

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5597

As of February 3, 2023

Title: An act relating to modifying boater safety and education requirements.

Brief Description: Modifying boater safety and education requirements.

Sponsors: Senators Van De Wege and Lovick.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 2/06/23.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the State Parks and Recreation Commission to implement a boater safety education program for a boater operating a human-powered vessel by January 1, 2024.
- Requires an operator of a human-powered vessel to obtain a \$10 paddle education card.
- Expires a boater education card and a paddle education card 20 years after the date of issuance.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

Background: The Parks and Recreation Commission (commission) manages a required boating safety education program in Washington. The commission must establish a minimum standard of boater safety accomplishment, and adopt minimum standards for boating safety education. To obtain a boater education card, a boater must provide a certificate of accomplishment issued by a boater educator for taking and passing an accredited boating safety education course, or equivalency exam, or provide proof of

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completion of a course that meets the standard adopted by the commission. The fee for a boater education card is \$10.

To operate a motor-driven boat or vessel of 15 horsepower or greater, a person must be at least 12 years old, and possess a boater education card; or be accompanied by and under the supervision of a person at least 16 years old who has a boater education card. Certain individuals are not required to have a boater education card, including a person at least 12 years old renting a vessel who completes a commission-approved safety operating and equipment checklist, or any person born before January 1, 1955.

Failure to possess a boater education card as required by law is a natural resource infraction punishable by a fine; however, the penalty must be waived if the boater provides proof to the court, within 60 days, that they received a boater education card.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute): By January 1, 2024, the commission is required to establish and implement a program to provide required boating safety education for boaters operating a human-powered vessel. A paddle education card may be issued to a person who successfully completes a human-powered vessel boating safety education program, and pays a \$10 registration fee.

A person operating a human-powered vessel is not required to obtain a paddle education card if they are renting and operating the vessel under the guidance of a rental business, and they complete a commission-approved abbreviated program or checklist. Human-powered vessels include, but are not limited to, canoes, kayaks and stand-up paddleboards. A human-powered vessel does not include a surfboard. A person possessing a boater education card is not required to obtain a paddle education card to operate a human-powered vessel.

A boater education card and a paddle education card expire 20 years after the date of issuance. A person may renew their boater or paddle education card by providing the commission a certificate of accomplishment issued by a boating educator for taking and passing an accredited boating safety education course; passing an equivalency exam developed by the commission; or providing the commission proof of completion of a course that meets the standard adopted by the commission.

The exemptions to the boater education card requirement for a person operating a motor driven boat or vessel with a mechanical power of 15 horsepower or less, or a person born before January 1, 1955, are eliminated. A provision allowing a person that demonstrates they have successfully completed a substantially equivalent boater education course prior to July 24, 2005 to obtain a boater education card is repealed.

Failure to possess a paddle education card as required is a natural resource infraction

punishable by fine. The commission is directed to adopt a digital option for boater education and paddle education cards. A member of a federally recognized tribe is exempt from the boater education and paddle education requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 1, 2023.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.