Airboat Operator Course Lesson Plan

Ecology Center, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Course Title: Basic Airboat Operator Instruction

Time Frame: 16 hours (usually a weekend)

Course Goal: At the completion of this training, students will have a basic understanding of transporting, operation, and maintenance of automotive-engine powered airboats.

Objectives - Students will acquire:

- Knowledge of airboat terminology
- Knowledge of safety precautions and liability concerns
- Launch and recovery of airboat at boat ramp
- Operation of airboat in deep and shallow water, over marsh, and across low-lying levees
- Knowledge of preventive maintenance techniques and basic trouble-shooting
- Field experience in the proper operation of an airboat

Methods of Instruction:

- Lecture
- Power Point presentation
- Field activities

Equipment and Supplies:

Ear Protection (Headphones, earplugs)

- Eye Protection (Safety glasses, goggles)
- Personal Flotation Device (Life Jacket)
- Field attire (Suitable protection from wind, rain, sun, and insects)

Airboat and trailer –

Students have the option to provide their own airboat to gain familiarity and experience with a vehicle they will use in the field. This is not a requirement. The Ecology Center will provide an airboat for the course.

References:

- DOI USGS NWRC Manual of Safe Airboat Operation
- Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission Airboat Manual
- Mark Robichaux's Airboat Connection Airboat Operator’s Information
- South Florida Water Management District Manual for Airboat Operations
Course: Basic Airboat Operator Instruction

Outline:

I. Introduction
   a. Evaluation of Student Boating Skills
   b. Overview of the Course

II. Airboat Terminology
   a. Hulls
      i. Types
      ii. Bottom coatings
   b. Power Train
      i. Engine types
      ii. Transmissions - Reduction units versus direct-drives
   c. Propellers
      i. Material types
      ii. Blade configurations
      iii. Length and Pitch
   d. Cage
   e. Steering systems
   f. Miscellaneous - Controls, switches, lights, bilge pump, trim tab

III. Maintenance
   a. Preventive Maintenance Care
      i. Periodic Equipment Inspection
      ii. Maintenance Schedules
   b. Pre-Operation Checks
      i. Batteries
      ii. Engine fluid levels
      iii. Gear stowage
      iv. Boat plugs
   c. Post-Operation Care
      i. Freshwater wash-down
      ii. Anti-corrosion measures
      iii. Post-operation inspection
      iv. Storage

IV. Safety, Liability and Courtesy
   a. Propeller Danger Awareness
      i. Starting
      ii. Operating
      iii. Prop Wash
      iv. Propeller hazards inside the boat
v. Cage etiquette
b. Safety Considerations and Liability
   i. Pilot responsibilities
   ii. Float Plans
   iii. Communications
   iv. First Aid Kit
   v. Emergency Procedures
c. Courtesy Considerations
   i. Prop wash
   ii. Wake responsibility
   iii. Noise Hazard

V. Operations
   a. Steering and Throttle Controls
   b. Operational limits
   c. Trailer launch at boat ramp
   d. Transiting deep water
   e. Transiting shallow water
   f. Getting stuck and unstuck
   g. Maneuvering over marsh
   h. Levee crossing
   i. Trailer recovery at boat ramp
   j. Dry launch and recovery
   k. Load Balancing

VI. Special Topics (Discussion only)
   a. Night operation
   b. Ice Operation
   c. Horror Stories - Discussion of submersion, collisions, injuries, fatalities, bad luck

VII. Practical Evaluation