



PRESS RELEASE

Recreational Fishing Alliance

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NEW JERSEY LAUNCHES FREE ANGLER REGISTRY Anglers Must Register Or Face Fines Of Up To \$3,000

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today announced that New Jersey's new free web-based saltwater fishing registry will go live this Wednesday, May 4. According to the DEP's official release, the registry will allow the state to comply with a federal mandate to collect angler names and contacts for improving data collection at the federal level.

Saltwater anglers fishing in New Jersey coastal waters who've not already registered to fish in marine waters are encouraged to visit www.saltwaterregistry.nj.gov.

New Jersey's free saltwater fishing registry replaces a fee-based federal registry that state anglers were required to participate in and which has been in effect since January. All saltwater anglers and for-hire vessel operators will now be able to register through the no-fee state system rather than the fee-based federal system; the DEP said anglers must still register with the state, even if they have already registered with the federal system, although those fishing on a for-hire party or charter vessel already registered with the New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program are not required to file for an individual registration.

"I would like to thank the Governor, Commissioner Bob Martin, and the Recreational Fishing Alliance for their help in making the free fishing registry a reality. This is great for fishermen, tourism, and the State of New Jersey," said Senator Jeff Van Drew, primary sponsor of the legislation to create a free saltwater angler registry. "This registry fulfills the federal requirement, assists in collecting important data from anglers, and will allow us to best manage our resources with no cost to the fisherman," Sen. Van Drew added.

The angler registry legislation was first introduced in the fall of 2008 by Sen. Van Drew along with Sen. Chris Bateman in the form of S2080, while a companion bill in the Assembly was sponsored primarily by representatives Nelson Albano, Matt Milam, Doug Fisher and Scott Rumana. Despite heavy opposition from inside the DEP because there was no user fee attached to the bills, the legislation ultimately passed through both houses with support from fellow Assembly representatives John Amodeo, Celeste Riley, Paul Moriarty, and Gil "Whip" Wilson, "with a big boost of support from Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver" according to Jim Donofrio, Executive Director of the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA). Donofrio added that additional Senate support came from free registry sponsors Jennifer Beck, Sean Kean, James Beach, Fred Madden and Donald Norcross.

"Very simple, very well-done," Donofrio said after registering at www.saltwaterregistry.nj.gov. "I'm not sure why such a big deal was made about their ability to implement an online phonebook of saltwater anglers, we're just happy that the initiative has finally been completed."

Donofrio praised the bipartisan legislative efforts of legislators who stuck with the free angler registry legislation until it was finally signed into law by Governor Christie on February 22, despite strong opposition from within both the state-level public sector and among small facets of the conservation community.

"This was not an easy task, and certain groups well entrenched in the Trenton bureaucracy fought us the whole way, but we're proud that the governor listened to the will of the people within our coastal community," Donofrio said.

"This is a big day for RFA in New Jersey and our members who fought side-by-side with us and our state legislators in their unanimous support of this free registry," said Capt. Adam Nowalsky, chairman of the New Jersey chapter. "We're thankful that the governor heard our collective voices and helped put this through on our

behalf, and thanks to the Bureau of Marine Fisheries for getting this done prior to the start of New Jersey's summer flounder season."

Donofrio said that the registry is required to help the National Marine Fisheries Service improve their ability to track recreational angler harvest and participation, and said it's vital for anglers to register in terms of improving fisheries management.

"Those anglers who do not have a computer at home or ability to print should visit their local library or Internet café in order to log in and print off their registry card," Donofrio said. "It's critical too in terms of escaping the excessive fines which the DEP appears to have put in place through their Administrative Order."

According to the RFA, the DEP's official regulation indicates that any person in violation of not being registered within the state of New Jersey or failure to have their registry card in possession may be liable to a penalty of not less than \$300 or more than \$3,000 for the first offense, and not less than \$500 or more than \$5,000 for any subsequent offense.

"We'll be in contact with the governor's office about this excessive fine structure proposed by the DEP, but our members need to be aware of what could happen if not registered," Donofrio added.

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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.