

For Immediate Release

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Oregon “Fit to Float®” Events Kick Off National Safe Boating Week

Life Jacket Fitting Events planned for youth and families on “National Wear Your Life Jacket to Work” Day

May is traditionally the month when recreational boaters start hitting the waterways, increasing in numbers as the air temperatures rise. New this year, the Oregon State Marine Board is teaming up with paddlesports leaders on May 15 to offer life jacket fitting events for youth and families at various locations statewide in conjunction with National “Wear Your Life Jacket to Work,” Day.

The “Oregon Fit to Float®” Life Jacket Fitting Events are geared towards youth, families, and caregivers to make boating safety simple and approachable. “Oregon Fit to Float®” events aim to have every participant experience how a life jacket should fit, learn about what to check before getting on the water, and why comfort and safety matter in life jacket selection for the boating activity.



The following locations will be holding “Fit to Float®” activities on May 15, from 3 pm to 6 pm:

- The Paddle Shack – Warren, OR
- Alder Creek Kayak & Canoe – Portland, OR
- KeizerFEST– Keizer, OR
- River House Outdoor Center – Eugene, OR
- Oregon Paddle Sports – Eugene, OR
- SOTAR – Merlin, OR
- **Sawyer Station** – Gold Hill, OR
- Indigo Creek Outfitters – Phoenix, OR



“We are excited to bring this idea to life at eight locations across Oregon, in conjunction with National Wear Your Life Jacket to Work, Day,” said Priscilla Macy-Cruser, Boating Safety Advocate Program Coordinator for the Oregon State Marine Board.

“For years, the Oregon State Marine Board has coordinated life jacket fitting events, as well as being a funding partner for [Life Jacket Loaner Stations](#) in regions across the state.

“Fit To Float®” is yet another way the agency is investing in communities to improve water safety through life jacket education for families, and we are happy to be doing these events in partnership with other boating safety champions.” Macy-Cruser adds, “Recreational boating is a meaningful way for visitors and residents alike to enjoy our beautiful waterways, and we want to ensure they have the knowledge and tools to do it safely.”

“Fit to Float®” began as an idea from Southern Oregon-based paddle and oar manufacturer, *Sawyer Paddles and Oars*. The concept of having coordinated, statewide life jacket fitting events hosted by local partners was developed in collaboration with the Oregon State Marine Board, the American Canoe Association Regional Activity Council, and the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, with the intention of launching events that coincide with National Safe Boating Week.

“A life jacket is the key that opens the door to countless days of safe and enjoyable recreation on our rivers, lakes and oceans,” said Zac Kauffman of Sawyer Paddles and Oars. “We’re proud to work alongside local, state, and national partners to bring this idea to life across Oregon.”

“The ACA Regional Activity Council tries to help coordinate local initiatives to promote paddler safety, education, and infrastructure that makes new paddlers feel welcome in our community,” said Andrea White, National Chair of the ACA Regional Activity Council’s Safe Boating Week activities. “Fit to Float®” is a powerful idea that’s being amplified through partnership with instructors, state officials, outfitters and outdoor recreation advocates from across Oregon who recognize the enormous benefits of connecting with the water. We are excited to collaborate on this pilot campaign in 2026, with hopes of expanding its impact to other states in the future.”

Recreational boating is enjoyed by millions of Americans each year. Boating safety advocates recommend that all boaters and passengers not only have a life jacket on board but always wear it while boating. Regardless of your age or experience level, data shows that life jackets save lives. “Fit to Float®” is designed to encourage responsible and safe boating habits. According to the [2024 U.S. Coast Guard statistics](#), drowning was the reported cause of death in 76% of all boating fatalities. Of those, 87% were reported as not wearing a life jacket.

Governor Kotek acknowledges how vital boating safety outreach is for educating visitors and Oregonians about safe boating and water recreation practices, aiming to decrease preventable deaths. To support this goal, [May 16-22, 2026, has officially been proclaimed National Safe Boating Week](#). The National Safe Boating Council (NSBC) organizes this annual campaign to promote awareness around safe boating habits.

Supporting Organizations

In addition to the Oregon State Marine Board and the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, supporting organizations for the event include leaders from ACA Oregon, volunteer instructors certified by the American Canoe Association, Sawyer Paddles and Oars, SOTAR, The Paddle Shack, Alder Creek Kayak & Canoe, Keizer Fire District, River House Outdoor Center, Oregon Paddle Sports, and Indigo Creek Outfitters.

[Learn more about Oregon Fit to Float®](#). A **free online paddlesports safety course** is also available on the ACA Paddlesports site. Visit Boat.Oregon.gov for all things recreational boating in Oregon.

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