

U.S. Coast Guard Will Not Allow Hi-jinks on the High Seas

JUNEAU — Are you planning to paddle a canoe to Japan? Or maybe sail a bathtub to the Soviet Union?

Before you get past the plan-

ning stage there is something you should know. On April 17, the U.S. Coast Guard was given the authority to prohibit the departure of boats on extended

and perilous voyages for which they are manifestly unsuited.

The new regulation emphasized that the authority to use the new law is limited to the Coast Guard District Commanders, with the explicit restriction that this authority cannot be delegated further.

In Alaska, Rear Admiral Glenn O. Thompson, Commander, Seventeenth Coast Guard District will consider the design or configuration of the boat, its construction, its operational and safety equipment, and the specific voyage intended.

The Coast Guard generally learns of such voyages either through the news media, or by means of calls and letters from members of the boatman's family and from his concerned friends.

Venturesome seafarers will be given every reasonable opportunity by the District Commander to show why he should be permitted to make the voyage in question.

The Coast Guard's concept of a manifestly unsafe voyage is perhaps best typified by a recent case in which an operator

proposed to sail and paddle a 16-foot canoe across the Atlantic to Portugal.

The purpose of the voyage was to focus attention on the financial needs of a senior citizens' home in the Mid West. The operator had admittedly very limited experience in open water.

In fact, the operator had determined the suitability of the canoe for the intended voyage by sailing and testing it on an inland lake.

Based on search and rescue case studies, the Coast Guard anticipates that approximately four manifestly unsafe voyages will be attempted each year.

The District Commander for San Francisco reports that his district expended nearly 75,000 man hours in handling only four unsafe voyages.

In one case, search and rescue aircraft flew a total of 125 hours and searched more than 270,000 square miles of ocean, an area almost half the size of Alaska, in a period of only three days.

The Coast Guard is concerned that these boating safety and search and rescue resources should be applied to other more pressing and universal needs of the boating community.

It is important to note that the boatman (or boat owner) against whom the rule is im-

posed has the right, under the Administrative Procedure Act, to petition for reconsideration and repeal of the ruling.

It is also important to note that the District Commanders will be looking for blatantly unsafe conditions that would make the successful completion of certain extended voyages virtually impossible.