



General Assembly

January Session, 2025

**Committee Bill No. 5388**

LCO No. 5709



Referred to Committee on ENVIRONMENT

Introduced by:  
(ENV)

***AN ACT CONCERNING NATURAL FISHING, HUNTING AND  
AQUACULTURE RIGHTS OF CERTAIN NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

- 1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) There is established the  
2 Connecticut Tribal Wildlife and Fisheries Commission that shall consist  
3 of the following members: (1) One member from the Mashantucket  
4 Pequot Tribal Nation and one member from the Mohegan Tribe; (2) one  
5 member each from the Eastern Pequot Tribe, the Golden Hill Paugussett  
6 Tribe and the Schaghticoke Tribe; (3) the Commissioner of Energy and  
7 Environmental Protection, or the commissioner's designee; (4) one  
8 member each from the Department of Energy and Environmental  
9 Protection's Fisheries Division, Wildlife Division and Forestry Division;  
10 (5) one member from the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station;  
11 (6) one member from the Department of Agriculture; (7) one member  
12 from the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Aquaculture; (8) one  
13 member from Connecticut Sea Grant; (9) one member from the Native  
14 American and Indigenous Studies Department at The University of  
15 Connecticut; (10) two indigenous persons appointed mutually by the  
16 tribes named in this section; and (11) the chairpersons and ranking  
17 members of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly

18 having cognizance of matters relating to the environment, or such  
19 chairpersons' and such ranking members' designees.

20 (b) Such commission shall: (1) Develop tribally administered hunting  
21 and fishing regulations within designated tribal lands and ancestral  
22 territories; (2) oversee comanagement agreements between the tribes  
23 and the state concerning such regulations; and (3) implement  
24 sustainable conservation practices through tribal knowledge and  
25 scientific research.

26 (c) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall  
27 work with such commission to provide the Mashantucket Pequot and  
28 Mohegan Tribes with the authority to regulate, enforce and issue  
29 permits to the citizens of such tribes for hunting, fishing and gathering,  
30 without interference from the state of Connecticut, on tribal and  
31 ancestral lands.

32 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) The Commissioner of Energy  
33 and Environmental Protection shall undertake efforts to establish the  
34 requisite state recognition of the exemption of members of federally  
35 recognized tribes from state fishing and hunting licensing fee  
36 requirements when such members engage in traditional subsistence or  
37 ceremonial activities. Additionally, any such recognition shall recognize  
38 historical indigenous harvesting sites and ensure tribal access to  
39 fisheries and hunting areas consistent with federal Indian law.

40 (b) The commissioner shall provide, at no cost, a permit to engage in  
41 ceremonial or subsistence hunting or fishing outside of reservation  
42 lands, provided such hunting or fishing is consistent with state  
43 conservation goals.

44 Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) Notwithstanding any  
45 provision of the general statutes, the Commissioner of Energy and  
46 Environmental Protection shall issue, at no cost, a lifetime hunting and  
47 fishing license to any member of any federally recognized or state  
48 recognized tribe in the state.

49 (b) The Commissioner of Agriculture shall prioritize tribal meat and  
50 fish processing facilities for funding and certification by the United  
51 States Department of Agriculture to support food sovereignty of such  
52 tribes.

53 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) The Commissioners of Energy  
54 and Environmental Protection and Agriculture shall ensure that any  
55 member of a tribe that exercises a right, as described in sections 1 to 3,  
56 inclusive, of this act is not subject to harassment, legal action, regulation  
57 or any penalty for engaging in any activity conducted in accordance  
58 with the provisions of such sections or any other agreement or  
59 authorization entered into pursuant to such sections.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	New section
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	New section

***Statement of Purpose:***

To affirm and expand fishing, hunting and aquaculture rights of federal and state-recognized Native American tribes.

*[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]*

Co-Sponsors: REP. BUMGARDNER, 41st Dist.

H.B. 5388