

JOHN FERRO



OUT THERE

Fishing-fee repeal is not such a good thing

On Feb. 20, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced he was amending his proposed state budget to include lower fees for hunting and fishing licenses.

Buried in the news release from the governor's office were a couple of sentences about the marine fishing license. The license is for anglers who head out into ocean waters off of New York's coastline, and is separate from a freshwater fishing license.

The marine license used to cost \$10. But in 2011, Cuomo suspended that fee on a two-year trial basis. In his Feb. 20 announcement, Cuomo said he would propose making the license permanently free.

Unless the state Legislature changes the proposal — which is unlikely — the free marine license will become law once the budget is adopted.

You'd think that would come as good news to fishing enthusiasts around the state. But many anglers have been and continue to be opposed to the free marine license.

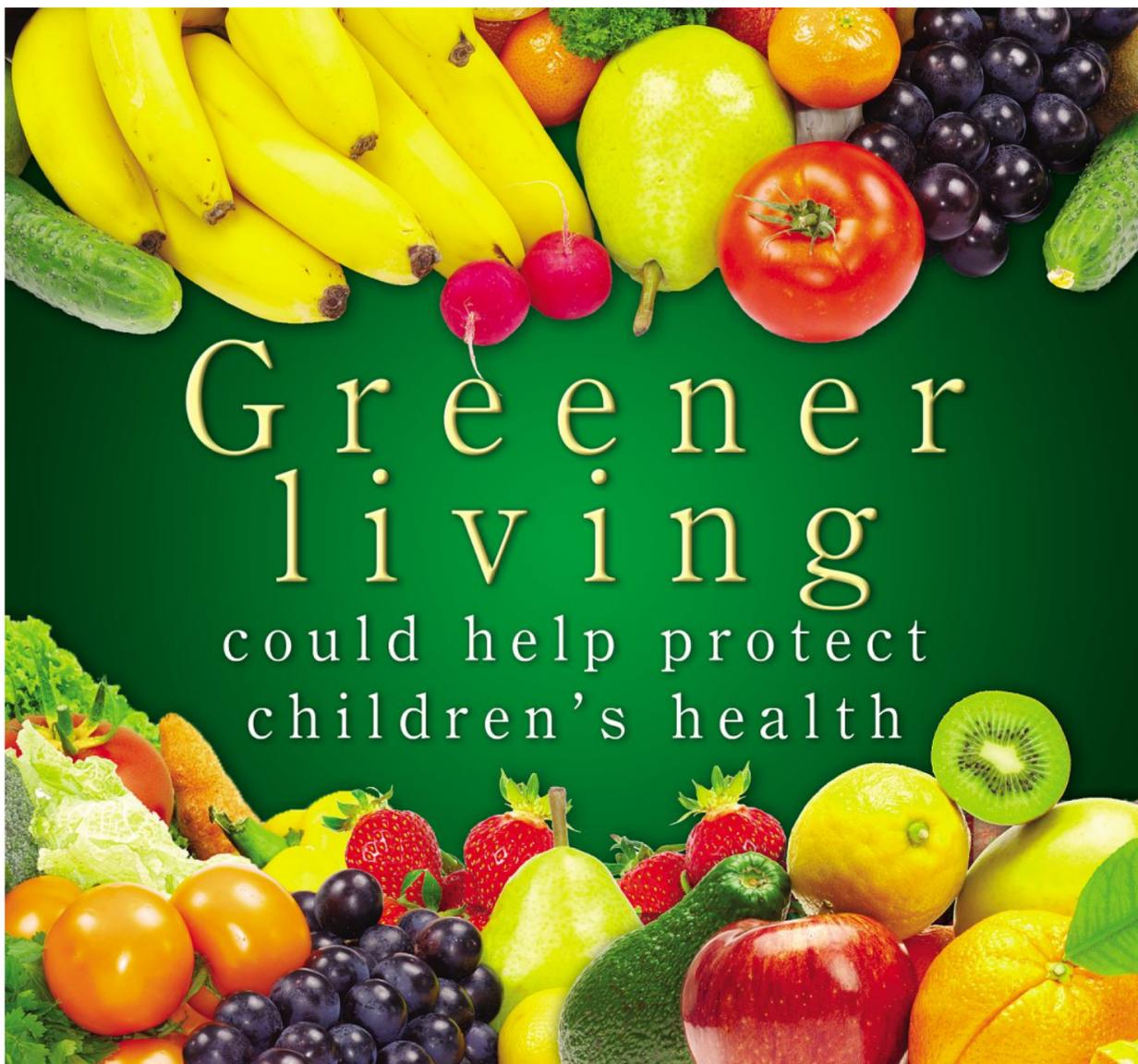
Fees from licenses support research and conservation efforts that sustain the very pastimes hunters and anglers enjoy so much.

They help pay for fish and wildlife staff at the state Department of Conservation. They pay for hatcheries. They pay for a portion of the costs for many of the DEC's wildlife studies. And they often leverage federal matching funds that are based, in part, on the number of hunting and fishing licenses in each state.

The notion that marine anglers get to benefit from state-funded conservation efforts without paying for them has been described by some as a form of welfare.

"All other hunters and anglers in the state contribute toward resource management," said Charles Witek, vice chairman of Coastal Conservation Association New York. "Why should saltwater anglers be treated differently?"

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Greener living
could help protect children's health

GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATION BY DANI CHERCHIO

Organic produce cuts risk of harm from pesticides

By **Lisa Iannucci**
For the Poughkeepsie Journal

After reading "Silent Spring" by Rachel Carson, Dana Devine O'Malley decided it was time to focus on what she and her family ingest and how it interacts with their bodies.

"Once I started having children, I saw a yellow sign and wondered why I couldn't step on the lawn," the Beacon resident says. "Our neighbor used a lawn service that used pesticides and you'd smell the chlorine smell, but they said it was safe. We're trained to believe that chemicals are good for us, but (they're) not."

RESOURCES

» Pesticide Action Network: Pesticide Action Network North America replaces pesticides with ecologically sound alternatives: panna.org.

» Dr. Ronald D. Whitmont: homeopathicmd.com

» Protecting Children from Pesticide Exposure: epa.gov/opp00001/health/children.htm

» Check references of landscapers who say they are using organic methods; contact the Northeast Organic Farming Association Organization www.nofa.org to verify their accreditation.

INSIDE

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O'Malley has since become involved in a movement to ban pesticides to help keep her 5- and almost 2-year-old safer.

"I have a front and back garden and raise chickens, fruits and veggies, and I'm concerned about what's going into the ground and onto my food," she said. "I'm very concerned about their health, and I take them inside every time I see a neighbor spraying the lawn."

Cathy Montiero also has become concerned about what she feeds her family.

"I've been researching pesticides a lot lately, and I know it's bad for you," the Poughkeepsie mom said. "It was eye-opening."

Pesticides are used to kill bugs on food and on lawns and, according to the Environmental Protection Agen-

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THE DIRT

Filtering turns the tide for water quality

The following is a Q&A by Terry Platz of Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries of Clarkson University and Shane Rogers, Ph.D., an assistant professor in civil and environmental engineering at Clarkson and a member of the faculty for River University, a Beacon Institute/Clarkson undergraduate program that will run June 10-28 in Beacon. Rogers teaches courses in water



Terry Platz

and waste treatment processes, water resources, environmental design and biological processes. Rogers earned his Ph.D. in environmental engineering from Iowa State University and advises the Clarkson chapter of Engineers Without Borders-USA.

Your work with the Clarkson University chapter of Engineers Without Borders began with assessing the water



Shane Rogers

quality of a rice-farming community in La Margarita, Ecuador. What characteristics of the landscape raised red flags for health risks?

Rogers: The rice-farming community of La Margarita is in the coastal plains region of Ecuador, placed between Los Tintos River and their water-rich rice paddies. Los Tintos is the lifeblood of the community; residents rely on this river for transportation, refuse removal and water for bathing and drinking. Close to the coast, Los Tintos River is under a strong tidal influence,

with common daily fluctuations of 7-10 feet in the river's water level. Most houses are built on stilts to accommodate frequent flooding during high tides, which are especially high during the rainy season. At best, sewage management in the community includes the use of pit latrines; other means are less sophisticated. Ultimately, sewage infiltrates the irrigation canals and river — the community's resource for drinking water. Residents rely on tidal fluctuations to wash

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sewage from ground surfaces.

La Margarita is an unfortunate example of how landscape features, land uses and water interactions can lead to serious public health consequences; it is one of hundreds of similar communities in the coastal plains region of Ecuador. These landscape and river interactions have left Los Tintos River heavily polluted, where concentrations of *Escherichia coli*, a bacterium that indicates the presence of fecal pollution, range from 1,000-5,000 per 100 milliliters. In comparison, the United States Environmental Protection Agency has a threshold of 126 of these organisms per 100 milliliters to close a beach due to public health risks; detection of one of these organisms in our domestic drinking water supplies triggers a cascade of actions. In La Margarita, people regularly bathe in Los Tintos River and the irrigation canals and drink the water with little or no treatment. Residents complain of frequent diarrhea, headaches, vomiting, dehydration and bouts of constipation among other symptoms. They know that the water is unhealthy to drink, but they lack alternatives.

As an environmental engineer in a remote area with limited resources, how do you go about solving the water quality challenges inherent in the landscape of La Margarita?

Rogers: Working in remote areas with limited resources does require an engineer to make a shift from conventional first-world water engineering thinking where use of increasingly complex technologies remove finer quantities of emerging contaminants. In Ecuador, we are forced to implement low-cost, robust, yet simple combinations of systems and practices that address the most immediate health risks associated with a community's water systems (or lack thereof). Fortunately, the fundamental principles that govern the removal and transformation of contaminants in the environment still apply, as do good consulting engineering prac-

tices: listen to your client, respect their history and local culture, communicate openly, deliver well-designed products shaped through these interactions, and follow through after the project to assure continued success.

In the case of La Margarita, our water quality challenges are numerous. By interacting with community members, we have a combined solution for clean drinking water: practical changes in landscape management and the use of ceramic water filters. Though skeptical at first, older community members have been able to convince the community to adopt the use of current-day ceramic filters; they resemble a stone their elders had used for filtering water which had produced "sweet" and clear water. Pumice, plentiful with Ecuador's many active volcanoes, had been used to filter water, a lost practice in modern time.

La Margarita is a farming community at heart. Owning and operating a ceramic filter manufacturing facility is not an option. We have identified partners in Hogar de Cristo, an Ecuadorian nonprofit humanitarian organization, with assistance from Rotary organizations in Guayaquil and Idaho, Potters for Peace and Potters Without Borders. With the help of these organizations, we recently constructed a water filter production facility and, in 2011, distributed water filters to the community. We discussed the need for improved management of septic waste and as of 2012, the use of improved latrine structures has increased from only one or two houses to nearly 25 percent of the community, with additional installations in progress. These water filters used by community members are reducing *E. coli* in their drinking water, although not all community members choose to use a water filter and continue to drink water straight from Los Tintos River. With ongoing training programs, we encourage use of the filters and their proper maintenance.

Terry Platz is associate public affairs officer for the Beacon Institute of Rivers and Estuaries in Beacon. The Dirt is a regular feature in My Valley.

IF YOU GO ...

What: River University, an interdisciplinary undergraduate program in environmental science and water policy. Shane Rogers, Ph.D., will teach the course "Our Water Future: Sustainable Water Resource Management" as part of the program. Participants can earn six Clarkson University credits. Only 20 students will be selected; application deadline is March 15.

When: June 10-28.

Where: Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries, Clarkson University, Center for Environmental Innovation and Education at Denning's Point in Beacon. River University includes three days on the Sloop Clearwater.

Web: Visit www.RiverUniversity.com to apply.

Fishing

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"Why should the angler in (upstate) Massena," Wittek said, "who might never see the ocean over the course of a year, have not only to pay for his own license when he fishes local rivers and ponds, but also have to contribute some small portion of his taxes so that the saltwater anglers of the state can continue to fish for free?"

Those who favor the free license said the \$10 fee impeded Long Island businesses like charter boats.

Marine anglers also say their freshwater brethren don't have to compete with commercial fishers. And though freshwater fees help pay for stocking streams and rivers, that doesn't happen — nor would it be practical — in the ocean.

The bigger issue may be the impact on science.

"It's shortsighted to shortchange the pool of money for marine funding," said John Lipscomb, Riverkeeper's boat captain. "If you want to have fish in the future, you have to know how to manage your harvest. And if you don't have science, you can't do it."

One can argue the science is needed now more than ever. It remains to be seen what effect warming oceans may have on fish stocks, habits and habitat.

Cuomo has gone out of his way to signal that New York is "open for business." He has also been one of the most outspoken proponents of the need to deal proactively with climate change.

In this decision, those two agendas are at odds.

"*Out There*" appears every other week in *My Valley*. Reach John Ferro at 845-437-4816; jferro@poughkeepsiejournal.com; Twitter: @PoJoEnviro.

A LOOK AT OUR CHANGING ENVIRONMENT



Contamination creates fiercer fish

By Lori Quillen

Researchers in Sweden have found that when wild perch are exposed to oxazepam, a common anti-anxiety medication, they undergo surprising changes in their behavior and feeding rate.

"Normally, perch are shy and hunt in schools. This is a known strategy for survival and growth. But those who swim in oxazepam became considerably bolder," explains ecologist Tomas Brodin, lead author of the article. Braver and less social, the drug-exposed fish also ate much faster.

Low concentrations of biologically active drugs are commonly found downstream from sewage treatment plants. The new study, published in the journal *Science*, is the most recent paper to highlight the toll that pharmaceutical pollution is having on aquatic ecosystems. Effects were seen at levels commonly found in surface waters.

Brodin and his research group are now investigating the food web consequences of a change in perch feeding behavior. If perch become more efficient feeders, it could lead to shifts in species composition in polluted streams as well as unexpected impacts, such as a rise in algal blooms.

Globally, pharmaceutical use is on the rise. And wild fish populations are being exposed to a cocktail of pharmaceutical drugs, from psychiatric drugs and birth control pills to antihistamines.

More work is needed to understand the long-term ecosystem effects. In the mean time, to ensure the health of our freshwaters we need to develop sewage treatment plants that can effectively capture environmentally hazardous drugs.

Lori Quillen is the Cary Institute's communications director. "Earth Wise" is heard on WAMC Northeast Public Radio and is supported by the Cary Institute. Visit earthwiseradio.org.

ON THE WEB

- » Scientific American: www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=antianxiety-drugs-in-flushed-into-water-may-be-making-fishes-fearless
- » Science: www.sciencemag.org/content/339/6121/814.abstract
- » Umea University: www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2013-02/uu-fbb020813.php
- » American Association for the Advancement of Science: www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2013-02/aafmdf020813.php

Weekly Weather		
Feb 21 - 27, 2013		
Temperature (F)	High 2/20/2013	46.1°
	Low 2/14/2013	18.7°
	Average	32.8°
Precipitation (in)	Weekly	0.70
	Year-to-Date	4.65
	Average Year-to-Date	5.55
Historical Temperature (F)	Record High 2/24/1985	71°
	Record Low 2/25/1894	-16°
	Average	32°
Ozone (ppb)	High 2/25/2013	42
UV (mW/m2)	High 2/25/2013	82
CO2 (ppm)	Average	400
Precipitation pH	Volume-Weighted Mean	4.64
For current weather data, visit: caryinstitute.org/emp		
Data provided by: Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies (Historical temperature from Poughkeepsie, Ozone data from NYDEC.) www.caryinstitute.org		

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