

**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
PENNSYLVANIA FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION**

**MINUTES FOR  
THE BOATING ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

**Monday, June 9, 2025  
9:00 a.m.  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania**

**Members**

Chair Rocco Ali  
Vice Chair Steven Ketterer  
W. Cary Allen  
Loren Lustig

**Members Ex Officio**

Timothy D. Schaeffer, Executive Director  
Mark Sweppenhiser, Director of Boating, Secretary to the Board  
Ryan Dysinger for Cindy Adams Dunn, Secretary for the  
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

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  - A. Boating Committee Meeting
    - i. July 8, 2025, 2:30 p.m.
  - B. Quarterly Commission Meeting
    - i. July 28-29, 10:00 a.m.
- X. Adjourn

## **I. Call to Order, Welcome, and Roll Call**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Rocco Ali at 9:00 a.m. at the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's (Commission) Harrisburg Headquarters. Board members in attendance included Chair Rocco Ali, Vice Chair Steven Ketterer, Loren Lustig, W. Cary Allen, Timothy Schaeffer, Mark Sweppenhiser, and Ryan Dysinger. A quorum was present.

In addition to the members of the Board, Commissioner Charles Charlesworth (Boating at-Large) was present, along with the following Commission staff: Chris Andreoli, Acting Chief Counsel; Mike Parker, Director of Communications; Laurel Anders, Deputy Executive Director for Administration; Kailee Glock, Legislative Liaison; Tanyan Carnes, Administrative Officer for Bureau of Boating; Adam Spangler, Boating Safety Education Specialist; Jeff Sabo, Colonel for Bureau of Law Enforcement; Rachael Thurner-Diaz, Waterways Conservation Officer; John Shero, Director of Bureau of Information Technology; Maria Flynn, Administrative Officer for Office of Chief Counsel; and Tyler DiVittore, Clerical Assistant for the Division of Licensing and Registration.

## **II. Introduction of Guests**

Guests included: Tom Mehaffie, Pennsylvania State Representative; Rick Taylor, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Auxiliary State Liaison Officer; Craig Stoudt Jr., private citizen; Shelley Stoudt, private citizen; Colton Stoudt, private citizen; Christian Stoudt, private citizen; Craig Stoudt Sr., private citizen; Darlene Stoudt, private citizen; and Brian Kane, private citizen.

## **III. Review and Approval of Minutes of June 2024 Meeting**

A motion was made to approve the February 2025 meeting minutes by Steven Ketterer and seconded by Rocco Ali. The motion carried.

## **IV. Public Comment**

No public comment.

## **V. Recognition (Lifesaving Awards)**

State Representative Tom Mehaffie presented Craig Stoudt Jr., Colton Stoudt, and Christian Stoudt with the Commission's Lifesaving Awards.

During the afternoon hours of Sunday, April 20, 2025, Mr. Stoudt and his sons were fishing along the Susquehanna River in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania when they saw two kayaks coming downstream towards the Dock Street Dam. The Stoudt's noticed the kayakers were in trouble after watching the female kayaker frantically paddling away from the dam and the male kayaker being thrown from his vessel.

Mr. Stoudt directed his sons to pull up the anchor and move towards individuals in the water. Colton clipped the anchor line to a throwable cushion and launched it toward the female in the water. She was able to hook the line with her paddle and pull herself over to their boat. The

Stoudt family located the male holding on to the kayak and were able to pull him to the side of their boat. Both kayakers were brought onboard until the emergency crew arrived. Craig, Colton, and Christian were instrumental in rescuing these individuals from the backwash of the dam.

The prompt and selfless actions of the Stoudt family saved the lives of both kayakers. For that reason, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission presented Craig, Colton, and Christian with these Lifesaving Awards. Rachael Thurner-Diaz, the investigating Waterways Conservation Officer, Tim Schaeffer, and Mark Sweppenhiser joined Representative Tom Mehaffie in presenting these awards.

## **VI. Old Business**

No old business.

## **VII. New Business**

### **A. Amendments to 58 Pa. Code § 111.43 (Mercer County)**

#### Commentary:

Lake Wilhelm is an 1,860-acre impoundment in New Vernon Township, Mercer County in northwestern Pennsylvania. It is bisected by Interstate 79. The 1,440-acre portion of Lake Wilhelm southeast of Interstate 79 is within Maurice K. Goddard State Park and is owned and managed by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). DCNR permits the operation of boats powered by internal combustion motors and prohibits the use of motors in excess of 20 horsepower. As such, an amendment of 58 Pa. Code § 111.43 (Mercer County) is required to bring the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's regulations into alignment with DCNR's posted restrictions for Lake Wilhelm.

The 240 acres of Lake Wilhelm northwest of Interstate 79 are owned and managed by the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) as part of State Game Lands 270. The PGC has regulations in place for State Game Lands lakes. Specifically, as stated in 58 Pa. Code § 135.41 (State Game Lands), these lakes are restricted to electric motors only and boats may not exceed slow, no-wake speed, unless otherwise posted by PGC. Therefore, there is no need for the language already found in 58 Pa. Code § 135.41 to be made part of Chapter 111.

The Interstate 79 causeway over Lake Wilhelm is a recognizable boundary between State Game Lands 270 and Maurice K. Goddard State Park which simplifies the division of regulations for boaters. Both DCNR and PGC staff are in favor of this amendment.

Staff propose the following changes to § 111.43:

§ 111.43. Mercer County.

\* \* \* \* \*

(b) *Lake Wilhelm—Maurice Goddard State Park*. The operation of boats powered by internal combustion motors is permitted **[except from a point approximately 200 yards north of the Interstate 79 causeway over Lake Wilhelm upstream to the Game Commission Propagation Area above the Sheakleyville Causeway (State Route 1018, Milledgeville Road).] southeast of Interstate 79. The use of motors in excess of 20 horsepower is prohibited. Regulations on Lake Wilhelm northwest of Interstate 79 are as posted by the Pennsylvania Game Commission.**

Briefer:

Mark Sweppenhiser, Director of Bureau of Boating

Action:

A motion was made by Steven Ketterer and seconded by W. Cary Allen to recommend this amendment to the Commission. The motion carried.

**VIII. Discussion Items**

**A. Request for Slow, No-Wake Zone – Lake Wallenpaupack**

Mark Sweppenhiser presented the request for a slow, no-wake zone (SNW) at Lake Wallenpaupack, which is owned and operated by Brookfield Renewable Energy. Lake Wallenpaupack is 13 miles long, containing 5,700 acres, and has 52 miles of shoreline. Approximately 7,600 additional feet of SNW is requested to extend the existing restriction from Ledgesdale Recreation Area to a point where the lake widens near Cairns Island from 6:00 a.m. Friday to 6:00 a.m. Monday and major holidays. The existing SNW is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for the first 1,000 feet from the Ledgesdale Recreation Area. Property owners are concerned about the noise, wakes, and congestion on this part of the lake.

On May 28, staff met on-site with Commissioner Gibney and two of the requestors to evaluate the site. The request has been verbally modified from 7,600 feet to the water area between Laurel Lane and Salem Park Lane (approximately 1,600 feet). The narrowest section is 535 feet shore-to-shore when full. Approximately 425 feet in October when the lake is drawn down for potential hurricanes. The docks in the area are permitted to extend a maximum of 50 feet from shore, plus the added feet for gangways restricts the amount of boatable water. Mooring and SNW buoys were noticeably too far from shore. The Commission will coordinate with Brookfield Renewable Energy to address the placement of docks, mooring and no-wake buoys. Brookfield, in turn, can work with individual property owners to ensure proper alignment and compliance.

For the proposed request, the Commission looked at incident data for this area over the past 10 years. No boating incidents were recorded in this area. Most of the incidents were in the main

portion of the lake. There are no conditions at Lake Wallenpaupack that do not exist in other parts of the state that would necessitate a special regulation above and beyond what is already established for Lake Wallenpaupack.

Commission staff have worked collaboratively with Brookfield Renewable Energy to establish the existing regulations at Lake Wallenpaupack under Chapter 111, which include: boats are limited to 45 mph from sunrise to sunset on weekends and holidays from the Saturday before Memorial Day to Labor Day; boats are limited to 25 mph between sunset and sunrise; waterskiing is prohibited on weekends and holidays at the western end of the lake from a line of marked buoys about 200 yards east of Cairn's Island and the Ledgesdale Recreation Area; and boats are limited to SNW 24 hours a day, seven days a week for the first 1,000 feet starting at the Ledgesdale Recreation Area.

After compiling this data, Commission staff recommend the following actions rather than implementing a special regulation. Over the course of the coming months, Commission staff will work with Brookfield Renewable Energy to address dock encroachment and placement of buoys in key boating areas. The Commission also expect more law enforcement presence on Lake Wallenpaupack beginning this summer with increased staffing as Waterways Conservation Officer assignments are made in July 2025. In response to public concern about noise complaints, Commission staff will also work with marinas to help reinforce responsible boating behavior and SNW zones. Landowners who wish to install buoys to mark SNW zones may apply to the Commission for a *Permit to Install Floating Structures and Private Aids to Navigation*.

#### **B. Request for Slow, No-Wake Zone – Pittsburgh**

Mark Sweppenhiser presented the request for a slow, no-wake zone in Pittsburgh. The Pittsburgh Safe Boating Council (PSBC) submitted a request last November for SNW in front of all marinas in the Pittsburgh boating pool to the first lock on the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio Rivers. There are multiple marinas in this area. Commission staff, BAB members Rocco Ali and Carey Allen, met with PSBC members, State Representative Anita Kulik, and State Senator Devlin Robinson on April 24, 2025, to view the water area in Pittsburgh.

The most narrow section in this area of the Three Rivers is approximately 600 feet from shore to shore under normal flow conditions. A review of the Commission's recreational boating incident data revealed there were two incidents from 2014 through 2024 in this area where the primary cause was force, wake, or wave. The reported boating incidents do not support a regulation change. Additional considerations include: some marinas extend into river(s) well over 100 feet; recreational boats in this area can be large; commercial boating traffic uses these channels; effectively marking, an enforcement of the SNW zones and posting for the public could be challenging.

Commission staff met with PSBC members after considering the situation and discussed non-regulatory options to address their concerns in this area. Staff recommended that private marinas who wish to place and maintain buoys may apply to the Commission for a *Permit to Install Floating Structures and Private Aids to Navigation*. Buoys may be placed 100 feet out from the marina and must not obstruct navigable channels.

In discussion, PSBC members expressed a desire to seek a future regulation to extend the current SNW regulations in Allegheny County on the Monongahela River approximately ½ mile upriver to the Smithfield Street Bridge. In order for Commission staff to consider the request, PSBC members are encouraged to secure permission from the bridge owner to hang/post signs and identify a process to relocate current signage to the new location. PSBC should also gain stakeholder support for this regulatory change, including members of the upriver marina community, public access users, boating clubs, and affected commercial enterprises.

Tim Schaeffer expressed gratitude to PSBC for their continual collaboration with the Commission and dedication to boater safety on the Three Rivers.

### **C. Boating Safety Education Certificate Transition**

Laurel Anders shared an update on the Boating Safety Education Certificate (BSEC) transition. The Commission issues a BSEC for the completion of an approved online or in-person course. Approximately 18,000 were issued last year, and about 15,000 of those were issued to people who completed the course online. The certificate is a hard blue card made for easy carrying.

There are six online courses approved by the Commission: BoatEd, BoaterExam, iLearntoBoat, BoatTests101, AceBoater, and BoatU.S. Foundation. The cost varies by provider, and each includes the certificate fee. All students receive a digital temporary certificate to use while they wait for their hard card to arrive in the mail. Currently, the hard card takes four to six weeks to come through the mail, and on average, about 90% of the certificates issued are for completion of an online course. Boat U.S. Foundation is the newest online course that was just added last year. This course is priced significantly less than the other online courses. The courses are different in style, but the content is all dictated by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) standards. Based on each student's preference and style, they may choose a course that is more interactive or a simpler, content-driven option. Each course provider's website provides details to assist students with determining which course is best for them.

In-person BSECs include the Commission's Pennsylvania Basic Boating and Pennsylvania Boating and Water Safety Awareness. Other courses approved by the Commission are through the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and America's Boating Club, formerly known as the U.S. Power Squadrons. Applications and certificate fees for in-person courses are processed manually by Commission staff. Not all students who complete an in-person course submit an application for a certificate.

Currently, students receive their hard card in the mail through a third-party vendor. Student data remains in an internal database that is transmitted by the Commission to the third-party vendor who prints the cards, attaches the cards to the carrier page, and mails them to the students. When students want a replacement or duplicate hard card (\$5.00 processing fee per card), they must complete the paper form and mail it. Commission staff manually process the request form and the processing fee. Again, this is then transferred to a third-party vendor who prints and mails the card.

The Commission is transitioning to a new process that is more efficient and convenient for both customers and staff. The new process, as of May 2025, is using Tyler Technologies to produce hard card fulfillment, and customers receive their cards in two to four weeks. Tyler Technologies runs HuntFishPA ([huntfish.pa.gov](http://huntfish.pa.gov)), which is the license sales platform for our customers. The Commission is working on transferring all the legacy BSEC data to HuntFishPA. If a customer has purchased a fishing license, hunting license, launch permit, or renewed their boat registration within the HuntFishPA platform, the Commission will be adding the BSEC as an eligibility to their HuntFishPA profile if they have completed a BSEC. For people who don't have an existing customer profile, a limited access profile will be created for them.

Coming soon, duplicate/replacement orders will be submitted electronically by the customer, and a copy of their BSEC will be available for on-demand printing. If a boater doesn't want to purchase a duplicate hard card, they may present the paper copy or present the certificate on their phone to the Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO). Additionally, the certificate will be visible to WCOs in the customer's profile on the Pocket Warden app, giving officers real-time ability to check BSECs. In the past, officers had to call Commission headquarters to find out if a person obtained a BSEC. This option was not available outside of normal business hours. In addition to the time savings for the WCOs, this change will decrease staff processing time and reduce the fulfillment timeframe from four to six weeks to two to four weeks.

As an additional safety enhancement for staff, the Commission established a policy that requires staff who operate boats as part of their job to complete the BSEC regardless of their experience, date of birth, or type of boat. Staff who operate motorboats must also complete a hands-on motorboat operation training session. On that same note, Executive Director Tim Schaeffer has encouraged all Boating Advisory Board members to take an approved boating safety education course to enhance their awareness and to understand what we ask of our boaters to operate in Pennsylvania.

#### **D. Legislative Update**

Kailee Glock provided a legislative update. Senate Bill 800 was introduced by Chairman Rothman and would allow flexible use of Fish and Boat Funds. The language in this bill would provide for the use of Fish and Boat Fund expenditures where mutual benefits to both anglers and boaters can be demonstrated. It would require a record of spending to ensure transparency and accountability, and an annual reports submitted to document spending. As of June 2, 2025, this Bill was referred to the Senate Game and Fisheries Committee. There have been favorable conversations with Chairman Rothman and we hope to see the advancement of this legislation.

House Bill 992 is a reintroduction from last year and sponsored by Representative Delloso for the restructuring of the Boating Advisory Board (BAB). This would remove the Executive Director and Boating Director from the BAB and formally add the two Boating-at-Large Commissioners to the BAB, increasing efficiency and consistency. The Bill was referred to the Senate Game and Fisheries Committee on May 12, 2025. It received third consideration in the House on May 7, 2025, and was voted unanimously.



Both Senate Bill 476 and House Bill 1418 relate to boating safety education. These bills would amend Title 30 Pa.C.S. § 5103 and allow regulation implementation for boating safety education requirements for electric personal watercraft coming on the market. Currently, boating safety education certificates are required for certain boaters. Within this section of the law, there are exemptions where a boating safety education certificate is not required, such as the operators of boats of 25 horsepower or less. In today's market, more watercraft are available that use electric motors, some of which are high-speed. This bill would remove the electric motor exemption, allowing the Commission to promulgate regulations for newer watercraft, like efoils and jetboards, to be considered personal watercraft and ensure boating safety requirements are in place. These respective bills were referred to the Senate Game and Fisheries Committee and the House Game and Fisheries Committee and we are hoping to receive favorable consideration.

House Bill 103 addresses abandoned and derelict vessels (ADVs) and was reintroduced from last year's session. This bill would provide clear definitions; give authority to local governments to investigate, address, and remove ADVs in their jurisdiction; and increase penalties for violators, as well as restitution costs. This bill was referred to the Senate Game and Fisheries Committee as of May 12, 2025, and received third consideration in the House on May 7, 2025.

#### **E. Abandoned and Derelict Vessels Research Project**

Mark Sweppenhiser provided an overview of the Abandoned and Derelict Vessels (ADVs) Project. For the past six months, the Commission has been collaborating with Duquesne University to research and explore solutions to ADVs. Some key takeaways from the spring 2025 semester include establishing costs to remove ADVs, exploring disposal alternatives to landfills, and identifying potential partners. Duquesne University students provided options that included estimated potential value of ADVs, costs for disposal, and suggestions for alternatives to landfills.

Students recommended a salvage and resale program, allowing for the recovery and reselling of valuable components of the boat, such as the engine, hull, wiring, and electronics. This option reduces landfill waste and is cost-efficient, with an estimated benefit of up to \$5,300 on a 25-ft vessel. Furthermore, partnering with recyclers and scrap yards would allow for potentially lower startup costs for someone entering this line of work.

Students also recommended fiberglass-to-cement recycling which diverts fiberglass from landfills and cuts the greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 16% through the use of recycled boat fiberglass into cement production, allowing long-term environmental benefits and preserving valuable landfill space. This option requires coordination with cement plants, further research on engineering specifications and a method to store and transport the product to its final location.

Another recommendation was to use unwanted boat hulls for artificial reef conversion which would help boost marine habitats and avoid costly disposal costs. This option would be a long-term ecological benefit to marine fisheries and relatively easy to start. Some considerations such as suitable water locations, removing potential toxins from the craft and removing the

flotation materials from the hull and replace this flotation with a denser product. Potential partners for this option include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) or ocean reef programs.

Duquesne University students also recommended actions the Commission may implement immediately. Proactive measures such as specific information on how the public may safely dispose of boats so they do not become ADVs, detail the dangers ADVs pose to the environment, and financial costs to government or dangers for emergency responders. Additionally, provide the public methods on how to report suspected ADVs if found on waterways, and inform the public of potential fines for improper disposal of vessels. The implementation of the students' recommendations are partially contingent on the passage of House Bill 103.

Building on the momentum of the spring 2025 collaboration, Duquesne University has committed to continuing the ADV project through the summer semester. The students are challenged to take the supply of unwanted fiberglass boats and create a sustainable business model, where the supply creates a profitable demand. Their task is to find a way to create demand for the product at a lower cost than the cost of disposal at a landfill. They are to focus on the southwest portion of the state where there have been as many as 25,000 fiberglass boats registered and of those boats approximately 7,000 boats are not currently registered. These 7,000 boats previously registered, but not currently registered, have the potential to become part of the supply of abandoned boats. To address this issue a vessel turn-in program could be created as part of the proposed business to meet a demand for recycled fiberglass.

The 2026 NFL Draft in Pittsburgh presents a timely incentive to increase public and media attention on the city's rivers. It offers a chance to improve aesthetics, promote public-private partnerships, and launch a business model that could eventually be franchised or scaled statewide. Students have been asked to create a business portfolio and presentation suitable for an entrepreneur to address the issues identified in the Duquesne spring semester. To facilitate this endeavor the students were divided into four areas, each addressing a key component of the venture: operations, logistics, funding and partnerships, administration and communication.

The Commission remains committed to continue support for this research and ultimately solving the ADV issue. The need for academic and business collaboration is a model for innovation and provides community-driven environmental stewardship. The Commission welcomes ideas, partnerships, and stakeholder feedback as we move into the next phase of the project. Those with interest in participating or supporting the initiative are encouraged to reach out to the Commission.

**IX. Other Business**

The next Boating Committee Meeting will be held on July 8, 2025, at 2:30 p.m.

The next Quarterly Commission Meeting will be held on July 28-29, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

**X. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by Steven Ketterer and seconded by Loren Lustig. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 10:58 a.m.

DRAFT