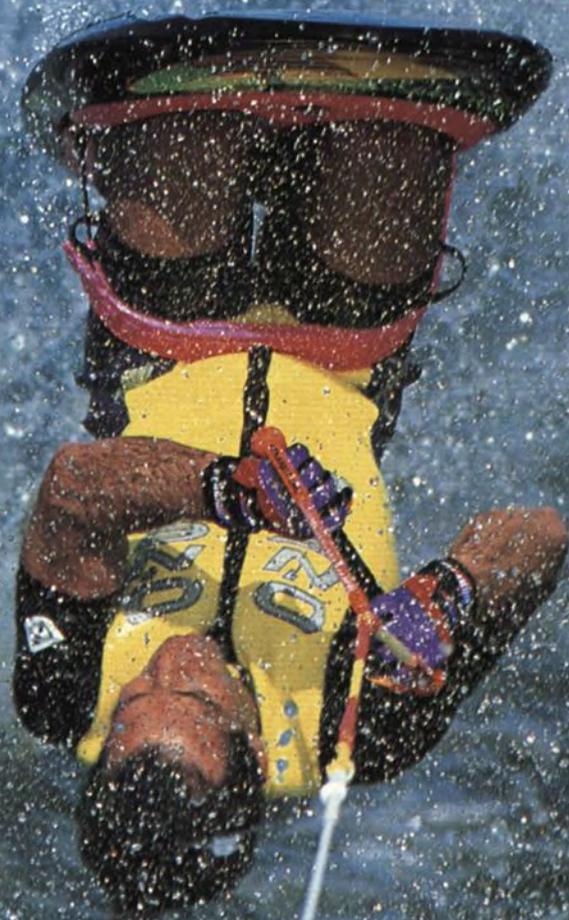


BOAT

Pennsylvania

The Keystone State's Official Boating Magazine

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An Important Step for the Future of Boating



John Simmons

Director

Bureau of Boating

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

On December 12, 1992, House Bill 1107 was signed into law. Boat registration fees were increased for the first time in nearly 30 years and the name of the Commission was changed to the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. By changing the name of the Commission to the Fish and Boat Commission, the Legislature recognized the importance of boating to the citizens of the Commonwealth. Whether you fish, water ski or cruise, your boat has become an important part of your recreational experience. Each year over 2.5 million people go boating. Only swimming, hiking, biking and fishing had greater participation levels.

In 1963, the year the Commission was officially given authority over the Pennsylvania boating program, only 78,000 boats were registered. Since then, boating has grown steadily. Today over 302,000 boats bear Pennsylvania registrations. To accommodate this growth, additional launching facilities had to be provided. New laws and regulations had to be written. Methods to provide additional law enforcement had to be found to maintain control over the use of the water. Boating safety education programs had to be developed so that the great number of people new to boating could learn the rules of safety and courtesy.

During the development years of the boating program, expansion of the registration base and additional revenue sources, such as the return of the tax paid on fuel used in boats, Projects 500 and 70, Federal Aid for Fish Restoration and the U. S. Coast Guard boating safety assistance programs, all helped defray the costs associated with the increased services. Unfortunately, the cost to provide services began to outstrip available resources during the latter part of the last decade. Costs continued to rise, but the small increases in revenue from each new registration were not sufficient to keep up with the demands each new boat placed on the system.

When determining the amount of increase to request from the Legislature, the Commission estimated that the increased boat registration fees would have to bring in about \$3.5 million annually or about \$2.3 million more than previously collected. This amount was needed to fund current programs and to meet inflationary pressures. The Commission has identified several major areas, based on requests of the boating public, where additional effort will be made.

- More safety patrols/regulatory enforcement.** Ten additional fulltime officers will be hired along with 20 seasonal officers to help patrol the busiest waters of the Commonwealth. The Commission will also increase the compensation of deputy waterways conservation officers.

- Expand boating safety education.** Financial grants will be made available to schools to encourage them to incorporate boating safety programs into their curriculums. Additional education specialists will be hired to coordinate programs in the various regions of the state.

- Improve and maintain boating access areas.** The Commission has developed 300 boat launch sites. These areas provide a place to park vehicles and a ramp to launch boats. Additional revenues from the boat registration fees will ensure the continued acquisition and development of new access areas and the improvement and maintenance of current facilities.

- Aids-to-navigation program.** The Commission oversees a program in which over 1,700 aids are currently deployed by state and federal agencies and private parties. These navigational aids include buoys, signs and other markers. Important maintenance and systematic tracking of this program will be implemented to improve boating safety.

Act 1991-39 was an important step for the future of boating in Pennsylvania. It provides recognition of the sport and the funding to take it into the next century. The boaters of the Commonwealth were behind our efforts all the way. You have our continuing pledge that the new revenue will be used to increase your enjoyment and safety, and to ensure that boating will always be a premiere recreational activity for the citizens of Pennsylvania.

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The cover

This issue's front cover, photographed by Tom King, whets the appetite for warm weather and sunshine. If you have similar boating plans for this season and you own a personal watercraft, check out page 4 for a raft of suggestions on where to boat. If paddling is your preference, the article on page 28 offers suggestions statewide on where to go. Trailer boaters will want to check out the useful details in the article on page 16. All boaters have a stake in two articles—one on insurance, which begins on page 26, and another on just who's patrolling our waterways, which begins on page 24.

