

## **DNR 2013 Legislative Agenda- Talking Points**

### **Boater Safety**

#### ***BUI***

- Georgia is one of eight states in the country with a Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) limit for boating under the influence (.10) that is higher than that of driving under the influence (.08).
- The US Coast Guard shows that alcohol is a contributing factor in over 50% of boating fatalities each year, and this statistic holds true for Georgia.
- Legislation proposes equalizing the BAC limit for boating under the influence with that of driving under the influence.
- Legislation also provides for penalty escalation for BUI offenders that mirrors penalties contained within the DUI statute so that offenders, especially repeat offenders, may be handled in a more rigorous manner.
- Recreational boating provides \$2.1 billion in annual spending to the state of Georgia. The potential for Georgia to be seen as an unsafe boating state is a threat to this economic driver.

#### ***Vessel Operation***

- Existing statute regarding what type vessels individuals under the age of 16 may operate is unnecessarily complicated. This section clarifies statute so that it can be more easily understood by the boating public.
- Legislation would:
  - Allow individuals 12 to 15 to operate a PWC or a Class A vessel (a boat less than 16 ft. in length) with boater education OR if accompanied by an adult.
  - Allow individuals under the age of 12 to operate a Class A vessel (less than 30 HP), but not a PWC, if accompanied by an adult.
  - No person age 12-15 may operate a Class 1, 2, or 3 vessel (over 16 ft.).

#### ***Education***

- By phasing in an education requirement for all individuals, you effectively change the culture of boating through our youth for generations to come.
- Legislation would:
  - Require all motorized vessel operators born on or after January 1, 1998 to complete a boater safety education course (a free course is available on the DNR website).

- Require all renters of vessels (10 horsepower or more) to complete a boater safety education briefing.
- States who have already implemented mandatory boating education have shown an overall decrease in the number of fatalities per 100,000 registered boats.
- Effective July 2014 to allow for public education.

### ***Life Jackets***

- The US Coast Guard recommends PFD (Personal Flotation Device) wear for children under the age of 13.
- Georgia currently requires children under 10 to wear life jackets.
- Only Florida has a lower age requirement for life jacket wear (under 6).
- Legislation would require PFD wear for children under the age of 13 while aboard a moving vessel (doesn't apply when child is in a fully enclosed roofed cabin).

### ***Navigation Lights***

- Updates regulations for navigation lights according to current industry standards for boat manufacturers, allowing the placement of navigation sidelights on the sides of vessels (per U.S. Coast Guard guidance).

### ***Hunting Under the Influence***

- Brings HUI law in line with the DUI law by lowering the BAC from .10 to .08.

### ***Effective Date***

- Provides for effective date for enforcement of all rules and regulations passed by the Department of Natural Resources to be February 5, 2013 (annual DNR housekeeping language).