



Seaplane Access in Ohio

Forward

The purpose of this document is to open a discussion with state policymakers and the general public regarding fair and equal access to Ohio public waterways for seaplane owners, operators, and pilots.

Members of the seaplane community are concerned about their ability to use Ohio public waterways for recreational, sport, and limited commercial purposes. State policies and procedures severely restrict, and in many cases prohibit, seaplane access to public waterways, apparently for reasons that the facts show are unsupportable.

The Seaplane Pilots Association is the national advocacy organization for seaplane owners, operators, and pilots. We are committed to representing the interests of our members by partnering with local, state, regional and federal government and regulatory agencies to ensure fair and equal access to waterways while protecting public safety and being responsible stewards of the environment.

Our experience is that restrictive policies regarding seaplane access to waterways typically are based on incorrect assumptions about compatibility of seaplanes with other vessels, and lack of knowledge of seaplane operations. We intend to demonstrate that seaplane operations are far safer than boating in general, and that seaplane pilots are specifically trained to operate so as not to conflict with boaters and other users of public waterways.

Methodology

Following are tables comparing boating safety in Ohio with seaplane safety. We also present these statistics for the state of Florida, which has both the highest number of registered boats in the nation, and the highest number of resident seaplane pilots. Also, while Ohio is perceived as hostile to seaplane operations, Florida is considered one of the most accommodating states in the country for seaplane operations. The Florida statistics especially support our contention that seaplane operations can be conducted with a very high degree of safety, and can share public waterways with boaters with no threat to public safety.

The data have been collected from the United States Coast Guard (boating safety) and the National Transportation Safety Board (seaplane safety). The numbers have not been altered in any way from the source documents.



Review of the Data

In 2013 Ohio had 449,541 registered boats, up from 441,732 in 2012.

Florida led the country in 2013 with 870,749 registered boats, up from 870,031 in 2012.

Ohio reported 13 deaths from boating accidents in 2013, up from 11 in 2012.

Florida experienced 58 deaths from boating accidents in 2013, up from 50 in 2012.

As of 2010 Ohio had a population of 11,536,504 and more than 400,000 registered boats. That same year there were only 586 licensed seaplane pilots in the state, and fewer than 27,000 nationwide.

Reviewing a recent five-year period, Ohio experienced the following:

Ohio	Total Number of Boating Accidents	Total Number of Fatal Boating Accidents	Total Number of Boating Accident-Related Deaths	Total Number of Seaplane Accident-Related Deaths
2009	105	9	9	0
2010	127	15	16	0
2011	135	13	15	0
2012	136	11	11	0
2013	108	13	13	0

Reviewing Florida for the same period:

Florida	Total Number of Boating Accidents	Total Number of Fatal Boating Accidents	Total Number of Boating Accident-Related Deaths	Total Number of Seaplane Accident - Related Deaths
2009	610	53	67	0
2010	608	65	69	0
2011	685	56	61	0
2012	662	48	50	0
2013	685	51	58	0

A comparison of safety statistics for the two states:

Boating Accident Stats for Florida and Ohio	5 Year Average of Boating Accidents per Year	5 Year Average of Boating Fatalities	Number of Boating Accidents Involving a Seaplane	Average Number of Seaplane-Related Deaths in the United States
Florida	650	61	0	6
Ohio	122	12.8	0	6

	Population 2010	Number of Registered Boats 2013	Number of Licensed Seaplane Pilots	Total Boating Accidents 2013	Seaplane Accidents Involving Boats	Seaplane Accident-Related Deaths
Florida	18,801,310	870,749	3,447	685	0	0
Ohio	11,536,504	449,541	586	108	0	0

The Facts

Ohio's regulatory system has a long history of being unfriendly to seaplanes and seaplane owners and operators, with no logical basis for this bias. The consequence is that a group of highly qualified waterways users—taxpayers all—are not able to enjoy the same freedom of access to public resources that other user groups enjoy.

On average there are fewer than six seaplane-related fatalities per year nationwide, while in recent years Ohio alone has experienced an average of 12.8 boating-related fatalities per year. Denying access to public waterways in the state based on a perceived threat to public safety is to ignore the facts. Seaplane pilots are highly trained, proficient, and responsible users. Initial and recurrent training—required of all seaplane pilots—stresses the importance of surveying the intended waterway landing site to assess wind and water conditions, check for obstacles, and plan the approach and landing to give people and vessels a wide berth. The same is true of water takeoffs.

Florida has more registered boats and more seaplane-rated pilots than any other state in the nation, yet it is extremely friendly in regards to seaplane access to waterways. It is worth noting that none of the average 61 boating-related fatalities that occur in Florida each year involve a seaplane.

The data show that in recent years there have been no reports of collisions between boats and seaplanes that have resulted in injuries or deaths. We looked back to a 1993 study that examined the previous 20-year period and found a total of three seaplane/boat-related incidents nationwide.

The number-one cause of boating-related accidents and fatalities nationwide is boat-on-boat collisions.

In the extremely detailed 80-page Annual Boating Safety Report compiled by the U.S. Coast Guard, seaplanes are not even mentioned as a contributing factor to any boating-related accidents, even though the Coast Guard considers seaplanes to be vessels while they are on the water.

According to the Coast Guard, the top three contributors to boating accidents in the United States are:

- 1) Operator inattention
- 2) Improper lookout
- 3) Operator inexperience

The Coast Guard cites the top three contributing factors in boating-related deaths in 2013 as:

- 1) Alcohol use
- 2) Operator inattention
- 3) Operator inexperience



Boats under 16 feet in length were involved in 47 percent of boating fatalities nationally in 2013, with boats between 16 and 26 feet involved in 39 percent of fatalities. These numbers support the dangers of a casual boater where inexperience, lack of attention to the control of the boat, and alcohol use are the largest contributing factors in fatal accidents. In contrast, Federal Aviation Regulations prohibit pilots from consuming alcohol within eight hours of flying, at minimum. As noted, seaplane pilots undergo extensive training prior to earning the rating, and must undergo periodic proficiency training. Seaplane pilots approach their responsibilities with a professional attitude and a primary emphasis on safety for all concerned, including the general public.

In Conclusion

Discriminatory water-use regulations, policies, and procedures are not supported by the facts. Such regulations, policies, and procedures not only unfairly prevent qualified users from enjoying Ohio's beautiful natural resources, they negatively affect the state's economy and potential for creating new jobs.

The Seaplane Pilots Association offers its knowledge, expertise, and resources to assist policymakers in Ohio in crafting legislation and regulations that will provide all users, including seaplanes, open and equal access to public waterways in the state.

Let's work together to rectify this situation for the betterment and benefit of all.

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