

## PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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### **Boater Safety Education Bill Signed by Governor Gregoire**

OLYMPIA, WA, May 11, 2005 – Legislation that will require boat operators to take a boater safety education course in order to operate a boat in Washington State was signed into law by Washington Governor Christine Gregoire today. The legislation was developed by the Washington Alliance for Mandatory Boater Education (WAMBE) and was passed by both the Senate and House during the recent legislative session.

The law is patterned after similar legislation in Oregon and will require completion of a basic boating class, or passage of an equivalency exam, to obtain a Boater Education Card. The Boater Education Card will be required for operation of a boat with 15 horsepower or more.

“Up to now, 36 other states have had some sort of educational requirements for operating a boat, and now Washington is added to the list”, commented Steve Greaves, Chairman of the WAMBE group. “The Card is not like a driver’s license. It is obtained once and is good for life. The Card indicates that the boat operator has a basic level of boating safety knowledge, like a diploma.”

Like the Oregon law, the Washington law will have a phased-in period for compliance starting in 2008. For example, boaters 30 years of age and younger will be required to obtain their Card by January 1, 2010. Boaters born before January 1, 1955 will be exempt.

For the many thousands of Washington boaters who have already received a certificate of completion from a Coast Guard Auxiliary or U. S. Power Squadron boating safety class (or similar class), they need only supply a copy of their certificate along with a \$10 administrative fee to receive their lifetime Boater Education Card under the new law.

Operators without a Card may operate a boat provided they are under the supervision of an adult with a Card. Purchasers of new and used boats may operate their boats immediately and have 60 days after their purchase to obtain a Card. Cards issued by other states will be recognized in Washington and the Washington Card will be recognized in other states and Canada.

The Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission’s Boating Safety Program will administer the provisions of the new law. The administration of the law is totally supported by the \$10 Card user fee. The program is funded by boaters for boaters.

The WAMBE group was formed two years ago with the sole purpose being to develop and pass a bill concerning mandatory boater education in Washington. “With a majority of states already having mandatory boater education laws on the books, it was only a

matter of time before it would come to Washington State,” said Michael Campbell, President of the Northwest Marine Trade Association – one of the founding groups of the alliance. “We feel it’s important to have a law that is fair to boaters, encourages safety on the water, and yet doesn’t restrict access to boating.”

WAMBE is comprised of representatives from a variety of boating-related organizations. The alliance includes representatives of the boating industry, representatives of recreational boating groups, as well as government, law enforcement, and marine safety groups. “We’ve tried to include representatives from all facets of the boating arena in WAMBE”, commented David Kutz, Secretary of WAMBE and President of the Recreational Boating Association of Washington. “This has been a real team effort resulting in a sensible law that has broad support among boaters.”

The complete text of the new law and a complete listing of the organizations that have supported the concept of boater education in Washington are available on the WAMBE web site: [www.wambe.org](http://www.wambe.org).

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