

# From the President's Desk

Steve Medeiros



## The License, Coast Guard Meeting - LNG

Not everyone will be pleased by the news that a recreational saltwater license is on our doorstep, but we all knew it was coming. We did our best to keep RISAA membership aware of issues as they unfolded over the past few years.

Some have said I sold them out by getting involved in this, but I always believe we should take an active part in the process, rather than have something shoved down our throats that we all didn't like.

Our fishing quota system was a mess. At times we receive big cuts in our catch allotment, yet we knew there was plenty of fish out there. At other times they told us everything is fine (stripers?) but we think they might be wrong. Just look at the mess we have with summer flounder.

Blame MRFSS, the phone survey and dockside interview program that supposedly tells the federal fish counters how many fish we caught and what we should get the next year. MRFSS had plenty of things wrong with it, but it was all they had.

Then the Magnuson-Stevens Act was reauthorized and within the legislation came forth the mandate to count saltwater recreational fishermen. Register us all, and then they would know for sure who call to get information. They would finally know for sure how many of us are out there fishing.

And we have no choice. Federal law.

But the Feds don't really want to run the registry. They would rather have each state do it for them, so they encourage all states to establish their own registry or license and then apply to be exempted from the Federal registry. They said that if a state doesn't have their own, then their citizens will have to pay the Feds \$15-\$25 to register and the money will go into the U.S. general fund.

So, as of this writing at the end of May, every coastal U.S. state either already HAS a license in place or is working on the legislation to establish one. It was inevitable that a license would eventually come to Rhode Island.

But since that day is here, we at least had the opportunity to voice our concerns, and help to create something that treated Rhode Island citizens fairly, and give us the opportunity to help fix this fishery quota mess and maybe even have a little money left over to improve the state's infrastructure or improve public access.

It was an honor for us that RIDEM chose to work with RISAA in setting up the process. I was instructed to invite 12 recreational fisheries leaders, plus a representative of the charter/party industry and bait & tackle shops.

Those representatives worked for 8 months on the issue and the result is announced here today. They were all fair people, dedicated to working up a program for the common good.

**Capt. Frank Blount**, owner of The Frances Fleet, said "It was great to work towards a common goal. That goal being better data for all involved."

"I came out of this process smarter than when I went in," said

**Richard LaFaille**, President of the Weekapaug SurfCasters. "The end result will benefit most of the fishing community."

"The data is the most important missing ingredient to recreational fisheries management," said **Capt. John Rainone**, President of the R.I. Party & Charter Boat Association. "Hopefully this will be the beginning of solving that problem."

And **David Giuliano**, Narragansett Surfcasters said, "This license addresses all the issues we were looking to resolve and several we weren't even aware of. The new advisory board will insure input from the recreational fishing population so as to ensure fair and even application and modifications in the future."

Our next task is to make sure this bill passes though the House and Senate Committees, unscathed, and then onto for full floor votes. We need to have the legislation in place this year in order to be approved by NOAA in time to be an "exempted state" from the Federal registry next year.

### COAST GUARD MEETING - LNG & CROSSING B.I. SOUND

Last month I was invited to attend a meeting at DEM in Providence with U.S. Coast Guard Captain Raymond Perry, who is in charge of the Southeastern New England region. The purpose of the meeting was to be able to discuss RISAA concerns on large LNG ships sailing through Narragansett Bay, and then a second issue regarding the federal law which governs the stretch of EEZ between Block Island and Galilee. (to page 36)



## IMPORTANT DATES

Additional information on these events can be found on the RISAA web site at [www.risaa.org/events.html](http://www.risaa.org/events.html)

- Jun 2 **RI Ocean SAMP Stakeholders meeting** - 6:00 PM  
Coastal Institute, URI Bay Campus, Narragansett
- Jun 6 **RISAA Trip to Boston Red Sox**
- Jun 12-14 **Annual Spring Surf Fishing Club Challenge**
- Jun 20 **12th Annual Take-A-Kid-Fishing Day**
- Jun 23 **RISAA Board of Directors Meeting** - 6:30 PM
- Jun 23-25 **N.E. Fisheries Management Council Meeting**  
Holiday Inn, Portland, ME
- Jun 29 **RISAA Monthly Seminar** - 7:00 PM (see page 12)
- July 27 **RISAA Monthly Seminar** - 7:00 PM  
*Fluke Fishing Tips & Tactics*
- Aug 31 **RISAA Monthly Seminar** - 7:00 PM  
Multiple speakers: *Fishing Tips & Tricks 101*
- Sep 30 **RISAA Quarterly Meeting** - 7:00 PM.  
Bob Oberg: *Saltwater Fishing From A Kayak*
- Oct 26 **RISAA Monthly Seminar** - 7:00 PM  
Capt. Fred Bowman: *Tautog Fishing*  
R.I. Sea Grant: *Tautog Biology*
- Nov 30 **RISAA Monthly Seminar** - 7:00 PM