

Stand Up Paddleboards in Pennsylvania

photo-courtesy of American Canoe Association

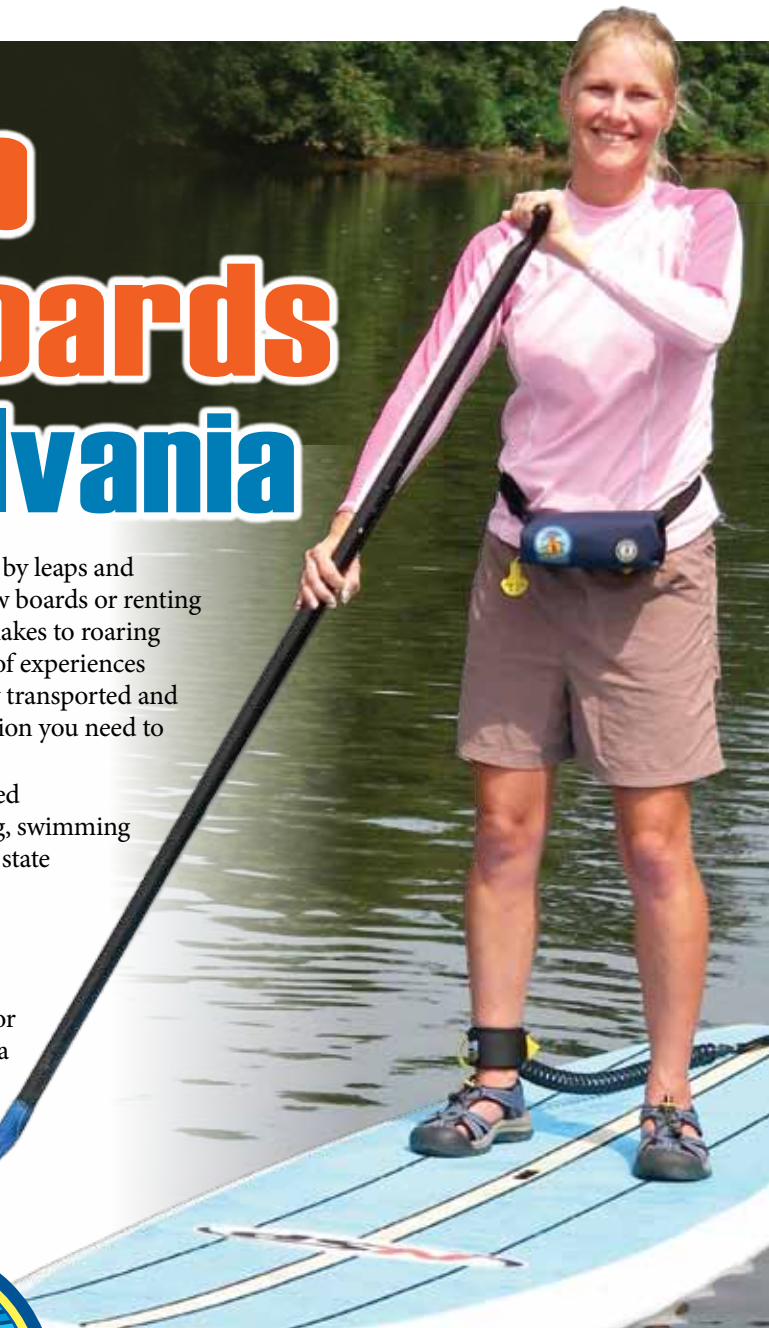
The sport of stand up paddleboards (SUP) is growing by leaps and bounds. People are getting on the water with their new boards or renting boards to try the sport for the first time. From placid lakes to roaring whitewater, stand up paddleboarding offers a variety of experiences for novices and the more experienced. SUPs are easily transported and require minimal gear, but there is important information you need to know before you go to be legal and safe on the water.

The United States Coast Guard (USCG) has classified paddleboards as “vessels.” When used outside a surfing, swimming or bathing area, paddleboards must follow federal and state boating safety regulations.

On Pennsylvania waters, these regulations include:

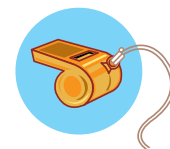
Life Jacket Requirements

- A USCG-approved wearable life jacket is required for each person on board. It is highly advisable to wear a life jacket at all times.
- The life jacket must be the appropriate size for the person wearing it.
- Life jackets must be appropriate for the activity for which they are worn.
- Life jackets must be in good and serviceable condition, functional, free of tears or defects in the material. All buckles, straps, zippers and other closures must be operable.
- Check the life jacket label for approvals and restrictions on its use.
- Children 12 years of age and younger onboard SUPs on Commonwealth waters must wear a life jacket when underway (i.e., not at anchor).
- Everyone on board SUPs on Pittsburgh District United States Army Corps of Engineers lakes must wear a life jacket.
- Everyone on board SUPs from November 1 to April 30 must wear a life jacket.



Other Required Equipment for SUPs

- A device that is capable of sounding a prolonged blast for 4 to 6 seconds that can be heard by another boat operator in time to avoid a collision. An athletic coach's whistle is acceptable.
- A white light, either hand-held or installed, ready to be displayed in time to avoid a collision, if SUP is operated between the hours of sunset and sunrise or during periods of restricted visibility, such as fog or heavy rain.
- A Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) Use Permit, or boat registration, or Pennsylvania State Parks launch permit or mooring permit, if launching or retrieving at a PFBC lake or access area or state park or forest.
- Visual Distress Signals, if operating on Lake Erie.





SUP operators must

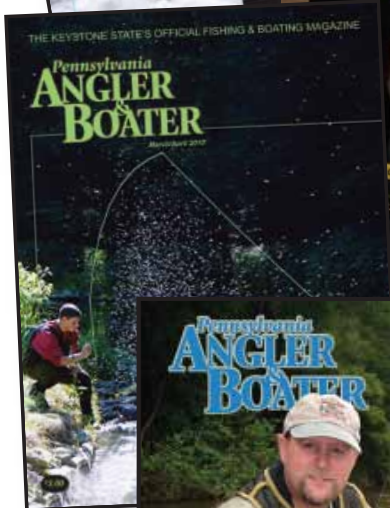
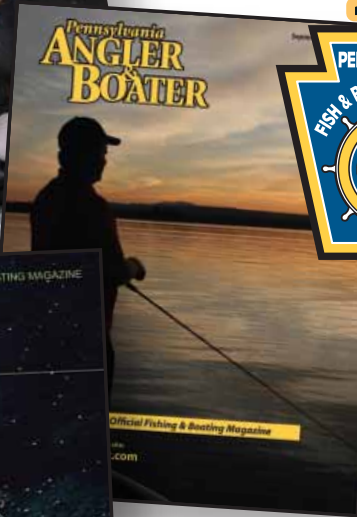
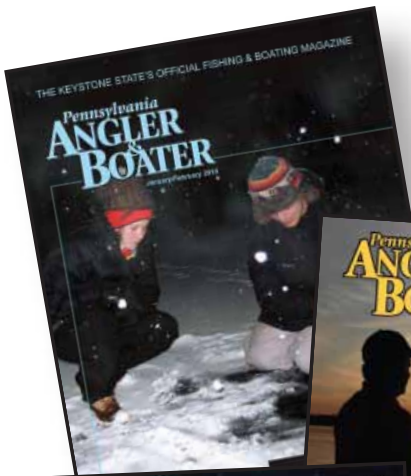
- Know the rules and regulations in the areas where they boat.
- Know the waters where they are boating.
- Have the required safety equipment for their vessel.
- Know and follow the USCG Navigation Rules.
- Maintain a proper lookout at all times.
- Observe aids to navigation (buoys and signs).
- Report any boating accident that results in a death or disappearance (within 48 hours), an injury that requires treatment beyond first aid (within 48 hours), damage to a vessel or other property exceeding \$2,000, or complete loss of a vessel (within 10 days).

Important safety recommendations for SUPs

- Wear your life jacket at all times while on or near the water.
- Expect to get wet and dress accordingly. Wear clothing that continues to insulate when wet and dries quickly.
- Scout ahead whenever possible to avoid surprises and dangerous situations.
- Leave a float plan that details your intended trip and time of return. Leave it with someone who will contact officials if you do not return on time.
- Do not use alcohol or controlled substances while on a SUP.
- Be alert for powerboats and other watercraft. Wearing brightly colored life jackets and apparel can help ensure you're seen by other boaters. Use your signaling devices to help them spot you when necessary.
- A leash connects you to the paddleboard. Know which style of leash to wear and in what water conditions to wear it.
- Do not SUP alone.
- Portage around low-head dams and obstacles such as fallen tree limbs (strainers).

Following these requirements and safety recommendations will help ensure that you have an enjoyable and safe SUP adventure on Pennsylvania's waters. ☐





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