Bill No.: SB-245
Title: AN ACT PROHIBITING HUNTING ALONG THE QUINNIPIAC RIVER IN NEW HAVEN.
Vote Date: 3/8/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable
PH Date: 3/1/2019
File No.: 213

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Sen. Martin M. Looney, 11th Dist.
Rep. David Michel, 146th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:
Concerns have been shared with committee in regards to the hunting along Quinnipiac River in an area close to Interstate 91. Such area has been described to committee as densely populated and urban; therefore, is concern for public safety. Although the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection has established a temporary moratorium, and plans to develop regulations to ban hunting, the moratorium is set to expire in June 2019. Proponents have argued that enacting statute will create a permanent solution to such concerns. The bill seeks to address environmental and public safety concerns by designating portions of the Quinnipiac and Mill rivers in New Haven as state wildlife refuges.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:
None Expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:
Jo-Anne Basile, Executive Director, Connecticut Votes for Animals: Both densely populated public and private housing borders both sides of Quinnipiac River in New Haven.
Additionally, the area on which this bill seeks to make a wildlife refuge is near the Quinnipiac Meadows Preserve, a community, conservation, and recreational area where children often play. Furthermore, the area is home to over one hundred species of wildlife, and is a significant migration stop for Canadian Geese, ducks and migratory birds.

**Justin Elicker, Executive Director, New Haven Land Trust:** The area addressed in the bill, previously used for hunting, is now an educational outlet for many school field trips and public programming, such as bid walks, live bird of prey shows, bats and bugs night walk, and much more. Furthermore, the City of New Haven has discussed the city’s shot spotter program, and the effect hunting weapon discharges would have on the number of calls police would receive.

**Priscilla Feral, President, Friends of Animals:** Hunting is dangerous. DEEP’s budget is dependent on hunters; therefore, the agency cannot be trusted to effectively regulate Connecticut’s hunting areas. “Residents and visitors to this area should not have to hear, let alone witness waterfowl being shot out of the sky and then killed for the sake of a minority of hunters.” Wildlife watchers collectively spend more money than hunters, the State should expand the lands that “are free of gunfire” and allow wildlife watchers to enjoy their public lands without worry.

**Senator Martin M. Looney, 11th Senate District, and Representative Al Paolillo, 97th Assembly District:** Complaints have been received over past years in regards to hunting along the Quinnipiac River in New Haven. Residents in the area consider hunting in this area a threat to public safety, as it is in a densely populated area. Although the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection has a temporary moratorium on this area for hunting, and is submitting regulations to permanently ban hunting on this property, the bill creates a more permanent solution to the problem.

**Annie Hornish, Connecticut Senior State Director, The Humane Society of the United States:** The hunter population has dwindled while the wildlife watching population has increased substantially. Hunters are one percent of the population in Connecticut, but “have a disproportionate use of public lands available to them”. As the number of hunters dwindles, the state should open more public lands to wildlife watchers to “correct for the changing demographics.”

*The Environment Committee received approximately 10 similar testimonies supporting the bill explaining the area addressed in the bill is densely populated and is now used for educational and recreational purposes.*

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Greg Chasko, President, Connecticut Waterfowlers Association (CWA):** Although in agreement that waterfowl hunting should not be allowed at the site addressed in the bill, CWA is opposed to the process by which such prohibition is enacted. The legislature has rightfully provided DEEP with the authority to manage natural resources. Furthermore, the agency has already enacted a hunting closure at the site and is in the process of making the closure permanent.
Conservation Organizations Joint Testimony: CSF, CWA, NRA Et. Al.: DEEP has the experience, and is open and transparent with their regulatory process; this should not to be undermined by legislative action. Hunting is already tightly regulated in Connecticut, and there is no evidence of any safety-related incidents prior to the moratorium instituted on the Quinnipiac River. This bill sets a dangerous precedent for how decisions impacting the regulations of hunting are made.

The Environment Committee received approximately 5 similar testimonies opposing the bill explaining the state is over reaching due process and has already provided the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection the authority to regulate hunting in the area addressed in the bill.

Reported by: Steve Smith / Ussawin R. Bumpen Date: 3/29/2019