



Substitute House Bill No. 5229

Public Act No. 24-12

***AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
EELGRASS WORKING GROUP.***

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

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Not later than January 1, 2025, the members of the eelgrass working group, as constituted pursuant to special act 23-7, shall reconvene to review the output of the Eelgrass Collaborative related to permitting and policies surrounding restoration of eelgrass in the state and review the attendant report generated by the Eelgrass Collaborative. The working group shall review the existing regulations under the United States Army Corps of Engineers permits to evaluate any potential future modifications and the need for similar modifications of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's and the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Aquaculture's policies.

Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Aquaculture and The University of Connecticut, shall identify an individual to serve as the Connecticut Seagrass Coordinator. Such coordinator shall oversee and interact with stakeholders associated with eelgrass in Connecticut, Long Island Sound and the broader eelgrass community. The coordinator shall: (1)

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Work with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to develop policies and strategies for the sustainable harvesting of eelgrass seeds from existing Connecticut eelgrass meadows in order to utilize such seeds in eelgrass meadow restoration projects; (2) research, review and compile best management practices for conducting aquaculture in close proximity to eelgrass meadows; (3) prescribe eelgrass-friendly mooring systems in mooring fields with a high potential to host eelgrass, as predicted by the Eelgrass Habitat Suitability Index model and identify necessary attendant public awareness campaigns for use of such mooring systems; and (4) establish an appropriate set of metrics for the evaluation of any restoration efforts made by the state to yield a reasonable return on investment for such projects over the requisite period of time for any such project.

Approved May 14, 2024