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BOAT

Pennsylvania



The Keystone State's Official Boating Magazine



Viewpoint

Your Marine Fuels Tax



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Boat owners whose registrations expire this year should have received notices to renew their registrations for the next season. On these renewal notices is a question that is vitally important. That question deals with the amount of fuel used in your boat during the previous season.

Why do we ask for this information? It is very simple. By law the tax you pay when you buy gasoline is refundable to the Commission for use to provide services to boaters. The tax on motor fuel in Pennsylvania now amounts to 12 cents per gallon. This may not seem like much, but when multiplied by the millions of gallons used, the revenue generated is significant. Last year the Boat Fund received \$1.9 million from this source. Almost one-third of boating expenditures is funded by marine fuels taxes.

Why am I telling you this? First of all, you have a right to know where your tax dollars go and from which sources your boating programs receive their funding. Secondly, I want you to be assured that we do not use this information to make judgments concerning the amount of use of your boat to increase registration fees. On the contrary, the refund of the marine fuels tax is used to keep your registration fees down.

Thirdly, I want you to know the importance of reporting a correct and accurate estimate of the amount of fuel you use. Reports that are either too high or too low skew the calculations used to determine the amount of the refund. This results in the Boat Fund not getting the total amount of revenue that it deserves.

Last year boaters reported using the following average amounts:

- Boats less than 16 feet—28 gallons
- Boats 16 feet but less than 26 feet—94 gallons
- Boats 26 feet but less than 40 feet—249 gallons
- Boats over 40 feet in length—495 gallons

I have talked with many boaters and when I ask how much fuel they purchase, I find that the amount they tell me far exceeds these averages. I am especially concerned with boats in the class 16 feet to less than 26 feet. Many boats in this class have fuel tanks equal to half this amount. Boat owners with these kinds of boats use a full tank in one day of boating. I can conclude only that there is much under-reporting taking place. If this under-reporting is intentional, boaters must know that they are hurting only themselves. The tax has already been paid, and if the Commission does not get the refund for its boating programs, the highway fund will use it for its projects. One may argue that the highway fund needs money, too, but the \$1 million to \$2 million that we are talking about is a drop in the bucket for them, but it is a substantial amount for the Boat Fund.

When completing your renewal application, please give serious thought to the amount of fuel you purchased last year. Don't inflate the figure, but be sure it accurately reflects the purchases you made. Tell your fellow boaters about the importance of accurate reporting. The ability of the Commission to provide facilities and programs and future boating fees depends on it.

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The covers

This issue's front and back covers were photographed by Tom King. If you're looking for a spot to try this spring, check out Mike Bleech's article on paddling Tionesta Creek, on page 4, and Jeff Knapp's tour of the Armstrong County portion of the Allegheny River, on page 28. In addition, tour the Delaware River on page 23 with Area Boating Programs Specialist Heidi Milbrand and WCO John Sabaitis. If you're a novice water skier, check out Bruce Kistler's article on basic techniques, on page 8, and if you're a more experienced water skier, please turn to page 26 for a glimpse at what could be on the horizon for you. If you own a powerboat, the information on props beginning on page 12 is important, and the ideas on launching and retrieving on page 16 could make your life easier this season.

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