

TO: RBAW Board

FROM: Doug Levy – 6/3/2020

RE: **MAY 2020** Report from State Lobbyist

RESPONSE NEEDED: For use at Thursday, June 4 Board Meeting (*Doug will participate via Zoom*)

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**Hello, All:**

May was a “keep on keepin’ on” 31-day period for our work on COVID-19, clearing a better path for marina mitigation projects, and seeing how to best advance the Lakebay Marina acquisition.

I will be a virtual attendee at the June 4 Board Meeting. In the meantime, here is my monthly report covering our activities and efforts in May. As I write this, I want to do a shout-out to several Board Members and Board Executive Officers for their tireless work – President Bob Wise, Andrea Pierantozzi, and Dave Kircher among them. Gracias!

**COVID-19 – Governor starts month by reopening recreational boating and vessel sales, ends it by transitioning “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” into a county-driven process:** I previously reported to you on some high-profile wins for, most notably the Governor’s decision to reopen the recreational boating sector (*and a broad swath of other outdoor recreation activities*) and vessel sales as part of the Phase 1 component of his recovery plan. Because our sector got an early green light for reopening (*albeit under strict guidelines, for example, requiring that boaters limit the numbers of those on-board and keep open-water boating to the same household only*), we teamed up with the Northwest Marine Trade Association (NMTA) on a thank-you letter that I’ve attached with this monthly report. While boating and launch ramps reopened as of May 5 in nearly every part of the state, that wasn’t universally the case. *See below for City of Seattle.*

In any case, while the Governor began May by detailing his 4-phase reopening plan, he closed it by putting an end to the “Stay at Home, Stay Healthy” plan and transitioned Washingtonians into a process that will be more county-led in nature.

**Most City of Seattle launch ramps remain closed – but a breakthrough in late May:** While launch ramps throughout most corners of the state reopened, it was a source of frustration to us to have City of Seattle-operated launch ramps remain closed for much of May. Both President Bob Wise and myself joined Peter Schrappen of NMTA in pushing that to change. We did a request letter, sent numerous e-mails, made behind-the-scenes phone calls to City staff, and held two conference-call meetings with Seattle’s Deputy Mayor and staff.

Finally, as of May 30, the City had agreed to open two saltwater ramps (Don Armeni and Golden Gardens) on Elliott Bay. There will be a two-week trial period before the City agrees to any reopening of freshwater ramps such as Magnuson Park and others on Lake Washington. I’m also aware of one ramp that has remained open – will cover at Thursday night Board meeting.

*Meanwhile, it’s more important than ever for all to boat safely and avoid big crowds and gatherings – that’s vital to the City of Seattle bringing more ramps back on line.*

**Campgrounds and Marine State Parks in 22 “Phase 2” counties now open!** By month’s end, we received encouraging news from Washington State Parks that the agency is reopening marine parks, allowing overnight tie-ups to buoys, and reopening campgrounds. Here is a list of what has reopened in the Phase 2 counties, as well as about a dozen sites that remain closed:

<https://parks.state.wa.us/1181/Parks-opening>

As I share all this with you, I must issue a reminder that individual counties are authorized to issue more stringent conditions than those contained in the Governor’s orders and guidance. Kudos to one of our Members for taking note of the fact that in the San Juans, facilities will be open locals but not those travelling into the area from other destinations.

**Meeting with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on federal permitting for marina upgrades – a glimmer of hope?** Late in the month (May 27), we had a virtual meeting with the Central and South Puget Sound branch chief for NMFS (Jennifer Quan) and members of her team. Jennifer Quan shared with President Wise, NMTA Vice President Peter Schrappen, Logan Brown of Marine Floats, and myself that NMFS will provide the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers a “batch” list of over 30 marina upgrade projects that can be permitted for on-the-water work this summer if they meet certain mitigation requirements. Jennifer did not specify the mitigation requirements but did agree she would be notifying us right away of details once the list and mitigation requirements are transmitted to the Corps. We also provided a list of routine activities that we would hope can be exempted for mitigation requirements based on a ‘calculator’ that NMFS staff plans to use. These include projects with footprints less than eight (8) feet wide; in a deep-shore zone; featuring removal of solid docks; those that replace aging creosote piling; etc. Stay tuned.

**Lakebay Marina:** I start this update by noting that fund-raising in the throes of a pandemic is about as difficult as it gets. While we are moving towards applying for a state “Heritage Projects” capital grant, we’ve not yet nailed down near-term funding to close the acquisition-price gap we have for Lakebay. Last month, Bob Wise, Dave Kircher, and myself had meetings with both Forterra and the Washington State Housing Financing Commission (which runs a non-profit facilities component of its programs) on bridge loan options they have available or could make available. Unfortunately, the RBAW Marine Conservancy Board is very new and has no financial track record or well-heeled ‘guarantors’ we can point toward. We are continuing to plug away and will work with volunteer Bruce Barbarasch on a likely “crowd-funding” initiative, but we have not yet found the breakthrough to close up our \$800,000 gap. We have a few other ideas and will keep all posted.

**No Discharge Zones:** On May 29, RBAW Board Executive Officers met and voted in favor of distributing to the membership a No Discharge Zone (NDZ) related survey developed by a DOE consultant. The survey is confidential in nature and RBAW is not taking a position on or vouching for it. Respondents will see a question about race because Ecology believes communities of color are a disproportionately lower-use segment of the recreational boating public. Nonetheless, at times such as these, the question will be controversial to say the least.

**Boat US funds!** Another late-May development – this one quite positive – was the news that Boat US had sent RBAW a \$5000 check to help with our operations and efforts. It’s now in hand – Woo!

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