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Exempt Action: Proposed Regulation Agency Background Document

Agency name	DWR
Virginia Administrative Code (VAC) Chapter citation(s)	4VAC15-380
VAC Chapter title(s)	Watercraft: Motorboat Numbering
Action title	May 2026 – Ch. 380
Date this document prepared	5/29/2026

This information is required for executive branch review pursuant to Executive Order 19 (2022) (EO 19), any instructions or procedures issued by the Office of Regulatory Management (ORM) or the Department of Planning and Budget (DPB) pursuant to EO 19. In addition, this information is required by the Virginia Registrar of Regulations pursuant to the Virginia Register Act (§ 2.2-4100 et seq. of the Code of Virginia). Regulations must conform to the Regulations for Filing and Publishing Agency Regulations (1 VAC 7-10), and the *Form and Style Requirements for the Virginia Register of Regulations and Virginia Administrative Code*.

Brief Summary

Provide a brief summary (preferably no more than 2 or 3 paragraphs) of this regulatory change (i.e., new regulation, amendments to an existing regulation, or repeal of an existing regulation). Alert the reader to all substantive matters. If applicable, generally describe the existing regulation.

Section 120:

The proposed amendments increase motorboat registration fees by \$5 as allowed by §29.1-701.1 as well as assigns a fee of \$15 to issue a temporary motorboat registration certificate.

Mandate and Impetus

Identify the mandate for this regulatory change, and any other impetus that specifically prompted its initiation (e.g., new or modified mandate, internal staff review, petition for rulemaking, periodic review, or board decision). For purposes of executive branch review, "mandate" has the same meaning as defined in the ORM procedures, "a directive from the General Assembly, the federal government, or a court that requires that a regulation be promulgated, amended, or repealed in whole or part."

Section 120:

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources administers numerous programs that support boaters on the waters of Virginia, including boat registration, titling, and customer service; boating safety law enforcement (including boat incident investigation); boating education and safety training and public awareness; waterways management (including administration of regulatory markers); and public boating access maintenance and renovation. These services are paid for, in part by fees paid to register and title watercraft. In 2025, the DWR issued more than 72,000 registrations; more than 27,500 titles; more than 7,000 duplicates, changes of motor, and recordation of supplemental lien; and over 400 livery registrations. Registrations are issued for a three-year period; titles are typically a one-time transaction. Under its authorities outlined in the Code of Virginia (§29.1-701.1), the Board of Wildlife Resources may, by regulation, adopt revisions to fees charged for motorboat registration certificates and certificates of title. These fees may not be raised or lowered more than once every three years and by not more than \$5 at any one time. The Board of Wildlife Resources last considered fee changes in 2019. The temporary registration certificate, authorized in the Code (§29.1-703.1) with a \$10 fee, has never been adjusted. In 2025, the DWR issued more than 8,000 temporary registration certificates.

Since the Board's last action on registration and titling fees, there has been a 25% increase in salaries of state employees; significant increases in printing and postage needed for registration, titling, and education activities; and increased costs for equipment, such as boats and motors (and related gas/oil), needed for on-the-water patrols and inspections of waterway markers. Construction and related materials costs have increased more than 40% since 2020, meaning that the DWR is only able to address renovation of one or two of its 230 facilities annually with current revenues. Demand for additional access to public waters is well-documented not only in the DWR's Boating Access Site and Facilities Management Plan, but also in the updated Virginia Outdoors Plan, where access to water continues to be one of the top 10 most desired outdoor recreation opportunities, identified as the fourth most needed outdoor recreation asset.

While the DWR has made great strides in moving registration, titling, and educational programming online, which have reduced certain costs, those systems must be maintained and upgraded to provide quality service to constituents. Enforcement of laws and regulations that protect public recreating on Virginia waters, and providing access, remain top priorities with an increased number of boats in the state. The proposed updated fees would help offset increased costs across all program areas, allowing the agency to still meet the needs of anglers, boaters and recreationists on Virginia's waters. Accounting for a relatively minor churn rate of 3%, the agency expects this increase to generate about \$556,000 in additional annual revenue.