

§13068-A. Operating watercraft; prohibitions

1. Launching contaminated watercraft. A person may not place a watercraft that is contaminated with an invasive aquatic plant upon the inland waters of the State.

A. A person who violates this subsection commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$500 and not more than \$5,000 per violation may be adjudged. A fine imposed under this subsection may not be suspended by the court. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

B. A person who violates this subsection after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]
[PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

2. Unlawfully permitting operation by another. A person may not permit operation of a watercraft in violation of this subsection.

A. A person violates this subsection if that person owns a watercraft and negligently permits another person to operate that watercraft in violation of this chapter.

(1) A person who violates this paragraph commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500 may be adjudged.

(2) A person who violates this paragraph after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

B. A person violates this subsection if that person is the parent or guardian responsible for the care of a minor under 18 years of age and the minor operates a personal watercraft in violation of this chapter.

(1) A person who violates this paragraph commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500 may be adjudged.

(2) A person who violates this paragraph after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

[PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

3. Operating motorboat other than personal watercraft while underage. A person under 12 years of age may not operate a motorboat propelled by machinery of more than 10 horsepower unless under the immediate supervision of a person located in the motorboat who is at least 16 years of age.

This subsection does not apply to operating a personal watercraft.

A. A person who violates this subsection commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500 may be adjudged. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

B. A person who violates this subsection after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]
[PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

3-A. Supervising young person. Beginning January 1, 2024, a person born on or after January 1, 1999 may not supervise a person in accordance with subsection 3 unless that supervisor is 16 years of age or older and has completed a boater safety and education course.

This subsection does not apply to the operation of personal watercraft or motorboats other than for recreational boating purposes.

A. A person who violates this subsection commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500 may be adjudged. [PL 2021, c. 656, §4 (NEW).]

B. A person who violates this subsection after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [PL 2021, c. 656, §4 (NEW).]

[PL 2023, c. 206, §4 (AMD).]

4. Operating watercraft without proper safety equipment. Except as provided in paragraph B, a person may not operate a watercraft without proper safety equipment as described in paragraph A.

A. A person operates a watercraft without proper safety equipment if the person operates a watercraft and:

(1) Fails to comply with the same requirements pertaining to lights, life-saving devices, fire extinguishers and other safety equipment as required by federal laws and regulations on federal navigable waters, as promulgated under the Federal Boat Safety Act of 1971, Public Law 92-75, as amended;

(2) Fails to comply with requirements pertaining to additional equipment not in conflict with federal navigation laws, which the commissioner may prescribe if there is a demonstrated need;

(3) Fails to wear a Coast Guard approved personal flotation device while canoeing or kayaking on the Saco River between Hiram Dam and the Atlantic Ocean between January 1st and June 1st; or

(4) Fails to wear a Coast Guard approved personal flotation device while operating a watercraft on:

(a) The Penobscot River, between the gorge and the head of Big Eddy; or

(b) The Kennebec River, between Harris Station and Turtle Island, at the foot of Black Brook Rapids. [PL 2023, c. 228, §§13, 14 (AMD).]

B. Notwithstanding paragraph A:

(1) Canoes, owned by a youth camp located upon internal waters in the State and duly licensed by the Department of Health and Human Services and utilized by campers under the direction and supervision of a youth camp counselor at least 18 years of age or older during training and instruction periods on waters adjacent to the main location of the youth camp within a distance of 500 feet from the shoreline of that camp, are exempt from this subsection; and

(2) Log rafts, carrying not more than 2 persons and used on ponds or lakes or internal waters of less than 50 acres in area, are exempt from carrying personal flotation devices. [PL 2009, c. 211, Pt. B, §14 (AMD).]

C. The following penalties apply to violations of this subsection.

(1) A person who violates this subsection commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500 may be adjudged.

(2) A person who violates this subsection after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

[PL 2023, c. 228, §§13, 14 (AMD).]

5. Operating watercraft to endanger. A person may not operate any of the following so as to endanger any person or property:

- A. Watercraft; [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]
- B. Water ski; or [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]
- C. Surfboard or similar device. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

A person who violates this subsection commits a Class E crime.

[PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

6. Reckless operation of watercraft. A person may not operate any of the following in such a way as to recklessly create a substantial risk of serious bodily injury to another person:

- A. Watercraft; [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]
- B. Water ski; or [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]
- C. Surfboard or similar device. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

A person who violates this subsection commits a Class D crime.

[PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

7. Operating watercraft at greater than reasonable and prudent speed. A person:

- A. May not operate a watercraft except at a reasonable and prudent speed for existing conditions; and [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]
- B. Shall regulate the speed of a watercraft so as to avoid danger, injury or unnecessary inconvenience in any manner to other watercraft and their occupants, whether anchored or under way; waterfront piers; floats or other property or shorelines, either directly or by the effect of the wash or wave created by the watercraft through its speed, or otherwise. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

A person who violates this subsection commits a Class E crime.

[PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

8. Imprudent operation of watercraft. A person may not, while operating a watercraft on the inland or coastal waters of the State, engage in prolonged circling, informal racing, wake jumping or other types of continued and repeated activities that harass another person.

A. This subsection may be enforced by any law enforcement officer or a person may bring a private nuisance action for a violation of this subsection pursuant to Title 17, section 2802. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

B. The following penalties apply to violations of this subsection.

(1) A person who violates this subsection commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500 may be adjudged.

(2) A person who violates this subsection after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

[PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

9. Operating watercraft to molest wild animals or wild birds. A person may not operate a watercraft so as to pursue, molest, harass, drive or herd any wild animal or wild bird, except as may be permitted during the open season on that animal.

A. A person who violates this subsection commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500 may be adjudged. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

B. A person who violates this subsection after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]
[PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

10. Operating motorboat that exceeds noise limits. The following provisions govern noise limits.

A. A person may not operate a motorboat in such a manner as to exceed:

(1) A noise level of 90 decibels when subjected to a stationary sound level test with and without cutouts engaged and as prescribed by the commissioner; or

(2) A noise level of 75 decibels when subjected to an operational test measured with and without cutouts engaged and as prescribed by the commissioner.

As used in this paragraph, "motorboat" does not include an "airboat," which has the same meaning as in paragraph A-2. [PL 2021, c. 166, §1 (AMD).]

A-1. [PL 2021, c. 166, §1 (RP).]

A-2. [PL 2021, c. 585, §1 (AMD); PL 2023, c. 209, §1 (AMD); MRSA T. 12 §13068-A, sub-§10, ¶A-2 (RP).]

REVISOR'S NOTE: Paragraph A-2 was repealed 9/30/23. PL 2023, c. 209, §1 attempted to amend the language that repealed the paragraph, but did not take effect in time.

B. The following penalties apply to violations of this subsection.

(1) A person who violates this subsection commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$300 nor more than \$500 may be adjudged.

(2) A person who violates this subsection after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

C. This subsection does not apply to motorboats that are operating in a regatta or race approved by the commissioner under section 13061. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]
[PL 2021, c. 585, §1 (AMD); PL 2023, c. 209, §1 (AMD).]

11. Operating motorboat without muffler. A person may not operate a motorboat that is not equipped at all times with an effective and suitable muffling device on its engine or engines to effectively deaden or muffle the noise of the exhaust, except that motorboats that are operating in a regatta or race approved by the commissioner under section 13061 may use cutouts for these motorboats while on trial runs or competing in speed events, for a period not to exceed 48 hours immediately preceding or following such an authorized event.

A. The following penalties apply to violations of this subsection.

(1) A person who violates this subsection commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500 may be adjudged.

(2) A person who violates this subsection after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

[PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

12. Tampering with motorboat muffler system. A person may not modify a motorboat muffler system in any way that results in an increase in the decibels of sound emitted by that motorboat.

A. A person who violates this subsection commits a civil violation for which a fine not to exceed \$100 may be adjudged. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

B. A person who violates this subsection after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]
[PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

13. Headway speed only. The following provisions govern speeds in certain zones.

A. A person may not operate a watercraft at a speed greater than headway speed while within the water safety zone or within a marina or an approved anchorage in coastal or inland waters except:

(1) While actively fishing; or

(2) While picking up or dropping off one or more persons on water skis in the water safety zone if a reasonably direct course is taken through the water safety zone between the point that the skiers are picked up or dropped off and the outer boundary of the water safety zone. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

B. For the purposes of this subsection, "headway speed" means the minimum speed necessary to maintain steerage and control of the watercraft while the watercraft is moving. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

C. The following penalties apply to violations of this subsection.

(1) A person who violates this subsection commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500 may be adjudged.

(2) A person who violates this subsection after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]
[PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

14. Operating motorboat in bathing areas. The following provisions apply to operating a motorboat in a bathing area.

A. A person may not:

(1) Operate a motorboat within a bathing area marked or buoyed for bathing; or

(2) Operate an airmobile on a beach adjacent to a bathing area marked or buoyed for bathing. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

B. The following penalties apply to violations of this subsection.

(1) A person who violates this subsection commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500 may be adjudged.

(2) A person who violates this subsection after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]
[PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

15. Violation of surface use restriction order. A person may not operate, launch or remove a watercraft at a restricted-access site or refuse inspection of a watercraft in violation of an order issued under Title 38, section 1864.

A. A person who violates this subsection commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$500 and not more than \$5,000 per violation may be adjudged. A fine imposed under this subsection

may not be suspended by the court. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

B. A person who violates this subsection after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]
[PL 2005, c. 397, Pt. E, §16 (AMD).]

16. Operating motorboat in prohibited or restricted area. The following provisions apply to operating a motorboat in prohibited or restricted areas.

A. A person may not:

- (1) Operate a motorboat on that portion of Portage Lake in Township T. 13, R. 6, W.E.L.S., County of Aroostook, known as the Floating Island Area, north and westerly of a line beginning at the eastern edge of the marshy peninsula running out from Hutchinson Ridge, running 50 yards outside of the floating islands in a northerly direction to the mouth of Mosquito Brook;
- (2) Operate a motorboat on Quimby Pond in the Town of Rangeley, Franklin County;
- (3) Operate a motorboat upon the waters of Jerry Pond, so called, situated within the boundaries, or having a shore line abutting, the incorporated municipality of Millinocket and the unincorporated Townships being T.1, R. 7 and T.A., R. 7, all in Penobscot County;
- (4) Operate a motorboat on Upper and Lower Ox Brook Lakes in the Towns of T. 6 ND, T. 6 RI and Talmadge in Washington County;
- (5) Operate a motorboat on Little Nesowadnehunk (Sournahunk) Lake, in T. 5, R. 11, Piscataquis County;
- (6) Operate a motorboat having more than 10 horsepower on Eagle Lake and Jordan Pond, Mt. Desert Island, Hancock County and Long Pond, T.E. and T. D., Franklin County;
- (7) Operate a motorboat on a body of water commonly known as and referred to in the Dunham-Davee Work Plan as Snow's Pond, situated west of Route 7 in the Town of Dover-Foxcroft, Piscataquis County;
- (8) Operate a motorboat having more than 6 horsepower on Long Pond, Town of Denmark, Oxford County;
- (9) Operate a motorboat on Lily Pond, Edgecomb, Lincoln County;
- (10) Operate a motorboat powered by an internal combustion engine on Nokomis Pond, situated in the Towns of Newport and Palmyra, Penobscot County;
- (11) Operate a motorboat in Merrymeeting Bay at a speed in excess of 10 miles per hour, except within the confines of the buoyed channels;
- (12) Operate a motorboat equipped with an internal combustion engine on the following waters on Mount Desert Island in Hancock County: Witch Hole Pond; Aunt Betty's Pond; Bubble Pond; Round Pond; and Lake Wood;
- (13) Operate a motorboat equipped with a motor greater than 10 horsepower on Upper Hadlock Pond or Lower Hadlock Pond on Mount Desert Island in Hancock County;
- (14) Operate a personal watercraft in violation of section 685-C, subsection 10 or any rule adopted by the Maine Land Use Planning Commission to implement that subsection;
- (15) Operate a watercraft at greater than headway speed on any area of Torsey Lake within 1/2 mile from the boat launch on Desert Pond Road in the Town of Mount Vernon;

(16) Operate a watercraft at greater than headway speed on any area of Torsey Lake within 1/2 mile from the boat launch on Old Kents Hill Road in the Town of Readfield;

(17) Operate a watercraft equipped with a motor greater than 10 horsepower on Cold Rain Pond in the Town of Naples or on Holt Pond in the Town of Naples and the Town of Bridgton;

(18) Operate a watercraft equipped with a motor greater than 5 horsepower on Moose Pond in the Town of Otisfield;

(19) Operate a watercraft at greater than headway speed on any area of Pickerel Pond in the Town of Wayne;

(20) Operate a motorboat having more than 10 horsepower on Middle Branch Pond in the Town of Waterboro in York County;

(21) Operate a motorboat having more than 10 horsepower on Adams Pond, Foster Pond or Otter Pond in the Town of Bridgton in Cumberland County; or

(22) Operate a motorboat having more than 10 horsepower on Pickerel Pond in the territory of T.32 MD in Hancock County. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF); PL 2011, c. 682, §38 (REV).]

B. The following penalties apply to violations of this subsection.

(1) A person who violates this subsection commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500 may be adjudged.

(2) A person who violates this subsection after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF).]

[PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §380 (NEW); PL 2003, c. 655, Pt. B, §422 (AFF); PL 2011, c. 682, §38 (REV).]

17. Operating motorboat without boater safety and education course certificate. The following provisions apply to operating a motorboat.

A. Except as provided in paragraph C, beginning January 1, 2024, a person born on or after January 1, 1999 may not operate on inland waters of this State or territorial waters, as defined in section 6001, subsection 48-B, a motorboat for recreational boating purposes propelled by machinery capable of producing more than 25 horsepower unless that person is 12 years of age or older and:

(1) Has completed a boater safety and education course; and

(2) Possesses and presents for inspection upon request to a law enforcement officer a boater safety and education course certificate. [PL 2023, c. 206, §5 (AMD).]

B. The following penalties apply to violations of this subsection.

(1) A person who violates this subsection commits a civil violation for which a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500 may be adjudged.

(2) A person who violates this subsection after having been adjudicated as having committed 3 or more civil violations under this Part within the previous 5-year period commits a Class E crime. [PL 2021, c. 656, §5 (NEW).]

C. A person is not required to meet the boater safety and education course requirement of this subsection if the person:

(1) Possesses a valid Maine guide license and has met the requirements for carrying passengers for hire under section 13063;

(2) Possesses a valid or expired United States merchant marine document issued by the United States Coast Guard for an operator of uninspected passenger vessel, or master or mate captain's license;

(3) Is test driving a motorboat that is registered in accordance with section 13060-A and that is offered for sale by a dealer that has been issued a watercraft dealer's certificate of number and the person is under the direct supervision of a person 16 years of age or older who has completed a boater safety and education course;

(4) Possesses a rental or lease agreement that lists the person as an authorized operator of the motorboat and the person has completed a temporary boater safety course provided by the rental agent who has been issued a certificate of number as described in section 13064. A renter or lessor meeting the requirements of this subparagraph may operate the rented or leased motorboat for up to 14 days from the date of course completion or for the duration of the rental agreement, whichever is earlier; or

(5) Is not a citizen of the United States, arrived to the United States by sea and is temporarily operating on territorial waters as defined in section 6001, subsection 48-B for 60 days or less. [PL 2023, c. 206, §6 (AMD).]

[PL 2023, c. 206, §§5, 6 (AMD).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2003, c. 655, §B380 (NEW). PL 2003, c. 655, §B422 (AFF). PL 2003, c. 689, §B6 (REV). PL 2005, c. 397, §E16 (AMD). PL 2009, c. 211, Pt. B, §14 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 682, §38 (REV). PL 2019, c. 662, §§1, 2 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 166, §1 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 585, §1 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 656, §§4, 5 (AMD). PL 2023, c. 206, §§4-6 (AMD). PL 2023, c. 209, §1 (AMD). PL 2023, c. 228, §§13, 14 (AMD).

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