

2026 Boating Legislative Update Summary

[HB54 Boating Safety Education](#) Representative Mike Petersen

- This bill creates an annual watercraft operator safety course that applies to people operating a motorboat or sailboat.
- The course:
 - Focuses on developing and instilling knowledge, attitudes, habits, and skills necessary for the safe and ethical operation of a watercraft, and information about aquatic invasive species (AIS).
 - Takes an average of 20 minutes to complete.
 - Provides a digital certificate option (operators must have proof of it)
- ***This bill also grants rulemaking authority to the Division of Outdoor Recreation to create and manage a safety briefing for liveries (a person or business who rents a boat(s))***
 - ***A livery may not rent a motorboat or sailboat to someone unless the renter provides proof they completed the safety course or the livery provides the renter with the safety briefing created in the administrative rule.***
- This bill does not change the requirement for youth aged 12-16 to complete the youth personal watercraft (PWC) education course.
- Effective date: January 1, 2027

[HB125 Department of Natural Resources Related Modifications Amendments](#) Representative Rex Shipp

This bill combines cleanup recommendations from several divisions within the Department of Natural Resources, with provisions regarding aquatic invasive species (AIS). As it relates to outdoor recreation users, this bill:

- States that a person renting or leasing a vessel from a boat livery: is not required to pay the AIS fee, but *is* required to complete an AIS education course through the boat livery unless the person is exempted by launching a nonmotorized vessel or inflatable motorboat, or exempted through livery exemptions
 - An owner of a boat livery is exempt from requiring the renter to take the AIS course if the renter never transports or operates the conveyance (the person operating the conveyance - an employee or contractor of the livery - must take the AIS education course)
- States that resident or nonresident owners or operators of a nonmotorized vessel or inflatable motorboat is exempt from the AIS fee before launching or operating a *nonmotorized vessel or inflatable motorboat* on Utah waters
- An owner of a boat livery is exempt from requiring the renter to take the AIS course if the rental is exclusive to a water body (e.g., the boat is only rented at Bear Lake)
 - * "Conveyance" means a terrestrial or aquatic vehicle or a vehicle part that may carry or contain a Dreissena mussel. "Conveyance" includes a motor vehicle, a vessel, a motorboat, a sailboat, a personal watercraft, a container, a trailer, a live well, or a bilge area.
- Effective date: May 6, 2026

[HB169 Boating Insurance Amendments](#) Representative Jack

- This bill would have repealed the statutory requirement for boat insurance
- This bill was heard by a committee and did not pass.

[SB157 \(Substitute 2\) New Motorboat Distributor Act](#) Senator Chris Wilson

- This bill would have enacted the New Motorboat Distributor Act which focused on the manufacturer and dealer relationship; gives dealers more freedom on warranty work.
- This bill passed the Senate but did not pass the House

Administrative Rule Summaries

R650-205-17. Cutler Reservoir.

- (1) A person may not use a motor with a manufacturer-listed horsepower of more than 35 horsepower on Cutler Reservoir.
- (2) A person may not operate a vessel at a speed greater than wakeless speed in the area south of the Benson Railroad Bridge on Cutler Reservoir.
- (3) A person may not operate a vessel at a speed greater than wakeless speed from the last Saturday in September through March 31st in the Bear River east of the confluence with Cutler Reservoir.

Summary of Change -

PacifiCorp has noticed that the currently listed rule is incorrect, and the Division and AG's Office is researching when, or if, the language was changed. They are asking that we update the rule to the following:

- North Boater Zone A (access via Benson or Canyon marinas). In the area north of the Benson Railroad Bridge and west of the confluence with the Bear River: • All motor sizes and safe speeds are allowed year-round.
- South Boater Zone B (access via Cutler Marsh or Benson marinas). In the area south of the Benson Railroad Bridge: • Motorized watercraft are restricted to a maximum of 35-horsepower motors and wakeless speeds year-round.
- Bear River Boater Zone C (access via Upper Bear River or Benson Marina). In the Bear River area, east of the confluence with Cutler Reservoir (including the 'horseshoe area'): • Motorized watercraft are restricted to wakeless speeds from the last Saturday in September to March 31 every year.
- In addition to the language above, they are requesting the following vessel restrictions:
 - Wakeboarding, wake surfing, or wake-enhancing activities are prohibited. Use of ballast tanks, bags, plates, fins, continuous transition operation or other methods is prohibited.

Background on Cutler Reservoir -

The Cutler hydroelectric project consists of nearly 10,000 acres of land and water managed for power production, irrigation, public recreation, wildlife, and compatible agricultural uses. PacifiCorp recognizes and is committed to maintaining the unique recreation opportunities and wildlife habitat values provided by Cutler Reservoir.

R650-205-18. Newton Reservoir.

A person may not operate a vessel on Newton Reservoir at a speed greater than wakeless speed when the reservoir's elevation is at or below 4,761 feet above sea level.

Summary of Change -

A recommendation was made by the Division of Wildlife Resources to zone Newton Reservoir as a wakeless body of water. Newton has been a hotbed of user conflicts for almost 15 years. This recommendation was made, but the Bureau of Reclamation wanted to try the above language first.

[R650-206 Carrying Passengers for Hire](#)

Too long to include in this document, use the link for your reference

Summary of Change -

- Update First Aid requirements for Trip Leaders from the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians to the Wilderness First Responder standards from the Wilderness Medicine Education Collaborative. Guide requirements will stay the same.
- Fix the conflict between a trip log and a trip manifest.
- Correct and update any legal language and references

[R650-215. Personal Floating Devices.](#)

R650-215-6. Required Wearing of PFDs.

- (1) A person may not use an inflatable PFD to meet the requirements of this section.
- (2) All persons on board a personal watercraft shall wear a PFD.
- (3) The operator of a vessel under 19 feet in length shall ensure each passenger 12 years of age or younger wears a PFD at all times while onboard the vessel.
- (4) The operator of a vessel 19 feet or more in length shall ensure each passenger 12 years of age or younger wears a PFD at all times while onboard the vessel, except when the passenger is inside a cabin area.
- (5) On every river, every person on board a vessel shall wear a PFD, except that a PFD may be loosened or removed by a person 13 years of age or older on designated flat water river sections as listed in Section R650-215-10.

R650-215-7. Designated Flatwater River Sections.

- (1) Flatwater river sections on the Green River extend:
 - (a) from Red Creek Camp, below Red Creek Rapids to the Indian Crossing Boat Ramp;
 - (b) from 100 yards below Taylor Flats Bridge to the Utah or Colorado state line in Browns Park;
 - (c) within Dinosaur National Monument, from the mouth of Whirlpool Canyon to the head of Split Mountain Gorge;
 - (d) from the mouth of Split Mountain to Jack Creek in Desolation Canyon; and
 - (e) from the Green River Diversion Dam, below Gray Canyon, to the confluence with the Colorado River.
- (2) Flatwater river sections on the Colorado River extend:
 - (a) from the Colorado or Utah state line to the Westwater Ranger Station;
 - (b) from Big Hole Canyon in Westwater Canyon to Onion Creek;
 - (c) from Drinks Canyon, mile 70, to the confluence with the Green River; and
 - (d) after the last active rapid in Cataract Canyon.

(3) Flatwater river sections on the San Juan River extend from after the last active rapid before Lake Powell to Lake Powell.

Summary of Change -

- Remove flat-water designations and statewide mandatory PFD wear from all rivers except flat-water areas.
- Create a definition of non-standard watercraft
- Create mandatory PFD wear sections on the following rivers
 - Bear River,
 - Dirty Devil River
 - Escalante River
 - Fremont River
 - Huntington Creek
 - American Fork River
 - Big Cottonwood Creek
 - Jordan River
 - Logan River
 - Muddy Creek River
 - Provo River
 - San Juan River
 - San Rafael River
 - Virgin River
 - Weber River
 - Ogden River
 - Green River
 - Colorado River

R650-221. Boat Liveries and Boat Rental Companies.

R650-221-1. Boat Liveries.

- (1) A person who wishes to operate a boat livery shall annually register the livery with the division.
- (2) A person shall submit the following to the division to register a boat livery:
 - (a) a registration application on a form provided by the division;
 - (b) evidence of a valid business license; and
 - (c) the applicable boat livery fee.
- (3) A person who has registered with the division a boat livery as an outfitting company is not required to pay the boat livery fee required by Subsection (2)(c).
- (4) A person may not operate a boat livery unless it has been registered with the division pursuant to Subsection (2).
- (5)
 - (a) A boat livery owner shall display the name of the boat livery on the outward superstructure of each vessel in the boat livery's fleet.

- (b) If a governmental agency with regulatory authority over a boat livery or a vessel in the boat livery's fleet prohibits the display of a livery's name on the exterior of a vessel in the boat livery's fleet, the boat livery owner shall display the boat livery's name on the vessel in a visible manner that does not violate the agency's requirements.
- (6)
- (a) A boat livery that rents or leases a vessel from its fleet shall do so pursuant to a written rental or lease agreement.
- (b) The lease or rental agreement shall:
- (i) be signed by the owner of the livery or the owner's representative;
 - (ii) be signed by the person leasing or renting the vessel;
 - (iii) list the name of the person leasing or renting the vessel;
 - (iv) list the vessel's assigned bow number, hull identification number, or other number if the vessel is not powered by a motor or sail;
 - (v) contain a description of the vessel's make, model, color, and length;
 - (vi) list the period for which the vessel is leased or rented; and
 - (vii) include a check-off list of the required safety equipment provided on the vessel.
- (c) A person renting or leasing a motorboat or sailboat shall carry on board the vessel a copy of the lease or rental agreement.
- (7) A person renting or leasing a group of non-motorized vessels is only required to complete one rental agreement pursuant to Subsection (6).
- (8) Upon request of the division, the owner of a boat livery, or the owner's representative, shall provide the division with a copy of a lease or rental agreement.
- (9) A boat livery may maintain a certificate of registration for a leased or rented vessel on shore.
- (10) A recreational equipment timeshare business which leases or rents vessels for consideration is a boat livery.
- (11) Each vessel in a boat livery's fleet that is equipped with a 50 hp or greater motor shall be covered with liability insurance as required by Sections 73-18c-101 through 73-18c-308 and Sections 31A-22-1501 through 31A-22-1504.

Summary of Change -

Add in requirements that were specified in HB54 and HB125