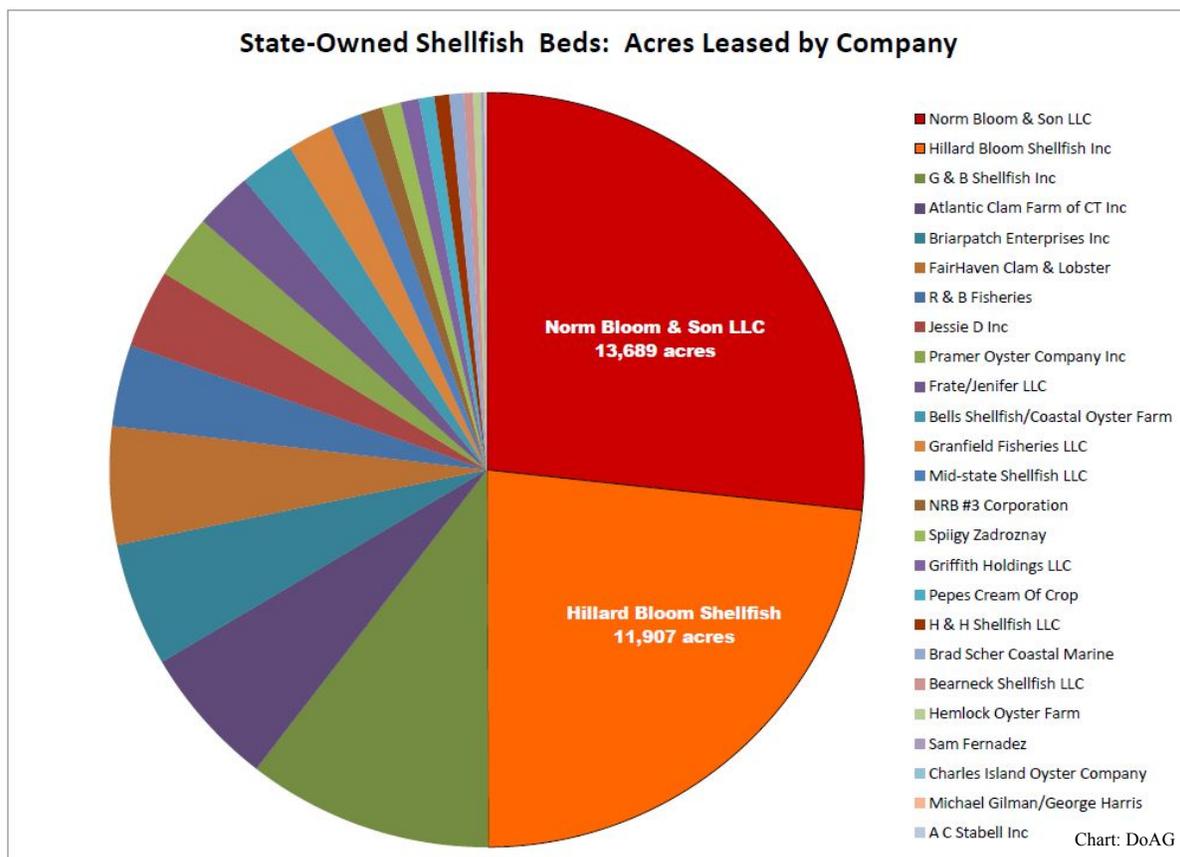
Instead, CFE/Save the Sound proposes reducing the size restriction from three inches to two and one-half inches for all oysters. Under the current system, the most desirable oyster beds are leased or owned by a small number of large shellfish companies. These beds feature natural protection from storms and hazards, limiting oysters' exposure to diseases and reducing the amount of time they need to grow to the legal size. Unfortunately, this system has left only the less desirable beds available for smaller

operations and industry newcomers. With two and one-half inch limit across the board, small and new oyster companies will be able to succeed in a risky environment and sell a competitive product.

Connecticut's oysters are already sought after across the country and around the world. Decreasing the size limit will not decrease the quality of our shellfish. Instead, it will allow us to enter new markets, such as "boutique raw bars", which are currently dominated by oysters from states with lower size limits. As our market reach expands, competition within Connecticut's shellfish industry will increase innovation and efficiency. Continuing to grow, this will produce more revenue, more jobs, and more opportunities. For these reasons, CFE/Save the Sound is opposed to H.B. 5722 as written, but is strongly in favor of reducing the size restriction to two and one-inch for all oysters.

Suggested edit to the General Statutes:

"Sec. 26-234b. Taking of eastern oysters. Regulations. No person may take eastern oysters (*Crassostrea virginica*) from the waters of this state which are less than [three] two and one-half inches long or which are otherwise not ready for harvest, as determined by the Commissioner of Agriculture..."



Sincerely,

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