




Report
to the
Tennessee Advisory Committee on
Intergovernmental Relations
from the TN Paddlesports Association

TN PADDLESPORTS ASSOCIATION

About the TN Paddlesports Association

- ▶ Members operate on most of the waterways where paddlecraft rental services are available.
- ▶ TPA members represent the majority of outfitted public user days in the state.



The TN Paddlesports Association hopes that the TACIR study will focus on options to accommodate or support the growth of private and commercial paddlesports.



State of Paddlecraft Industry 2021

State of paddlecraft uses in TN

- ▶ 90 to 100 businesses renting paddlecraft to the public in TN, not including outfitters exempted from TWRA regulations.
- ▶ 48 outfitters held TWRA permits during 2021 season.
- ▶ Greatest amount of use is at private access points and state access points.
- ▶ Estimate total annual paddlecraft user days in TN between 800,000 to 1 million commercial and private paddlers. But no one knows for sure.
- ▶ **Noncommercial (private) user days probably exceed outfitted public user days**, but it is more dispersed and harder to quantify.

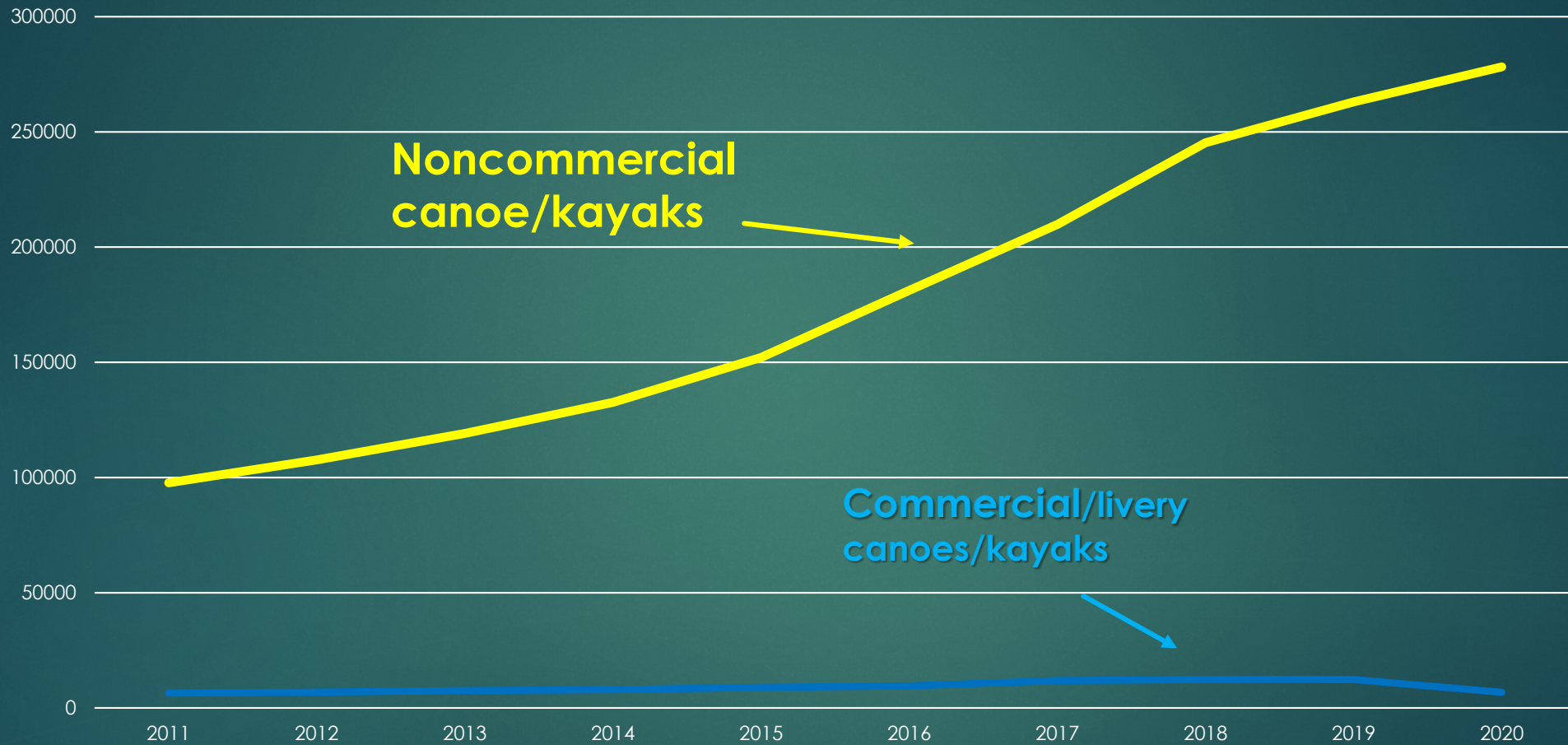
Commercial paddlecraft rentals in TN

- ▶ Paddlecraft businesses operate on approximately 27 streams and 18 lakes.
- ▶ Estimate 60,000 to 70,000 outfitted public user days annually using TWRA access points statewide.
- ▶ Commercial paddlecraft prominent for about 24 weekend days on 125 miles of waterways.
- ▶ Statewide there are 22,000 miles of streams, 29 major reservoirs.

State of paddlecraft uses in TN

- ▶ Noncommercial paddlecraft uses have grown more rapidly in recent years but will probably flatten out soon depending on events.
- ▶ Commercial paddlecraft fleets are not growing significantly.
- ▶ Manufacturers are not taking new orders for livery paddlecraft instead devoting their capacity to production of more expensive retail boats.
- ▶ As this year has shown, 2020 was not the new normal but an anomalous year.

Ten-year growth of paddlecraft fleets in Ohio



— Private canoes/kayaks

— Livery canoes/kayaks

Ohio data reveals trends (2020)

- ▶ Number of paddlecraft in Ohio exceeds number of powerboats:
 - ▶ **250,468 powerboats**
 - ▶ **290,531 canoes and kayaks registered**
- ▶ In Ohio private paddlecraft outnumber commercial vessels by a wide margin:
 - ▶ 278,200 privately owned (canoes, kayaks) in 2020.
 - ▶ 12,331 vessels in livery fleets (2019).
- ▶ Over ten-year period ending in 2020 private (noncommercial) paddlecraft in Ohio grew by 284% (2020), commercial fleets grew by 52% (2019).
- ▶ Ohio is significantly more populous than Tennessee, so the total number of vessels in Tennessee is probably less.

Misconceptions

- ▶ Recent growth of commercial services has not been explosive.
- ▶ Rivers are pristine, not full of litter. Outfitters leave them cleaner.
- ▶ Data shows outfitted trips are lower risk for beginners than self-guided trips.

Safety

- ▶ Majority of safety problems are among private boaters.
- ▶ In 2020 on Caney Fork Smith County Rescue squad reported approximately 22 calls involving paddlers and fishermen. Of those 3 or 4 were outfitted.
- ▶ 2020 saw 5 fatalities among canoe and kayak users, all non-commercial. Includes whitewater incidents.
- ▶ Coast Guard data shows about 10% of fatalities nationwide involve rented paddlecraft.

Why are outfitted trips safer?

One primary reason is outfitters stop operating when conditions are hazardous for beginners.

Harpeth River strainer

EXAMPLE FROM 2020 SEASON



- ▶ All the resident outfitters stopped running trips through this section of Harpeth due to risks of strainer.
- ▶ State Parks allowed private boaters to continue to access it with no warning signs (see photo).
- ▶ Death trap, but outfitters got criticized for crowding because they diverted all their customers to another access.
- ▶ Eventually outfitter, not State Parks, cut away much of strainer.



Litter.

Outfitters help maintain access points by clearing weeds and picking up litter.

Participate and support river cleanups.

Leave rivers cleaner.



**Yes, there are user conflicts
but those are manageable
without suppressing use.**



What are the real issues and solutions

- ▶ Congestion at some boat ramps on summer weekends
- ▶ User conflicts between paddlers and fishermen.
- ▶ Need for funding for access improvements.

Solution to user conflicts on specific rivers:

- ▶ Access improvements at existing ramps to reduce user conflicts.
- ▶ Additional access to segregate fishing/boating and non-motorized vessels launch.
- ▶ Best practices to reduce user conflicts
- ▶ Educate private paddlers on best practices
- ▶ Develop funding sources for improvements


Outfitter actions to relieve access point congestion.

- ▶ Use of areas adjacent to launch ramps.
- ▶ Implementation of best practices.
- ▶ Respect for fishermen and other users.
- ▶ Assist inexperienced paddlers clear ramps.



Summarizing what we support

- ▶ Application fee for permit.
- ▶ Fee for use of agency facilities.
- ▶ No use fees for holders of fishing licenses or boat registrations.
- ▶ Credit on state portion of sales tax for use fees paid to TWRA, State Parks, local governments.
- ▶ Multi-year permits with a renewal provision.
- ▶ Policy that allows the permit to be transferred or awarded to the buyer of a business without complication.
- ▶ If fees are necessary, they should be broad-based and not just levied on outfitters customers. Coordinated with federal initiatives.



Duplicative fee and regulatory authorities may threaten survival of some paddlecraft businesses. Consolidation is needed.



Guiding principle moving forward

**PEOPLE OF GOODWILL AND GOOD
FAITH CAN WORK TOGETHER TO SOLVE
USER CONFLICTS AND ISSUES WITHOUT
ELIMINATING ACCESS.**