



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Sean M. Ryan

Senator Sean Ryan And Assemblyman Bill Conrad Encourage Western New Yorkers To Take Part In Free Fishing Weekend

SEAN M. RYAN June 25, 2021

| ISSUE: NYS SENATE DISTRICT 60, NYS SENATOR SEAN RYAN, FISHING, FISHING LICENSES, FREE FISHING WEEKEND



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ASSEMBLYMAN BILL CONRAD
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Legislators Tout Western New York As A Great Fishing Region And Encourage Local Anglers To Take Part In New York State Angler Achievement Awards Program

TONAWANDA – Today, June 25, 2021, New York State Senator Sean Ryan and New York State Assemblyman Bill Conrad gathered at Niawanda Park in the City of Tonawanda with officials from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the Erie County Federation of Sportsmen, and the Town of Tonawanda to encourage Western New Yorkers to take part in Free Fishing Weekend being held across New York State on June 26th and 27th.

This weekend marks the second of four designated Free Fishing events in 2021, during which New York residents and non-residents are permitted to fish for free without a fishing license. Participating anglers are reminded that although the requirement for a fishing license is waived during Free Fishing Days, all other fishing regulations remain in effect.

There are 60 shore fishing sites in Erie County, with dozens of other freshwater fishing sites across Western New York. Anglers can find many varieties of fish in the Niagara River and around Western New York including Largemouth Bass, Rock Bass, Smallmouth Bass, Muskellunge, Sheepshead, Bluegill, Pumpkinseed, Carp, Perch, Chinook Salmon, Coho Salmon, Brown Trout, Lake Trout, and Steelhead Trout.

Senator Sean Ryan said, “Our world-class fishing is a major point of pride for us here in Western New York. In my time as an elected official, I have often worked to ensure public access to the water and expand opportunities for fishing. Free Fishing Weekend is a great opportunity to introduce kids to the sport, and a chance for those who haven’t cast a line in years to get back into it. I encourage everyone to take part in Free Fishing Weekend and support our local communities.”

Assemblyman Bill Conrad said, “The Niagara River Greenway spurs waterfront revitalization, both public and private, it draws visitors and it connects communities. Fishing, one of the easiest ways to enjoy the river, is good for the environment, fun for families, and a low-cost way – especially during a free-fishing weekend – to enjoy the scenically beautiful and readily accessible Niagara River. Fishing is also good for the economy: The annual value of Lake Erie’s recreational fishery, which of course is tied to the Niagara River, was last estimated at \$1.4 billion. I encourage everyone to come out this weekend and enjoy our region’s best natural asset, then stop for a meal, a drink, or some entertainment at one of the local businesses nearby.”

Senator Ryan and Assemblyman Conrad also encouraged Western New Yorkers to participate in New York’s Angler Achievement Awards Program, which recognizes exceptional catches by New York State anglers in several categories each year.

The Angler Achievement Awards Program has three different award categories:

- **Annual Award:** The Annual Award recognizes the anglers who caught the three heaviest fish of the year for 45 different species. Each fish entered must meet or exceed the minimum qualifying weights. The winning anglers are awarded an Angler Achievement Award lapel pin. The angler entering the

heaviest fish in each species category also receives a Certificate of Achievement.

- **Catch and Release:** The Catch-and-Release awards commend the actions of anglers who return their qualifying catch to the water. This category is limited to 21 major gamefish species. Qualifying anglers are awarded a distinctive Catch-and-Release award lapel pin.
- **State Record:** If you catch a really big fish, you may have a new State Record. The State Record Program recognizes those anglers who break current New York State records for any of the 45 eligible fish species. Anglers receive a custom engraved plaque, an Angler Achievement Award lapel pin, and a Certificate of Achievement.

To participate in New York State's Angler Achievement Awards Program, simply follow these guidelines:

- Fish must be taken by angling in New York State waters in accordance with New York State fishing regulations.
- Fish must meet the minimum qualifying weight or length for that species and the entered category.
- Fish entered in the Annual Award and State Record categories must be weighed on a certified scale by the owner of the scale or an employee, and must be witnessed by at least one other person.
- Fish submitted as a potential State Record entry must be identified by a DEC biologist or a designee.
- Qualifying fish must be entered on an official entry form or facsimile.
- All entries must be accompanied by a clear, sideview photograph of the fish or the angler with the fish.
- Entry forms must be received by DEC's Bureau of Fisheries within 30 days of the catch.

Interested anglers can download the entry form [here](#), obtain one from any DEC Regional Fisheries Office, or write to: NYSDEC, Bureau of Fisheries, 625 Broadway, Albany, New York 12233-4753.

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