



ABANDONED AND DERELICT VESSELS

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Boating offers many great opportunities for fun, yet boat owners have a responsibility to maintain and tend to their vessels. Boats in poor condition can become a liability to other boaters and the environment. In recent years, abandoned and derelict vessels (ADV) have drawn increasing attention from residents, local conservation groups, government officials and legislators wanting to learn more and develop ways to address ADVs in the state.

Generally, a boat becomes abandoned or derelict when the owner fails to maintain it, properly secure it, remove the vessel in a timely manner or simply surrenders ownership. Boats at risk of becoming abandoned are often left unattended or in significant disrepair.

ADV's are not just eyesores. They can be dangerous to people and aquatic resources if they leak fuel and oil into water, obstruct waterways, or become a hazard to navigation. The problem gets worse over time as ADVs break down in waterways and become increasingly more expensive and difficult to remove. The boat's owner is responsible for the removal and pollution mitigation expenses.

Boat owners should keep their vessel in good working condition, check their vessel's mooring or docking site regularly, and take action promptly in the event of weather-related hazards or equipment failure. In addition, boat owners are required to notify the Pennsylvania Fish and

Boat Commission (PFBC) of any transfer, sale, destruction or abandonment of their registered boat within 15 days of such action. Boats may be moored at designated areas on PFBC property only between March 1 and November 30 if a current boat registration decal is displayed.

Unpowered boats can also become abandoned or derelict if left unattended or unsecured. Canoes and kayaks can be swept away in storm events or high waters, prompting dangerous search and rescue efforts by emergency responders and eventually landing on private properties downstream. Unpowered boats are often difficult to reconnect with their owners unless they are registered or contain the boat owner's contact information. See the PFBC website at fishandboat.com for simplified instructions to register an unpowered boat. Visit a PFBC Region Office or contact the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary to obtain a vessel identification decal to add your contact information to your boat. ☐



photos: PFBC archives

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