

Recreational Boating Association of Washington
E-Lert and Call to Arms

SENATE FULLY FUNDS MARINE PARKS
STATE HOUSE RAIDS BOATERS' UNREFUNDED GAS TAXES,
BOATING FACILITIES PROGRAM.

Yesterday, when the Senate proposed operating budget was released, there was cause for elation. The release of the House proposed operating budget today was a more sobering event.

Both Senate and House will claim that their budgets keep marine and other parks open. The definition of "open" is important, as are all of the many other considerations that must be weighed in evaluating a budget.

The Senate budget provides for a 5.8% increase in funding for State Parks, if all revenues materialize. All state parks, including marine parks, are kept open, on the same basis as they are today. Equipment needs are funded. The costs of operating completed construction projects are funded. This is based upon an anticipated revenue of \$28 million for all parks from the opt-out car tabs, but lead senators on the budget have indicated a strong commitment to keeping parks open even if this revenue fails to fully materialize in the coming months.

The House budget provides for a 3.4% decrease in funding for State Parks, including marine parks, and cuts general fund support by over 40% (\$40,268,000) compared to the 28% cut in the Senate budget (\$28,394,000). While it is claimed that the House budget keeps all parks open, the House still requires seasonal closures of parks, does not fund equipment needs, and mandates cuts in staffing. The House also relies on \$28 million from opt-out car tabs.

In addition, the House budget moves \$3 million from the Parkland Acquisition Account (these are funds from the sale of park-owned lands that are supposed to be used for purchase of replacement lands), \$9.8 million from the Recreation Resource Account (these are funds from the boaters' unrefunded gas taxes, and \$9.6 million from the NOVA Program Account (these are funds from trail-users gas taxes and ORV permits) INTO THE STATE GENERAL FUND FOR USE ON NON-RECREATION PROGRAMS. In addition to those funds, \$6.8 million from the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account and \$2 million from the Wildlife Fund are also moved into the general fund.

These fund transfers proposed by the House will have a very negative impact on recreation, including recreational boating facilities, launch ramps, public marina improvements and boating facilities. NONE of our boating fuel tax dollars will be used any longer to help State Marine Parks, Ports, Cities, and Counties to support recreation and boating programs, but will be used for GENERAL FUND programs instead.

The Senate has done a much better job of taking care of our State Parks and boating programs. In addition to the above-and of great interest to boaters- the Senate also fully funded the boaters' number one priority- 2SSB 5691 (improving boating programs).

IT IS TIME TO CALL THE LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE AND URGE YOUR 2 HOUSE REPRESENTATIVES AND GOVERNOR GREGOIRE TO:

"PLEASE SUPPORT THE SENATE BUDGET CHAIR'S POSITION ON STATE PARKS, BOATING, TRAILS, AND OUTDOOR RECREATION."

You can also leave a message for your Senator saying "Thank you for taking care of outdoor recreation and boating programs in the Senate's proposed budget."

THE LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE IS 1-800-562-6000. IT IS OPEN FROM 8 AM TO 8 PM, MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY, AND FROM 9 AM TO 1 PM ON SATURDAYS.

IT IS VITALLY IMPORTANT THAT THE HOTLINE CALLS START IMMEDIATELY.

Jim King, RBAW lobbyist