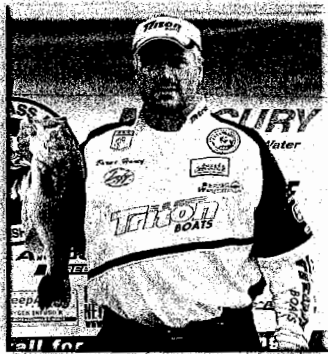




Water Discharge Permits May Hamper Boaters

By Burnie Haney - Conservation Director



Conservation is alive and well and our Federation has five new helpers to prove it. I know at this point you're probably wondering what in the world is he talking about now; well let me explain that for you.

A short while ago we asked our membership for volunteers to be our eyes and ears in each of the nine Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Regions across the state and I'm proud to report so far we have five people who have stepped forward.

Representing Region 1 is Mr. Dan McGarry from Long Island Bassmasters. We also have Mr. Skip Hommel from Rip Van Winkle Bassmasters working with Region 4. In February Skip attended a press day that DEC Commissioner Pete Grannis hosted in Albany and Skip reports the commissioner is approachable and willing to work with us and he want's the bass fishing communities input.

During the discussions Skip was able to identify the 15 inch length limit for Hudson River Black Bass as a concern of ours. We're working now to meet with the Greene County Chamber of Commerce and other stakeholders along the Hudson River to see if we can't obtain a 12 inch tournament waiver. Now keep in mind this project is in its first phases and it's going to take a while, but Skip was able to plant the seed with the commissioner, so when this topic comes back through the channels to Albany it won't be the first time they've heard it.

In Region 6 I'll be representing us and I've worked with them on a few projects in the past. Our Salt City Bassmasters has the representation in Region 7 with Ms. Barb Elliot volunteering. Barb and I attended the 6 March State of the Lake meeting that DEC presented in Mexico and we were able to meet Dan Bishop from Region 7 and the Lake Ontario/St. Lawrence River managers. Rochester Bassmasters has Ian Palmer stepping up to represent us in Region 8; so that leaves us just four more regional representative positions to fill 2, 3, 5 and 9. If we have

any other members interested in helping us by working with one of these remaining DEC offices let me know.

Another hot topic we have that needs our immediate attention is the Clean Boating Act of 2008.

S. 2766 Preserves Recreational Boating & Protects Environment

THE PROBLEM

In 1973, the Environmental Protection Agency recognized that it would be unnecessary for recreational boaters to be subject to complex federal and state permitting requirements designed for large point source polluters, such as wastewater treatment plants, cruise ships, cargo ships, and supertankers. EPA thus issued a common sense exemption. In Sept. 2006, however, a U.S. District Court ruling nullified this EPA regulation, ruling that the Agency did not have the authority to issue it. The ruling resulted from a lawsuit brought to halt the introduction of invasive species into U.S. waters through the discharge of ballast water from large, oceangoing commercial ships. The decision, however, was a major blow to recreational boating. Included under the exemption the court nullified were incidental discharges from recreational boats, including engine cooling water, gray water, uncontaminated bilge water, and weather deck runoff, among others.

As a result of this broad decision, all recreational boat operators in the nation will have to obtain a federal or state permit by September 2008. Minimizing the exchange of ballast water from one international port to another is very important in reducing the spread of aquatic invasive species, but neither Congress nor EPA intended to sweep pleasure boats into same regulatory scheme. Doing so would have a devastating effect on recreational boating in America.

THE IMPACT

Unless Congressional action is taken soon, every recreational boat owner in the country (18 million strong and growing) will be subject to an unprecedented permitting sys-

tem for everyday discharges associated with the normal operation of a boat. The threat is imminent. EPA has already completed the first phase of this new regulation and is moving to implement this permitting system for pleasure boaters by the court-ordered September 2008 deadline. This burdensome permitting will lead to:

- New yearly fees for family boaters;
- Bureaucratic red tape-potentially different in each state-associated with getting a permit;
- An increased burden for the taxpayer because federal and state governments will be required to develop new government programs and entities to implement these regulations;
- New enforcement regimes, \$32,000 per day penalties and citizen suits.

THE SOLUTION

Congress should enact S. 2766, the Clean Boating Act of 2008, introduced by Senate Environment & Public Works Chair Barbara Boxer and Senator Bill Nelson on March 13, 2008. The Clean Boating Act restores a 35-year exemption for recreational boat incidental discharges, such as weather deck runoff and engine coolant water, and protects the health of the nation's waterways, on which recreational boaters and anglers depend, by pursuing whether reasonable best management practices need to be put into place for some recreational boat incidental discharges.

On 23 March we provided a sample letter to our club reps and asked that all send in a letter of support to our Senators and ask that you share the information about this important bill with all stakeholders you know; water skiers, duck hunters, sail boaters, pleasure cruisers and marina owners & operators... this affects all recreational boaters and working together we can get S. 2766 passed. **FL**

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