



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Executive Director

March 9, 2023

Re: House Bill 6813 - An Act Authorizing the Establishment of a Seabird and Shorebird Protection Program

Honored Co-Chairs Sen. Lopes and Rep. Gresko, Vice Chairs Sen. Hochadel and Rep. Palm, Ranking Members Sen. Harding and Rep. Callahan, Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee,

The Council on Environmental Quality (Council) is a nine-member board that works independently of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to assess the condition of Connecticut's environment and report its findings annually to the Governor; recommend actions to improve state environmental programs; advise other state agencies on the environmental impacts of proposed projects; and investigate citizens' complaints and allegations of violations of environmental laws.

The Council **supports** the provisions of House Bill 6813 that would establish a program to better protect seabirds and shorebirds through the designation of protected areas to reduce disturbances during the spring and summer months. As noted in the Council's most recent annual report, *Environmental Quality in Connecticut*¹, the population of piping plover, just one shorebird that the Council reports on, remains low, but has generally increased since 1984 when only 30 nesting piping plovers were observed in Connecticut. In 2021, 60 pairs successfully raised 80 young plovers on Connecticut's beaches. This increase in the population of piping plover is due, in part, to the conservation efforts of DEEP, their conservation partners, and dedicated volunteers; however, more can be done to protect seabirds and shorebirds. The Council recommends that the Committee also consider including a prohibition on the use of drones near the designated protected areas since drones might be perceived as aerial predators.

Thank you for consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Paul Aresta,
Executive Director

¹Council on Environmental Quality; <https://portal.ct.gov/CEQ/AR-21-Gold/2021-CEQ-Annual-Report-eBook/Wildlife---Lobster-and-Fishes/Piping-Plovers>