

the **HANDBOOK!** OF **MISSISSIPPI BOATING LAWS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

2018 Edition



BOAT **MISSISSIPPI**

A Course on Responsible Boating

Boater education certification is required by law for many Mississippi boaters. Even if it's not required for you, becoming certified can save you money on boat insurance. You have two ways to be certified:



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Share the learning experience with other interested students and a qualified instructor. The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks can help you find a classroom course in your area.

Call 601-432-2180 for information

the **HANDBOOK!** of **MISSISSIPPI BOATING LAWS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

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Stay abreast of new boating laws...

- Call the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks:
601-432-2180
- Call the Department of Marine Resources:
228-523-4134
- For federal boating laws, visit the U.S. Coast Guard's
boating safety website: **www.uscgboating.org**

Information in this handbook does not replace what is specifically legal for boating in Mississippi, which is found in the Mississippi Boating Act and federal laws.

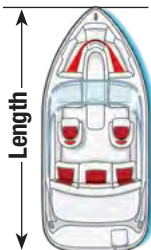
Before Going Out

Before going out on the water, take steps to make the outing safe and enjoyable.

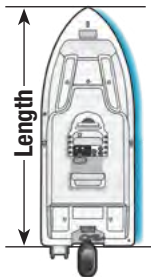
Vessel Length Classes

- A vessel's length class determines the equipment necessary to comply with federal and state laws.
- Vessels are divided into length classes:
 - Less than 16 feet
 - 16 feet to less than 26 feet
 - 26 feet to less than 40 feet
 - 40 feet to less than 65 feet
- Length is measured from the tip of the bow in a straight line to the stern. This does not include outboard motors, brackets, rudders, bow attachments, or swim platforms and ladders that are not a molded part of the hull.

Inboards



Outboards



Vessel Capacity

- Always check the capacity plate, which is usually found near the operator's position or on the vessel's transom. This plate indicates the maximum weight capacity and maximum number of people that the vessel can carry safely.
- Personal watercraft (PWC) and some other vessels are not required to have a capacity plate. Always follow the recommended capacity in the owner's manual and on the manufacturer's warning decal.

Fueling a Vessel

Never fuel at night unless it is an emergency. If you must refuel after dark, use only electric lights. Try to refuel away from the water or on a commercial fueling ramp.

- **Before beginning to fuel:**
 - Dock the boat securely, and ask all passengers to exit.
 - Do not allow anyone to smoke or strike a match.
 - Check all fuel lines, connections, and fuel vents.

- Turn off anything that might cause a spark—engines, fans, or electrical equipment.
- Shut off all fuel valves and extinguish all open flames, such as galley stoves and pilot lights.
- Close all windows, ports, doors, and other openings to prevent fumes from entering the boat.
- Remove portable fuel tanks, and fill them on the dock.

■ **While filling the fuel tank:**

- Keep the nozzle of the fuel-pump hose in contact with the tank opening to prevent producing a static spark.
- Avoid spilling fuel into the boat's bilge or the water.
- Never fill a tank to the brim—leave room to expand.

The most important safe fueling practice...

If your vessel is equipped with a power ventilation system, turn it on for at least four minutes both after fueling and before starting your engine to remove gas vapors in the bilge.

■ **After fueling:**

- Wipe up any spilled fuel.
- Open all windows, ports, doors, and other openings.

Additional Safety Procedures for PWC

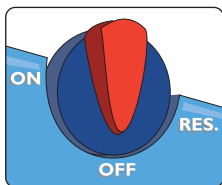
- Do not tip the PWC in order to fill it all the way up. If the tank is overfilled, the fuel may expand and spill into the water.
- After fueling, open the door of the engine compartment and sniff to check for any evidence of gas fumes. Do this before starting the engine. If you do smell gas fumes, determine the source and make repairs immediately.



Fuel Selector Switch on a PWC

This switch can help you avoid becoming stranded without fuel.

- Use the “Off” position when the PWC’s engine is turned off.
- Use the “On” position while you are underway.
- Use the “Reserve” position if you run out of fuel while underway. This will allow you to return to shore. Don’t forget to switch back to “On” after refueling.



Preventing Theft

Defend against the theft of your vessel and equipment.

- Store your vessel so that it is not easily accessed.
 - Store your vessel and trailer in a locked garage or storage area.
 - Park another vehicle in front of the trailer, or lock the trailer to a fixed object in a well-lit area.
 - Secure the vessel and trailer to a fixed object with a good quality chain and lock. If moored, secure the vessel to the dock with a steel cable and lock.
 - Remove a trailer wheel if parked for an extended time.
 - Purchase a quality trailer hitch lock and use it.
- Chain and lock the motor and fuel tanks to the vessel.
- Mark or engrave all equipment with an identifier such as your driver’s license number.
- Photograph or videotape the interior and exterior of your vessel, showing all installed equipment and additional gear and equipment. Make a complete inventory of your equipment, vessel, and trailer.
- Remove expensive electronics or other valuables if the vessel is left unattended.
- Cover your vessel and always remove the keys.
- Title and register your vessel.

Filing a Float Plan

Before going out on a vessel, it is always a good idea to leave a float plan with a friend or relative, or at least with a local marina. A float plan should:

- Describe the vessel, including its registration number, length, make, horsepower, and engine type.
- State where you are going, the detailed route, your planned departure time, and your expected return time.
- Give the name, address, and telephone number of each person on board and an emergency contact.

Pre-Departure Checklist

You can help assure a good time while operating your vessel by performing this pre-departure check.

- ✓ Check the weather forecast for the area and time frame during which you will be boating.
- ✓ Make sure that the steering and throttle controls operate properly and all lights are working properly.
- ✓ Check for any fuel leaks from the tank, fuel lines, and carburetor.
- ✓ Check the engine compartment for oil leaks.
- ✓ Check hose connections for leaks or cracks, and make sure hose clamps are tight.
- ✓ Drain all water from the engine compartment, and be sure the bilge plug is replaced and secure.
- ✓ Check to be sure you have a fully charged engine battery and fire extinguishers.
- ✓ If so equipped, make sure the engine cut-off switch and wrist lanyard are in good order.
- ✓ Make sure you have the required number of personal flotation devices (PFDs), and check that they are in good condition.
- ✓ Leave a float plan with a reliable friend or relative.

On the Water

Safe navigation on Mississippi waterways is everyone's responsibility. All operators are equally responsible for taking action as necessary to avoid collisions.

Encountering Other Vessels

Even though no vessel has the "right-of-way" over another vessel, there are some rules that every operator should follow when encountering other vessels. It is the responsibility of both operators to take the action needed to avoid a collision. The following shows what to do when encountering another vessel.

To prevent collisions, every operator should follow the three basic rules of navigation.

- Practice good seamanship.
- Keep a sharp lookout.
- Maintain a safe speed and distance.

Encountering Vessels With Limited Maneuverability

- When operating a power-driven vessel, you must give way to:
 - Any vessel not under command, such as an anchored or disabled vessel
 - Any vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver, such as a vessel towing another or laying cable, or one constrained by its draft, such as a large ship in a channel
 - A vessel engaged in commercial fishing
 - A sailboat under sail unless it is overtaking
- When operating a vessel under sail, you must give way to:
 - Any vessel not under command
 - Any vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver
 - A vessel engaged in commercial fishing

Navigation Rules

There are two terms that help explain these rules.

- **Stand-on vessel:** The vessel that should maintain its course and speed
- **Give-way vessel:** The vessel that must take early and substantial action to avoid collision by stopping, slowing down, or changing course

Power vs. Power

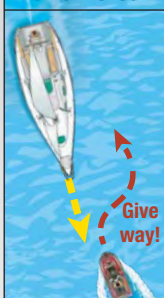


Meeting Head-On

Power vs. Power: Neither vessel is the stand-on vessel. Both vessels should keep to the starboard (right).

Power vs. Sail: The powerboat is the give-way vessel. The sailboat is the stand-on vessel.

Power vs. Sail



Crossing Situations

Power vs. Power: The vessel on the operator's port (left) side is the give-way vessel. The vessel on the operator's starboard (right) side is the stand-on vessel.

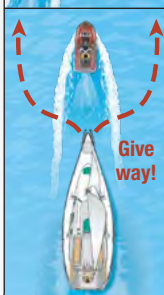
Power vs. Sail: The powerboat is the give-way vessel. The sailboat is the stand-on vessel.



Overtaking

Power vs. Power: The vessel that is overtaking another vessel is the give-way vessel. The vessel being overtaken is the stand-on vessel.

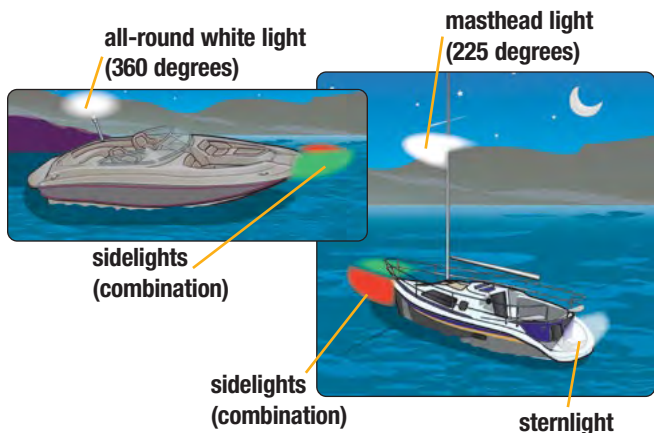
Power vs. Sail: The vessel that is overtaking another vessel is the give-way vessel. The vessel being overtaken is the stand-on vessel.



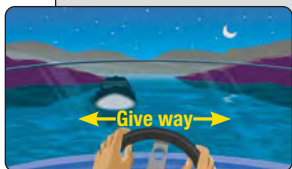
Nighttime Navigation

Be on the lookout for the lights of other vessels when boating at night. Several types of lights serve as navigational aids at night. There are four common navigation lights.

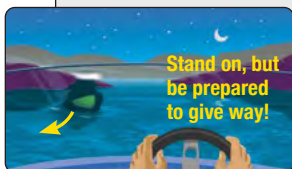
- **Sidelights:** These red and green lights are called sidelights (also called combination lights) because they are visible to another vessel approaching from the side or head-on. The red light indicates a vessel's port (left) side; the green indicates a vessel's starboard (right) side.
- **Sternlight:** This white light is seen from behind or nearly behind the vessel.
- **Masthead Light:** This white light shines forward and to both sides and is required on all power-driven vessels. A masthead light must be displayed by all vessels when under engine power. The absence of this light indicates a sailboat under sail.
- **All-Round White Light:** On power-driven vessels less than 39.4 feet in length, this light may be used to combine a masthead light and sternlight into a single white light that can be seen by other vessels from any direction. This light serves as an anchor light when sidelights are extinguished.



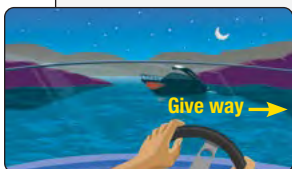
Encountering Vessels at Night



When you see only a white light, you are overtaking another vessel. It is the stand-on vessel whether it is underway or anchored. You may go around it on either side.



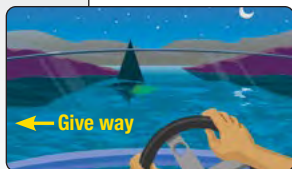
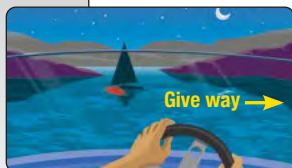
When you see a green and a white light, you are the stand-on vessel. However, remain alert in case the other vessel operator does not see you or does not know the navigation rules.



When you see a red and a white light, you must give way to the other vessel! Slow down and allow the vessel to pass, or you may turn to the right and pass behind the other vessel.

Encountering a Sailboat at Night

When you see **only a red light** or **only a green light**, you may be approaching a sailboat under sail and you must give way. The sailboat under sail is always the stand-on vessel!



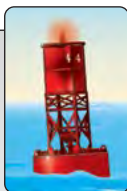
U.S. Aids to Navigation System (ATON)

Buoys and markers are the “traffic signals” that guide vessel operators safely along some waterways. They also identify dangerous or controlled areas and give directions and information. As a recreational boat or PWC operator, you will need to know the lateral navigation markers and non-lateral markers of the U.S. Aids to Navigation System.

Lateral Markers

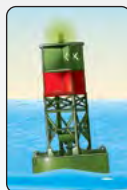
These navigation aids mark the edges of safe water areas—for example, directing travel within a channel. The markers use a combination of colors and numbers, which may appear on either buoys or permanently placed markers.

Red colors, red lights, and even numbers indicate the right side of the channel as a boater enters from the open sea or heads upstream.



Green colors, green lights, and odd numbers indicate the left side of the channel as a boater enters from the open sea or heads upstream.

Red and green colors and/or lights indicate the preferred (primary) channel. If green is on top, the preferred channel is to the right as a boater enters from the open sea or heads upstream; if red is on top, the preferred channel is to the left.



Nuns are red cone-shaped buoys marked with even numbers.



Cans are green cylindrical-shaped buoys marked with odd numbers.



Lighted Buoys use the lateral marker colors and numbers discussed above; in addition, they have a matching colored light.



Daymarks are permanently placed signs attached to structures, such as posts, in the water. Common daymarks are red triangles (equivalent to nuns) and green squares (equivalent to cans). They may be lighted also.

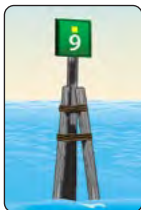


Red Right Returning

is a reminder of the correct course when returning from open waters or heading upstream.

Intracoastal Waterway System

- The Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) is a chain of channels that provide an inland passage along the U.S. coast. Buoys and markers used in this system are identified by yellow symbols and serve a dual purpose—they are navigational aids for the lateral system and are markers for the ICW.
- If you are following the ICW from New Jersey to Brownsville, Texas, in a clockwise direction:
 - Any marker displaying a yellow triangle should be passed by keeping it on the starboard (right) side of your vessel.
 - Any marker displaying a yellow square should be passed by keeping it on the port (left) side of your vessel.



Non-Lateral Markers

Non-lateral markers are navigational aids that give information other than the edges of safe water areas. The most common are regulatory markers that are white and use orange markings and black lettering. These following regulatory markers are found on lakes and rivers.

Mooring Buoy

Mooring buoys are white with a blue horizontal band and are found in marinas and other areas where vessels are allowed to anchor.





Information

Squares indicate where to find food, supplies, repairs, etc., and give directions and other information.

Controlled

Circles indicate a controlled area, such as speed limit, no fishing or anchoring, ski only or no skiing, or “slow, no wake.”



Exclusion

Crossed diamonds indicate areas off limits to all vessels, such as swimming areas, dams, and spillways.

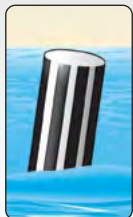
Danger

Diamonds warn of dangers, such as rocks, shoals, construction, dams, or stumps. Always proceed with caution.



Other Non-Lateral Markers

Safe Water Markers are white with red vertical stripes and mark mid-channels or fairways. They may be passed on either side.



Inland Waters

Obstruction Markers are white with black vertical stripes and indicate an obstruction to navigation. You should not pass between these buoys and the nearest shore.

Weather Emergencies

Weather can change very rapidly and create unexpected situations for boat operators. Even meteorologists have trouble predicting rapid weather changes. You should always monitor weather developments. One way is to tune a VHF radio to the frequencies listed on the next page.

What to Do if Caught in Severe Weather

■ Prepare the boat to handle severe weather.

- Slow down, but keep enough power to maintain headway and steering.
- Close all hatches, windows, and doors to reduce the chance of swamping.
- Stow any unnecessary gear.
- Turn on your boat's navigation lights. If there is fog, sound your fog horn.
- Keep bilges free of water. Be prepared to remove water by bailing.
- If there is lightning, disconnect all electrical equipment. Stay as clear of metal objects as possible.

■ Prepare your passengers for severe weather.

- Have everyone put on a USCG-approved PFD. If passengers are already wearing their PFDs, make sure they are secured properly.
- Have your passengers sit on the vessel floor close to the centerline for their safety and to make the boat more stable.

■ Decide whether to go to shore or ride out the storm.

- If possible, head for the nearest shore that is safe to approach. If already caught in a storm, it may be best to ride it out in open water rather than try to approach the shore in heavy wind and waves.
- Head the bow into the waves at a 45-degree angle. PWC should head directly into the waves.

- If the engine stops, drop a “sea anchor” on a line off the bow to keep the bow headed into the wind and reduce drifting while you ride out the storm. In an emergency, a bucket will work as a sea anchor.
- If the sea anchor is not sufficient, anchor using your conventional anchor to prevent your boat from drifting into dangerous areas.

VHF Frequencies Broadcasting NOAA Weather Reports

162.400 MHz	162.450 MHz	162.500 MHz	162.550 MHz
162.425 MHz	162.475 MHz	162.525 MHz	

These are the most commonly used VHF channels on United States waters.

Channel 6 Intership safety communications.

Channel 9 Communications between vessels (commercial and recreational) and between ship to coast (calling channel in designated USCG districts).

Channel 13 Navigational use by commercial, military, and recreational vessels at bridges, locks, and harbors.

Channel 16 Distress and safety calls to USCG and others and calls initiated to other vessels, often called the “hailing” channel. (Some regions use other channels as the hailing channel.) When hailing, contact the other vessel, quickly agree to another channel, and then switch to that channel to continue conversation.

Channel 22 Communications between the USCG and the maritime public, both recreational and commercial. Severe weather warnings, hazards to navigation, and other safety warnings are broadcast on this channel.

Channels 24–28 Public telephone calls (to marine operator).

Channels 68, 69, and 71 Recreational vessel radio channels and ship to coast.

Channel 70 Digital selective calling “alert channel.”

Specifically for PWC

Although a PWC is considered an inboard vessel and comes under the same rules and requirements of any other vessel, there are specific considerations for the PWC operator.

steering control



steering nozzle

Steering and Stopping a PWC

- PWC are propelled by drawing water into a pump and then forcing it out under pressure through a steering nozzle at the back of the unit. This “jet” of pressurized water is directed by the steering control. When the steering control is turned, the steering nozzle turns in the same direction. For example, if the steering control is turned right, the nozzle turns right, and the jet of water pushes the back of the vessel to the left, which causes the PWC to turn right.

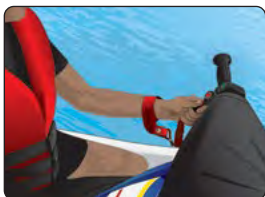
Remember—no power means no steering control...

Most PWC and other jet-drive vessels must have power in order to maintain control. If you allow the engine on a PWC or other jet-propelled vessel to return to idle or shut off during operation, you may lose all steering control. Many PWC will continue in the direction they were headed before the engine was shut off, no matter which way the steering control is turned. New PWC allow for off-throttle steering.

- **Most PWC do not have brakes.** Always allow plenty of room for stopping. Just because you release the throttle or shut off the engine does not mean you will stop immediately. Even PWC that have a braking system do not stop immediately.

Engine Cut-Off Switches

- Most PWC and powerboats come equipped by the manufacturer with an important device called an emergency engine cut-off switch. This is a safety device that is designed to shut off the engine if the operator is thrown from the proper operating position.
- A lanyard is attached to the safety switch and the operator's wrist or PFD. The safety switch shuts off the engine if the operator falls off the PWC or out of the powerboat. If your vessel does not come equipped with an engine cut-off switch, you should have one installed.
- In many states, it is illegal to ride your PWC without attaching the lanyard properly between the switch and yourself.



Reboarding a Capsized PWC

After a fall, the PWC could be overturned completely. You should be familiar with the proper procedure to right the PWC and to reboard from the rear of the craft.

- Most manufacturers have placed a decal at the rear or bottom of the craft that indicates the direction to roll your PWC to return it to an upright position. If no decal exists, check your owner's manual, or ask the dealer. If you roll it over the wrong way, you could damage your PWC.
- Practice reboarding with someone else around to make sure you can handle it alone. Don't ride your PWC if you are very tired because reboarding would be difficult. Also, avoid riding where there are strong currents or winds, which could hamper your reboarding efforts.



Courtesy When Encountering Other Vessels

- Jumping the wake of a passing boat or riding too close to another PWC or boat creates risks and is restricted, or even prohibited in some states. The vessel making the wake may block the PWC operator's view of oncoming traffic and also conceal the PWC operator from approaching vessels.
- Excessive noise from PWC often makes them unwelcome with other vessel operators and people on shore. Be a courteous PWC operator.
 - Vary your operating area, and do not keep repeating the same maneuver.
 - Avoid congregating with other PWC operators near shore, which increases annoying noise levels.
 - Avoid making excessive noise near residential and camping areas, particularly early in the morning.
 - Avoid maneuvers that cause the engine exhaust to lift out of the water because that increases noise levels.
 - Do not modify your engine exhaust system if it increases the noise. Improperly modified exhausts will not make your PWC faster and may raise the noise to an illegal level.

Environmental Considerations

When operating your PWC, consider the effect you may have on the environment.

- Make sure that the water you operate in is at least 30 inches deep. Riding in shallow water can cause bottom sediments or aquatic vegetation to be sucked into the pump, damaging your PWC and the environment.



- Avoid causing erosion by operating at slow speed and by not creating a wake when operating near shore or in narrow streams or rivers.
- Do not dock or beach your PWC in reeds and grasses. This could damage fragile environments.
- Take extra care when fueling your PWC in or near the water. Oil and gasoline spills are very detrimental to the aquatic environment. Fuel on land if possible.
- Never use your PWC to disturb, chase, or harass wildlife.

Other PWC Considerations

- Remember that everyone on board a PWC must wear a PFD.
- Keep hands, feet, loose clothing, and hair away from the pump intake area. Before cleaning debris away from the pump intake, be sure to shut off the engine.
- Keep everyone clear of the steering nozzle unless the PWC is shut off. The water jet can cause severe injuries.
- Frequently inspect your PWC's electrical systems (e.g., starter and engine gauge connections) to ensure there is no potential for electrical spark. Gas fumes could collect in the engine compartment, and an explosion could occur. After fueling, sniff the engine compartment for any evidence of gas fumes.
- Never exceed the manufacturer's recommended capacity for your PWC.
- Know your limits, and ride according to your abilities.



Before Going Out

All operators are required to obey laws that regulate your vessel's registration and operation.

Registering Your Vessel

- You must have a Mississippi Certificate of Number and validation decals to operate your vessel legally on Mississippi waters. Vessels that are required to be registered are:

- Any motorized vessel
- All sailboats (with or without motors)

- *This Certificate of Number (pocket-sized, plastic registration card) must be on board and available for inspection by an enforcement officer whenever the vessel is being operated.*



- The registration number and validation decals must be displayed as follows.
 - Number must be painted, applied as a decal, or otherwise affixed to both sides of the bow.
 - Number must read from left to right on both sides of the bow.
 - Number must be in at least three-inch-high **BLOCK** letters.
 - Number's color must contrast with its background.
 - Letters must be separated from the numbers by a space or hyphen: **MI 3717 ZW** or **MI-3717-ZW**.
 - No other numbers may be displayed on either side of the bow.
 - Decals must be affixed on both sides of the vessel *preceding the prefix letters* of the registration number and within six inches of the registration number.
- If your vessel requires registration, it is illegal to operate it or allow others to operate your vessel unless it is registered and numbered as described above.

Validation Decal



**Spaces or hyphens
should appear here.**

Where to Register

Registration and title application forms can be obtained from:

- **www.mdwfp.com** on the Internet
- Any tax collector's office
- Many marine dealers, marinas, and bait shops
- Any Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks office
- Locations where hunting/fishing licenses are sold
- **1-800-5GO-HUNT** 24 hours a day
- The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

You can submit your registration application and fee to:

Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks
1505 Eastover Dr.
Jackson, MS 39211-6374

Renew Online

You can renew your registration online at:

www.ms.gov/mdwfp/boat_registration

Registration Questions? Call the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks at **601-432-2180** or the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources at **228-523-4134**.



Fees for Vessel Registration, Transfer, or Renewal

Vessel less than 16 ft. long	\$10.20
Vessel 16 ft. but less than 26 ft. long	\$25.20
Vessel 26 ft. and longer	\$47.70

Other Fees

Duplicate Certificate of Number	\$7.70
Dealer Number	\$40.20
Boat Inspection Fee	\$12.70

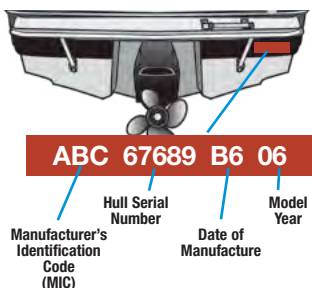
Boat inspection fees are subject to change.

Other Facts About Titling and Registration

- Effective July 1, 1998, you may choose to title your vessel and/or outboard motor; however, titling is not mandatory.
- A Certificate of Number is valid for three years from the last day of the month in which the original or transferred certificate was received. Owners of vessels that have already been registered will be sent a renewal notice to their residence without any action by the owner.
- If you change your address, you must notify the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks (MDWFP) within 15 days of the change.
- If a numbered vessel is lost, stolen, or abandoned, the owner should report it to local authorities and to the MDWFP within 15 days of such event.
- If you lose or destroy your Certificate of Number or decal(s), you must apply to the MDWFP for duplicates and submit a processing fee.
- Vessels registered in another state may operate on Mississippi waters for 60 days before a Mississippi registration and numbering are required.
- Larger recreational vessels owned by U.S. citizens may (at the option of the owner) be documented by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). Call the USCG at **1-800-799-8362** for more information.

Hull Identification Number

- The Hull Identification Number (HIN) is a unique 12-digit number assigned by the manufacturer to vessels built after 1972.
- Hull Identification Numbers:
 - Distinguish one vessel from another.
 - Are engraved in the fiberglass or on a metal plate permanently attached to the transom.
- You should write down your HIN and put it in a place separate from your vessel in case warranty problems arise or your vessel is stolen.



Buying and Selling a Vessel

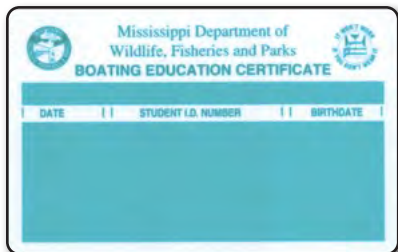
The procedure for transferring ownership of a vessel is outlined here.

- The steps are essentially the same whether the “seller” is a marine dealer or the “buyer” is an individual purchasing a pre-owned vessel from an individual “seller.”
- If a registered vessel is sold or otherwise transferred to another person:
 - The “buyer” must apply for the Certificate of Number to be transferred to his or her name within 10 days from the date of purchase.
 - The “seller” is required to report the transaction to the MDWFP.

Who May Operate a Vessel

All persons born after June 30, 1980, must have passed a boating education course approved by the MDWFP to operate a vessel legally.

- In addition, a person younger than 12 years of age must be accompanied on board by someone who is at least 21 years old.
- The boater safety certification card must be carried on board the vessel whenever the vessel is operated by someone required to have a certificate.



Local Regulations

Some waterways in Mississippi may have special regulations such as size and horsepower restrictions. Check with the governing body of the county or municipality where the waterway is located before you go boating.

Homeland Security Restrictions

- Violators of the restrictions below can expect a quick and severe response.
 - Do not approach within 100 yards and slow to minimum speed within 500 yards of any U.S. Naval vessel. If you need to pass within 100 yards of a U.S. Naval vessel for safe passage, you must contact the U.S. Naval vessel or the USCG escort vessel on VHF-FM channel 16.



- Observe and avoid all security zones. Avoid commercial port operation areas, especially those that involve military, cruise line, or petroleum facilities.
- Observe and avoid other restricted areas near dams, power plants, etc.
- Do not stop or anchor beneath bridges or in the channel.

■ Keep a sharp eye out for anything that looks peculiar or out of the ordinary. Report all activities that seem suspicious to the local authorities, the USCG, or the port or marina security.

NOTICE
RESTRICTED
AREA
AUTHORIZED
PERSONNEL ONLY

Enforcement

- The boating laws of Mississippi are enforced by the officers of the MDWFP, the officers of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, USCG officers, and any other authorized peace officers or law enforcement officers.
- Officers have the authority to stop and board vessels in order to check for compliance with state and federal laws.
- The USCG also has enforcement authority on all federally controlled waters.



Required Equipment

When preparing to go out on a vessel, the operator must check that the legally required equipment is on board.

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)

- All vessels must carry one wearable USCG–approved personal flotation device (PFD), sometimes called life jacket, for each person on board.
- Besides being USCG–approved, all PFDs must be:
 - *In good and serviceable condition.*
 - *Readily accessible*, which means you are able to put the PFD on quickly in an emergency.
 - *Of the proper size for the intended wearer.* Sizing for PFDs is based on body weight and chest size.
- In addition to the above requirements, vessels 16 feet in length or longer must have one USCG–approved throwable device on board and readily accessible.
- Children 12 years old and younger must *wear* a USCG–approved Type I, II, or III PFD whenever underway in a vessel less than 26 feet in length.
- Each person riding on or being towed behind a personal watercraft (PWC) must *wear* a USCG–approved Type I, II, or III PFD.



TYPE I: Wearable Offshore Life Jackets

These vests are geared for rough or remote waters where rescue may take awhile. They provide the most buoyancy, are excellent for flotation, and will turn most unconscious persons face up in the water.



TYPE II: Wearable Near-Shore Vests

These vests are good for calm waters when quick rescue is likely. A Type II may not turn some unconscious wearers face up in the water.



TYPE III: Wearable Flotation Aids

These vests or full-sleeved jackets are good for calm waters when quick rescue is likely. They are not recommended for rough waters because they will not turn most unconscious persons face up.



TYPE IV: Throwable Devices

These cushions and ring buoys are designed to be thrown to someone in trouble. Because a Type IV is not designed to be worn, it is neither for rough waters nor for persons who are unable to hold onto it.



TYPE V: Wearable Special-Use Devices

These vests, deck suits, hybrid PFDs, and others are designed for specific activities such as windsurfing, kayaking, or water-skiing. *To be acceptable, Type V PFDs must be used in accordance with their label.*

Navigation Lights

The required navigation lights must be displayed between sunset and sunrise and during periods of restricted visibility.

Power-Driven Vessels When Underway

If less than 65.6 feet long, these vessels must exhibit the lights as shown in illustration 1. Remember, power-driven vessels include sailboats operating under engine power. The required lights are:

- Red and green sidelights visible from a distance of at least two miles away—or if less than 39.4 feet long, at least one mile away—on a dark, clear night.
- An all-round white light or both a masthead light and a sternlight. These lights must be visible from a distance of at least two miles away on a dark, clear night. The all-round white light (or the masthead light) must be at least 3.3 feet higher than the sidelights.

Unpowered Vessels When Underway

Unpowered vessels are sailboats or vessels that are paddled, poled, or rowed.

- **If less than 65.6 feet long**, these vessels must exhibit the lights as shown in illustration 2. The required lights are:
 - Red and green sidelights visible from at least two miles away—or if less than 39.4 feet long, at least one mile away.
 - A sternlight visible from at least two miles away.
- **If less than 23.0 feet long**, these vessels should:
 - If practical, exhibit the same lights as required for unpowered vessels less than 65.6 feet in length.
 - If not practical, have on hand at least one lantern or flash-light shining a white light as in illustration 3.

All Vessels When Not Underway

All vessels are required to display a white light visible from all directions whenever they are moored or anchored outside a designated mooring area between sunset and sunrise.

1. Power-Driven Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet



The masthead light and sternlight may be combined as an all-round white light on vessels less than 39.4 feet long.



Less than 39.4 feet only

2. Unpowered Vessels Less Than 65.6 Feet



An alternative to the sidelights and sternlight is a combination red, green, and white light, which must be exhibited near the top of the mast.

3. Unpowered Vessels Less Than 23.0 Feet



Vessel operators should never leave shore without a flashlight. Even if you plan to return before dark, unforeseen developments might delay your return past nightfall.



Fire Extinguishers

- All vessels are required to have a Type B fire extinguisher on board if one or more of the following conditions exist:
 - Closed compartments under seats where portable fuel tanks may be stored
 - Closed storage compartments in which flammable or combustible materials may be stored
 - Closed living spaces
 - Permanently installed fuel tanks
- Approved types of fire extinguishers are identified by the following marking on the label—"Marine Type USCG Approved"—followed by the type and size symbols and the approval number.
- Extinguishers should be placed in an accessible area—not near the engine or in a compartment, but where they can be reached immediately. Be sure you know how to operate them, and inspect extinguishers regularly to ensure they are in working condition and fully charged.

Use this chart to determine the size and quantity required for your vessel.

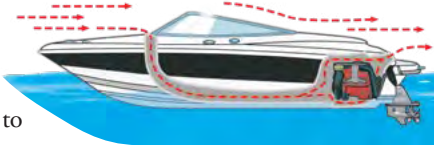
Fire Extinguisher Requirements

Classification type & size	Foam minimum gallons	Carbon Dioxide minimum pounds	Dry Chemical minimum pounds
B-I	1¼	4	2
B-II	2½	15	10
Length of Vessel	Without Fixed System	With Fixed System*	
Less than 26 ft.	one B-I	none	
26 ft. to less than 40 ft.	two B-I or one B-II	one B-I	
40 ft. to less than 65 ft.	three B-I or one B-II and one B-I	two B-I or one B-II	

* refers to a permanently installed fire extinguisher system

Ventilation Systems

The purpose of ventilation systems is to avoid explosions by removing flammable gases. Properly installed ventilation systems greatly reduce the chance of a life-threatening explosion.

- All gasoline-powered vessels, constructed in a way that would entrap fumes, must have at least two ventilation ducts fitted with cowls to remove the fumes.
- 
- If your vessel is equipped with a power ventilation system, turn it on for at least four minutes both after fueling and before starting your engine.
 - If your vessel is not equipped with a power ventilation system (for example, a PWC), open the engine compartment and sniff for gasoline fumes before starting the engine.

Backfire Flame Arrestors

Backfire flame arrestors are designed to prevent the ignition of gasoline vapors in case the engine backfires.

- All powerboats (except outboards) that are fueled with gasoline must have an approved backfire flame arrestor on each carburetor.
- Backfire flame arrestors must be:
 - In good and serviceable condition *and...*
 - USCG-approved (must comply with SAE J-1928 or UL 1111 standards).
- Periodically clean the flame arrestor(s) and check for damage.

Mufflers

A vessel's engine must have a factory-installed muffler or exhaust water manifold for noise reduction, or another effective muffling system. Vessel operators may not hear sound signals or voices if the engine is not adequately muffled.

Sound-Producing Devices

In periods of reduced visibility or whenever a vessel operator needs to signal his or her intentions or position, a sound-producing device is essential.

- Mississippi state law does not require that vessels carry a sound-producing device; however, it is always a good idea to have one on board.
- Federal law requires that vessels boating on federally controlled waters, such as Mississippi's coastal waters, carry sound-producing devices.
 - Vessels less than 65.6 feet (20 meters) in length, which includes PWC, are required to carry on board a whistle or horn or some other means to make an efficient sound signal audible for at least one-half mile.
 - Vessels that are 65.6 feet (20 meters) or more in length are required to carry on board a whistle or horn, *and* a bell that are audible for at least one mile.

Visual Distress Signals (VDSs)

Visual distress signals (VDSs) allow vessel operators to signal for help in the event of an emergency.

- Vessels on federally controlled waters must be equipped with visual distress signals that are USCG–approved, in serviceable condition, and readily accessible.
- All vessels, regardless of length or type, are required to carry night signals when operating between sunset and sunrise. Most vessels must carry day signals also; exceptions to the requirement for day signals are:
 - Recreational vessels that are less than 16 feet in length
 - Non-motorized open sailboats that are less than 26 feet in length
 - Manually propelled vessels
- If pyrotechnic VDSs are used, they must be dated. Expired VDSs may be carried on board, but a minimum of three unexpired VDSs must be carried in the vessel.
- The following examples satisfy USCG requirements:
 - Three handheld red flares (day and night)
 - Three orange smoke signals (day only), and one electric light (night only)

- It is prohibited to display VDSs while on the water unless assistance is required to prevent immediate or potential danger to persons on board.
- VDSs are classified as day signals (visible in bright sunlight), night signals (visible at night), or both day and night signals. VDSs are either pyrotechnic (smoke and flames) or non-pyrotechnic (non-combustible).



Pyrotechnic VDSs

Orange Smoke—Handheld

Orange Smoke—Floating

Day Signal

Red Meteor

Day and Night Signal

Red Flare

Day and Night Signal

Non-Pyrotechnic VDSs

Electric Light

Night Signal

Orange Flag

Day Signal

Federally Controlled Waters

Vessels must observe federal requirements on these waters:

- Coastal waters
- The Great Lakes
- Territorial seas
- Waters which are two miles wide or wider and are connected directly to one of the above



Arm Signal

Although this signal does not meet VDS equipment requirements, wave your arms to summon help if you do not have other distress signals on board.

On the Water

In addition to the laws mentioned previously, here are some other Mississippi regulations that apply when vessel operators are on the water.

Unlawful and Dangerous Operation

- Mississippi law prohibits reckless or negligent operation of a vessel or the reckless manipulation of water skis, a surfboard, or any similar device. Reckless operation or manipulation is the failure to exercise the care necessary to prevent the endangerment of life, limb, or property of any other person. Examples of illegal and reckless operation are:
 - Operating a vessel at speeds that may cause danger, injury, damage, or unnecessary inconvenience. Be aware of and obey all regulatory markers, including those marked as “idle speed” or “no wake speed.”

“Idle Speed” or “No Wake Speed”—This is the slowest speed at which it is still possible to maintain steering and which does not produce a wake.

- Weaving your vessel through congested waterway traffic or swerving at the last possible moment in order to avoid collision.
- Jumping the wake of another vessel unnecessarily close to the other vessel or when visibility around the other vessel is restricted.
- Loading the vessel beyond the recommended capacity shown on the capacity plate installed by the vessel manufacturer.
- Causing damage from the wake of your vessel.

- Boating in restricted areas without regard for other boaters or persons, posted speeds and wake restrictions, diver-down flags, etc.
- Allowing passengers to ride on the bow, gunwale, transom, seat backs, seats on raised decks, or any other place where there may be a chance of falling overboard. (It also interferes with the operator's visibility and the stability of the vessel.)
- Chasing, harassing, or disturbing wildlife with your vessel.



■ In addition to the above examples of reckless or negligent operation, Mississippi Ordinance No. 16.003 states that on marine waters south of Interstate 10 (I-10), it is illegal for vessel operators to:

- Operate at an excessive speed within 100 feet of another occupied vessel except in a crossing situation or when overtaking in accordance with the navigation rules.
- Jump, or attempt to jump, the wake of another vessel within 100 feet of that vessel.
- Follow within 100 feet of a water-skier.
- Create a potentially damaging wake within 100 feet of:
 - Harbors, public marinas, or anywhere else vessels are typically docked *or...*
 - Any public boat launching ramp facility.
- Operate the vessel with passengers positioned such that they block the operator's view of other waterway traffic or of persons and objects in the water.

Remember—vessel owners are responsible...

As an owner of a vessel, you may be held civilly liable if you allow others to operate your vessel recklessly.

Alcohol and Drugs

The Mississippi Alcohol Boating Safety Act prohibits anyone from operating a boat powered by a motor of 25 horsepower or greater while intoxicated due to alcohol or any combination of alcohol, controlled substance, or drugs.

- The Mississippi Alcohol Boating Safety Act defines intoxicated as being under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs such that a person's thoughts and actions are impaired and he or she has a loss of normal control of faculties to such an extent as to cause danger to others. A concentration of alcohol of 0.08% or more, based upon a chemical analysis of breath, blood, or urine, is evidence that a person is intoxicated.
- The Mississippi Alcohol Boating Safety Act establishes the following penalties.
 - Those arrested and convicted of boating while intoxicated may be fined up to \$1,000 and jailed for two days for a first conviction.
 - Upon a second conviction within five years, a person may be fined and jailed and also will lose the privilege of operating a vessel for one year. More severe penalties exist for additional convictions.
 - A person boating while intoxicated who causes the death or serious injury of another person will, upon conviction, be guilty of a felony.
- By operating a vessel on Mississippi waters, you have consented to be tested for alcohol or drugs if requested by a law enforcement official. If you refuse, you will be subject to arrest and punishment consistent with the penalties described above and lose your privilege of operating a vessel for at least one year.



Just remember this simple rule:
Don't drink and boat!

Obstructing Navigation

It is illegal to:

- Operate any vessel in such a way that it will interfere unnecessarily with the safe navigation of other vessels.
- Anchor a vessel in the traveled portion of a river or channel in a way that will prevent or interfere with any other vessel passing through the same area.
- Moor or attach a vessel to a buoy (other than a mooring buoy), beacon, light, or any other navigational aid placed on public waters by proper authorities.
- Move, displace, tamper with, damage, or destroy any navigational aid.
- Obstruct a pier, wharf, boat ramp, or access to any facility.

Boating Accidents

- Vessel operators involved in an accident must report it. An accident includes, but is not limited to, capsizing, collision, foundering, flooding, fire, explosion, and the disappearance of a vessel other than by theft.
- The operator must file an accident report form if:
 - A person dies or disappears *or...*
 - An injury occurs causing any person to remain incapacitated for more than 24 hours *or...*
 - Damage to the vessel and other property exceeds \$100.
- Report accidents to the MDWFP if the accident occurs north of Interstate 10, or to the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources if it occurs south of Interstate 10.
- Most reports must be made within five days of the accident. However, you must file the report within 48 hours if a person dies as a result of the accident.
- It is also the duty of any operator involved an accident to remain at the scene until he or she has rendered all necessary aid and assistance, including ensuring that any injured person receives medical treatment.

Diver-Down Flags

- Federal law requires that scuba divers or snorkelers on federally controlled waters display the Alfa diver-down flag to mark their diving area.
- Vessels should stay as far away from a diver-down flag as is reasonable and prudent for the circumstances. The suggested safe distance from a flag is 100 yards.



Divers Flag

A rectangular red flag with a white diagonal stripe is used on Mississippi state waters.



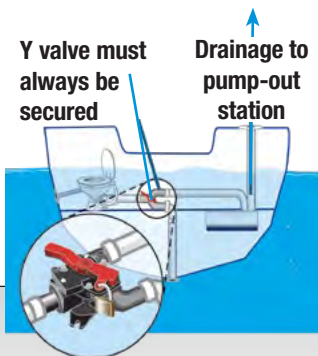
Alfa Flag

A blue and white International Code Flag A (or Alfa flag) is used on federally controlled waters.

Discharge of Waste

If you have a vessel with installed toilet facilities, it must have an operable marine sanitation device (MSD).

- Vessels 65 feet or less in length may use a Type I, II or III MSD.
- Vessels more than 65 feet in length must install a Type II or III MSD.



Types of MSDs

There are three types of MSDs.

- Types I and II MSDs are usually found on large vessels. Waste is treated with special chemicals to kill bacteria. The Y valve must remain secured.
- Type III MSDs provide no treatment and consist of holding tanks or portable toilets. Waste is to be discharged on shore into a pump-out facility.

Discharge of Oil and Other Hazardous Substances

- You are not allowed to discharge oil or hazardous substances into the water.
- You are not allowed to dump oil into the bilge of the vessel without means for proper disposal.
- You must dispose of oil waste at an approved reception facility. On recreational vessels, a bucket or bailer is adequate for temporary storage prior to disposing of the oil waste at an approved facility.

If your vessel discharges oil or hazardous substances in the water:

- Call the National Response Center at **1-800-424-8802**.
 - Also notify the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency at **1-800-222-MEMA**.
- If boating on federally controlled waters with a vessel that is 26 feet or longer, you must display a 5 x 8-inch placard made of durable material, fixed in a conspicuous place in the machinery spaces or at the bilge pump control station, stating the Federal Water Pollution Control Act's law.

Discharge of Trash

It is illegal to dump refuse, garbage, or plastics into any state or federally controlled waters. Many forms of litter can kill birds, fish, and marine mammals.

- You must store trash in a container while on board and place it in a proper receptacle after returning to shore.
- If boating on federally controlled waters with a vessel that is 26 feet or longer, you must display a Garbage Disposal Placard that is at least 4 x 9 inches and notifies passengers and crew about discharge restrictions.
- Vessels on marine waters south of Interstate 10:
 - Must have on board a clearly marked, closed container for proper disposal of waste, trash, and other garbage. Containers must be sealed and of sufficient size for the number of people on board and the length of the cruise.
 - Must display a sign informing all on board that it is illegal to dispose of waste, trash, and other garbage into the marine waters of Mississippi.

Specifically for PWC

PWC operators must adhere to additional legal requirements that apply specifically to the operation of PWC on Mississippi waters.

Requirements Specific to PWC

- Each person riding on or being towed behind a PWC must *wear* a USCG–approved Type I, II, or III PFD.
- PWC should not be operated in a manner that requires the operator to swerve at the last possible moment to avoid a collision. Also, a PWC should not jump the wake of another vessel recklessly or unnecessarily close to that vessel.
- It is also *strongly recommended* that:
 - An operator of a PWC equipped with a lanyard-type engine cut-off switch always attach the lanyard to his or her person, clothing, or PFD
 - PWC are operated during daylight hours only
- In addition to the requirements above, Mississippi Ordinance No. 16.003 states that on marine waters south of Interstate 10 (I-10), PWC:
 - Must be equipped with a self-circling device or lanyard-type engine cut-off switch with the lanyard attached to the operator's person, clothing, or PFD.
 - Must not be operated at an excessive speed within 100 feet of another occupied vessel except in a crossing situation or when overtaking in accordance with the navigation rules.
 - May not jump, or attempt to jump, the wake of another vessel within 100 feet of that vessel.
 - May not follow within 100 feet of a water-skier.

Sharing Your PWC...Safely!

Sharing the fun of your PWC with friends is all part of the boating experience. Before you share your PWC, however, make sure that others you allow to operate it understand their responsibilities as an operator. They need to know that they have the same responsibilities as any other vessel operator, including obeying the navigation rules.

In addition:

- Make sure that anyone you allow to operate your PWC meets the minimum age and education requirements for PWC operation in Mississippi and the local waterway you are using.
- Show new operators how to start and reboard the PWC while on shore or in shallow water.
- Explain how to steer and control the PWC. Tell all new operators and remind experienced operators that ***power is required for steering control!***
- Make sure that the operator understands how to use the engine cut-off switch and attaches the lanyard to his or her person or PFD before starting the engine.
- Have anyone new to PWC go out in an uncongested area first. Tell them to stay clear of other PWC, boats, or persons in the water.
- Explain how to recognize a “slow, no wake speed” marker and what to do when approaching one.



Specifically for Skiing

Vessel operators towing a person(s) on water skis or a similar device have additional laws they must follow.

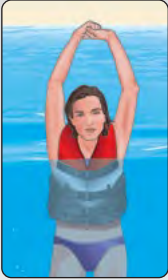
Requirements for Towing Skiers

- Every vessel towing a person(s) on water skis, a surfboard, or a similar device must have a person older than 10 years of age, in addition to the operator, observing the towed person(s) at all times.
- A reasonable distance from other vessels, people, and property must be maintained so as not to endanger life or property. It is illegal to cause the person being towed to collide with any object or person.
- It is illegal to be towed on water skis, a surfboard, or a similar device while you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- If towing a person behind a PWC, the PWC must be rated for at least three people—the operator, the observer, and the retrieved skier.
- In addition, it is also *strongly recommended* that:
 - All persons being towed behind a vessel on water skis or any other device wear a USCG–approved PFD (this is required by law if being towed behind a PWC). Ski belts are not USCG–approved.
 - Persons be towed behind a vessel on water skis or any other device *only* during daylight hours.

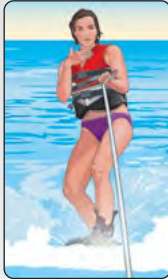


Hand Signals for Skiers

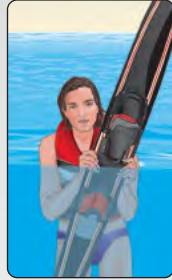
Knowing proper hand signals will help the skier(s) communicate with their boat operator or the observer.



Skier OK



Stop



Skier down—watch!



Speed up



Slow down



Speed OK



Turn left



Turn right

Mississippi Boaters' Telephone Directory

Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks Administrative Building

1505 Eastover Drive
Jackson, MS 39211
Phone: 601-432-2400

Boat Registration Department/Titling

601-432-2055

Boating Safety

Law Enforcement
601-432-2180

Boating Education/ Hunter Education Class Schedules/Questions or Call your Local Regional Office

1-800-354-5033

License/Hunting & Fishing

601-432-2055

Law Enforcement Bureau

601-432-2174

Fisheries Bureau

601-432-2200

Wildlife Bureau

601-432-2199

Mississippi State Parks

1-800-GO PARKS

To Report Hunting, Fishing, or Boating Violations

1-800-BE SMART

To Order Hunting/ Fishing License by Visa/ MasterCard

(7 days/24 hours)

1-800-5GO HUNT

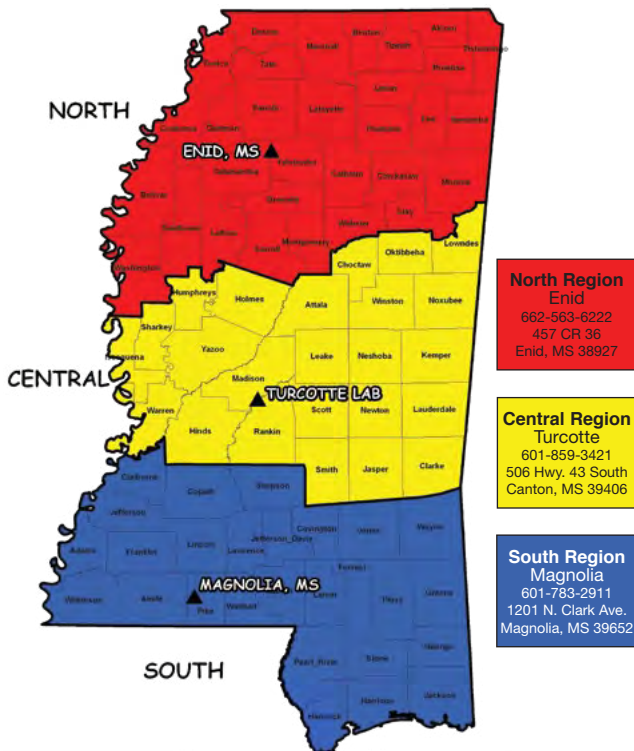
Mississippi Outdoors Magazine & TV Show

601-432-2250

Mississippi Museum of Natural Science

601-576-6000

Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks Regional Offices



Lakes

- Elvis Presley
- Lamar Bruce
- Monroe
- Tippah County
- Claude Bennett
- Kemper County
- Neshoba County
- Prentiss Walker
- Tom Bailey

- Bill Waller
- Bogue Homa
- Calling Panther
- Columbia
- Jeff Davis
- Mary Crawford
- Mike Conner
- Perry
- Simpson County
- Walthall

Reservoirs

- Arkabutla
- Enid
- Grenada
- Sardis
- Okatibbee
- Ross Barnett

Protecting Mississippi's Waterways

Aquatic Nuisance Species

Introducing non-native species into Mississippi waters can upset the balance of the ecosystem, thereby harming the environment. Aquatic nuisance species, such as zebra mussels, quagga mussels, milfoil, and hydrilla, most often are spread between waterways by hitching a ride on vessels and trailers. When transplanted into new waters, these organisms proliferate, displacing native species and damaging water resources.



How You Can Help

Here's what you can do to prevent spreading aquatic nuisance species:

- ✓ Inspect your vessel and trailer, and remove any plants and animals you see before leaving the area.
- ✓ Drain your motor, live well, and bilge on land before leaving the area.
- ✓ Empty your bait bucket on land. Never release live bait into a body of water or release aquatic animals from one body of water into another.
- ✓ Rinse your vessel, propeller, trailer, and equipment.
- ✓ Air-dry your vessel and equipment for as long as possible.

Required Equipment Checklist



	PWC	Boat Less Than 16 Ft.	Boat 16 Ft. to Less Than 26 Ft.
Boating Education Certificate	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1
Certificate of Number on Board	✓	✓	✓
Validation Decals Displayed	✓	✓	✓
PFDs: Type I, II, III, or V	✓ 2	✓ 3	✓ 3
PFD: Type IV			✓
Engine Cut-Off Switch	✓ 4		
Type B-I Fire Extinguisher	✓	✓	✓
Backfire Flame Arrestor	✓	✓ 5	✓ 5
Ventilation System	✓	✓	✓
Muffler	✓	✓	✓
Horn, Whistle, or Bell	✓	✓	✓
Daytime VDSs			✓ 6
Nighttime VDSs	7	✓ 7	✓ 7
Navigation Lights	7	✓	✓

1. Applicable if operator is born after June 30, 1980.
2. Those on PWC must *wear* a Type I, II, or III PFD at all times.
3. Those 12 years old and younger must *wear* a PFD at all times when underway in a vessel less than 26 feet in length.
4. When boating on Mississippi marine waters south of Interstate 10 (I-10).
5. Required on inboard and stern drives only.
6. When boating on federally controlled waters.
7. It is strongly recommended that PWC are not operated after dark. However, if a PWC is operated at night, it has the same requirements for VDSs and navigation lights as a boat less than 16 feet long.

Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks



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