

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-929

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING PENALTIES FOR THE TAKING OF STRIPED BASS.

Vote Date: 3/31/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/19/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Patricia A. Dillon, 92nd Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Enforcement of striped bass regulations and violations only allows for law enforcement to make a misdemeanor arrest. The only enforcement action requires engagement of the courts. Often the court enforcement is dismissed without action by the courts, that undermines current penalties to deter violations. Providing the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) the ability to issue infractions results in enhanced compliance and effective deterrent.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie Dykes, Commissioner, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) recently declared the Atlantic striped bass as overfished and results in more conservative fish regulations were enacted. Effective enforcement of striped bass regulations is a component of rebuilding stocks. Recent public hearings between Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and ASMFC multiple public comments were made on effective enforcement. SB929 proposed language changes current policy in favor of issuance of infractions. The issuance of infraction provides for greater enforcement and deterrence. The time requirements for Environmental Police to process the paperwork for the current system of misdemeanor arrests striped bass violations versus infractions is substantial.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

William Hyatt, Vice-Chair, Connecticut Fisheries Advisory Council

Recent information shows more than 100,000 anglers make over 800,000 trips and spend approximately \$112 million to fish striped bass in Connecticut each year. The Fisheries Advisory Council (FAC) suspects some anglers may not initially grasp how reduction of penalties for striped bass violations leads to improved recovery of the fishery. FAC thinks law-abiding anglers will understand the legislation once they understand how it means more enforcement dedicated to the striped bass fishery.

Bill Lucey, Soundkeeper, Save the Sound

Connecticut issues a misdemeanor instead of a simple ticket for striped bass fishing violations. DEEP environmental police are already understaffed for the territory covered and the misdemeanor takes significant time to process, an infraction will allow provide them the ability to enforce regulations to rebuild the striped bass fishery.

Patrick M. Comins, Executive Director, Connecticut Audubon Society

Striped bass are of a high conservation concern and have seen a regional population concerns, the Connecticut Audubon Society encourages effective and enough deterrence to enforce fishery regulations.

George Baldwin, Brandford CT

The current situation does not work. The current misdemeanor system is counterproductive to rebuild the striped bass populations, minimizes the hard work of Connecticut's conservation officers and not in the best interests of Connecticut's anglers.

The Environment Committee received more than 10 additional testimonials in support of SB929.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Owen Zimmerman

SB929 does not go far enough. Changes to increase the law enforcement and increased enforcement of existing law would increase the enforcement of striped bass regulations. Tougher measures would reduce the impulse for criminal behavior.

Reported by: Steve Smith

Date: 4/15/2021

