



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