

Program Development Committee Meeting Notes

Friday, April 15, 2022

9:00AM – 10:00AM

Participants: Commissioner Tom Pier, Nicole Ingot (DBW), Keren Dill (DBW), Andrea Lueker (Harbor Masters & Port Captains), Beau Biller (lobbyist, MRA), Jerry Desmond (lobbyist, RBOC), John Conover, Morris Lum (RBOC), Peter Zaleski, Todd Leutheuser (RBOC)

Preliminary

Ms. Dill reminded all participants of upcoming hybrid Commission Meeting on May 5th, welcome to attend virtually or in person in Ventura. Will be discussions of boating safety program and yacht brokers, among other topics.

Summary of Committee Activities to Date

Commissioner Pier led the discussions, beginning with a summary of topics discussed thus far in prior committee meetings:

1. Economic Impact Report – Data is extremely important; last study conducted in 1999. Still unknown what it would take to conduct an updated study.
2. Beach Erosion and Shoreline Restoration programs – gained an understanding the historical origins of these programs within DBW; committee concurs that program should remain at DBW but DBW is unfairly carrying the financial burden of these efforts; would be beneficial getting other stakeholders involved and other funding sources, such as general fund and local municipalities, etc.
3. Aquatic Invasive Species programs – committee reviewed the legislative origins of this program; seems to be a good fit for DBW with respect to Quagga and Zebra Mussels, but committee agrees that financial support for the invasive weed programs should be shared by other stakeholders utilizing the water and waterways, i.e. commercial shipping, agriculture, water purveyors, etc.;
4. SAVE Program – currently allocated \$2.75 million; committee concurs that prevention is a critical part and recommends the program continue to promote prevention of abandoned vessels from becoming problematic.
5. Loan Programs. Loans currently paused for lack of funding, but it is unknown if there is interest in starting up the program again. Data is uncertain.

Commissioner Pier reiterated that the committee has stopped just short of making full recommendations to the Commission. He will draft up a list of recommendations for the committee to review. Ms. Dill confirmed that presenting recommendations sooner rather than later is more favorable for the budgets office and the other committees. Presentation of preliminary recommendations to the other committees need not wait for a formal Commission Meeting as the committees are public processes. Member confirmed that recommendations will be identified in the next budget cycle.

New Business: Continued Program Evaluations:

Boating Safety Unit

- a. Boating Safety Financial Aid Program - \$11.5 million. Provides financial support to marine patrol entities that don't have sufficient boat tax revenue to fund marine patrol activities at their waterbodies. Support assists with staffing costs, utilities, gas, etc. Committee had no comments/recommendations for this program.
- b. Boating Accidents – \$65K, Committee had no comments/recommendations for this program.

- c. Yacht Licensing & Brokers – \$321,000. Program is similar to real estate licensing with comparable regulations and statutes for purchases (e.g., escrow) of used recreational vessels 16 feet or longer. Committee had no comments/recommendations for this program.
- d. Law Enforcement Training - \$475,000. DBW pays for the instructors, equipment, and reimburses participants for travel. Courses are POST and NASBLA certified, and they tend to fill up quickly on a first-come, first-served basis. Member commented in support of this program and finds the training opportunities beneficial and good for networking and on potential need to expand the program

Boat Launching Facility Programs - \$6 million

Discussion:

Member shared that they believe this program is an appropriate expenditure to provide public access to waterways and also expressed interest in what could be improved or made more efficient.

Another member confirmed support for the program and shared that main issue reported in the past is that projects sometimes go slower than desired, but that is the nature of construction. They also informed the committee that the program benefits from DBW staff visits after project completion to evaluate how projects are being used.

Member question: Is there a process for regular visitation of project sites?

Ms. Dill responded: DBW is very hands-on throughout the development of each project, including review of the engineering and design to ensure that the project will last for twenty years. DBW conducts site visits before, during, and after construction, although there isn't a formalized mechanism in place or the staffing availability to complete annual follow-ups, DBW is very responsive to boater complaints of inappropriate use at sites.

Member question: Is the funding amount enough for the program?

Ms. Dill responded: The Grants & Loans program receives \$6 million currently, which was more than needed in the past few years but is insufficient for the funding requested this year. DBW has been issuing press releases, promoted the program on social media, and sent letters to previous grantees (especially ones whose projects are 20+ years old) to generate interest in the program. One of the challenges the program has with many of the small local agencies is that many of them have not recovered from the 2008 recession, don't have sufficient expertise, funding, and often have quite a bit of staff turn-over.

Member question: Has DBW considered funding local salaries to mitigate the issue?

Ms. Dill responded: DBW has not considered supplementing local salaries of staff resources as initial local commitment of resources are a good indicator of a grantees commitment to the ongoing operation and maintenance of a project. There are alternate models though, Oregon has a model that lets them take control of the project area, do the work on behalf of the local entity, then turn the site back over to the local entity to operate and maintain. While intriguing, it would require structural changes in the Department. The model is challenged if local entities have insufficient resources to take care of the project for the 20 year grant term. Oregon has been doing this for about 15-20 years.

Member comment: Oregon has also recently instituted an annual pass for non-motorized boaters which helps to fund construction of non-motorized boating facilities has been very successful and may be worth exploring for California.

Action Items:

Committee members to review the remaining grant programs for comment.

Next meeting will focus on future programs the Committee would like the Department to consider implementing.