

March 4, 1997

Introduced By: KENT PULLEN

Proposed No.: 97-168

MOTION NO. 10177

1
2 A MOTION accepting a loan of two personal watercraft from the
3 Yamaha Motors Corporation to the King County department of
4 public safety to enhance public safety and education of water
5 safety.
6

7 WHEREAS, the King County department of public safety operates a Marine Unit
8 responsible for patrolling waterways, educating, and enforcing watercraft safety, and

9 WHEREAS, using personal watercraft in emphasis patrol of areas of high complaints
10 such as Juanita Bay, North End Seaplane Zone, Lake Sammamish State Boat Ramp,
11 Sammamish Slough and at public events will enhance public safety and education, and

12 WHEREAS, the Yamaha Motors Corporation operates a personal watercraft Public
13 Safety Loan program to contribute to boating safety, and

14 WHEREAS, in 1996 the Yamaha Motors Corporation loaned the county two personal
15 watercraft under the following conditions:

- 16 1. The watercraft would be used solely to help with public safety responsibilities, and
17 2. The watercraft would be returned to the dealer at the end of the loan period, and
18 3. The county would pay for the maintenance of the watercraft and any damage other
19 than ordinary wear and tear, and

20 WHEREAS, during 1996, there was a reduction in citizen complaints made to the
21 Marine Unit of the department of public safety, and

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WHEREAS, the Yamaha Corporation is willing to renew the loan for an additional year with the same conditions;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

The King County Executive is authorized to accept the loan of two personal watercraft from the Yamaha Motors Corporation to be used exclusively by the King County department of public safety for public safety purposes.

PASSED by a vote of 12 to 0 this 7th day of April, 1997.

KING COUNTY COUNCIL
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Jane Hague
Chair

ATTEST:

James Masno
ACTING Clerk of the Council

Attachments: Personal Watercraft Loaner Program 1996 Boating Season

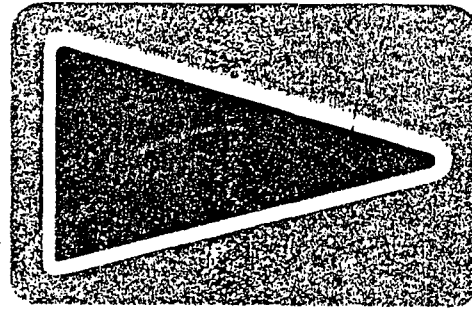
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REPORT TO COUNCIL

JANUARY 1997

INITIAL IMPACT
PERSONAL WATERCRAFT LOANER
PROGRAM
1996 BOATING SEASON

SMALL
CRAFT



ADVISORY

Vol. 11 No. 2
DEC 1995/JAN 1996

**Coast Guard
reorganization plan, p. 3**
NASBLA Directory, p. 6



Michigan conservation officers are shown on patrol Labor Day weekend at Lake St. Clair (just north of Detroit). This is the first year the department has used PWCs for education purposes. At the end of the summer the PWCs were used for enforcement patrols.

10177

INITIAL PWC PROGRAM IMPACT
1996 BOATING SEASON

The King County Council approved the use of the Personal Watercraft Loaner Program in 1996. although approval came late into the boating season, the program was quite successful.

The number of contacts with operators of personal water craft increased from 102 in 1995 to 874 in 1996. In the opinion of the King County Communications Center supervisors and King County Police Marine Unit officers, this increased number of contacts resulted in fewer citizen complaints about PWC usage in their areas. However, since PWC complaints were not recorded in 1995, we are unable to make a statistical comparison with 1996.

Having the loaner PWCs allowed the Marine Unit officers to expose approximately 7,157 citizens (adults and children) to the proper use of this type of craft through boating safety training classes and special events. While we have found these PWCs to be an efficient tool for education, we have also used them as a very effective enforcement tool. We have used them to rescue swimmers, tow disabled boats, patrol waters not navigable by a regular boat, and transport emergency response divers when necessary. We were able to accomplish all the above mentioned tasks for a total operating cost of around \$500 for the 1996 boating season.

Wave-hopping cops

Police to ride relief offenders' vehicle of choice

By Dale Steinke
Valley Daily News

Jet engines and water may be the right mix for the King County Marine Unit to reach untutored personal watercraft users.

Personal watercraft — commonly known as jet skis — are becoming a major source of complaints on lakes controlled by the county Marine Unit, including Lake Washington, Lake Weyers and Lake Sammamish, King County Police want to add to their fleet this summer. The police department's request for obtaining two more from Yamaha is on the county Council agenda. As reported to patrol Lake Sammamish Friday, Officer Rob Mendel said he hopes the two craft will be on county-patrolled lakes in July. That's a tall order considering 60 officers have to go through mandatory training program before they can hit the water.

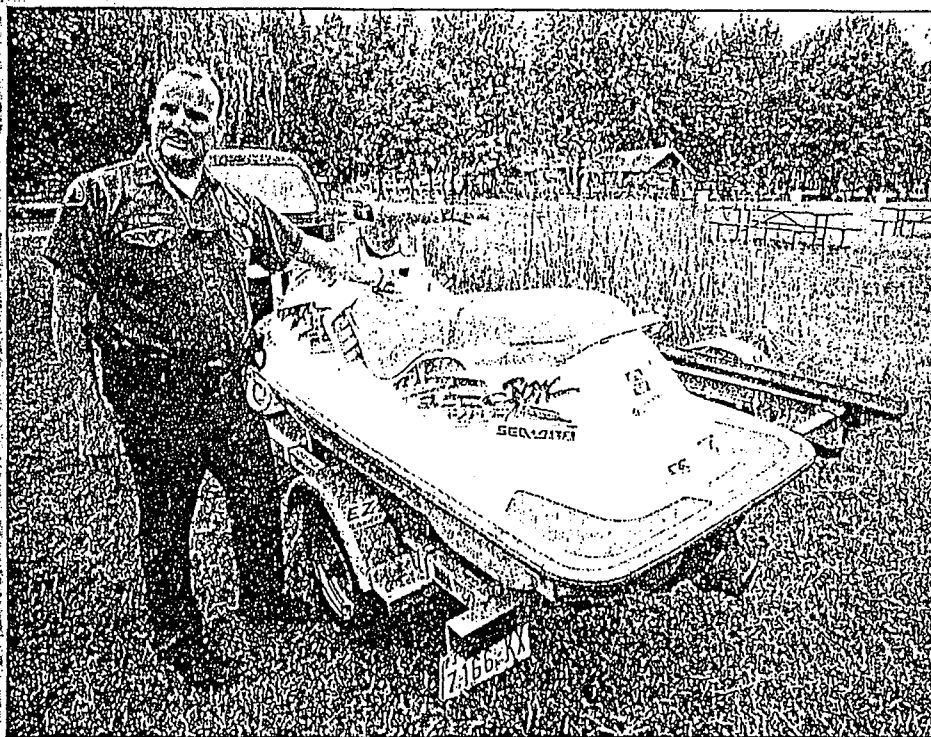
Police want to use the jet craft not only for enforcement — a sort of HIPs on water — but also for boating safety education aimed straight at the jet ski set. "It's not unusual to see water-jetters ducking and bobbing around each other in a dangerous dance. In 1990 in California, of 194 collisions involving personal watercraft, 126 were personal watercraft slamming into each other."

Boaters frustrated by the antics of those who use the snowmobile-like craft wish something would be done.

When Sylvia Acosta takes her kids out waterskiing, personal watercraft are drawn to her boat's wake like trout to flies.

The jet skiers are back there having a ball, jumping the wake while Bellevue mom is gripping her seat and steering wheel, fearing what might happen if one of her children poked out and the wave riders can't hold them.

"They get so close," Acosta said Friday, "the jet skiers as her boat nuzzled in the middle of the



King County Police Officer Rob Mendel stands next to a personal watercraft at Vasa Park. Rick Schweinhart/Spectra to Valley Daily News

lake. "It scares me when my kids are out (skiing)."

If people think there's a lot of personal watercraft out there now, expect to see more: Mendel said local police have seen the use of personal watercraft increase 30 percent each year since 1988 with no signs of abating. Roughly 17,000 of the tiny boats are registered in Washington.

The relative affordability — a few thousand dollars to about \$8,000 for a three-passenger, 60-mph water rocket — and high fun quotient promise to keep sales up, unless safety concerns make personal watercraft go the way of the three-wheeled all-terrain vehicle.

Even some of the jet-powered boat users would like to see bad boaters sunk before lawmakers quash the activity for everyone. Conflicts with personal watercraft have already prompted three Washington counties to ban or

severely restrict use of the boats.

"Get them off the water so those of us who are doing it right can stay on the water," said Greg Metzger of Woodinville during a personal watercraft break on Lake Sammamish Friday. "It's people who are less responsible — they're playing chicken. If you're going 50 mph and you both turn the same way, it's an opportunity to die."

Back at the launch, Mendel pulled away from the dock at the helm of a 17-foot Boston Whaler, scanning the lake for trouble. None appeared, unusual for a Friday, but not unexpected considering a threatening cloud cover that may have made many reconsider going out on the lake.

While he didn't see anything amiss, it was easy for other boaters to spot Mendel's canopied craft a mile away, a problem when trying to pull over lawbreakers.

With low-profile personal water-

craft, Mendel said officers could be on top of troublemakers before they even know police are nearby.

"We hope to be able to get in and talk to the people on a one-to-one basis. I'm on a personal watercraft, you're on a personal watercraft," Mendel said, acting out a possible encounter that would segue into tips for safer boating.

"I, just like everyone else, would like to see the lakes safe for anyone who chooses to use them," Mendel said.

The small craft also could be used to get into places the county can't easily patrol now, such as Lake Desire, Spring Lake, the Sammamish Slough and the Cedar River.

Through better education, Mendel hopes the King County Police can prevent accidents, often of personal watercraft colliding with larger boats.

Several years ago on Lake

Tips for personal watercraft users

By Dale Steinke
Valley Daily News

Personal watercraft can be a lot of fun, but jet skis can also be a danger in the hands of people who don't know how to operate them.

Here's some tips that will make personal watercraft boating a safer experience:

■ The operator of a personal watercraft must be at least 14 years old, 16 if it's a rental craft.

■ Watercraft riders must wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life vest.

■ Some personal watercraft come with a lanyard engine cutoff switch that must be attached to the person operating the boat. If the pilot falls off the craft, the lanyard pulls the cutoff switch, killing the engine to keep the craft nearby.

■ Personal watercraft cannot be used from sunset to sunrise.

■ Reckless or negligent behavior is a no-no. Numerous accidents happen when jet skis jump boat wakes, slamming into the boat or another craft blocked from view.

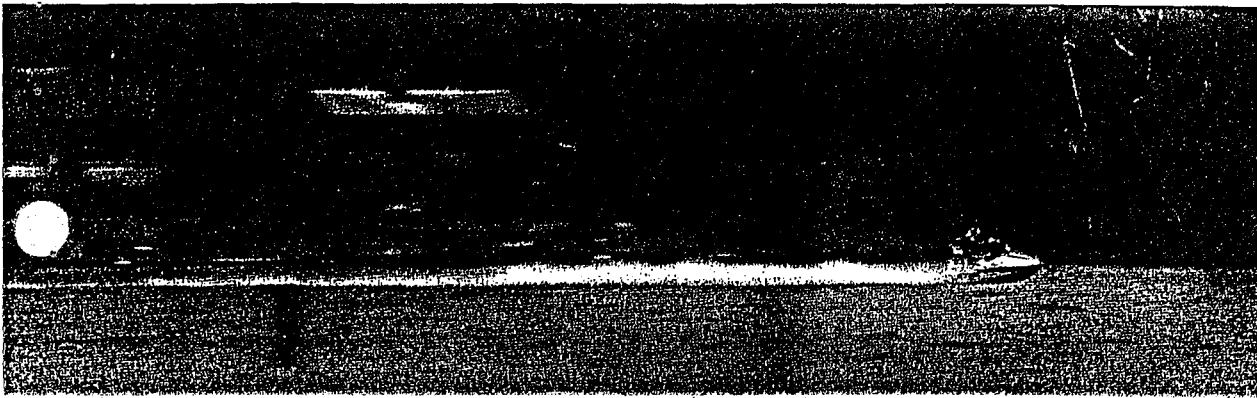
■ Personal watercraft are steered by directing a water jet out the back of the boat. Cutting the power essentially leaves the craft rudderless.

Sammamish, a personal watercraft pilot died after making a high-speed 90-degree turn into the bow of a ski boat paralleling his course.

The state does not require any training to use a personal watercraft, but does put the minimum age of the driver at 14 to 16 for a rental craft.

Some dealers provide varying levels of training.

While larger boats are usually piloted by an owner well-versed in his or her boat's operation, an average of three or four different people of varying abilities may switch off at the helm of a personal watercraft.



Frederick D. Joe/The News Tribune

Rich Parkinson of Federal Way Cycle Center makes a high-speed run on Lake Tapps Tuesday. Law enforcement and local watercraft merchants were at the lake to promote safety.

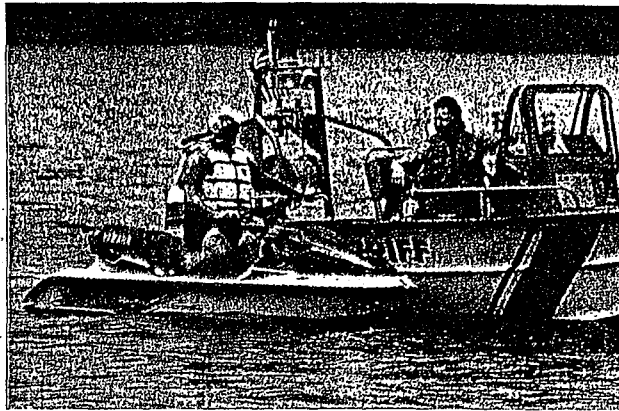
Cruising the waterways

Police urge wet-bike users to keep safety in mind

By Greg Chang
The News Tribune

They're fast. They're fun. And they're nearly everywhere. Simplicity and low cost have helped personal watercraft soar in popularity the past two years. Dealers say they are seeing a 30 percent increase in sales annually. "They're really snappy," said Curt Filleau, a deputy with the Pierce County sheriff's marine services unit. Personal watercraft — known as Jet Skis, skis and water scooters — are part of a recent surge in boating, dealers say. And with July 4 being the busiest boating day of the year, law enforcement officials are trying to publicize regulations and safety tips. Speed limits at lakes vary, and boaters

should observe posted signs. In general, in Pierce County keep below 5 mph if within 200 feet of shore. In King County, it's 8 mph within 300 feet of shore. A reckless-driving citation often gets a boater's attention, since it can cost \$304. Drinking also leads to trouble. "It's clear that most accidents are partly to blame on alcohol," Filleau said. But it's legal to drink on a boat and officers can't require a breathalyzer test, so boating while intoxicated is exceedingly hard to prove. Instead, officers usually cite drunken operators for other infractions. The increasing numbers of personal watercraft — and their often inexperienced pilots — are raising safety concerns. Personal watercraft are small vessels that seat up to three and are similar to mo-



King County sheriff's deputy Rob Mendel, left, aboard one of King County's new personal watercraft, talks with Pierce County sheriff's deputy Curt Filleau during a water safety demonstration Tuesday at Lake Tapps.

torcycles in their size, speed and maneuverability. While older craft demand a balancing act that can be difficult for beginners, riders on the new generation of personal watercraft just sit down, push a button and zoom away. It's an exhilarating thrill and affordable, with some models costing less than \$5,000. The day rental business is also booming. About 17,000 personal watercraft are registered in Washington state.

For many fun-seekers, the personal watercraft is the first boat they've ever steered. Such novices often lack marine savvy. "We end up having people without any knowledge out on the water," Filleau said. Inexperienced operators sometimes make fundamental errors, such as the guy who didn't know how to turn off the machine and rammed into a dock. They also fre-

Please see Boating, B3

• The News Tribune, Thursday, July 4, 1996 B3

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 22101

Boating

Continued from B1

Don't forget their craft lacks brakes, said Rob Mendel, an officer with the King County Police marine services unit. Daredevils also keep law enforcement officers busy. Jumping the wake of another boat is a favorite of risk-takers. Pilots in search of thrills often steer dangerously close to other boats. "People tend to view them as a toy without realizing that they're a very fast and powerful toy that has the ability to seriously injure and even kill," said Sherman Volles, the supervisor of Pierce County's marine

SAFETY TIPS AND REGULATIONS FOR BOATERS

- Always wear a life jacket. State law says each boat must have one wearable life jacket per person.
- Don't overload the boat. A Coast Guard-mandated sticker on the boat should show its capacity.
- Don't pilot a vessel while drunk.
- Carry a sound-producing device such as a whistle in case of an emergency.
- Keep a fire extinguisher handy.
- Carry a visual distress signal.
- Always look first and slow down early.
- Raise a flag if a skier is down.
- At some lakes internal combustion engines are prohibited and other regulations might apply. For more information, contact the Pierce County Sheriff's Department at 798-3278 or King County police at 296-7559.

services unit. He says operators should stay at least 100 yards away from other boats. Personal watercraft are unregulated, and there's no mandated safety

training or driver's license test. State law allows even 14-year-olds to drive the vessels, which can go as fast as 60 mph. (The age limit in Pierce County is 16; in King County 14). But because of beginners violating marine rules and etiquette, irresponsible pilots performing risky stunts and noisy machines going too fast close to shore, the craft have attracted the scrutiny of some local governments. In January, San Juan County became the first in the country to ban the vessels. The Lakewood City Council has discussed following suit. Such government attention isn't isolated. "It's all across the nation," said Bruce Burwell, who owns Tacoma

Honda/Sea Doo. The industry is fighting back, though. Burwell heads a group of dealers who meet periodically to discuss strategies to promote safety. The organization has spawned others in Oregon and Idaho. Burwell says he also tells customers to mind their manners: "Go out in the middle of the lake where you're not going to bother people," he says. Dealers also have lent the King County police marine services unit two personal watercraft, which should add a stealth factor. "We want to get right in on top of these people before they even know police are around," said Mendel.

WHY A LOANER PROGRAM FOR KING COUNTY

LITTLE OR NO COST TO THE AGENCY WITH THE ABILITY TO USE THE CRAFT FOR UP TO NINE MONTHS.

With the current budget crunch and reduced capitol budget outlays for equipment, this program allows the King County Police Marine Unit to use and test these craft at little or no cost to the county. A good example of the program is in use in the State of Mississippi. (The State of Florida also utilizes this program) The misuse of personal watercraft gets on the nerves of boating law enforcement professionals across the country, there is no doubt about it. But, these 1-3 person vessels are also carving out a niche on the right side of the law. Personal watercraft on loan from North Jackson Honda/Yamaha, a local Mississippi dealer, are giving water patrol officers one more tool in their efforts to make the waterways safe. According to Liz Raymond, Mississippi Boating Law Administrator, they have nine of them and they are all used for law enforcement purposes. They do not make them visible with the agency decal and many of them are used for undercover work. A PWC gives an officer several advantages. Aside from the visibility--an officer on a PWC is far less visible to lawbreakers than one on a full sized patrol boat--they are far more portable and extremely fuel efficient. For ten dollars, Ms. Raymond observed, you can operate them a long time. The agency issued officers special credit cards for fueling up only the PWCs. By monitoring fuel consumption and the hours of service, it was determined beyond a doubt that these small craft can save money in operating expenses. All nine of their machines are Wave Runner III Models and the agency gets them on a loaner basis for six months at a stretch. They are then turned in for new models. The PWCs see duty all over the State, being used in each of the six enforcement districts. On heavily used waterways, PWC officers can "double-up", taking two of the craft on patrol. They also come in handy on search and rescue operations and on recovery of drowning victims, especially on shallow lakes. (Aug/Sept 1994 Small Craft Advisory).

**PERSONAL WATERCRAFT
MISSION STATEMENT**

To enhance public safety and education through the use of personal water craft in enforcement and education programs.

JUSTIFICATION

With the increase of personal water craft (PWC) usage over the last few years and the expected 1,000,000 personal water craft in use by the year 2000, the Marine Unit, Parks Department, and patrol units have seen an estimated 30% increase in personal water craft contact each year since 1988. In contacting local dealers, Sea-Doo feels they have a 44% market share with an estimated 165,000 units to be sold during 1996 alone.

INCREASED NUMBERS OF PERSONAL WATERCRAFT SALES

The Boat Manufacturers Association estimates of the 560,000 boats sold in 1994, PWC's accounted for about one-fourth of the total and the trend did not slow down. Personal water craft sales over the past three years represent over 25% of all powerboat sales.

GREATER ACCIDENT POTENTIAL WITH MORE PWC USE ON WATER

One large difference between "traditional" vessels and PWC's is that on a traditional vessel, the owner is usually aboard. One does not normally lend his or her boat to someone else. Not so with personal water craft where the tendency is to loan to children, friends of children, boy friends, girl friends, etc. with little or no instruction on correct use.

In 1991, the State of Wisconsin saw 6.89 accidents per 1,000 personal water craft in use in the state. Since a 100 foot Slow-No-Wake law was enacted and enforcement was added, this has dropped to 2.82 accidents per 1,000 personal water craft while the number of personal water craft in that state has doubled during the same period. (Oct/Nov 1995 Small Craft Advisory).

LOUISIANA: PWC's are involved in about 25% of the state's boating fatalities while they constitute only about three percent of the registered vessels in the state. As a result, in Louisiana PWC problems are requiring an inordinate amount of attention from officers throughout the state. (Page 16).

Two accidents in an unknown state show PWC's are not the only accident cause; but all involved accidents were due to their design. In one case, a bass boat ran over an individual sitting on an idling PWC. In another incident, a drunken boater plowed into yet another individual sitting on an idling water craft. Capt. Reed Sanders with the Kentucky Water Patrol and Mike Wilson of the Arkansas B.L.A. both noted it is not the machine but the operator. Reaching these people before they're involved in an accident is the challenge facing both industry and enforcement agencies. (Aug/Sept 1995 Small Craft Advisory).

WASHINGTON STATE: Walt Spady of Dout's Inboard Boats reports that the average personal water craft is used by 3 to 4 persons with about half having no formal training before they get on.

MINNESOTA: In 1994, this state had a record four personal water craft fatalities and dozens of serious non-fatal accidents with 10,500 registered PWC's. In 1995, accidents were down 30% through enforcement and education. (Aug/Sept 1995 Small Craft Advisory).

MICHIGAN: We found that 97% of the accidents involving personal watercraft were resulting from lack of formal education and lack of experience. The majority of accidents involved people between the ages of 19 and 29. The most startling revelation from students is that they don't realize a PWC is a boat. (Aug/Sept 1995 Small Craft Advisory).

INCREASED ACCIDENTS AND PROBLEMS WITH PERSONAL WATERCRAFT
USED IN RENTAL SITUATIONS

WASHINGTON STATE: Lt. J. Hunt of the Seattle Police Harbor Patrol Unit states that most of their personal water craft rental problems come from persons who rent the craft for two (2) hours, usually 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., after they have worked all day and then had a few drinks. She feels that these people are given little or no training and that most have no previous experience on personal water craft or vessel operation.

WISCONSIN: The State of Wisconsin's accident rate for rental users was 49.68 per 1,000 which dropped to 13.59 per 1,000 after an aggressive rental education program was started. (Oct/Nov 1995 Small Craft Advisory). another example of a rule change is to require all PWC owners to place a PWC rule decal on the machine which would be visible to the operator when using the PWC. This rule would address the issue of loaning a PWC to someone else who is not familiar with the laws. Let's not forget that with any law you need education and enforcement to make it work.

OTHER STATES

PWC PROGRAMS AND POINTS OF THEIR OPERATIONS

"Michigan State personal watercraft have proven their value as educational and enforcement tools in the Great Lakes State this year (1995)", noted Lt. Lyle Belknap, Boating Law Administrator with the Department of Natural Resources. During one training session that dealt with using PWC's in search and rescue operations, an actual opportunity to put training into practice arose. Belknap said a couple of fishermen suddenly became stranded on the lake when both outboards on their boat conked out simultaneously. To the rescue rode Glyn Johnston on a Sea-Doo, cast a line to the luckless anglers and using his PWC, towed them to shore. During enforcement with support boats, officers split into teams to patrol high problem areas.

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JUSTIFICATION REVIEW
ONE STATE'S STATEMENT THAT SEEMS TO COVER ALL ABOVE POINTS
THEIR SOLUTION, THROUGH EDUCATION AND ENFORCEMENT

New Jersey educates PWC users, abusers -- Citing statistics which indicate that personal watercraft are involved in an inordinate number of boating violations in the Garden State, New Jersey marine officers are educating PWC users -- and abusers -- through enforcement efforts. That was the word from Boating Law Administrator Capt. William Gronikowski with the New Jersey State Police Marine Bureau. Of the 189,000 registered vessels in the state, there are approximately 14,000 personal watercraft, or about seven percent of the boats, Gronikowski estimated. Yet, he noted, at least 60 percent of our summons are now issued to personal watercraft operators. They are involved in a third of our accidents. Part of the problem, Gronikowski said, is attributed to rented units. He lamented that PWC lease operations provide little or no education about safe operations. As a result, renters are often the ones who get into trouble. They are a fun thing, he acknowledged, but people forget they are a boat... They are obliged to follow the rules. We're using mostly enforcement to educate them, and there have been articles in the newspapers. (Aug/Sept 1995 Small Craft Advisory, Page 4).

PURPOSE OF OUR PERSONAL WATERCRAFT PROGRAM

Enhance public safety and education through the use of personal water craft in emphasis patrol areas of high complaints such as Juanita Bay, North end seaplane zone, Lake Sammamish State boat ramp, Sammamish Slough, and at public events as part of our unit's commitment to the public's safety and to State Parks under our approved boating/education program.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF PROGRAM

Greater diversification of vessels for small lakes and quick response, in rescue, dive, and search and rescue incidents throughout King County and surrounding regional service areas. For example, in Nebraska, officers may use the machines to work undercover, mingling with other PWC operators and helping to control some of the drinking and partying problems by personal contact.

**TRAINING REQUIRED FOR PARTICIPATION
IN KING COUNTY PROGRAM**

Each officer working this program must complete the following training and pass the Basic Practical Operator Course for craft to be used.

- 1) Watch basic rules operations information video - 16 minutes.
- 2) Read operator's handbook for craft to be used.
- 3) Read and understand program S.O.P. and guidelines for program.
- 4) Complete a two hour "on water" orientation ride to practice skills for practical operator's skills test.
- 5) Complete practical skills test on the water.
- 6) Pass written test.