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Kudos to the Passenger Vessel Association and responsible T- and K-boat operators for raising awareness about illegal charters in the March issue ("Charter Party," page 36).

Regarding six-pack charters, I have discovered an alarming number of unsuspected vessel owners who believe that they can start carrying paying passengers on their recreational vessels as soon as they have an OUPV (operator of uninspected passenger vessel) license. A Coast Guard license is only for the vessel operator, not for a vessel. The vessel is subject to commercial vessel requirements, and having a licensed operator is just one of many requirements. The most common deficiencies concern random drug testing and improper (or no) vessel documentation.

Many six-pack operators do not meet chemical testing requirements. Any six-pack operator who is not a member of a random drug testing consortium needs to join a responsible consortium, one that has had its program reviewed by Coast Guard headquarters for compliance.

Another common deficiency is that six-pack charterers operate vessels five net tons or over with state registration, or with Coast Guard documentation only for recreational use. To legally carry paying passengers, the vessel must be documented (not state-registered) and have a coastwise commercial

vessel endorsement.

There are also higher standards for safety equipment regarding PFDs, etc. Six-pack charterers should contact their local USC&G Sector for a vessel operating/equipment checklist.

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Vessel traffic is 'too much' in Chicago

I wanted to thank you for the article in the March issue on illegal charter-boats operating in and around Chicago. As a master/captain for 15 years running a fully licensed operation offering both OUPV charters and launch rentals, I am hopeful that our local Coast Guard operation can continue to crack down on the illegal operations.

I thought I would give you an idea for a follow-up article on operating here in Chicago. We are in the midst of an unprecedented boom in river traffic. The local inspected vessel tour operators continue to increase the size of both their boats and fleets. Please note that I don't begrudge anybody trying to grow their business. I am currently looking to add at least one or two boats to my fleet as well. But this build-up has caused what I consider to be an unsafe boating environment on weekends and also on Wednesday and Saturday nights when there are fireworks shows off of Navy Pier.

The main problem is the blending of a fireworks barge, commercial boats,

OUPV's and recreational boats all trying to get out of the river through the Chicago Lock for the shows. No other boats are allowed in the lock when the barge is locking through since it is not flagged, so we lose one complete lockage every night. Then on the "final" outboard lock before the show, there are so many commercial boats that the recreational boaters get left behind or there are 20-25 boats trying to get into the four or five spots still available in the lock. The lockmasters have no queue set up, so it is chaos.

I think the article should focus on how commercial traffic is so much versus recreational boating concerns in a closed system like the Chicago lockout and river system.

Capt. Chris Connor

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NTSB assesses industry's close encounters with recreational boats

The increase in dangerous incidents between recreational and commercial vessels on U.S. waterways has resulted in new safety recommendations by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) based on an investigation into the scope of the problem.

infrastructure such as port facilities and locks, and ongoing changes in the size and number of watercraft. The results of the analysis underscored the necessity for action.

The study found that preventive measures by regional harbor safety committees and



Boaters publicize close proximity to a large industrial vessel on the Chicago River. The Coast Guard says that from 2014 to 2018, there were 81 dangerous encounters between recreational and commercial vessels and 10 deaths in collisions with a recreational craft.

The agency's findings are published in "Shared Waterways: Safety of Recreational and Commercial Vessels in the Marine Transportation System," which was released to the public in February. The report includes recommendations for the U.S. Coast Guard, National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA), and National Water Safety Congress (NWSC).

The NTSB investigation included an analysis of past, present and future risks of encounters, taking into consideration emerging waterborne commercial enterprises, expanding recreational boating segments, developing

stakeholders such as distinguishing risks according to particular geographic areas, addressing waterway management practices, and requiring uniformly applied mandatory education for recreational boaters could serve to inhibit the otherwise "predictable" rise in dangerous incidents between recreational and commercial craft.

As for recommendations, the NTSB advised each of its target agencies — the Coast Guard, NASBLA and NWSC — to make a concerted effort to review and update "A Guide for Multiple Use Waterway Management" at regular intervals.

Recreational boating: The case for education

With dangerous encounters between recreational and commercial vessels on the rise, the National Transportation Safety Board's report presented a strong case in support of Coast Guard efforts to secure the authority to require safety education for all recreational boaters nationwide.

According to Coast Guard spokesman Amy Midgott, from 2014 to 2018 there were 88 marine casualty investigations where a commercial vessel was involved in an incident with a recreational vessel, involving 228 vessels of both types. Among these encounters, several patterns emerged.

"First, in looking at the location of such incidents, 87 of the 93 incidents happened in harbors and rivers," Midgott said. In regard to specific sites or ports, Midgott said the highest number of encounters occurred "on the Columbia and Willamette rivers associated with Portland, Ore., and the Long Beach Harbor as well as coastal areas near Santa Barbara (Calif.) and San Diego." Midgott also noted that most of the incidents involved towing industry vessels and craft passenger vessels.

The growing number of recreational boaters has come with a corresponding toll. In 2018 alone, the Coast Guard reported 4,159 recreational boating accidents resulting in 628 deaths, 2,613 injuries and approximately \$42 million in property damage. Causes of the accidents included "collisions with recreational vessels" (983), "collisions with fixed objects" (476), "grounding/stranding" (418), "grounding" (356), and "skin contact" (197).

Keating A. Carter

**Oconee County
Council**

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The Oconee County Council will meet in 2017 on the first and the third Tuesday of each month [excluding July & August which will meet only on the third Tuesday of the month] at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers, Oconee County Administrative Offices, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, South Carolina unless otherwise advertised.

Oconee County Council will also hold a Planning Retreat in February 2017 (TBD) in Council Chambers to establish short and long term goals.

Additionally, Council will meet on January 2, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers at which point they will establish their 2018 council and committee meeting schedules.

Additional Council meetings, workshops and/or committee meetings may be added throughout the year as needed.

Oconee County Council Committees will meet in 2017 on the following dates/times in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, South Carolina unless otherwise advertised.

The Law Enforcement, Public Safety, Health & Welfare Committee and the Transportation Committee at 5:30 p.m. on the following dates: January 10, April 11, July 11 and October 10, 2017.

The Real Estate, Facilities & Land Management Committee and the Budget, Finance & Administration Committee at 5:30 p.m. on the following dates: February 14, May 9, August 8 and November 14, 2017.

The Planning & Economic Development Committee at 5:30 p.m. on the following dates: March 14, June 13, September 12 and December 12, 2017.

