

1.1 Overview

Boating is one of the most popular outdoor recreation activities in Oregon. Residents and visitors have a diverse and abundant choice of waterways, from the Pacific Ocean with its many bays and inlets to cold mountain lakes, and majestic rivers. Oregon provides opportunities and settings for all forms of boating.

The Oregon State Marine Board, the state's recreational boating agency, was created in 1959 to help ensure that the state's waterways are safe and enjoyable for boating. Boaters of all types benefit from the Marine Board's programs, which include:

- boat registration and titling;
- boating and waterway regulation;
- grants for public boating access facilities and maintenance.
- marine law enforcement;
- safety and education;

These programs are self-supporting, paid for by boaters with registration/title fees and marine fuel taxes. Determining where and how to use boater funds – for example, where to build a new launch ramp or how many marine deputies are needed in a given county – are Board decisions that directly affect the quality and quantity of boating opportunities throughout the state.

The Board recognizes that these decisions must be based on accurate and current information. To get this information, the Board conducts a statewide survey of registered boat owners every three years.

This report, like the ones that proceed it, presents data describing the use patterns and opinions of thousands of boaters. Also, it includes comparisons of activities, use patterns and concerns from previous triennial surveys.

It is important to note that the survey results reflect only responses from owners of pleasure boats registered with the Board in 1997-98. These are non-commercial craft that are motorized, regardless of size, or sail boats 12 feet or longer.

A significant number of smaller sail boats and non-motorized crafts (canoes, rafts, drift boats, etc.) also use Oregon's waters and benefit from Board programs but cannot be represented in this survey because they are not registered. Also not included, although certainly of significant impact on our lakes and rivers, are boaters who visit Oregon from out of state. Although they may be registered in Oregon, commercial vessels such as tour boats and fishing boats or boats used as rentals, are also excluded from the survey.

The information presented in this document could only be obtained with the help of thousands of boaters who were randomly selected and then chose to participate. The Board appreciates the time and consideration these individuals took to reply to the survey. With the information they have provided, the Marine Board and other agencies will better understand boating in Oregon.

This chapter describes the overall context of boating in Oregon and the methodology used. The survey is based on the 1997-98 boating season.



1.2 Methodology

Questionnaires were sent to 6,839 randomly selected boat owners, or 3.5% of all owners. A total of 4,707 completed questionnaires were returned, a 73.6% rate of response.

To identify what activities boaters engage in, where they go, and what kinds of experiences they have on the state's waterways, a questionnaire was mailed to owners of randomly selected boats throughout Oregon. Since motorized craft and sail boats 12 feet or longer are required to be registered with the Board, the agency's computerized registration rolls provide the best source of names and addresses of large numbers of boat owners. There are no comparable lists for canoes, kayaks, rafts, drift boats or smaller sail boats, so owners of those watercraft, as well as operators of boats brought into Oregon from outside the state, could not be included.

The overall strategy included the following steps:

- Determine the sample size and sampling technique to assure adequate coverage of all parts of the state, including the more rural eastern counties;
- Devise a questionnaire that would retain continuity with previous surveys but add key questions without unduly lengthening the questionnaire;
- Mail questionnaires with postage-paid return envelopes, send postcard reminders to the entire sample after two weeks, and mail second questionnaires to non-respondents after one month;
- Ask selected respondents to recall their boating activities and experiences for the one-year period beginning October 1, 1997, and ending September 30, 1998 (referred to later in this report as the 1997-98 boating season).



The sampling methodology and questionnaire design were performed in cooperation with Oregon State University's Survey Research Center. In addition, Center staff input the responses and produced tabular results.

The survey instrument consisted of four pages with 18 questions, many of which had several subsections. A sample questionnaire is included in Appendix A. Three questions requested standard demographic information. The remaining questions asked boaters to provide information on their boating activities and

experiences for an entire year. The 1998 survey included new questions seeking boater views on mandatory education and on use fees at boating facilities. Inquiries about gender, membership in boating organizations, and boaters' means of access to water, were dropped from the questionnaire as these factors have not varied dramatically in past surveys.

The questionnaire was designed to acquire information that would help establish the following key measures of boater behaviors and opinions:

Boater information

Primary operator’s age and years of experience operating a boat.

Boater safety awareness and experience

Experience with safety course training, familiarity with media safety campaigns, and experience with safety problems or conditions encountered.

Boat operation not specific to a waterbody or location

Assistance received while boating.

Typical trip profile

Gallons of gas used daily and yearly.

Boater experience with law enforcement

Incidence of equipment inspection, warnings or citations received, courtesy or service evaluation of officers and law enforcement problems on waterways.

Waterway and site use

Use days; trips; activity days for fishing, sailing, water skiing, cruising and riding personal watercraft (often known by brand names such as Jet Ski, SeaDoo, etc.); and experiences with waterway problems and conditions.

Statewide boating statistics

Monthly and seasonal use of boats; total days of use statewide; number of trips; days of use per trip; days of use for fishing, sailing, water skiing, cruising and personal watercraft riding; and use days by county and basin.

To determine an appropriate sample size, the same percentage used in the 1995 survey (3.5 percent) served as a guide. For the 1998 survey, 6,839 boat owners were selected from a data base of 201,161. The data base total exceeded the number of registered pleasure boats (197,315 at the time of the survey), as it included commercial vessels and rental craft. The response rate from the boaters selected was 73.6 percent (4,707 responses).

The sample is stratified by county, so that counties with large number of boats are not disproportionately represented and counties with few boats under represented. This also ensures suitable levels of precision for each county. The selected precision was ± 10 percent for counties with lower numbers of registered boats, as in eastern Oregon, and ± 4 percent for counties with higher numbers of registered boats, as in western Oregon.

The sample size ranged from 681 for the most-populous county, Multnomah, to 69 for Wheeler County. The sample size for each county is shown in the right hand margine note on this page.

Survey Sample by County

1-Baker	139
2-Benton	144
3-Clackamas	495
4-Clatsop	143
5-Columbia	144
6-Coos	160
7-Crook	138
8-Curry	142
9-Deschutes	253
10-Douglas	201
11-Gilliam	86
12-Grant	126
13-Harney	124
14-Hood River	136
15-Jackson	276
16-Jefferson	135
17-Josephine	145
18-Klamath	145
19-Lake	120
20-Lane	479
21-Lincoln	144
22-Linn	181
23-Malheur	140
24-Marion	337
25-Morrow	126
26-Multnomah	681
27-Polk	141
28-Sherman	91
29-Tillamook	143
30-Umatilla	144
31-Union	140
32-Wallowa	127
33-Wasco	139
34-Washington	361
35-Wheeler	69
36-Yamhill	144

