

Testimony regarding Abandoned and Derelict Vessels in Pennsylvania

Before the
Game and Fisheries Committee

by
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Dear Chair Astorino, Republican Chair Maloney, and members of the Game and Fisheries Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to present the National Marine Manufacturers Association's (NMMA) perspective on Abandoned and Derelict Vessel (ADV) issues. NMMA has worked extensively on ADV issues throughout the United States to implement best practices for mitigating the proliferation of derelict watercrafts.

NMMA is the leading trade association representing the recreational boating industry in North America. NMMA member companies produce more than 80 percent of the boats, engines, trailers, and accessories used by boaters and anglers throughout the United States and Canada. Importantly, an estimated 95 percent of traditional power boats (outboard, sterndrive, inboard and jet boats) sold in the U.S. in 2018 were made in the U.S.

Boating is big business in Pennsylvania, with an estimated annual economic impact of \$4.5 billion. The Pennsylvania boating industry supports over 16,000 jobs and 557 businesses.

In the formulation of policies pertaining to derelict vessels, we advocate for a comprehensive approach that considers both the life cycle of the watercraft and the degree of negligence exhibited by the owner in its upkeep. Such considerations are paramount in identifying and addressing derelict vessels promptly, thereby forestalling further degradation of our waterways and potential harm to the environment.

I would like to further draw your attention to two areas of ADV policy that warrant significant consideration:

1. Definition of Abandoned and Derelict Vessels:

- Drawing inspiration from Florida's ADV classification program, we support the establishment of clear definitions for different types of abandoned and derelict vessels. Specifically, delineating between "wrecked," "junked," and "substantially dismantled" vessels would provide clarity and consistency in identifying and addressing these maritime hazards.

2. Allocation of Sustainable Funding:

- Upon securing sustainable funding, we advocate for the diversion of funds from recreational vessel registration fees or related recreational funding towards the

removal of recreational ADVs. The substantial disparity in costs between the removal of recreational and commercial vessels underscores the need for targeted allocation to optimize resource utilization.

We firmly believe that incorporating diverse definitions or categories for derelict vessels will enhance the efficacy of removal efforts, thereby mitigating risks to human safety and environmental integrity. By prioritizing the removal of vessels posing the greatest threats, we can safeguard Pennsylvania's waterways as vibrant recreational hubs and vital ecosystems.

Moreover, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) Derelict Vessel Grant Guidelines, which afford ongoing grant applications with no fixed deadlines contingent upon the availability of funding, have produced expeditious and efficacious intervention results to date. Furthermore, the provision mandating an opportunity for vessel owners to contest the designation of their vessels as derelict ensures procedural fairness and adherence to due process.

Considering the exemplary precedent set by the FWC's program, we respectfully urge the committee to contemplate the adoption of analogous policies and grant programs within Pennsylvania. By investing in the expeditious removal and disposal of derelict vessels, the state can effectively discharge its custodial responsibilities towards our waterways, promote public safety, and preserve the ecological integrity of our natural environs for posterity.

In conclusion, we commend the Game and Fisheries Committee for your inclusive approach in gathering further information to implement a robust ADV plan that accommodates varied perspectives. We remain committed to supporting the implementation of initiatives aimed at preserving the health and vitality of our waterways.

Should you require any further information or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at Jmcardell@nmma.org. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jesse McArdell". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jesse McArdell

Midwest and Northeast Policy and Engagement Manager

National Marine Manufacturers Association

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