Press Release

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Fort Drum Public Affairs

**Fort Drum community members can get hooked on fishing in the North Country**

Northern New York is widely hailed as a premier fishing destination with many recreational and sport angling opportunities available for people of all ages and skill levels.

Fort Drum community members can cast a line in the open waters on post, or enjoy a fishing excursion to Salmon River, St. Lawrence River or any of the nearly 1,000 named lakes and ponds located within 70 miles of the installation.

“I think it’s the quality and the quantity of the fish that we have that makes this region so great,” said Burnie Haney, an accomplished tournament bass angler and New York State Outdoorsman Hall of Fame inductee. “I mean, we truly have world-class fisheries here, and if you take a seasonal approach you could go fishing year round.”

Any off-post fishing expedition should start on the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) website, which Haney said can provide all of the information anglers need to know about fishing in this region.

“Fort Drum is in Region 6, and when you look on the DEC website for Region 6 it will tell you all the places that offer public fishing rights, what lakes have what species and the best time of year to catch them,” he said. “The website also has downloadable maps for each of the lakes in Region 6 that tells you what fish you can expect to catch.”

Haney is partial to Oneida Lake in Brewerton, where he has caught everything the waters have to offer.

“This is a good lake for multi-species fishing. It has a great population of smallmouth and largemouth bass, and it’s rated the No. 1 walleye lake in the state,” he said. “For the shorebound angler in the springtime, there are bullhead catfish, as well as perch, and all summer long, perch, rock bass and bluegill are readily accessible for most anglers casting out from the shore. For anyone just starting out, those species are worth pursuing because there is a higher percentage of them.”

Haney was hooked on fishing as a young child when he caught a five-pound largemouth bass and his father paraded it around the campground like a trophy.

“I was like, ‘Wow, so that’s fishing.’ I thought that was the coolest thing in the world,” he said.

While his father was frequently busy with work, Haney would often fish with his grandmother. That taught him a valuable lesson.

“I think the beauty of fishing is that it doesn’t matter if you are a six-year-old or a 60-year-old,” he said. “The fish have no idea who is behind the reel, so it is really an all-inclusive sport that anyone can do.”

Haney retired as a sergeant major in the 10th Mountain Division (LI) and later as a chief of operations in Fort Drum’s Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security. Although deployments and work requirements might have gotten in the way from time to time, he never gave up his love of fishing. Today, he shares that passion and experience as a charter captain and on his fishing blog.

“Practice makes perfect,” he said. “I know it sounds like I’m oversimplifying it, but it really is that easy. Or you can hire a guide and they take you out on the water, show you everything you need to know and you’re good to go. For the money you spend on that, you’ve taken months of guesswork out of the equation because now you know what to use, how to use it and where to go.”

As a parent, Haney knows that children can grow to love fishing if they can hold out long enough to reel in their first fish.

“When that happens, it’s either the most amazing thing that’s ever happened to them or the most disgusting thing ever,” he said. “But you’ll know right away which one it is. It could become a lifelong passion or something they never want to do again.”

He recommends starting with a simple push-button reel and attaching a bobber to the line. That way, the child will have a visual fishing experience of watching the device submerge when the fish takes the bait, and also feel the tug of the line.

“The more engagement they can get out of the experience, odds are they will stick with it because it’s fun,” Haney said. “The anticipation of seeing that bobber going down is kind of cool for them. It erases all that wait time as if it never happened.”

Dave Campbell, Fort Drum DPTMS chief of operations, is another lifelong angler who frequents the waters of this region.

“In short, my two passions outside of the Army have been rodeo and fishing,” he said. “But I’m too old and broke to rodeo anymore, so I concentrate on fishing.”

Campbell said that Bassmaster – the NFL of bass fishing – ranks all of the best lakes for fishing, and northern New York has always ranked high on that list.

“Northern New York fishing is ranked as one of the top smallmouth bass and salmon fishing locations in the U.S.,” he said. “In Bassmaster’s best lakes of the decade, Lake Erie ranks third, Lake Champlain ranks 11 and St. Lawrence River ranks 12. In 2019, St. Lawrence River was ranked No. 1, and northern New York had Oneida Lake, Lake Ontario and Lake Cayuga in the top 15 in the same year.”

For that reason, Campbell is hard-pressed to choose just one place he enjoys fishing.

“I love fishing, so all bodies of water in upstate New York are awesome,” he said. “However, if I had to choose, it would be Chaumont Bay on Lake Ontario, and, of course, St. Lawrence River.”

For those interested in fishing closer to home, the Fort Drum Fish and Wildlife Management Program maintains the iSportsman website at [www.fortdrum.isportsman.net](http://www.fortdrum.isportsman.net) to provide current information on outdoor recreation regulations on post, a fish stocking map and other guidance.

“I think most people aren’t aware that the DPW (Directorate of Public Works) Environmental Division has maps of all the different fishing locations at Fort Drum,” Haney said. “If people want to fish right in their own back yards, those are the people who can help with that.”

Fort Drum has more than 400 acres of open water available for recreational fishing, with at least 39 miles of streams with both warm and cold water fish species. There are 24 designated sites on 10 bodies of water.

“If you have children or have never fished and want to start slow, Remington Pond is a great place to start,” said Ray Rainbolt, Fort Drum Natural Resources manager. “Remington Pond is catch-and-release, but there are nice pumpkinseed sunfish, black crappie and largemouth bass.”

“If you have a boat, Indian Lake and Narrow Lake in Training Area 19 is one of the best fishing spots on the installation with a variety of fish species available,” he added.

In early May, Remington Pond and other fisheries on post were stocked with trout.

“The NYS DEC releases trout on Fort Drum ever year,” Rainbolt said. “There are brown trout at Black Creek, brook trout at the West Branch of Black Creek and Remington Pond, and rainbow trout at Quarry Pond.”

A recreation permit is required to fish in the training areas, but not at Remington Pond, and is available for free on the iSportsman website. Additionally, a New York state fishing license is required for all anglers 16 years or older. Non-resident active-duty Soldiers at Fort Drum are eligible for licenses at the resident fee rate, and state residents who are members of the National Guard or Army Reserves are eligible for free licenses.

For more information about recreational fishing and access to Fort Drum, call (315) 772-6283 or visit [www.fortdrum.isportsman.net](http://www.fortdrum.isportsman.net).

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