

§1866. Abandoned watercraft

1. Definitions. As used in this section, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

A. "Abandoned watercraft" means any watercraft that is inoperative and neglected, submerged or partially submerged or that has been left by the owner in coastal waters without intention of removal. This term includes motors, electronic and mechanical equipment and other machinery customarily used in the operation of watercraft. [PL 1997, c. 678, §13 (NEW).]

B. "Coastal waters" means those waters within the jurisdiction of the State under Title 1, section 2, including intertidal land as defined in section 572. [PL 1997, c. 678, §13 (NEW).]

C. "Owner" means the person who claims lawful possession of a watercraft by legal title or equitable interest in the watercraft. [PL 1997, c. 678, §13 (NEW).]

D. "Watercraft" means any type of vessel, boat, barge, float or craft 20 or more feet in length that is used or capable of use as a means of transportation on water. "Watercraft" includes seaplanes. [PL 1997, c. 678, §13 (NEW).]

[PL 1997, c. 678, §13 (NEW).]

2. Eligibility. An abandoned watercraft is subject to removal under this section only under the following conditions.

A. A permit under Title 38, section 9 has not been granted by the municipal board or commission entrusted with harbor management for the area. [PL 1997, c. 678, §13 (NEW).]

B. A landowner has not granted permission to a watercraft owner to abandon a watercraft on that landowner's property. [PL 1997, c. 678, §13 (NEW).]

C. Notice has been given the director within 120 days of the date that the municipal board or commission determines, in its opinion, that the watercraft has been abandoned. [PL 2003, c. 254, §4 (AMD).]

D. [PL 2003, c. 254, §4 (RP).]

Watercraft that have been abandoned prior to July 1, 1993 are not subject to removal under this section.

The municipal board or commission entrusted with harbor management is responsible for the notice requirements under this subsection.

[PL 2003, c. 254, §4 (AMD).]

3. Ownership. The municipal board or commission entrusted with harbor management shall attempt to determine the owner of a watercraft considered by that body to be abandoned.

[PL 1997, c. 678, §13 (NEW).]

4. Responsibility of the director. The director is responsible for the following.

A. After notification under subsection 2, the director shall investigate any report of an abandoned watercraft and give notice to the owner if an owner can be identified. The notice must require the owner to respond within 15 days and to remove the watercraft from the coastal waters within 60 days of notification by the director or, if the watercraft is icebound, within 60 days of ice-out in the body of water where the watercraft is located. If the owner of a watercraft to whom the director has given notice does not respond to the notice and remove the watercraft within the time period specified or the owner can not be identified or contacted, the director may initiate removal of the watercraft. [PL 2003, c. 254, §5 (AMD).]

B. Beginning July 1, 1993 the director shall establish and implement, subject to available funding, a program to remove from coastal waters those abandoned watercraft that have been reported under subsection 3. The program must provide that, if another government agency is responsible for

removal of an abandoned watercraft, the director shall notify that agency of the existence of that abandoned watercraft. Funding for removal by the director comes from funds available from the Submerged Lands Fund established under section 1861. [PL 1997, c. 678, §13 (NEW).]

C. The director may authorize a 3rd party to remove abandoned watercraft if the director is satisfied that the work will be completed. Ninety-five percent of the proceeds from the sale of the salvaged watercraft accrue to the 3rd party and 5% accrue to the Submerged Lands Fund established under section 1861. [PL 1997, c. 678, §13 (NEW).]

D. Notwithstanding the time periods for owner removal specified in paragraph A, if the director determines at any time that a watercraft is a health or safety hazard, the director may immediately remove the watercraft from the coastal waters. [PL 1997, c. 678, §13 (NEW).]

E. If the director removes a watercraft from coastal waters under this subsection, the director may sell the watercraft. Any proceeds from the sale must first be applied to the costs to the State directly related to the expense of removal of the watercraft. Any money that remains may be applied to any liens against the watercraft. Money that finally remains must accrue to the Submerged Lands Fund established under section 1861. [PL 1997, c. 678, §13 (NEW).]

F. Abandoned watercraft located on intertidal land may not be removed by the director without the permission of the landowner. [PL 1997, c. 678, §13 (NEW).]

G. The director may adopt rules governing abandoned watercraft in accordance with Title 5, chapter 375. [PL 1997, c. 678, §13 (NEW).]

[PL 2003, c. 254, §5 (AMD).]

5. Method of removal. The method of removal of abandoned watercraft, whether by the owner, by a 3rd party or by the State, must comply with all state and federal environmental laws. [PL 1997, c. 678, §13 (NEW).]

6. Civil action. If the State is not compensated for removal costs under the provisions of subsection 4, the State may bring a civil action against the owner of the abandoned watercraft to cover any cost of state removal of the abandoned watercraft from coastal waters. The court in its discretion may award an additional 50% of the cost of removal. The penalty is payable to the submerged lands leasing program pursuant to section 1862.

[PL 1997, c. 678, §13 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1997, c. 678, §13 (NEW). PL 2003, c. 254, §§4,5 (AMD).

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