

**Boating Safety Unit**  
**Division of Boating and Waterways**  
**For-Hire Vessel Operator Licensing Program**  
**August 4, 2026**

**Program Summary:**

The Department of Parks and Recreation, Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW) issues For-Hire Licenses to operators on vessels propelled by machinery carrying more than three passengers on 'non-navigable' waters for a valuable consideration, whether directly or indirectly flowing to the owner, charterer, operator, agent or any other person interested in the vessel. These requirements are designed to provide an added measure of protection for the public. To obtain a For-Hire Vessel Operators License an application and medical examination report needs to be submitted to DBW. Once the applicant has met all requirements, passed the examination and practical, a five-year license is issued to the applicant to operate a for-hire vessel on the specific waters defined on the license.

**2026 Outcome:**

The Division allocated \$10,000 in funding for proctoring the For-Hire License exam. There are currently (343) active For-Hire licensees in the State. The program is facilitated by (1) Staff Services Analyst who serves as the program coordinator and (1) contractor who serves as the exam proctor.

**Goals and Objectives of the program for 2027:**

- DBW is currently working with our Parks IT section in the testing phase of a web-based application system. This will streamline the process for the end user and staff when submitting and reviewing applications. Currently, applications must be submitted via email or mail. DBW will have the ability to query information from this database as well. We're currently working on the development and testing phase.
- DBW is currently working to establish a fee for the for-hire operator program pursuant to Assembly Bill AB865 which requires this program to be cost neutral. DBW plans to consult with other for-hire businesses to help in creating a fee that allows this program to be cost-neutral but also allows the business to not sustain a financial hardship.