
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6222 (as amended by House "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING THE TAKING OF EASTERN OYSTERS AND INVASIVE AQUATIC SPECIES.

SUMMARY

This bill exempts a person who operates a food service establishment regulated under the public health code from needing to obtain a bait dealer's license from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) if the person purchases bait species to prepare as food for human consumption and not for resale for any other purpose. By law, "bait species" is all species of fish, frogs, crustaceans, and insects listed as bait in DEEP's regulations (CGS § 26-1; Conn Agencies Regs., § 26-112-45(d)).

By law, a person generally needs a bait dealer's license to possess bait species for the purpose of selling or offering them for sale. Licenses cost \$63 annually, and licensees must keep certain records and file reports with DEEP. A violation of the bait dealer license requirements is a class D misdemeanor punishable by a fine up to \$250, up to 30 days in prison, or both.

Separately, the bill requires the Department of Agriculture (DoAg) commissioner to review a study of the appropriate minimum harvest length for eastern oysters done by an in-state university-based marine research, education, and outreach program. In doing the review, he may consult with scientific experts on the appropriate minimum length. The bill also requires him to issue a detailed recommendation to the Environment Committee by February 1, 2026, for the minimum harvest length for eastern oysters. The recommendation must be based on the review and any scientific consultations and enable optimal health conditions for the oysters and oyster beds.

Existing law generally prohibits harvesting eastern oysters that are

less than three inches long or otherwise not ready for harvest as determined by the DoAg commissioner (CGS § 26-234b).

*House Amendment "A" replaces the underlying bill, which required the (1) DEEP commissioner to establish a commercial invasive aquatic species harvest license and (2) DoAg commissioner to do a study of the appropriate minimum harvest length for eastern oysters.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2025, except the eastern oyster provisions are effective upon passage.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 33 Nay 0 (03/28/2025)