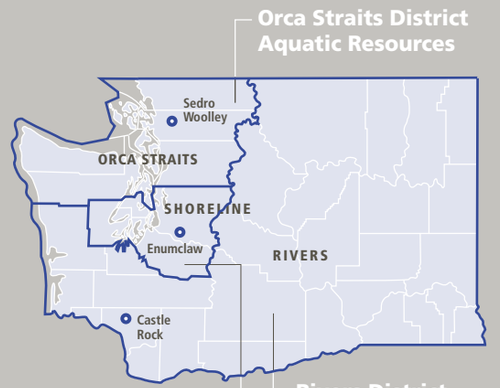
Aquatic Resources District Offices

DNR manages the 2.6 million acres of State Aquatic Lands statewide—lands under the marine and fresh waters, and beaches. These mostly-submerged lands offer aquatic habitat, navigation, commerce, and public use and access. DNR's aquatic districts provide on-the-ground management.



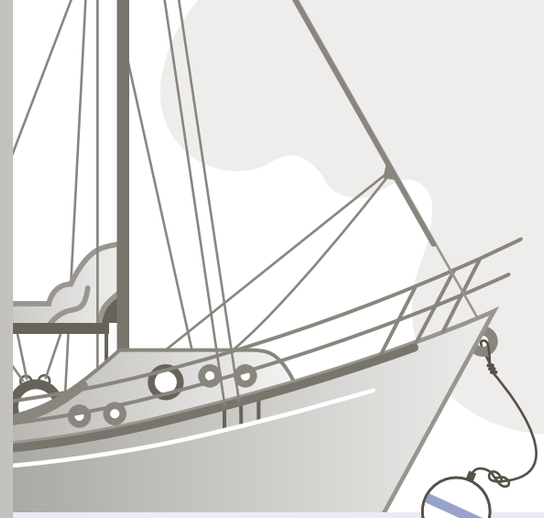
For more information, please contact:
Stacy Birk-Risheim
Email: buoy@dnr.wa.gov
1111 Washington St. SE,
Olympia, WA 98504-7027
360-902-1068

Mooring buoy information and application are online at www.dnr.wa.gov — Type 'mooring buoy' in the upper right search tool.

Need Help With Your Permits?
For assistance preparing permits, contact the **Office of Regulatory Assistance**. They provide statewide environmental permit information, at **(360) 407-7037** or **1-800-917-0043**

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources

UPDATED 10/14



Recreational Mooring Buoys

For Residential Owners Next to State-Owned Aquatic Lands

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources



Shoreline Residents May Moor a Boat on State Aquatic Lands

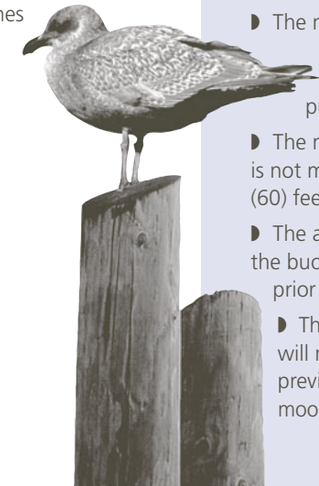
Laws Change for Recreational Mooring Buoys

The 2001 and 2002 Legislatures passed laws about recreational mooring buoys. Individuals who own residential property abutting state-owned aquatic lands may install a mooring buoy on those public lands for recreational purposes without charge.

The law prohibits commercial and transient uses, and living on boats moored to recreational buoys on state lands. It limits boats to sixty feet or less in length, and allows for a second buoy to help secure moorage to the first buoy.

It directs disputes over the assertion of rights to superior court, and it defines the circumstances around which Washington's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) may require a buoy to be relocated or removed:

- To protect access of other landowners;
- If it poses a hazard to or obstructs navigation or fishing;
- If it contributes to degradation of aquatic habitat;
- If it contributes to decertification of shellfish beds.



Qualifying for Free Use of State Lands for Your New Mooring Buoy

Residential owners of "uplands" next to state aquatic lands might qualify for free use of the state lands to install a recreational buoy.

A mooring buoy qualifies for free use if the conditions meet all of these criteria:

- The applicant owns residential property next to state-owned shorelands, tidelands, or related beds of navigable waters (other than harbor areas);
- The moored boat is used for private recreational purposes;
- The moored boat is not more than sixty (60) feet in length;
- The area being used for the buoy is not subject to prior rights;
- The mooring buoy will not obstruct use of previously authorized mooring buoys;
- The mooring buoy is located on state aquatic lands, but as near to the shore of residence as practical; and
- All applicable local, state, and federal rules and regulations have been met.

If your buoy meets these criteria, fill out the mooring buoy/boatlift application at www.dnr.wa.gov. Mail it to DNR's Aquatic District Office in your area, listed here.

Boatlifts on state aquatic lands require the same application. Boatlifts have a yearly fee.

ABOVE PHOTO: LEIGH ESPY / DNR

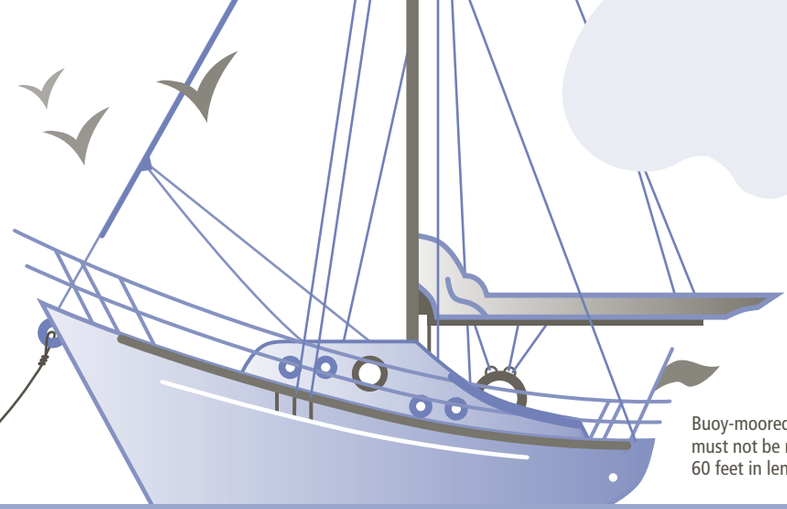
USE REQUIREMENTS

Although residential landowners whose property abuts state aquatic lands may use a recreational mooring buoy for free, they are still responsible for meeting requirements for the installation of the buoy, including:

- **State Registration with DNR**
  Complete an application.
- **City Restrictions**
  If you live within city limits, allowable uses vary. Contact your city's planning office for requirements.

Contact the following agencies to determine if a permit or authorization is required:

- **WA Department of Fish and Wildlife Hydraulic Project Approval**
  (360) 902-2534
- **WA Department of Ecology**
  (360) 407-6400
- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Permit)**
  (206) 764-3495
- **Shoreline Master Program (Permit or Exemption)**
  Requirements differ by county, addressed through your local county planning office.



Buoy-moored boat must not be more than 60 feet in length.

PLEASE NOTE

Private recreational mooring buoys are not authorized for residential (living on the boat) or commercial purposes.

FOR RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY OWNERS

How to Moor Your Boat On State-Owned Aquatic Lands

CHOOSE A MOORING SYSTEM DESIGN

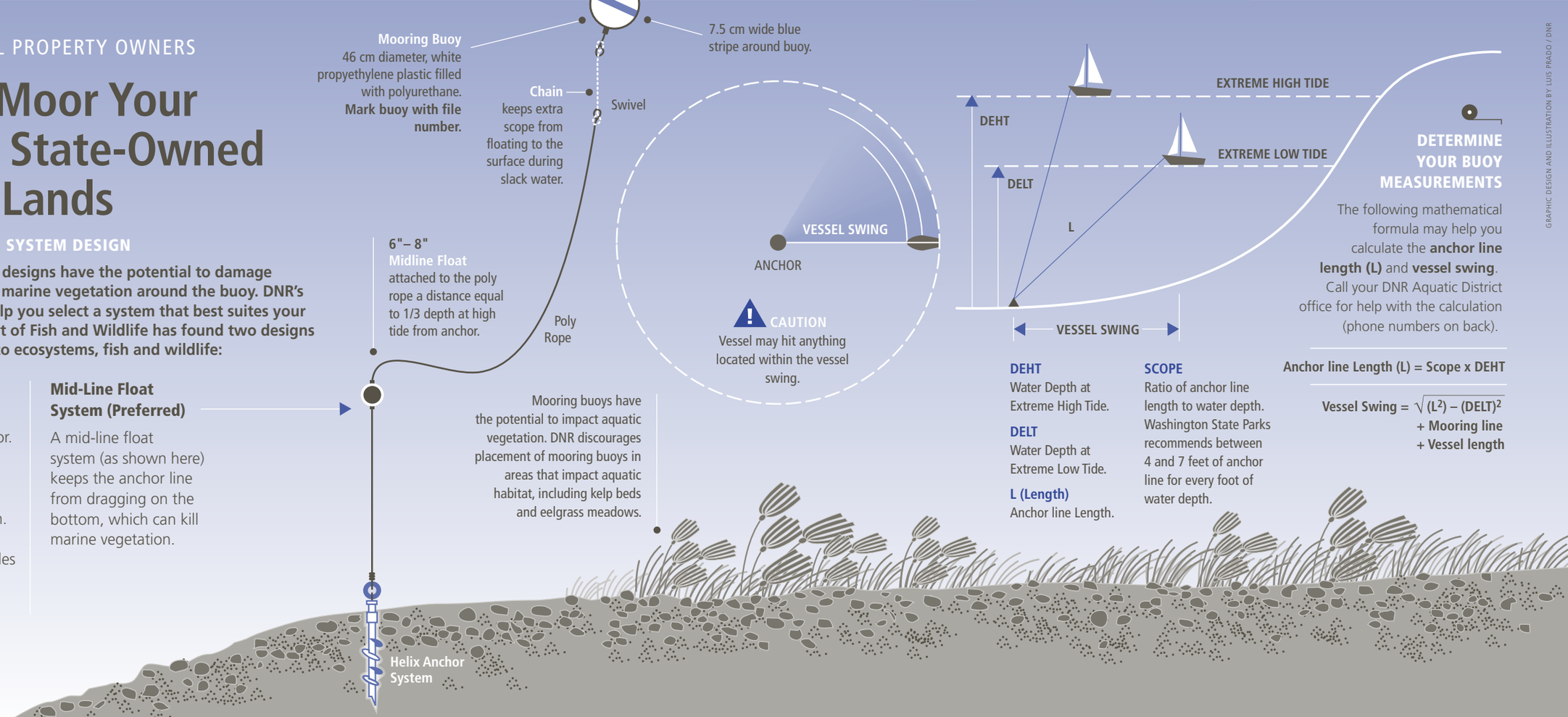
Some mooring system designs have the potential to damage underwater lands and marine vegetation around the buoy. DNR's Land Managers can help you select a system that best suites your area. State Department of Fish and Wildlife has found two designs to be less destructive to ecosystems, fish and wildlife:

All-Rope System

High-strength nylon rope joins buoy to anchor. The rope's buoyancy keeps it from dragging along the bottom and killing marine vegetation. Regular maintenance is required to keep barnacles and mussels from colonizing on the rope and weighing it down to scour the area.

Mid-Line Float System (Preferred)

A mid-line float system (as shown here) keeps the anchor line from dragging on the bottom, which can kill marine vegetation.



DETERMINE YOUR BUOY MEASUREMENTS

The following mathematical formula may help you calculate the **anchor line length (L)** and **vessel swing**. Call your DNR Aquatic District office for help with the calculation (phone numbers on back).

Anchor line Length (L) = Scope x DEHT

Vessel Swing = $\sqrt{(L^2) - (DELT)^2}$ + Mooring line + Vessel length

DEHT
Water Depth at Extreme High Tide.

DELT
Water Depth at Extreme Low Tide.

L (Length)
Anchor line Length.

SCOPE
Ratio of anchor line length to water depth. Washington State Parks recommends between 4 and 7 feet of anchor line for every foot of water depth.

GRAPHIC DESIGN AND ILLUSTRATION BY LUIS PRADO / DNR