

Environment Committee Testimony Raised Bill 139  
Public Hearing Feb 24, 2016

Co-Chair: Senator Kennedy  
Co-Chair: Representative Albis  
Members of the Committee

I am writing to you to express my thoughts on Raised Bill No. 139 **AN ACT CONCERNING THE AUTHORITY OF THE COMMISSIONER OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION TO ESTABLISH A TROUT STAMP.**

I am in SUPPORT of Raised Bill 139, with two reservations.

1. That the bill exempt anyone who is not required to obtain an individual fishing license, and
2. That the bill “protect” the designed use of the resulting revenues, by requiring the DEEP to refund to all purchasers the amount of any collected stamp fees whenever the funds collected in a specific fiscal year are greater than the funds spent on trout raised or procured and subsequently stocked into Connecticut water, (and similarly, funds from Pheasant stamps collected that exceed the amount spent on pheasant stocked onto Connecticut state hunting areas).

We all need to recognize that the DEEP Bureau of Natural Resources funds the majority of its programs through the licenses, tags, permits, stamps and other fees, (including by revenue sharing from the Federal Government via *Pitman-Roberson* and *Greenberg-Warburton*). The latest figures I have from the DEEP are for 2012. Please see the ‘pie-chart’ exhibits at the end of this testimony. On a budget of \$16,000,000, DEEP shows that over 80% of the revenues in 2012 came from sportsmen and less than 7% are from the General Fund. Essentially, (quite remarkably I should add), is that the DEEP Bureau of Natural Resources is funded almost entirely ‘outside of the General Fund’, with the majority of the revenue coming from sportsmen themselves. I am sure DEEP can update these exhibits for you to show 2013 and 2014 fiscal years. In keeping with the tradition of sportsmen ‘funding’ the DEEP Bureau of Natural Resources, we, as sportsmen, generally recognize the need to continue to increase the funds available to the BNR by both new and (from time to time) increases in (reasonable) fees for licenses, tags, permits, stamps and other fees paid by sportsmen in the State in Connecticut. I am in agreement that SB 139, in creating a *Trout Stamp* does so within the spirit of this tradition and therefore I am ready to SUPPORT this bill.

However, there are two (2) amendments that are needed to convince me that the bill protects all to whom the services of the DEEP Bureau of Natural Resources are designed.

1. S.B. 139 must EXEMPT all individuals who may fish for trout in the State of Connecticut, but are not required to obtain a fishing license, from the requirement of purchasing a *Trout Stamp*.  
EXAMPLES: Especially important are our ‘youth’. Kids under the age of 16 should not be required to purchase a *Trout Stamp*, (whether or not they participate in the ‘voluntary’ *Youth Fishing Passport* program or not). Additionally, individuals fishing under a “Group Fishing License” should not have to purchase a trout stamp. (Examples of this refers to ‘Take a Vet Fishing Programs’). Individuals fishing for trout in “Private Waters” or “Special Registration Waters” registered with DEEP should not have to purchase a *Trout Stamp*. Individuals participating in the <new in 2015>, Secondary Schools fishing license exemption, should not have to purchase a *Trout Stamp*. Individuals fishing during a designated, “free fishing day”, (whether part of the no license required day as on May 9, 2015, or a Commissioner designated “free license day”), should not have to purchase a *Trout Stamp*. DEEP should be asked, (prior to finalizing the language of this bill), to review all of the ‘free and/or reduced fee’ licenses in effect or proposed in this legislative session, to let them determine which ones need to be addressed in this bill, and

which ones may be addressed within their ‘hunting’ and/or’ fishing *regulations*, with guidance by the Connecticut Legislature where they believe the new *Trout Stamp* need not be purchased.

2. From my extensive contact with Sportsmen over my 55+ years of hunting and fishing in Connecticut, my membership in four sportsman’s organizations, my seat for the last 12 years on DEEP’s Conservation Advisory Council and my representation on the New London/Windham County League of Sportsmen’s Clubs, (representing the issues of 17 organizations East of the River), I can attest to the fact that “generally” sportsmen will support the DEEP Bureau of Natural Resources with (reasonable fees, both new and increases to existing), whenever those fees are to be used within the BNR programs for the designated purposes they were intended. My point here is, if a fee is charged for a *Trout Stamp*, the revenue raised ‘had better’ be used for raising trout in our trout hatcheries or purchasing trout and stocking them in Connecticut waters for the purpose of angling. S.B. 139 needs to insure the revenue collected from the *Trout Stamp*, be not only returned to DEEP BNR, but allowed to be “appropriated” for the precise reason it was instituted, that is using it for raising trout in our trout hatcheries or purchasing trout and stocking them in Connecticut waters for the purpose of angling. To do this, I ask that the bill be amended to mandate that the DEEP Bureau of Natural Recourses REFUND to each individual who purchases a *Trout Stamp*, the amount of any stamp fees paid whenever the funds collected in a specific fiscal year are greater than the funds spent on trout raised or procured and subsequently stocked into Connecticut waters, (and similarly, funds from “*Pheasant Stamps*” collected that exceed the amount spent on pheasant stocked on Connecticut state hunting areas). Sportsmen, (generally), will not support new fees and fee increases in which the Governor (and his budget minions), have and continually propose, cuts in the designated appropriations of funds paid by sportsmen and assumed, by them, to be used as designed, on designated programs historically part of the Connecticut’s DEEP BNR hunting and fishing programs. To be specific, the CT State Trout Hatcheries & Stocking Program and the CT Pheasant Acquisition and Stocking Programs need to be protected. To be succinct, put a ‘money back guarantee’ into the laws for “*Trout Stamps*” and “*Pheasant Stamps*” spending.

Given these thoughts, I am fully in support of the proposal of S.B. 139, to give the Commissioner of DEEP the authority to create a *Trout Stamp*.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful considerations on this proposed bill.

Bruce A. Tolhurst  
16 Virginia Rail Dr.  
Marlborough, CT 06447  
860-295-0327

