



FOR RELEASE FEBRUARY 16

Boat, Fishing Tackle Manufacturers Form the S. C. Boating and Fishing Alliance
\$5.1 billion a year industry to be a voice for state's top recreational activities

Today, Falcon Boats joined more than 30 other South Carolina-based boating and fishing related companies to form the South Carolina Boating and Fishing Alliance (SCBFA), a statewide alliance designed to protect and grow the state's burgeoning boating and fishing industry.

Founding members of SCBFA include companies such as boat manufacturers, sportfishing manufacturers, boat dealers, suppliers, marinas and tackle retailers. Individual memberships for the public will also be offered.

"This organization is long overdue. We are happy to have a voice for our industry and are excited to be a part of the founding members of the SCBFA. We look forward to working with other state boat manufacturers to make a difference in our industry," said Lisa Waller, Director of Marketing.

SCBFA will focus on connecting the outdoors lifestyle with economic growth policies while being a positive influence for the protection and advancement of the industry through advocacy, education, and stewardship.

"By any measure, time on the water, fresh and salt, is the top recreational activity in our state. Add to that the fact that we have some of the most iconic brands of boats and fishing tackle made here, and it just makes sense to give our industry and consumers a unified voice," said Chris Butler, board chairman of the alliance and owner of Butler Marine in Charleston and Beaufort. He also serves on the Center for Sportfishing Policy Board.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The economic impact on South Carolina is big and growing. Boating and fishing represent a combined \$5.1 billion a year economic impact to South Carolina and support 23,000 jobs, according to merged data from the American Sportfishing Association (ASA) and the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA), both of which have endorsed the SCBFA.

Boating and fishing increased the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the Palmetto State at a faster rate than Florida, where more boating and fishing commerce occurs than any other state in the country.

Value added dollars from South Carolina's boating and fishing sector increased at an 8.4% percent rate between 2018 and 2019, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the federal agency that tracks Gross Domestic Product.

By comparison, Florida, the No. 1 boating and fishing state in the country, saw a 7.74 percent increase.

South Carolina, the 23rd most populous state, has more than a half a million registered boats, and ranks 7th in the U.S. with one in 10 South Carolinians owning a boat.

In addition, 725,000 fishing licenses are held in South Carolina that contribute \$6.7 million to the state budget annually.

"South Carolina is nationally known for being a fishing and boating mecca. It is also home to some of the most popular brands in the outdoors world. The National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) looks forward to working with the South Carolina Boating and Fishing Alliance as we work together to grow our industries and protect our waterways," said Lee Gatts, NMMA Southeast United States Policy & Engagement Manager.

GOALS

The SCBFA has four stated goals: Protect and expand the boating and fishing industry; connect the outdoors lifestyle to governmental economic development policies; promote workforce readiness; and environmental stewardship.

"Few people realize that South Carolina is home to brand names known worldwide in boating and fishing," said Gettys Brannon, CEO of the newly-formed alliance. "South Carolina has the most unique economic mix of boating and fishing-related businesses in the United States, and the fact that they are here is a credit to our state.

"We want to become more involved in promoting a growing economic sector and give a voice in policymaking not only to our members companies, but the millions of South Carolinians who spend time on the water," Brannon said.

Brannon is a former college fishing national champion where he represented the University of South Carolina, a two-time College Fishing All-American and FLW Cup Qualifier. Following college, Brannon's experience in the outdoors industry includes a four-year stint in various media and advisement roles for B.A.S.S., the world's largest freshwater fishing organization.

While many industries have suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic, boating and fishing manufacturers are actively looking for a qualified workforce. As a result, the Alliance has formed a Workforce Development Committee, led by Dr. Lisa Waller of Falcon Boats.

“Most South Carolina high school and college outdoors enthusiasts don’t know about the professional opportunities that this industry offers,” said Waller. “We want students in South Carolina to know there are opportunities to work and thrive in our industry, and we want to make opportunities for industry-specific training and education available and recognized by our state.”

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