

The Jonah Center for Earth and Art, www.thejonahcenter.org, is writing in reference to Proposed Bill No. 5023.

AN ACT CONCERNING THE BUYING, SELLING AND EXCHANGE OF SNAPPING TURTLES.

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

- 1 That section 26-78 of the general statutes be amended to provide
- 2 snapping turtles with the same protections concerning their purchase,
- 3 sale or exchange as other reptiles currently have.

Statement of Purpose:

To promote full legal equality for Connecticut's snapping turtles.

Facts and Reasons to End Commercial Taking of Snapping Turtles in Connecticut

Please find below pertinent facts concerning the current Statute and what the Proposed Bill 5023 will do.

The statute Sec. 26-78 is concerned with commerce, specifically commercial exploitation of the Connecticut's wildlife.

Currently, **Sec. 26-78 Sale of birds, quadrupeds, reptile and amphibians**, prohibits commercial taking from the wild of all of Connecticut's wildlife with one exception, the snapping turtle. The exception is noted in the last sentence of the statute, "*The provisions of this section shall not apply to snapping turtles.*" This sentence was added in 1971.

The Proposed Bill 5023 will amend Sec. 26-78 of the general statutes by deleting one sentence and prohibit commercial exploitation of **all** Connecticut's wildlife.

The antiquated regulatory carve out is a throwback to the early days of ecological science, before the importance of apex predators in maintaining the ecosystem were known. Today, biologists understand the critical role these species play in maintaining biodiversity and the health of their ecosystem. The statute needs to be updated to reflect Connecticut's responsible, fact-based and modern conservation ideology.

There is abundant scientific evidence to prove that snapping turtles cannot be sustainably harvested from the wild.

Surrounding states have banned this harvest making Connecticut's turtles even more vulnerable to exploitation by opportunistic outside trappers.

There is increasing economic incentive to take snapping turtles from the wild primarily on account of the demand from Asian markets. DEEP Wildlife Director Rick Jacobson pointed out in 2011, *The Year of the Turtle*, that Partners in Reptile and Amphibian Conservation (PARC) estimated that since 2000, 12-20 **million** turtles per year were shipped from the United States. The rising economic prosperity and demands of China have caused Asia's indigenous turtle species to be on the brink of extinction. Connecticut's turtles, especially less-protected species, are in great demand.

At a 2012 public hearing to amend DEEP's Hunting and Trapping regulations, a local commercial turtle trapper claimed to have taken more than 10,000 pounds of snapping turtles in six weeks along the freshwater tidal marshes of the Connecticut River, referring specifically to Deep River's Pratt Cove.

New DEEP regulations for snapping turtles went into effect this year. Previously there had been no regulations.

The regulations are not concerned with commercial exploitation. The new regulations are intended to recognize the conservation needs of snapping turtles by defining seasons, limits(30), size (13 inches) and taking methods. Additionally, a snapping turtle "endorsement" is required. No reporting is required. No effective monitoring is possible

DEEP issued 400 snapping turtle endorsements in 2014. That means the possible taking 12,000 mature snapping turtles. There will always be individuals who, in pursuit of economic gain, will choose to ignore regulations and break the law.

Stop inviting opportunists to deplete Connecticut's natural resources. Delete one sentence and amend this anachronistic Statute. Support Proposed Bill 5023.