



The California Association of Harbor Masters and Port Captains



July 14, 2022

Armando Quintero, Director
California State Parks
Via email to Armando.Quintero@parks.ca.gov

Re: DBW Harbors and Watercraft Deficiency – Recommendations

Director Quintero –

Our organizations write to express our appreciation for the stakeholder process the Division of Boating and Waterways [DBW] and the Boating and Waterways Commission are undertaking to provide stakeholders with the opportunity to obtain information and provide input into recommendations that are being prepared for submission to the Legislature to address the deficiency in the Harbors and Watercraft Revolving Fund [HWRF] and an appropriate increase in vessel registration fees.

Throughout the past several months, we have been participating in the subcommittees and have reviewed the boater-derived fees and taxes boaters contribute to the state, the expenditure of those revenues, the objectives of current programs and services, and opportunities to enhance the value programs and services to recreational boating.

As these activities continue into the summer, several recommendations are becoming clear and developing traction. They include:

Report on Economic Impact of Recreational Boating- The preparation and publication of an economic impact report on the impact of recreational boating on a regular, ongoing basis. This document provides data that facilitates an understanding of developments and trends that can inform policy decisions. An advisory group of stakeholders should be established to work with the Division in developing the parameters for a report, identifying vendors, and other actions.

Stakeholder Contributions - The enhanced participation and financial contribution of stakeholders and beneficiaries who benefit from current and future programs and services including:

- The increasing types and number of non-motorized watercraft that utilize state waterways and are increasingly engaged by boating law enforcement.
- The government agencies that benefit from the Division’s ongoing and growing aquatic invasive species program that enables the conveyance of water and navigation of commercial watercraft.

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B&W Commission Role and Authority - The enhancement of the statutory authority and role of the Commission to provide not only advice, but also consent on the Division's loans and grants from the HWRF. This will ensure in law that the Commission has a vital role that furthers the objectives of the administration, that transparency is provided, and that the Division benefits from their expertise.

Addressing Identified Needs – The identification of approaches that can be taken to meet the new challenges identified through the stakeholder engagement process such as the number of abandoned and derelict vessels that are not addressed by the existing SAVE grant program.

Enhancement of Administration - The enhancement of the Division's administration of essential programs by:

- Moving the administration of vessel registrations from the Department of Motor Vehicles [DMV] to the Division, saving significant dollars.
- Modernizing the boat operator certification card so that it can be provided to boaters in an electronic format such as on their smartphones.

Loans and Grants - The identification of efficiencies and programmatic improvements to programs that are not attracting the desired number of recipients due to statutory requirements that may be out-of-date. These include the capital outlay programs for public and private boating facilities, as well as the abandoned and surrendered vessel program.

Public Access – Encouragement of Californians to take advantage of the unique and diverse on-the-water opportunities that exist throughout the state. The pandemic has confirmed the value of on-the-water experiences that provide physical and mental benefits to all Californians.

Resource Alignment - A return of a significant amount of the motor vehicle fuel taxes attributable to recreational boaters to the HWRF. Those revenues approximate \$107 million per year yet only \$15 million is deposited in the HWRF.

Beach Erosion Funding - An identification and expenditure of other funds for grants for beach erosion control. This effort is of increasing importance and value to the many coastal Californians as we endeavor to address climate change and would ideally be funded by the state General Fund. In recognition of the tenuous nexus to recreational boaters, the appropriate level of HWRF support is the personnel who provide their expertise in administering the grant program.

Vessel Registration Fees – As appropriate, a vessel registration fee adjustment that is reasonable and that corresponds to the revenues and savings that are recommended above.

Thank you for the stakeholder process, as well as this opportunity to provide our recommendations at this stage of our engagement. We would very much like to discuss these recommendations with you and will contact your office to schedule a meeting.

Sincerely [in alphabetical order]:

BoatU.S.—Boat Owners Association of the United States
David B. Kennedy, BoatU.S., Government Affairs, [703-461-4367](tel:703-461-4367)

California Association of Harbor Masters and Port Captains
Andrea Leuker, President, 805-550-3909

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California Yacht Brokers Association

Peter Zaleski, President, 619-857-2349

Marine Recreation Association

Kate Pearson, President, 619-666-1640

National Marine Manufacturers Association

David Dickerson, VP, State Government Relations, 202-737-9761

Pacific Inter-Club Yacht Association

Joan Marsh, Commodore, 925-427-6607

Recreational Boaters of California

Todd Leutheuser, President, 562-896-2161

Southern California Yachting Association

Anne Eubanks, Commodore, 949-243-5148

C: Ramona Fernandez, Acting Deputy Director, Division of Boating and Waterways