
Panel Advances Pennacchio/Durr Bill Securing Access to Public Lakes for Recreational Fishermen

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Legislation sponsored by Senator Joe Pennacchio and Senator Ed Durr that would preserve access to any state-owned lake that is open to boats with or without onboard motors was approved today by the Senate Environment and Energy Committee.



Legislation sponsored by Sen. Joe Pennacchio and Sen. Ed Durr that would preserve access to any state-owned lake that is open to boats was approved in committee. ([Pixabay](#))

“There is growing concern about the lack of public boat launches,” noted Pennacchio (R-26). “New Jersey is home to public lakes that are open to bass boats and motorized vessels, but recreational boaters who don’t live on the lake or have private docks find it impossible to get into the water.”

The fees recreational fishermen in the state pay for freshwater fishing licenses helps fund the stocking of fish in public lakes.

“The absence of public launches in effect creates private lakes,” said Pennacchio. “The system isn’t doing its job. These waters are supported by fees intended for the benefit and enjoyment of the public who are prevented from getting their boats and lines in the lakes.”

Pennacchio and Durr’s bill, [S-987](#), would direct the New Jersey Department of Environmental

Protection (DEP) to ensure public boat access to all state-owned lakes where boats are allowed.

The DEP would be required to construct boat ramps or enter long-term contracts for public launches at marinas or other private sites.

“Recreational fishing and boating are very popular in New Jersey, but residents are being denied entry to water that should be public,” said Durr (R-3). “We want to secure fair access to our freshwater resources and safeguard the important benefits to the State’s economy.”

Greenwood Lake is one significant body of water with no public boat access. The 7.5-mile-long lake, spanning the border of New York and New Jersey, is one of the state’s premiere freshwater fishing locations. Each year, it is stocked with thousands of fish.

In the past, recreational fishermen could pay to drop their boat in the water at private marinas, but the popularity of boating and fishing on the state’s lakes spiked in recent years, partly due to the pandemic. As marinas filled to capacity, they could no longer handle daily traffic.

“The public should be able to enjoy the same ease of access enjoyed by property owners and members of private marinas,” Pennacchio noted. “More than 1.2 million anglers fish the state’s waters each year, and two of every three boats registered in New Jersey are used for fishing. Incredibly, Greenwood Lake, the state’s second-largest lake, has no public access. This bill will fix that.”