



National Association of State Boating Law Administrators Policy Position on Registering Non-Powered Vessels

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Committees: Numbering & Titling; Paddlesports

Background

There is a need for the states, as well as the U.S. Coast Guard, to know how many non-powered vessels are being operated in this country. (Non-powered vessel is the term used here to identify watercraft such as canoes, kayaks and other vessels propelled by paddles, oars or poles.) The majority of the states do not require the registration of non-powered vessels.

There are a number of advantages to registering non-powered vessels:

- Ability to trace the vessel if it is stolen
- Source of statistical information for non-powered vessel accidents, fatalities and other incidents.
- Defrays the costs of programs that directly benefit paddlers, such as the acquisition and development of access sites, river safety programs (removing or marking hazards), barrier float systems, rescue training, portages, and campsites.
- Defrays the costs associated with the printing and distribution of safety pamphlets and water trail maps.
- Funds can be used for search and rescue operations for lost and drowned paddlers, as most boating fatalities are capsizing and falling overboard accidents involving small boats and canoes, as well as infrastructure and amenities to assist paddlers with the safe access to and around water. Such amenities may include paddle trail development and improvement, carry-down landings, river campsites and mapping services, and can provide for long-term continuation of services.
- Aids law enforcement officers in the identification of abandoned, capsized and stolen non-powered vessels, an ultimate benefit to the vessel owner.
- Ability to inform the non-powered vessel owners of changes in the law, such as PFD requirements, if the vessels are numbered and a mailing list of owners is available.
- Aids law enforcement officers to identify all vessels for homeland security purposes

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Because of the number of advantages to registering non-powered vessels and especially identifying vessels for homeland security purposes -- NASBLA supports registration of motorized and non-powered vessels, which may include alternative methods of numbering non-powered vessels.

Policy References

NASBLA Model Act for Numbering and Titling of Non-Powered Vessels

Policy Letters