



## LC 2500-001/492 Waterway Access Account

**Problem** Oregon is experiencing exponential growth in non-motorized boating. According to the 2017 Oregon Resident Outdoor Recreation Survey, “public access to the waterways” was ranked in the top five “priorities for the future” by Oregonians both in and outside their immediate communities. Surveys for the Marine Board’s Six-Year Plan (2017) show increased desire for non-motorized boating access. Finally, the Marine Board has seen an increase in the number of grant requests to improve access for non-motorized boaters.

The Marine Board began engaging non-motorized boaters in 2011 to discuss the problems around safety and access and solicited solutions from this user group. Advisory committees were formed and in 2017, the Marine Board brought forward HB 2320, which would have created a non-motorized boating permit program. These fees would have been dedicated to non-motorized access improvement projects and to help offset the rising costs of marine law enforcement. However, the bill was controversial, also requiring people floating in inner tubes, air mattresses and pool toys to wear life jackets and would have included all non-motorized boat lengths. This concept removes the controversial areas and focuses on providing public access grants to facility providers.

The Marine Board receives all revenue used for boating facilities, boating safety and education from titling and registration of motorized boats, marine fuel tax on gasoline powered boats, and federal funds received from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund. Each year a larger amount of funding is being used to serve the interests or provide for the safety of non-motorized boaters, which creates a growing disconnect with the motorized boating community.

The current fee structures does not fully support non-motorized boaters in the form of dedicated access, safer and more appropriate launching facilities, specialized education and enforcement dedicated to safety on the waterway in primarily non-motorized areas.

**Solution** Create a dedicated account to increase waterway access to Oregon’s waterways. The permit that funds this account would be required on all boats 10’ and over except motorboats and sailboats with valid registration decals. This is identical to the current requirement for non-motorized boats to carry the Aquatic Invasive Species Permit (AIS permit), and in this concept the Waterway Access Permit would replace the AIS permit for non-motorized boats. Permits would be transferrable to other non-motorized boats and children under 14 would not need a permit. Revenues generated will be used to support boating facility grants for state, local governments, park organizations, and tribal governments for the acquisition of property, leases, or easements in order for the public to access waterways and construction and maintenance of boating access facilities. Funds would also be available for public bodies and non-profit entities to develop safety education courses and to purchase boating equipment to reduce barriers for underserved communities who wish to recreate on Oregon’s waterways.

**Fees** Flexible permit options based on use: \$5 for one week, \$17 annual, \$30 biennial. Non-motorized users would no longer purchase an AIS permit because this permit would fund both the waterway access account and maintain the current level of funding non-motorized boaters provide for the AIS program. Continue permit discounts for registered liveries renting non-motorized boats. Establishes free use days to coincide with free fishing and camping weekend.