



General Assembly

January Session, 2025

Committee Bill No. 6222

LCO No. 5357



Referred to Committee on ENVIRONMENT

Introduced by:
(ENV)

AN ACT CONCERNING AQUACULTURE IN THE STATE.

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

1 Section 1. Section 26-234b of the general statutes is repealed and the
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

3 (a) No person may take eastern oysters (*Crassostrea virginica*) from
4 the waters of this state which are less than three inches long or which
5 are otherwise not ready for harvest, as determined by the Commissioner
6 of Agriculture, except that the taking of such oysters for sale, transplant
7 and relay for aquaculture purposes within the waters of the state shall
8 not be prohibited. The Commissioner of Agriculture may adopt
9 regulations, in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54, to carry out
10 the purposes of this section.

11 (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of this section,
12 no person may harvest hatchery-based, farm-raised eastern oysters that
13 are less than two and one-half inches long or which are otherwise not
14 ready for harvest, as determined by the Commissioner of Agriculture.
15 The Commissioner of Agriculture may adopt regulations, in accordance
16 with the provisions of chapter 54, to carry out the purposes of this

17 section.

18 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) For purposes of this section:

19 (1) "Oyster shell recycling" means the collection, curing and
20 repurposing of oyster shells for use in shellfish restoration and
21 enhancement projects;

22 (2) "Curing" means the process of storing oyster shells in a designated
23 location for a period sufficient to eliminate potential pathogens before
24 use in shellfish restoration efforts;

25 (3) "Shell recycling site" means a location authorized by the
26 Department of Agriculture for the collection, curing and storage of
27 oyster shells; and

28 (4) "Public shellfish restoration efforts" means oyster shell
29 deployment in state or municipal programs that are designed to restore
30 or enhance shellfish habitats, support natural bed productivity and
31 improve coastal resilience.

32 (b) The Commissioner of Agriculture, in consultation with the
33 Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection, shall develop
34 a streamlined permitting process for municipalities, businesses and
35 nonprofit organizations that seek to establish oyster shell recycling
36 operations.

37 (c) The Commissioner of Agriculture, in consultation with the
38 Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection, may designate
39 transfer stations and water pollution control facilities as shell recycling
40 sites, provided such designation shall be in compliance with any
41 applicable public health or environmental regulation. The
42 Commissioner of Agriculture may adopt regulations, in accordance
43 with the provisions of chapter 54 of the general statutes, to implement
44 the provisions of this section. Such regulations shall include, but not be
45 limited to, provisions concerning storage time limits to prevent odor
46 and pest issues, public health protections to ensure oyster shells do not

47 interfere with existing waste management operations and any local
48 approval requirements, including, but not limited to, consultation with
49 municipal health departments.

50 (d) The Commissioner of Agriculture may designate oyster shells as
51 a recyclable commodity for purpose of use in a public shellfish
52 restoration effort. Any oyster shells designated as a recyclable
53 commodity by the Commissioner of Agriculture shall be used
54 exclusively for public shellfish restoration efforts. No person shall sell
55 such shells or profit from any such public shellfish restoration efforts.
56 The Commissioner of Agriculture shall oversee the allocation of
57 recovered oyster shells to ensure their use in approved public shellfish
58 restoration efforts.

59 (e) Each oyster shell recycling operation shall comply with sanitation
60 guidelines, as established by the Commissioner of Agriculture, to
61 prevent public nuisance and contamination. The collection and storage
62 of such oyster shells shall comply with the standards set forth in the
63 state's shellfish restoration program and any other shell recovery
64 guidance of the Departments of Agriculture and Energy and
65 Environmental Protection.

66 Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Department of Agriculture's
67 Bureau of Aquaculture shall consult with Connecticut Sea Grant to
68 prepare a diversity, equity and inclusion report on efforts to increase the
69 participation of black, indigenous and people of color, women and
70 veteran farmers in aquaculture. Such report shall identify sources of
71 funding for increasing such participation through the provision of
72 training and technical assistance, including, but not limited to,
73 providing opportunities for access to aquaculture leases, associated
74 equipment and vessels for such groups. Not later than January 1, 2026,
75 the bureau shall submit such report, in accordance with the provisions
76 of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee
77 of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the
78 environment.

79 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Notwithstanding the provisions
80 of sections 22-11h to 22-11j, inclusive, of the general statutes, the
81 Commissioner of Agriculture shall consult with Connecticut Sea Grant
82 to ensure clear permitting guidelines for the production of seaweed by
83 persons with an aquaculture license. Additionally, the commissioner
84 shall develop processing and distribution infrastructure for seaweed
85 producers in the state. In undertaking such efforts, the commissioner
86 may enter public-private partnerships to improve market access and
87 market viability of seaweed produced in the state.

88 Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Department of Agriculture's
89 Bureau of Aquaculture shall consult with Connecticut Sea Grant to
90 study the Noank Aquaculture Cooperative in order to evaluate it as a
91 sustainable model for shellfishing operations. Such study shall include,
92 but not be limited to, an examination of the benefits of shared working
93 waterfront access for shellfish farmers, the economic advantages and
94 challenges of cooperative aquaculture models and the development of
95 recommendations for increasing cooperative-based aquaculture,
96 hatchery and research opportunities in the state. Not later than January
97 1, 2026, the bureau shall submit such report, in accordance with the
98 provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing
99 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters
100 relating to the environment.

101 Sec. 6. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2025*) (a) The Commissioner of
102 Energy and Environmental Protection, in consultation with the
103 Department of Agriculture, shall establish a commercial invasive
104 aquatic species harvest license to regulate the collection, sale and
105 distribution of invasive marine species, including, but not limited to,
106 green crabs and Asian shore crabs. Any such licensee shall be permitted
107 to: (1) Harvest and sell such invasive species for use as bait or for human
108 consumption, and (2) sell such invasive species directly to restaurants
109 and seafood markets for food purposes.

110 (b) The Commissioners of Energy and Environmental Protection and

111 Agriculture shall develop clear guidance and regulatory provisions to
 112 ensure that (1) restaurants and individuals with a dealer's license can
 113 legally procure, process and sell green crabs and other designated
 114 invasive species for human consumption, and (2) fishermen operating
 115 under a bait dealer license may sell invasive species both as bait and for
 116 food while ensuring compliance with all applicable public health and
 117 seafood safety regulations.

118 (c) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection may
 119 adopt regulations, in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54 of the
 120 general statutes, to implement the provisions of this section. Such
 121 regulations may include an expansion of the list of invasive aquatic
 122 species covered under such license, as may be necessary to support
 123 ecosystem management efforts.

124 Sec. 7. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2025*) (a) The Department of Revenue
 125 Services shall develop an oyster shell recycling tax credit program for
 126 restaurants that participate in oyster shell recycling efforts. Such
 127 program shall provide a tax credit of one dollar for every fifty pounds
 128 of oyster shells recycled by such a restaurant, provided such credit shall
 129 not exceed one thousand dollars for any such restaurant in a tax year.

130 (b) The Commissioner of Revenue Services shall develop procedures
 131 for restaurants to claim such credit, including documentation and
 132 verification of oyster shell recycling participation.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

Section 1	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	26-234b
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 4	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 5	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 6	<i>October 1, 2025</i>	New section
Sec. 7	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	New section

Statement of Purpose:

To support and expand aquaculture in the state.

[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. 6222