
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5354 (as amended by House "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING SNAPPING TURTLES AND RED-EARED SLIDER TURTLES.

SUMMARY

This bill prohibits the commercial trade in snapping turtles (*Chelydra serpentina*) until the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) adopts applicable regulations. The bill also bans (1) with two exceptions, importing red-eared slider turtles (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) and (2) releasing red-eared slider turtles to Connecticut's land or waters.

The bill's import ban on red-eared slider turtles exempts (1) scientific or educational institutions as long as the turtles are used for research or educational purposes and (2) buying or selling red-eared slider turtles with unique color patterns as long as the seller keeps certain purchaser information.

By law, violating the commercial trade ban or applicable regulations is a class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500, up to three months in prison, or both. The bill extends this penalty to importing or releasing red-eared slider turtles.

*House Amendment "A" adds the import exemption for buying or selling red-eared slider turtles with unique color patterns.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2018

SNAPPING TURTLE TRADE

Under the bill, no one can engage in the commercial trade of snapping turtles unless DEEP adopts applicable regulations.

Current law exempts snapping turtles from the law that generally bans, absent applicable DEEP regulations, purchasing, selling,

exchanging, or possessing with intent to sell or exchange, wild birds, quadrupeds, reptiles, or amphibians. The bill removes this exemption, consequently banning the commercial trade of snapping turtles unless DEEP regulates it.

Existing DEEP regulations allow possessing up to 10 wild adult snapping turtles at a time. The daily and seasonal snapping turtle bag limits are five and 10, respectively. The open season for taking snapping turtles extends from July 15 to September 30 annually (Conn. Agencies Regs. §§ 26-55-3 and 26-66-14).

RED-EARED SLIDER TURTLE SELLING

The bill exempts from the import ban buying, selling, exchanging, or possessing with intent to sell or exchange, red-eared slider turtles with distinctive aberrant color patterns, including albino or amelanistic (i.e., lacking skin pigment) turtles. The exemption only applies if the turtle seller keeps a record of the purchaser's name and address on a form the agriculture commissioner prescribes.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 29 Nay 0 (03/14/2018)