

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5364

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF HORSESHOE CRABS.

Vote Date: 3/14/2018

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/9/2018

File No.: 80

***Disclaimer:** The following Joint Favorable Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environment Committee

Rep. Joseph P. Gresko, 121st Dist.

Rep. Ben McGorty, 122nd Dist.

Rep. Mary M. Mushinsky, 85th Dist.

Rep. Diana S. Urban, 43rd Dist.

Rep. Philip L. Young, 120th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill prohibits the hand-harvesting of horseshoe crabs in any Stratford shoreline between Stratford Point and Sniffen Point. Designating this area as a no kill or harvest zone could potentially help protect the horseshoe crab population along the Stratford shoreline.

Substitute Language – LCO No. 2618:

Removes reference to specific statutes in section 2 in regards to violations and states that any person who violates the provisions of the bill have committed an infraction. Testimony shared by the Connecticut Judicial Branch commented that section 2 created a new infraction and it is not necessary to amend section 51-164n as proposed.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

External Affairs Division, Connecticut Judicial Branch

This bill creates a new infraction. All infractions are, by nature, payable by mail. As such, it is not necessary to amend Sec. 51-164n, as proposed in Section 2 of the bill, since that section contains a list of violations that are payable by mail, not infractions.

Robert Klee, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

There is nothing we are aware of that is unique about the shoreline of the town of Stratford in terms of horseshoe crab abundance or breeding success that warrants a special designation. Although the town does have areas that physically support highly successful horseshoe spawning, there are equally good areas in almost all adjoining towns. Horseshoe crabs do not use a particular breeding ground exclusively throughout their lifespan. Therefore banning harvest in one area will not effectively protect them from being harvested from nearby beaches later in the year or in other years. The timeline for completion of that assessment (by the end of 2018) will not allow staff sufficient time to compile and submit recommendations regarding changes to restricted areas or the season for the taking of horseshoe crab by January 1, 2019.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Christina Senft-Batoh, Ph.D., Conservation Administrator, Town of Stratford

Fishermen harvest horseshoe crabs as bait for other fish. This puts pressure on the areas where the horseshoe crabs are taken from; local it is Short Beach in Stratford. Protecting Short Beach would serve to improve the local population's chances.

Bill Lucey, Soundkeeper, Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound

The establishment of breeding beach sanctuaries can help to determine the proper policies and procedures to manage Connecticut's horseshoe crab population.

Susan Armknecht

Bill should be amended to apply to all of coastal Connecticut and prevent the "harvest of horseshoe crabs".

Jennifer Budai

Jennifer is an active citizen scientist that has participated in the study and tagging of horseshoe crabs in Stratford. She considers Stratford an important location for horseshoe crabs.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Ben Goetsch, Briarpatch Enterprises, Connecticut Coalition of Shellfishers

HB5364 undermines the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's (DEEP) regulatory authority to provide consistent management along Connecticut's coastline. If a specific area is determined to require intervention, in this case the harvesting of horseshoe crabs in the Stratford area, then this should be done by regulatory powers of DEEP.

Reported by: Steve Smith, Asst. Clerk

Date: 4/2/2018