



# The CT Eelgrass Working Group

*House Bill No. 6480*

*Special Act No. 23-7*

## ***AN ACT ESTABLISHING A WORKING GROUP ON THE RESTORATION OF EEL GRASS.***

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

Section 1. (*Effective from passage*) The co-chairpersons and ranking members of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the environment shall convene a working group on the restoration of eel grass along the state's shoreline. Such working group shall consist of members of shoreline conservation commissions, members of municipal shellfish commissions, a marine biologist from The University of Connecticut at Avery Point, a student from the Marine Science Magnet School in Groton and Save the Sound's Long Island Soundkeeper. The co-chairpersons, in consultation with the ranking members, of said joint standing committee shall select the members and chairperson of such working group. The chairperson of such working group shall commence the first meeting of such working group not later than thirty days after the effective date of this section. Such working group shall develop strategies for the preservation, restoration and expansion of eel grass along the state's shoreline. In developing such strategies, the working group shall review and synthesize information from studies performed by the states of New York and Rhode Island, including, but not limited to, Tier 1 mapping of *Zostera marina* in Long Island Sound

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and change analysis performed by the University of Rhode Island. Not later than February 1, 2024, the chairperson of such working group shall submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the environment detailing the work of such working group, including, but not limited to, explanations of any such strategies and identification of any priority areas of the shoreline for the implementation of such strategies. Approved June 26, 2023



# The CT Eelgrass Working Group

***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 U.S. 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)

***Substitute House Bill No. 5229***

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