



## Government Affairs Committee Recap

January 9<sup>th</sup> 2026

Generated by AI. Be sure to check for accuracy.

Meeting notes:

- **Legislative Session and Budget Outlook:** Roman Daniels Brown and Jay Jennings provided an overview of the upcoming 60-day legislative session, highlighting the state's budget deficit, the governor's proposed income tax, and the implications for marine-related programs, with input from Bill Deveaux and other participants.
  - **Session Overview:** Roman Daniels Brown explained that the legislative session will be short and compressed, with a primary focus on the state budget due to a deficit following a significant tax increase the previous year. The session is expected to introduce various bills, but so far, few directly impact the marine sector.
  - **Governor's Budget Proposal:** Roman described Governor Bob Ferguson's budget as a 'cut budget,' which includes a proposed millionaire income tax at 9.9% for incomes over \$1 million. The proposal would require legislative and public approval, with implementation unlikely before 2029 due to expected legal challenges.
  - **Budget Deficit and Revenue Strategies:** Jay Jennings and Roman discussed the state's ongoing budget challenges, including reliance on the rainy day fund and the possibility of new taxes. Jay noted that the governor's budget often serves as a starting point for negotiations, typically featuring significant cuts that prompt lobbying for restored funding.
  - **Impact on Marine Programs:** Jay highlighted that state boating programs, DNR, and Fish and Wildlife are facing cuts in the governor's budget, with agencies expressing concern about reduced funding and the need for alternative support, such as private foundations.
- **Derelict Vessel Removal Funding and Legislation:** Jay Jennings, Roman Daniels Brown, Trevor Justin, and Marsha discussed the proposed \$5 million transfer from the derelict vessel removal account to the general fund, the status of derelict vessel legislation, and the implications for program stability and grant eligibility.
  - **Proposed Fund Transfer:** Jay explained that the governor's budget proposes a one-time transfer of \$5 million from the derelict vessel removal account, funded by the watercraft excise tax, to the general fund. This move is opposed by DNR and marine stakeholders, who are drafting a formal letter of opposition.
  - **Program Stability Concerns:** Marsha raised concerns about the impact of the fund transfer on the program's ability to respond to emergencies and on future grant eligibility, particularly if federal agencies perceive the funds as vulnerable to diversion.
  - **Stakeholder Responses:** Jay responded that while DNR is not happy with the proposed cut, they believe they can manage in the short term due to unanticipated federal receipts. However, the balance in the account is often already obligated, and stakeholders remain committed to protecting the fund for boating purposes.

- **Legislative Bill Status:** Roman and Trevor reported that the derelict vessel bill (HB 2199) has not yet been scheduled for a hearing. The bill aims to expedite vessel removal, but there are concerns about new language and administrative feasibility, which are being discussed with DNR and other stakeholders.
- **Industry Trends and Legislative Priorities:** John Dumas noted an increase in derelict vessels due to post-COVID boat purchases by inexperienced owners, emphasizing the importance of maintaining dedicated funding for vessel removal and making it a legislative priority.
- **Lobby Day and Industry Advocacy:** Jay Jennings and Tarin Todd announced the upcoming Voter Lobby Day in Olympia on January 29th, encouraging participation to advocate for recreational boating interests and address legislative issues such as derelict vessel funding.
  - **Event Details:** Jay provided information about the Lobby Day event, including registration details, the schedule (starting at noon with a group gathering and a reception at the Olympia Yacht Club), and the involvement of ARBA and the National Marine Manufacturers Association.
  - **Advocacy Goals:** The event aims to facilitate meetings with legislators to highlight the importance of recreational boating to Washington State and to advocate against the proposed fund transfer from the derelict vessel removal account.
  - **Encouragement for Participation:** Tarin emphasized the importance of industry presence at Lobby Day, especially given the ongoing legislative challenges, and encouraged members to attend for networking and advocacy opportunities.
- **Organizational Updates and Introductions:** Tabitha announced the appointment of Jason as the new CEO of Marine Floats, and participants including Tarin Todd, Matthew Orge, Wyatt, John Dumas, Sam LeClaire, Keith Cordeis, Arnie Hammerman, James Cockburn, Marsha, Katy Bivegni, Maury Moore Schuler, Jay Blasphus, Trevor Justin, Abbey Smeltzer, Bill Deveaux, and Brandon Baker introduced themselves and their affiliations.
  - **Leadership Change:** Tabitha shared that Jason is the new CEO of Marine Floats, succeeding Logan, and expressed optimism about upcoming changes and initiatives.
  - **Participant Introductions:** Participants from various organizations introduced themselves, outlining their roles and affiliations, including representatives from marinas, lobbying groups, marketing firms, and industry associations.
- **NOAA Permitting and Staffing Changes:** Tabitha and Jay discussed recent changes in NOAA permitting processes, including a temporary pause, subsequent resumption, and the introduction of new staff, which has led to repeated negotiations and adjustments.
  - **Permitting Process Update:** Tabitha reported that NOAA permitting experienced a pause but has since resumed, with new staff members now involved, requiring renewed discussions and re-argument of previously settled issues.

Follow-up tasks:

- **Derelict Vessel Removal Account Advocacy:** Draft and send a formal letter opposing the proposed \$5 million reduction from the derelict vessel removal account in the governor's budget. (Jay, DNR)
- **Lobby Day Preparation:** Distribute logistical and scheduling details for Lobby Day in Olympia to NMTA members prior to January 29th. (Jay)
- **Derelict Vessel Legislation Coordination:** Coordinate with DNR and ARBA to resolve concerns regarding language in the derelict vessel bill (2199) and ensure alignment on legislative intent before the bill is scheduled for hearing. (Trevor, Roman, Jay)

## **Attendees**

Jay Jennings  
Wyatt Asbury  
Tabitha Simonetti  
Tarin Todd  
Matthew Dortch  
Matthew's Notetaker  
William's Notetaker  
Matthew's Notetaker  
John Dumas  
Sam LeClercq  
Roman Daniels-Brown  
Keith Korthuis  
Jay Balasbas, JMB Strategies  
Trevor Justin  
Arnie Hammerman  
info rbaw.org  
James Cockburn  
Marsha McGruer  
Katy Bevegni  
Abbey Smelcer  
Brandon Baker  
Bill DeVoe  
Mary LaFleur  
Andrea Pierantozzi  
Jay Balasbas  
Ryan

## **Government Affairs Committee AGENDA**

**Welcome/Call to Order**

**Tarin Todd**

**Updates from Jay:**

**Jay Jennings**

**Boating Day in Olympia!! Thursday January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

**Roman/Jay**

**Olympia Update:**

**Jay/Roman/JayB**

*“The lead budget writer in the Washington Senate won't be accepting requests for new spending from individual lawmakers in the upcoming session. Sen. June Robinson, chair of Senate Ways and Means, let fellow legislators know in an email this week, blaming budget*

*troubles. “We don’t have money to pay for what is needed, let alone new spending that members might request,” Robinson told the Standard.”*

**Governor’s Proposed Supplemental Budget**

Derelict Vessel Removal Account: For transfer to 32 the state general fund, \$5,000,000 for fiscal 33 year 2027. . . . . \$5,000,000

During the 2025-2027 fiscal biennium, the legislature may direct the state treasurer to make transfers of money in the derelict vessel removal account to the general fund.

\$200,000 of the workforce education investment account—state appropriation is provided ((solely)) for the Bellingham Technical College maritime apprenticeship program.

***Prefiled Legislation:***

- HB 2131 Providing for voluntary donations to the sea lion predation control account at the time of vessel registration for the purpose of salmon level preservation.
- HB 2199 Reducing impacts from derelict vessels.
- SB 5851 Providing for donations to the sea lion predation control account at the time of vessel registration for the purpose of salmon level preservation.