



General Assembly

Amendment

February Session, 2026

LCO No. 5143



Offered by:

REP. BUMGARDNER, 41st Dist.

REP. PEMBERTON, 139th Dist.

REP. PARKER, 101st Dist.

SEN. LOPES, 6th Dist.

REP. CALLAHAN, 108th Dist.

SEN. OSTEN, 19th Dist.

To: Subst. House Bill No. 5523

File No. 436

Cal. No. 319

**"AN ACT CONCERNING A TRIBAL WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES
ADVISORY COUNCIL."**

1 Strike everything after the enacting clause and substitute the
2 following in lieu thereof:

3 "Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) There is established a
4 Connecticut Tribal Wildlife and Fisheries Advisory Council within the
5 Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Said advisory
6 council shall consist of the following members who voluntarily agree to
7 serve on such advisory council: (1) Two members from each of the
8 federal or state-recognized tribes identified in subsection (b) of section
9 47-59a of the general statutes; (2) the Commissioner of Energy and
10 Environmental Protection, or the commissioner's designee; (3) one
11 member each from the Department of Energy and Environmental
12 Protection's Wildlife Division and Fisheries Division, as appointed by
13 the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection; (4) one
14 member from the Department of Agriculture, as appointed by the
15 Commissioner of Agriculture; (5) one member from the Bureau of

16 Aquaculture of the Department of Agriculture, as appointed by the
17 Commissioner of Agriculture; (6) one member from the Connecticut
18 Agricultural Experiment Station, as appointed by the director of said
19 station; (7) one member from Connecticut Sea Grant, as appointed by
20 such organization; (8) one member from the Native American and
21 Indigenous Studies Department at The University of Connecticut, as
22 appointed by the head of such department; (9) one representative of a
23 land conservation organization, appointed by the president pro
24 tempore of the Senate; (10) one representative of a watershed advocacy
25 organization, appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives;
26 (11) one representative of the Connecticut Fisheries Advisory Council;
27 (12) one representative of an avian conservation organization,
28 appointed by the Senate minority leader; (13) one representative of a
29 sportsmen or hunting organization, appointed by the minority leader of
30 the House of Representatives; (14) one representative of the Native
31 American Heritage Advisory Council, appointed by the Governor; and
32 (15) the Long Island Soundkeeper, or the Soundkeeper's designee.

33 (b) The tribal members of the advisory council shall develop written
34 processes and procedures for conducting council business and holding
35 meetings, which shall be distributed to all members of the advisory
36 council.

37 (c) Such advisory council shall:

38 (1) Make recommendations to the Department of Energy and
39 Environmental Protection on how state fish and wildlife conservation
40 plans and policies can integrate tribal ecological knowledge and
41 stewardship practices; and

42 (2) Promote the sustainable use of natural resources consistent with
43 state conservation goals.

44 (d) Nothing in this section shall be construed to apply to lands held
45 in federal trust for any tribe or to reservation lands that remain under
46 tribal jurisdiction.

47 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) The provisions of this section
48 shall apply only to the following licenses and permits and associated
49 state-issued endorsements or stamps required for such activities, that
50 are issued pursuant to chapter 490 of the general statutes: (1)
51 Recreational fishing licenses; (2) hunting licenses; (3) trapping licenses;
52 and (4) archery permits. Nothing in this section shall be construed to
53 waive or replace any federal permit, stamp or registration requirement
54 applicable under federal law.

55 (b) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall
56 issue any license or permit, specified in subsection (a) of this section to
57 any resident of the state who is also an enrolled member of a federally
58 or state-recognized tribe identified in subsection (b) of section 47-59a of
59 the general statutes for lawful activities conducted outside of
60 reservation lands in the state, provided the associated fees for such
61 licenses or permits are satisfied through a funding mechanism
62 approved by the commissioner and at no cost to such member.

63 (c) For purposes of eligibility verification under this section, an
64 applicant shall satisfy any one of the following methods:

65 (1) The applicant presents a valid identification card issued by a
66 federally or state-recognized tribe identified in subsection (b) of section
67 47-59a of the general statutes that demonstrates enrollment in such tribe;
68 or

69 (2) The applicant uses any additional reasonable, lawful method and
70 procedure for verification, including, but not limited to, procedures for
71 verification by municipalities, that the commissioner may establish, in
72 consultation with the tribes.

73 (d) After receiving an application for a license or permit, specified in
74 subsection (a) of this section, the commissioner shall verify such
75 applicant's eligibility within a reasonable time period.

76 (e) Any activities conducted pursuant to this section shall remain

77 subject to all state conservation laws and regulations, seasons and
78 species protections pursuant to chapter 490 of the general statutes and
79 all state laws and regulations applicable to state parks and forests
80 pursuant to chapter 447 of the general statutes. Each such resident tribal
81 member shall comply with all applicable safety and education
82 requirements under said chapters of the general statutes and any
83 applicable federal requirements governing the taking of migratory birds
84 or other federally regulated species, including any required registration,
85 reporting or federal permits or stamps.

86 (f) The Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management on an
87 ongoing and annual basis shall allocate funds from the Mashantucket
88 Pequot and Mohegan Fund to the Department of Energy and
89 Environmental Protection for the purpose of satisfying the fees
90 associated with licenses and permits issued pursuant to this section.

91 (g) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall
92 ensure that all licenses and permits issued pursuant to this section are
93 recorded as part of the standard licensing system, including the value
94 of such licenses, permits and the source of funds used to satisfy such
95 fees, for purposes of maintaining auditable records and compliance with
96 federal Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration requirements. Such records
97 shall be maintained in a manner consistent with sections 26-15 and 26-
98 15a of the general statutes and shall be included in any reports required
99 for federal reimbursement or program compliance.

100 Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) The Commissioner of Agriculture
101 shall prioritize tribal meat, fish and aquaculture processing facilities for
102 technical assistance, United States Department of Agriculture
103 certification support and eligibility for state or federal infrastructure
104 funding programs. Such prioritization shall support tribal food
105 sovereignty, local food systems and community-based economic
106 development.

107 Sec. 4. Section 47-65a of the general statutes is repealed and the
108 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

109 Notwithstanding the provisions of section 26-27, any Indian may
 110 take, hunt or trap any wild bird or quadruped on, or take or assist in
 111 taking any fish or bait species in the waters of, the reservation of such
 112 Indian's tribe without a license therefor, subject to the regulations
 113 promulgated by the council and to such seasonal and bag limitations as
 114 may be provided by law. The Commissioner of Energy and
 115 Environmental Protection shall issue, without fee, a private land deer
 116 permit to any Indian for use only on the reservation of such Indian's
 117 tribe, provided such reservation is not less than [two hundred fifty] ten
 118 acres in size and provided further no such Indian shall be issued more
 119 than one such permit per season. Such permit shall allow the use of a
 120 rifle, shotgun, muzzleloader or bow and arrow on such reservation land
 121 from November first until December thirty-first, inclusive, of each year.

122 Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) Any federally or state-recognized
 123 tribe identified in subsection (b) of section 47-59a of the general statutes
 124 may submit a report to the Office of Policy and Management that lists
 125 any additional state-issued permits, licenses, endorsements or stamps,
 126 and the costs thereof, purchased by resident tribal members that are
 127 required for the activities described in section 2 of this act. The Secretary
 128 of the Office of Policy and Management, on an ongoing and annual
 129 basis, shall allocate funds from the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan
 130 Fund to any tribe that submits a report pursuant to this section for the
 131 purpose of refunding such fees associated with such additional permits,
 132 licenses, endorsements or stamps required for such activities."

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	47-65a
Sec. 5	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section