



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

JOBS, BUSINESSES DEPEND ON HEALTH OF FISHING INDUSTRY

PATTY RITCHIE July 19, 2011

Last weekend, the St. Lawrence River Walleye Association, a group of about 150 unsung heroes, spent Saturday collecting fingerlings they've spent months raising in a hatchery they constructed themselves to help restore the walleye population in the St. Lawrence River.

With pollution, invasive species and habitat destruction threatening the fishing resources of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence, the efforts of our volunteer sportsmen's groups has become crucial to our region's efforts to protect this critical part of our economy.

Fishing is more than just a relaxing way to spend a morning or afternoon. Fishing charters, bait stores, marinas, motels and other businesses connected to the region's tourism industry represent a \$140 million sector of Central and Northern New York's economy.

Those fishing tourists and their families eat at our restaurants, shop at our stores and visit our museums, wineries, farm markets and countless tourist attractions throughout the year. The health of our sportfishing population has a direct correlation to many of the jobs of our residents. The money they spend turns over several times in our economy, providing spin off jobs for contractors, builders and the stores that line our shopping districts.

That's why I pay close attention to what's happening to our anglers. When Canadian border officers seized an American fisherman's boat, handcuffed him and demanded he pay a \$1,000 fine even though he had a Canadian fishing license, I enlisted the assistance of Ontario Senator Robert Runciman who raised the issue with top officials in the Canadian government.

I then set up a meeting between fishing captains and Lt. Governor Robert Duffy and asked him to enlist the help of Governor Andrew Cuomo. Together, we were able to convince the Canadian government to return the fisherman's money. Canadian border officials say fishermen who do not intend to land on Canadian soil can call 1-888-226-7277 to check in with Canadian customs.

As the senator who represents one-third of New York State's international border on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, I will continue to work hard to preserve and expand our region's fishing and tourism opportunities. By working together we'll help make our region the premier place to vacation for anglers from around the world.