



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie Unveils Plans for St. Lawrence County Wine Trail

PATTY RITCHIE September 30, 2013

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### **Legislation To Spotlight Lisbon, Black Lake And Winthrop Wineries**

State Senator Patty Ritchie has announced plans to introduce legislation in January to establish a St. Lawrence County Wine Trail to help put local winemakers and vineyards on the map, boost local businesses and create jobs in the North Country.

“St. Lawrence County can now proudly say that it has three outstanding local wine producers in Lisbon, Black Lake and Winthrop,” said Senator Ritchie. “Unfortunately, a lot of people have yet to discover

River Myst, Bella Brooke and High Peaks wineries. My legislation will literally put these three local businesses on the map. Just as importantly, it will create a new county-wide tourist destination that will provide new business and employment opportunities for neighboring restaurants, stores and attractions.”

“As the chair of the New York State Senate Agriculture Committee, I have worked closely with the New York State Wine and Grape Foundation which has seen more than 250 new wineries open across the state over the past 27 years,” Senator Ritchie said. “As more wineries open, we’ve seen the number of tourist visits increase from 384,000 in 1985 to over 5.1 million in 2012, a 13-fold increase.”

“That same trend has been seen in Jefferson County where their seven wineries are now the county’s single largest tourism engine thanks to the creation of the 1000 Island Wine Trail in 2007 which has helped convince hundreds of thousands of people to visit these businesses,” Senator Ritchie said. “The St. Lawrence County Wine Trail will help spotlight these St. Lawrence County businesses and provide a brand new regional attraction in the North Country that we can eventually link with Jefferson County’s trail.”

Under Senator Ritchie’s plan, the St. Lawrence County Wine Trail would start near Black Lake’s Bella Brooke Winery in Morristown, extending to Lisbon’s River Myst Winery and then to High Peaks Winery in Winthrop. The trail is being designed to also bring visitors to St. Lawrence Brewing’s microbrewery in Canton, allowing the four companies additional opportunities to work together to market themselves.

“The St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce has long dreamed of using our local wineries as tourist destinations," said Chamber Executive Director Pat McKeown. "We know that visitors come for our great outdoor offerings, like fishing, hunting and snowmobiling. Senator Ritchie's new plan adds a really great dimension to St. Lawrence County's arsenal of tourist attractions and we are delighted to do whatever we can to help her project gain traction.”

“Senator Ritchie’s decision to introduce a St. Lawrence County Wine Trail in the legislature will literally help put our wineries on the map by introducing hundreds of thousands of visitors to our family businesses,” said Randy LaMay, owner of River Myst winery in Lisbon. “I believe this wine trail is critical to our efforts to build our tourism economy.”

“I want to thank Senator Ritchie for helping people discover that the Black Lake valley offers ideal conditions for growing cold hearty grapes that allow us to create exciting new wines,” said Larry E. Hollister, co-owner of Bella Brooke winery in Morristown. “As a small family-owned agribusiness, a state-recognized wine trail has proven benefits as a major regional tourism attraction.”

“A St. Lawrence County Wine Trail will help us attract more visitors to High Peaks Winery,” said Matt Whalen, owner of High Peaks Winery. “By helping our wineries work together, Senator Ritchie can help us make the St. Regis River valley region known for its wine as well as its natural beauty.”

*(Senator Ritchie is pictured in the above photo with Randy LaMay, owner of River Myst winery in Lisbon)*