



Addressing the problem of derelict and abandoned vessels in Washington waters

Abandoned or derelict vessels can cause a number of public safety and environmental hazards. Through deliberate action or negligence, vessels can break up, sink, or block navigation channels. These vessels have the potential to leak pollutants such as oil, diesel, gas, and other hazardous substances.



Derelict and abandoned vessels are becoming far too common in Washington waters.

DNR's Derelict Vessel Removal Program

As steward of the state's aquatic lands, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages the Derelict Vessel Removal Program (DVRP) to help protect Washington's waters and public safety.

Directed by the legislature in 2002, DNR established the program to manage funding and provide expertise and assistance to public entities (such as cities, counties, ports, state agencies) in removing and disposing derelict and abandoned vessels. Since then, the program has proven to be extremely successful and has won awards.

By law, the DVRP must give funding priority to removing and disposing vessels that are in danger of breaking up, sinking, or presenting a threat to human health and safety, the environment, or navigation. DNR maintains an inventory of derelict vessels, ranking the vessels by priority for removal. By statute, the funding for removal and disposal can only be used on vessels up to 200 feet. In reality, however, the funding available only adequately covers vessels up to 100 feet.

How is the program funded?

Funding for the Derelict Vessel Removal Program comes from:

- A \$3 fee on annual registration costs for recreation vessels.
- A \$5 surcharge on the cost of a vessel visitor permit.
- A one-time legislative appropriation of \$3 million from the 2012 Jobs Now Act. (Much of this funding was used to pay for the removal and disposal of the 140-foot crab fishing vessel *Deep Sea*, which caught fire and sank in Penn Cove in May 2012, and the 180-foot *Cactus*, which was abandoned on the Maury Island Marine Reserve.)
- 2013 Legislature approves additional one-time funding of \$4.5 million to help with addressing the backlog of derelict vessels.

DVRP QUICK FACTS

(as of January 15, 2014)

153 Number of vessels on the DVRP removal list.

513 Number of derelict vessels removed with funds from the DVRA.

**King
Kitsap
San Juan** Counties identified with the greatest number of derelict vessels.

On average, the registration fees bring in approximately \$750,000 each year to the program. Unfortunately, with the growing number and size of problem vessels, the funding can't keep up with the removal and disposal costs. The backlog of vessels in need of removal continues to grow.

Significant milestones in DNR's Derelict Vessel Removal Program

2002 — Washington State Legislature passes the **Derelict Vessel Act**, authorizing and providing funding for public entities to remove and dispose of derelict and abandoned vessels.

The act also establishes the Derelict Vessel Removal Account to reimburse authorized local and state agencies for 75 percent of the costs associated with removal and disposal. The agency must provide 25 percent of the cost—either money or in-kind services.

DNR establishes the Derelict Vessel Removal Program.

2006 — Legislature makes it a **misdemeanor** to cause a vessel to become derelict or abandoned.

Also increases the maximum amount of reimbursement to 90 percent, reducing the public agency match to 10 percent.

2007 — Legislature **adds a temporary \$1 surcharge** to the boating registration fee (effective 2008-2013) in addition to the \$2 fee.

Expands public entities' **authority** to take **temporary possession** of vessels that pose an imminent threat to human health or safety.

Legislature provides \$2 million to fund removal of large vessels and another \$1 million to remove two large dry docks from Lake Washington.

2011 — Legislature passes DNR-request legislation further defining the misdemeanor clause and **creates immunity liability** for public entities involved in derelict vessel removal and disposal.

2012 — Legislature passes the **Jobs Now Act**, which includes a **one-time, \$3 million appropriation** (through June 30, 2013) for the Derelict Vessel Removal Account to address the growing number of abandoned and derelict vessels.

2013 — Legislature approves **one-time funding of \$4.5 million** and **makes permanent the \$1 surcharge** added in 2007. In addition, 2013 legislation addressed a number of issues including **vessel owner accountability**, a **pilot volunteer turn-in program**, granted **boarding authority** to authorized public entities (ex., cities, towns, ports, state agencies), and **established a work group** to continue to seek ways to lessen the burden of derelict vessels on taxpayers and the environment.



The 140-foot former crab-fishing vessel *Deep Sea* caught fire and sank in Penn Cove in May 2012. By early June, the vessel was raised, removed, and towed to Seattle, where it was dismantled.

Need more information?

Visit DNR's Derelict Vessel Removal Program on the web at: http://bit.ly/dnr_dvrp