

S.290

Introduced by Senator Brennan

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Fish and wildlife; public lands; hunting; fishing; no net loss of land

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require the State to ensure no net loss of State lands available for hunting or fishing, or both.

An act relating to no net loss of State lands used for hunting and fishing

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. 10 V.S.A. chapter 103, subchapter 5 is added to read:

Subchapter 5. No Net Loss of State Lands for Hunting and Fishing

§ 4211. NO NET LOSS OF STATE LANDS FOR HUNTING OR FISHING

(a) As used in this subchapter:

(1) “Secretary” means the Secretary of Natural Resources, and requirements of the Secretary or reference to the Secretary’s authority shall apply to and include the authority of the Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife, the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation, and the Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation.

1 (2) “State lands” mean lands owned in fee by, interests in land owned
2 by, or lands controlled by the Agency of Natural Resources; the Department of
3 Fish and Wildlife; the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation; or the
4 Department of Environmental Conservation.

5 (b) The Secretary shall ensure that State lands shall be open to public
6 access and use for hunting or fishing, or both, unless restricted or prohibited by
7 the Secretary for purposes of fish or wildlife management, public safety, or
8 conformity with State or federal law.

9 (c) Decisions or actions by the Secretary regarding the management of
10 State lands shall not result in the net loss of State land acreage available as of
11 July 1, 2026, for hunting or fishing, or both. Decisions or actions by the
12 Secretary regarding the management of State lands include when the owners of
13 private land controlled by the State close the land to hunting or fishing, or
14 both.

15 (d) When State lands that were used for hunting or fishing, or both, as of
16 July 1, 2026, are removed from use for hunting or fishing, or both, the
17 Secretary expeditiously shall acquire through ownership or control
18 replacement acreage to compensate for the closed land. Replacement acreage,
19 to the extent possible, shall be located within 25 miles of the closed land, and
20 the Secretary shall allow the same hunting or fishing activities on the
21 replacement land that was allowed on the closed lands.

1 (e) Annually on or before January 15, the Secretary shall submit to the
2 House Committee on Environment and the Senate Committee on Natural
3 Resources and Energy a report describing:

4 (1) the acreage of State lands that was closed to hunting or fishing, or
5 both, during the previous calendar year and the reasons for the closures;

6 (2) the acreage of State lands that was opened to hunting or fishing, or
7 both, to compensate for closure of other State lands to hunting or fishing, or
8 both; and

9 (3) the total amount in acreage of State lands available for hunting or
10 fishing, or both.

11 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

12 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.