



CHECKLIST FOR BUYING A USED BOAT WITH WISCONSIN REGISTRATION

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (r. 5/21)

Buying a boat which is less than 16 feet in length (non-titled boat):

Before you purchase a boat:

- **Make sure the seller has a registration card for the boat matching the registration number, make, and model for the boat you are buying. The registration card should list the seller's name and address.**
 - *The registration card is pocket sized and has the seller's name and information about the boat.*

After you purchased a boat:

- **Draft a record of sale.**
 - *We recommend both the buyer and seller retain a copy of the record of sale for their records.*
 - *A record of sale is not required by the DNR; however, it may be needed for tax purposes.*
- **Apply for registration.**
 - *Per state statute [30.549\(2\)\(a\)](#), boat owners are required to apply for a new registration within 10 days of purchase and prior to operation of the boat.*
 - *You can transfer the boat registration into your name online by visiting [GoWILD.wi.gov](#), at a DNR Service Center, or by paper application.*

Buying a boat which is 16 feet in length or greater (titled boat):

Before you buy a boat:

- **Make sure the seller has the original certificate of title (not a photocopy); you will need the original certificate of title to transfer the boat into your name.**
 - *The certificate of title is a full sheet of paper which contains the legal description of the boat and its owner(s).*
- **Check the certificate of title document for outstanding liens.**
 - *If there is an outstanding lien listed on the title, make sure the seller has a lien release document from the lien holder; you will need this to title the boat.*
- **Verify the assignment section on the back of the certificate of title is complete with your name and address.**
 - *If the assignment section has already been filled out in another's name, or has changes or deletions, the seller must obtain a replacement title to transfer ownership.*
- **Make sure the seller has a registration card for the boat matching the registration number, make, and model for the boat you are buying. The registration card should list the seller's name and address.**
 - *The registration card is pocket sized and has the seller's name and information about the boat.*

After you purchased a boat:

The Wisconsin DNR cautions boat buyers not to pay for a titled boat unless the seller has the original certificate of title signed by all required owners (not a photocopy).

- **Draft a record of sale.**
 - *We recommend both the buyer and seller retain a copy of the bill of sale for their records.*
 - *A Bill of Sale is not required by the DNR; however, it may be needed for tax purposes.*
- **Make sure the seller signs the certificate of title and that the assignment section is complete.**
 - *If the title shows more than one owner and the names are separated by the word "and", the primary owner and all "and" owners shown must sign. If the word "or" separates the names, any of the owners shown may sign if no other "and" ownership.*

- **Seller will complete the assignment section on the backside of the title document with your name, address and sales price.**
 - *The Wisconsin Department of Revenue checks applications and investigates suspiciously low sales prices.*
- **If there is an outstanding lien listed on the title, the seller should provide you with a lien release document from the lienholder; you will need this to transfer the boat into your name.**
 - *Lien release document must identify the lienholder listed on the title, the boat owner on account, and the boat by hull ID number or Wisconsin registration number. Lien releases shall be signed and dated by the lienholder.*
- **Apply for registration.**
 - *Per state statute [30.549\(2\)\(a\)](#), boat owners are required to apply for a new registration within 10 days of purchase and prior to operation of the boat.*
 - *You can transfer the boat registration into your name online by visiting GoWILD.wi.gov, at a DNR Service Center, or by paper application.*
 - *For titled boats, the signed, original certificate of title, lien release, and any other necessary documentation must be mailed in to the DNR. The online transaction will be incomplete until the paperwork is received and processed. Failure to mail in these documents will result in delays in receiving your new certificate of title, certificate of registration card, and new decals (if the ones on the boat have expired).*