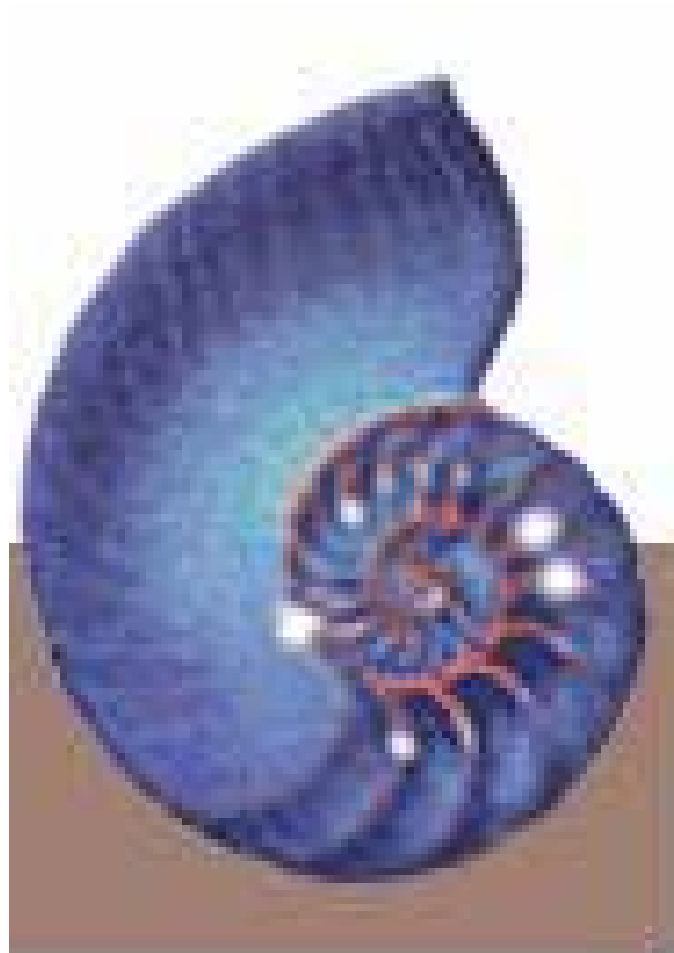




Small Vessel Operations Guide



Forward

The University of West Florida's **Small Vessel Operations Guide** is adapted from several existing sources. Of those, the authors of this guide relied heavily on the format and content of the Bodega Marine Laboratory Marine Operations **Guidelines for Small Boat Use**. The Bodega Marine Laboratory is operated by the University of California, Davis (UCD), and is well known for its scientific diving and Marine Operations programs. Special thanks are extended to UCD Diving Safety Officer Henry Fastenau for sharing information and for his assistance in developing this guide.

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SECTION 1.00

GENERAL POLICY

1.10 PURPOSE

The purpose of this manual is to establish guidelines for vessel usage under the auspices of the University of West Florida (UWF) Marine Services Center (MSC); to ensure that all vessel operations under MSC auspices are conducted in a safe and efficient manner; and to educate participants about basic boating procedures that affect their own safety and the safety of others.

All persons designated as MSC small vessel operators are required to observe the provisions of this guide. Authorized operators will be given a copy of this manual for reference.

1.20 CONTENTS

The Small Vessel Operations Guide contains policy and procedures for all small vessel operations. The MSC Small Vessel Operations Guide includes:

1. Policy that pertains to all MSC vessel operations.
2. Requirements for obtaining operator certification.
3. Administrative procedures for conducting the MSC small vessel program.
4. Equipment and maintenance procedures.

1.30 APPLICABILITY

The provisions of this manual apply whenever MSC personnel are using a small vessel under MSC auspices. Specific examples of vessel operations under UWF auspices include but are not limited to: persons engaged in research; MSC employees acting within the scope of their employment; students engaged in any research operation including those receiving vessel operation instruction or involved in checkouts; and vessel operations conducted in educational programs sponsored by UWF/MSC.

In order to be approved for use by MSC personnel, a small vessel must be numbered in accordance with the regulations of the State of Florida or in accordance with applicable Federal Law.

SECTION 2.00

RESPONSIBILITY

2.10 DIRECTOR, UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA MARINE SERVICES CENTER

The Director of the Marine Services Center has the ultimate authority over all vessel operations and related activities. The Director is also responsible for administration of the small vessel operations program and for approving changes to this manual.

The MSC director is responsible for the conduct of small vessel operations, including certification of operators, approval of a vessel request form/float plan, maintenance of vessels, and ensuring compliance with this manual by all operators of MSC vessels. The MSC Director may permit portions of this program to be carried out by a qualified delegate.

The MSC director shall suspend operations that are considered unsafe, and will provide equipment and gear necessary to ensure that boat operators can remain in full compliance with U.S. Coast Guard equipment and safety requirements.

2.20 PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

Principal Investigators and/or primary operators are personally responsible for assuring that all vessel operations that are part of a program under their direction are conducted in accordance with these guidelines. Principal Investigators must determine that all individuals assigned to vessel operations related to their projects are properly authorized as described in section 3.20 of this manual.

2.30 VESSEL OPERATOR

Only persons who have been certified as MSC vessel operators may operate small vessels owned by UWF. The designated vessel operator is responsible for all aspects of vessel operations and the safety of all passengers, regardless of any senior personnel present in the vessel. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Safe transport of the vessel to and from the launch site, if applicable.
- 2) The safe navigation of the vessel to and from the site(s) of operation.
- 3) The safe operation of all equipment, either in the collection of data, or the handling of the vessel.
- 4) Insuring that all required operational and safety equipment is on board before getting underway. And that it is properly cleaned and stowed upon return.

Failure to comply with provisions of the UWF Small Vessel Operations Guide may result in the revocation or restriction of the operator's certification by the MSC director. However, any operator may deviate from the requirements of this manual to the extent necessary to prevent or minimize a situation that is likely to cause death, serious physical harm, or major environmental damage. In such events MSC personnel must be contacted immediately and a written report explaining the circumstances and justifications of must be submitted within 24-hours to the MSC director.

2.31 Requirements for UWF small vessel operators

Applicants to the UWF Small Vessel Operations Program must:

1. Be a minimum of 18 years of age.
2. Sign a Waiver of Liability, Assumption of Risk, and Indemnity Agreement provided by the UWF Marine Services Center.
3. Present a copy of certification of completion of the Florida Boaters Safety Course (*How to Boat Smart*) to the MSC staff.
4. Sign a statement agreeing to conduct all operations under the auspices of the UWF Small Vessel Operations Guide.
5. Complete a practical operational checkout administered by the MSC staff.
6. Have a valid Driver's license.

SECTION 3.00

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

3.10 GENERAL

The regulations in this guide must be observed wherever small vessel operations are conducted under the auspices of the MSC. All operators must follow the provisions of the Small Vessel Operations Guide and all equipment used must conform to U.S. Coast Guard requirements.

Illegal drugs or alcohol are strictly prohibited onboard any MSC vessel at any time. No person under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol may operate an MSC vessel under any circumstances. Any person found in possession of illegal drugs or alcohol on any MSC vessel will be permanently denied access to any MSC vessel for any reason.

3.20 OPERATING AREAS

The regulations herein shall be observed at all locations where vessel operations are conducted under the auspices of the MSC. Areas of operation are classified as:

1. Inland Waters: Shoreward of the demarcation line that separates International Navigation Rules from U.S. Inland Navigation Rules. The demarcation line is known as the COLREGS (Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972) Demarcation Line. It is shown on nautical charts.
2. Coastal Waters: Seaward of the COLREGS Demarcation Line, but normally considered within sight of land.

The type of service for each vessel within the Small Vessel Program will be clearly identified. Vessels will be used only in their designated areas or in areas that provide greater protection

3.30 AUTHORIZATION OF SMALL VESSEL OPERATORS

To become an authorized small vessel operator, applicants must demonstrate proficiency in safe vessel operations, knowledge of the “rules of the road” and familiarity with the operation of safety equipment. These requirements are to be completed in two phases. Phase one requires that the applicant complete the Florida Boaters Safety Course (*How to Boat Smart*) and provide MSC staff with a copy of the certificate of successful completion. Phase two requires the applicant to complete a practical operational checkout administered by the MSC staff.

3.31 Small Vessel Operation Checkout List

Upon completion of the Florida Boaters Safety Course (*How to Boat Smart*), approved applicants must schedule and complete a practical operational checkout administered by the MSC staff. Prior to the checkout, the operator will be given a briefing on the proper care and operation of equipment and safety procedures for small vessels having engines up to 50hp. Practical skills to be demonstrated include (list adapted from the UWF small vessel operator application form):

1. File a vessel request with MSC – vessel requests may be submitted directly at the MSC facility, via Internet, or by telephone. Requests must be made at least 24 hours in advance of proposed operation.
2. Arrange for a tow vehicle – Academic departments and institutes are responsible for providing a vehicle capable of towing the intended vessel.
3. Scheduling for a pick up at MSC – The UWF small vessel operator that submitted the request must be present when the vessel is picked up from the MSC and on board the vessel during all operations.
4. Properly filling out Float Plan – Float plans must be filled out at the time the vessel is picked up and completed upon return. Information on properly filling out float plans is discussed in **Section 3.50** of this manual.
5. Performing all pre-departure checks – Before any vessel leaves the MSC facility, all pre-departure equipment and safety checks must be completed. These checks are listed on the UWF float plan (**Section 3.50**).
6. Trailer light connection and check – No trailer/vessel is to leave the MSC facility unless all trailer lights are in working condition. A pre-departure light check for brake lights, turn signals and running lights is mandatory.
7. Test start vessel – Prior to departure from the MSC facility the outboard engine equipped on the requested vessel must be started and run for 5 minutes.
8. Travel to launch site – To become qualified to tow a vessel and trailer, the small vessel operator or designated driver must demonstrate to MSC staff the proper procedures for towing a vessel and trailer over the road, as well as launching and retrieving the vessel from the trailer to the water.

- 9.** Back trailer into launch - To become qualified to tow a vessel and trailer, the small vessel operator or designated driver must demonstrate to MSC staff the proper procedures for launching and retrieving the vessel from the trailer to the water. No UWF small vessel operator shall launch or retrieve a vessel alone. Prior to backing into launch, the operator must make sure the drain plug is inserted into the drain hole.
- 10.** Launch vessel and tie vessel to dock – Small vessel operators must board the vessel and once in the water, start the outboard engine. After letting the engine warm up, the vessel will be launched from the trailer and securely moored to the dock.
- 11.** Park tow vehicle and trailer – Upon successful launching of the vessel the tow vehicle and trailer will be parked in an area considered by the vehicle operator to be safe and non-intrusive to other motorists.
- 12.** Take vessel away from dock – Once the vessel is loaded with all necessary gear, all dock lines will be freed and the vessel will proceed from the dock into the operating channel at idle speed.
- 13.** Test ride in open water – Once clear of “No Wake Zone” signs, the operator will gradually increase the speed of the vessel until a safe operating limit has been reached.
- 14.** Maneuver vessel around buoy – MSC small vessel operators must maintain control of the vessel at all times. The ability to maneuver the vessel under the safe operating speed is mandatory. During the checkout the operator must demonstrate this ability by rounding a channel marker buoy at speed and without touching the buoy.
- 15.** Safely return to dock and tie up – upon completion of the skills/research, operators must safely return to the dock and secure the vessel for unloading of gear and in preparation for retrieval.
- 16.** Back trailer down and load vessel – To become qualified to tow a vessel and trailer, the small vessel operator or designated driver must demonstrate to MSC staff the proper procedures for launching and retrieving the vessel from the trailer to the water. No UWF small vessel operator shall launch or retrieve a vessel alone.
- 17.** Pull boat out and ready for travel – Once the trailer is backed into the launch, the operator must slowly drive the vessel onto the trailer until it is secured with the winch hook. After making sure the vessel is centered on the trailer for safe travel, the tow vehicle should slowly pull the vessel/trailer out of the water and away from the launch ramp to a stopping location that will not impede the use of the ramp. At this point all gear is to be stowed, the boat plug should be pulled, and safety straps must be attached to ready the vessel for travel.

18. Refill fuel (and oil if applicable) – While en route to the MSC facility the tow vehicle operator must stop to refill the fuel tank on the vessel. Some MSC vessels require manually adding 2-cycle oil to the fuel. A \$5.00 per gallon fuel charge will be assessed for vessels that are not refueled prior to being returned to the MSC Facility.
19. Safely return to MSC – After refueling, the tow vehicle operator must safely return the vehicle, vessel/trailer, and all equipment to the MSC.
20. Wash vessel and flush engine – Upon arrival at the MSC, the vessel, trailer, and all equipment (including life jackets, anchors and line, etc.) must be thoroughly rinsed with fresh water in order to ensure that all residual salt and dirt are washed off and that each item is returned in the condition in which it left the MSC. The outboard engine MUST also be flushed with fresh water for no less than 5 minutes.
21. Store all MSC equipment – Each item must be returned to its proper location at the MSC and stored neatly to ensure easy access for the next user.
22. Park vessel in proper location – Each small vessel is parked in a particular location at the MSC. Before leaving the facility the vessel must be returned to its parking space.
23. Disconnect and block trailer – On each side of the trailer a wheel must be blocked to prevent it from rolling when disconnected from the tow vehicle. In order to disconnect the tow vehicle, unhook the light harness, unhook the safety chains, lower the trailer jack and release the hitch.
24. Return tow vehicle – The tow vehicle must be safely returned to the proper academic department or institute.

3.32 Re-Authorization

If a vessel operator's authorization is revoked, they may be re-qualified after the operator complies with such conditions as the MSC director may impose. The operator shall be given the opportunity to present their case to the MSC director before conditions for re-authorization are stipulated.

3.40 VESSELS AND EQUIPMENT

All vessels and equipment used by MSC operators will conform to U.S. Coast Guard requirements and to the standards set forth in the Small Vessel Operations Guide.

3.41 Stability

All motor vessels used by MSC personnel are required to have a data plate installed that designates the number of people and weight capacity according to the manufacturer's specifications. It is the responsibility of the operator to stay within these limits and to have all weight evenly distributed so that the vessel will trim properly. If the manufacturer's specifications have been altered or special

research equipment added, the trim and stability modifications may be altered. No modifications to any vessel may be made without prior authorization of the MSC director.

3.42 Equipment

Small vessel operators must be familiar with the operation of safety equipment and shall inspect all emergency equipment prior to departure. Notification of any malfunctioning or damaged equipment used during their operation. It is the responsibility of the operator and/or Principal Investigator(s) to replace any equipment lost or damaged as a result of negligence or misuse by the operator or project staff. If equipment is lost or damaged the MSC director will review the case and assign responsibility for replacing it. Required safety equipment for MSC vessels is listed in Appendix I.

3.50 RESERVATIONS

Reservation of MSC vessels is based on a first come, first served basis. Early filing of a vessel request with MSC staff assures reservation. Requests must be filed a minimum of twenty-four (24) hours prior to departure. Requests may be made directly at the Marine Service facility, via email, or by phone.

3.51 CANCELLATIONS

If you will not need a vessel that you have reserved, you must contact the MSC to cancel your reservation by 2:00 p.m. the day prior to your reservation. Because prior reservations make a vessel unavailable for use by others, no-shows will be billed a full day's usage. Trips canceled due to weather or emergencies do not apply. Repeated "no-shows" for reserved vessels may result in the loss of MSC privileges.

3.60 RECORD KEEPING

3.61 Float Plan

A MSC Float Plan must be filled out and left at the MSC facility before any vessel is allowed to leave. A float plan is an important document that allows MSC staff to know vital information about any planned small vessel operation. This information includes vessel and responsible operator, purpose and location of operation, estimated time of return to the MSC facility, time and location of launch and recovery, and the number and names of passengers aboard.

Also included on the MSC Float Plan are checklists for both the vessel and trailer to be used. These lists must be filled out prior to departure from and upon return to the MSC facility. These ensure that all necessary operational procedures performed, and operational items and safety equipment checked out, are documented and returned. Sections for "Maintenance or Items Needed" and "Parts and Items Installed & Repairs Completed" are included and intended alert MSC staff problems encountered.

Float plans must be filed with the MSC before departure. Blank forms can be obtained from the MSC or downloaded from the website. Operators are expected to follow the float plan, and report in when the vessel is returned. If the vessel is going to be late the operator shall call the MSC facility or a MSC staff member's cell phone and advise them of the new estimated time of arrival. Boats returning after normal working hours will make special arrangements with MSC staff to check back in.

3.62 Routine Records

The MSC staff will keep a file of usage for all vessels, including a log of scheduled and unscheduled maintenance for each vessel, trailer and outboard engine.

3.63 Accident Reporting

All accidents must be reported to MSC director and to the within 24 hours of the incident. MSC director is responsible for investigating and documenting the accident and related personal injury and/or property damage and preparing a report of the incident.

3.70 WEATHER

Use of any MSC vessel is contingent upon weather conditions. UWF small vessel operators are responsible for monitoring weather conditions prior to departure and during operations. If small craft advisories are issued by the National Weather Service, it is mandatory that scheduled vessel operations within affected areas be postponed until more favorable conditions prevail, unless special permission to operate is granted by the MSC director. The MSC director holds ultimate authority concerning boating operations and may suspend boating operations if conditions are deemed unsafe.

3.80 SCUBA DIVING

All diving operations conducted from MSC vessels are required to operate under the protocol established in the UWF Scientific Diving Guide. Diving research performed by students, faculty, and staff, by visiting professionals, or volunteer divers, under the supervision of the UWF, constitutes diving under the auspices of UWF. A proposed dive plan must be submitted and approved by the UWF Diving Safety Officer at least 10 days prior to the planned operation. A designated UWF lead diver must be onboard to supervise all aspects of the diving operation. A UWF certified vessel operator remaining on board is required for dives deeper than 15 meters (45') in local waters.

3.90 SAFETY CHECKS

3.91 Prior to departure

1. Perform a functional inspection of the vessel and all equipment.
2. Assess all environmental risks, including weather and sea conditions.
3. State all emergency procedures including man-overboard, fire, abandonment and methods for seeking assistance.

3.92 Upon Return

1. Upon return the operator will log in the return time on the float plan. Any problems encountered or work/parts needed should be brought to the attention of MSC staff in the “Maintenance or Items Needed” section of the float plan.
2. Small vessel operators are responsible for ensuring that the vessel, vessel trailer, engine and all other equipment are thoroughly rinsed with fresh water and stowed after each use.
3. On all MSC vessels, fuel tanks are to be full upon return. **REMINDER, a \$5.00 per gallon fuel charge will be assessed for vessels that are not refueled prior to being returned to the MSC Facility.**



WAIVER OF LIABILITY, ASSUMPTION OF RISK, AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT

Waiver: In consideration of permitted to participate in any way small vessel operations, I for myself, my heirs, personal representatives or assigns, **do hereby release, waive, discharge, and covenant not to sue** The University of West Florida, its officers, employees, and agents from liability **from any and all claims including the negligence of The University of West Florida, its officers, employees, and agents,** resulting in personal injury, accidents, or illnesses (including death), and property loss arising from, but not limited to, participation in small vessel operations.

_____	_____	_____
Signature of Participant	Participant's Printed Name	Date
_____	_____	_____
Witness	Witness Printed Name	Date

Assumption of Risks: Participation in small vessel operations carries with it inherent risks that cannot be eliminated regardless of the care taken to avoid injuries. The specific risks vary with each activity, but can range from 1) minor injuries such as scratches, bruises, and sprains to 2) major injuries such as eye injury or loss of sight, joint or back injuries, heart attacks, and concussions to 3) catastrophic injuries including paralysis and death.

I have read the previous paragraphs and I know, understand, and appreciate these and other risks that are inherent in small vessel operations. I hereby assert that my participation is voluntary and that I knowingly assume all such risks.

Indemnification and Hold Harmless: I also agree to INDEMNIFY AND HOLD The University of West Florida HARMLESS from any and all claims, actions, suits, procedures, costs, expenses, damages, and liabilities, including attorney's fees brought as a result of my involvement in small vessel operations and to reimburse them for any such expenses incurred.

Severability: The undersigned further expressly agrees that the foregoing waiver and assumption of risks agreement is intended to as broad and inclusive as is permitted by the law of the State of Florida and that if any portion thereof is held invalid, it is agreed that the balance shall, notwithstanding, continue in full legal force and effect.

Acknowledgement of Understanding: I have read this waiver, assumption of risk, and indemnity agreement, fully understand its terms, and **understand that I am giving up substantial rights, including my right to sue.** I acknowledge that I am signing the agreement freely and voluntarily, and **intend my signature to be a complete and unconditional release of all liability** to the greatest extent of the law.

_____	_____	_____
Signature of Participant	Participant's Printed Name	Date
_____	_____	_____
Witness	Witness Printed Name	Date



SMALL VESSEL OPERATOR APPLICATION

PLEASE PRINT

Date _____

NAME (Last, First)	UWF ID#	D.O.B.	
ADDRESS Street	City	State	Zip
PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL		
DEPARTMENT/INSTITUTE	MAJOR PROFESSOR/ SUPERVISOR		
EMERGENCY CONTACT	Relationship	PHONE	

PRACTICAL CHECKOUT LIST (50 HP OR LESS)

- 1) Successfully and satisfactorily complete a safe boating course issued and approved by the state of Florida.

Course Name _____ **Date Completed** _____
Card ID # _____

- 2) Schedule Practical checkout with MSC staff; practical skills to be demonstrated include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> File a vessel request with MSC | <input type="checkbox"/> Test ride in open water |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arranging for a tow Vehicle | <input type="checkbox"/> Maneuver vessel around buoy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scheduling for a pick up at MSC | <input type="checkbox"/> Safely return to dock & tie up |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Properly filling out float plan | <input type="checkbox"/> Back trailer down & load vessel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Performing all pre-departure checks | <input type="checkbox"/> Pull boat out & ready for travel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trailer light connection & check | <input type="checkbox"/> Refill fuel (& oil if applicable) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Test start vessel | <input type="checkbox"/> Safely return to MSC |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Travel to launch site | <input type="checkbox"/> Wash vessel & flush engine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Back trailer into launch | <input type="checkbox"/> Store all MSC equipment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Launch vessel & tie vessel to dock | <input type="checkbox"/> Park vessel in proper location |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Park tow vehicle & trailer | <input type="checkbox"/> Disconnect & block trailer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take vessel away from dock | <input type="checkbox"/> Return tow vehicle safely |

Checkout performed by: _____ Date: _____

I _____ (print name) feel that I can safely and professionally operate and maintain a MSC vessel/trailer while in my possession.

Signed: _____ Date: _____



Small Vessel Load-Out List

- ___ FLOAT PLAN FILLED OUT & RELEASE FORMS SIGNED
- ___ BOAT KEYS
- ___ LIFE JACKETS UNLOCKED & ENOUGH FOR ALL PASSENGERS
- ___ FLARES
- ___ EMERGENCY HORN
- ___ FIRST AID KITS
- ___ ELECTRONICS (VHF, Cell phone, DGPS)
- ___ CHARTS, MAPS & DIVE TABLES (As necessary)
- ___ ANCHOR, CHAIN & LINE
- ___ ENGINE OIL (4- and/or 2-cycle)
- ___ SPARE FUEL FILTER (optional)
- ___ DOCK LINES (Minimum of four)
- ___ EXTRA LINE
- ___ BUOYS (if necessary)
- ___ BOAT HOOK
- ___ PADDLE
- ___ BINOCULARS
- ___ TOWELS, PAPER TOWELS OR RAGS
- ___ TOOL BOX
- ___ DIVE GEAR (If necessary - mask, Fins, Snorkel, Weight belt, BC, Regulator, Depth gauge, SPG, computer, wetsuit, tanks and tank racks, Dive Master Kit)
- ___ ICE CHEST (If necessary)
- ___ FOOD & WATER (personal)



Float Plan and Maintenance Checklist

Vessel: _____ Grant/Fund Account # _____

Boat Operator: _____ Authorizing Signature _____

Purpose of Operation: _____

Estimated Time of Return: _____

Launch: Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____

Recovery: Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____

Personnel on Board: (if more than 6, list on back)

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____

Vessel Checklist: (circle which applies)

Fuel Level Out: Full ¾ ½ ¼ Oil Level or Mixture: OK? Y N N/A Electronics: Bottom Machine? Y N Anchor and Line Y N Life Jackets Out: Qty _____ Throwable Cushions Out: Qty _____	Fuel Level In: Full ¾ ½ ¼ Oil Added: Type _____ Qty _____ Radio? Y N Dock Lines: Qty _____ Life Jackets Returned: Qty _____ Throwable Cushions Returned: Qty _____
--	--

Boat Box : Key **Y** **N** Registration **Y** **N** Flares **Y** **N**
 First Aid Kit **Y** **N** Whistle **Y** **N** Fire Extinguisher **Y** **N**

Trailer Checklist : (circle which applies)

Lights Working: Left Right Tail Trailer Ball Size: 1 7/8" 2" 2 5/16" Wheel Bearings Greased: Y N Tire Pressure: L.F. ok low R.F. ok low	Lights Not Working: Left Right Tail Trailer Coupling Size: 1 7/8" 2" 2 5/16" Safety Chains Hooked: Y N Lugs Bolts or Nuts Tight: Y N L.R. ok low R.R. ok low
--	---

Return Checklist:

Date: _____ Time: _____ By: _____
 Engine Flushed: How Long _____ Boat/Trailer/Axles & Hubs: Rinsed **Y** **N** Scrubbed **Y** **N**
 Gear (Life Jackets, Boat Box, Electronics, Lines etc.) Returned & Stored Properly **Y** **N**

Maintenance or Items Needed: (extra space on back) _____

Parts & Items Installed & Repairs Completed _____

Items Installed and Repairs Completed by: _____ **Date:** _____

Float plan reviewed by: _____ **Date:** _____