

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5140

AN ACT CONCERNING THE HAND-HARVESTING OF HORSESHOE CRABS

Title: IN THE STATE.

Vote Date: 3/18/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/25/2022

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. David Michel, 146th Dist.

Rep. John K Hampton 16th Dist.

Rep. Josh Elliott 88th Dist.

Rep. Mary Mushinsky 85th Dist.

Rep. Joseph P. Gresko 121st Dist

Rep. Kerry S. Wood 29th Dist.

Rep. Lucy Dathan 142st Dist.

Rep Raghiv Allie-Brennan, 2nd Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

To protect the extinction of horseshoe crabs from the waters and shorelines of the state of Connecticut

Substitute Language- LCO 3652

Change the effective date to October 2022 not withstood other horseshoe related statues and changed the fine to \$25 per specimen.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner, Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

DEEP appreciates the intent of the bill but cannot support the implementation of a fishery moratorium for horseshoe crab at this time. More restrictive fishing regulations are needed and multiply long-term surveys indicate the decline of populations but we support the ASMFC Horseshoe Crab Management Boards proposals. We have included this information in our testimony.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Robin Comey, Representative, State of Connecticut

As a volunteer for Sacred Heart University's Project Limulus I have been conducting a tag and recapture analysis of the adult horseshoe crab's movement within the Long Island Sound. I have seen first-hand a licensed harvester load dozens upon dozens of spawning horseshoe crabs into his boat. Where we once saw more than hundred horseshoe crabs we see a dozen if lucky. As the oldest living fossil we know of it is upon us to ensure that the horseshoe crabs endure for generations to come.

Patrick Comins, Executive Director, The Ct. Audubon Society

We believe that because of the poor condition of the horseshoe crab population and the inability of the population to recover the only remaining course of action is to invoke a moratorium on the harvest of horseshoe crab and to ban them as bait.

Andrea Dobras, Board Chair, CT Votes for Animals

We have an expansive shoreline in Connecticut and horseshoe crabs play an intricate part in the survival of many shore birds along with sea turtles, anemones, barnacles, oysters and seaweed. The state's annual quota for the harvesting of horseshoe crabs is close to 49,000 and the numbers are dwindling. West Haven, Milford and Westbrook have already declared their shoreline a no-kill zone as has New Jersey. It is time to protect this "living fossil"

Nathan Frohling, Director of External Affairs, The Nature Conservancy

Our mission is to conserve the ecosystem and wildlife species of Long Island. Horseshoe crabs play an ecological process of the sound in the food webs. It is necessary to place appropriate constraints on the human harvest of these animals.

Annie Hornish Ct Senior State Director, The Humane Society of the United States

We support the provision of protections for horseshoe crabs. Horseshoe Crabs are an important contributor to the biodiversity of our coastline.

Jennifer Mattei, Professor, Sacred Heart University

I have been researching the American horseshoe crab for over 20 years and the population is declining. When I first brought this to the attention of CTDEEP in 2005 we had three areas that were off limit to harvesting. It takes 10 to 12 years for juvenile horseshoe crabs to develop into adults so we are unable to assess if this conservation effort has had any measurable effect on the population until now. Two no harvest zones have not resulted in an increase in the spawning horseshoe crab population. We recommend closing all harvest of this species to keep the Long Island sound ecosystem functioning sustainably.

Scott Smith, Communications Director, Friends of Animals

The protection of the horseshoe crab is long overdue. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has downgraded the stocks of horseshoe crabs from Good in 2009 to Neutral in 2013 and now in 2019 as Poor. This state lags behind its neighbors in efforts to protect this species that is so important to the survival of several other species.

Over 80 people submitted testimony in support of the bill

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Robert LaFrance, Director of Policy, Audubon Connecticut

Complete prohibition of hand-harvesting horseshoe crabs is not necessary at this time. We agree with the Hearing Officer's Report and agree that appropriate action is restriction that will curtail harvest within the commercial fishery. The agency feels there is not sufficient rationale to impose a complete ban on harvesting and the economic hardship it would cause on fishers and whelk fisheries.

Reported by: Pamela Bianca

Date: March 25, 2022