



Connecticut Chapter
P.O. Box 270595
West Hartford, Connecticut 06127
connecticut.sierraclub.org

Dear Environment Committee Chairs Cohen and Demicco, Vice-Chairs Gresko and Kushner, Ranking Members Harding and Miner, and distinguished members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Sierra Club and our more than 40,000 members and supporters in Connecticut, thank you for the opportunity to testify on a number of bills before you today.

HB 5340 AN ACT CONCERNING THE MODERNIZATION OF THE CONNECTICUT BOTTLE REDEMPTION PROGRAM

Sierra Club Connecticut fully supports the expansion and modernization of Connecticut's Bottle Bill. As we struggle in the midst of a recycling crisis, this bill will provide our state with a proven solution to reducing litter, increasing recycling, and reducing taxpayer recycling costs.

Connecticut's natural environment remains more vulnerable than ever to litter pollution due to a broken recycling infrastructure, and we must act quickly to make repairs and incentivize recycling. According to the Connecticut River Conservancy, beverage containers were by far the most common litter item found in the CT River watershed in 2019.¹ Litter is not just ugly. Depending on the container material it can take hundreds of years to break down - and while in the process, it can be ingested by wildlife and leach chemicals into our water supply.

Data shows that robust bottle deposit programs work to curb this litter. One recent study shows that states with redemption laws had 40% less litter along their coastlines than states without them.² But if Connecticut truly wants to crack down on litter and recycling, we need to update our bottle redemption program. Connecticut's redemption rate on covered containers is only 51%, but states such as Michigan and Oregon with 10 cent deposits see rates around 90%!

Currently, it is estimated that 40% of the glass that goes into the curbside blue bins in the northeast goes straight to a landfill.³ And, according to DEEP, 60% of the glass in Connecticut's blue bins is wine & liquor bottles. Single stream glass that is broken and mixed together has no value, whereas clean separated deposit glass has an average value of \$20/ton. Glass also destroys other recyclables in the blue bin like cardboard and paper. Expansion of the deposit program to include wine and liquor bottles will save towns money, and dramatically increase recycling. It is a crucial step in modernizing the bottle bill.

The bottle bill needs to be improved in three important ways:

- Increase the deposit amount from 5 cents to 10 cents to encourage redemption.

¹ "Source to Sea Cleanup Chronicle, 2019" Connecticut River Conservancy, <https://www.ctriver.org/wp-content/uploads/CRC-Cleanup-Chonicle-2019-FINAL-web.pdf>

² "Economic incentives reduce plastic inputs to the ocean," Schuyler, et al., 2018.

³ "Northeast MRF Glass Survey Report," NERC (October 2018)
<https://nerc.org/documents/Glass/Northeast%20Recycling%20Council%20-%20MRF%20Glass%20Survey%20Report.pdf>



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- Increase the handling fee paid per container to redemption centers by distributors. Connecticut's handling fees are the lowest in the northeast and are insufficient to support the cost of doing business. An increase would support job creation and ensure equitable consumer access to redemption centers.
- Cover additional beverage containers, in particular glass wine and liquor bottles, nips, sports drinks, and non-carbonated beverages. The Container Recycling Institute estimates we could capture an additional **416 million containers** each year by including these beverage categories.

A January 2020 poll of Connecticut voters found that 81% support expanding the bottle deposit program to include all recyclable containers, and 64% strongly support expansion. This bill will reduce pollution, save taxpayer's money, create green jobs, and increase recycling. The Sierra Club stands with Connecticut voters, our members, and over 50 coalition members who recognize an expanded bottle bill as a win-win solution for our state.

Sierra Club also supports these other bills before the Environment Committee to reduce waste and increase recycling: SB 11, SB 296, SB 298, HB 5342.

SB 301 AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF CHLORPYRIFOS

Sierra Club Connecticut supports a ban on the use of chlorpyrifos in Connecticut. Chlorpyrifos is a highly toxic pesticide linked to harming the developing brains of children, autism, learning disabilities, and other negative human health issues. It is extremely harmful to wildlife, especially birds, fish and pollinators. Farmers, farmworkers, rural communities, and communities in close proximity to golf courses are especially at risk of immediate and long-term adverse health effects due to direct exposure.

Decades of scientific studies have concluded that there is no safe amount of chlorpyrifos for any use. It has been banned in New York, California and Hawaii, and in the EU, and we support Senate Bill 301 to ban chlorpyrifos here in Connecticut.

SB 292 AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS AND PESTICIDE REGULATION IN THE STATE

Sierra Club Connecticut supports SB 292 which will allow residents to electronically access pesticide applications made to the state.

SB 299 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE-USE PLASTIC STRAWS

Sierra Club Connecticut supports SB 299 which will greatly reduce the distribution and use of single-use plastic straws. We are strongly in support of eliminating plastic and polystyrene food service items such as, but not limited to, food containers, plates, bowls, beverage cups and lids, utensils, straws, insulated beverage cups and bowls, clamshell food containers, and trays.

Phone: (860) 578-4750 -- Email: Connecticut.chapter@sierraclub.org



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Plastics are harmful to humans and our environment. Plastic production is directly connected to climate change as 99% of plastics are derived from fossil fuels. U.S. shorelines are littered with millions of tons of single-use plastic. 91% of the plastic we use is not recycled and instead ends up in landfills or the ocean.

HB 5339 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE RELEASE OF HELIUM BALLOONS INTO THE ATMOSPHERE

Helium balloons, like all single use plastics, pollute our environment and endanger wildlife. Sierra Club Connecticut supports House Bill 5339.

HB 5344 AN ACT PROHIBITING OFF-SHORE DRILLING FOR OIL AND GAS IN CONNECTICUT

Sierra Club Connecticut supports House Bill 5344 as an important measure to protect Connecticut residents, environment and wildlife from offshore drilling and seismic testing.

Sierra Club Connecticut is opposed to offshore oil drilling in new areas. Our nation's ocean, waves and beaches are vital recreational, economic and ecological treasures that will be polluted by an expansion of offshore oil drilling.

Offshore drilling for oil and gas risks spills in waters that our state residents rely on for jobs and recreation. Connecticut's coastal, marine and tourism industries create millions of dollars in revenue for our state, all of which are put at risk by offshore drilling.

SB 297 AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF PERFLUOROALKYL OR POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES IN CLASS B FIREFIGHTING FOAM

Sierra Club Connecticut supports Senate Bill 297. Connecticut should prohibit the use of PFAS in firefighting foams and develop a takeback program for such products.

HB 5343 AN ACT ESTABLISHING LOCAL REPRESENTATION ON THE CONNECTICUT SITING COUNCIL FOR CERTAIN PROJECTS

Sierra Club Connecticut supports HB 5343. When decisions are being made regarding electrical distribution, a representative from the municipality where the facility is being proposed should have a seat at the Siting council.



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HB-5341 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE AND BREEDING OF CERTAIN CETACEANS.

Sierra Club Connecticut supports HB-534. Connecticut should no longer bring wild-caught or captive-bred whales, dolphins, and porpoises into the state. These intelligent and social marine mammals really do not belong in tanks, and the suffering, frustration and loneliness they experience while living in such intensive confinement should no longer be tolerated.

There are serious concerns about keeping these animals in captivity. Dolphins, for instance, are large-brained, cognitive animals that live in complex societies in the open ocean. They also have emotions (and personalities) and require acoustic communication over long distances.⁴ No state-of-the-art captive aquarium or marine park can ever truly meet the complex physiological and psychological needs of a dolphin, or most other marine mammals, for that matter. Additionally, there are a large number of individuals killed in the process of being captured, and these animals go through incredible stress when separated from their companions and social networks.⁵

Last year, Canada passed landmark legislation banning whales, dolphins and porpoises from being bred or held in captivity, with the notable exceptions that marine mammals already held will be allowed to remain in captivity and they can be kept during rehabilitation from injury or for the purposes of licensed scientific research.⁶ These exceptions are similar to those within HB 5341. Because leading marine scientists agree that whales and dolphins suffer great psychological and physical harms in captivity, including isolation, chronic health problems, abnormal behavior, high infant mortality and extreme boredom, we should not be expanding this practice.

California has also led the way by passing the Orca Protection Act, which bans holding orca whales in captivity for performance or entertainment purposes in California, and ends captive breeding programs and the import/export of orcas and their genetic material into/out of the state.

For the estimated 2,000 to 3,000 whales, porpoises and dolphins currently held in captivity around the world, life can be bleak, boring and unnaturally short. These highly intelligent and social beings are bred, trained, sold and shipped like commodities, and suffer from physical

⁴ <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/ottawa-passes-legislation-that-bans-whale-and-dolphin-captivity-in-canada-1.4459753>

⁵ <https://blog.nationalgeographic.org/2014/04/08/debunking-captivity-3-reasons-not-to-keep-dolphins-in-a-tank/>

⁶ <https://www.npr.org/2019/06/11/731570415/canada-bans-keeping-whales-and-dolphins-in-captivity>



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and psychological ailments. An estimated 5,000 cetaceans have already died in captivity since the 1950's, when the practice of keeping them in small tanks began.⁷ Sierra Club Connecticut urges the Environment Committee to pass this legislation to prohibit any future exploitation, breeding, selling and captivity of these marine mammals.

SB-294 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE AND TRADE OF IVORY AND RHINOCEROS HORN.

Sierra Club supports SB 294. We should be doing everything we can at the state level to help preserve and protect elephants and rhinoceroses whose numbers are dangerously low due to illegal poaching.

After the decimation of countless elephants and rhinoceros through the 1970s up to 1989, several African countries enacted anti-poaching bans which have largely been a failure. Poaching continues to escalate. Often the poaching is carried out by terrorist and militia groups operating within these countries. These groups are responsible for the slaughter of elephants and rhinos and illegal trafficking of their parts on the black market.

Prior to the 1970s there had been approximately 1.4 million elephants on the African continent. Currently, only 500,000 remain in the wild. Studies show that approximately 38,000 are killed each year. At this rate, it is estimated the elephant will go extinct in the wild within a dozen or so years. The rhino is suffering a similar as the elephant since their population has been reduced by 97% of what it used to be. At the present time, the Northern White Rhino is extinct, and all other types of rhinos are severely endangered. It should be noted that the rate of reproduction for both these species is less than the rate at which they are poached. The situation is critical. In addition to the killing of these animals, there is also a loss of human life. Approximately a hundred rangers are killed by ambush each year trying to protect these animals in wildlife parks. At this point, about 1000 rangers have lost their lives. Civilian populations that live near or in areas that support elephant and rhino ranges are also frequently subjected to poaching-related terrorism and violence.⁸

The U.S. is second to China in the world ivory market. The value of smuggled raw, uncut ivory from elephants is extremely high. Once the tusks from elephants are cut up and fashioned into items such as jewelry, gun handles, and other ornamentation the value escalates enormously. It has become a multimillion-dollar business per year. Contraband ivory is then "laundered" and mixed with existing legal ivory and openly sold all over the world, frequently as "old ivory." The profits from ivory are used to enrich various militias and terror groups in Africa. This

⁷ <https://weanimalsmedia.org/2019/11/19/the-current-state-of-cetacean-captivity/>

⁸ <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/tracking-ivory/article.html>



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money finances the horrible crimes they commit and pays for the weapons used to kill the elephants and rangers that get in the way.

The circumstances are similar for the rhinoceros. Their horns are worth a great deal on the black market. Rhino horn is simply composed of keratin, the same substance as human hair and fingernails. Science has long proven that rhino horn has no medicinal qualities and yet they are still being slaughtered for their horns.

Passing this bill can make a major difference to put an end to poaching and illegal wildlife trafficking of ivory and rhino horn. This bill can help stop the extinction of these iconic animals. Further, Connecticut has an opportunity to stand in solidarity with other states that have passed similar laws: California, New Jersey, New York and Washington. In addition, bills such as ours have been filed in Maryland, Massachusetts, Vermont and other states.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

Samantha Dynowski, State Director
Ann Gadwah, Chapter Chair
Sierra Club Connecticut