

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5152 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN AUTHORITIES RELATED TO THE
PREVENTION OF WILDFIRES.

Vote Date: 3/4/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/20/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF THE BILL:

Environment Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The purpose of the bill is to strengthen the State's ability to prepare for and respond to wildfire threats.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie Dykes, Commissioner, Connecticut DEEP

DEEP supports this bill and appreciates the Committee raising it on behalf of the Department. The legislation will improve DEEP's and municipal fire departments' ability to respond to wildfire emergencies, but the Department requests one additional amendment to Section 1 to fully achieve the provision's goals. Connecticut experienced, in October and November 2024, a unprecedented statewide wildfire emergency That began with the large and dangerous Hawthorne Fire and was followed by more than 200 Additional fire-starts within 30 days. After-action reviews conducted by DEEP, and partners identified actions that could improve and modernize future wildfire response.

Section 1

Section 1 aligns the statute with the National Fire Danger System used by DEEP and the USDA Forest Service by adding additional fire danger categories to CGS Sec.22a-174(f)(3), which specifies the fire danger levels at which open burn permits are suspended during periods of elevated forest fire risk.

DEEP also recommends adding a similar amendment to CGS Sec. 23-49a, which currently prohibits burning (under certain circumstances) when fire danger is high or extreme. DEEP recommends adding the "very High" fire danger category to subsection (a) of the section.

These edits will align both CGS Sec. 22a-174(f)(3) and CGS Sec. 23-49a with the fire danger classification scheme used by DEP and the USDA Forest Service.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Robert La France, Director of Policy, Audubon for Connecticut

Audubon of Connecticut Support HB 5152. The frequency and intensity of wildfires takes a toll on the many bird species that inhabit Connecticut's forests. The bill simply seeks to increase Connecticut's wildfire preparedness, reduce wildfire risks, protect communities, and support recovery efforts. HB5152 will improve DEEP's ability to address, mitigate, and respond to wildfires through resource allocation, land management practices, and intergovernmental coordination. Audubon for Connecticut believes that what DEEP has proposed in the bill are common sense policy updates to forest management that we support.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Sarah Dzialo

Ms. Dzialo Opposes HB 5152 because this bill expands the authority of both the governor and DEEP in ways that centralize decision-making and displace market solutions. She believes from a free-market economics standpoint, the state's role should be limited to protecting individual rights and enforcing liability for harm – not assuming broad regulatory authority over land management and fire prevention. Bureaucratic wildfire prevention strategies are often one size fits all and lack the adaptability that localized, market-driven approaches deliver. For these reasons, and in defense of economic liberty and efficient risk management, she opposes HB5152.

Reported by: Judy Ganswindt

Date: March 12, 2026