

Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection

March 9, 2010

DEP Holding Open Forums to Discuss Regulations Concerning Possession of Wild Animals

The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has scheduled three open forums on proposed changes to the rules governing the importation, possession and liberation of wild animals.

The three forums will take place:

- March 16, 2010, 7 – 9 pm
Department of Environmental Protection
Marine Headquarters
333 Ferry Road
Old Lyme, CT
(directions: www.ct.gov/dep/directions)
- March 18, 2010, 10 am – 12 pm
Connecticut Forest and Park Association
16 Meriden Road
Rockfall, CT
(directions: www.ctwoodlands.org/contact)
- March 24, 2010, 7 – 9 pm
Department of Environmental Protection
Kellogg Environmental Center
500 Hawthorne Avenue
Derby, CT
(directions: www.ct.gov/dep/directions)

As a result of action in the 2009 session of the General Assembly, the Commissioner of Environmental Protection is charged with developing new regulations pursuant to Section 26-55 of the Connecticut General Statutes, affecting the importation, possession and liberation of wild animals in the state.

To meet this charge, the Commissioner is inviting the public to three open forums to assist in crafting these new regulations. To start the discussion, the proposed changes are outlined in a draft entitled, "[Rules Governing the Importation, Possession and Liberation of Certain Wild Animals](#)." This draft addresses three key components of the overarching state law: prohibitions, permitting and exemptions.

Input from the forums and written comments will guide the agency in formally proposing regulations. Once these regulations are formally proposed, they will be subject to a public comment and public hearing process – as well as a vote of the General Assembly's Regulations Review Committee – before being adopted.

DEP Deputy Commissioner Susan Frechette said, "The possession of dangerous, potentially dangerous and exotic animals raises important public policy and public safety issues. We know that many individuals hold these kinds of animals and we routinely receive calls to remove them from people's homes. Last July alone, during the Exotic Animal Amnesty Day held cooperatively with the Beardsley Zoo, in Bridgeport, more than 135 animals were surrendered. In other cases, taxpayer resources must be committed to removing dangerous animals that pose a public safety threat, damage agricultural interests, or injure native plants and animals."

"From all of this," Frechette, said, "we recognize that there is a wide range of views on possession of wild, exotic and potentially dangerous animals. As a result, we've scheduled these open forums to encourage public participation as we craft draft regulations."

The draft "Rules" attempt to clarify who may import, possess or liberate any particular wild animal. For instance, zoos, circuses, public aquaria, laboratories, research facilities and municipal parks would be the only organizations that may import or possess wild animals that pose a threat to humans, including bears, wild cats and canids, great apes, and poisonous snakes.

While other limitations would be placed on the importation and possession of wild animals that pose a threat to agricultural resources and native plants and animals, the general public would be allowed to possess a wide range of animals commonly sold in the pet trade as well as common native wildlife. Individuals would not be allowed, however, to have wild animals that pose a threat to human health and safety. Anyone wishing to import or possess any wild animal that is regionally, nationally or internationally imperiled would need to obtain a permit from DEP.

The public is welcome to participate in the open forums. DEP reminds interested parties that only service animals are permitted at these events. Written comments can also be submitted by March 31. Written comments can be directed to:

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