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The Week That Was

03-10-17

1. More Important Fish to Fry

Our Spin:

Fish have been important in Albany since Hendrick Hudson fed his crew with them while sailing up the Hudson, to discover Albany. In politics, fishing played a critical role in the 2008 Senate campaign that saw Darrel Aubertine defeat Assemblyman William Barclay by raising the issue of fishing rights on the Barclay family river. We know our priorities here in New York and DEC issuing some fishy regulations is nothing new.

The Story:

A long list of freshwater fishing regulations that will be effective April 1 was recently released by the state Department of Environmental Conservation. The changes, according to the DEC, are the result of a two-year process that included biological assessment, discussions with anglers and a formal 45-day comment period. The DEC used public input to finalize the new rules. "New York State is known for fantastic freshwater sport fishing opportunities," said Commissioner Seggos. "These regulatory changes will help maintain these opportunities and enthusiasm for the sport." Highlights of the new regulations include:

- Adjustments to existing walleye regulations in various waters throughout the state, including measures to protect spawning walleye and conservative minimum harvest size and creel limits in waters where managers are trying to establish self-sustaining populations of this popular sport fish.

- Modifications to DEC Region 7 Finger Lakes rules to increase survival of rainbow trout, brown trout, and Atlantic salmon.

- Allowing ice fishing in some waters and restricting the number or use of devices used for fishing through the ice.

- Simplification of the black bass regulations in Lake Erie by compressing the three existing seasons into two while expanding opportunities to use live bait and harvest one large bass per day during a special season.

- Greater protection for northern pike in the St. Lawrence River due to the declining abundance of spawning adults and poor recruitment of young-of-year fish in the Thousand Islands region.

See the complete list of rule changes for the 2017 fishing season on the [DEC website](#).

Syracuse.com
[Spotlight News](#)

2. To Tax or Not to Tax?

Our Spin:

The March weather in Albany has been cold and unpredictable but inside the Capitol things are starting to heat up. The Legislature is drawing battle lines in the sand as their one house budget proposals are set to be released next week. A key issue during negotiations will be taxes on the middle class.

The Story:

As the Legislature continues to finalize their one house budget proposals, State Senate Republicans announced earlier this week that the Senate proposal will not include an estimated \$800 million in taxes and surcharges included in Gov. Andrew Cuomo's \$152 billion budget proposal. Speaking at a press conference on Wednesday, Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan signaled the Senate resolution will not include motor vehicles fees, Internet sales tax revenue, pre-paid cellphones and an extension of the millionaires tax, which Cuomo has insisted is key to his spending plan. "Middle-class taxpayers are struggling under the crushing weight of property taxes, income taxes, mortgages and the skyrocketing costs of higher education for their children," said Flanagan. "In this environment, these new taxes and fees are the last thing hardworking families want or need. We must make it more affordable to live and work in New York, not less, and that's exactly what our Senate budget will reflect." Cuomo has stated the tax extension is vital in order to generate revenue for a middle-class tax reduction set to take effect in the coming fiscal year, which begins April, however Senate Republicans have signaled the extension is the equivalent to a tax increase. "Our overburdened taxpayers need and deserve relief, and the Senate is rejecting these additional taxes because we are committed to enacting a fiscally responsible budget," said Sen. Cathy Young, the Finance Committee chairwoman. "We need to make our state a more affordable place to live, work and grow jobs, so that everyone has the opportunity to succeed."

[State of Politics](#)
[Capitol Confidential](#)

3. **WANTED: Audrey Zibelman**

Our Spin:

Governor Cuomo's plan to keep upstate nuclear power plants up and running at the expense of ratepayers from across the state have legislators scratching their heads. In particular, downstate Assembly Democrats have raised several questions about the cost of the bailout and the impact it will have on their constituent's wallets. There are outstanding legitimate questions, which remain unanswered as representatives from the state's Public Service Commission failed to appear at this week's hearing to flesh out the Governor's plan. Did the invitation get lost in the mail? Maybe Chairwoman Zibelman's dogs ate it...or could it be that PSC reps are still recovering from the marathon interrogation they were subject to at the recent Indian Point hearing...

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The Story:

The state Assembly held a hearing Monday on Governor Andrew Cuomo's plan to spend \$8 billion in subsidies to keep three upstate nuclear power plants operating for the next 12 years, but not a single representative from the Cuomo administration showed up. The plan, announced last summer as part of an overall state energy plan, is said to generate half of the state's energy from renewable sources by 2030. However, critics say it's an expensive bailout for the nuclear industry that will be financed by ratepayers around the state, as well as public institutions the same ratepayers use, like the MTA and New York City's public housing authority. A study conducted by the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) found that public institutions will see their electric bills rise by as much as \$112 million a year for the first two years of the deal and then even more over the next dozen years. "Since the Cuomo Administration has kept this process largely in the dark, it's up to us to educate the public on the tremendous hit all ratepayers are going to take," said NYPIRG Executive Director Blair Horner. "We hope this analysis will spur lawmakers to block the plan." Assemblyman Steve Englebright, a Democrat from Long Island who chairs the Environmental Conservation Committee, echoed Horner's testimony. He said the additional costs could even be compounded by utility ratepayers who also use public transportation or shop at stores that have to raise their prices due to higher electric rates. A spokesman for the Governor's Public Service Commission said the invite came too late, and there were "scheduling conflicts," but the agency is submitting "extensive" written testimony.

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