

November 28, 2022

Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
550 West 7th Avenue
Suite 1380
Anchorage, AK 99501

Re: 2023-2027 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

Dear Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation,

The National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA), Marine Retailers Association of the Americas (MRAA), and Personal Watercraft Industry Association (PWIA) appreciate the opportunity to comment on the 2023-2027 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). Collectively, we are the leading trade associations representing recreational marine manufacturers and dealers.

The recreational boating industry has a \$170 billion impact on the nation's economy and in communities across the country, with nearly 700,000 American jobs across 35,000 U.S.-based marine businesses. Recreational boating in Alaska has a \$586.9 million economic impact, providing almost 3,000 jobs and more than 300 business.

The National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) is the premier trade association for the U.S. recreational boating industry, representing nearly 1,300 marine businesses, including recreational boat, marine engine, and accessory manufacturers. Our members primarily are U.S.-based small businesses, many of which are family owned. NMMA members collectively manufacture more than 85 percent of the recreational marine products sold in the U.S.

The Marine Retailers Association of the Americas (MRAA) is the leading trade association of North American small businesses that sell and service new and pre-owned recreational boats and operate marinas, boatyards, and accessory stores. MRAA represents more than 1,300 individual member retail locations and although the MRAA proudly represents only one member in Alaska at the time of this comment, we are making significant efforts to expand in the state.

The Personal Watercraft Industry Association (PWIA) was founded in 1987 by personal watercraft (PWC) to be and advocate for safe and responsible PWC operation, as well as for equal access to all waterways where boating is allowed. PWIA members include BRP (SeaDoo®), Kawasaki Motors Corp., U.S.A. (Jet Ski®) and Yamaha Motor Corporation, USA (Waverunner®). Collectively, they support the implementation of reasonable boating safety laws and regulations, include mandatory boating safety education and strict enforcement of boating safety and navigation laws.

As the SCORP states, "Alaska's outdoor way of life is instrumental in how many perceive Alaska...[and] outdoor recreation demand is skyrocketing," which is shown by the data collected throughout the plan (p. 2). The SCORP identifies hiking and trails as a part of the "outdoor way of life," but does not clearly identify recreational boating as a major component of outdoor recreation in the state. However, the plan reports that over 34% of people expressed interest in water and boating education compared to that of having road-side/trail-side recreational hubs and cultural and natural history interpretation (p. 72). To add to this, the Kenai River Special Management Area and local Alaska tribal governments

identified an area of growth as needing more boat launches (p. 64, p. 77). Because of Alaska's unique terrain, boating is an integral part to many recreational activities as they are used to access backcountry areas to pursue other outdoor activities. As the SCORP proves, boating is an essential part of accessing Alaska's great outdoors.

An analysis released in November by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis determined that the boating industry in the United States generated \$37.2 billion in economic output in 2021, making it the second most profitable among industry segments including biking, canoeing and kayaking, hunting, and more. Recreational boating serves a significant portion of the industry economic impact. In conjunction with Alaska's outdoor nature, Alaska has a very high boater participation rate, with data compiled by NMMA showing it ranks fifth in America as percentage of households having a boat. Nearly one in every five households own a motorized boat.

Therefore, we are concerned about the data pulled for the SCORP as recreational boating is not readily included in this plan. The research on which the SCORP is based found that boating is a fundamental part of life in Alaska, therefore the state's four-year recreation work plan should place greater emphasis on improvements in boating infrastructure and promotion.

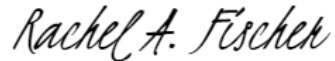
NMMA, MRAA, and PWIA appreciate the continued work of Alaska's Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation to ensure that the outdoors is properly recognized as a major economic driver of the state. As pointed out within the SCORP, "a sizeable share of Alaska's outdoor recreation facilities and destinations are undersized, overcrowded, and not well maintained" (p. 2). The work plan does not reflect these shortcomings in the level of commitment it calls for regarding recreational boating. According to the SCORP Public Survey, boating was included as a year-round activity by many respondents, highlighting that boating is not necessarily a seasonal activity but part of daily life in Alaska for both recreation and more (p. 37). Furthermore, Question 15 found that 33.7% and 32.5% of Alaskans, respectively, believe that boat ramps in saltwater and freshwater need improvement and that 28.1% and 27.2% respectively think more boat ramps are needed. We would welcome an opportunity to work with the SCORP Statewide Advisory Group to identify priority projects and the associated funding mechanisms.

We also laud the SCORP's focus on workforce development (p. 7, Goal 3) and believe that the work plan's goals should specifically include development of the workforce needed to support the recreational boating industry. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the SCORP Working Group on Strategy 2.1 Action A, Action B, and Action C. We currently work with organizations throughout the lower 48 states to develop workforce opportunities and development and can provide insights into efforts by several state Marine Trade Associations throughout America who have robust workforce development programs.

Lastly, we support creating a State Office of Outdoor Recreation (OREC). Nearly 20 states have ORECs and use their expertise to help implement their economic goals for recreation. They often can find synergies with the private sector as support develop the outdoor recreation economy at large. With proper planning and increased investment, Alaska's recreation-based businesses and infrastructure could do much more to build the Alaskan economy and expand job opportunities. We have helped state governments and legislatures establish ORECs in nearly 20 states and we would like to work with the SCORP Statewide Advisory Group to assist in the development of an office Focused on the development of outdoor businesses and economic opportunity.

We recommend that Alaska's SCORP be revised to increase the emphasis it places on developing recreational boating as part of the state's overall goal of making outdoor recreation a fundamental part of Alaska's workforce and public attraction. Recreational boating is a major and unique feature of the state, and there is an opportunity to continue building upon boating as a part of the SCORP. We greatly appreciate the thoughtful authorship and commitment to ensuring the growth of Alaska's outdoor life and recreation.

Sincerely,



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National Marine Manufacturers Association



Chad Tokowicz, Government Relations Manager
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David Dickerson, Vice President, State Government Relations
Personal Watercraft Industry Association