



Traveling by water presents greater safety challenges than traveling on land: Weather, waves, tides and currents, water levels, large boat traffic and other concerns all pose risks. Safe boating begins with being aware of these factors before going out on the water. Remember to swim and boat only when sober, wear a life jacket, follow the "rules of the road," and, most importantly, have fun!

For more information, visit

[www.goboatingwa.com](http://www.goboatingwa.com)

Legislation created the Boating Program in 1983 and made Washington State Parks responsible for administering the program.

The goal of the program is to reduce accidents and fatalities, increase stewardship of Washington waterways, and keep recreational boating a safe, accessible and enjoyable pastime.

Partners include law enforcement agencies, state agencies, marinas and boating organizations across Washington.



Boating Program

### Connect with us on social media



[www.twitter.com/WASStatePks](http://www.twitter.com/WASStatePks)



[www.facebook.com/WashingtonStateParks](http://www.facebook.com/WashingtonStateParks)



[www.youtube.com/WashingtonStateParks](http://www.youtube.com/WashingtonStateParks)

Share your stories and photos: [AdventureAwaits.com](http://AdventureAwaits.com)

## Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

P.O. Box 42650  
Olympia, WA 98504-2650  
(360) 902-8500  
[www.parks.wa.gov](http://www.parks.wa.gov)



### Commission members:

Ken Bounds	Mark O. Brown
Patricia T. Lantz	Steve S. Milner
Douglas Peters	Rodger Schmitt
Lucinda S. Whaley	

Agency director: Don Hoch

*All Washington state parks are developed and maintained for the enjoyment of all people.*

To request this brochure in an alternative format, please call (360) 902-8844 or the Washington Telecommunications Relay Service at (800) 833-6388.



P&R 45-15500-36 (12/17)

WASHINGTON STATE PARKS

# 'Weather' or not to go



Boating Program



[www.parks.state.wa.us/boating](http://www.parks.state.wa.us/boating)

# UNDERSTANDING WEATHER

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Checking and understanding the weather forecast are critical to safe—and enjoyable—boating. The **Washington State Parks Boating Program** encourages you to take a course that will help increase your understanding of weather forecasts for boating conditions. Several organizations offer classes, including local boating and paddlesport clubs, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and U.S. Power Squadron.

Before heading out on coastal and open waterways, such as the ocean, bays, harbors and inlets, be sure to check the **marine weather forecast**. General forecasts do not take into account wind speed over water or wave heights and swell.

Since inland waterway conditions aren't included in marine forecasts, seek advice from locals or boaters familiar with the waterway where you plan to boat.

Weather forecasts are free and accessible through a range of sources, including VHF radio, the internet and smartphone apps. The National Weather Service offers local and real-time marine weather, tides and currents and river information for trip planning.

- [www.weather.gov/seattle](http://www.weather.gov/seattle)
- [www.weather.gov/spokane](http://www.weather.gov/spokane)
- [www.weather.gov/portland](http://www.weather.gov/portland)
- [www.weather.gov/pendleton](http://www.weather.gov/pendleton)

### When in doubt, don't go out.

Weather can change quickly. Minimize your risks by being properly equipped and rescue ready. Carry essential gear, such as communications equipment, wear your life jacket, dress for water immersion, and don't boat under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

# 'WEATHER' OR NOT TO BOAT OR PADDLE

## 5 VITAL CHECKS

Plan ahead. Always check the weather forecast before heading out on the water. Pay attention to the following:

- 1. WARNINGS** are the highest priority forecasts. They alert boaters to potentially dangerous conditions expected in the next 24 hours. Winds of more than 21 knots indicate rough conditions for small boats.
- 2. WEATHER** affects safe boating and comfort. Take note of forecasts indicating reduced visibility from fog or rain or risks to safety from thunderstorms, lightning or squalls.
- 3. WIND** forecasts are the average wind speed in knots. Look at trends in wind speeds and shifts in wind directions over the day. Gusts can be up to 50 percent stronger than forecasted wind speed. Winds can cause choppy conditions that are especially dangerous for small boats under 21 feet.
- 4. WAVE** forecasts include swell and wave conditions. Waves vary in height from one to the next. The wave forecast describes the average height of the highest one-third of waves. Be prepared for waves higher than forecasted.
- 5. TIDES & CURRENTS** are just as vital to check along with weather. Obstructions can be hidden at high tide, and then become exposed and hazardous at low tide. Knowing tide times is critical for boats entering or exiting river entrances and crossing bars. Paddlecraft users will conserve energy by paddling with the tide.



[www.parks.state.wa.us/boating](http://www.parks.state.wa.us/boating)