



**HILARY S. FRANZ**  
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS



**Derelict vessels threaten navigation, impede aquatic recreation, contaminate the environment and cost taxpayers. Preventing boats from becoming derelict will minimize all these impacts.**

## **CONTACT**

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# Strengthening Derelict Vessel Removal through Prevention and Enforcement

## **LEGISLATION**

The Derelict Vessel Removal Program has been an extremely effective and successful tool since its inception in 2002. While derelict vessels continue to pollute state waters and cost taxpayers, recent improvements to the program have made it more efficient and effective. The 2020 Washington Legislature adopted SB 6528, which gives the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) more prevention and enforcement tools that will reduce environmental damage, minimize navigation hazards and hold down costs. This legislation took effect June 11, 2020, and includes new tools for:

## **PREVENTION**

### **More resources for the Vessel Turn-In Program**

DNR's Vessel Turn-In Program allows boat owners who can no longer take care of their vessels to turn them in for responsible disposal. Disposing a vessel before it becomes derelict in Washington's waters is considerably less expensive and less damaging. The bill removed a funding cap that had limited the program to spending \$200,000 per biennium. With the cap removed, DNR can dispose more vessels before they become derelict or abandoned.

### **Reduced length limit on vessels subject to secondary liability law**

Prior to the bill's passage, the law required a survey and insurance on the transfer of vessels over 65 feet and older than 40 years. Failure to do so left the seller financially liable for removal costs if the vessel became derelict or abandoned. The bill reduced the length limit to 35 feet, meaning buyers of smaller vessels now fully understand the vessel's condition and insurance requirements, and makes sellers liable for costs of recovering these vessels, which make up the majority of DNR's recovered vessels.

### **Extends ticketing authority to the DNR**

The bill gave DNR the authority to ticket vessels that are not properly licensed or registered with the state. This authority, developed with the partnership of stakeholders, law enforcement and legislators, will make it easier to identify at-risk vessels, and to contact owners of vessels that do become derelict or abandoned. Staff will educate boaters on proper registration requirements on first contact, and will only ticket as a last resort.

### **Derelict & Abandoned Reporting Tool (DART)**

<https://www.dnr.wa.gov/vessel-reporting>