Bill No.: SB-998
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR REVISIONS TO ENVIRONMENT RELATED STATUTES.
Vote Date: 3/18/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 3/11/2019
File No.: 599

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Environment Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:
The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) requested the following changes to environmental related statutes: (1) clarification in regards to vessel speeds in the vicinity of law enforcement vessel using audible or visual signal devices to assist law enforcement in safely executing their duties, (2) to allow conditional approval of licensure and application transfers, (3) change pesticide application renewal and recordkeeping requirements, (4) allow for certain permitting exemptions for aquaculture structures, (5) remove DEEP’s role in approving municipal noise ordinances, (6) to allow aide to and from any state belonging to the Northeastern Interstate Forest Fire Protection Compact, and (7) change forest practitioner certification and continuing education requirements.

Substitute Language – LCO No. 6230
Current statute, section 26-107h, requires DEEP to submit an annual report to the Environment Committee on the agency’s conservation program for species not traditionally harvested – this program is not currently active or funded. The original draft of the bill included a request by DEEP to remove such language from the general statutes. While not currently active, concern was shared with the Environment Committee that if the program received funding and became active, such reporting requirement will no longer exist. Substitute language removes the requirement that DEEP submits such report, and instead, allows DEEP to submit the report.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:
Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP): Supports the bill. Testimony provided by DEEP outlined sections 1 through 11 of the bill and provides reasoning behind the agency’s request for such changes.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Patrick M. Comins, Executive Director, The Connecticut Audubon Society: The Connecticut Audubon Society supports lines 455-464, pertaining to forest practitioner’s application extensions. These changes remedy instances in which forest practitioners, in good standing, unknowingly let their registration expire or have submitted incomplete registrations.

Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA): While supportive of the bill in its entirety, CFPA is especially supportive of sections 7 through 10. Additionally, CFPA requests the bill be amended to include language from House Bill 6004 An Act Concerning the Qualifications for Membership on the Forest Practices Advisory Board to clarify the appointment authorities for the Forest Practices Advisory Board.

Joan Nicholas, Certified Forester: Expressing support for section 8 of the bill and shared personal testimony as a certified forester. The bill will create a favorable regulatory environment for Connecticut forest products industry by providing a grace period and recognizing the national Society of American Foresters testing as an acceptable substitute for state examination. Additionally the bill should be amended to include language from House Bill 6004 An Act Concerning the Qualifications for Membership on the Forest Practices Advisory Board to clarify the appointment authorities for the Forest Practices Advisory Board.

Ralph Scarpino, Commissioner, Northeast Forest Fire Protection Compact (NFFPC): Supports section 7 of the bill pertaining to the Northeastern Interstate Forest Fire Protection Compact because (1) the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection has had a reduction in staff available to respond to wildfires, (2) nine of the twelve NFFPC agencies have adopted such changes outlined in the bill, (3) the bill will allow for the exchanging of resources from compact agencies, (4) revisions to the compact cost nothing to the state, (5) outside assistance will be needed during wildfire emergencies, and (6) Today, 43 states are in one of eight compacts.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Katherine M. Fiedler, Leal Fellow, Connecticut Fund for the Environment (CFE): Opposes section 11, removing the annual reporting requirement for the agency’s program on conservation of non-harvested wildlife. Although such program is no longer funded, if future funding for this program is available, the reporting requirement will no longer be in place.

Reported by: Pamela Bianca / Ussawin R. Bumpen  Date: 4/16/2019