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US Sailing on Legislation Limiting Boat Operation in MD, FL: Based on a majority vote on supporting US Sailing's position on this legislation, Keith Christopher, President of the National Boating Federation, has written the following as an introduction to the information that US Sailing sent in explanation of their position on the legislation for Maryland and Florida. **'The National Boating Federation supports the position of US Sailing on the legislation being proposed in Maryland and Florida: We support US Sailing in their position of being strongly opposed to any legislation that would limit sailors' abilities to operate boats in a manner consistent with normal operational methods and practices for any type of sailboats, from sailboards and kites to dinghies, keelboats and multihulls, inshore and offshore. We also support the position of US Sailing being strongly opposed to any legislation that would restrict the rights of sailors of any age from participation in the sport by mandating over reaching supervision, when in reality US Sailing provides effective safety and education to all of our sailing youth.'**

We also agree with US Sailing that the Florida bill as proposed would limit the rights of minors to operate small power boats (10 HP or greater) and sailboats (10' or longer) in salt water without direct supervision of an adult over the age of 21. We support the efforts and guidance by US Sailing to help with boating education of both power boats and sailboats.'

Outdoor Groups Back House Fisheries Bill: The recreational fishing and boating community praised the introduction of a U.S. House bill that addresses critical challenges facing saltwater recreational fishing at the Federal level. The bill would reform current Federal fisheries management policy.

Reps. Garret Graves, R-La., Gene Green, D-Texas, Daniel Webster, R-Fla., and Rob Wittman, R-Va., led the Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act of 2017, or Modern Fish Act.

The groups said the bill aims to benefit fishing access and conservation by incorporating modern management approaches, science and technology to guide decision-making.

"We applaud the introduction of the Modern Fish Act in the House and the efforts of Rep. Graves and his colleagues to modernize the Federal regulations governing access to the public's natural resources by boaters and anglers," National Marine Manufacturers Association President Thom Dammrich said. "We appreciate the congressmen's support for better management of our recreational fisheries that will bring federal management into the 21st century."

"For decades in Federal fisheries management, recreational fishing was always an afterthought," Recreational Fishing Alliance executive director Jim Donofrio said. "The Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act introduced by congressman Graves and his colleagues finally addresses the specific needs of the recreational fishing community, stands to bring parity to fisheries management and will get anglers back on the water."

President Trump's Budget Blueprint and Potential to Recreational Boating: As reported by NBF and NMMA, President Trump's FY 2018 Budget Blueprint was recently released, with full budget details expected in May. The FY2018 budget, if enacted, would offset a ten percent increase in defense spending (\$603 billion) with a ten percent decrease in non-defense spending (\$462 billion), which includes a \$1.5 billion (11.7 percent) decrease for the Department of Interior (DOI), a \$1 billion cut for the Army Corps of Engineers (16.3 percent), and a reduction of \$2.6 billion (31.4 percent) for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). All of these departments, have a significant impact on the recreational boating.

The National Boating Federation (NBF) understands the fiscal climate facing our nation and the need for some streamlining of agency programs for efficiencies. We must invest in our federal lands and waters and ensure recreational access and conservation of our nation's treasured resources.

While the Budget Blueprint is the Administration's first physical proposal, it will face scrutiny on Capitol Hill, where bi-partisan support is required for final passage.

DOI Budget Summary: The DOI is responsible for managing branches that impact the boating community including National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These departments are integral to providing boating access within the National Park System, promoting fish habitat restoration, and the disbursement of dollars to state agencies through the \$600 million Sport Fish and Restoration Boating Trust Fund.

While the proposed \$1.5 billion decrease in spending will make new projects difficult and hardly begin to tackle the \$12 billion maintenance backlog in the National Park System, NMMA is hopeful the DOI will reach out to stakeholders for innovative public private partnerships and new ways to engage and attract outdoor enthusiasts.

EPA Budget Summary: The Trump Administration's proposed cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency are deep and wide ranging. It seek to shrink spending by 31%, to \$5.7 billion, from \$8.1 billion and would eliminate a quarter of the Agency's 15,000 jobs. The proposal recommends eliminating more than 50 EPA programs and grants. Cuts to the EPA could impact the Clean Water Programs throughout the country, monitoring point and non-point pollution sources in fresh and salt water, Great Lakes Restoration, the Chesapeake Bay Restoration, invasive species and emission levels and standards.

Clean and accessible water is essential to recreational boating, especially in the Great Lakes where threats of invasive species are real and in the Chesapeake Bay, where boating is a popular pastime and contributes to tourism and the local economy.

Dept. of Commerce Budget: The budget proposes the elimination of over \$250 million in targeted National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration grants and programs related to coastal and marine management, research, charts and education. As to the National Marine Fisheries Service, it is still unknown what the budget cut will be, but with the growth of 11 million saltwater recreational anglers and its inherent ties to recreational boating any cut would have a significant impact.

Dept. of Homeland Security: The DHS budget will be increased by \$2.8 billion, which is indeed good news for the boating community, since the U.S. Coast Guard is under the DHS.

Trade Budget Summary: NBF and NNMA will continue to monitor the budget process as it unfolds on Capitol Hill, including the looming April 28th deadline for the FY 18 budget. In any event, as a number of people in Congress have stated "Congress creates the budget, not the Administration." There will be contentious negotiations on the FY18 budget, which begins 1 October.

Update on the Renewable Fuel Standard Reform Act, H.R. 1315: As I reported last month, the RFS Reform Act, as introduced by Congressman Goodlatte (R-VA), had four cosponsors. The bill now has 47 bipartisan cosponsors and is still assigned to the House Energy and Commerce Committee. This definitely increases the chance of passage. The bill has yet to be introduced in the Senate. H.R. 1315 caps the amount of ethanol that can be in our gasoline at 10%.