

As private citizens of Maryland, the residents along Thompson Creek in Queen Anne's County are asking the General Assembly for a positive referral in support of HB 293 State Boat Act – Abandoned or Sunken Recreational Vessels – Identification and Removal.

The problem my neighbors and I face is the actions of irresponsible boat owners mooring in Maryland waters. My testimony is witness to 13 years of irresponsible activity adjacent to the Thompson Creek Public Landing where 24 wooden mooring poles exist.

My neighbors and I have witnessed the arrival, abandonment, and removal of at least 13 derelict boats in the last 13 years. We have witnessed these craft break-free from their moorings, stray randomly with the tide, then damage private piers at the expense of the homeowner. There was an incident of one derelict vessel graffitied with racial slurs. We have witnessed these boats sink while still moored resulting in pollution to the Creek from fuel, trash, human waste, and various floating debris. My neighbors and I have participated in the monitoring of these derelict vessel arrivals, alerted DNR of sinkings and break-aways, and helped clean-up the Creek and Public Landing because of this irresponsible behavior. Tragically in 2022 one death also occurred on one of these derelict vessels while moored in Thompson Creek.

One thing these 13 irresponsible boat owners had in common is they all tied their derelict vessels to privately-owned mooring poles in Thompson Creek. These poles were installed over the years and ownership is not recorded. We believe these irresponsible boat owners need to be held accountable for the risks they pose to the surrounding private property and to the environment of Maryland waters. Accountability in this regard can be improved by supporting HB 293 which will require any recreational boat owner tied to a privately-owned mooring device to prove they have permission from the device's owner.