



PRESS RELEASE

Recreational Fishing Alliance

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NJ LEGISLATORS INTRODUCE “TAX ON THE WILLING” RFA Praises Legislation Designed To Drive Marine Resource Funding

According to the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA), groups who fought in opposition to a free, ‘no cost’ angler registry could soon have two chances to put their money where their mouth is!

Late last week, New Jersey coastal legislators from District 1 introduced new legislation to help drive funding towards New Jersey’s fish and wildlife management and conservation. Sen. Jeff Van Drew and Assembly Nelson Albano have authored legislation (*S2849/A4039*) which would provide for voluntary contributions by taxpayers on gross income tax returns to support fish and wildlife management in the state. The legislation would provide New Jersey taxpayers with the opportunity to indicate on their annual return if a portion of the tax refund or enclosed contribution should be deposited in a special fund known as the Fish and Wildlife Management and Conservation Fund.”

A second bill sponsored by Van Drew and fellow Cape May, Atlantic and Cumberland County Assemblyman Matt Milam would also establish a flat digital striped bass motor vehicle license plate with monies dedicated to a new Striped Bass License Plate Fund (*S2856/A4016*). Monies deposited in the fund would be used by the Division of Fish and Wildlife in the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), in consultation with the Marine Fisheries Council, to support New Jersey’s State registry program for saltwater recreational angler.

According to the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA), both pieces of legislation would go a long way in helping a grossly under-funded Division of Fish and Wildlife, while also respecting the overtaxed New Jersey resident. “We are getting taxed, tolled and charged to death here in the Garden State, so coming up with funding mechanisms based on a taxpayer’s willingness to pay over and above what’s mandated is certainly unique,” said RFA Executive Director Jim Donofrio.

“You have to hand it to our District 1 legislators for sticking to their Jeffersonian values and creating the perfect tax, laid solely on the willing,” Donofrio added.

As of May 4 of this year, all saltwater anglers 16 and older must register their contact information with the state at www.saltwaterregistry.nj.gov when fishing the marine and fresh tidal waters of the State of New Jersey with hand line, rod and line, spearfish or fishing by hand. Even anglers registered with the federal government or licensed in another state must register with New Jersey’s DEP if fishing or landing a catch in state. Legislation to pass the free angler registry law in order to comply with new federal guidelines took nearly 3 years to pass, as some groups and representatives within the DEP itself fought to oppose the registry bill because it didn’t have a mandatory fee attached.

“I hope those folks who wanted to pay for the privilege of registering to fish would help Sen. Van Drew and Assembly representatives Milam and Albano to get these bills into committee and onto the floor for a vote as quickly as possible so that voluntary contributions to the state DEP can get implemented here in New Jersey,” said Capt. Adam Nowalsky, chairman of the RFA-NJ chapter. “The response we’ve seen seems to indicate that many anglers are willing to contribute to voluntary programs like this, so I can’t believe these pieces of legislation would have much opposition.”

RFA said a recent mail-in survey conducted by *The Fisherman Magazine* of New Jersey found that over 79% of the saltwater angling respondents said they would be willing to purchase a special Striped Bass license plate if monies were used to benefit the state's coastal fisheries management. S2856 and A4016 call for an initial application fee of \$50 and an annual registration fee of \$10 to be applied to support the state's free angler registry program established under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) guidelines.

"In this economy, certainly every little bit helps," Nowalsky added.

State residents who recently filed their 2010 tax returns are already familiar with lines 58-62 on the tax form which offers contribution boxes of \$10, \$20 and "other" to which taxpayers may voluntarily support state programs like the Endangered Wildlife Fund, Children's Trust Fund To Prevent Child Abuse, the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Fund, Breast Cancer Research Fund and the *U.S.S. New Jersey* Educational Museum Fund. RFA believes the conservation and management of the state's coastal resources to be an equally worthwhile recipient of such charitable funds at tax time.

"These are all worthy programs in New Jersey, but it sure would be terrific to see S2849 and A4039 get passed successfully through this session in order to protect the vitality of our coastal resources as well," Donofrio added. "This would be a huge boon to our coastal community at the Jersey Shore."

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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, call 888-JOIN-RFA or visit www.joinrfa.org.