



"New Jersey's Voice On The Water"

I BOAT NJ Program Background and Current Status

The I BOAT NJ Program provides grant funds to selected eligible applicants to promote, improve and enhance the marine industry in the State of New Jersey for the benefit of the general boating public.

Before 2002, New Jersey was one of the few coastal States that did not dedicate any portion of its boat registration fees back to boating. That changed when our organization successfully worked to amend a boater registration fee increase proposed by Governor McGreevey. The fee increase gradually dedicated a portion of the fees (50%), which represents approximately 2 million dollars per year to a new grant program designed to promote boating, education, safety and infrastructure improvements. The program, known as "I BOAT NJ", has been managed by the DOT's Office of Maritime Resources, and has successfully provided grants to build boat ramps, improve and renovate marine facilities, provide public access, expand clean boating initiatives to protect New Jersey's natural resources, increase safe boating efforts, develop new programs and many other projects that have had a positive impact on the State. These grants have benefited local governments, small businesses, State agencies, such as the State Police, private entities and the citizens and visitors that utilize our waterways for recreation and transportation. The I BOAT NJ program has funded projects that have not only enhanced recreational boating opportunities but have also saved thousands in funds that otherwise would have been required of State and local government. Since the fund uses boater registration fees, not tax dollars, to operate it is exactly the kind of program that New Jersey should rely on and support.

Sadly, the last few State Budgets, beginning in Fiscal Year 2010, have diverted I BOAT NJ Program dollars into the Department of Transportation's operations and maintenance fund. Boaters once again get no return on their contributions to government. To make matters worse, that MTA/NJ has been unable to obtain a clear accounting of what the Department uses these funds for.

It is important to stress that New Jersey boaters spend approximately \$2 billion dollars on in-state recreational boating activities. Boating in New Jersey is serious business as the industry not only substantially contributes to the economy but greatly enhances the quality of life for New Jersey's residents and visitors alike. There has never been a more important time to support the boating industry. Hurricane Sandy devastated marinas, boat yards, recreational fishing and boating businesses and destroyed countless boats just as the industry was beginning to recover from national and local economic struggles from the recession. Additionally, there is increasing demand for water access, marina and marine business closures and a growing list of challenges facing New Jersey's waterways and all of the people, businesses and families that depend on them. New Jersey cannot afford to lose something that can never be rebuilt and this funding is critical to ensure that current infrastructure is repaired, maintained and vital boating programs continue.

The MTA/NJ respectfully requests assistance and leadership in restoring this critical funding back to its intended purpose.