

BILL GRISWOLD'S NOTES
NON – POWERED VESSEL SUBCOMMITTEE
FLORIDA BOATING ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting 1/31/2006
Gainesville, Florida

9 members of the Subcommittee met, Lisa Neal Chairwoman, at the Hilton Hotel in Gainesville. Capt. Paul Ouellette was the FWC representative. There were 3 paddling outfitters in the audience, as well as 3 or 4 other interested parties, including Bruce Wright, CCGD7 RBS Specialist. These notes are not official minutes, the meeting was recorded and minutes will be published.

The thrust of the meeting was directed at registering non-powered vessels. The definition of a vessel was finally found in a Florida Statute, and "includes every description of watercraft, barge, and air boat, other than a seaplane on the water, used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water". This put aside some examples of pool toys being entered into the discussion.

Various objections to the subject of registering were voiced, one comparing bicycle registration. Titling and the problems of ownership, documents of origin were also voiced. We learned that canoes and kayaks do have serial numbers, but are not HIN's. Mention was made of other states that register non-powered vessels; Bill Griswold noted that DC, IL, MN and OH have a total boat registration of 1,310,418 boats of which 448,701 are non-powered (34%). Accidents and fatalities were mentioned, and one questioner asked how many of the Florida fatalities in non-powered craft resulted by being run over by a motorboat. FWC will research that item.

Access was debated, the paddlers saying that concrete boat ramps are not solutions for paddler access. A few ramps have paddler only access, a benefit. Signage, manatees, speed limits, and other regulatory subjects don't apply to non-powered vessels in any significant way. However, some felt that law enforcement, accident investigation and some other aspects of the boating infrastructure do apply. Fairness seemed to be a large part of the discussion, that paddlers, sailors and row boat users should be contributing something to support the infrastructure.

We launched into a large debate about funding. Wallop-Breaux funding was discussed, and we learned that in order for Florida to add non-powered vessels to the grand total of registered boats, they would have to comply with the Federal Numbering System, in other words display 3" bold FL numbers on the craft. That didn't generate much enthusiasm. Most of the registration fees are retained by the counties, and there is not much accounting for how that money is rolled back into the boating infrastructure. Some counties obviously have marine patrols, and send some money to the cities, but it isn't even throughout the state. We did get some numbers of how much money comes from Wallop-Breaux, and how much is generated by registration fees.

Canoe trails was brought up, perhaps some of these require money for signage, maps and brochures. Conflict of use is another topic, in which law enforcement is needed. Questions about the lack of sailors in the group as well as racing scull groups was noted, and contact with those organizations will be made. Comparisons with other states were needed, and those web sites will have to be distributed. The

members of the sub-committee were handed statements from various views, but we didn't have time to digest those. We hope to have such papers distributed at least a week ahead of the next meeting.

The debate went on, and towards the end of the day, one member forwarded a list of specific items that we should consider. (OFFERED BY JESSICA KOELSCH.) They are:

Do not impose the Federal numbering system on a Florida registration system.

Impose a small fee for registering non-powered vessels, and make that fee fixed for some period of time.

Do not title non-powered vessels.

Write into the law that a portion of the registration fee be returned directly back to the non-powered community or projects.

Impose a small increase in motor boat registration fees, to help get the non-powered registration underway. (By that, we learned that even imposing a small fee for non-powered vessels, the administrative costs would exceed the income, thus looking for support.)

FWC should investigate and determine the cost effectiveness of this program.

THE FOLLOWING UNDERLINED INFORMATION WAS ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT BY FWC AFTER A REVIEW OF THE MEETING RECORDING. (OFFERED BY DAVID RAY.)

Direct any revenue from non-motorized vessel registrations to FWC and no other agency or organization

- Require 3" numbers on all boats to capitalize on increased federal boating safety grant funding

- Set the registration fee at \$20 per vessel

- Title all boats

- Do not increase motorboat registration fees

While I agree with the position above, I added the following:

Paddlers should support the State's boating infrastructure.

Registration would enable the state to count the number of non-powered vessels, and be a vehicle to distribute educational materials.

Livery operations might be considered separately, meaning that perhaps the livery could pay one fee which would include all the boats used, instead of a per boat deal.

Once the paddlers were included, they could have a voice at the table and bring up things that community would like the State or counties to provide.

The session wound down with some informational news:

Comments can be found at www.paddle-fishing.com

There will be a paddling workshop May 15-18 at Crystal River

The State Organization for Boating Access will have a meeting in Florida in Sept.

Web sites with additional information:

Reference Guide to State Boating Laws -

<http://www.nasbla.org/references.php#Numbering>

NASBLA Model Act for Numbering and Titling of non-powered vessels-

<http://www.nasbla.org/> click on left hand column the above

Summary of the state and county registration revenues –
<http://www.hsmv.state.fl.us/html/revpub/revpub2004-2005.pdf>

USCG State Grants (how Wallop-Breaux works) –
http://uscgboating.org/grants/state_grants.htm

The next subcommittee meeting will be held April 6th in Tallahassee a day before the full Boating Advisory Council meeting is scheduled. While a consensus was not reached, a clearer picture of the issue came out of the meeting. The sub-committee will now have a chance to review the materials, and FWC has a list of other items that it will provide. In all, it was a beneficial meeting for understanding all sides of the question.