# *Abandoning a boat is expensive - to the owner and Washington's waters*

**Local News**

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OLYMPIA - Is your boat more of an anchor than an outlet for everyday stress? Have you had serious thoughts of abandoning ship? Is the cost of boating more than you imagined? Is your boat an environmental stimulus or deficit? In the current economic downturn, some items considered luxuries or non-essential may get set aside or neglected. However, there is a right way -- and a wrong way -- to deal with a boat you can no longer afford. Allowing a boat to sink into the deep blue is not the answer. Every year Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) gets numerous reports of boats sinking. And when boat's sink, fuel, oil, grease, solvents and other pollutants often get spilled to state waters. Under state law, the penalty for allowing oil and other petroleum products to spill to water has increased fivefold. A negligent boat owner could face a fine of up to $100,000 a day. Additionally, boat owners are responsible for spill clean-up costs and for the expense of restoring damages done to the environment.

Boating can be a great way to relax. But in this economy and with the high fuel prices, if it becomes unaffordable, consider making any needed repairs and putting it up for sale. While the market for new boats may be slipping, boats in good condition may still find a home. Consider doing some basic maintenance to get it ready to sell or sail. With boating season just days away, there are buyers looking for affordable boats that are well maintained. A small investment in maintenance could make the difference between sinking and sailing. "There is no such thing as a maintenance-free boat of any size," said Ecology's Spills Prevention Section Manager Chip Boothe. "The integrity of a boat depends entirely on a regular program of inspection, maintenance and repair." Boothe said the time for a maintenance check up is now, BEFORE you launch your boat for the season. Here are some steps you can take to get your boat ready to sell or use in the coming season: Start with a basic tune-up by replacing spark plugs, checking for oil and fuel leaks, and examining the clamps for rust or corrosion. Replace any old, stiff or cracking hoses that might fail. Failed hoses can cause fuel spills too.Drain used oil using a pump to prevent drips or spills into the bilge. Contain the waste and take the used oil to an oil recycling location.Check the bilge area for oily residue, and clean thoroughly with absorbent materials. Never use detergents on oily bilge water. Detergents make the problem worse and it is illegal to discharge the soapy water. Insert an oil-absorbent bilge pillow in the area as a safeguard for future leaks.Check the bilge pump, and make sure both the automatic and manual operation work. Test the warning alarm system.Check the battery for water level and for corrosion on the terminals. Recharge or replace your battery. When replacing batteries, turn the core into the dealer or use a hazardous waste recycling center. (Do not discard batteries into a dumpster. Most batteries contain lead and/or cadmium, both of which are harmful to the environment.)Inspect the cockpit drains to make sure they are clear and will drain rain water or spray from boats or waves. Check fuel tanks for leaks, damage or corrosion.For major repairs and all bottom paint work, including bottom cleaning, pull the boat out of the water and take it to a permitted boatyard that captures any discharges. Anti-fouling paints contain toxic materials such as copper, zinc and lead that are harmful to marine life.Check the hull for punctures or cracks - and repair. As little as a quart of spilled oil, diesel or gasoline can contaminate acres of water and can prove deadly to marine life, particularly in shallow waters. Juvenile fish, shellfish larvae and other

essential sea life are extremely sensitive to even small amounts of oil or fuel products. There are several boating fairs coming up that could prove to be a great advertising opportunity for boat owners. Here are a few: Tacoma - Clean, Green Boating Fair, May 2, 2009, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., Delin Docks Marina, Thea Foss Waterway, Downtown TacomaSeattle - Seattle Yacht Club Opening Day Races and Parade, May 2, 2009, 10 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., SeattleSequim - Boat Parade, May 2, 2009, 2 p.m. - 4 p.m., SequimMukilteo - Boat Parade, May 2, 2009, Mukilteo Yacht Club, Mukilteo Be a good steward of our waters and report all fuel and oil spills by calling 800-OILS-911 and the U.S. Coast Guard at 800-424-8802. Reporting is mandatory and fines can increase for failing to notify state and federal authorities about a spill.