

Natural Resources Building
1111 Washington St SE
Olympia WA 98501

PO Box 40917
Olympia WA 98504-0917



(360) 902-3000
TTY (360) 902-1996
Fax: (360) 902-3026

E-mail: info@rco.wa.gov
Web site: www.rco.wa.gov

STATE OF WASHINGTON

RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE

December 19, 2007

TOPIC #14: SHB 1651 Initial Boater Needs Study and "Boating Activities Program" Guidance

Prepared and Presented By: Jim Eychaner, Senior Outdoor Resource Planner

Approved by the Director:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Valerie Cottrell".

Proposed Action

1. Acceptance of contractor's report.
2. Approval of letter transmitting the report to the Legislature, including RCFB recommendations.
3. Guidance to staff concerning the new "boating activities program" policies and management.

Summary

SHB 1651, enacted during the 2007 legislative session, creates a boating activities program and calls for the RCO to conduct an initial study of recreational boater needs. RCO hired a contractor, Responsive Management, to conduct the study and to write an independent, objective report with recommendations. Staff has worked with a group of boaters and providers to develop early recommendations on management of the boating activities program.

Staff Recommendation

1. Accept the contractor's report and send it, with Board comment, to the Legislature as an independent, objective study. Attachment A is the proposed transmittal letter from the RCFB chair to the legislature.
2. Review and provide guidance to RCO on recommendations regarding the "boating activities program." The recommendations will be forthcoming after a boater and agency workshop on January 3rd.

Background

SHB 1651 establishes the boating activities program and requires the Recreation and Conservation Office to complete an initial study of boater needs.

The Initial Study

RCO hired the survey firm Responsive Management to conduct the study. SHB 1651 uses the word "initial" and it is a good choice of words: to paraphrase Responsive



Management, good research should generate questions that result in further research. The initial study captures as much data as possible, makes initial recommendations, and, perhaps most importantly, sets a foundation on which to engage boaters and providers alike in the work necessary to build better service and facilities for the boating public.

Responsive Management collected data through a statewide telephone survey of residents who boat (whether they own a boat or not), a series of focus group meetings with service and facility providers, and a survey of service and facility providers. The study results and general recommendations for state boating priorities are found in Responsive Management's report *Washington Boater Needs Assessment*. Staff will present an overview to the RCFB at its January 15th board meeting.

The report is written as an independent, objective assessment of the status of boating in Washington State. Staff believes that the study accurately represents the needs of the boating public, and presents a fair assessment of provider perspectives.

The draft initial study was made available to the boating public and the many providers who serve them. RCO received a number of comments on the initial draft. All comments, due January 11, will be made available to RCFB. We intend to share all comments with the Legislature, as well.

Boating Activities Program

Staff worked with a temporary steering committee to help select a study contractor and determine the issues on which the study would focus. Many members of the steering committee had earlier worked with the Legislature to develop SHB 1651. Staff also advised the standing Boating Facilities Program advisory committee as the study went forward.

Anticipating the need for boater and provider guidance on management of the boating activities program, staff held a boater workshop with the steering committee, the BFP advisory committee, and boaters involved with both the Legislative effort and the study. The workshop is discussed further on page 4.

Analysis

Initial Study

Responsive Management's study has resulted in a wealth of defensible data on boater needs, as well as qualitative information on provider challenges and opportunities.

The study presents a series of independent recommendations based on the consultant's analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data. The recommendations are not without controversial elements. While all boaters seem to agree on the need for well-managed access sites and facilities, not all agree on other recommendations such as potential funding sources.

Of the recommendations found in the report (most easily found in *Washington Boater Needs Executive Summary*), staff suggests the following deserve consideration for RCFB support:

- **Improve coordination and communication among agencies providing services to the boating public.** This is consistent with many agency initiatives and assignments, as well as direction from the Governor.
- **Improve boater safety through education programs and higher levels of law enforcement presence.** Boaters and providers alike agree on these priorities.
- **Emphasize the management of existing access sites and facilities,** including maintenance and maximizing utility (e.g., parking, etc.). Staff recommends further study on the use of state funds for maintenance and operation.
- **Improve RCO grant processes.** RCO is always interested in improving its ability to serve the recreating public through its investment in services and facilities. The recommendation to develop a "call for proposals" is a creative, forward-looking recommendation that merits further work with boaters and providers.
- **Address environmental issues.** RCO supports the work of many partners concerned with environmental issues. These include working with State Parks to review "pump-out" grants, addressing aquatic invasive species through the Washington Invasive Species Council, or supporting the activities of the newly-created Puget Sound Partnership, to name three examples. This work goes hand-in-hand with improved coordination and communication.

Some of the report's funding recommendations may be more appropriate for evaluation by the legislature and the Office of Financial Management, rather than the RCFB. If, the legislature should address these funding recommendations, the RCFB does have the capacity to allocate such funds for projects that support the needs of boaters.

Staff recommends that RCFB accept the report and transmit it to the Legislature as an independent, objective study of boater needs, balanced with the perspective of professionals who provide services and facilities to all boaters. A draft transmittal letter is attached to this memo for the Board's consideration.

Boating Activities Program

The boating activities program created by SHB 1651 is similar to RCO's existing Boating Facilities Program (BFP) in that it can pay for a variety of facilities to support recreational boating. There are important differences:

- The new boating activities program may fund programmatic projects such as education and law enforcement.

- Nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply for funding under the boating activities program.
- There is a significant set-aside (80%) of the first \$2.5M appropriated for State Parks for law enforcement and education in the boating activities program.
- It appears all boats, from canoes to yachts, may be supported directly by the boating activities program projects, whereas the BFP, by agency policy, focuses on the needs of motor boats.
- The boating activities program is supported by the State General Fund and therefore not as predictable or as reliable as the motor vehicle fuel tax that supports the BFP.

Policy Implications, Options Considered

Initial Study

At minimum, data from the statewide study, especially the views and needs of the boating public, should be considered an invaluable tool when reviewing programs serving boaters. The data is highly useful for assessing whether existing programs are aligned with boater needs.

A key finding of the study is the high importance placed on the maintenance of existing sites. We know that public agencies have difficulty finding sufficient resources for maintenance. We also know that many agencies do not have capacity for additional new sites or even for full utilization of capital dollars. Therefore, a review of maintenance funding may be in order. RCFB may wish to take a lead role by considering adjustments to the Boating Facilities Program that would allow some degree of maintenance support for grantees. This would require legislation to amend current BFP statutes.

Boating Activities Program

The assignment of a new grant program with similarities to existing programs raises a number of policy questions. A boater workshop is scheduled for January 3 to address some of the initial questions needing advice. Invited attendees are members of RCO's Boating Facilities Program advisory committee, members of our temporary study steering committee, and a number of others who had involvement in SHB 1651.

The workshop attendees were asked to provide advice on the following policy issues:

- **Overall management the boating activities program.** Options to be discussed include whether to keep separate programs for BAP and BFP, or to combine the two programs.
- **The composition of the advisory committee mandated in SHB 1651.** Options to be discussed include whether to: 1) use the existing BFP committee with modifications, 2) create a committee specifically for each program, or 3) create a new committee to oversee all three RCO boating-specific programs.

- **Advice on priorities for the new grant program.** Data from the initial study on boater and manager ratings of "importance and performance of boating programs and services" will be a key guide to this discussion.
- **Advice on use of current-year funds from SHB 1651** (approximately \$363,000). Options to be considered include: 1) directing the money to current grant projects that were not fully funded, 2) funding one-time emergency repair costs for flood-damaged access sites, 3) funding one-time law enforcement training opportunities to control invasive species, 4) funding improvements to State Parks and RCO web-based boater information, 5) funding one-time maintenance support of key sites, and/or 6) funding of a staff person to coordinate existing boating programs.

Results of the workshop will be provided at the January 15 meeting for Board consideration.

Next Steps

Initial study

RCFB is asked to transmit the study, with its comments, to the Legislature. Staff will also transmit all public comments received on the study.

The study will remain available on RCO's web site at http://www.rco.wa.gov/rcfb/temp/boat_survey_results.htm

Boating Activities Program

Staff asks RCFB for guidance on the issues addressed at the boater workshop. In March, staff will bring a refined proposal for program management, including use of current-year funds.

Attachments:

Washington Boater Needs Assessment Executive Summary, Responsive Management
Washington Boater Needs Assessment Data Summary, Responsive Management
Draft RCFB letter transmitting the initial study to the Legislature

Natural Resources Building
1111 Washington St SE
Olympia WA 98501

PO Box 40917
Olympia WA 98504-0917



(360) 902-3000
TTY (360) 902-1996
Fax: (360) 902-3026

E-mail: info@rco.wa.gov
Web site: www.rco.wa.gov

STATE OF WASHINGTON

RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE

January 15, 2008

The Honorable XXXX
_____ Committee
PO Box 40XXX
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Dear _____:

SHB 1651 called for the Recreation and Conservation Office (formerly the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation) to complete an initial study of recreational boater needs. To ensure that the boater needs study would be as impartial and objective as possible, we chose to retain the services of an independent contractor to conduct the study and to write a report detailing the study findings. You received a copy of the draft report on December 3, 2007.

As Chair of the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board, I am pleased to transmit the final report to you. It was researched and written by Responsive Management, one of the nation's leading survey and research firms specializing in natural resource and outdoor recreation issues.

This initial study attempted to capture as much data as possible, make initial recommendations, and perhaps most importantly, set a foundation on which to engage boaters and providers alike in the work necessary to build better service and facilities for the boating public.

The first draft of the report was made available to the boating public and the many providers who serve them. A summary of their comments is enclosed.

RCFB has accepted the Responsive Management report as an independent, objective study of boater needs, balanced with the perspective of the many professionals who provide boating services and facilities. We believe that the study accurately represents the needs of the boating public, and presents a fair assessment of the challenges faced by providers.

The report contains a number of recommendations based on Responsive Management's interpretation of the data. Of these recommendations, the RCFB supports the following:



- **Improve coordination and communication among agencies providing services to the boating public.** This is consistent with many agency initiatives and assignments, as well as direction from the Governor. The RCFB will explore mechanisms to accomplish this, including the possible establishment of a Washington Boating Council.
- **Improve boater safety through education programs and higher levels of law enforcement presence.** Boaters and providers alike agree on these priorities.
- **Emphasize the management of existing access sites and facilities,** including maintenance and maximizing utility (e.g., parking, etc.). We believe this issue warrants further study with the potential to follow-up with statutory changes regarding the use of state funds for maintenance and operation.
- **Improve RCO grant processes.** RCO is always interested in improving its ability to serve the recreating public through its investment in services and facilities. The recommendation to develop a "call for proposals" is a creative, forward-looking recommendation that merits further work with boaters and providers.
- **Address environmental issues.** RCO supports the work of our many partners concerned with environmental issues. This includes working with State Parks to review "pump-out" grants, addressing aquatic invasive species through the Washington Invasive Species Council, and supporting the activities of the newly-created Puget Sound Partnership, to name three examples. This work goes hand-in-hand with improved coordination and communication.

Some of the funding recommendations may be more appropriate for evaluation by the legislature and the Office of Financial Management, rather than the RCFB. On these recommendations the RCFB takes no position. If the legislature should address these funding recommendations, the RCFB does have the capacity to allocate such funds for projects that support the needs of boaters.

Thank you for the opportunity to be of service. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information.

Sincerely,

Val Ogden, Chair
Recreation and Conservation Funding Board

**NORTHWEST
MARINE TRADE
ASSOCIATION**



[Home](#)

[Member Search](#)

**CAMPBELL'S
CORNER**



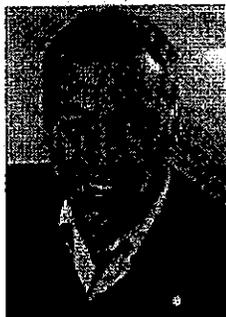
Campbell's Corner

[>> View A](#)

- [NMTA Newsletter](#)
- [Campbell's Corner](#)
- [Tony's Tackle Box](#)

GENERAL INFO

- [About the NMTA](#)
- [Events Calendar](#)
- [Get Involved](#)
- [Why Join the NMTA?](#)
- [Staff Contacts](#)



We Found Out What Boaters Want!

Last year, the Washington State Legislature approved a bill that directed additional \$2M into boating programs. This was the result of lots of hard work and effort by many organizations and many of you.

The bill, known as HB1651, required that a state agency called the Recreation and Conservation Office conduct a study in 2007 to determine "boater needs." This was a key part of our strategy to increase funding for boating programs in the State.

Well the good news is in. The RCO did conduct a survey of over 3,000 boaters last fall as well as 200 individuals who provide services to boaters. Boaters gave us a clear picture of what services they want from the State. Service providers such as marinas, ports, marine law enforcement and agencies told us what services they would like to provide to boaters..

Before sharing some of the key findings, I want to thank all the members who contacted their legislators and encouraged them to support the bill. Thank you. Collectively you had a positive impact on the future of boating in the State of Washington.

Key findings from boaters:

- The top three reasons why people go boating:
 - 49% - For Relaxation
 - 29% - To Fish
 - 26% - To be with Friends and Family
- If the State had more resources to invest in boating programs/services, they would want them spent on:
 - 60% - Public Access
 - 56% - Boater Education
 - 54% - New Boat Launch Ramps
- Asked another way, boaters said they wanted more:
 - 55% - Parking at Boat Launch Ramps
 - 54% - New Boat Launch Ramps
 - 51% - Courtesy Tie-ups
 - 50% - Restrooms at Boat Launch Ramps
- Asked yet another way, boaters said they would like more of the following:
 - 48% - Boat Launch Ramps
 - 23% - Mooring or Docks
 - 18% - More Public access

- 17% - More Restrooms at Boat Launch Ramps

Key findings from boating service providers:

- The top two services they feel like they currently provide are:
 - 84% - Boating safety
 - 70% - Public Access
- 85% said that crowding at boat launch ramps are a problem (said it was a major problem)
- If they had more resources, the top three areas they would invest in:
 - Boating Safety
 - Boater Education
 - Public Access
- If they could improve facilities/services for boaters, the top three would be:
 - Parking at boat launch ramps
 - Boat launch ramps
 - Boating safety courses
- Maybe most telling of all... 63% said there should be one state agency responsible for boating programs in the state. (We have agencies. Oregon, California and Ohio have one).

I hope this gives you a flavor of the feedback. I would encourage all of you to go online and look at the study. I think you would find it fascinating and probably will find insights that would help your individual businesses. I recommend you download the 40-page summary, but if you really like it you can download the full 500-page survey at www.rco.wa.gov. Then on "Recreational Boating Survey Results Revealed."

We will be meeting with legislators in the months ahead to make sure we have the results from the study. After all, they were the ones who asked for the study to be done. We are hoping that when they have the survey results, as well as the recommendations that the RCO will provide to them later this month, that we can get them to do two things: 1) Create a structure where there is better coordination of services between state agencies, reducing overlaps and filling gaps. 2) Invest more of the \$100M into the programs that boaters currently pay annually in taxes and fees to the State. Stay tuned and please share your thoughts, suggestions and ideas with us anytime.

Finally, I want to thank Jim Eychaner at the RCO who was in charge of the survey. It is so easy to criticize government at any level, yet we know how much they need what they do. In this instance, Jim did a great job; he ran a very open and inclusive process which allowed us to provide input on the survey from beginning to end. We have had a great working relationship with Jim's agency, the RCO in the past and I look forward to continuing our public/private efforts to serve boaters better in the future.

With warm regards,

Michael Campbell
 President
michael@nmta.net

Our offices are located at:
 1900 N Northlake Way, #233
 Seattle, WA 98103-9087
 Telephone: 206-634-0911
 FAX: 206-632-0078
 Send e-mail to us at info@nmta.net

For comments or questions, please contact
 © 2001 Northwest Marine Trade Association
[Click to view the](#)