Bill No.: SB-7
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING WATER FOWL HUNTING AT CALF PASTURE BEACH IN NORWALK.
Vote Date: 3/18/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 2/4/2019
File No.: 562

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Rep. Lucy Dathan, 142nd Dist.
Rep. David Michel, 146th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:
Calf Pasture Beach is a historic site in Norwalk, Connecticut that has become a popular destination for members of the Norwalk community. Community members and others who frequent the park are alarmed when hearing gunshots during the hunting season and have shared concerns that a stray bullet will harm them. The bill seeks to address such concerns by establishing a two year moratorium on waterfowl hunting in Calf Pasture Beach.

Substitute Language – LCO No. 6261
The bill as originally drafted would have established Calf Pasture Beach in Norwalk as a state refuge for wildlife. Concern was shared with the committee that establishing the area as a wildlife refuge could potentially restrict certain recreational activates such as fishing and shell fishing. Additionally, current statute, section 26-67c, authorizes the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to address and regulate hunting in proximity to certain areas. Substitute language creates a two year moratorium on waterfowl hunting on Calf Pasture Beach. The substitute language will allow DEEP the opportunity to study the area of Calf Pasture Beach as it relates to waterfowl hunting.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:
Melody Currey, Acting Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Agriculture: Supports the bill. The area of Norwalk known as Calf Pasture Beach is a unique location that allows for recreational shell fishing. Due to declining water quality trends, the remaining shoreline in Norwalk prohibits this recreational activity. Although supportive of the bill, language should be amended to (1) enable the City of Norwalk to address significant populations of waterfowl and (2) allow shell fishing and fishing in the refuge.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Jo-Anne R. Basile, Executive Director, Connecticut Votes for Animals (CVA): Calf Pasture Beach is a multipurpose recreational and scenic area. This bill will allow people to peacefully enjoy Calf pasture Beach without fear of an accidental shooting or witness the “blood sport of hunting water fowl.”

Representative Lucy Dathan, 142nd Assembly Dist.: Many constituents from the 142nd district have shared concerns over hunting in Calf Pasture Beach State Park. Looking at a map of the state park, one could see that the area is small and in close proximity to city recreational facilities.

Senator Bob Duff, 25th Senate Dist.: Calf Pasture Beach is a historic part of Norwalk, dating back to the American Revolutionary War. This area is a staple of the Norwalk community and is home to a skate park, kayak rentals, music, as well as a beachside café. Nevertheless, the pervasive sounds of gunshots during hunting season have prevented the community from fully enjoying the renovated Calf Pasture Beach.

Priscilla Feral, President, Friends of Animals: More than 99% of Connecticut residents do not find recreation in shooting ducks and geese from the sky. The sounds of gunfire can be heard at Calf Pasture Beach during the waterfowl hunting season.

Annie Hornish, Connecticut State Director, The Humane Society of the United States: There is an extreme disproportionate use of public lands available to hunters even though wildlife waters is a bigger demographic. According to the US Wildlife Service and the US Department of Commerce, Connecticut wildlife waters contributed $935 million to the economy and outspend hunters by a margin of 3 to 1. Additionally, the number of Connecticut hunters has declined since 2011.

The Environment Committee Received approximately 15 testimonies supporting the bill explaining that there is concern with gunshot noises heard at Calf Pasture Beach, a recreational location for the Norwalk community, during the waterfowl hunting season.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Diane Cece, Board of Directors, East Norwalk Neighborhood Association (ENNA): Several East Norwalk residents have expressed concerns with shoreline waterfowl hunting; however, complaints of gunfire mostly originate in Veterans Memorial Park and the Norwalk harbor areas, not on the beach. The ENNA shares concern as to why the bill relates to the
city of Milford and is concerned about the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection’s authority to ban or suspend park activities.

**Greg Chasko, President, Connecticut Waterfowlers Association:** The decision to establish a wildlife refuge should be made by a natural resource professional within Connecticut’s Department of Energy and Environmental Protection as outlined in general statutes section 26-67c. Even so, CWB believes 26-67 may be too limiting and should modify statutes to allow such authority to be more flexible in evaluating sites.

**David Lersch, Chairman, Delta Waterfowl – Connecticut Chapter:** Waterfowl hunting has occurred on Calf Pasture Beach for many years, and is a recreational activity of the area before it was developed for other recreational purposes. This area is a prime location for shoreline hunting because of the coastal migration of various waterfowls; at the same time, many access points to the shoreline are disappearing for hunters. This bill is puzzling since state statute allows the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to conduct a hunting safety review to determine whether there are any safety concerns, yet the agency has not designated the area as requiring any form of special protection.

*The Environment Committee received approximately 20 testimonies opposing the bill stating that (1) the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection currently has authority to regulate hunting areas of the state, (2) there has not been any injuries or accidents as a result of waterfowl hunting in Calf Pasture Beach, (3) a majority of the gunshots heard are from Veterans memorial Park and the Norwalk harbor areas, and (4) the state has a limited number of shoreline area that allows for waterfowl hunting.*

Reported by: Pamela Bianca / Ussawin R. Bumpen Date: 4/11/2019