

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

**MINUTES FOR
THE BOATING ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

**Tuesday, June 30, 2026
1:00 p.m.**

Members

Chair Rocco Ali
Roy Finney Jr.
Teresa Guerrein
Michael Hills
Brian Kane

Members Ex Officio

Ryan Dysinger for Cindy Adams Dunn, Secretary,
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Charles Charlesworth, Boating At-Large Commissioner
Vice Chair Steven Ketterer, Boating At-Large Commissioner

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 - A. Quarterly Commission Meeting
 - i. July 27, 2026
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 - i. September 28, 2026
- VIII. Adjourn

I. Call to Order, Welcome, and Roll Call

The virtual meeting was called to order by Chair Rocco Ali at 1:00 p.m.

The Chair welcomed new member, Michael Hills, to the board and congratulated Steven Ketterer on his appointment to the Commission's Board of Commissioners.

Board members in attendance included:

Chair Rocco Ali
Roy Finney Jr.
Teresa Guerrein
Michael Hills
Brian Kane
Ryan Dysinger, ex officio member
Commissioner Charles Charlesworth, ex officio member
Vice Chair Commissioner Steven Ketterer, ex officio member

Guests in attendance included: Rick Taylor, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Auxiliary State Liaison Officer; Seth Wagner, USCG Specialist, State Program Coordinator; Derek Eberly, Director, Governor's Advisory Council for Hunting, Fishing and Conversation; Brian Whipkey, Outdoors Columnist for the USA Today Network; Samantha Romano, Manager, Northeast Government Relations at National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA); and Kurt Bresswein, Supervising Reporter for Lehigh Valley Live.

II. Review and Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve March 23, 2026, meeting minutes by Steven Ketterer and seconded by Brian Kane. The motion carried.

III. Public Comment

Robert Schefter reported that no public comment was received.

IV. Old Business

A. Amendment to 58 Pa. Code § 91.2 (Definitions).

This amendment defines the term "public property." This amendment was previously recommended by the Boating Advisory Board (BAB) and approved by the Commission for publication of notice of proposed rulemaking. However, upon review of the Office of Attorney General, it was determined the amendment required a minor edit before it could be published for public comment. PFBC's Chief Counsel, Robert Schefter, advised that the edit was not substantive, therefore the BAB and Commissioners would not need to vote again on the proposal. The amendment was published for public comment and will be considered as final rulemaking at the Commission's July 27th meeting.

B. Amendment to 58 Pa. Code § 93.13 (Issuing Agents).

This amendment was previously recommended by the BAB and approved by the Commission for publication of a notice of proposed rulemaking. This amendment aligns the process for applying to be a temporary boat registration issuing agent with the process for fishing license issuing agents. It was published for public comment and will be considered as final rulemaking at the Commission's July 27th meeting.

V. New Business

No new business.

VI. Discussion Items

A. National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA)

Mark Sweppenhiser provided an overview of the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA), noting its importance to boating safety and regulatory consistency nationwide. NASBLA is a nonprofit organization representing recreational boating authorities in all states and territories and serves as a liaison between the states and the U.S. Coast Guard on boating safety and policy matters.

NASBLA plays an instrumental role in developing model acts, public policy recommendations, boating education standards, professional training, and many other resources for the states' boating programs. The organization also promotes initiatives such as Operation Dry Water and provides standardized training programs for maritime law enforcement officers to ensure consistency across jurisdictions.

An overview of NASBLA's policy committee structure was provided, including the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission staff representatives serving on those committees: Ryan Walt, Education and Outreach; Tom Edwards and Justin Schillaci, Enforcement and Training; Mark Sweppenhiser, Engineering, Reporting and Analysis (ERAC); Amanda Sonon, Finance and Grants; Adam Spangler, Paddlesports; and Tigh Savercool, Vessel Identification, Registration and Titling (VIRT).

B. Abandoned and Derelict Vessel (ADV) Implementation

Mark Sweppenhiser presented the first half of the discussion on Act 28 of 2025, which establishes a statewide process for handling abandoned, derelict, and at-risk boats in Pennsylvania. The Act defines vessel classifications, sets notification requirements, authorizes municipalities and law enforcement to remove vessels, provides liability protections, allows restitution for removal costs, and outlines forfeiture and ownership-transfer procedures for unclaimed vessels.

He reviewed vessel definitions, notification timelines, municipal liability protections, and the loss of ownership claims after required notice periods. He stressed the importance of correctly identifying a vessel's status, noting that derelict vessels may still have active owners, and at-risk

vessels generally remain claimable once fines or restitution are paid. He also reminded municipalities to retain receipts for storage, cleanup, and removal to support restitution requests. Staff added that Commission databases and forms help municipalities locate owners and standardize the process.

Ty Savercool presented the second half of the discussion and provided an implementation update since January 2026. He reported that submissions are processed within one business day, most involve identifiable owners, and the U.S. Coast Guard Vessel Identification System (VIS) has been effective for identifying out-of-state owners. He reviewed available website resources, including the ADV-001 form, notification templates, checklists, and guidance materials. He also noted NASBLA's pending model act incorporated lessons from Pennsylvania's experience.

Mark Sweppenhiser concluded with lessons learned, including clarifying public property definitions, coordinating with private salvors, resolving ownership issues involving trailers and motors, addressing situations where non-owners may live aboard abandoned vessels, and managing funding challenges for complex removals. Staff reported that Act 28 has effectively supported municipalities in removing abandoned vessels on both waterways and land, with land-based impoundments more common than expected. The Act provides a clear process for removal and disposal before vessels become hazards. The Commission will continue refining procedures and sharing lessons learned with national partners.

C. Boat Incident Reports, Distraction Data

Mark Sweppenhiser presented an overview of boating incident reports and ongoing distraction related data collection efforts conducted through NASBLA's Engineering, Reporting, and Analysis Committee (ERAC). Pennsylvania is participating in a multi-state pilot project with several other states to gather additional information on operator inattention, improper lookout, and operator inexperience as contributing factors in boating incidents.

As part of this initiative, the Commission has implemented an addendum to boating accident reports to document incidents involving operator inattention, improper lookout, and operator inexperience. The enhanced data collection captures factors such as onboard and background lighting, use of electronic and wireless communication devices, passenger interactions, environmental conditions, and unfamiliarity with vessel operation or local waterways.

Preliminary analysis of Pennsylvania's 2025 boating incident data indicates that operator inattention, improper lookout, and operator inexperience contributed to several incidents involving injuries and fatalities. Staff noted that the information collected through the pilot project will support future boating safety education and outreach, potential legislative or regulatory updates, and planned improvements to the U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Accident Report Database (BARD) system scheduled for implementation in 2027. The data may also help manufacturers identify potential vessel design flaws and assist law enforcement in making informed decisions during incident investigations.

D. Boat Rental Businesses and Kayak Rental Kiosks

Adam Spangler provided an update on the Commission's ongoing efforts to strengthen safety messaging and communication with Pennsylvania's boat rental businesses. Enhancements to the program include expanded outreach through newsletters, officer visits, and new training opportunities aimed at improving consistency in safety orientations and regulatory compliance. Staff also noted a recent increase in inquiries from prospective rental businesses seeking information on startup requirements.

An overview was shared on the use of HuntFishPA, the Commission's online license sales platform, to support rental businesses through organizational accounts that help maintain current contact information and streamline communication with the Commission. Staff indicated that additional functionality may be explored to further assist rental operations and enhance safety messaging.

The presentation also addressed the emergence of self-service kayak rental kiosks in Pennsylvania and the Commission's work to ensure these operations comply with existing boat rental safety requirements. Staff emphasized that rental kiosk operators must provide site-specific safety information, applicable boating laws and regulations, required safety equipment details, and information on local hazards before releasing equipment. Customers must acknowledge receipt of this information as part of the rental process.

In response to questions about oversight of site-specific hazards, staff explained that the Commission reviews compliance with boat rental regulations and collaborates closely with kiosk operators to ensure appropriate safety information is tailored to the waterbody where equipment is used. Staff noted that the three kiosk operations currently known in Pennsylvania are located on lakes and that additional considerations would be necessary for moving water environments.

The discussion also highlighted opportunities to expand boating safety education for first-time paddlers and new paddlecraft owners. Staff outlined recent initiatives to provide safety information through retailers, launch permit materials, online resources, and free paddlesports safety courses. The Commission's recent regulatory updates for boat rental businesses and partnerships with retailers and manufacturers were also cited as ways to improve safety awareness among new participants.

Staff concluded by noting that they will continue working with kiosk manufacturers, rental businesses, retailers, and host sites to ensure safety requirements are integrated into rental platforms and customer orientations as self-service kiosks become more common across the Commonwealth.

E. Clean Vessel Act (CVA)

Mark Morrison presented an overview of the Clean Vessel Act (CVA) program, a federally funded initiative established in 1992 to reduce pollution from recreational vessel sewage discharges by expanding access to pump-out stations and waste-reception facilities. The program supports the construction, renovation, operation, and maintenance of these facilities to improve water quality and protect aquatic resources.

Funding comes from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund and is administered as a 75-percent federal, 25-percent matching grant program. Eligible applicants include marinas, yacht clubs, local and state governments, and nonprofit organizations. Grants may be used for pump-out stations, mobile pump-out boats, facility maintenance, signage, and boater education and outreach.

Morrison highlighted several complete projects, including upgrades at Lighthouse Harbor Marina on Lake Wallenpaupack and the Presque Isle Yacht Club on Lake Erie. These improvements increased reliability, safety, and efficiency while making use of existing infrastructure where possible.

Staff also reported that the Commission is updating its statewide inventory of pump-out facilities and conducting outreach to facility owners about available funding. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is currently accepting applications, and the Commission plans to apply for inland grant funding during the current cycle. A call for projects is expected in spring 2027 following the award of federal funds.

F. Legislative Updates

Kailee Glock provided a legislative update and recognized the advocacy efforts of Commission staff for their work advancing legislative initiatives affecting the Commission.

Staff reported that the Senate Rules and Executive Nominations Committee unanimously confirmed Mr. Ketterer as the Commission's Boating At-Large Commissioner and reappointed Commissioner Bill Brock and Commissioner B.J. Small to their respective districts. Staff expressed appreciation for their continued service and noted that they look forward to working with them in their official capacities.

An update was also provided on House Bill 2392, introduced by Representative Kerry Benninghoff, which would update Pennsylvania's boating under the influence (BUI) law to more closely align with existing driving under the influence (DUI) statutes. The legislation adds refusal provisions for individuals who decline chemical testing for breath or blood, revises felony grading for repeat offenses, and increases penalties for repeat offenders. Staff noted that the bill is intended to improve consistency between BUI and DUI laws, strengthen public safety measures, and deter impaired operation on Pennsylvania waterways. The legislation has received support from NASBLA and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and is currently awaiting further consideration by the House following amendments adopted by the House Judiciary Committee on June 8, 2026.

G. Operation Dry Water and Boating Under the Influence (BUI) Enforcement

Jeffrey Sabo provided an overview of Operation Dry Water, the national boating under the influence (BUI) awareness and enforcement campaign conducted annually over the Fourth of July holiday weekend. He explained that the initiative, established in 2009, combines heightened enforcement with public outreach and education to reduce impaired boating and promote safe operation on Pennsylvania waterways.

During the 2025 campaign, Waterways Conservation Officers contacted 2,683 vessels and more than 4,600 boaters through enforcement actions, safety inspections, and educational interactions. Staff emphasized that the campaign allows officers to address not only BUI violations but also broader boating safety issues and equipment requirements, while increasing public awareness through media events and outreach conducted in partnership with other agencies.

An overview of officer training and BUI detection methods was also presented. Staff described the Commission's use of National Highway Traffic Safety Administration field sobriety training, NASBLA's seated field sobriety testing program designed specifically for marine environments, advanced impairment-detection instruction, and annual refresher training. They highlighted the importance of practical scenarios and vessel-stop exercises in preparing officers for on-water enforcement.

Staff additionally provided an update on House Bill 2392, which would align Pennsylvania's BUI laws more closely with existing DUI statutes, including provisions addressing repeat offenders and prior Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition (ARD) participation within a ten-year lookback period.

Finally, staff discussed ongoing efforts to provide seated field sobriety test training to municipal law enforcement agencies in York, Cumberland, and Centre counties. This training equips officers with additional tools for impairment detection in situations where traditional standing field sobriety tests may not be practical and reflects the Commission's continued partnership with local agencies across the Commonwealth.

VII. Other Business

The next quarterly Board of Commissioners Meeting will be held on July 27, 2026.

The next Boating Advisory Board Meeting will be held on September 28, 2026.

VIII. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Ryan Dysinger and seconded by Michael Hills. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.