



PA 24-12—sHB 5229
Environment Committee

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

SUMMARY: This act requires the eelgrass working group convened under Special Act 23-7 to reconvene by January 1, 2025, for specified purposes. It also requires the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to select a Connecticut Seagrass Coordinator. DEEP must do this with the Department of Agriculture's (DoAg) Bureau of Aquaculture and UConn.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

WORKING GROUP

The act requires the reconvened working group to review the (1) Eelgrass Collaborative's work on permitting and eelgrass restoration policies in Connecticut (see BACKGROUND) and (2) U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' existing permit regulations to evaluate future changes and the need to make similar changes to DEEP's and DoAg's policies.

CONNECTICUT SEAGRASS COORDINATOR

Under the act, the coordinator must generally oversee and interact with those in the eelgrass community and do the following:

1. work with DEEP to develop ways to sustainably harvest eelgrass seeds from existing Connecticut eelgrass meadows for use in restoration projects;
2. research, review, and compile best management practices for aquaculture operations near eelgrass meadows;
3. specify 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 public awareness campaigns for use of the systems; and
4. establish metrics for evaluating the state's eelgrass restoration efforts to determine a reasonable return on investment.

BACKGROUND

Eelgrass Collaborative

The Long Island Sound Eelgrass Collaborative is a bi-state eelgrass working group formed in 2023 to bring together scientists, practitioners, and other stakeholders to evaluate eelgrass management in Long Island Sound and advance

OLR PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY

eelgrass restoration in the region. The collaborative is funded by the Long Island Sound Study and facilitated by UConn's Connecticut National Estuarine Research Reserve.