

BOAT BISCAYNE

Bringing Personal Watercraft Back to Biscayne National Park

Get the Facts About Today's Personal Watercraft

- **What is a PWC?**

The official definition of a personal watercraft varies from state to state, but they are generally recognized as vessels which use an inboard motor powering a water jet pump as its primary source of power, and is designed to be operated by a person sitting, standing, or kneeling on the vessel, rather than the conventional manner of sitting or standing in the vessel. PWCs are manufactured by BRP (Sea-Doo®), Honda (AquaTrax®), Kawasaki (JET SKI®), and Yamaha (WaveRunner®).

- **Who rides personal watercraft?**

Many people are surprised to learn that 99 percent of all personal watercraft sold today are multi-passenger vessels, with three seat models the fastest growing segment of the industry. In 2006, the three-passenger models accounted for 84 percent of total sales. PWC are family vessels, purchased by families who want to spend a day together on the water, and have found PWC to be affordable, and easy to store, transport, and maintain. The National Survey on Recreation and the Environment reports that 20 million Americans enjoy PWC each year.

- **How many families are directly impacted by the PWC ban at Biscayne National Park?**

According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, in 2006, the following number of PWC were registered in South Florida and are not allowed on the public waters of Biscayne National Park:

County	Total
Miami-Dade County	9,990
Broward County	7,761
Monroe County	1,913
Grand Total	19,664

- **How does the PWC ban in Biscayne National Park affect boater access to the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW)?**

The ICW runs 3,000 miles from Maine to the Florida Keys, 17 miles of which runs through Biscayne National Park. The National Park Service asserts that the PWC ban, enacted in 2000, applies to all waters within the park, including the Intracoastal Waterway. As a result, PWC operators are denied safe passage afforded by ICW from Miami to points south, and are forced to venture out nearly 12 miles into the waters of the Atlantic Ocean rather than simply travel the two to three miles offshore along the ICW. Depending on weather conditions, the surf 10 miles out from shore can be challenging for small boats like PWC. This is the only area along the ICW where PWC are denied passage. It is dangerous and puts PWC riders in potentially unsafe waters.

- **What is the process to get PWC back into Biscayne National Park?**

The park superintendent must conduct an environmental assessment to determine what the effects would be for PWC to access the park. After the assessment is complete, a formal rulemaking must take place. To date, park officials have declined to conduct an environmental assessment, thus depriving PWC users access to the Intracoastal Waterway, and its protected waters.

Since 1999, all national parks have been forced to conduct an environmental assessment to let PWC back into the park as a result of a baseless lawsuit brought by an anti-boating organization. This lawsuit forced the National Park Service to ban PWC in many of its parks in 2000 pending the results of site-specific environmental assessments that conclude PWC use is appropriate and presents no unique impact on the environment. **Fifteen park units have performed these environmental assessments over the past several years and all fifteen have found in favor of personal watercraft.**

- **Are PWC environmentally-friendly? What about emissions?**

PWC are among the most environmentally friendly motorized boats on the water. As a result of remarkable technological advancements made by manufacturers, all PWC sold today incorporate emissions controls that make the vessels up to 90 percent cleaner than models manufactured prior to 1998. Most PWC now run on direct-injection, four-stroke engines that enabled them to meet the Environmental Protection Agency's marine engine standards years ahead of schedule. In fact, four-stroke models now account for nearly 92 percent of all sales.

- **Do PWC propellers damage seagrass?**

Contrary to allegations, PWC do not cause harm to seagrass because **PWC do not have propellers!** PWC are designed and operated by water propulsion, which means water enters through the intake grate and is then pumped from a rear maneuverable outlet. With a PWC, a swimmer can climb aboard from the rear of the vessel without concern of a propeller-related injury.

- **How many PWC are there?**

The National Marine Manufacturers Association reports 82,200 PWC were sold in the U.S. in 2006 (three percent increase over 2005) at an average price of \$9,636. NMMA also estimates that in 2006, there were approximately 1.22 million PWC in use in the United States. According to Dealer News, 84 percent of all PWC sold in 2006 were three-passenger models, and four-stroke models accounted for nearly 92 percent of all sales.

- **Has the PWC ban impacted visitation to Biscayne National Park?**

The national park data shows since 2000, visitation increased at an anemic rate. Local PWC dealers estimate that as many as 90 percent of their customers used to boat at Biscayne National Park. If the 19,664 South Florida PWC users who are currently banned were allowed back in the park, surely park visitation would surge.

- **What is the safety record of PWCs?**

According to U.S. Coast Guard statistics, more than 99 percent of PWCs are enjoyed accident-free every year. A 2002 report published by the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management and the NOAA Coastal Services Center concludes, "There is little data or evidence to suggest that PWC are inherently more dangerous than other recreational vessels."

- **How loud are personal watercraft?**

PWC have always complied with all state and federal sound regulations, and are well within the sound range of other motorboats. Thanks to industry investment in hull insulation and other technologies, today's PWC are up to 70 percent quieter than 1998 models, and manufacturers are working to bring their customers even quieter vessels in the future.