



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Darrel J. Aubertine

## Aubertine Bill Would Promote Fishing Events for Veterans

DARREL J. AUBERTINE April 1, 2010

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Legislation provides for free temporary licenses to use fishing as rehab for military personnel

WATERTOWN (April 1, 2010)—With trout and salmon fishing season beginning today, State Sen. Darrel J. Aubertine said he is pushing legislation (S.7041) that would encourage more fishing events as physical and emotional rehabilitation for veterans or active duty members of the armed forces.

“Our veterans and armed service members give so much to our country, it’s only appropriate we take this opportunity to give back by opening new access to an essential part of our way of life in Central and Northern New York,” Sen. Aubertine said. “This bill addresses a need and an opportunity. With Fort Drum here in Jefferson County, we have the demand for these events and of course, plenty of great fishing spots, whether on the St. Lawrence, the Salmon River, Lake Ontario or one of our many inland streams, rivers and lakes.”

State law currently allows the State Department of Environmental Conservation to designate and host up to four free fishing events per year in each region, where all non-licensed residents can learn about fishing. The purpose of these events, such as DEC’s Free Fishing Day Clinics, is generally to promote recreational fishing to the general public. Current law, however, makes no distinction or special exception to allow still more rehabilitative events for veterans.

“Providing our veterans and active duty personnel, who have sacrificed bravely for our country, with more opportunities to learn the rehabilitative nature of fishing is a small way of saying thank you,” said Sen. David J. Valesky of Oneida. “Our veterans and military service personnel deserve more of these opportunities, and we should do everything we can on the state level to help make that possible.”

The bill, which Sen. Aubertine has sponsored with Sen. Valesky, would specifically allow the DEC to designate additional free fishing events for veterans and active duty personnel. Designation as an official event would allow veterans and military personnel to participate whether or not they currently have a

fishing license. In our region and across the country, events that introduce veterans to fishing's rehabilitative effects, promoted by organizations like Project Healing Waters, have been met with broad approval by veterans groups.

“When the Region 7 Fish and Wildlife Management Board (FWMB) realized Project Healing Waters was having difficulty gaining access to the Salmon River for an event, because some wounded war veterans lacked a one-day fishing license, the nine-county board unanimously agreed to do our part,” Jim Petreszyn, Region 7 FWMB Sportsmen’s Representative, said. “As we often do, we contacted Senators Valesky and Aubertine for their help finding a solution to the problem, which lead to this proposed legislation. It’s not often we have the opportunity to positively impact a person’s life, especially a person who has given so much.”

“It’s a small token of appreciation, but it fits with the mission of groups such as Project Healing Waters which use the simple joy of fishing to help wounded veterans,” Sen. Aubertine said. “This is an opportunity to share with our veterans who have sacrificed for us the pleasure so many of us enjoy fishing throughout the region.”