



DEPARTMENT OF GAME AND INLAND FISHERIES - CLIENT SERVICES  
P.O. BOX 9930, HENRICO, VA 23228-9930  
TELEPHONE: (866) 721-6911 WEBSITE: WWW.DGIF.VIRGINIA.GOV

## **PROCEDURE TO ACQUIRE REGISTRATION/TITLE TO AN ABANDONED WATERCRAFT**

**An “abandoned watercraft” is a watercraft that is left unattended on private property for more than 10 days without the consent of the property's owner. In order to apply for title to an abandoned watercraft, it must have been abandoned on the applicant's property or water immediately adjacent to his/her property for a period of 60 DAYS.**

**This 60 days begins to run at the time the watercraft becomes abandoned, i.e. after the initial 10 day period.**

### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. If the abandoned watercraft has a registration number assigned by the Commonwealth or any other state, or is documented with the Coast Guard, or if there are any other means of identifying the owner(s), a copy of the registration/title or if documented a copy of the “Abstract of Title” must be acquired.
2. The person desiring to acquire title shall make a good faith effort to secure the last known address of all owners and lienholders. If the address is different than what is listed on the official record an explanation of where/how the address was obtained is required.
3. You must notify the last registered owner(s) according to the state's/Coast Guard's official records (unless a more recent address is available), by **REGISTERED MAIL** with return receipt requested, that if ownership is not claimed and the boat removed within 30 days, you will apply to the Department for Watercraft Registration/Title in your name (letter attached).
4. If there is an unsatisfied lien listed on the state's/Coast Guard's official records, you must notify the lienholder by **REGISTERED MAIL** with return receipt requested, that if ownership is not claimed and the boat removed within 30 days, you will apply to the Department for Watercraft Registration/Title in your name.

If the lienholder has merged, changed names or address, contact the State Corporation Commission (SCC) to request information about the lienholder's new name or location. If the lienholder has gone out of business, you will need a letter from the SCC stating that the lienholder is no longer in business.

5. If there is no means to identify the owner(s), you must make a good faith effort to notify the rightful owner and document your efforts of such attempt.
6. Place a notice, to appear for three consecutive issues in a newspaper of general circulation published in the county or city where the watercraft is located. This notice must accurately describe the watercraft, its location, and any identifying numbers. The notice must also state that if the watercraft is not claimed and removed within 30 days of the date the first notice is published, you will apply to the Department for registration/title in your name (sample advertisement notice attached).
7. At the end of the 30-day period, you may apply to the Department for title/registration. The **application and appropriate fees** must be accompanied by the following:
  - a. The attached Affidavit for Abandoned Watercraft completed and notarized.

- b. Proof that the registered letter(s) was/were mailed at least 30 days prior to the application. Attach the unopened, undeliverable letter if returned by the post office, or attach the green return post card from the post office showing the signature of the recipient and the date of receipt.
- c. A copy of the letter that was mailed to the previous owner(s).
- d. A detailed explanation of the steps taken to identify the owner(s) and lienholder (if applicable) if the watercraft shows no identifying numbers.
- e. Proof that a notice was printed in a newspaper of general circulation for three consecutive issues.
- f. A copy of the state registration/record or if documented a copy of the “Abstract of Title” (if applicable) proving to whom the watercraft was registered or titled or documented.
- g. Any response received from the previous owner(s) and lienholder (if applicable).
- h. A completed Application for Watercraft Certificate of Title & Certificate of Number (Registration).
- i. Please allow 30-60 days for processing

Upon receipt by the Department of all items required and after all fees and taxes due have been paid, the Department shall then issue title/registration in the applicant’s name.

**All cost incurred in obtaining title/registration to a watercraft shall be borne by the applicant.**



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ABANDONED WATERCRAFT AFFIDAVIT

I/we affirm that I/we have complied with the provisions of Section 29.1-733.25 of the Code of Virginia, as amended, in regard to the watercraft described below. I/we hereby submit the following to obtain a Virginia Watercraft Registration/Title for this watercraft, which was abandoned on my/our property or in the water immediately adjacent to my/our property for a period of AT LEAST 60 DAYS.

City/County where the boat is located \_\_\_\_\_

Make of Watercraft \_\_\_\_\_ Year built \_\_\_\_\_ Length \_\_\_\_\_

Hull ID Number \_\_\_\_\_ Boat Number \_\_\_\_\_

Attached is the following documentation pursuant to Section 29.1-733.25 of the Code of Virginia to support the issuance of a new watercraft registration/title to the above-described watercraft:

- 1. The receipts with signatures for the registered letter(s) which notified the owner(s) and lienholder(s) of the location of the watercraft and of my/our intention to apply for Virginia Watercraft Registration/Title if it is unclaimed after 30 days notice...
2. A copy of the letters that were sent to the last registered/titled/documented owner(s) and lienholder.
3. A detailed explanation of the steps taken to identify the owner and lienholder if the owners could not be determined.
4. A copy of the notice that was published in \_\_\_\_\_ (Newspaper) on \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Any response that was received from the last registered/titled owner(s).

Printed name of Applicant

Signature of Applicant

Printed name of Applicant

Signature of Applicant

STATE OF VIRGINIA City/County of \_\_\_\_\_:

On this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_ before me personally appeared the affiant(s) signing above, acknowledged and made oath that the matters set forth in the foregoing affidavit are true.

X Notary Public

My Commission Expires

An Application for Certificate of Title must accompany this form.

**THIS LETTER IS TO BE DELIVERED VIA REGISTERED MAIL TO THE LAST REGISTERED OWNER (S) AND LIENHOLDER ACCORDING TO THE OFFICIAL RECORDS OF THE STATE OF REGISTRATION AT LEAST 30 DAYS PRIOR TO APPLICATION FOR TITLE AND REGISTRATION.**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Registered/Titled Owner's Name and Address:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

According to the records of the Commonwealth/State of \_\_\_\_\_, you  
(State of Registration)  
are the last registered owner for a \_\_\_\_\_ with hull  
(Model year) (Make of vessel)  
identification number \_\_\_\_\_ and registration number \_\_\_\_\_  
(Hull Identification Number) (Registration Number).  
which has been abandoned on my/our property for at least 60 DAYS.

If this watercraft is not removed from my/our property within 30 days of the receipt of this letter, I/we will make application for Watercraft Registration/Title to the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries as is provided for in 29.1-733.25 of the Code of Virginia.

If you wish to claim ownership of this watercraft, please contact either me/us and/or the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries by certified letter as soon as possible at the addresses given below:

Department of Game and Inland Fisheries  
Boat Section  
P.O. Box 9930  
Henrico, VA 23228

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print your name and Mailing Address)

Sincerely,

(Your Signature)

**SAMPLE AD TO BE PLACED IN NEWSPAPER**

**NOTICE**

**ABANDONED WATERCRAFT**

Notice is hereby given that the following watercraft has been abandoned for more than 60 DAYS on the property of: (List name, address, and telephone number).

Description of watercraft

Make, length, year built, color and any identifying numbers

Application for Watercraft Registration/Title will be made in accordance with Section 29.1-733.25 of the Code of Virginia if this watercraft is not claimed and removed within 30 days of first publication of this notice. Please contact the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries with questions.



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**The person in possession of the abandoned watercraft may apply for title and registration in his name by submitting to the Department the following:**

*f* Application for Certificate of Title and Certificate of Number completed with the appropriate fees.

*f* Abandoned Watercraft Affidavit completed and notarized.

*f* A copy of the watercraft registration record from the last state the watercraft was registered/ titled if applicable.

*f* If the watercraft was documented with the U S Coast Guard, a copy of Abstract of Title.

*f* The newspaper advertisement in the correct format and evidence of the ad running for 3 (three) consecutive issues.

*f* A copy of the letter(s) mailed to the previous owner(s) of record at the most current address available. (If address is different than what is listed on the official record an explanation of where the address was obtained from is required )

*f* A copy of the letter mailed to the lien holder at the addresses, if the lienholder is out of business a copy of the letter from the State Corporation Commission stating this fact is required.

*f* Copies of the return receipts for the registered letters OR W K H OXHQWR W N U G G D  
SHQODICEYH H U X VHHWGF 3MRKFV HW 2 I

*f* Copies of any response from the last registered/titled owner(s)

**Please allow 30-60 days for processing**