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**Strategic Plan for Ohio Boating 2011-2015**

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Chief’s Message

Developed with extensive stakeholder input, the Strategic Plan for Ohio Boating 2011-2015 focuses on promoting recreational boating as a fun and safe recreational pursuit. This plan serves as a guidance document designed to assist in the detailed planning and goal-setting activities of the Division over a five-year framework.

I hope this document provides beneficial insight and enhanced understanding of how the ODNR Division of Watercraft seeks to fulfill its mission in service to Ohio boaters. My sincere hope is that you, as a boating stakeholder, will monitor our efforts to ensure these strategic outcomes are successfully obtained in a timely and cost-efficient manner. With this plan the Division of Watercraft continues on course to enhance safe, fun enjoyment on high-quality streams and waterways in Ohio.

Sincerely,

Pamela S. Dillon, Chief
ODNR Division of Watercraft
Our Mission Statement

The Division of Watercraft shall provide the finest boating services, facilities, protection, and education for users of Ohio’s waterways through the innovative and wise use of our resources.

Our Vision

A dedicated and skilled team of employees, volunteers, and partners empowered to respond to the needs and desires of the recreational boating public while providing an environment that ensures the highest quality boating experience for all who use Ohio’s waterways.

Our Guiding Principles and Values

We respect and value our external and internal customers, recognizing their diversity, knowledge, and needs.

- Practice highest ethical and professional standards.
- Provide timely, quality customer service.
- Encourage self-improvement and employee pride.
- Promote and implement teamwork and partnerships.
Executive Summary

Boating provides an opportunity to spend recreational time with friends and family or to have personal time alone on the water. Boating removes the distractions of hectic, everyday life. Recreational boating in Ohio enriches people's lives.

The ODNR Division of Watercraft is interested in promoting boating as Ohioans' choice for recreation as well as ensuring that such opportunities are safe and enjoyable. Our goal is to determine what our boating customers' highest priority needs are and to determine how we can improve the programs and services we offer.

This strategic plan presents a common vision that enables the Division of Watercraft to provide programs and services that benefit Ohio's boaters. It provides the framework for agency decision-making, budgeting, and program evaluation.

This plan was produced in a concerted effort with participation from Ohio's boaters and is a follow-up to The Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Watercraft Strategic Plan for the Twenty-First Century published in 1999 and A Strategic Plan for Ohio Boating published in 2004. Input we received from the boating public, the Waterways Safety Council, employees of the Department, and various organizations was utilized to identify the issues contained in this strategic plan.

The Division is funded by a portion of the state motor fuel tax (currently seven-eighths of one percent), boating registrations and titling fees, fines, a grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund Boat Safety Account (administered by the US Coast Guard), and other federal grants — all coming out of the pocket, in one way or another, of Ohio's recreational boaters.

“Wise use” is part of the Division’s mission and responsible management of our fiscal resources is essential to fulfilling that mission. Each strategic area includes specific, measurable program goals which guide financial and staffing resources ensuring wise use of boater funds. As requested by the boaters, Division efforts, funding, and resources are targeted to these 7 Areas of Emphasis:

**Boating Safety:** An educated and trained boating community enhances safety in the boating environment. The Division will continue its work with boating partners to offer and promote diverse boater education opportunities, from the mandatory boater education course to a heighten level of hands-on skill development course offerings in powerboat handling and safe boating practices. Educated and informed Ohio boating participants will understand and comply with a Boater’s Code of Conduct with emphasis on sober boating.

**Waterway Management & Facilities:** We will invest boating dollars into waterway access through construction of launch ramps, marinas, transient moorage, slips, docks, and other amenities. We will provide low impact stream access through work on public projects on Scenic Rivers. Water Trail development will further enhance public awareness of boating opportunities and support tourism on Ohio's waterways.
Resource Protection: The Division will work to ensure Ohio citizens enjoy the highest quality of boating opportunities possible on our state’s waterways while working with local communities to protect Ohio’s last remaining high quality rivers and streams.

Regulatory Stewardship: Educated and informed Ohio boating participants will comply with state’s alcohol and boating regulations. The Division will continue to develop and enhance partnerships with public and private organizations, constituent groups, government agencies, and the boating community to revise/refine current regulations and identify new areas of need.

Registration & Titling: The Division shall serve Ohio’s boaters using efficient, convenient, timely and accurate registration and titling processes. This would include Ohio’s 88 County Clerk of Court Title Offices, the statewide network of watercraft registration agents and law enforcement agencies.

Partner & Customer Interactions/Customer Satisfaction: The Division is dedicated to providing Ohio boaters and partners the information to meet their needs and expectations, provide a satisfying interaction with the Division, advance the quality of their Ohio personal boating experience, and enhance their level of program constituent support.

Organizational Development: Employees of the Division of Watercraft are an essential component to providing public safety and service to Ohio boaters. The Division is dedicated to training and supporting staff who are motivated to advance the Division Mission in service to the boating community.

The purpose of this plan is to continue a viable strategy for the Division of Watercraft to address issues important to the boating public. The Division continues to support innovative ways to enhance the recreational boating experience.

The Division of Watercraft is extremely grateful for the input we have received. Without assistance from our constituents and customers — namely Ohio’s boaters — it would have been impossible to complete this planning process. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Watercraft’s Strategic Plan for Ohio Boating 2011-2015 is a plan for all Ohio boaters, encompassing the diverse boating interests of all our customers who share our desire to make boating a safer and more enjoyable activity for themselves and future generations.
History of the Division

Overview
Prior to the late 1800s most boating in Ohio was done out of necessity for transportation and commerce. The Ohio and Erie Canal, which became operative from Akron to Cleveland in 1827, provided Ohio with an economic boon as well as a link to needed resources. The Miami and Erie Canal, which comprised three canals (the Miami Canal running from Cincinnati to Dayton, the Miami Extension, and the Wabash and Erie Canal), was officially designated in 1849.

Boating as a recreational activity was popularized by sailing regattas held on Lake Erie in the late 1800s. The first international sailing regatta on the Great Lakes was held at Put-in-Bay in September 1871. The Inter-Lake Yachting Association (ILYA) was conceived in July 1884 at Put-in-Bay Harbor and was formally organized at a January 1885 meeting of the Cleveland Yachting Association and the Cleveland Canoe Club. Interest in regatta sailing races was so great that in 1900 carrier pigeons were dispatched from a boat at the finish line to fly the results to the Sandusky Star, the local evening newspaper.

For many Ohioans Lake Erie weekends were not a recreational option, so inland Ohioans flocked to the rivers for recreational boating and fishing opportunities. Popular family vacation destinations were the Maumee, Miami, Muskingum, Tuscarawas, and Ohio rivers, which provided ample opportunity to spend on-the-water time with family and friends.

Production of the first Evinrude outboard motor in 1909 opened the doors to modern recreational boating. In the 1920s the high cost of owning and operating powerboats relegated their recreational use to mostly wealthy individuals. The Depression of the 1930s tremendously slowed the growth of recreational boating, but following World War II the demand for leisure time activities dramatically increased.

At that time boat owners registered their boats locally, for a particular body of water — thus requiring multiple registrations for a single vessel if it was used in different bodies of water. Also after World War II sailing enjoyed a resurgence, with competitive racing becoming very popular.

Waterways Safety Fund Established in 1955; Division Begins in 1960
In response to the dramatic increase in the number of recreational boats following World War II, the 101st General Assembly created the Waterways Safety Fund in 1955 (Ohio Revised Code, Section 1545.75). The fund was originally administered by the Division of Shore Erosion and was established to provide monies for construction and improvement of public facilities for boating on the navigable waters within Ohio. The fund also enabled the state to obtain federal matching funds for the establishment of harbors of refuge.

In 1958 the Federal Boating Act was passed in Congress. This Act enabled the United States Coast Guard to develop and administer a uniform numbering system for all of the states and allowed for a single statewide registration. A statewide registration replaced multiple, local registrations. The 103rd Ohio General Assembly passed Amended Substitute House Bill 928 in 1959, conforming
Ohio law to the concepts and objectives of the Federal Boating Act, and created the Division of Watercraft within the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. The main functions of the Division, which became operative January 1, 1960, were to register boats and motors and to fund capital improvement projects such as launch ramps and marinas. Local political subdivisions and sister state agencies applied yearly for funds to build or improve boating facilities.

The enactment of House Bill 949 in 1960 made Ohio the first state in the nation to adopt a uniform system of buoy markers to designate controlled operation areas of waters used for recreational boating.

Ohio law established a Waterways Safety Commission consisting of four members who served without pay and acted in an advisory capacity to the Administrator of the Division of Watercraft. In 1963 legislation changed the Commission’s name to the Waterways Safety Council, expanded the membership to five, and changed “Administrator” to “Chief” of the Division of Watercraft.

In 1963 the Division began providing assistance to political subdivisions, conservancy districts, and state agencies to establish and maintain local marine patrols.

**Registration and Titling Functions**

The issuance of Certificates of Titles and recording of liens (mortgages on watercraft and outboard motors) was initiated on January 1, 1964. With the enactment of Senate Bill 350 in 1971, boat and motor titling was transferred from the Bureau of Motor Vehicles and became the responsibility of the Division of Watercraft on December 21, 1971.

In 1980 boat registrations were changed from a one-year to a three-year registration period, and a renewal-by-mail system was established which provided added convenience to boaters while also serving as a very cost-effective procedure. The Division also stopped licensing outboard motors separately, and fees were established by watercraft length classifications.

In 1991 a study was conducted to document the basic structure, functions, activities, and related data of the Division of Watercraft’s information system. In January 1992, 12 computers were connected to the ODNR computer network, allowing the Division to share registration data and to better serve law enforcement and other needs. In 1998 the Watercraft Information System (WIS) was implemented. WIS is the database system used by the Division to keep track of registration and titling records and the history of the records. Annual upgrades to the system were performed for renewal of registrations via the Internet and the capability of changing addresses electronically. In 2004, an upgrade allowed for the issuance of online registrations by Watercraft Registration Agents. The system is continually being upgraded to respond to changes in technology and boaters’ needs and expectations.

In 1992 the Automated Titling Process System (ATPS) was initiated. All 88 counties were online by 1993. ATPS allows daily networking of all county titling offices with the Division of Watercraft. Cross-county titling came into existence in 2002, and in 2008 the electronic title law was revised to address outboard motors.

In 2000 a titling requirement went into effect for Personal Watercraft (or ‘PWC’ such as Jet Ski, Waverunner, or Sea Doo), creating a paper trail for ownership transfers of these expensive but
relatively portable watercraft. In 2002 the 12-character Hull Identification Number law affected many more boats. This law requires all boats in the state of Ohio to have a correct 12-character HIN at the time a registration or title is issued (boats built in 1973 or later) and after a transfer of ownership for boats that were built before 1973.

Temporary registrations came into being in 1999, allowing boaters to use their boats while waiting for title work to be completed. In 2002 an Alternative Registration for Hand-powered vessels became available. This law gives owners of hand powered canoes, kayaks, rowboats, racing shells, rowing sculls and inflatable watercraft an option to exempt their boats from the traditional numbering system.

With the Internet growing in availability, the Division began offering online boat registration renewals in 2001. Online services expanded in 2003 to include the ability to change your address. Since then services have expanded to allow boaters to renew multiple boats with one credit card transaction and the ability to renew Alternative Registrations online, as well as to renew registrations that had lapsed for up to two years. The convenience of the Internet has not been lost on our customers; online renewals now top 15,000 annually.

Ohio consistently ranks in the top ten states for the number of boat registrations: 424,700 registered boats in 2010 – a record high – ranks us ninth nationally.

Facilities & Boating Access
An original mandate of the Division in 1960 was to fund capital improvement projects such as launch ramps and marinas. Local political subdivisions and sister state agencies applied yearly for funds to build or improve boating facilities. Grants for public boating access improvement from the Division have topped $40 million since 1998. The largest facility built with Division funds has been the Middle Bass Island Marina.

The enactment of House Bill 949 in 1960 made Ohio the first state in the nation to adopt a uniform system of buoy markers to designate controlled operation areas of waters used for recreational boating. Our Aids to Navigation grant offers about $50,000 annually in buoys and signage to political subdivisions. The Division also manages federal grants for pumpout facilities as well as harbors of refuge for larger boats and dredging.

The Division completed the Boating on Ohio Waterways (BOW) plan in 2004 and has implemented many suggested strategies for improving boating access across the state. Research currently is being completed for a 2012 revision to the BOW plan, which helps keep waterways accessible to all boaters.

In 2005 House Bill 66 established the Marine Facility Low Interest Loan Program for the development of marine recreational facilities to both public and private entities.

As a response to the popularity of paddling as a recreational sport, the Division established an Ohio Water Trails program in 2005. Designated water trails offer not only boating enjoyment but also complementary activities like biking and hiking as well as geological and historical opportunities for interpretive learning. The Kokosing Scenic River was the first Ohio Water Trail, designated in 2005. Subsequent trails have been designated on the Muskingum River (2006), Sandusky
Bay/Lake Erie (2007), Vermilion River/Lake Erie/Black River (2009), and the Mad, Stillwater, and Great Miami rivers (2010).

In 2005 the Division began the labor of transferring all facility information into a geographic information system (GIS) database. Operational since 2006, this GIS allows for a more comprehensive view of boating facilities and their amenities. The facility database, coupled with GIS technology, allows for spatial analysis and provides the basis for a web-based mapping application that can produce on-demand maps. GIS also allows for more accurate publications such as the Boat Launch Guide & Map as well as water trail, scenic river, and paddling access maps and scenic river lands delineations. The facility database will be instrumental in revising the BOW plan.

Law Enforcement
The Federal Boat Safety Act of 1971 marked the beginning of the Division’s enforcement program. The first training academy for Watercraft officers was held at the Ohio State Highway Patrol Academy in 1972 and consisted of 16 officers. Six district offices were established throughout the state to serve the boating communities, enforce boating laws, and provide education programs.

In 1986 Ohio passed the “Implied Consent” statute requiring potentially intoxicated boat operators to submit to chemical tests when requested by law enforcement officers. Operating a watercraft while under the influence continues to be a major concern of the Division of Watercraft, as alcohol is involved in a high percentage of boating accidents. The original legislation prohibiting the operation of watercraft while under the influence (OUI) was enacted in 1970. With the passage of the revised legislation, the Division enhanced its ability to enforce OUI laws with the purchase of portable breath-testing equipment.

In 1988 the federal government passed legislation that required the U.S. Coast Guard to develop a Vessel Identification System (VIS) to share individual states’ vessel information as well as information on federally documented vessels. With such a system, it was thought that the Coast Guard and state law enforcement officials could more effectively identify information on vessels in our nation’s ports and waterways — the need for which has heightened since the September 11 terrorist attacks. Ohio became the first state to sign an agreement with the U.S. Coast Guard for participation in VIS in 2007.

In 2001 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary to partner with them in the Vessel Safety Check program. If Ohio boaters pass a vessel safety inspection, they benefit by receiving a state-issued decal that is recognized nationally.

Watercraft officers work with the U.S. Coast Guard at both the northern and southern borders of Ohio, on Lake Erie and the Ohio River. Also on Lake Erie, the Division is instrumental in the Northern Border Initiative, a law enforcement and protection partnership with other state agencies, U.S. Homeland Security, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Ohio Watercraft officers are among the best trained boating response agencies in the United States. In addition to patrolling, inspections, and education efforts, they provide emergency flood response, homeland security, and protection support for myriad activities in the state. Officers also provided assistance in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and Hurricane Ike in 2008.
Education Programs

The Federal Boat Safety Act of 1971 also marked the beginning of the Division’s education program. Watercraft officers in concert with local law enforcement and parks and recreation groups provide boating education programs and courses across the state. General boating education courses are enhanced by skill development courses that include sailing, paddling, navigation, and (planned for 2012) powerboating.

In 1978 the Division pioneered the development of the first river rescue program in the United States and Canada. An ad hoc committee on fast water rescue composed of paddlers, emergency medical technicians, and park rangers was spearheaded by the Division to develop safe, simple, and practical rescue techniques. This program received national and international awards and recognition.

In 1983 legislation was enacted to enable the Division to award grants for boater safety education to political subdivisions (non-profit groups became eligible in 1990). Over $2 million has thus far been awarded to community recreation departments, state universities, cities, counties, and townships. These grants enhance services provided by the Division and make more boating safety programs available at the local level.

A volunteer program was established in 1983 to support the efforts of paid staff by expanding available services. Volunteers donate thousands of hours each year by teaching courses, assisting in training, supporting law enforcement, and representing the Division at special events and shows. A large corps of volunteers assists with the Stream Quality Monitoring program.

In 1992 the Division of Watercraft began offering a standardized basic boating course. A year later, volunteers, marine patrol officers, and staff were certified as instructors in what is now called the Ohio Boating Education Course. This course, approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA), fulfills requirements of the National Boating Education Standards, and is recognized as meeting the mandatory education requirement in most U.S. states as well as Canada. The Ohio Boating Education Course continues to change as the national standards for boating safety education change, as NASBLA re-approval is required every three years.

In 1996 the Division of Watercraft entered into memoranda of understanding with the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary and the United States Power Squadrons to provide educational assistance with Ohio laws and safety requirements. These cooperative agreements greatly increased the Division’s long-standing, professional and successful relationships with both of these outstanding volunteer boating safety organizations. The diversity and convenience of the course offerings provided by these agencies collectively allow all Ohio boaters an opportunity to receive boating safety information and training at minimal cost and in proximity to their homes.

Ohioans witnessed the introduction and enactment of more boating legislation in 1998. House Bill 502 established a graduated mandatory education requirement for individuals born on or after January 1, 1982, when operating powerboats over ten horsepower. The law requires the successful completion of a course approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators or passing a proficiency exam. The effective date for the law was January 1, 2000. In response to this law, the classroom version of the OBEC class was revised to include a home study version as well as an online version that continues to be managed by a third-party vendor.
Because the law requires boaters to show proof of education, the Division keeps record of Ohio boaters who have achieved their education certificates. Since 2000, over 104,000 NASBLA-approved boater education certificates have been issued in Ohio through ODNR, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, and U.S. Power Squadron certified boating courses.

The Division has been represented on the Internet since 1996. Boating facilities, safety information, boating course and registration information as well as boating laws have continually been updated online. Services expanded in 2001 to include online boat registration renewals and in 2006 to include boating facility GIS data. *The Buckeye Boater* started as a bimonthly electronic newsletter in 2006 sent to just over 4,000 boaters. Now offered quarterly, the newsletter is subscribed by over 12,000 customers. As a further means to reach out to constituents, the Division embraced social networking in 2010, represented by Ohiodivisionofwatercraft on Facebook and @ohiowatercraft on Twitter.

At the 2008 Ohio State Fair the division opened the State Fair Kayak Pond to the delight of fair attendees. This attraction proved to be one of the most popular at the fairgrounds, providing thousands of Ohio youth a chance to participate in the growing activity of recreational kayaking. The kayak pond was made a permanent installation in 2009 and its popularity at the State Fair has increased. Our volunteer base is vital to the success of this activity, as paddlers are closely monitored and taught simple paddling strokes as they maneuver the Kayak Pond.

**Boating Safety Campaigns**

Wearing lifejackets, boating sober, and clean boating have been topical boating safety campaigns for the Division since its inception. National Safe Boating Week, in partnership with the National Safe Boating Council and U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, is celebrated every May with lifejacket campaigns and vessel safety checks. Sober boating is promoted for the holidays in July and Labor Day, and environmentally responsible boating includes reminders on recycling and water quality issues throughout the season.

In 1993 the Splash Test Dummies™, a family of characters used to promote boating safety, were first featured at the Ohio State Fair. Created by the Public Information and Education Section, the Splash Test Dummies won the National Safe Boating Council’s 1995 Idea Fair. The two main characters, Splish and Splash, were featured in coloring books for youth, public service announcements, posters, and the 1996 National Safety Council Youth Congress at Disney World in Orlando, Florida. The Splash Test mascots were featured at the State Fair display through 2007 and their coloring books are still requested. A number of organizations both inside and outside of Ohio continue use the Splash Test Dummies likeness to promote boating safety and lifejacket use.

The Division created a “Wear the Gear” campaign in 2007 to promote lifejacket wear. It included ramp signage and radio public service announcements, and the campaign was featured at a number of boating festivals across Ohio. In 2008, the Division joined with other states and national boating partners to promote the Wear It! program. Wear It Ohio! is a lifejacket awareness program that features a lifejacket loaner program at select inland lakes. The loaner program gives adults the opportunity to borrow an inflatable lifejacket for the duration of the boating season. Activities at the event – like boat rides and a prize wheel for boating education – are meant to appeal to boaters of all ages. All field offices have a Wear It Ohio! prize wheel to use at local events and boat shows any time of the year.
The Division reinvigorated its Sober Boater campaign in 2009 and joined national efforts for the Operation Dry Water campaign. “Get on board with a Sober Boater” garnered national support by winning a grant from the National Safe Boating Council in 2009. Originally piloted at a few Lake Erie locations, the program is meant to use informal intervention techniques to remind boaters how poorly alcohol and boating mix. The program is now available across Ohio. Nationally, “Operation Dry Water” is used as an enforcement saturation-type of campaign to inform boaters of the dangers of drinking while boating.

In 1985 the Division of Watercraft applied for and received a State Agency Grant from the Division of Recycling and Litter Prevention. With the funding, the Division of Watercraft implemented a comprehensive litter prevention, recycling awareness, and waterway cleanup program. Major projects supported under this program include the Lake Erie Waterways Cleanup, the Little Miami River Cleanup, the Licking River Round-up, and the Ohio River Sweep. This program ran through the 1990s.

Since 2005 the Division has been partnering with Ohio Sea Grant on the Clean Marina and Clean Boater initiatives. Marinas with environmentally responsible boating best practices qualify as Clean Marinas; boaters who pledge to adhere to best practices can claim to be Clean Boaters. These initiatives help increase awareness and spread the message about having a positive impact on the environment, including supporting recycling programs, to ensure good water quality for future boaters.

As a component of the 2009 Budget Bill, the 128th General Assembly transferred the State Scenic Rivers Program to the Division of Watercraft, expanding the Division’s mandate to ‘provide wild, scenic, and recreational river area conservation education and provide for corridor protection, restoration, habitat enhancement, and clean-up projects in wild river areas, scenic river areas, and recreational river areas.’ This brought administration of the state’s 14 designated wild, scenic, or recreational rivers under Division of Watercraft oversight.

The Scenic Rivers Stream Quality Monitoring program measures the health of the scenic rivers by counting organisms and measuring turbidity of the water. Monitors do environmental education outreach to schools and organizations that in turn assist in collecting data.

**Field Restructure**

In 1999 a Field Restructure Plan began implementation. Four regional field offices were created to better manage law enforcement and education services. The Alum Creek field office was opened and officer satellite sites were established in New Philadelphia, Wapakoneta, and Chillicothe.

In 2000 the U.S. Coast Guard agreed to lease their station in Ashtabula to the Division to use as a satellite site. This collaboration was the first of its kind in Ohio. Satellite sites were also established at Buckeye Lake and Newton Falls. In 2003 a satellite site was established in Marietta.

As a component to the Field Restructure Plan, an increase in law enforcement staff took place in 2000 with the hiring of 13 Watercraft officer cadets and 18 established-term Watercraft officers. Due to retirements, progression, and attrition, the established-term officers were restructured as full time in 2007 and hirings occurred again in 2003 and 2010. An additional cadet class was formed in 2007 and one is in process for 2011. In 2011 the division had 57 law enforcement officers.
and 11 managers in the field and 6 staff officers providing central service support. Three regional managers oversee 11 full-service field offices and 4 satellite offices.

Many field offices responded to this growth by moving into larger space. The Cincinnati field office moved to East Fork State Park in Clermont County in 2003. The Ashtabula and Wapakoneta satellite locations became full-service offices in 2004 and 2006, respectively. The Cleveland office moved to a larger space in 2005, and the Sandusky office moved in 2008. In 2011, an office in Franklin Furnace (Scioto County) at the Greenup Dam on the Ohio River replaced the Portsmouth office.

**Operational Planning**

The Division established an internal advisory committee in 1994 to help oversee quality improvement. The Guidance Committee comprises division employees from all bargaining units (FOP, ASFCME, and exempt personnel) from headquarters as well as from offices across the state. The Guidance Committee plays a pivotal role in strategic planning as well as process improvement. Employee suggestions are vetted by the committee, and the committee sets the framework for implementing innovations as well improved processes.

In 1999 the Division of Watercraft, Ohio Sea Grant, the Lake Erie Commission, the Boating Associations of Ohio, and the Lake Erie Marine Trades Association conducted a recreational boating economic impact study. The study revealed that approximately 19,500 jobs exist in Ohio due to recreational boating. Subsequent updates show that current economic impact of recreational boating in Ohio is $3.5 million.

A Comprehensive Management System, which encompasses strategic and operational planning as well as evaluation, was implemented in the Division in July of 2001. This system drives the budgeting and project management for the agency and assists managers in planning for and utilizing division resources for maximum customer service.

**Operating Law Changes**

Senate Bill 295 (effective in 1997) addressed changing trends in boating. The minimum operator age changed to 16 for PWC and persons under 12 years of age were prohibited from operating a boat over ten horsepower unless a person 18 years or older is on board (effective January 1, 2000).

In 1999 an exhaust muffler law set acceptable noise levels for boats. Noise testing devices were purchased and training was conducted for division staff and marine patrol agencies.

Senate Bill 187 addressed a number of issues including operating requirements and prohibitions, operating vessels when under the influence of alcohol or drugs, temporary registration of watercraft, a process for dealing with unclaimed vessels and outboard motors, the sale of specified items, titling requirements for PWCs and other vessels, and insurance fraud. The major portions of the law went into effect March 18, 1999, with some parts becoming effective January 1, 2000.

In 2002 with authority from the U.S. Supreme Court, Ohio and Kentucky signed an agreement to mutually promote boating safety education and boating law enforcement on the portion of the Ohio River that divides these two states. In 2010 Ohio and West Virginia signed a Mutual Aid Agreement for emergency response and boating law enforcement on the portion of the Ohio River that divides...
these two states. These agreements represent an important partnership and mutual understanding with our neighboring states that benefits all boating interests along the Ohio River.

House Bill 87 became effective July 1, 2003. This bill modified the offenses of the state law relating to boating while under the influence of alcohol by reducing the specified concentrations of alcohol that can be present in a person’s blood, breath or urine from 0.10% to 0.08%.

The governor signed House Bill 50 on July 22, 2003. The law increases the penalties for hit-and-run offenders when the incident results in the death of a person. In addition, it establishes the offenses of aggravated vehicular homicide and aggravated vehicular assault for watercraft operators under the influence of alcohol or drugs if injury or death occurs during an incident. With this law, boat operators are held to the same penalties as motor vehicle operators who violate these laws.

Senate Bill 271 (June 2008) established a number of new regulations including an increase to 20 for the horsepower limit on Pymatuning Lake; creation of regulations for ‘Failure to Control’, ‘Public Service Safety Zones’, and ‘Slow-Tow’ operation in no wake zones; and amended the use of U.S. Coast Guard-approved Type V life jackets (Special Use PFDs) to include children.

Horsepower limits and operating rules for a number of inland lakes managed by the ODNR Division of Wildlife changed in 2009.

Many rules pertaining to scenic rivers were changed in 2010 to reflect the transfer of Scenic Rivers to the Division in 2009. Also in 2010, the U.S. Coast Guard made some determinations on new types of watercraft and clarified the need for stand-up paddleboards (SUPs) to be registered.

As state boating laws change from year to year and as the Division of Watercraft continues to upgrade the programs and services it provides to the public, the Division will persist in its tradition of working hard to enhance the state’s boating safety program. As the only state agency with marine capabilities and authority, the Division of Watercraft will continue to provide assistance to and foster partnerships with federal, state, and local authorities such as the U.S. Secret Service for the protection of the President, the Ohio State Highway Patrol for the protection of the Governor, sister state departments and divisions, county sheriffs’ offices, and local political subdivisions. The Division will continue to grow our partnerships with boating organizations such as the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, the U.S. Power Squadrons, our many boating education partners, and our corps of dedicated, statewide volunteers.
Watercraft Offices & Scenic Rivers
The Strategic Planning Process

In 1998 the Division developed its first Strategic Plan using information gathered from 26 public meetings, national reports, and other resources. In 2004 the Strategic Plan for Ohio Boating was updated by establishing “next step” objectives while retaining the original strategic issues. Approximately 90% of the objectives in the 2004 Plan were implemented prior to beginning this most recent planning process.

In the spring of 2008 the Division conducted 10 public meetings at Buckeye Lake, Dayton, Cleveland, Akron, Ottawa, Portsmouth, East Fork, Lewis Center, Cambridge, and Wapakoneta. In addition, surveys were made available to marinas, clubs, partner organizations, and the public. Comments from the public meetings, surveys, and many other resource materials were compiled to identify current boating issues.

Results from the 2007 Customer Satisfaction Survey also were considered in this planning process, as was input from employees.

All of this information as well as the U.S. Coast Guard Strategic Plan and Department priorities were reviewed by the division’s internal advisory group, the Guidance Committee, to arrive at 11 common areas of concern:

- **Public Access & Facility Safety** – including capital improvement grant programs and handicap accessibility

- **Waterways Management** – including user conflict, sedimentation and navigational aids

- **Boating Promotion, Education & Skill Development** – including youth programs, hands-on skill development, and promotion of boating in Ohio

- **Watercraft Operator Laws** – including education, regulation of vessels for hire, and towed sports

- **Alcohol Enforcement** – including consideration of penalties and behavior trends

- **Partnerships** – includes interstate aid agreements, federal-state-local interactions

- **Fiscal Solvency** – includes U.S. Coast Guard funding, motor fuel tax revenue, and specialty license plates

- **WIS Upgrades** – includes data accessibility and integrity

- **Titling** – includes abandoned boat procedures, change of ownership regulations, and salvage titles

- **Communications & Fixed Assets** – including improvement/relocation of field offices, evaluation of equipment resources, and electronic communications

- **Law Enforcement Staff Issues** – including staff retention, pay compression, and rank systems
Focus groups were formed to work with each of the identified areas. Each group consisted of 15 to 25 participants representing the full range of Ohio’s boating constituents: technical experts, industry representatives, partnering agency representatives, boaters, and staff directly involved in a service process. These groups were charged with completing the first steps of the planning process using the Situation-Target-Plan Model.

The Situation-Target-Plan (STP) Model examines all of the available information to establish:

- **Situation** – derived from public comments, survey data, professional experience
- **Target** – outcome statements
- **Plan** – objectives / strategies

Participants were provided with simple planning tools, data, and resources related to their assigned topic and directed to focus on identifying targets and proposing draft plans.

The Guidance Committee and Executive Staff of the Division then applied Solution Engineering, which subjected the first draft of targets to a validity test using strategic planning tools specifically developed for government agencies and designed to achieve goal clarity. All of the pertinent planning resources were reviewed for the purpose of validating the draft targets. Efforts were focused on clarifying the situation, which required creating a master list of issues.

These issues were compared to the draft proposals created by the Focus Groups and correlated with one of the areas of concern. It was determined that several issues had not been captured by the draft proposals, requiring the committee to propose a few additional outcomes and objectives.

The revised list of desired outcomes and objectives was assigned to small internal workgroups for further development. While these teams drafted implementation proposals, Interpretive Structural Modeling was used to score the objectives in relationship to 9 criteria:

- Division Mandates
- Division Responsibilities
- Division Authorities
- U.S. Coast Guard Commitment
- U.S. Coast Guard Strategic Plan
- Supporting Data
- Qualitative Data/Stakeholder Opinion
- Department Priorities
- Organizational Improvement
The scores generated through Interpretive Structural Modeling determined where each of the objectives falls within a Comprehensive Priority Framework.

**Comprehensive Priority Framework**

Once the proposals were scored, the appropriate Project Administrators and Section Managers reviewed the proposals and identified occurrences of duplicate strategies, which allowed for similar proposals to be combined when appropriate. Thus the original 11 areas of concern were refined to the existing 7 Areas of Emphasis. Composite scores were used to eliminate items that were unreasonable, unattainable, or inconsistent with our responsibilities and to prioritize all remaining items. Proposals also were evaluated based on resource availability, required conditions, and stakeholder impact as part of the composite scoring and list reduction processes. Prioritization highlights those proposals that are most relevant, achievable, and have the greatest potential impact on the boating community in Ohio.

A preliminary strategic plan made available in March 2011 did not include outcomes for the Scenic Rivers program, as that program joined the Division in the middle of this process. Outcomes and strategies for the Scenic Rivers program were determined using the same process as those in the draft plan, with the exception that they were scored using the National Scenic Rivers Program Guidelines. This final version of the *Strategic Plan for Ohio Boating 2011-2015* integrates the original outcomes with the additional Scenic Rivers outcomes.

With a final list of prioritized outcomes and strategies, the Division has re-examined and re-defined our Strategic Issues and drafted a complete Strategic Plan. This prioritized plan provides the foundation for Division goals and allocation of resources over the next several years.
Strategic Planning Outcomes

Outcome: All boaters are skilled, well educated, and operate their boats safely at all times
- Increase general boating knowledge by improving delivery of National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) approved boating course and by increasing the number of Ohioans completing a NASBLA-approved boating course.
- Create more opportunities for boater education and skill development in all areas of the state for all types of watercraft.
- Consider mandating classroom education after certain types of violations.

Outcome: Ohio boaters voluntarily comply with state laws and regulations that are appropriate for ensuring boating safety without creating unnecessary restrictions which results in a quality boating experience
- Simplify or address areas of inconsistency in state watercraft operating regulations to reduce or eliminate confusion in the boating community.
- Develop and publicize a boater’s list of best practices to improve the boating experience.
- Reduce user conflict through promotion of rules of the road compliance.
- Target enforcement activities and increase patrols in known/identified problem areas (alcohol violations, inappropriate personal watercraft operation, no-wake violations, etc.).

Outcome: Achieve a balance between state regulation and personal responsibility of Ohio boaters to reduce the number of alcohol/drug involved incidents on Ohio waterways
- Develop a public awareness campaign specifically to highlight the responsibility of individual boaters to understand alcohol/drug laws and the dangers associated with boating under the influence.

Outcome: Waterway managers use consistent informational signage and navigational aids for improved customer service and public safety
- Enhance and optimize the Navigational Aids Program for the purpose of standardizing Ohio’s markers and informational signs.
Outcome: Ohioans recognize the many benefits of recreational boating and increase their participation
  • Encourage growth of boating in Ohio by developing promotional programs, expanding youth programs, and offering more introductory on-the-water skill development courses.
  • Monitor and respond to trends in boater behavior.

Outcome: Increase Watercraft Information System capabilities and efficiencies related to the titling process to accommodate changes in the boating industry and utilize available technologies
  • Interface the Automated Title Processing System (ATPS) with the Watercraft Information System (WIS) to improve data integrity and consumer protection.

Outcome: Ohio boaters and partners must be knowledgeable and have access to information and documentation to enhance / satisfy their interaction with the Division.
  • Improve public awareness of existing channels of information dissemination.
  • Expand information and services available on the Division web site.
  • Inform boaters of situations in which a Boating Accident Report (BAR) is required by law.

Outcome: Ohio recreational boaters enjoy increased opportunities to utilize suitable facilities and access points to open, barrier free, high quality waterways. (Subsets of paddlers and powerboaters/sailors)
  • Conduct area-specific meetings or web-casts to inform waterway managers of boater opinions/concerns/data and available programs regarding private facility conditions.
  • Evaluate, prioritize and implement a plan to maintain and improve recreational boating opportunities.
Outcome: Public safety agencies and organizations within Ohio and our neighboring states work in partnership to provide a safe, quality boating experience through seamless assistance and services in support of the diverse boating public

- Develop and enter into mutual agreements with appropriate state and federal public service partners to address agency/officer liabilities and response protocols.
- Implement inter-agency training to provide consistent/seamless law enforcement, assistance, and services.
- Improve communications between partners.
- Evaluate existing technology, partnerships, and officer presence on the water to increase efficient delivery of services.
- Coordinate law enforcement activities among agencies.
- Create and post electronic law enforcement forms on a secure web server for use by Department officers, marine patrols, and other law enforcement partners.

Outcome: Ohio boating participants understand boating alcohol / drug laws as well as the risks and consequences associated with alcohol / drug use and choose not to boat under the influence (as operator or passenger)

- Increase boater awareness of alcohol and drug issues through public service announcements, signage, cable TV, internet, podcasts, etc.
- Create regulations to increase and diversify penalties and require education for repeat offenders of alcohol/drug laws.

Outcome: The Scenic Rivers Program effectively preserves the natural stream biological diversity, through riparian corridor conservation practices.

- Promote protection of identified riparian areas and floodplains as (low impact recreational use areas/parks/access sites) and open space in local land use and comprehensive land use plans.
- Advocate for and actively participate in the removal & control of invasive species in waterways and on public and private lands.
- The Scenic River Program protects riparian corridors through fee simple and conservation easement purchases or donations from willing landowners for conservation.

Outcome: Customers and partners must be knowledgeable about registration processes and have access to necessary information.

- Continue to better educate partners and boaters regarding registration requirements.
Outcome: All boaters are well versed in the options and educated about the safety and importance of wearing PFDs and desire to wear them at all times while boating.
  • Increase PFD promotion and marketing through several mediums (boat shows, demos, manufacturers, advocacy groups, school systems, at-risk populations, etc.).

Outcome: Ohio boaters are aware of and comply with Ohio’s boat and motor titling requirements resulting in increased owner protections.
  • Update and revise outboard motor and boat titling regulations.

Outcome: The employees of the Division of Watercraft shall comprise a motivated, trained, and supported staff involved with the development of Division goals and objectives who, through communication and clarity of decision making, understand their role in carrying out those goals resulting in increased employee job satisfaction.
  • Ensure employees receive effective and timely training.

Outcome: Responsible and informed boaters have ample access to appropriate and well-managed water resources.
  • Develop waterways management plans that include activity zones where necessary to create a balance between maximizing safe boater activity while minimizing user conflict and negative impacts on the resource.
  • Create boating opportunities based on desired activities and modes of operation instead of horsepower ratings.

Outcome: All Ohio recreational boaters will have a positive experience through well-maintained and improved access and facilities.
  • Evaluate status of Boating on Ohio Waterways (BOW) Plan to determine what has been completed/implemented and update.
  • Develop a mechanism to ensure fair distribution of dredging funds as a component of facility improvement.
  • Promote/advertise facility improvement programs that are currently available and strive to expand these programs with additional staff and funding (Recreation Marine Loan Program, Cooperative Boating Facility Grants, etc.).
  • Develop and implement criteria for use of emergency repair fund.
  • Encourage partner management agencies to improve facility cleanliness and maintenance.
Outcome: Ohio boaters will not be impacted by recreational use impairments resulting from water quality issues on our state’s boating waterways.

- Improve public awareness and support water quality improvement efforts on Ohio waterways.
- Improve public awareness and support the improvement and expansion of efforts to control the spread of aquatic nuisance species throughout Ohio’s waterways.
- Improve public safety and the boating experience by encouraging or facilitating the removal of obsolete lowhead dams on Ohio’s streams.
- All Ohio boaters are aware of best practices to minimize negative impacts on Ohio’s waterways.
- Increase awareness of Clean Vessel Act and promote the Clean Marina programs as well as the use of CVA facilities.
- Establish, implement, support innovative environmental protection and waterway conservation education programs.
- Fully integrate the Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers program into the mission and operation of the Division of Watercraft.

Outcome: With the support of the public, Ohio’s high quality streams are managed and protected through Wild, Scenic, or Recreational River Designation, watershed planning, and continued stream quality monitoring.

- Clearly define and publish the scenic river designation process and criteria.
- Encourage strong local public support to spur the scenic river designation process.
- Division staff will participate with property owners and the public in the development and implementation of watershed planning.
- Conduct data collection through the SQM program to track water quality and biodiversity (task – online reporting tools).
- Maintain fully appointed and diverse advisory councils for each scenic river.

Outcome: Leverage stakeholder support to ensure continued dedicated funding for Ohio boating services and programs.

- Address specific stakeholder issues on a regional or statewide basis to raise customer satisfaction levels with expenditures of the Waterways Safety Fund.
- Promote and increase Scenic River license plate sales.
- Work with the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators to draft legislation providing protection for funds received as a result of administering the state’s numbering system.
- Encourage support for reauthorization of the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund.
Outcome: Ohio’s boaters are to be served with an efficient and accurate registration process that is secure, convenient, timely, cost appropriate, and (1) eliminates redundant processes, (2) provides a favorable customer experience, (3) allows boaters to boat when they want, and (4) is cost effective for business partners.

- Obtain an upgrade and enhance the Watercraft Information System system.

Outcome: An informed and educated public supports the Scenic Rivers Program’s conservation mission to protect and restore Ohio’s remaining high quality stream systems.

- Increase promotion and information regarding Scenic River program goals through the website, press releases, newsletters, conservation events, fairs, boat shows, festivals, etc.
- Building on the success of the SQM program, support, facilitate, and/or provide opportunities for direct contact with these streams in the form of float trips, river festivals, clean-ups, etc.
- Utilizing the SQM program, focus outreach efforts on youth, school programs, and community groups to emphasize the importance of protecting our rivers and their watersheds along with their water quality, biodiversity, ecosystems, and values including the relationship between people, rivers, and wildlife.
- Inform and educate the public to eliminate the perception that there is a threat to private property.
- Publish river-specific publications that provide area communities information about the scenic river(s).

Outcome: Identify and acquire additional funding to enhance the quality of boating programs, opportunities, and environments.

- Seek appropriate grant funding opportunities.
- Consider change in current registration fee structure in order to increase revenues.
- Establish fees for services provided by the Division where appropriate (i.e. home study, replacement education certificates, special duty).
**Outcome:** Public project review and approval process results in the protection of stream resources and recreational experiences while taking into consideration socio-economic impacts.

- Work with government agencies and educational institutions to review and update agreements with partner agencies.
- Identify and request mitigation measures to offset negative impacts resulting from proposed public projects.
- Process public project reviews and approvals in a timely manner.
- Print and electronically publish requirements and provide guidance to agencies and organizations regarding the scenic river approval & public project review process.
- Shape project plan design in order to maintain environmental quality and minimize stream and riparian corridor degradation while taking into consideration project costs.
- Facilitate quick project completions (minimize delays) and final site stabilizations.
- Ensure periodic project inspections are conducted for compliance.

**Outcome:** The Division of Watercraft shall be a professional organization with informed and involved employees characterized by (1) transparent planning and decision making, (2) effective and timely dissemination of information, and (3) open, honest two-way communication resulting in improved employee job satisfaction and morale.

- Re-evaluate methods of collecting data to ensure diverse representation of stakeholders and to ensure that decisions are not based on limited data.
- Enhance services by ensuring appropriate facilities, staff and equipment are available to provide effective response and customer service.
- Conduct staff surveys at regular intervals using required Division meetings/trainings to increase response rates:
  - Separate surveys for AFSCME, FOP, and exempt staff.
  - Request input regarding Division operations from all staff at least annually
- Improve communications:
  - Ensure transparent planning and decision making.
  - Ensure effective and timely dissemination of information.
## Appendix A: Funding 2006-2010

### Revenue

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<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Motor Fuel Tax</td>
<td>$15,683,881</td>
<td>$15,048,330</td>
<td>$16,005,019</td>
<td>$14,940,991</td>
<td>$15,191,493</td>
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<tr>
<td>Registration/Titling Fees</td>
<td>5,487,149</td>
<td>5,223,007</td>
<td>5,157,773</td>
<td>6,151,382</td>
<td>4,952,560</td>
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<td>Federal Grants</td>
<td>3,363,986</td>
<td>3,842,693</td>
<td>5,356,419</td>
<td>6,151,382</td>
<td>4,952,560</td>
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<td>Fund Earnings</td>
<td>790,571</td>
<td>1,132,407</td>
<td>854,713</td>
<td>465,897</td>
<td>189,956</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>171,419</td>
<td>57,550</td>
<td>75,145</td>
<td>118,056</td>
<td>147,384</td>
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<td>Fines</td>
<td>73,169</td>
<td>80,100</td>
<td>65,726</td>
<td>69,517</td>
<td>71,914</td>
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<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>$25,570,175</td>
<td>$25,384,087</td>
<td>$27,514,795</td>
<td>$27,069,317</td>
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### Expenditures

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<th>2009</th>
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<td>Operating Expenses</td>
<td>$16,263,664</td>
<td>$16,203,458</td>
<td>$15,814,944</td>
<td>$17,213,644</td>
<td>$16,569,432</td>
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<td>Capital Improvements</td>
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<td>6,479,490</td>
<td>5,548,125</td>
<td>5,775,000</td>
<td>5,611,258</td>
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<td>Waterway Improvements*</td>
<td>3,715,655</td>
<td>3,542,460</td>
<td>3,923,951</td>
<td>4,040,361</td>
<td>4,184,436</td>
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<td>Marine Patrol Grants</td>
<td>575,244</td>
<td>544,147</td>
<td>556,786</td>
<td>530,213</td>
<td>557,003</td>
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<td>Education Grants</td>
<td>345,674</td>
<td>364,610</td>
<td>364,417</td>
<td>365,420</td>
<td>330,441</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shared Revenue/Subsidies/ Navigational Aids</td>
<td>152,413</td>
<td>112,344</td>
<td>167,367</td>
<td>113,957</td>
<td>114,068</td>
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<td>Total Expenditures</td>
<td>$25,780,710</td>
<td>$27,246,509</td>
<td>$26,375,590</td>
<td>$28,038,595</td>
<td>$27,366,638</td>
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</tbody>
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* Dredging support to Ohio DNR Division of Parks & Recreation
Appendix B: Relevant Links

At ohiodnr.com/watercraft you will find:

...Register Your Boat: What You Need, Find An Agent, What It Costs, Alternative Registration, Online Renewal

...Where to Boat: Ohio Boat Access Sites GIS, A List by County, Rivers & Streams, Water Trails, Water Releases, Lake Erie, Ohio River

...Education: What the Law Says, What Your Options Are, Find a Class, Become an Instructor

...Laws: Ohio Boat Operators Guide, Required Safety Equipment

...Scenic Rivers: Stream Quality Monitoring

...News: Events Calendar, The Buckeye Boater, Wear It Ohio!, Vessel Safety Checks, National Safe Boating Week and other seasonal campaigns

...Publications & Data, Safety Tips, Common Questions, Clean Boating

...About the Division: Strategic Plan, BOW Plan, Waterways Safety Council, Employment Opportunities, Volunteer Opportunities

...Grants, Forms, Links, Division Offices

Online Boat Registration Renewal: https://www.dnr.state.oh.us/watercraft/erarenewal/default.aspx

Scenic Rivers License Plates: http://www.oplates.com

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/ohiodivisionofwatercraft

Twitter: http://twitter.com/ohiowatercraft
Appendix C: Acknowledgements

Ohio’s Boating Partners
Many government entities, community organizations, trade associations, and individuals share a vested interest in Ohio’s recreational boating program:

U.S. Coast Guard
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Power Squadrons
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
State of Kentucky
State of Indiana
Ohio EPA
Ohio Department of Public Safety
Ohio Clerks of Court
Ohio Sea Grant
Ohio’s marine trade associations
Marine Dealers, Watercraft Registration Agents, and Livery and Marina Operators
Ohio State Parks, Natural Areas, and Division of Wildlife
Watercraft Grant Recipients, Volunteers, and Staff