



STATE OF WASHINGTON
BOARD OF PILOTAGE COMMISSIONERS

2901 Third Avenue, Suite 500 | Seattle, Washington 98121 | (206) 515-3904 | www.pilotage.wa.gov

2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION
Agency Request Legislation

[RCW 88.16.190](#) Oil Tankers – Restricted waters - Requirements

Background: Working through the deliverables of 2019 Legislation ESHB 1578 *Reducing the threats to southern resident killer whales by improving the safety of oil transportation* (The Act), the Board of Pilotage Commissioners, with support from the Department of Ecology, adopted tug escort operational requirements for oil tankers, Articulated Tug Barges (ATBs), and towed oil barges between 5,000 and 40,000 deadweight tons. The findings adopted November 20, 2025, and effective as of December 21, 2025, indicated that the current statutory requirement for tug escorts on tankers 40,000 – 60,000 deadweight tons was not sufficient and did not match industry standards or best practices.

Findings: Using “aggregate shaft horsepower equivalent to at least 5% the deadweight tons of the escorted vessel” as required per [RCW 88.16.190\(2\)\(a\)\(i\)](#):

Key Points:

→ There is already an industry standard and best practice to use at least 3,000 HP tugs for escorting larger vessels. The standard is enforced by the pilots that are required to be on those vessels by law.

→ This is a technical fix based on extensive research conducted as a part of the Tug Escort Rulemaking process.

→ The impact on industry, the environment, etc. is negligible because this is already in practice.

DWT	HORSEPOWER	SOURCE
5,000	2,000	Rulemaking
10,000	2,000	Rulemaking
15,000	2,000	Rulemaking
20,000	2,000	Rulemaking
25,000	2,000	Rulemaking
30,000	3,000	Rulemaking
35,000	3,000	Rulemaking
40,000	2,000	RCW
45,000	2,250	RCW
50,000	2,500	RCW
55,000	2,750	RCW
60,000	3,000	RCW

Proposed Change:

12 (2)(a)(i) An oil tanker of ((forty)) 40,000 to ((one hundred
13 twenty-five thousand)) 125,000 deadweight tons may operate in the
14 waters east of a line extending from Discovery Island light south to
15 New Dungeness light and all points in the Puget Sound area, including
16 but not limited to the San Juan Islands and connected waterways and
17 the waters south of Admiralty Inlet, to the extent that these waters
18 are within the territorial boundaries of Washington, only if the oil
19 tanker is under the escort of a tug or tugs that have an aggregate
20 shaft horsepower ((equivalent to)) of at least 3,000 or five percent
1 of the deadweight tons of the escorted oil tanker, whichever is
2 greater.

Sheri J. Tonn, Chair

Sheri.Tonn@wsdot.wa.gov

Jaimie C. Bever, Executive Director

Jaimie.Bever@wsdot.wa.gov



Who We Are

The Board is tasked with the regulation of marine pilotage in Washington State. The mission of the Board is to ensure against the loss of lives, loss of or damage to property and vessels, and to protect the marine environment by maintaining efficient and competent pilotage service in our state's inland waters.

The Board develops and proposes statutory language for legislative adoption to ensure safe and compulsory pilotage, adopts rules to administer State pilotage laws, and enforces pilot and public adherence to the Pilotage Act. The Board also administers testing, training, and licensing of marine pilots, and establishes standards for reporting and investigating incidents involving state-piloted vessels.



We are an independent small state agency housed in Washington State Ferries facilities in Seattle. There are three full-time staff, an Executive Director, Training Program Manager, and Program Analyst. Seven of our nine commissioners are gubernatorial appointees. One commissioner is a Department of Ecology appointee, and our Chair is a designee of the WSDOT Deputy Secretary for Washington State Ferries and a WSF part-time employee.

The BPC operates with an annual budget of roughly \$1.7M. Operating revenue is derived from pilot annual license fees, a training program surcharge in the Puget Sound pilotage tariff, and fees from vessel exemptions from pilotage.

Detailed information can be found on our website at <https://pilotage.wa.gov> and in our [Annual Reports](#).

