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Recreational Fishing Alliance (NY) &
New York Sportfishing Federation

72-11 Austin Street, Suite 144, Forest Hills, NY 11375

For Immediate Release
Contact: Jim Hutchinson, Jr.

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888 564-6732

CUOMO SAYS COASTAL ANGLERS TO GET REFUNDS RFA & NEW YORK SPORTFISHING FEDERATION PRAISE BIPARTISAN TAX REPEAL

August 5, 2011 - Governor Andrew Cuomo today announced that anglers and boat captains who plunked down money for a saltwater fishing license in 2011 prior to the license repeal in March will be refunded in full.

At a morning press conference at the Freeport Boatmen's Association in Freeport on Long Island, Governor Cuomo said "there are still some things in life that are free" while announcing that he has as directed the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to issue refunds to recreational fishermen and charter boat operators who purchased a recreational marine fishing license in addition to refunding license fees to New Yorkers who purchased lifetime licenses.

"We fought for provisions in the state budget to restore free fishing in New York's saltwater areas so it's only fair the New Yorkers who had to pay for licenses receive a refund," Governor Cuomo said. "The federal government required that we help manage a wide variety of species in coastal waters, but it was unfair to ask New Yorkers to pay for it. Fair is fair – if you bought a license or paid a charter boat fee for this year before our new free registry was in place, you will get your money back."

The federal government requires all fishermen in marine waters must be registered, and the state originally met this requirement by adopting a saltwater license. However, the 2011-2012 New York State budget eliminated the license fee, creating a no-fee registration program to comply with federal law. Therefore, any New Yorker who purchased a license for 2011 will be issued a refund.

Refunds totaling \$1.35 million have already been issued to approximately 9,000 saltwater anglers who purchased a "lifetime license" and starting today the DEC will begin issuing refunds to approximately 200 charter boat operators totaling \$80,000 dollars; and to approximately 23,000 individuals who purchased an annual license at the start of this year refunds totaling \$220,000 dollars. All refunds are expected to be issued by the end of summer.

Senator Lee M. Zeldin said, "Governor Cuomo's unyielding leadership, vision and dedication is getting our state's fiscal house in order and stimulating our economy. Earlier this year, we passed a budget that successfully eliminated the fee to the recreational saltwater fishing license. And now the Governor is taking this one step further by directing the DEC to refund those individuals and businesses who purchased an annual fishing license for 2011. In addition, the new no-fee registry will continue to ensure that fishing remains free for all New Yorkers and make Long Island more attractive to tourist and businesses."

Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele Jr. said, "By directing the DEC to issue refunds to fishermen and businesses that purchased a license, Governor Cuomo is putting money back into the pockets of thousands of New Yorkers. This is real money that will benefit real people as well as bolster Long Island's fishing and tourism industry. I thank Governor Cuomo for making fishing affordable for all New Yorkers."

U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer said, "Fishing in the ocean, Sound and Great South Bay was never meant to be like driving through the Midtown Tunnel, with a fee-to-enter. That's why we fought so hard and this is such a huge win for Long Island families and small fishing businesses who will now not have to pay these unprecedented and unfair license fees. By creating a free license registry, Governor Cuomo and the New York State legislature have done the right thing for Long Island anglers already struggling in these tough economic times."

Jim Hutchinson Jr., Managing Director of the Recreational Fishing Alliance and President of the New York Sportfishing Federation said, "Governor Cuomo has made it clear that his top priority is to stimulate New York's economy and protect our states natural resources at the same time. In directing the DEC to refund fishermen and businesses, the Governor is putting real money back into the pockets of New Yorkers. I applaud the Governor for creating the no-fee registry that will help create and sustain jobs throughout the fishing community in Long Island."

Capt. Tony DiLernia who has been personally recommended by the Governor to take the state's obligatory seat at the Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council said "I thank Governor Cuomo for taking action to refund fishermen and businesses across the state. The Governor is giving us our money back and making sure that fishing is available to any and all New Yorkers. Long Island's local economy depends on the tourism and business generated by the fishing industry and the no-fee registry will continue to create jobs and business opportunities."

John Mantione of the New York Fishing Tackle Trades Association praised the governor's announcement today for what it means to the recreational fishing community on Long Island. "The Governor showed a unique ability to combine commerce and conservation, while recognizing the role of the recreational fishing industry and its contribution to the overall economy in the state of New York."

"All the fishing charters, all the bait stores, all the equipment, all the rentals all the boat salesmen, there's an entire industry, especially on Long Island, that's very vibrant," Cuomo told the audience assembled in Freeport, adding "when you charge a tax, a fee, just for someone to get a fishing license you actually retard that industry, you slow the growth in that industry, and that winds up costing you more money than the \$10 you were charging in the first place."

"As a saltwater angler himself, Governor Cuomo made a very strong statement today that he's committed to solving the financial problems in New York and not simply by taxing the working class," Hutchinson added. "Not only did this governor close a \$10 billion budget deficit without raising new taxes, he's actually repealed an unfavorable fishing tax and has already put that money back into the economy where it can do the most good."

RFA and the New York Sportfishing Federation remind anglers of the importance of adhering to the free registration requirements in terms of helping the federal fisheries service improve harvest data within the recreational sector. Anglers fishing in New York coastal waters are encouraged to visit www.dec.ny.gov/permits/54950.html for free registration information.

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The Recreational Fishing Alliance is a national, grassroots political action organization representing recreational fishermen and the recreational fishing industry on marine fisheries issues. RFA's Mission is to safeguard the rights of saltwater anglers, protect marine, boat and tackle industry jobs, and ensure the long-term sustainability of our Nation's saltwater fisheries. For more information, visit www.joinrfa.org.

The New York Sportfishing Federation is a non-profit organization founded in 1981 to protect and promote the interests of the marine recreational angler and to develop and promote programs design to protect and conserve the marine environment and fisheries in the area of the eastern seaboard of the United States of America, including but not limited to the southern part of New York State and its environs. Visit www.nysf.org