



## PROPOSED: Boating Facilities Program Changes

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Public Comments requested by March 9, 2026

### Background

In preparation for the 2026 fall grant round, Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) staff worked with the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (board) to identify and consider policy changes to [Manual 9: Boating Facilities Program](#). To date, there have been multiple public meetings where these policy changes have been discussed:

- [October 28, 2025 \(Item 4\)](#) – RCO staff provided initial context for the effort and requested board direction on potential policy changes related to funding limits.
- [January 27, 2026 \(Item 9\)](#) – RCO staff requested board direction on general policy updates and alignments, as well as longer-term proposals related to eligible planning projects.

### Scope of Potential Changes

Public comment is being sought on the following items:

- Increase in local agency request limits for acquisition, development or combination projects.
- Increase in local agency request limits for planning projects.
- Increase in funding caps for individual worksites in a multisite project.
- General policies updates relating to state agency total request limits, length of transient moorage exclusive use, and timeline requirements for aquatic lands use authorizations.

The key goals of this intent and criteria update are to:

- Address increases in overall costs since funding request limits were last established.
- Better align policies with other grant programs, conform with best practices, and address operational issues.

## How to Comment

RCO is requesting public comment on the proposed policies in this document. Comments can be submitted by completing the web form at this link: <https://forms.office.com/g/M32dtj3eVY>.

The **Proposed Policies** section below is specifically formatted and designed to serve as a companion for completion of the web form.

Comments will be accepted until **11:59 pm on Monday, March 9, 2026**.

## Questions?

Questions about the proposed policy changes can be emailed to Nicholas Norton, Policy and Planning Specialist, at [nicholas.norton@rcowa.gov](mailto:nicholas.norton@rcowa.gov).

## Next Steps

RCO staff will utilize public feedback to inform the final proposed policy changes and associated staff recommendations to the board. The current timeline is for the board to review public comments, receive staff recommendations, and make final decisions on these policy items during their April 28-29 meeting. The public will also have an opportunity to comment on the final proposed changes during the board meeting.

If the board adopts any proposed changes, RCO staff will incorporate the new policy language and other administrative changes into [Manual 9: Boating Facilities Program](#) by late May. The Boating Facilities Program is currently scheduled to accept applications beginning in early August 2026.

## Key Funding Context

Over the last decade, the Boating Facilities Program (BFP) has seen substantive changes in funding and request dynamics. These changes are summarized below to help support decision-making about preferred policy options by the public.

- **Less Applications** – The number of applications to the state and local categories of BFP has steadily fallen between the 2016 and 2024 grant rounds. In 2016, there were 23

applications from local agencies and 21 from state agencies. In contrast, 2024 saw 11 applications from local agencies and 8 from state agencies.

- **High Success Rates** – Despite some variability across biennia, both the local and state categories of BFP have seen most applications funded. Across the last five grant rounds, an average of 87 and 81 percent of local agency and state agency projects, respectively, received funding.
- **Increased Project Costs** – The total overall project costs of BFP applications have increased dramatically in recent years. The average project costs of local agency applications increased from ~\$750,000 to ~\$1.15 million between the 2018 and 2024 grant rounds. Similarly, the average project costs of state agency applications increased from ~\$750,000 to ~\$1.75 million during that same time.
- **Declining Funding** – The total amount of project funding available for local and state agencies has slowly but steadily fallen. The 2016 grant round had ~\$17.2 million available, while the 2024 grant round had ~\$12.9 million available. This means that both local and state funding categories had about \$6.4 million available in the most recent grant round.

## Policy Changes Under Consideration

Current Policy	Issue Statement	Policy Options
<b>Local Acquisition, Development, or Combination Grant Limits</b>		
		No change.
Local agencies and Native American Tribes can request up to \$1 million for a development, acquisition, or combination project.	The costs of acquisition and construction have increased significantly since these grant limits were established in 2003.	Increase grant limits to \$1.5 million
State agencies have no limits on request amounts for a single project.		Increase grant limits to \$2 million.
		Increase grant limits to \$2.5 million
		Increase grant limits to \$3 million.
<b>Local Planning Grant Limits</b>		
		No change.
For planning projects, local agencies and Native American Tribes can request the lesser of \$200,000 or 20 percent of the estimated construction costs.	The costs of planning have increased significantly since these grant limits were established in 2003.	Increase planning grant limits to \$250,000.
State agencies have no limits on request amounts.		Increase planning grant limits to \$300,000.
	It is difficult to estimate construction costs prior to planning, and they can change significantly depending on minor scope changes or market conditions.	No change.
		Remove the 20 percent of estimated construction costs as a cap on planning projects.
<b>Multisite Projects</b>		

Funding for each worksite in a multisite project is limited to no more than \$50,000.	The costs of planning and construction have increased significantly since this multisite limit was established. For example, replacing a bathroom can cost over \$150,000 today.	No change. Increase multisite worksite cap to \$250,000. Remove funding cap and instead limit worksites per project.
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**State Agency Total Request**

The total BFP request by any single state agency may not exceed twice what is estimated by RCO to be available for state agencies in a grant cycle.	Agencies are scoping applications before RCO knows what to expect in terms of funding levels.  This artificially reduces the competitive environment and does not appear to be needed based on recent awards.	No change.  Remove state agency request limits.
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**Transient Moorage**

BFP currently caps exclusive use or moorage at fourteen days without an approved Use Certification from RCO.	The Boating Infrastructure Grant program caps exclusive use and moorage at fifteen days. The caps do not align.	No change.  Increase exclusive use or moorage to fifteen days.
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**State-owned Aquatic Lands**

Applicants are required to secure use authorization within sixty days after board funding approval and prior to agreement.	Use authorizations for state-owned aquatic lands may take longer than the sixty-day requirement, as agency staff must deal with highest priority permits first.	No change.  Remove timeline requirement relative to board funding meeting. Authorization still be required prior to signing agreement.
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