

# AAA aims to reduce mishaps involving personal watercraft

Operators of Personal Watercraft in Michigan can help continue a two-year trend towards reduced accidents and fatalities by practicing safety every time they hit the waves, suggests AAA Michigan.

"While we commend the majority of PWC operators who follow state laws and don't engage in reckless operation, the percentage of accidents involving Wave-Runners, Jet-Skis and other PWCs is still too high," stated Jerry Basch, AAA Michigan Community Safety Services manager.

"PWCs comprise less than 10 percent of all registered water-

craft in the state, but preliminary figures from 1997 show more than 43 percent of the 422 Michigan boating accidents involved PWCs, compared with 40 percent in 1996," Basch said.

In 1997, the number of accidents involving PWCs fell by 21 percent, from 232 in 1996 to 182. The number of fatalities also fell, from two to one. Some of the drop could be attributed to the cool summer last year, along with increased water safety education and awareness.

"Inexperience and lack of knowledge of these popular machines, however, is the leading cause of trouble," Basch said.

Lack of operator skills is a major factor in 95 percent of all PWC accidents last summer.

That inexperience leads to: ■ Operating PWCs at high speed. Increased speeds reduce visibility to the sides, increasing the chance for a collision with another boat or object.

■ Not knowing what to do in an emergency. About half of all PWC crashes involve non-owner operators, again pointing to inexperience as a key contributor. Often, inexperienced riders are confused by how PWCs steer. They frequently release the throttle and try to steer away from an impending collision, forgetting that PWCs will only turn under power.

The Michigan Legislature is close to passing new regulations affecting PWC operators that call for minimum training and operator age requirements for those speedy, relatively inexpensive and highly maneuverable craft that have taken our lakes by storm," said Basch. For now, PWC operators and passengers should heed the following tips: ■ Know your craft. All passengers and operators, especially non-owners, should be instructed on operating, turning and stopping a PWC, especially in an emergency.

■ Never operate a PWC or any watercraft under the influence of alcohol. About half of all fatal boating accidents are alcohol-related. ■ Know and follow local boating laws and "rules of the road." ■ Use the craft's safety lanyard if so-equipped. A PWC should not be started without first attaching the lanyard to the operator's wrist. In case of a fall, the lanyard will automatically stop the PWC. ■ Wear a wet suit, footwear, eye protection and gloves for protection. ■ Operate PWCs only during daylight. Keep away from fisher-

men. ■ Always look for other boats before turning. Stay at least 100 feet away from other craft and 150 feet when crossing wakes. ■ Never carry more than the maximum load specified. ■ Operators borrowing a PWC must be of legal age (currently at least 12 years old), complete a safe boating course, know how to operate it and know the rules. Requirements for PWC safety training and operator age could change this summer. ■ Properly maintain the craft and be sure all required safety equipment, including a fire extinguisher, is up-to-date.

## OUTDOOR CALENDAR

### ARCHERY

**MAA SHOOT**  
Detroit Archers will hold a state outdoor MAA shoot on Saturday, June 6, at its facilities in West Bloomfield. Call (248) 661-9610 or (313) 836-2110 for more information.

**3D SHOOT**  
Oakland County Sportsman Club will hold a 30-target 3D shoot beginning at 9 a.m. Sunday, June 14, at its walk-through course in Clarkston. Call (248) 623-0444 for more information.

**JUNIOR OLYMPICS**  
The Oakland County Sportsman Club in Clarkston offers a Junior Olympic Archery Development Program beginning at 1 p.m. on Sundays. Call (248) 623-0444 for more information.

**JUNIOR ARCHERS**  
A weekly program for junior archers begins at 9 a.m. Saturdays at Detroit Archers in West Bloomfield. Call (248) 661-9610 or (313) 836-2110 for details.

### CLASSES

**HIKING THE APPALACHIANS**  
A slide presentation by "Grandma" Fern Soule about hiking the Appalachian Trail begins at 7 p.m. Wednesday, June 10, at REI in Northville. Call (248) 347-2100 for details.

**CANOE DAY**  
Test drive one of 20 different Mad River canoes during this on-the-water clinic, which begins at

4 p.m. Wednesday, June 17, on Kent Lake at Kensington Metropark. The clinic is offered by REI in Northville. Call (248) 347-2100 for details.

**FLY TYING**  
Paint Creek Outfitters in Rochester offers a variety of fly tying classes for beginners and advanced tiers. Call (248) 650-0440 for more information or to make a reservation for an upcoming class.

**HUNTER EDUCATION**  
Wayne County Sportsmen's Club will hold several hunter education classes in the upcoming months at its clubhouse and grounds in Romulus. These classes will be taught by certified instructors. Students must be present for both days of their respective class. All equipment will be provided. Classes will be offered Aug. 29-30, Oct. 3-4, Oct. 17-18 and Nov. 7-8. Cost is \$10.50 and includes lunch both days. To pre-register call (313) 532-0285.

### TOURNAMENTS

**OAKLAND BASS MASTERS**  
Oakland Bass Masters will hold an open tournament on Sunday, June 7, on Orchard Lake. Entry fee is \$75 per boat before June 3 and \$80 per boat after June 3. There is a 50-boat limit. Call (248) 542-6264 for information.

**BASS**  
Bass season opens June 20 on Lake St. Clair, and the St. Clair and Detroit rivers. The season opened May 23 on all other

waters.

**SPEARS/BOWS**  
Spearfishing, hand netting and bow fishing for suckers, carp, gar and bowfin runs through May 31 on non-trout waters south of M-46

**SMELT**  
Smelt netting season on non-trout streams runs through May 31 south of M-72 and May 1-31 north of M-72. Bow and spear fishing on non-trout inland waters is open for carp, gar and bowfin May 1-Aug. 15. Check the 1998 Michigan Fishing Guide for exceptions and closures.

**TURKEY**  
The spring turkey season runs through May 31 by special permit in designated areas only.

**FREE FISHING WEEKEND**  
Michigan's annual Free Fishing Weekend, in which all fishing license fees are waived for residents and non-residents, is scheduled for June 6-7.

### COUNTY PARKS

**COUNTY PARK REQUIREMENTS**  
Advanced registration is required for all nature programs at Oakland County Parks. Call (810) 625-6473 to register or for more information.

**FREE WOOD CHIPS**  
Free wood chips from the Oakland County Parks Christmas tree recycling program, will be available on Saturday, June 27, at Orion Oaks at the Clarkston Road entrance. Individuals are asked to provide their own shovels and to load the chips by

hand. No motorized equipment is allowed and no commercial haulers. Additional wood chip dates are scheduled for July 25, August 29, Sept. 26 and Oct. 31.

**AMAZING AMPHIBIANS**  
Ages 7-11 will learn what makes frogs, toads and amphibians special during this program, which begins at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, May 30, at Independence Oaks.

### METROPARKS

**METROPARK REQUIREMENTS**  
Most Metropark programs are free while some require a nominal fee. Advanced registration and a motor vehicle permit are required for all programs. Call the respective parks, toll free: Stony Creek, 1-800-477-7756; Indian Springs, 1-800-477-3192; Kensington, 1-800-477-3178.

**1998 PERMITS**  
The 1998 Huren-Clinton Metroparks annual vehicle entry permits and boat launching permits are on sale at all Metropark offices. Vehicle entry permits are \$15 (\$8 for senior citizens). The annual boat launching permits are \$18 (\$9 for senior citizens). Call 1-800-477-PARKS for more information.

**ALCOHOL BAN**  
An alcohol ban will be in effect at some metroparks until the middle of June. Times and dates will be posted at each park.

**ATTRACT WILDLIFE**  
Learn what trees, shrubs and vines are most effective in attracting birds and other animals to your property during

this program, which begins at 10 a.m. Saturday at Kensington.

**BUG SOUP**  
Find out what lives in a pond during this program, which begins at 2 p.m. Sunday at Kensington.

**NATURE'S PHARMACY**  
Learn about some of the plants with healing properties that can be found in Mother Nature's Pharmacy during this program, which begins at 3:30 p.m. Sunday at Kensington.

### STATE PARKS

**STATE PARK REQUIREMENTS**  
Maybury State Park, Proud Lake Recreation Area, Bald Mountain Recreation Area, Highland Recreation Area, and Island Lake Recreation Area offer nature interpretive programs throughout the year. A state park motor vehicle permit is required for entry into all state parks and state recreation

areas. For registration and additional information on the programs at Maybury call (810) 349-8390. For programs at Bald Mountain call (810) 693-6767. For programs at Proud Lake and Highland call (810) 685-2433. For programs at Island Lake call (810) 229-7067.

**CLEAN AIR CHALLENGE**  
A bicycle fund-raiser for the American Lung Association will be held Sunday, June 7, at Island Lake Recreation Area. Call (810) 659-5100 for details.

**SUMMER BIRD HIKE**  
Observe bird species while taking a walk through the park during this program, which begins at 8 a.m. Saturday, June 13, at Maybury.

**DAIRY DAY**  
Learn about dairy products and how they are made during this hands-on demonstration, which begins at 2 p.m. Saturday, June 13, at Maybury.

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