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President Bush signs 2008 Clean Boating Act into law

President Bush last night signed into law The Clean Boating Act of 2008, protecting more than 17 million recreational boats throughout the U.S. from unprecedented federal regulations.

The signing took place on Air Force One as the President was en route from Ohio to Washington, D.C.

Both houses of Congress passed the Clean Boating Act July 22.

“This is welcome news for all recreational marine manufacturers across the country,” said Thom Dammrich, president of the National Marine Manufacturers Association, in a statement. “NMMA raised the alarm on this misguided court decision nearly two years ago, and we are thrilled that Congress and the President have prevented the bureaucratic nightmare that was set to become law.”



President George W. Bush is joined by Rep. Steven LaTourette, R-Ohio, left, and Rep. Patrick Tiberi, R-Ohio, at the signing Tuesday, of S. 2766, The Clean Boating Act of 2008. White House photo by Chris Greenberg

Introduced by Sens. Bill Nelson, D-Fla. and Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., and Reps. Steve LaTourette, R-Ohio, and Candice Miller, R-Mich, The Clean Boating Act of 2008 permanently and fully restores a regulation that excludes recreational boaters and anglers from the Clean Water Act federal and state permitting system designed for land-based industrial facilities like sewage treatment plants.

Without legislative relief, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency was set to implement new permitting regulations for boaters by Oct. 1, 2008.

Congressional action was prompted by a U.S. district court decision in September 2006 under which recreational boats would have fallen under Clean Water Act permit requirements effective Sept. 30, 2008. The federal permit would have dictated maintenance and operation procedures and potentially subjected boaters to citizen lawsuits as well as a penalty system designed for industrial polluters.

At the same time it passed The Clean Boating Act of 2008, Congress also passed legislation to provide a moratorium on permitting for commercial vessel discharges until the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency completes a review of certain incidental discharges.

“It’s just a wonderful day for boating and it’s really wonderful that this common-sense legislation went all the way through this legislative process to become law,” Margaret Podlich, vice president of government affairs for BoatU.S., told Soundings Trade Only this morning.

The bill went to the president last Friday, Podlich said, but it was unknown when it would be signed.

Also, she noted, comments on the draft permits proposed by the EPA had been due this week, “so for recreational boaters, it’s a nice clean timeline because he signed it before that Aug. 1 comment deadline.”

Podlich, and officials from the NMMA, praised the efforts by so many in the industry that led to the passage of this bill. “The beauty of this year-plus effort is that everybody came together toward this common goal,” she said. “The industry, marinas, equipment manufacturers, equipment sellers ... and the boaters themselves.”

“Passage of this legislation is a testament to what is possible when our community joins forces and speaks with one voice before key decision-makers,” said Scott Gudes, NMMA vice president for government relations.

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