

**Chapter 79.100 RCW  
DERELICT VESSELS**

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**RCW 79.100.005 Findings.** The legislature finds that there has been an increase in the number of derelict and abandoned vessels that are either grounded or anchored upon publicly or privately owned submerged lands. These vessels are public nuisances and safety hazards as they often pose hazards to navigation, detract from the aesthetics of Washington's waterways, and threaten the environment with the potential release of hazardous materials. The legislature further finds that the costs associated with the disposal of derelict and abandoned vessels are substantial, and that in many cases there is no way to track down the current vessel owners in order to seek compensation. As a result, the costs associated with the removal of derelict vessels becomes a burden on public entities and the taxpaying public. [2002 c 286 § 1.]

**RCW 79.100.010 Definitions.** The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Abandoned vessel" means a vessel that has been left, moored, or anchored in the same area without the express consent, or contrary to the rules of, the owner, manager, or lessee of the aquatic lands below or on which the vessel is located for either a period of more

than thirty consecutive days or for more than a total of ninety days in any three hundred sixty-five-day period, and the vessel's owner is: (a) Not known or cannot be located; or (b) known and located but is unwilling to take control of the vessel. For the purposes of this subsection (1) only, "in the same area" means within a radius of five miles of any location where the vessel was previously moored or anchored on aquatic lands.

(2) "Aquatic lands" means all tidelands, shorelands, harbor areas, and the beds of navigable waters, including lands owned by the state and lands owned by other public or private entities.

(3) "Authorized public entity" includes any of the following: The department of natural resources; the department of fish and wildlife; the parks and recreation commission; a metropolitan park district; a port district; and any city, town, or county with ownership, management, or jurisdiction over the aquatic lands where an abandoned or derelict vessel is located.

(4) "Department" means the department of natural resources.

(5) "Derelict vessel" means the vessel's owner is known and can be located, and exerts control of a vessel that:

(a) Has been moored, anchored, or otherwise left in the waters of the state or on public property contrary to RCW 79.02.300 or rules adopted by an authorized public entity;

(b) Has been left on private property without authorization of the owner; or

(c) Has been left for a period of seven consecutive days, and:

(i) Is sunk or in danger of sinking;

(ii) Is obstructing a waterway; or

(iii) Is endangering life or property.

(6) "Owner" means any natural person, firm, partnership, corporation, association, government entity, or organization that has a lawful right to possession of a vessel by purchase, exchange, gift, lease, inheritance, or legal action whether or not the vessel is subject to a security interest.

(7) "Ship" means every species of watercraft or other mobile artificial contrivance, powered or unpowered, intended to be used for transporting people or goods on water or for floating marine construction or repair and that exceeds two hundred feet in length.

(8) "Vessel" means every species of watercraft or other mobile artificial contrivance, powered or unpowered, intended to be used for transporting people or goods on water or for floating marine construction or repair and which does not exceed two hundred feet in length. "Vessel" includes any trailer used for the transportation of watercraft, or any attached floats or debris. [2014 c 195 § 604; 2007 c 342 § 1; 2006 c 153 § 2; 2002 c 286 § 2.]

**Reviser's note:** The definitions in this section have been alphabetized pursuant to RCW 1.08.015(2)(k).

**Findings—Intent—2014 c 195:** See notes following RCW 79.100.170 and 79.100.180.

**RCW 79.100.020 Chapter not exclusive remedy.** This chapter is not intended to limit or constrain the ability and authority of the authorized public entities to enact and enforce ordinances or other regulations relating to derelict and abandoned vessels, or to take any actions authorized by federal or state law in responding to derelict

or abandoned vessels. This chapter is also not intended to be the sole remedy available to authorized public entities against the owners of derelict and abandoned vessels. [2002 c 286 § 3.]

**RCW 79.100.030 Authority of authorized public entity—Owner retains primary responsibility—Limitation on civil liability.** (1) An authorized public entity has the authority, subject to the processes and limitations of this chapter, to store, strip, use, auction, sell, salvage, scrap, or dispose of an abandoned or derelict vessel found on or above aquatic lands within the jurisdiction of the authorized public entity. A vessel disposal must be done in an environmentally sound manner and in accordance with all federal, state, and local laws, including the state solid waste disposal provisions provided for in chapter 70A.205 RCW. Scuttling or sinking of a vessel is only permissible after obtaining the express permission of the owner or owners of the aquatic lands below where the scuttling or sinking would occur, and obtaining all necessary state and federal permits or licenses.

(2) The primary responsibility to remove a derelict or abandoned vessel belongs to the owner, operator, or lessee of the moorage facility or the aquatic lands where the vessel is located. If the authorized public entity with the primary responsibility is unwilling or unable to exercise the authority granted by this section, it may request the department to assume the authorized public entity's authority for a particular vessel. The department may at its discretion assume the authorized public entity's authority for a particular vessel after being requested to do so. For vessels not at a moorage facility, an authorized public entity with jurisdiction over the aquatic lands where the vessel is located may, at its discretion, request to assume primary responsibility for that particular vessel from the owner of the aquatic lands where the vessel is located.

(3) The authority granted by this chapter is permissive, and no authorized public entity has a duty to exercise the authority. No liability attaches to an authorized public entity that chooses not to exercise this authority. An authorized public entity, in the good faith performance of the actions authorized under this chapter, is not liable for civil damages resulting from any act or omission in the performance of the actions other than acts or omissions constituting gross negligence or willful or wanton misconduct. Any person whose assistance has been requested by an authorized public entity, who has entered into a written agreement pursuant to RCW 79.100.070, and who, in good faith, renders assistance or advice with respect to activities conducted by an authorized public entity pursuant to this chapter, is not liable for civil damages resulting from any act or omission in the rendering of the assistance or advice, other than acts or omissions constituting gross negligence or willful or wanton misconduct. [2021 c 65 § 88; 2011 c 247 § 4; 2002 c 286 § 4.]

**Explanatory statement—2021 c 65:** See note following RCW 53.54.030.

**RCW 79.100.040 Obtaining custody of vessel.** (1) Prior to exercising the authority granted in RCW 79.100.030, the authorized

public entity must first obtain custody of the vessel. To do so, the authorized public entity must:

(a) Mail notice of its intent to obtain custody, at least twenty days prior to taking custody, to the last known address of the previous owner to register the vessel in any state or with the federal government and to any lienholders or secured interests on record. A notice need not be sent to the purported owner or any other person whose interest in the vessel is not recorded with a state or federal agency;

(b) Post notice of its intent clearly on the vessel for thirty days and publish its intent at least once, more than ten days but less than twenty days prior to taking custody, in a newspaper of general circulation for the county in which the vessel is located; and

(c) Post notice of its intent on the department's internet website on a page specifically designated for such notices. If the authorized public entity is not the department, the department must facilitate the internet posting.

(2) All notices sent, posted, or published in accordance with this section must, at a minimum, explain the intent of the authorized public entity to take custody of the vessel, the rights of the authorized public entity after taking custody of the vessel as provided in RCW 79.100.030, the procedures the owner must follow in order to avoid custody being taken by the authorized public entity, the procedures the owner must follow in order to reclaim possession after custody is taken by the authorized public entity, and the financial liabilities that the owner may incur as provided for in RCW 79.100.060.

(3) (a) Any authorized public entity may tow, beach, or otherwise take temporary possession of a vessel if the owner of the vessel cannot be located or is unwilling or unable to assume immediate responsibility for the vessel and if the vessel:

(i) Is in immediate danger of sinking, breaking up, or blocking navigational channels; or

(ii) Poses a reasonably imminent threat to human health or safety, including a threat of environmental contamination.

(b) Before taking temporary possession of the vessel, the authorized public entity must make reasonable attempts to consult with the department or the United States coast guard to ensure that other remedies are not available. The basis for taking temporary possession of the vessel must be set out in writing by the authorized public entity within seven days of taking action and be submitted to the owner, if known, as soon thereafter as is reasonable. If the authorized public entity has not already provided the required notice, immediately after taking possession of the vessel, the authorized public entity must initiate the notice provisions in subsection (1) of this section. The authorized public entity must complete the notice requirements of subsection (1) of this section before using or disposing of the vessel as authorized in RCW 79.100.050.

(4) An authorized public entity may invite the department of ecology to use the authority granted to it under RCW 90.56.410 prior to, or concurrently with, obtaining custody of a vessel under this section. However, this is not a necessary prerequisite to an authorized public entity obtaining custody. [2013 c 291 § 37; 2007 c 342 § 2; 2006 c 153 § 3; 2002 c 286 § 5.]

**RCW 79.100.050 Use or disposal of vessel.** (1) After taking custody of a vessel, the authorized public entity may use or dispose of the vessel in any appropriate and environmentally sound manner without further notice to any owners, but must give preference to uses that derive some monetary benefit from the vessel, either in whole or in scrap. If no value can be derived from the vessel, the authorized public entity must give preference to the least costly, environmentally sound, reasonable disposal option. Any disposal operations must be consistent with the state solid waste disposal provisions provided for in chapter 70A.205 RCW.

(2) If the authorized public entity chooses to offer the vessel at a public auction, either a minimum bid may be set or a letter of credit may be required, or both, to discourage future reabandonment of the vessel.

(3) Proceeds derived from the sale of the vessel must first be applied to any administrative costs that are incurred by the authorized public entity during the notification procedures set forth in RCW 79.100.040, removal and disposal costs, and costs associated with environmental damages directly or indirectly caused by the vessel. If the proceeds derived from the vessel exceed all administrative costs, removal and disposal costs, and costs associated with environmental damages directly or indirectly caused by the vessel, the remaining moneys must be applied to satisfying any liens registered against the vessel.

(4) Any value derived from a vessel greater than all liens and costs incurred reverts to the derelict vessel removal account established in RCW 79.100.100. [2021 c 65 § 89; 2002 c 286 § 6.]

**Explanatory statement—2021 c 65:** See note following RCW 53.54.030.

**RCW 79.100.060 Reimbursement for costs.** (1) The owner of an abandoned or derelict vessel, or any person or entity that has incurred secondary liability for an abandoned or derelict vessel under this chapter or RCW 88.26.030, is responsible for reimbursing an authorized public entity for all reasonable and auditable costs associated with the removal or disposal of the owner's vessel under this chapter. These costs include, but are not limited to, costs incurred exercising the authority granted in RCW 79.100.030, all administrative costs incurred by the authorized public entity during the procedure set forth in RCW 79.100.040, removal and disposal costs, and costs associated with environmental damages directly or indirectly caused by the vessel. An authorized public entity that has taken temporary possession of a vessel may require that all reasonable and auditable costs associated with the removal of the vessel be paid before the vessel is released to the owner.

(2) Reimbursement for costs may be sought from an owner, or any person or entity that has incurred secondary liability under this chapter or RCW 88.26.030, who is identified subsequent to the vessel's removal and disposal.

(3) If the full amount of all costs due to the authorized public entity under this chapter is not paid to the authorized public entity within thirty days after first notifying the responsible parties of the amounts owed, the authorized public entity or the department may bring an action in any court of competent jurisdiction to recover the

costs, plus reasonable attorneys' fees and costs incurred by the authorized public entity. [2014 c 195 § 601; 2013 c 291 § 40; 2006 c 153 § 4; 2002 c 286 § 7.]

**Findings—Intent—2014 c 195:** See notes following RCW 79.100.170 and 79.100.180.

**RCW 79.100.070 Contract with private company/individual.** An authorized public entity may enter into a contract with a private company or individual to carry out the authority granted in this chapter. [2002 c 286 § 8.]

**RCW 79.100.080 Chapter not exclusive.** The rights granted by this chapter are in addition to any other legal rights an authorized public entity may have to obtain title to, remove, recover, sell, or dispose of an abandoned or derelict vessel, and in no way does this chapter alter those rights, or affect the priority of other liens on a vessel. [2002 c 286 § 9.]

**RCW 79.100.100 Derelict vessel removal account.** (1)(a) The derelict vessel removal account is created in the state treasury. All receipts from RCW 79.100.050 and 79.100.060 and those moneys specified in RCW 88.02.640 must be deposited into the account. The account is authorized to receive fund transfers and appropriations from the general fund, deposits from the derelict vessel removal surcharge under RCW 88.02.640(4), deposits under RCW 79.100.180, as well as gifts, grants, and endowments from public or private sources as may be made from time to time, in trust or otherwise, for the use and benefit of the purposes of this chapter and expend the same or any income according to the terms of the gifts, grants, or endowments provided those terms do not conflict with any provisions of this section or any guidelines developed to prioritize reimbursement of removal projects associated with this chapter.

(b) Moneys in the account may only be spent after appropriation. Expenditures from the account may only be used by the department for developing and administering the vessel turn-in program created in RCW 79.100.160 and to, except as provided in RCW 79.100.130 and 53.08.480, reimburse authorized public entities for up to ninety percent of the total reasonable and auditable administrative, removal, disposal, and environmental damage costs of abandoned or derelict vessels when the previous owner is either unknown after a reasonable search effort or insolvent. Reimbursement may not be made unless the department determines that the public entity has made reasonable efforts to identify and locate the party responsible for the vessel, or any other person or entity that has incurred secondary liability for the vessel under this chapter or RCW 88.26.030, regardless of the title of owner of the vessel.

(c) Funds in the account resulting from transfers from the general fund or from the deposit of funds from the watercraft excise tax as provided for under RCW 82.49.030 must be used to reimburse one hundred percent of costs and should be prioritized for the removal of large vessels.

(d) Costs associated with the removal and disposal of an abandoned or derelict vessel under the authority granted in RCW 53.08.320 also qualify for reimbursement from the derelict vessel removal account.

(e) In each biennium, up to twenty percent of the expenditures from the derelict vessel removal account may be used for administrative expenses of the department of licensing and department of natural resources in implementing this chapter.

(2) Priority for use of this account is for the removal of derelict and abandoned vessels that are in danger of sinking, breaking up, or blocking navigation channels, or that present environmental risks such as leaking fuel or other hazardous substances. The department must develop criteria, in the form of informal guidelines, to prioritize removal projects associated with this chapter, but may not consider whether the applicant is a state or local entity when prioritizing. The guidelines must also include guidance to the authorized public entities as to what removal activities and associated costs are reasonable and eligible for reimbursement.

(3) The department must keep all authorized public entities apprised of the balance of the derelict vessel removal account and the funds available for reimbursement. The guidelines developed by the department must also be made available to the other authorized public entities. This subsection (3) must be satisfied by utilizing the least costly method, including maintaining the information on the department's internet website, or any other cost-effective method.

(4) An authorized public entity may contribute its ten percent of costs that are not eligible for reimbursement by using in-kind services, including the use of existing staff, equipment, and volunteers.

(5) This chapter does not guarantee reimbursement for an authorized public entity. Authorized public entities seeking certainty in reimbursement prior to taking action under this chapter may first notify the department of their proposed action and the estimated total costs. Upon notification by an authorized public entity, the department must make the authorized public entity aware of the status of the fund and the likelihood of reimbursement being available. The department may offer technical assistance and assure reimbursement for up to two years following the removal action if an assurance is appropriate given the balance of the fund and the details of the proposed action. [2014 c 195 § 603; 2013 c 291 § 2; 2010 c 161 § 1161; 2007 c 342 § 4; 2006 c 153 § 6; 2002 c 286 § 11.]

**Findings—Intent—2014 c 195:** See notes following RCW 79.100.170 and 79.100.180.

**Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161:** See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

**RCW 79.100.110 Vessel abandoned or derelict upon aquatic lands—Causing a vessel to block a navigational channel—Penalty.** (1) A person who causes a vessel to become abandoned or derelict upon aquatic lands is guilty of a misdemeanor.

(2) A person who intentionally, through action or inaction and without the appropriate state, local, or federal authorization, causes

a vessel to sink, break up, or block a navigational channel upon aquatic lands is guilty of a misdemeanor. [2011 c 247 § 1; 2006 c 153 § 1.]

**RCW 79.100.120 Contesting an authorized public entity's decision to take temporary custody or possession of a vessel—Contesting the amount of reimbursement.**

(1)(a) An owner or lienholder seeking to contest an authorized public entity's decision to take temporary possession or custody of a vessel under this chapter, or to contest the amount of reimbursement owed to an authorized public entity under this chapter, may request a hearing in accordance with this section.

(b) A transferor or other entity with secondary liability under this chapter or RCW 88.26.030 may commence a lawsuit in the superior court for the county in which custody of the vessel was taken to contest the transferor's or other entity's liability or the amount of reimbursement owed the authorized public entity under this chapter.

(2)(a) If the contested decision or action was undertaken by a state agency, a written request for a hearing related to the decision or action must be filed with the pollution control hearings board and served on the state agency in accordance with RCW 43.21B.230 (2) and (3) within thirty days of the date the authorized public entity acquires custody of the vessel under RCW 79.100.040, or if the vessel is redeemed before the authorized public entity acquires custody, the date of redemption, or the right to a hearing is deemed waived and the vessel's owner is liable for any costs owed the authorized public entity. In the event of litigation, the prevailing party is entitled to reasonable attorneys' fees and costs.

(b) Upon receipt of a timely hearing request, the pollution control hearings board shall proceed to hear and determine the validity of the decision to take the vessel into temporary possession or custody and the reasonableness of any towing, storage, or other charges permitted under this chapter. Within five business days after the request for a hearing is filed, the pollution control hearings board shall notify the vessel owner requesting the hearing and the authorized public entity of the date, time, and location for the hearing. Unless the vessel is redeemed before the request for hearing is filed, the pollution control hearings board shall set the hearing on a date that is within ten business days of the filing of the request for hearing. If the vessel is redeemed before the request for a hearing is filed, the pollution control hearings board shall set the hearing on a date that is within sixty days of the filing of the request for hearing.

(c) Consistent with RCW 43.21B.305, a proceeding brought under this subsection may be heard by one member of the pollution control hearings board, whose decision is the final decision of the board.

(3)(a) If the contested decision or action was undertaken by a metropolitan park district, port district, city, town, or county, which has adopted rules or procedures for contesting decisions or actions pertaining to derelict or abandoned vessels, those rules or procedures must be followed in order to contest a decision to take temporary possession or custody of a vessel, or to contest the amount of reimbursement owed.

(b) If the metropolitan park district, port district, city, town, or county has not adopted rules or procedures for contesting decisions or actions pertaining to derelict or abandoned vessels, then an owner



or lienholder requesting a hearing under this section must follow the procedure established in subsection (2) of this section. [2014 c 195 § 602; 2013 c 291 § 32; 2010 c 210 § 34; 2006 c 153 § 5.]

**Findings—Intent—2014 c 195:** See notes following RCW 79.100.170 and 79.100.180.

**Intent—Effective dates—Application—Pending cases and rules—2010 c 210:** See notes following RCW 43.21B.001.

**RCW 79.100.130 Private moorage facility owner may contract with a local government—Contract requirements.** (1) A private moorage facility owner, as those terms are defined in RCW 88.26.010, may contract with the department or a local government for the purpose of participating in the derelict vessel removal program.

(2) If a contract is completed under this section, the department or local government shall serve as the authorized public entity for the removal of a derelict or abandoned vessel from the property of the private moorage facility owner. The contract must provide for the private moorage facility owner to be financially responsible for the removal and disposal costs that are not reimbursed by the department as provided under RCW 79.100.100, and any additional reasonable administrative costs incurred by the department or local government during the removal of the derelict or abandoned vessel.

(3) Prior to the commencement of any removal under this section for which a local government serves as the authorized public entity and that will seek reimbursement from the derelict vessel removal program, the contract and the proposed vessel removal shall be submitted to the department for review and approval. The local government shall use the procedure specified under RCW 79.100.100.

(4) If the private moorage facility owner has already seized the vessel under chapter 88.26 RCW and title has reverted to the moorage facility, the moorage facility is not considered the owner under this chapter for purposes of cost recovery for actions taken under this section.

(5) (a) The department and all local governments have discretion as to whether to enter into contracts to serve as the authorized public entity under this section for vessels located at a private moorage facility.

(b) The department may not enter into a contract to serve as the authorized public entity under this section for vessels located at a private moorage facility if the private moorage facility is not in compliance with the mandatory insurance requirements of RCW 88.26.030. [2014 c 195 § 201; 2013 c 291 § 4; 2011 c 247 § 2; 2007 c 342 § 3.]

**Findings—Intent—2014 c 195:** See notes following RCW 79.100.170 and 79.100.180.

**RCW 79.100.140 Authority to board a vessel—Administrative search warrant.** (1) An officer or employee of an authorized public entity, or the department of ecology at the request of an authorized public entity, may, consistent with subsection (2) of this section, board any vessel at any reasonable time for the purpose of:

(a) Administering this chapter, including identifying ownership of a vessel, assessing the structural integrity of a vessel, and assessing whether a vessel meets the criteria described under RCW 79.100.040(3); or

(b) For the department of ecology only, mitigating a potential threat to health, safety, or the environment under the authority provided in chapter 90.56 RCW.

(2) (a) Prior to boarding any vessel under the authority of this section, an officer or employee of an authorized public entity or the department of ecology must apply for and obtain an administrative search warrant in either Thurston county superior court or the superior court in the county where the vessel is located, unless a warrant is not otherwise required by law. The court may issue an administrative search warrant where the court has reasonable cause to believe it is necessary to achieve the purposes of this section.

(b) Prior to requesting an administrative search warrant under this subsection, the officer or employee must make a reasonable effort to contact the owner or the owner's designee and obtain consent to board the vessel.

(3) Nothing in this section affects an authorized public entity's authority to carry out actions under RCW 79.100.040 or any agency's existing authority to enter onto vessels under any other statute. [2013 c 291 § 35.]

**RCW 79.100.150 Transfer of certain vessels—Vessel inspection—Secondary liability.**

(1) A vessel owner must obtain a vessel inspection under this section prior to transferring a vessel that is:

(a) More than thirty-five feet in length and more than forty years old; and

(b) Either:

(i) Is registered or required to be registered under chapter 88.02 RCW; or

(ii) Is listed or required to be listed under chapter 84.40 RCW.

(2) If the vessel inspection determines the vessel is not seaworthy, as defined by agency rule, and the value of the vessel is less than the anticipated costs required to return the vessel to seaworthiness, then the vessel owner may not sell or transfer ownership of the vessel unless:

(a) The vessel is repaired to a seaworthy state prior to the transfer of ownership; or

(b) The vessel is sold for scrap, restoration, salvage, or another use that will remove the vessel from state waters to a person displaying a business license issued under RCW 19.02.070 that a reasonable person in the seller's position would believe has the capability and intent to do based on factors that may include the buyer's facilities, resources, documented intent, and relevant history.

(3) Where required under subsection (1) of this section, a vessel owner must provide a copy of the vessel inspection documentation to the transferee and, if the department did not conduct the inspection, to the department prior to the transfer.

(4) Unless rules adopted by the department provide otherwise, the vessel inspection required under this section must be contained in a formal marine survey conducted by a third party to the transaction. The survey must include, at a minimum, a conclusion relating to the

seaworthiness of the vessel, an estimate of the vessel's fair market value, and, if applicable, an estimate as to the anticipated cost of repairs necessary to return the vessel to seaworthiness.

(5) The department may, by rule, allow other forms of vessel condition determinations, such as United States coast guard certificates of inspection, to replace the requirements for a formal marine survey under this section.

(6) Failure to comply with the requirements of this section will result in the transferor having secondary liability under RCW 79.100.060 if the vessel is later abandoned by the transferee or becomes derelict prior to a subsequent ownership transfer.

(7) Nothing in this section prevents a vessel owner from removing, dismantling, and lawfully disposing of any vessel lawfully under the vessel owner's control. [2020 c 324 § 3; 2014 c 195 § 102; 2013 c 291 § 38.]

**Findings—2020 c 324:** See note following RCW 79.100.160.

**Findings—Intent—2014 c 195:** See notes following RCW 79.100.170 and 79.100.180.

**Effective date—2013 c 291 § 38:** "Section 38 of this act takes effect July 1, 2014." [2013 c 291 § 48.]

**RCW 79.100.160 Voluntary vessel turn-in program.** (1) The department may develop and administer a voluntary vessel turn-in program.

(2) The purpose of the vessel turn-in program is to allow the department to dismantle and dispose of vessels that pose a high risk of becoming a derelict vessel or abandoned vessel, but that do not yet meet the definition of those terms. The department shall design the program with the goal of dismantling and disposing of as many vessels as available resources allow, particularly those vessels posing the greatest risk of becoming abandoned or derelict in the future.

(3) The department shall disseminate information about the vessel turn-in program, including information about the application process, on its internet site and through appropriate agency publications and information sources as determined by the department. The department shall disseminate this information for a reasonable time as determined by the department prior to accepting applications.

(4) The department shall accept and review vessel turn-in program applications from eligible vessel owners, including private marinas that have gained legal title to a vessel in an advanced state of disrepair, during the time period or periods identified by the department. In order to be eligible for the vessel turn-in program, an applicant must demonstrate to the department's satisfaction that the applicant:

(a) Is a Washington resident or business;

(b) Owns a vessel that is in an advanced state of disrepair, has minimal or no value, and has a high likelihood of becoming an abandoned or derelict vessel; and

(c) Has insufficient resources to properly dispose of the vessel outside of the vessel turn-in program.

(5) Decisions regarding program eligibility and whether to accept a vessel for dismantling and disposal under the turn-in program are within the sole discretion of the department.

(6) The department may take other actions not inconsistent with this section in order to develop and administer the vessel turn-in program. [2020 c 324 § 2; 2013 c 291 § 42.]

**Findings—2020 c 324:** "The legislature finds that the derelict vessel removal program has been an extremely effective and successful tool since its inception in 2003, but recognizes that derelict vessels continue to be a critical problem for the waters of the state. Derelict vessels generate costs to taxpayers, impede the recreational enjoyment of waters, pose navigational safety hazards, and contaminate the environment, thereby impacting the health of Puget Sound and the habitat of imperiled species such as salmon and orcas. Every year, more vessels are reported to the derelict vessel removal program than can be removed. The legislature finds that improvements to the derelict vessel removal program statutes are needed to help address this problem.

Therefore, in order to increase the effectiveness of the derelict vessel removal program, the legislature proposes a suite of prevention and enforcement measures intended to decrease the number of vessels that become derelict and to provide the derelict vessel removal program with more tools to manage those that are currently derelict. These measures are intended to decrease costs to taxpayers and protect the environment by removing high risk boats from the waters of the state before they become derelict, and by expanding enforcement of existing aquatic regulations as they relate to enforcement of the derelict vessel statutes." [2020 c 324 § 1.]

**RCW 79.100.170 Transfer of ownership of certain vessels—Marine insurance policy.** (1) Any individual or company that purchases or otherwise receives a used vessel greater than thirty-five feet in length and more than forty years old must, prior to or concurrent with the transfer of ownership, secure a marine insurance policy consistent with this section. Proof of the marine insurance policy must be provided to:

(a) The transferor of the vessel upon purchase or other transfer; and

(b) If applicable, the department of licensing upon first-time registration or after the transfer of ownership, or the department of revenue upon the payment of any taxes.

(2) The transferor of a vessel greater than thirty-five feet in length and more than forty years old has an affirmative duty to ensure that any potential transferee has secured a marine insurance policy consistent with this section prior to or concurrent with the finalization of any sale or transfer. Nothing in this section prohibits the sale or other transfer of a vessel greater than thirty-five feet in length and more than forty years old to a transferee that fails to secure a marine insurance policy. However, a transferor that chooses to finalize a sale or other transfer with a transferee not in possession of a marine insurance policy assumes secondary liability for the vessel consistent with RCW 79.100.060 if the vessel is later abandoned by the transferee or becomes derelict prior to a subsequent ownership transfer.

(3) The marine insurance policy required under this section must be secured by the transferee prior to, or concurrent with, assuming ownership of a vessel greater than thirty-five feet in length and more than forty years old. The marine insurance policy must satisfy the following conditions:

(a) Have a term of at least twelve months following the transferee's assumption of vessel ownership;

(b) Provide coverage of an amount that is, unless otherwise provided by the department by rule, at least three hundred thousand dollars;

(c) Provide, unless otherwise provided by the department by rule, coverage for the removal of the vessel if it should sink and coverage should it cause a pollution event.

(4) The purchaser of marine insurance under this section may satisfy the requirements of this section through the purchase of multiple policies as necessary.

(5) The department may, by rule, provide for a purchaser of a vessel to also satisfy the insurance requirements of this section through the posting of adequate security with a financial institution.

(6) A person required to secure marine insurance or show proof of marine insurance under this section who either: (a) Fails to secure a marine insurance policy consistent with this section prior to or concurrent with the transfer of ownership, unless the vessel was sold consistent with RCW 79.100.150(2)(b); or (b) cancels a marine insurance policy consistent with this section prior to the end of the twelfth month of vessel ownership or to a subsequent transfer of ownership, whichever occurs first, without securing another marine insurance policy consistent with this section in its place, is guilty of a misdemeanor. The department may contact any vessel owner required by this section to have a marine insurance policy to ensure compliance with this section. [2020 c 324 § 4; 2014 c 195 § 101.]

**Findings—2020 c 324:** See note following RCW 79.100.160.

**Findings—Intent—2014 c 195:** "(1) The legislature finds that section 45, chapter 291, Laws of 2013 required the department of natural resources, in consultation with the department of ecology, to evaluate potential changes to laws and rules related to derelict and abandoned vessels that increase vessel owner responsibility and address challenges associated with the economics of removing vessels from the water.

(2) The legislature further finds that, during the 2013 legislative interim, the two responsible agencies engaged in a thorough process to satisfy their legislative charge. This process involved exhausting in-state expertise on various topics and reaching out to experts in vessel deconstruction, surety bonding, letters of credit, marine insurance, taxation, federal regulation, similar programs in other states, and more. The process also involved two open invitation public meetings.

(3) The legislature further finds that a significant number of various and competing options were discussed, analyzed, and ultimately dismissed during the process undertaken by the two agencies. It is the intent of the legislature to capture the recommendations for meeting the goals of increased vessel owner responsibility and addressing the challenges associated with the economics of removing vessels from the

water that rose to the top from the process undertaken by the agencies.

(4) It is the further intent of the legislature that this act serve as the final report due by the department of natural resources under section 45, chapter 291, Laws of 2013." [2014 c 195 § 1.]

**Findings—Intent—2014 c 195:** See note following RCW 79.100.180.

**RCW 79.100.180 Derelict vessel removal fee.** (1)(a) Except as otherwise provided in (b) of this subsection, an annual derelict vessel removal fee is imposed upon all persons required by RCW 84.40.065 to list any ship or vessel with the department of revenue for state property tax purposes.

(b) The derelict vessel removal fee imposed in (a) of this subsection does not apply in any year that a person required to list a ship or vessel does not owe the state property tax levied for collection in that year with respect to that ship or vessel.

(c) The annual derelict vessel removal fee is equal to one dollar per vessel foot measured by extreme length of the vessel, rounded up to the nearest whole foot.

(2) Each year, the department of revenue must include the amount of the derelict vessel removal fee due under this section for that calendar year in the tax statement required in RCW 84.40.065.

(3) The person listing a ship or vessel and the owner of the ship or vessel, if not the same person, are jointly and severally liable for the fee imposed in this section.

(4) The department of revenue must collect the derelict vessel removal fee imposed in this section as provided in RCW 84.56.440.

(5) All derelict vessel removal fees collected under this section must be deposited into the derelict vessel removal account created in RCW 79.100.100. [2014 c 195 § 402.]

**Effective date—2014 c 195 §§ 401-403:** "Sections 401 through 403 of this act take effect January 1, 2015." [2014 c 195 § 404.]

**Findings—Intent—2014 c 195:** "(1) The legislature finds that:

(a) Derelict and abandoned vessels are a threat to the safety of the public waterways, an environmental hazard for humans and marine life, and an occupational danger for persons that make their living on the waters of this state;

(b) Derelict vessel removal fees are imposed when recreational vessels are registered with the department of licensing. The accumulation of these fees is sufficient for the removal and disposal of recreational vessels that become derelict or abandoned;

(c) Derelict vessel removal fees do not apply to commercial vessels. Former commercial vessels are among the most costly to remove from Washington waters and to dispose of in an environmentally responsible manner. The costs for removing and disposing of these vessels far exceeds the funding provided by the derelict vessel removal fees paid by recreational vessels;

(d) According to the department of natural resources, as of January 1, 2015, there is a significant backlog of abandoned or derelict vessels that are former commercial vessels; and

(e) The use of general fund revenue to pay for the removal and disposal of derelict or abandoned vessels places an undue burden on

the nonboating public and reduces the revenue available to pay for necessary governmental services.

(2) The legislature intends for either the owners or operators, or both, of commercial vessels to pay their fair share for the removal of abandoned or derelict vessels by imposing a per foot fee on commercial vessels." [2014 c 195 § 401.]

**Findings—Intent—2014 c 195:** See note following RCW 79.100.170.

**RCW 79.100.901 Effective date—2002 c 286.** This act takes effect January 1, 2003. [2002 c 286 § 26.]