



Washington State Recreational Boating Programs

Legislative Auditor's conclusion

Boating-related revenues collected by the state support general government purposes and recreational boating activities.

Key points

- Recreational boating administration is decentralized, with six state agencies involved.
- Recreational boating generated \$108 million in state revenue in the 2021-23 biennium. Taxes and registration fees contributed 75%.
- The state uses boating-related revenue for boating programs and general government. Likewise, it supports boating programs with revenue unrelated to boating.
- State agencies spent \$86 million during the 2021-23 biennium on recreational boating activities. About 61% paid for infrastructure like boat ramps and docks.
- Washington is one of 15 states or territories that reported offering grants to local governments for recreational boating programs.

Read the full report and use interactive dashboards to learn more about revenue and spending at leg.wa.gov/jlarc/audits

Contact us

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Earlier JLARC review

The 2023 Legislature directed the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) to update its earlier review of state recreational boating revenues and expenditures.

You can read the [2010 recreational boating report](#) on our website.

Six agencies collect or spend money related to recreational boating

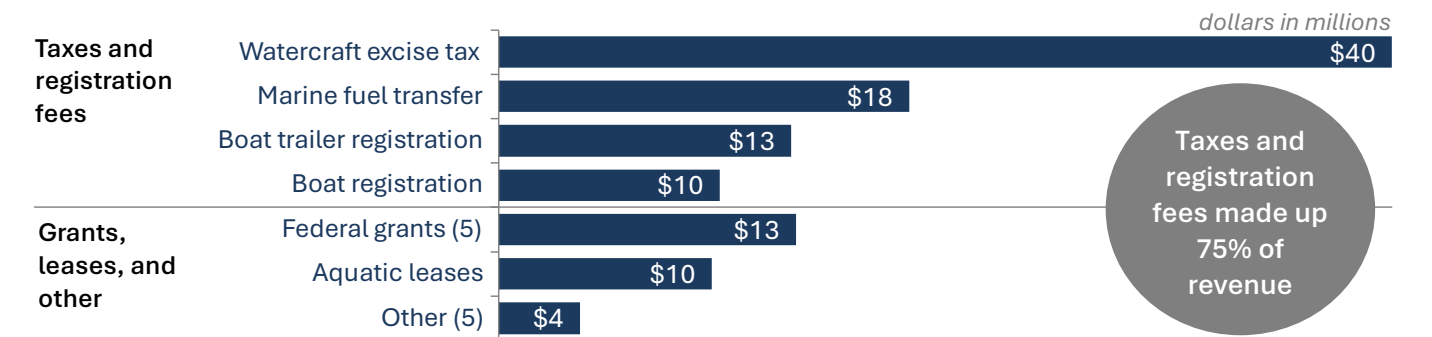
- State Parks and Recreation Commission (Parks).
- Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO).
- Department of Natural Resources (DNR).
- Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW).
- Department of Ecology (Ecology).
- Department of Licensing (DOL).

JLARC is a Washington state legislative committee that works to improve state government. It has members from the House and Senate, evenly split between the parties. JLARC's nonpartisan staff complete audits mandated by the Legislature. We follow professional standards to ensure our work is thorough, independent, and free from bias.

Recreational boating generated \$108 million in state revenue

(2021-23 biennium)

Statute specifies that agencies must use some revenues only for boating programs. Other revenues may be used for both boating and general government purposes.



State agencies spent \$86 million on recreational boating activities

(2021-23 biennium)

Washington pays for recreational boating activities with both boating-related revenue and with revenue from accounts that are unrelated to boating.

Of the \$86 million spent, \$19.2 million was transferred or awarded as grants to local governments for boating.

Category	Total spent
Infrastructure & access includes projects like building or maintaining docks, marinas, and access sites.	\$52,690,000
Environmental protection includes removing derelict vessels and preventing infestations of aquatic invasive species.	\$20,910,000
Boater safety activities focus on education and prevention to minimize injuries, accidents, and fatalities.	\$6,040,000
Marine law enforcement includes officer training and ensuring boaters know and comply with the laws.	\$5,910,000
Registration activities reflect DOL's administrative costs to register boats and boat trailers.	\$330,000

78% of states and territories responded to survey done by JLARC staff

Washington is one of 15 states or territories that reported offering grants to local governments for recreational boating programs.

Washington's laws about vessel registration, boater education, and life jackets are like those in other states.

Survey respondents by number of registered vessels, 2020

