



## Mercer Island Marine Patrol – Legislative Priority

Support Representative Tana Senn in seeking State funding to replace the aging City Of Mercer Island Marine Patrol fleet

**The City of Mercer Island requests \$1,100,000 in State funds to partially support the replacement of Mercer Island Police Department’s aging Marine Patrol vessels, a regional asset for the individuals who reside and recreate on Lake Washington.**

The Mercer Island Police Department has maintained a state-certified Marine Patrol Unit since it was founded in 1982. At its founding, the unit became a regional asset as other cities on Lake Washington signed Interlocal Agreements for marine-related services for their respective cities. **Today, the Mercer Island Police Department has Interlocal Agreements with the cities of Medina, Bellevue, and Renton and the Towns of Yarrow Point and Hunts Point for their water-based services.** Mercer Island is also part of a larger regional public safety umbrella comprised of the Seattle Police Department’s Harbor Patrol, King County Sheriff’s Office Marine Patrol, and the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. Lake Washington is a federal navigable waterway, and Mercer Island partners with the US Coast Guard for enforcement and maritime-related rescue operations.

The Washington State Department of Licensing reports that more than 237,000 recreational marine vessels are registered in the State of Washington. A study by the University of Washington indicates approximately 40,850 recreational marine vessels are registered in King County, with an additional 5,400 vessels from other counties moored within King County. In 2021, over 1,800 new recreational marine vessels were purchased in King County. The other large group of vessels, which is difficult to fully quantify, is the ever-growing number of human-powered watercraft such as kayaks, canoes, and stand-up paddleboards, representing an additional and particularly at-risk portion of the recreating public in Mercer Island’s jurisdiction.

Since its inception, the Mercer Island Marine Patrol Unit has dedicated its resources to public safety, education, maritime law enforcement, and public assistance on and off the water. The Police Department has **22 certified Marine Patrol Officers**, able to respond twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, to emergency and routine calls for service. **Marine Patrol Officers patrol the waters of Lake Washington and the approximate 34 miles of shoreline comprising its operational jurisdiction.** Officers respond to emergency calls for vessel collisions, search and rescue missions, vessel, and shore accessible fire suppression, boating under the influence, and more routine calls such as disabled vessels, debris, and hazard removal.

**Mercer Island, Marine Patrol vessels spend approximately 900 hours on patrol, which equates to more than 2,000 officer hours on the water.** Marine Patrol Officers conduct 200-250 Vessel Safety Inspections, 300 plus vessel stops and contacts, 100 assists, and 100s of citizen contacts each year. In the off-season, the Marine Unit participates in a wide range of educational outreach through kindergarten water safety classes, public safety events, marine/boat shows, and news/radio/podcast interviews. **The Marine Unit supports the safety and security of significant state infrastructure, including the I-90 and SR-520 Bridges, Renton Municipal Airport, and the Sound Transit light rail system.**

**Mercer Island’s current patrol vessel fleet consists of three vessels, two built in the 1990s and one in the early 2000s.** With a life expectancy of approximately 20 years, two of these marine patrol vessels are experiencing increasing mechanical and other failures, challenging our important mission to provide critical water safety services and enforcement. Advancements in marine technology make newly purchased vessels safer, more ergonomic, and more reliable than our current fleet.

**This request for legislative funding will support the replacement of one to two vessels and the associated equipment.** Washington State manufacturers and laborers will design and build new vessels, putting the funds directly back into our local communities.