



February 01, 2022

Office of Governor Tim Walz & Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan
130 State Capitol
75 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Saint Paul, MN 55155

CC:

Commissioner Sarah Strommen, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Senator Bill Ingebrigtsen, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Chair
Senator Carrie Ruud, Environment and Natural Resources Policy and Legacy Finance Chair
Representative Rick Hansen, Environment and Natural Resource Finance and Policy Chair
Policy Advisor Rachel Ganani, Office of Governor Tim Walz & Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan

Honorable Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and leaders in the lake and recreational boating communities, we respectfully request your support for a mandatory recreational boating safety education program in Minnesota.

Boating and lake life is woven into the fabric of life in our great state, as many Minnesotans use their boats to enjoy our many lakes and rivers. In fact, Minnesota ranks second in the nation for registered boats with more than 825,000 registered boats, which equates to nearly one boat for every six people.

With continued growth and popularity of boating also comes a responsibility to look out for our community through establishing safety standards and best practices to protect aquatic ecology and decrease conflicts among user groups so that everyone can enjoy the waters in a responsible manner for years to come. As outdoor recreation is at an all time high, the time is now to implement boater education to ensure all are safe on the water and are the best stewards of the resource.

Most states require some form of boater education, and while Minnesota requires an operator safety education course for every other motorized recreational product, it does not require such a course for boating. It is our collective priority to expand access and participation in boater education programs.

We would like to see the Minnesota legislature adopt mandatory boater safety education for all operators and believe that the Department of Natural Resources is best suited to lead community and stakeholder outreach on curriculum and implementation. Furthermore, we request the coursework be certified by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA), to meet its nationally recognized requirements.



Together, we can work together to establish a program that is:

- An education course with national recognition and offers reciprocity for users.
- A proven way to dramatically improve boater safety on the water.
- An opportunity to deliver key messages on best practices to protect aquatic ecology and reduce conflicts among users of our many lakes and rivers.
- Expanding awareness on the threat of aquatic invasive species and puts additional responsibility on boaters to prevent the spread.

Last, we believe the best way to implement the program would be through an inclusive effort that brings together the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, lake and river advocates, anglers, resort owners, the recreational boating industry, and other relevant stakeholders. It is important to establish statutory authority via the legislature for the Department of Natural Resources to expand and implement boater safety education. However, we strongly believe the Department of Natural Resources should regularly convene stakeholders most impacted by boat and lake use to develop the best practices and policies moving forward.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you on improving boater safety in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

Joe Shneider
President
Minnesota Coalition of Lake Associations (MN COLA)

Jeff Forester
Executive Director
Minnesota Lakes & Rivers Advocates (MLR)

Matt Gruhn
President
Marine Retailers Association of America (MRAA)

Jill Sims
Manager of Great Lakes Policy & Engagement
National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA)

Gabriel Jabbour
Owner
Tonka Bay Marina



March 8, 2022

Greetings,

Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates is an association of over 250 lake associations and county coalitions of lake associations, resorts, anglers, marina owners and others who are working to protect Minnesota's lake and river heritage.

This means protecting water quality and protecting and advancing the recreational experiences and the local recreation based economies in Minnesota.

I am writing in support of HF 3787, Watercraft operator safety education and permitting required. HF 3787 is critically important to protecting public safety, preventing conflicts among different user groups, and protecting lake ecology. Much work has been done to bring together a broad coalition of groups to work on this issue. I would like to thank engaged legislators and key partners Jill Simms, from National Marine Manufacturers Association, Matt Gruhn, Marine Retailers of Americas, Gabriel Jabbor, Tonka Bay Marina and Joe Schneider, Minnesota Coalition of Lake Associations for the work they have done to bring this bill forward.

Basic boating safety has been well developed and ongoing research by the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center and the St. Anthony Falls Lab at University of Minnesota will allow MN DNR and partners to build an educational track that will protect public safety, decrease the risk of aquatic invasive species spread, lower user conflicts and protect shorelines, lake sediments and lake ecology so that the critical resource services of our lakes can be maintained even as boating recreation expands into the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Forester".

Jeff Forester
jeff@mnlakesandrivers.org

March 07, 2022

Representative Rick Hansen
Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee
407 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: Boating & Fishing Support for HF3787 by Recreational Boating & Fishing Community

Dear Chair Hansen, Vice Chair Wazlawik, Ranking Member Heintzeman & Committee Members

On behalf of leaders in the recreational boating and fishing community, the undersigned organizations respectfully request your support for HF3787 – establishing a mandatory recreational boating safety education program in Minnesota.

Boating and fishing is vital to our way of life in our great state, as many Minnesotans enjoy our 11,842 lakes and many rivers. In Minnesota, we have over 825,000 registered boats and about 1.4 million licensed anglers. It's no wonder that boating and fishing are the top economic driver in the outdoor sector according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis 2020 Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account data.

As we continue to see growth in boating and fishing, we believe it is our responsibility to look out for our community and establish safety standards and procedures so that everyone can enjoy the waters in a responsible manner for years to come. As outdoor recreation is at an all time high, the time is now to implement boater education to ensure operators are safe on the water and we continue to be the best stewards of the resource.

The majority of states require some form of boater education, and while Minnesota requires an operator safety education course for every other motorized recreational product, it does not require such a course for boating. It is our collective priority to expand access to and participation in a boater education programs through online accessible coursework and in person opportunities.

We urge the committee to support this bill as it establishes:

- An accessible education course with national recognition and reciprocity for users.
- A proven way to dramatically improve boater safety on the water.
- An opportunity deliver key messages tailored for boaters using our many lakes and rivers.
- Creates further awareness on the threat of aquatic invasive species.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you on improving boater safety in the days ahead. If you have any questions please contact Jill Sims at the National Marine Manufacturers Association (612-961-2220 or jsims@nmma.org) or Chad Tokowicz at the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas (978-569-5127 or chad@mraa.com).

Sincerely,

Absolute Outdoor of America, LLC
Association of Marina Industries
Bean's Greenwood Marina
Bertha Boatworks
BoatU.S.
CD3 Systems
Hannay's Inc
MarineMax Bayport
MarineMax Excelsior
MarineMax Rodgers
Marine Retailers Association of the Americas
Metro Area Marine Dealers
Midwest Marina Association
Midwest Water Sports
Minnesota Inboard
MN-Fish Sportfishing Coalition
National Marine Manufacturers Association
Nisswa Marine
North Central Marine Association
Premier Marine
Port of Sunnyside Club, Inc.
River Valley Marine
Water Sports Industry Association
Wildlife Forever
Wolf Marine, Inc.
Yamaha Marine USA

MINNESOTA Boater Education: The Time Is Now

Key advocates in the boating and lakes and rivers communities have come together to seek implementation of a mandatory boater education program for motorized boat operators in Minnesota. **In the Land of 10,000 Lakes, we have more than 825,000 registered watercraft, and it is vital to keep users safe on the water and be good stewards of the water.**

Our waterways are Minnesota's most cherished natural resource. With record levels of recreation participation on those lakes and rivers and streams, it is more important than ever that we protect and maintain the safety, cleanliness and health of our aquatic ecosystems. Through a more formal boater education approach throughout Minnesota, we seek to unite the many stakeholder groups and create a strong civic partnership that will provide for recreational enjoyment, public safety, a strong lake-based economy and the long-term health of our waterways.

Who does it impact?

Minnesota Boat Operators: Expands from current youth operator requirement to eventually include all boaters through a phased-in approach based on a born-on date.

Out-of-State Boat Operators: Boaters operating a privately owned watercraft.

Rental Boat Operators: Individuals without boater education completed from their home state.

How do I become compliant?

Minnesota Boat Operators: Take and pass the online boater education safety course through the MN DNR platform, just like hunting safety or other recreational vehicles. In-person courses may become available for those interested.

Out-of-State Boaters: Meet the boater education requirements in your home state if operating in Minnesota waters less than 60 days. If over 60 days, follow Minnesota boater requirements.

Rental Boat Operators: Review summary of boater statutes and regulations provided by rental company. Take short, state approved, exam administered by rental company and initial the appropriate safety checklist.

What will the education course look like?

Coursework accessible online for users, just as youth operator course is now.

Stakeholders will work with MN DNR to use the best available science and most recent safety guidelines to write and prioritize curriculum through a public engagement process.

Relevant Minnesota boating specific information will be available.

Nationally recognized course so Minnesota boaters can have reciprocity when boating in other states.

Why now?

Minnesota is one of a handful of states that does not require boater education for boaters.

According to U.S. Coast Guard data, boater education courses dramatically improve a boater's chance for a safe and fun time on the water.

An opportunity to deliver key messages tailored for boaters using Minnesota's many lakes and rivers.

Creates further awareness on the threat of aquatic invasive species and puts additional responsibility on boaters to prevent the spread.

