



Photo: Peter Kingsley-Smith, South Carolina Dept of Natural Resources

Abandoned and Derelict Vessels

Vessels become abandoned and derelict for many reasons. Owners may neglect, or possibly abandon their boats when they can no longer afford to maintain them. Some boats may break loose from anchors or mooring and drift away, and some may be stolen. Catastrophic weather events can also result in large numbers of vessels becoming ADVs.

ADVs obstruct navigational channels, damage ecosystems, and diminish the recreational value of the surrounding area. Some ADVs may contain fuel and hazardous materials, which could leak into the surrounding water. ADV removal is often complicated and expensive, with some vessels located in hard-to-reach areas, requiring large, specialized equipment for recovery and transportation. The wreckage may persist for years, breaking apart and creating widespread debris that threatens marine and coastal resources.

What are ADVs?

Though the legal definition of Abandoned and Derelict Vessels (ADV) varies, vessels in significant disrepair that may pose a threat to the public or the environment are often considered to be an ADV. “Derelict” frequently refers to vessels that are dilapidated with an identifiable owner, while “abandoned” vessels are those where the owner is unknown or has surrendered rights of ownership.



Photo: Billeter Marine

How can ADVs be prevented?

ADV are dangerous and costly problems, but they can be prevented! The NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP) supports ADV prevention and removal efforts across our coastal states and the Great Lakes, including online resources to educate and inform boat owners and the public.

Boat owners should keep their registration current, purchase insurance, perform regular maintenance, and create an end-of-life plan for vessels. This plan may include:

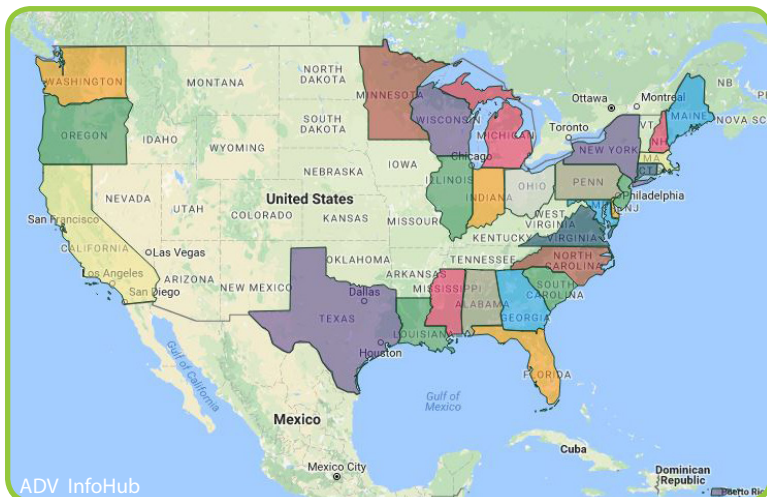
- Proper disposal of hazardous materials
- Recycling valuable parts and metals
- Bringing the vessel to a salvage shop or landfill for recycling and disposal
- Researching whether your state has a voluntary vessel turn-in / disposal program

Look out for these signs of an abandoned or derelict vessel:

- Illegal mooring or no movement for over 30 days
- Listing to one side or sitting low in the water
- High algal, moss, grass, or plant growth on the vessel
- Leaking fluids, such as fuel, oil, or waste
- Severe external deterioration of paint, wood, or other materials
- Drifting into open water and blocking navigation



Photo: Coral Bay Community Council



How can YOU help?

The MDP created the **ADV InfoHub** as a central source of information regarding ADVs. Users can access information on local legislation, policies, funding, and available ADV Programs, as well as links to relevant publications, case studies, and legal reviews. Check out the InfoHub to find an ADV contact in your area.

In addition to the funding available from state agencies and other resources, the MDP supports marine debris and ADV removal through a competitive grants process. Through the **Community-based Marine Debris Removal Grant** opportunity, the MDP has supported the removal of almost 400 ADVs, amounting to over 2,400 tons of debris.



Photo: Dauphin Island Sea Lab