
Ecology & Parks Committee

HB 1848

Brief Description: Increasing boating safety.

Sponsors: Representatives Condotta, Blake and Armstrong.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the State Parks and Recreation Commission to develop a plan to implement recommendations for increased boating safety and marine law enforcement.
- Requires the plan to implement recommendations for increased boating safety and marine law enforcement and the report detailing the status of implementation be delivered to the Governor and the Legislature by December 31, 2009.
- Sets funding allocations for the Recreational Boating Safety Grant Program.

Hearing Date: 2/13/09

Staff: Jaclyn Ford (786-7339)

Background:

Washington's boating safety laws are administered by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission). Every law enforcement officer in Washington and its political subdivisions has the authority to enforce the boating laws, including county sheriffs, officers of other local law enforcement entities, the Washington State Patrol, state park rangers, and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

There have been recent studies for reducing boating fatalities and injuries and increasing safety of Washington's waterways. These studies include:

- "Improving Coordination of State Services to Recreational Boaters," conducted for the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) in 2008;
- "Washington Boater Needs Assessment," conducted for the RCO in 2007; and
- "Recommendations on Child Drowning Prevention," conducted by the Department of Health's Child Death Review State Committee in 2004.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill:

Within existing funds, the Commission must develop a plan to implement recommendations for increased boating safety and marine law enforcement. The plan must include implementation methods for:

- increasing state and local law enforcement presence on waterways;
- enhancing standardized and specialized training for marine law enforcement regarding boating safety laws and boating accident investigation;
- increasing training opportunities for state and local law enforcement marine program personnel;
- increasing enforcement of boating laws, including enforcement against alcohol and drug-related boating;
- increasing the provision of on-site safety information and practical education to boaters;
- designating the WDFW as a boating safety program;
- maximizing existing funding sources for the purpose of expanding law enforcement on-the-water activities including patrols and enforcement, prevention activities, education activities, and search and rescue;
- enhancing state and local law enforcement's capabilities to conduct safety and equipment checks and courtesy inspections at boat access sites; and
- reviewing data sharing or other technology issues that impact law enforcement ability to enforce boating laws and increase boating safety.

In the plan, 80 percent of the funds from the Recreational Boating Safety Grant Program administered through the United States Coast Guard must be allocated to approved boating safety programs. The other 20 percent of the funds must be allocated to the Commission.

In addition, the plan must include timelines for implementation of the recommendations. If any of the recommendations require legislative action, those recommendations must be noted in the plan and subsequently reported to the Governor and the Legislature.

The Commission must provide a copy of the plan and a report detailing the status of implementation to the Governor and the Legislature by December 31, 2009.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.