

STATE OF OHIO
State-Specific Boating Safety Requirements

SL 1. Law Enforcement Authority

Law enforcement officers of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Watercraft, as well as state parks and wildlife officers, sheriff's deputies, and any other authorized law enforcement officer, in general, have the authority to enforce all boating safety laws, conduct vessel inspections in accordance with state law, and order the removal of a vessel deemed as an interference or hazard to public safety. Law enforcement officers may also stop a vessel to check for compliance with boating safety equipment requirements. The USCG also has enforcement authority on all federally controlled waters.

The Ohio River is a boundary between Ohio and the states of Kentucky and West Virginia. Numerous enforcement agencies patrol this river and each has the authority to enforce boating safety laws and assist boaters in distress. The Ohio River is considered to be "federal waters" and boaters need to comply with all U.S. Coast Guard requirements. When operating on the river all State of Ohio watercraft laws are in effect.

SL 2. Age Restrictions

Anyone born on or after January 1, 1982 must meet the mandatory education requirements listed in the next section (Boater Safety Education Requirements) before operating a vessel powered by more than 10 horsepower.

No person under 16 years old is allowed to operate a personal watercraft (PWC) unless they meet all of the following requirements:

- The individual is 12 to 15 years old and
- A supervising person 18 years old or older is on board the vessel with them at all times. In the case of a supervising person born on or after January 1, 1982, the supervising person must hold a National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA)-approved boating safety certificate.

A person under 12 years old may not operate a PWC under any circumstances.

Youth under 12 years old cannot operate a motorcraft powered by more than 10 horsepower (excluding PWCs) unless he or she is under the direct visual and audible supervision of a person who is 18 years old or older. In the case of a supervising person born on or after January 1, 1982, the supervising person must hold a NASBLA-approved boating safety certificate.

No supervising person shall allow any violation of watercraft law.

SL 3. Boater Safety Education Requirements

The law prohibits a person born on or after January 1, 1982, from operating a vessel powered by more than 10 horsepower unless the person has successfully completed either a boating education course approved by NASBLA or a proficiency examination approved by Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Watercraft.

If someone born on or after January 1, 1982, is operating a vessel powered by more than 10 horsepower and is stopped by a law enforcement officer on Ohio waters, he or she must produce a certificate of completion of either an approved course or proficiency test no later than 72 hours after being stopped. Proof that the person holds such a certificate may also be provided within the 72-hour period instead of the actual certificate. Failure to present the

certificate or proof of holding a certificate within the 72-hour period is enough evidence to be considered in violation of the law.

In addition to a basic boating safety course, new boaters should continue their education by taking a course on boat handling and operation. It is important that state boating safety laws are updated on an annual basis. Boaters must stay informed of these changes.

SL 4. Vessel Registration

Titling

Vessels must be properly titled, if required, and registered to operate on Ohio waters. A boat title is similar to a car title as they both provide proof of ownership. Boat titles are obtained from the title office of the new owner's county of residence. A boat may not be registered until a title, if required, is issued in the new owner's name. The following vessels must be titled:

- An outboard motor of 10 horsepower or more;
- A watercraft 14 feet or greater in length;
- A watercraft less than 14 feet in length with a permanently affixed mechanical means of propulsion of 10 horsepower or more.

Watercraft exempt from titling requirement:

- USCG-documented vessels;
- Canoes and kayaks;
- Watercraft under 14 feet in length if not equipped with a permanently affixed mechanical means of propulsion;
- Watercraft under 14 feet in length if equipped with a permanently affixed mechanical means of propulsion of less than 10 horsepower;
- Boats from other countries temporarily using Ohio waters;
- A ship's lifeboat;
- Boats owned by government agencies;
- Motors under 10 horsepower.

Sailboards (commonly called windsurfers) and manually propelled inflatables without a hull identification number are not considered a watercraft by definition. Therefore, the Ohio registration and titling laws do not apply.

Numbering

Every watercraft operated on Ohio waters must be numbered by this state or in compliance with the operator's own state numbering system and must properly display the identification number on their vessel.

Exemptions include:

- USCG-documented vessels;
- Watercraft numbered by another state and not used in Ohio for more than 60 days;
- Vessels from a country other than the United States temporarily using Ohio waters;
- Watercraft owned by the United States, a state or political subdivision;
- Ship's lifeboats. (a "lifeboat" is held aboard another vessel and used exclusively for emergency purposes);
- Vessels exempted by the chief of the Division of Watercraft;
- Vessels under a waiver issued for a race or special event.

The registration number in the State of Ohio begins with the prefix "OH," followed by four numbers and two letters. The number must be painted, applied as a decal or otherwise affixed to both sides of the forward part of the boat or PWC, and must read from left to right on both

sides of the boat or PWC. The numbers must be in at least 3" high block characters of good proportion and the color must contrast with its background. The letters must be separated from the numbers by a space or hyphen (i.e., "OH 1741 AK"); no other numbers can be displayed.

Registering

Numbering and registering a watercraft are two separate functions. Operating a watercraft without a valid registration is prohibited. Evidence of this registration is shown by displaying the two issued registration tags and carrying the original registration certificate on board the vessel. The tags must be placed on each side of the bow 6" toward the stern from the number prior to the operation of the watercraft. All expired tags or decals must be removed.

Registration certificates and tags are valid up to 3 years and expire on March 1 of the year indicated.

Watercraft exempt from registration include:

- Those exempt from numbering EXCEPT documented vessels;
- Those issued a commercial documentation and used exclusively for commercial purposes;
- Vessels meeting another state's registration system requirements that are used in Ohio for fewer than 60 days.

SL 5. Maximum Loading and Horsepower

The State of Ohio does not have any maximum loading and horsepower requirements that are in addition to federal regulations. To review federal regulations, refer to the section on Capacity Plates included in Chapter 1 of this course.

The following information was approved by NASBLA and is included in Chapter 1 of the Boater101 Course:

Capacity Plates

It is required for all mono-hull boats under 20 feet built on or after November 1, 1972 to have a capacity plate approved by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). In addition some manufacturers voluntarily install capacity plates on boats larger than 20 feet. This plate must be visible from the operator's station. The capacity plate lists a safe motor size, the maximum number of persons to be carried onboard and the total weight the boat can carry including persons, motor and gear. When operating your boat be sure to adhere to the restrictions listed on the capacity plate. Not only is it dangerous to overpower or overload a small boat since they can swamp or capsize more easily but also illegal. In many states, there are fines and penalties for exceeding capacity recommendations, including carrying more than the maximum number of people.

For vessels that are not equipped with a capacity plate, the following formula can be used to calculate the number of persons (averaging 150 lbs each) the vessel can carry safely in good weather:

$$\text{Number of people} = \text{vessel length (feet)} \times \text{vessel width (feet)} \div 15$$

SL 6. Equipment and Lighting Requirements

The USCG sets minimum safety standards for vessels and associated equipment. To meet these standards, some of the equipment must be USCG-approved. All boats operating on Ohio waters must carry and, if required, have in operation, acceptable personal flotation devices (PFDs), visual distress signals, fire extinguishers, sounding devices, backfire flame arrestor, ventilation systems, and navigation lights as required by federal law. If a boat manufacturer installs the safety equipment, it should not be assumed that the vessel is properly equipped at

time of purchase. Boat owners are responsible for ensuring that his or her vessel meets USCG regulations in accordance with vessel size and the waters in which the vessel is being operated. To review the federal requirements for safety equipment, refer to Chapter 2 of this course.

PFD Requirements

Mandatory PFD Usage:

No vessel under 18 feet long with a child under 10 years of age onboard may operate unless the child is wearing a PFD. The PFD must be USCG-approved Type I, II, or III, in good and serviceable condition, of the appropriate size, and securely attached.

Commercial Vessel PFD Requirements:

A commercial vessel under forty feet (40 feet) in length and not carrying passengers for hire must carry one Type I, II or III PFD for each person onboard the vessel.

A commercial vessel carrying passengers for hire or is 40 feet in length or longer and is not carrying passengers for hire must carry one Type I PFD for each person onboard the vessel. If the commercial vessel is 26 feet in length or longer, it must have at least one Type IV ring life buoy in addition to the above requirements.

PWC Operator/Water Skier/Other Towed Person PFD Requirements: ORC 1547.18

A PWC must not be operated unless each person aboard is wearing a USCG-approved PFD type I, II, III, or V. It is unlawful to ride or attempt to ride upon water skis, surfboards, inflatable devices or similar devices being towed by a vessel without wearing an adequate and effective USCG-approved Type I, II, III PFD or a Type V PFD specifically designed for water-skiing, in good and serviceable condition, and of appropriate size. No vessel operator may tow any person who fails to comply with this law.

Anchor Requirements:

Ohio requires that all watercraft must have an anchor and line of sufficient weight and length to anchor the watercraft securely. The following vessels are exempt from this requirement:

- A vessel less than 14 feet in length;
- A canoe or kayak;
- A sailboat less than 21 feet in length.

It is important to choose the correct anchor for the size of boat and the bottom type. A length of chain between the anchor and line will improve the holding ability of most anchors. When anchoring, use at least 5 to 10 times as much anchor line as depth of the water. This allows horizontal load on the anchor that will greatly improve the anchor's holding ability. Remember to anchor from the bow, not the stern.

Visual Distress Signals Requirements:

When operating on Ohio waters other than federally controlled waters, such as Lake Erie or the connecting bays, harbors, and anchorage areas, the vessel must be equipped with a distress flag at least two square feet and orange in color or a USCG-approved daytime distress signal.

The required visual distress signals must be USCG-approved, in good and serviceable condition, and readily accessible. The following are options of the types and quantities of required visual distress signals:

- Three (3) Hand Held Orange Smoke (for day use only)
- Three (3) Floating Orange Smoke (for day use only)
- One (1) Orange flag (for day use only)
- Three (3) Hand Held Red Flares (for day and night use)
- Three (3) Parachute Red flares (for day and night use)

- Three (3) Red Aerial Pyrotechnic Flares (for day and night use)
- One (1) Electric Distress Signal (for night use only)

NOTE: Distress signaling devices must comply with ORC 1547.69 - firearm restrictions, which states that no person may knowingly transport or possess a distress-signaling device in a loaded condition on a vessel other than immediately prior to discharge of the device for the purpose of signaling for assistance.

Exemptions to the visual distress signal carriage requirement exist. On Lake Erie or the immediately connecting bays, harbors and anchorage areas, an exempted vessel must carry approved visual distress signals for night use between sunset and sunrise.

Exempted vessels during daylight hours only include:

- Vessels in an organized marine event or race;
- Manually propelled vessels;
- Sailboats less than 26 feet in length with completely open construction and without propulsion machinery.

SL 7. Marine Sanitation Devices (MSDs)

Recreational vessels with installed toilet facilities must have an operable MSD on board. Vessels 65 feet and under may use a USCG-certified Type I, II, or III MSD. Vessels over 65 feet must install a USCG-certified Type II or III MSD. USCG-certified devices are so labeled except for some holding tanks, which are certified by definition under federal regulations.

Except on Lake Erie, the Muskingum River, and the Ohio River, no person shall launch, moor, dock, operate, or permit to be operated any vessel with a sink, toilet, or sanitary system capable of discharging urine, fecal matter, contents of a chemical commode, kitchen wastes, laundry wastes, slop sink drainage, or other household wastes into Ohio waters. Such a sink, toilet, or sanitary system must be removed, sealed or made to drain into a tank or reservoir that can be carried or pumped ashore for disposal in an approved sewage treatment works.

SL 8. Muffling Devices

To reduce noise, motorboat engines must be equipped with factory-installed mufflers, exhaust water manifolds or other effective muffling system. The following noise levels must not be exceeded on any powercraft:

- 90 decibels on the "A" scale in a stationary sound level test prescribed by the Society of Automotive Engineers standard number J2005. (Measured from one meter with engine at low idle speed when at dock or tied to another boat.)
- 75 decibels on the "A" scale measured as specified by Society of Automotive Engineers standard number J1970. (Measured from shoreline with boat in any level of operation, not less than 200 feet away.)

It is unlawful to remove, alter, or modify a muffler in a way that prevents compliance with this section. No person shall operate or allow to be operated a powercraft with an altered muffler or muffler cut out or in a manner that bypasses or reduces the effectiveness of any muffler system.

SL 9. Boating Accidents

If a boat is involved in an accident, the operator must give necessary assistance to the other vessel and passengers, as long as it will not personally endanger the operator, his or her passengers, crew or the vessel. The operator must also give his or her name, address, and the identifying number of his or her vessel to anyone injured in the accident and to the owner of any damaged property. Anyone who renders assistance at the scene of an accident involving a

vessel is not liable in a civil action for damages or injury from any act or omission in rendering assistance, except for willful or wanton misconduct.

If the accident results in loss of life, injury requiring medical treatment beyond first aid, or damage to property in excess of \$500, the operator must file a full report on a prescribed form. If the operator is incapacitated, an officer must file the form instead.

The following is a list of the Watercraft Field Offices that you can contact to obtain a copy of the Boating Accident Report Form, or download it from Chapter 1 of this course in the section discussing Boating Accidents.

Headquarters

Michael E. Quinn, Acting Chief
2045 Morse Road, Building A
Columbus, Ohio 43229-6693
614-265-6480
1-877-4BOATER (Ohio only)
Fax: 614-267-8883
watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

Akron

Bill Staiger, Area Supervisor
2756 South Arlington Road
Akron, Ohio 44312
330-644-2265
akron.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

Alum Creek

Tony DeLong, Area Supervisor
3305 S. Old State Road
Delaware, Ohio 43015
Voice: 740-548-5490
Fax: 740-548-4945
alumcreek.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

Cambridge

John Bird, Area Supervisor
1225 Woodlawn Avenue
Cambridge, Ohio 43725
740-439-4076
cambridge.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

Cleveland

Dan Fuller, Area Supervisor
1150 East 49th Street
Cleveland, Ohio 44114
216-361-1212
cleveland.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

East Fork

Karen Muench, Area Supervisor
3292 Elklick Road
Bethel, Ohio 45106
513-734-2730
cincinnati.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

Maumee Bay

Sam DeWalt, Area Supervisor
1400 State Park Road
Oregon, Ohio 43618
419-836-6003
maumeebay.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

Portsmouth

Dean Palmer, Area Supervisor
640 Second Street
Portsmouth, Ohio 45662
740-353-7668
portsmouth.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

Sandusky

Jeff Nehls, Area Supervisor
1630 Sycamore Line
Sandusky, Ohio 44870
419-621-1402
sandusky.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

Springfield

Marilyn Hinderer, Area Supervisor
1976 Buck Creek Lane
Springfield, Ohio 45502
937-323-1582
springfield.watercraft@dnr.state.oh.us

SL 10. Vessel Speed Restrictions

Every vessel must proceed at a safe speed so that it can take proper and effective action to avoid collisions and be stopped within a distance appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions. In determining a safe speed the following factors must be taken into account:

- Visibility;
- Traffic density;
- Maneuverability including stopping distance and turning ability in the prevailing conditions;
- At night the presence of background light;
- Wind, sea, current, and proximity of hazards;
- Draft in relation to depth of water;
- Additional factors for vessels with radar.

It is unlawful to operate a vessel in designated "swim areas," areas buoyed off as "no boats," or within any restricted area in violation of the designated restriction. It is also not permitted to operate a vessel at greater than idle speed or create a wake within 300 feet of any marina, boat docking facility, boat gasoline dock, launch ramp, recreational boat harbor, or harbor entrance regardless of whether buoys are present. Vessels may not operate at greater than idle speed or create a wake in any area buoyed as "no wake" or "idle speed."

Special Rules for Operating on the Ohio River

No Wake Zones

Ohio law states that any watercraft operating within 300 feet of a marina, gas dock or launching area must travel at no wake or "idle speed." Boat operators are responsible for any damage that their wake may cause. Stay in the main channel of the river when operating at greater than idle speed.

No wake or idle speed is also enforced during the period from sunset to sunrise according to local time within any water between the Dan Beard bridge and the Brent Spence bridge on the Ohio River for any vessel not documented by the U.S. Coast Guard as commercial.

Most of the creek and backwater areas leading to the Ohio River are also zoned as no wake. (Check with your local enforcement agency.)

Rules of the Road

When operating on waters where a current is present:

- A vessel heading downstream has right of way over a vessel heading upstream.
- Recreational watercraft are sharing the river with large commercial vessels that are confined to a channel. Boaters must yield the right of way to them.
- A vessel crossing a river shall keep out of the way of a powerdriven vessel ascending or descending the river.

When operating the vicinity of a narrow channel:

- A vessel in a narrow channel shall keep as near to the right side of the channel as is safe and practical;
- A power vessel proceeding downbound with a following current shall have right-of-way over an upbound vessel;
- Vessels less than 20 meters long, sailing vessels, vessels engaged in fishing, or vessels crossing the channel shall not impede passage of a vessel that can safely navigate only within a channel;
- Vessels shall avoid anchoring in narrow channels; An overtaking vessel shall indicate its intention by sounding the appropriate signal and take steps to permit safe passing. The overtaken vessel sounds the same signal if in agreement;
- A vessel nearing a bend or an area where vessels may be obscured by an obstruction shall navigate with caution and sound appropriate signals;
- Vessels leaving a dock, slip, tie-up or mooring shall yield the right-of-way to all vessels approaching.

A **security zone** spans Mile Marker 119 to 119.8 of the Ohio River encompassing 200 feet from the West Virginia shoreline near the PPG Plant in Natrium, WV. Boating through or anchoring in the security zone is prohibited.

SL 11. Mooring to Markers or Buoys

It is unlawful to moor or attach a vessel to a beacon, light, buoy (except a mooring buoy) or any other navigational aid installed on public waters by proper authorities. It is also unlawful to tamper with, move, displace, damage or destroy any navigational aid.

SL 12. Reckless and Careless Operation

It is unlawful to operate a vessel, water skis or similar device:

- Carelessly or heedlessly;
- Without due caution;
- In disregard of the rights or safety of any person, vessel, or property;
- At a rate of speed or in a manner so as to endanger any person, vessel, or property.

It is unlawful to operate or permit operation of a vessel in an unsafe manner. Unsafe operation includes:

- Becoming airborne while crossing the wake of another vessel within 100 feet or an unsafe distance;
- Operating at a speed or proximity to a vessel or person being towed so as to require either vessel to swerve to avoid collision;
- Operating less than 200 feet behind a water-skier;
- Weaving through congested traffic.

All vessels must be operated in a reasonable and careful manner at all times. If there is an unsafe condition, a law enforcement officer may determine that such unsafe condition presents an especially hazardous condition to persons aboard a vessel and may direct the operator to take immediate, reasonable actions to correct the situation. This includes directing the operator to return the vessel to shore until the condition is corrected or has ended. If the vessel operator refuses to terminate the operation of the vessel after being ordered to do so, it is considered a violation of the Ohio Revised Code.

The following situations present unsafe conditions:

- Insufficient personal flotation devices;
- Insufficient fire extinguishers;
- Overloaded, insufficient freeboard for the water conditions in which the vessel is operating;
- Improper display of navigation lights;
- Fuel leaks, including fuel leaking from either the engine or fuel system;
- Accumulation of or an abnormal amount of fuel in the bilges
- Inadequate backfire flame control;
- Improper ventilation.

Restrictions on Moving Vessels

No occupant of a vessel underway is permitted to sit, stand, or walk on any area not designed for that movement except when immediately necessary for safe and reasonable navigation or operation. No person shall permit any occupant to violate this requirement or operate or permit operation of any vessel in violation of this requirement.

SL 13. Interference with Navigation

It is unlawful to:

- Anchor a vessel in the traveled portion of a river, channel or other waterbody that will prevent or interfere with any other passing vessel.
- Obstruct a boat ramp, pier, wharf or access to any facility.

- Obstruct or mark the waters of Ohio in a way that may endanger the operation of watercraft or conflict with the marking system prescribed by the State of Ohio.
- Operate or otherwise position a vessel, other object or any person in a way that would obstruct or impede the normal flow of traffic on the lakes of this state.

SL 14. Boating Under the Influence

It is unlawful to operate or be in physical control of any vessel underway, or manipulate any water skis or similar device if the person is under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. A person is considered to be under the influence with a Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) of 0.08 or more.

NOTE: The legal detection limit for persons under 21 years of age is 0.02 Blood Alcohol Content (BAC).

Anyone who operates a vessel, water skis or similar device is deemed to have given consent to a chemical test or tests of their blood, breath, or urine to determine alcohol or drug content if arrested. If a person under arrest refuses to submit to a chemical test, the person is prohibited from operating a vessel or water skis or from registering a vessel for a one-year period. If the person is the owner of the vessel, the registration certificate and tags will be impounded for a one-year period.

Penalty for Operating Under the Influence of Alcohol or Drugs	
Offense	Minimum/Maximum
First	3 days jail \$150 fine / 6 months jail \$1,000 fine
Second	10 days jail \$150 fine / 6 months jail \$1,000 fine
Third	30 days jail \$150 fine / 6 months jail \$1,000 fine

SL 15. Mandatory Violator Education

Ohio has no regulations requiring mandatory violator education at this time.

SL 16. PWC Regulations

PWCs are those vessels (boats) designed for operation by a person sitting, standing, or kneeling on the craft rather than sitting or standing inside the vessel. PWCs include, but are not limited to, jet skis, wet bikes, wave runners and similar craft. PWCs are considered powered vessels and must abide by the same rules and regulations as any other boat. Although PWCs are considered to be a Class A boat, they are engineered differently than most boats. Since they are a jet boat, the water being forced out through the steerable nozzle controls the direction of the boat. If you release the throttle or shut-off the ignition, you will lose all steering control. When operating a PWC, boaters should avoid being stranded by carrying a full fuel reserve tank.

Additional PWC Regulations:

- All PWC operators and passengers must wear a USCG-approved PFD.
- Operators on personal watercraft equipped with a lanyard type engine cutoff switch must attach the lanyard to their clothing, PFD, themselves or as appropriate for the specific devices.
- No person shall operate a PWC between sunset and sunrise.
- No person who owns or has charge over a PWC shall permit operation in violation of laws.
- A PWC must be at least 100 feet from another vessel to become airborne while crossing a wake.
- The minimum age for PWC operators is 16. Adult supervision is required for 12-16 year olds to operate PWCs (See Section 2 - Age Restrictions).

SL 17. Water Ski Regulations

Anyone who rides or attempts to ride upon water skis or a similar device or who barefoot skis, or any boat operator who tows a skier must confine that activity to a designated ski zone or open zone.

Exceptions to this regulation exist on Lake Erie, the Ohio River, and immediately connected harbors and anchorage facilities where these zones have not been established. No person shall permit operation of a vessel in violation of this regulation.

Observer Required when Towing Skier

Anyone who operates a vessel towing a person on water skis, surfboard, other similar devices or barefoot skier must have an observer 10 years of age or older in the vessel to observe the person being towed at all times. The vessel operator should not watch the person being towed but must remain focused on observing the traffic pattern. It is unlawful to permit operation of a vessel in violation of this regulation.

Water-Skiing After Dark Prohibited

No person shall water-ski or be towed on any device, or operate a vessel towing a person between sunset and sunrise except upon special permit. Consult an official sunrise-sunset table of the local area for exact times.

SL 18. Divers-down Flag

Various requirements exist for snorkeling and scuba diving. Permission may be required by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation to dive in specific areas.

When diving, mark the diving area with an official Divers-Down flag at the water's surface. Boats must stay at least 300 feet away from displayed Divers-Down flags. Divers should ALWAYS dive with a companion; NEVER dive alone. Divers must also notify the park office before diving.

SCUBA diving is permitted at 29 lakes in 28 Ohio state parks, as listed below:

Northeast Ohio

- Guilford Lake
- Findley Lake
- Jefferson Lake
- Mount Gilead Lake
- Punderson Lake

Northwest Ohio

- Harrison Lake

Central Ohio

- Alum Creek Lake (designated area is the "no-wake" zone)
- Madison Lake

Southeast Ohio

- Adams Lake
- Belmont Lake (Barkcamp State Park)
- Burr Oak Lake (not within 1,000 feet from the dam or outlet structure)
- Cutler Lake (Blue Rock State Park)
- Dillon Lake (north of the "no-wake" buoys)
- Forked Run Lake
- Lake Hope
- Lake Logan

- Lake White
- Pike Lake
- Caldwell Lake and Stewart Lake (Scioto Trail State Park)
- Dow Lake (Strouds Run State Park)
- Pine Lake (Tar Hollow State Park)
- Turkey Foot Lake (Shawnee State Park)
- Wolf Run Lake

Southwest Ohio

- Acton Lake (Hueston Woods State Park -- not within 1,000 feet from the dam or outlet structure)
- C.J. Brown Reservoir (Buck Creek State Park -- designated area is the "no wake" zone)
- Caesar Creek Lake (designated area is the "no wake" zone)
- Kiser Lake
- Stonelick Lake

More information on the parks is available from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources website at <http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/parks/activities.htm>.

SL 19. Liveries (Rental Agencies)

No person who lets vessels for hire, or the agent or employee thereof, shall rent, lease, or otherwise permit the use of a vessel, unless the person provides the equipment required for that particular vessel.

The pilot or engineer of any powercraft for hire to carry passengers shall not permit passengers to come aboard before the engine of such powercraft has been permitted to run for a minimum of two minutes.

It is unlawful for a rental business to lease or rent a powercraft powered by more than 10 horsepower to a person born on or before January 1, 1982, unless the renter meets one of the following conditions:

- The person signs the rental agreement or attachment indicating that they have completed an approved boating course or proficiency exam as indicated above;
- The person receives educational materials from the rental business and passes an abbreviated exam with a score of 90% or better. Achievement of the passing score will be indicated on or attached to the rental agreement.

Anyone born on or after January 1, 1982, that operates or supervises the operation of a leased or rented powercraft, must meet the requirements above and be named as an operator on the rental agreement.

SL 20. Other State-Specific Regulations

Firearm Restrictions

Except for those legally engaged in hunting, no one is authorized to discharge a firearm while in or on a vessel or transport or have a loaded firearm in a vessel in such a manner that the firearm is accessible to the operator or any passenger.

It is unlawful to transport or have a firearm in a vessel, unless it is unloaded and carried in a closed package, box, or case OR in plain sight with the action open or the weapon stripped. These requirements do not apply to the possession or discharge of a USCG-approved distress-signaling device when the device is possessed or used for the purpose of giving a distress signal. Such signaling devices shall only be loaded immediately prior to discharging a legal signal of distress. It is unlawful to operate or permit operation of a vessel in violation of this section.

SL 21. Environmental Awareness

Protecting the Environment

Laws prohibiting speeding in no-wake and shore zones, littering, discharging sink, toilet or sanitary systems into the water are designed to protect the environment. Under Ohio law, litter is any trash thrown, discarded or dropped by a person onto public property, private property not owned by the individual, or into Ohio's waterways. The Ohio law describing littering from a watercraft vessel is similar to the law addressing littering from a motor vehicle. No operator or occupant of a vessel, regardless of whether or not it was intentional, may discard or deposit litter in any Ohio waters. The operator of a watercraft vessel can also be held responsible for allowing litter to be dropped out of the vessel by another person. Littering is a serious offense, punishable by fines of up to \$500 and 60 days in jail. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) is committed to keeping Ohio clean and beautiful.

By observing the following suggestions, you will help conserve our waterways for future use:

- Proceed slowly in shallow areas to avoid stirring up sediment. This will prevent interruption of the natural life cycle of the ecosystem;
- Watch your wake. Boat wake can erode shoreline. Not only is this unsightly but silt builds up which requires expensive dredge removal;
- Secure trash and dispose of it properly on shore. Recycle items when possible;
- Use environmentally friendly products on your boat. These may include non-phosphate liquid detergents, biodegradable soaps and non-acidic teak cleaner among others;
- Properly dispose of hazardous products with high concentrations of toxins. Avoid using wood preserver, turpentine, paint thinners and dangerous cleansers on or near the water;
- Know and use legal bottom paints. When scraping bottom paint, treat paint chips as hazardous waste when disposing of them;
- Remove all oil from the bilge. An oil absorbent bilge cushion can help in this effort. New technology is being used to create products which are proving effective in removing petroleum hydrocarbons from bilge water;
- Flush winterizing agents and antifreeze from the engine prior to launching each season;
- Don't top off your tank when fueling. This will reduce the risk of a fuel overflow and allow room for expansion in the tank. Make sure you wipe up all gasoline and oil spills;
- Support marinas that are environmentally conscious. They will assist you in recycling oil, antifreeze, aluminum, and provide a pump out facility for your sanitary system.

Lowhead Dams

Lowhead dams are deceptively dangerous and have caused numerous drowning incidences around the country. Ohio has an abundance of these types of dams on rivers throughout the state. Over the years, houseboats, fishing vessels, powercraft and canoes have all fallen victim to lowhead dams.

Lowhead dams may range from a twenty-five foot drop-off to a mere six-inch drop-off. Some dams are very wide while others are relatively narrow. Interestingly, the characteristics of the water moving over the dam are the same regardless of the size of the dam. Part of the deception is that most people would associate danger with a dam that has a significant drop off and fast flowing water. It is important to realize that the danger presented by a lowhead dam is as great with a two- or three-foot dam face and a moderate flow of water. The dam design, depth, volume and velocity of water combined determine the risk for boaters.

Danger lurks both above and below a lowhead dam. On the surface, water flowing over a drop forms a hole or hydraulic at the base which can trap objects washing over the top of the dam. Backwash or recirculating current is then formed below the dam. Once swept over the dam, a victim becomes trapped by the hole and is forced underwater. Once underwater, the victim is pushed away from the dam and then circulated back to the top. This cycle is then repeated

again and again as the individual becomes exhausted struggling in the current. To keep both you and your vessel safe, the best option is to avoid boating near lowhead dams altogether.

Dangers to Boaters:

- Dams are difficult to spot from upstream and often are not marked by signs or buoys;
- Dam hydraulics are unpredictable;
- Dams can deceive even experienced boaters;
- The concrete walls at the side of the dam face block the exit route for individuals trying to escape;
- Areas immediately downstream also present risk as the water is flowing upstream;
- Rescuing trapped individuals is dangerous and often unsuccessful.

Safety Tips to Follow:

- Scout the river and know the location of hazards. Talk with boaters who are familiar with the river to gain additional knowledge;
- Boat with experienced, responsible boaters and learn from them;
- Watch for a smooth horizon line where the stream meets the sky. This potentially indicates the presence of a dam;
- Look out for concrete retaining walls which are part of the dam structure and easier to spot;
- Portage around all dams;
- When portaging, re-enter the river at a point well downstream of the undertow.
- It is nearly impossible to escape the strength of the hydraulic when trapped. The best thing to do if in this situation is to tuck the chin down, draw the knees up to the chest with arms wrapped around them. Hopefully, conditions will be such that the current will push the victim along the bed of the river until swept beyond the boil line and released by the hydraulic.
- If attempting a rescue of a trapped person, always wear a PFD. Throw a line from shore to the person in danger. Untrained rescuers should never approach the hydraulic in a boat. Call for help if possible.

Ohio State Parks

Ohio State Parks have defined areas that may specifically restrict or permit certain activities including boating and/or other water sports. On Ohio State Park lakes, state watercraft, park, and wildlife officers, sheriff's deputies or other law enforcement units having jurisdiction in the area may enforce watercraft laws. Boating areas within other jurisdictions may have similar regulations.

Special Activities Permit - No person shall conduct any special activity on Ohio State Park waters without obtaining a permit 30 days prior to the anticipated event.

Locks

As a boater, you should know that water levels fluctuate in inland bodies of water depending on a variety of factors including precipitation levels and temperature. In order to help maintain a consistent depth of water on a river or lake, Dams were created to aid in navigation. Since Dams have one level of water above the dam and another below, a system of locks is used to assist in the safe passage of a vessel from one level to the other. When boating in an inland waterway in Ohio, make sure you follow these procedures when utilizing the lock system:

- When planning your outing, be sure that you check the hours of operation for any lock that will be encountered. Be aware that designated craft such as United States military vessels, commercial passenger craft, commercial tows and commercial anglers have priority over recreational boats.
- When approaching a lock at idle speed, sound one long blast followed by one short blast to indicate your desire to lock through. On the Ohio River, use the pull chain located on the short lock wall to activate the whistle.

- Do not block the way of priority vessels or watercraft exiting or entering the lock. Especially stay clear of barges and other large vessels that can create a current, drawing smaller boats into their path.
- Avoid restricted zones and the areas at the end of lock walls at all times.
- Wait well upstream or downstream of the lock until permission is granted to enter the lock chamber.
- Enter the lock only after the lockmaster directs you and grants permission to proceed. Either flashing lights or horn blasts will be used to communicate with you. Radio communication is available with lockmasters on the Ohio River. Channel 16 may be used as an emergency hailing channel to contact them initially. You will be directed to transmit on Channel 13 or 14. Communications may not interfere with the transmissions between tows.
- Loosely tie your craft to the mooring devices in the lock to permit your boat to rise and fall with the water. Use floating mooring devices when available. Boat fenders may be used to protect the hull of your boat.
- Carry a minimum of 50 feet of mooring line. When mooring, make sure your lines can rise and fall with the water level. Do not tie to a fixed object.
- Stay seated and wear your PFD.
- Depart the lock at idle speed when signaled by the lockmaster or the signal light.

By following these proper locking procedures, you can ensure that your boating experience is both safe and fun for you, your passengers, and other boaters.

Additional Information

For more information on Ohio boating law refer to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources at <http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/watercraft/opsguide/default.htm>, and the Ohio Revised Code - Title 15 for Natural Resources; Watercraft and Waterways in Chapter 1547 at <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/1547>.