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U.S. Boat Sales Reached Second Highest Volume in 12 Years in 2019, Expected to Remain Strong in 2020

CHICAGO (Jan. 7, 2020) – The National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA), representing North American recreational boat, engine and marine accessory manufacturers, announced today that as it finalizes 2019 sales numbers, retail unit sales of new powerboats are estimated to have held steady in 2019 at approximately 280,000 units, the second highest total since 2007. The busy winter boat show season kicks off this week across the country with new powerboat sales expected to be up as much as 2 percent in 2020.

“Sales in 2019 were nearly on par with the 11-year high we saw in 2018, even with some softening particularly in the freshwater fishing category, which we attribute to unseasonably cold and rainy weather in spring and early summer. Looking at 2020, with the economy on solid footing and key economic indicators like consumer spending remaining strong, we expect another healthy year for new boat sales, which could be up as much as 2 percent,” said Frank Hugelmeyer, NMMA president. “With approximately $42 billion per year in retail expenditures, boating is not only an economic driver but a unique vehicle for the kind of meaningful experiences consumers are seeking more and more—ones that take you outdoors, bring together family and friends, and create lasting memories.”

The following new powerboat categories drove retail unit sales momentum in 2019:

- New **personal watercraft** sales are estimated to be up 6 percent to 73,000 units in 2019; with accessible entry-level price points, personal watercraft are often considered a gateway to boat ownership.
- Sales of new **wake sport boats**—popular for wakesurfing and wakeboarding and attractive to new and younger boaters—are estimated to be up 6 percent to 11,000 units in 2019.
- New **cruiser** sales—boats between 22 and 32 feet, popular for relaxing, entertaining and ‘cruising’—are estimated to be up 3 percent to 9,000 units in 2019.

However, new **freshwater fishing boat** sales—a high-volume category—are estimated to be down 7 percent to 69,000 units in 2019.

U.S. boat manufacturers and dealers are gearing up for the winter **boat show season** around the country, an important marketing venue where manufacturers introduce their latest products and consumers come to buy. Based on association estimates, boat shows can generate 50 percent or more of annual sales for exhibiting dealers and manufacturers.

Shoppers at a boat show can expect to find some of the best deals of the year with the added convenience of comparing different boat models, and different dealers, in one location.

**U.S. Recreational Boating by the Numbers**

Additional statistics on the industry’s size, makeup and demographics include:

- Annual U.S. sales of boats, marine products and services are estimated to total $42 billion in 2019, up slightly from 2018.
- Retail unit sales of new boats are estimated to have reached approximately 280,000 units in 2019, the second highest level since 2007 and flat with 2018 totals.
• Leading the nation in sales of new powerboat, engine, trailer and accessories in 2018 were the following 10 states (2019 estimates available in the spring):
  1. **Florida**: $3.2 billion, up 8 percent from 2017  
  2. **Texas**: $1.8 billion, up 9 percent from 2017  
  3. **Michigan**: $1.1 billion, up 10 percent from 2017  
  4. **North Carolina**: $914 million, up 9 percent from 2017  
  5. **Minnesota**: $861 million, up 6 percent from 2017  
  6. **Wisconsin**: $781 million, up 9 percent from 2017  
  7. **New York**: $775 million, up 5 percent from 2017  
  8. **California**: $765 million, up 6 percent from 2017  
  9. **Georgia**: $680 million, up 8 percent from 2017  
  10. **South Carolina**: $661 million, up 4 percent from 2017

• It’s not just new boats Americans are buying; about 975,000 pre-owned boats are estimated to have been sold in 2019, down slightly from 2018.

• There were an estimated 11.9 million boats registered and documented in the U.S. in 2019, relatively unchanged from 2018.

• Ninety-five percent of boats on the water (powerboats, personal watercraft and sailboats) in the U.S. are small in size, measuring less than 26 feet in length—boats that can be trailered by a vehicle to local waterways.

• Sixty-two percent of boat owners have a household income less than $100,000, making boating a solidly middle-class recreational pursuit.

• Outdoor recreation accounts for 2.2 percent of U.S. GDP, generating $778 billion in gross economic output—on par with the telecommunications industry (2.3 percent)—of which recreational boating and fishing is the single largest segment, contributing nearly $40 billion in gross output. (Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis)

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**About NMMA:** The National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) is the leading trade organization for the North American recreational boating industry. NMMA member companies produce more than 80 percent of the boats, engines, trailers, marine accessories and gear used by millions of boaters in North America. The association serves its members and their sales and service networks by improving the business environment for recreational boating including providing domestic and international sales and marketing opportunities, reducing unnecessary government regulation, decreasing the cost of doing business, and helping grow boating participation. As the largest producer of boat and sport shows in the U.S., NMMA connects the recreational boating industry with the boating consumer year-round. Learn more at [www.nmma.org](http://www.nmma.org) and get engaged with us on [Twitter](http://Twitter) and [LinkedIn](http://LinkedIn).