



# PRESS RELEASE

## Recreational Fishing Alliance

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For Immediate Release  
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### **NEW JERSEY REVEALS FINAL COST OF ANGLER REGISTRY RFA Praises NJ & NY Governors For Eliminating Need for New Fishing Tax**

So how much does a saltwater angler registry actually cost?

According to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), the total cost in the first year to implement a saltwater angler registry was \$123,200. Based on 251,000 anglers who registered in 2011, that comes out to about 49 cents per registrant, a far cry from the \$5 per angler that the NJDEP testified in a Senate hearing in 2010 would be needed to implement the system.

After a three-year debate as to what a saltwater registration system would actually cost the state, NJDEP recently responded to a [state Office Of Legislative Services \(OLS\)](#) request as to cost of administering the New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program, saying that the projected annual operating costs for the program moving forward amount to just \$73,600.

Assuming the 2011 registrations would be the same for 2012, the total cost for administering the free saltwater angler registry in New Jersey will cost approximately 29 cents per registered user.

For the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) which lobbied extensively in favor of a no fee saltwater registry, the official OLS budget analysis and NJDEP response only proves what the majority of saltwater anglers were saying all along.

"The groups who were providing cover for bloated government truly misrepresented themselves and their members during this debate," said RFA executive director Jim Donofrio. "We heard ridiculous estimates ranging from \$600,000 to over \$1 million to manage a database of anglers, with the NJDEP even telling a Senate committee they would need at least \$5 per angler in order to administer the system."

"RFA is not the least bit surprised at the real cost, it's in line with what we'd said all along, and it just shows how irresponsible some of these new public sector lobbyists really are," he added.

*The Fisherman Magazine* on April 26 reported on a discussion with NJDEP Commissioner Bob Martin at a March meeting with outdoor writers in which the commissioner said over 251,000 anglers signed up for the state's saltwater registry in 2011. When pressed as to the cost of the registry, Commissioner Martin actually said the cost was about \$2 per angler, adding that the state of New Jersey had also been awarded an \$80,000 grant from the National Marine Fisheries Service to defray costs and operating expenses associated with the registry.

In frequent testimony before both the Senate and Assembly and through frequent bulletins to its members, the RFA said that federal grants would be available to help fund the registration program to meet the new federal requirements, but it was important for New Jersey legislators to act in time - which they apparently did!

"We're very happy that the governor listened to the voice of his constituents and the bipartisan legislative team, including state Senators Tom Kean and Jeff Van Drew along with Assemblyman Nelson Albano, who helped put this program together through legislative channels," said Donofrio. "There were a handful of part-timers and retired enforcement officers out there trying to drag this effort down in what amounted to an attempted angler shakedown using exaggerated cost estimates to try and force an unpopular fishing tax upon state anglers, but we're thankful that Governor Christie saw through the opposition rhetoric."

The enactment of a free saltwater registry in New Jersey ultimately paved the way for the suspension of the fee to fish in saltwater in New York as well. Enacted by former New York Governor David Paterson, New York's fee to fish was officially rescinded on August 5, 2011 when current [Governor Andrew Cuomo](#) made his position clear with members of the New York Sportfishing Federation out in Freeport on Long Island.

"Responsible government, that's what this is all about," said RFA managing director and New York Sportfishing Federation president Jim Hutchinson, Jr. "Governor Cuomo made it clear to everyone that some things in life should be free, a saltwater fishing is one of those things."

"We especially applaud Governor Cuomo for specifically mentioning that a fee to fish in saltwater was nothing but another tax which would only slow the growth of the recreational fishing industry in New York, it was a huge statement," Hutchinson added.

Just like in New Jersey, saltwater anglers who plan on fishing in New York's marine waters must first register with the state using the Department of Environmental Conservation Automated Licensing System (DECALS). Coastal fishermen can find a link to that system on the New York Sportfishing Federation homepage at [www.nysf.org](http://www.nysf.org). While there's no cost for the mandatory registration through DECALS, there is a charge to the state of New York of approximately \$2.40 every time someone registers to fish, which Hutchinson said is something which needs to be fixed.

"Our state and federal governments are being forced to cut the cost of doing business just like everyone else in U.S. private sector, and these registration programs offer perfect examples of where the fat can be trimmed without fleecing the constituents," Hutchinson said. "If New York can register waterfowl hunters through the Harvest Information Program for around \$1 per registrant, and New Jersey register its own saltwater anglers for less than 30 cents per person, I'm sure we can things back on track in New York as well, which is precisely what Mr. Cuomo has proven during his first term as governor."

At present, New York anglers are still exempt from paying a fee to register through DECALS in the coastal marine district through 2013, though efforts are underway by elected state officials including Senator Lee Zeldin and Assemblyman Fred Thiele to permanently repeal the tax on anglers and overhaul all state registration systems.

"We've been told that Governor Cuomo is also working on streamlining state registration mechanisms to help eliminate some of the wasteful spending, kudos to him for that."

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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](http://www.joinrfa.org).*