



GEORGIA

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

NEWS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Memorial Day Weekend Includes Enforcement of Boating Laws & Social Distancing for Game Wardens

SOCIAL CIRCLE - As Memorial Day quickly approaches, Georgia Game Wardens across the state are gearing up for a very busy weekend on the lakes, rivers, beaches, and on State Parks. They will be patrolling all state waterways, making sure the thousands of recreation seekers are lawfully enjoying themselves. This year, however, they have an added responsibility – making sure everyone is complying with the social distancing executive order.

“The Division will have a strong presence on our state impoundments, rivers and beaches across Georgia, addressing boating violations and emphasizing Boating Under the Influence (BUI) enforcement in order to keep our waters safe,” said DNR Law Enforcement Division Director Colonel Thomas Barnard. “They will also be addressing any violations regarding the Governors Executive Order.”

The Executive Order, which is in effect through May 31st, requires a 6-foot distance between individuals from different households, and therefore applies to people visiting beaches, lakes, parks and other public locations as well.

“With social distancing, our goal is compliance. We are not focused on writing tickets or making arrests related to social distancing. From what we have seen so far, when we ask people to comply, they do, and that is what we are looking for,” said Barnard.

When it comes to violations of boating laws, enforcement will be tight, especially for those who choose to operate a vessel while impaired. The Division has a zero-tolerance policy for BUI and violators will go to jail.

In Georgia there were 113 boating incidents with 26 fatalities in 2019, and Game Wardens made 209 boating under the influence arrests. So far in 2020, there have been 40 boating incidents, resulting in seven fatalities, and 25 people have been arrested for BUI. Additionally, there were 44 drownings statewide last year and 14 so far this year.

Boating Safety Tips

- *Designate an operator.* Do not drink and operate a boat. Georgia law states anyone operating a vessel with a blood alcohol content level of .08 or higher is boating under the influence.
- *Take a boating safety course.* Recommended for everyone, but anyone born on or after January 1, 1998 is required to have successfully completed a DNR-approved boater safety course before operating a motorized vessel on Georgia waters. Visit www.gadnrle.org/boating-education for course information.
- *Wear a life jacket.* Children under 13 years of age are required by law to wear a life jacket while onboard a moving vessel, but it’s highly recommended for EVERYONE to wear a life jacket.
- *Don’t overload your boat with people or equipment.* Check the capacity plate for the maximum weight or the maximum number of people the boat can safely carry.
- *Use navigation lights at ALL times between official sunset and official sunrise.* Check lights *before* it gets dark.
- *Watch your speed.* The 100-foot law applies to ALL size vessels and prohibits operation at speeds greater than idle speed within 100 feet of a moored or anchored boat or any boat that is adrift, a dock, pier or bridge, persons in the water, any shoreline at a residence, public park, beach or swimming area, a marina, restaurant or any other public use area, or any vessel, unless overtaking or meeting another vessel in compliance with the rules of the road.

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