



July 19, 2011

MTA/NJ Red Rape Review Commission Meeting Comments

My name is Kersten Roehsler and I am the President of the Marine Trades Association of New Jersey, a non-profit trade organization comprised of over 300 marine-related businesses committed to promoting and protecting the recreational marine industry and waterways in the State of New Jersey.

Our organization previously testified before the commission regarding public access at marinas and we appreciate the opportunity to again provide comments today. The Commission's guidance is extraordinarily important and we strongly support your efforts to protect and promote economic development and private-sector job creation. I would therefore like to offer comments today to suggest areas the Commission can assist the marine trades industry in promoting jobs and economic growth by consolidating bureaucracies and making boating a priority for the future.

The significance of the recreational boating industry cannot be understated as both a driver of our tourism economy or as an employer in numerous manufacturing, service and sales sectors. New Jersey boaters spend approximately \$2.1 billion dollars on in-state recreational boating activities. Boating in New Jersey is serious business and this level of economic impact confirms how important the industry is to the state and demonstrates how much we need to work to protect and promote it.

Unfortunately, despite the value of boating in New Jersey and the challenges our industry is facing, the State does not offer the types of protections or promotion that is considered critical in many other coastal states. Currently, management of key boating issues is split amongst several departments and offices, primarily the DEP and DOT. While these agencies provide positive assistance and direction, boating is not either of their primary responsibilities.

The DEP regulates boating programs ranging from the "Clean Marina Program" to public access issues to a myriad of environmental rules that impact boating and our waterways. But, as you are aware, the DEP's primary responsibility is regulatory. While the Association has seen dramatically positive changes in the overall regulatory process and in communication with the Department since 2010, the Department is not meant to "promote" boating as an industry.

The DOT has an Office of Maritime Resources, established by law in 1997 that provides extraordinary service, planning, grant management, dredged material management and project development to the maritime and boating industry. However, DOT leadership has indicated that the State's roadways are their primary obligation and they have considerable responsibilities as such resulting in a lack of much needed support and resources for this office. An equivalent level of priority is not assigned to waterways that in many ways are equally important. As a result, critical boating programs such as the successful I BOAT NJ grant program have seen their budgets transferred in their entirety to support DOT operations and maintenance. The I BOAT program, funded by boat registration fees, provided grants that increased public access, improved and renovated marine facilities and

deteriorating infrastructure, expanded waterway safety and education programs, developed youth sailing programs, protected our natural resources, and many other projects. It is in the State's interest to restore those funds ASAP.

Other State offices dealing with business development or tourism tangentially focus on boating but there is not a single State agency whose primary obligation is to coordinate boating policy, promote the recreational boating economy or coordinate the impact various State bureaucracies have on our industry.

In short, we need your help and believe we have a solution to address these concerns. The MTA/NJ has proposed in a letter to the Lieutenant Governor the concept of establishing an "Office of Boating and Waterways" that could merge various State agencies and offices into one focused and more efficient place. This would give the industry the specific oversight and promotion it needs to grow in this environment. It would also alleviate the loss of funding experienced by existing offices when Departments are forced to choose between priority mandates and other assignments. Since we propose the consolidation of existing programs and staff, we believe there should be no added cost to establish an Office of Boating and Waterways. Such an Office could mirror work done to coordinate boating programs from other States and act as an advocate to enhance economic growth built around our multi-billion dollar boating industry.

The boating industry in New Jersey is at a critical stage. The economy has hurt our businesses and the State is losing boating access points and opportunities for growth. There is no simple solution to that problem but the State and this Commission can help us by working with us to truly make our industry a priority.

Submitted 7/19/11 by:

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