Michigan Proposed Watercraft Registration

What is the Resolution?
The Michigan State Waterways Commission proposed a resolution in 2016 that would require paddlers to pay a fee to register their boats. The Waterways Commission recently amended the original resolution, and posted Resolution 02-2018-01. The proposed resolution amends current law on watercraft registration in the State of Michigan, and requires all rigid-hulled kayaks and canoes to be registered at a rate not to exceed $10.00/yr. per boat, and provides for a seasonal pass for non-resident craft at $10.00/yr.

The ACA encourages paddlers to consider the proposal and read the proposed language to determine whether it includes the following elements, to determine if the proposal is in the best interest of the Michigan paddling community.

ACA’s Points of Consideration for Paddlecraft Registration Legislation:

1. The merits of the registration proposal must outweigh the bureaucratic and financial burden to paddlers;
2. The proposal must enjoy widespread support from paddlers in the state and be endorsed by a majority of the state’s paddling clubs;
3. The proposal cannot require the placement of traditional boat numbers, as they are too large for most paddlecraft;
4. The proposal should have a fee structure that reflects the lower enforcement, access, and pollution costs associated with canoes, kayaks & SUPs;
5. The proposal should ensure that registration is convenient and affordable for paddlers that own multiple canoes, kayaks and SUPs;
6. The proposal should take into consideration reciprocity with other states; and
7. The proposal must include adequate guarantees that the funds derived from registration will be used to effectively serve the needs and interests of the paddlesports community – including a yearly or bi-annual report online similar to the State of Ohio.

What Happens Next?
The Michigan Waterways Commission submits the proposal for consideration to the legislature. The legislature then decides to draft the proposal in the form of a bill, and the bill would then need to make its way through both the Michigan House and Senate in order for the proposed bill to become a law.

What Can You Do?
The ACA recently sent a notice to all Michigan members making them aware of the proposal from the Waterways Commission, and encouraged members to write their representatives to voice their feelings and position, either in support of or against the resolution. Currently, there are seven other states that have boat registration laws including: Ohio, Alaska, Illinois, Oklahoma, Iowa, Minnesota, and Pennysylvania. The ACA encourages members to reach out to paddlers in those states to get a better understanding of how these programs impact the paddling public.

It is possible that boat registration fees are a good thing if the fees collected go to riparian, ocean, and lakeshore land conservation efforts and the paddling public has adequate
representation in state government through an appropriate agency that earmarks the collected funds in ways that clearly benefit the paddling community.

It is essential that the paddling community deeply engages in the process if they want to guarantee an outcome that provides paddlers with clear benefits.

Please contact ACA Public Policy Chief, Brett Mayer, at bmayer@americancanoe.org if you would like more information, and visit the Michigan State webpage on www.americancanoe.org to review the full Waterways Commission Proposal, in addition to other relevant documents.

Sincerely,

Brett Mayer
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