

AREA NEWS

Saltwater fishermen balk at registry

By Jay Lindsay
ASSOCIATED PRESS

BOURNE, Mass. — People have tossed hooks and lines into the New England tides since long before there was a Cape Cod Canal for Eddie Pachucki to fish in. So Pachucki, casting into the canal's current for striped bass, couldn't fathom why he would soon owe the state for the privilege.

"They didn't put the strippers there," said the 31-year-old baker. "Why should I pay to catch them?"

Starting in 2010, federal law requires all the nation's saltwater fishermen to be registered, whether they fish from a boat, dock or the canal's rocky borders. In most states, the registration will come with an annual fee of about \$10 to \$25.

Fishery managers say the registry is needed because they don't know the number of saltwater fishermen or what they're catching — but they could be reeling in enough fish to deplete popular stocks. A registry of anglers will help gather better catch information so fishery managers know whether a

species is being overfished and can make rules to protect it.

But the new requirement has met stubborn resistance in the Northeast.

Of the 21 coastal states in the continental United States, five haven't approved a registry: Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Maine and New Jersey, even though the National Saltwater Angler Registry was originally supposed to be in place in January.

Many fishermen believe the fees won't stay low and will ultimately fund free-spending state governments. They doubt it can provide accurate catch data. They also wonder why they're being tracked when their catch is puny compared with heavily tracked commercial fishermen.

Maine state Rep. John McKane, a Republican who's opposed to the registry, says it's just not the government's business to know who's picking up a rod and heading for surf.

"It requires people to go and get a certificate from the government for some-

thing they've always done, free as you please," he said. "We're losing our freedoms, they keep getting eroded one by one, and this is a big one."

The registry was mandated in 2007, when the federal Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Act was reauthorized. There are registry exemptions, including one for anyone under 16.

States get any proceeds if they design their own programs, which often involve collecting information for the registry when they issue licenses. The fees pay for administrative costs and services such as public land acquisition for fishing. Last week, Connecticut lawmakers became the latest to pass a registry, approving a bill that charges \$10 to \$15 for saltwater fishing licenses.

Gordon Colvin, a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration biologist who is leading the registry's implementation, struggles to explain the regional resistance to the saltwater fishing registry.

"You know, I'm not quite sure of that," he said. "It is

odd. . . . Part of it's a New England kind of tradition of free access to fisheries"

Saltwater licenses have existed for years in other areas of the country, and in the Northeast, sportsmen already pay for freshwater fishing licenses. It's no different to ask saltwater fishermen to pay to access a public resource with money that will ultimately benefit them, Colvin said.

Bob Ballou of Rhode Island's Division of Environmental Management doubts that sharp fee hikes or misuse of funds that some fear will happen, because fishermen won't tolerate it.

"Politically, there would be a march on the Statehouse," he said.

Today's best estimates say the country's 15 million to 25 million recreational fishermen catch 257 million pounds of fish annually — less than 3 percent of the 9.4 billion pounds that commercial fishermen haul in. But Colvin said that includes more than half the catch of some popular Northeastern species, including striped bass and bluefish.



JAY LINDSAV/AP PHOTOGRAPHER

Jeff Fish of West Springfield, Mass., displays his catch late last month along the banks of the Cape Cod Canal in Bourne, Mass. Starting in 2010, all the nation's saltwater fishermen must be registered, and in most cases pay for a license, whether they fish from a boat, dock or a canal's rocky borders.

Right now, a key tool for counting fishermen and their catch is a scattershot phone survey that reaches a fisherman on one out of 20 calls on its best days, Colvin said. The registry will allow the fishermen to be targeted, vastly improving the survey's estimates, he said.

Colvin said there's no advantage for a fishermen to hide his catch if called: If regulators get a false picture of healthy stocks, harmful overfishing continues. If regulators believe things are

worse than they are, overly tight restrictions might result.

Cape Cod fisherman Patrick Paquette, who's on a committee that's designing the Massachusetts registry, says it's needed but admits ambivalence. He believes new numbers could reveal there's more recreational fishing than now estimated, and lead to tighter restrictions.

"We will suffer from the new data, make no mistake about it," he said.

Fire

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of River, said the consolidation plan enacted in 2007 was an extension of Mayor Daniel Malloy's efforts to reorganize the city's fire service. Attempts to move city firefighters into volunteer districts date to 1996, when the city tried to staff a Long Ridge Fire Co. station with paid firefighters from Stamford Fire & Rescue.

Long Ridge Fire Co. sued the city, claiming that the move violated the Charter, a similar complaint in the Turn of River suit, but the case never came to judgment. The sides settled in 2004, seven years after it was filed.

Malloy said Friday that Long Ridge, which uses paid drivers and volunteer firefighters, told the city they could not guarantee the safety of residents. When the city attempted to staff a Long Ridge station with city firefighters, Long Ridge saw it as a threat to its autonomy, which is pro-

tected under the city Charter.

"We took certain steps and ultimately we withdrew those steps," Malloy said.

Malloy said the more recent lawsuit between the city and Turn of River is different. Turn of River never asked the city to leave its district, as Long Ridge did.

Since last summer, two city engines have operated out of temporary structures in the Turn of River district. Malloy said Turn of River hasn't asked the city to leave because it cannot guarantee a volunteer response. He said the city Charter does not require the city to fund the volunteer fire departments.

"They want to be able to interpret the Charter when it suits them one way," Malloy said. "The Charter speaks for itself. There is no obligation to fund the volunteer department. It's our obligation to ensure the safety of the people of Stamford. If the court sees

it another way, I hope they propose a solution."

In court, the judge said he was not happy with how Turn of River presented calculations it said proves the city diverted millions of taxpayer dollars from volunteer fire districts to fund Stamford Fire & Rescue.

"Does anyone know the date I was elected to the Board of Finance or the Board of Representatives in the city of Stamford?" Tierney asked rhetorically, later saying the calculations needed explanation from someone well-versed in city budgets. "Because that's what I'm being asked to do here."

Later, Tierney said he was confused by the complicated calculations and spotted an error that Turn of River and city attorneys missed. It cast doubt on the rest of the calculations, he said.

"I think it will play out with three people on a long bench in Hartford doing these calculations," Tierney said,

hinting at a potential appeal by one of the parties. "If my decision gets overturned, then so be it."

He gave Kovack a chance to reopen the case and make his argument clearer about diverted tax money. Kovack refined his argument but did not call an expert witness to the stand, as Tierney had suggested.

In his closing arguments, Kenneth Povodator, the lawyer representing the city, poked holes in Turn of River calculations that supposedly proved tax money was diverted from the volunteers. Kovack later withdrew that portion from his complaint.

After the trial, Kovack said the trial stood out for its slow pace.

"This is unique in the degree of its complexity and the length of the trial," he said.

— Staff Writer Jeff Morganteen can be reached at jeff.morganteen@scni.com or 964-2215.

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once to see what it was."

The talk is that the tip line draws a lot of pranks, and senior Hillary Goldsmith said that makes her skeptical.

"I can't take it seriously because they can't decipher what's real and what's fake," she said. "It's a good idea if you are a parent, but as for students, it's flawed."

There was no consensus in the cafeteria.

"Nobody's going to call," said Harold Johnson, a freshman.

"Nobody snitches when they are scared," said Sean Tores, another freshman. "Either way, they are going to get you, outside school or inside school."

"I think it's a good idea," said Shawn Maignan, a sophomore, who immediately thought of January's fight. "Would you rather be a snitch or would you rather have your friend go to the hospital?"

For the most part, students said they feel safe.

"The school has security guards, there's, like, a whole lot of cameras," said Manny Paredes, a sophomore. "If there is going to be a fight, they usually know about it."

Stamford High has 11 security guards and 28 security cameras, though Bass said 16 of the cameras are broken. The tip line is no substitute for the "big brother, big sister" relationships security guards develop with students, Tinnin said.

Disputes that begin outside the building often come inside, he said.

"They start fighting right in front of security — why do that?" he said. "Ninety percent of the time it's because they don't really want to fight but, because of peer pressure, they've got to do something."

Voices

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shirt to show the scars of the surgery he had to remove kidney cancer.

"Now I am cancer free," he said. "Now I didn't want to start crying . . ."

The volunteer smiled and invited him to walk, but Glen, a musician with his church, begged off with a promise.

"Next year, next year, because I am a survivor," Glen said.

Clown face

Nancy Gross trotted around the event, blowing up balloons, cracking jokes and spreading smiles. It didn't hurt that Gross was wearing mismatched American flag bloomers, a hat that looked like it needed potting soil and enough make-up to make a mime blush.

Gross, a member of the Health and Humor Associates — or HaHas, as they call themselves — clowns around the hospital twice a month as well as at any special events.

"I've never seen such compassion as I have with this group of clowns," she said.

Besides the balloon animals and the squirt guns, Gross has a special reason to attend the Bennett Cancer Center walk each year — her 18-year-old granddaughter died of cancer 12 years ago.

"She was a happy girl and she enjoyed clowns," Gross said. "There's always hope with cancer."

For the survivors

Amanda Glekas squatted next to the tribute wall and traced her message over again in the purple pen.

"Stay strong, Peter Arahovitis," it read in bold capital letters.

Arahovitis, Glekas' cousin, was diagnosed with leukemia last year. He is awaiting a transplant at Yale-New Haven Hospital.

Glekas was working in the The Ice Cream Box parked along the street, handing out free bottles of water and discounted ice creams for Peter with truck owner Lee Vechiola.

"My mom is a survivor, too," Vechiola said.

The survivors are "one reason we're here today," he said.

Not goodbye

Amid the 207 chatting, bustling teams clustered together, eagerly looking for stray members Sunday morning,

one team was standing quietly aside, watching the action.

The three-member team had only two members that could walk the course — 16-month-old Willow Handley merely smiled from her stroller. But those two members, Jessica and Griffin Handley of Stamford, did not mind their inclusive group.

They were walking for Jessica's brother, 31-year-old Kermit Breed, who died of colon cancer in January. Each member of the team Kermit Nation wore a T-shirt with his picture and the words "turtle soup."

Turtle soup, Jessica said, was Kermit's uniquely goofy way of saying so long.

"Instead of goodbye, it was just, 'turtle soup,'" Jessica said, smiling.

Cars

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said. She said the final figure wouldn't be known until late Sunday. Last year, the sales were nearly \$2.7 million for more than 50 vehicles, she said.

On Saturday, American makes of cars and motorcycles were showcased in Concours Americana.

Hundreds of people, equally made up of bidders and the curious, crowded into a tent near the waterfront and listened as Malcolm Barber, chief executive officer of United Kingdom-based Bonham's, led the auction.

The first car up for bid was a replica of a three-wheeled 1886 Benz Motorwagen, the first successful internal combustion motor car. The replica, built about 20 years ago, sold for \$35,000 to a telephoned bid. The sale hit the high end of the preauction estimate of

\$30,000 to \$35,000.

But the next car, a 1957 DeSoto Firelite sedan, wasn't as successful.

"We regard it as an entry-level classic, just get in it, ladies and gentlemen, it's a real head turner," Barber said as he tried to excite bidders. The original car had 44,000 miles on it and only "modest freshening," Barber said.

But the bidding stalled at \$6,500, half of its \$12,000 to \$15,000 estimate.

"That's it, all done. \$6,500," Barber said with a hint of disappointment before moving on to the next car.

Among the cars for sale was the 1928 Rolls-Royce Phantom 1 Ascot Tourer, used in the 1974 movie "The Great Gatsby," starring Robert Redford.

It sold in a telephone bid to a private American collector for \$238,000.

Money like that is out of the question for college stu-

dents, but the lure of the pricey automobiles draws David Chudy back every year.

Chudy, 19, who was making his fourth visit to the show, brought his friend, Mike Tuohy, 20. The two Trumbull residents are juniors at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

Chudy's father Jack owns a 1969 Jaguar E that hasn't quite been restored, he said.

"I keep trying to convince him to finish it. But other things get in the way, like a college education for my brother and me," Chudy said with a laugh about the car his father has been working on for about 25 years. Chudy has one brother, Andrew, 22.

It's that interest and passion in older automobiles that keeps the niche market strong, despite a world recession, said another Bonham's auctioneer, Toby Wilson, 47.

"There are three D's that drive the auction business:



HELEN NEAFESY/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Anna Mracek Dietrich, chief operating officer of Terrafugia, speaks to Andrew Sherwood, 8, from Purchase, N.Y., about the flying car on display Sunday at the Concours d'Elegance at the Roger Sherman Baldwin Park in Greenwich.

Death, debt and divorce," Wilson said. "Obviously, we are dealing with debt now because of the economy so people are reshuffling their portfolios."

At Bonham, he's head of automobilia, a word used to

describe everything related to automobiles, from hood ornaments to toy model cars.

Though owners of many antique cars who need cash are putting them up for sale, buyers are jumping into the

market, looking for a deal, Wilson said.

Some buyers, who have seen their portfolios shrink, decided they might as well buy a car they can have fun with, he said.

"We have people who are wanting to get rid of stuff and move to cash, and we have people who want to get stuff because they are getting out of cash. It's perfect for auctioneers when that happens," he said.

Although he wasn't one of those bidders, Ruszkowski — who was forced to sell his 1967 Ford Mustang five years ago because he didn't have a garage for it after moving from Brewster, N.Y. — knows the car he wants to buy.

"A 2001 Audi TT Roadster. I've already stopped in at a couple of dealers," he said.

— Staff Writer Frank MacEachern can be contacted at frank.maceachern@scni.com or 625-4434.