



COLORADO

**Department of
Regulatory Agencies**

Colorado Office of Policy, Research &
Regulatory Reform

2025 Sunset Review

Water Vessel Registration



October 15, 2025



COLORADO

**Department of
Regulatory Agencies**

Executive Director's Office

October 15, 2025

Members of the Colorado General Assembly
c/o the Office of Legislative Legal Services
State Capitol Building
Denver, Colorado 80203

Dear Members of the General Assembly:

The Colorado General Assembly established the sunset review process in 1976 as a way to analyze and evaluate regulatory programs and determine the least restrictive regulation consistent with the public interest. Pursuant to section 24-34-104(5)(a), Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.), the Colorado Office of Policy, Research and Regulatory Reform (COPRRR) at the Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) undertakes a robust review process culminating in the release of multiple reports each year on October 15.

A national leader in regulatory reform, COPRRR takes the vision of their office, DORA and more broadly of our state government seriously. Specifically, COPRRR contributes to the strong economic landscape in Colorado by ensuring that we have thoughtful, efficient, and inclusive regulations that reduce barriers to entry into various professions and that open doors of opportunity for all Coloradans.

As part of this year's review, COPRRR has completed an evaluation of the vessel registration program. I am pleased to submit this written report, which will be the basis for COPRRR's oral testimony before the 2026 legislative committee of reference.

The report discusses the question of whether there is a need for the regulation provided under Article 13 of Title 33, C.R.S. The report also discusses the effectiveness of Division of Parks and Wildlife in carrying out the intent of the statutes and makes recommendations for statutory changes for the review and discussion of the General Assembly.

To learn more about the sunset review process, among COPRRR's other functions, visit coprrr.colorado.gov.

Sincerely,

Patty Salazar
Executive Director





Water Vessel Registration

Background

What is regulated?

Unless exempt, any vessel operated on the waters of Colorado or at a vessel staging area must be registered with the Division of Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and display that registration number on the vessel's bow.

Why is it regulated?

Funds raised through the vessel registration program (Program) support CPW's boating safety activities (including on-water inspections and in-person educational programs), maintain recreational boating facilities such as boat ramps and affiliated parking lots, and are used in the U.S. Coast Guard's calculations for federal matching funds under the Federal Recreational Boating Safety Grant Program. Those grant dollars are used, in turn, to further fund CPW's boating safety activities.

Who is regulated?

In 2024, a total of 71,616 vessels were registered with CPW.

How is it regulated?

To register a vessel, the owner of the vessel must complete the required application, pay the required fee and present proof of ownership. CPW then provides the owner with a vessel registration number that must be displayed on both sides of the vessel's bow, along with an expiration decal.

What does it cost?

In fiscal year 23-24, CPW spent \$107,296 to administer the Program with 1.18 FTE.

What disciplinary activity is there?

In fiscal year 23-24, CPW personnel issued 70 citations for registration violations.

Key Recommendations

- Continue the vessel registration program indefinitely.

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Background

Sunset Criteria

Enacted in 1976, Colorado's sunset law was the first of its kind in the United States. A sunset provision repeals all or part of a law after a specific date, unless the legislature affirmatively acts to extend it. During the sunset review process, the Colorado Office of Policy, Research and Regulatory Reform (COPRRR) within the Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) conducts a thorough evaluation of such programs based upon specific statutory criteria¹ and solicits diverse input from a broad spectrum of stakeholders including consumers, government agencies, public advocacy groups, and professional associations.

Sunset reviews are guided by statutory criteria and sunset reports are organized so that a reader may consider these criteria while reading. While not all criteria are applicable to all sunset reviews, the various sections of a sunset report generally call attention to the relevant criteria. For example,

- In order to address the first criterion and determine whether the program under review is necessary to protect the public, it is necessary to understand the details of the profession or industry at issue. The Profile section of a sunset report typically describes the profession or industry at issue and addresses the current environment, which may include economic data, to aid in this analysis.
- To address the second sunset criterion--whether conditions that led to the initial creation of the program have changed--the History of Regulation section of a sunset report explores any relevant changes that have occurred over time in the regulatory environment. The remainder of the Legal Framework section addresses the fifth sunset criterion by summarizing the organic statute and rules of the program, as well as relevant federal, state and local laws to aid in the exploration of whether the program's operations are impeded or enhanced by existing statutes or rules.
- The Program Description section of a sunset report addresses several of the sunset criteria, including those inquiring whether the agency operates in the public interest and whether its operations are impeded or enhanced by existing statutes, rules, procedures and practices; whether the agency or the agency's board performs efficiently and effectively and whether the board, if applicable, represents the public interest.
- The Analysis and Recommendations section of a sunset report, while generally applying multiple criteria, is specifically designed in response to the fourteenth criterion, which asks whether administrative or statutory changes are necessary to improve agency operations to enhance the public interest.

¹ Criteria may be found at § 24-34-104, C.R.S.

These are but a few examples of how the various sections of a sunset report provide the information and, where appropriate, analysis required by the sunset criteria. Just as not all criteria are applicable to every sunset review, not all criteria are specifically highlighted as they are applied throughout a sunset review. While not necessarily exhaustive, the table below indicates where these criteria are applied in this sunset report.

Table 1
Application of Sunset Criteria

Sunset Criteria	Where Applied
(I) Whether regulation or program administration by the agency is necessary to protect the public health, safety, and welfare.	• Profile of the Industry • History of Regulation • Recommendation 1
(II) Whether the conditions that led to the initial creation of the program have changed and whether other conditions have arisen that would warrant more, less, or the same degree of governmental oversight.	• History of Regulation
(III) If the program is necessary, whether the existing statutes and regulations establish the least restrictive form of governmental oversight consistent with the public interest, considering other available regulatory mechanisms.	• Legal Framework
(IV) If the program is necessary, whether agency rules enhance the public interest and are within the scope of legislative intent.	• Legal Framework
(V) Whether the agency operates in the public interest and whether its operation is impeded or enhanced by existing statutes, rules, procedures, and practices and any other circumstances, including budgetary, resource, and personnel matters.	• Legal Framework • Program Description and Administration
(VI) Whether an analysis of agency operations indicates that the agency or the agency's board or commission performs its statutory duties efficiently and effectively.	• Program Description and Administration
(VII) Whether the composition of the agency's board or commission adequately represents the public interest and whether the agency encourages public participation in its decisions rather than participation only by the people it regulates.	• Not applicable
(VIII) Whether regulatory oversight can be achieved through a director model.	• Not applicable
(IX) The economic impact of the program and, if national economic information is not available, whether the agency stimulates or restricts competition.	• Profile of the Industry

Sunset Criteria	Where Applied
(X) If reviewing a regulatory program, whether complaint, investigation, and disciplinary procedures adequately protect the public and whether final dispositions of complaints are in the public interest or self-serving to the profession or regulated entity.	Complaint Activity
(XI) If reviewing a regulatory program, whether the scope of practice of the regulated occupation contributes to the optimum use of personnel.	Program Description and Administration
(XII) Whether entry requirements encourage equity, diversity, and inclusivity.	Not applicable
(XIII) If reviewing a regulatory program, whether the agency, through its licensing, certification, or registration process, imposes any sanctions or disqualifications on applicants based on past criminal history and, if so, whether the sanctions or disqualifications serve public safety or commercial or consumer protection interests. To assist in considering this factor, the analysis prepared pursuant to subsection (5)(a) of this section must include data on the number of licenses, certifications, or registrations that the agency denied based on the applicant's criminal history, the number of conditional licenses, certifications, or registrations issued based upon the applicant's criminal history, and the number of licenses, certifications, or registrations revoked or suspended based on an individual's criminal conduct. For each set of data, the analysis must include the criminal offenses that led to the sanction or disqualification.	Not applicable
(XIV) Whether administrative and statutory changes are necessary to improve agency operations to enhance the public interest.	Recommendation 1

Sunset Process

Regulatory programs scheduled for sunset review receive a comprehensive analysis. The review includes a thorough dialogue with agency officials, representatives of the regulated profession and other stakeholders. Anyone can submit input on any upcoming sunrise or sunset review on COPRRR's website at coprrr.colorado.gov.

The functions of the Division of Parks and Wildlife (CPW), as enumerated in Article 13 of Title 33, Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.), shall terminate on September 1, 2026, unless continued by the General Assembly. During the year prior to this date, it is the duty of COPRRR to conduct an analysis and evaluation of the vessel registration program pursuant to section 24-34-104, C.R.S.

The purpose of this review is to determine whether the currently prescribed regulation should be continued and to evaluate the performance of CPW. During this review, CPW must demonstrate that the program serves the public interest. COPRRR's findings and

recommendations are submitted via this report to the Office of Legislative Legal Services.

Methodology

As part of this review, COPRRR staff interviewed CPW staff, and officials with state and national professional associations; and Colorado statutes and rules, and the laws of other states.

The major contacts made during this review include, but are not limited to:

- Boat History Report
- Colorado Marine Dealers Association
- Division of Parks and Wildlife
- U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

Profile of the Industry

In a sunset review, the Colorado Office of Policy, Research and Regulatory Reform (COPRRR) is guided by the sunset criteria located in section 24-34-104(6)(b), C.R.S. The first criterion asks whether regulation or program administration by the agency is necessary to protect the public health, safety, and welfare.

To understand the need for regulation, it is first necessary to recognize what the profession does, where they work, who they serve and any necessary qualifications.

Colorado boasts a plethora of recreational waters for residents and visitors to enjoy. In fact, recreational waters are located throughout the state. There are a variety of types of vessels that are utilized to enjoy recreational waters, including, but not limited to:

- Sailboats,
- Kayaks,
- Jet skis,
- Canoes,
- Ski-doo's,
- Motorized boats, and
- Non-motorized rafts.

Although not all of the aforementioned watercraft are required to obtain a registration in order to operate on Colorado waters, generally, motorized boats, sailboats, jet-skis and ski-doo's must obtain a registration. In fiscal year, 23-24, there were more than 71,000 vessels registered in Colorado.

The ninth sunset criterion requires COPRRR to evaluate the economic impact of regulation. In 2023, recreational boating represented a \$230 billion economic impact in the United States.²

² National Marine Manufactures Association. *Recreational Boating*. Retrieved September 17, 2025, from <https://www.nmma.org/advocacy/economic-impact/recreational-boating>

Legal Framework

History of Regulation

In a sunset review, the Colorado Office of Policy, Research and Regulatory Reform (COPRRR) is guided by the sunset criteria located in section 24-34-104(6)(b), Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.). The first and second sunset criteria question:

Whether regulation or program administration by the agency is necessary to protect the public health, safety, and welfare; and

Whether the conditions that led to the initial creation of the program have changed and whether other conditions have arisen that would warrant more, less or the same degree of governmental oversight.

One way that COPRRR addresses this is by examining why the program was established and how it has evolved over time.

The Federal Boating Act of 1958 required the secretary of the department in which the U.S. Coast Guard is housed to develop a system for numbering vessels using the navigable waterways of the United States and authorized the secretary to approve state numbering systems.

The Federal Boat Safety Act of 1971 was enacted to encourage states to join in boating safety efforts and assume a larger role in boating safety education, assistance and enforcement activities.³ Although the Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) Grant Program created in that act expired in 1979, it was reestablished in the Recreational Boating Safety and Facilities Improvement Act of 1980.⁴

The purpose of Colorado's vessel registration program is to comply with the RBS Grant Program guidelines, which enables Colorado to receive federal funds under that program, and to promote the safety of people and property in connection with the use, operation and equipment of vessels.⁵

Historically, a vessel was any type of watercraft used or capable of being used as a means of transportation of persons and property on the water, other than single-chambered air-inflated devices or seaplanes.

Unless specifically exempted, all vessels were required to be registered in Colorado. Examples of such exempted vessels included:

³ U.S. Coast Guard. *State Grants: History*. Retrieved September 11, 2025, from www.uscgboating.org/grants/state-grants-history.php

⁴ U.S. Coast Guard. *State Grants: History*. Retrieved September 11, 2025, from www.uscgboating.org/grants/state-grants-history.php

⁵ § 33-13-101, C.R.S.

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- Canoes,
 - Kayaks,
 - Non-motorized or hand-propelled craft, and
 - Vessels registered in another jurisdiction.

House Bill 88-1088 clarified that any vessel that is neither a motorboat nor a sailboat, including sailboards, is exempt from the registration requirement.

Senate Bill 95-196 lowered the criminal penalty for failure to register a vessel from a Class 1 misdemeanor to a Class 2 petty offense.

That same year, COPRRR conducted the first sunset review of the vessel registration program, recommending that the program be continued.

The program's organic statute was amended again in House Bill 96-1077, by clarifying that law enforcement personnel may seize a vessel if the officer has probable cause to believe that the vessel does not lawfully belong to the person in possession of it.

In 2010, COPRRR conducted another sunset review, which recommended continuation of the program and discontinuance of further sunset reviews. The General Assembly continued the program but did not enact the provision to remove it from the sunset schedule.

In 2015, COPRRR conducted another sunset review, and again, recommended continuing the program indefinitely and removing it from the sunset schedule. The General Assembly continued the program but did not enact the provision that recommended removing it from the sunset schedule.

Legal Summary

The third, fourth and fifth sunset criteria question:

Whether the existing statutes and regulations establish the least restrictive form of governmental oversight consistent with the public interest, considering other available regulatory mechanisms;

Whether agency rules enhance the public interest and are within the scope of legislative intent; and

Whether the agency operates in the public interest and whether its operation is impeded or enhanced by existing statutes, rules, procedures, and practices and any other circumstances, including budgetary, resource, and personnel matters.

A summary of the current statutes and rules is necessary to understand whether regulation is set at the appropriate level and whether the current laws are impeding or enhancing the agency's ability to operate in the public interest.

Federal Law

The Secretary of Homeland Security (Secretary) is required to develop a standard numbering system for all vessels equipped with propulsion machinery of any type that is used on the waters of the United States.⁶ Specifically exempt from this requirement are:⁷

- Foreign vessels temporarily using waters subject to United States jurisdiction;
- Military or public vessels of the United States, except recreational-type public vessels;
- A vessel, the owner of which is a state or a subdivision thereof, which is used principally for governmental purposes, and which is clearly identifiable as such;
- Ships' lifeboats; and
- A vessel which has or is required to have a valid marine document as a vessel of the United States.

Each such number must:⁸

- Be painted on or permanently attached to each side of the forward half of the vessel,
- Be in plain vertical block characters of not less than three inches in height,
- Contrast with the color of the background and be distinctly visible and legible,
- Have spaces or hyphens that are equal to the width of a letter other than "l" or a number other than "1" between the letter and number groupings, and
- Read from left to right.

Colorado Law

To ensure that Colorado's registration and numbering of vessels complies with federal laws and to promote the safety of people and property in connection with the use of vessels,⁹ the General Assembly enacted Article 13 of Title 33, C.R.S.

Vessels are defined as:¹⁰

⁶ 46 U.S.C. § 12302(a); 33 C.F.R. § 173.11

⁷ 33 C.F.R. § 173.11

⁸ 33 C.F.R. § 173.27

⁹ § 33-13-101, C.R.S.

¹⁰ § 33-23-102(5)(a), C.R.S.

Every description of watercraft used or capable of being used as a means of transportation of persons and property on the water, including all types of paddleboards.

Importantly, the term “vessel” does not include the following:

- Any single-chambered, air-inflated devices that are not stand-up paddleboards; or
- Seaplanes.

It is unlawful for a person to operate a vessel on the waters of Colorado or to possess a vessel at a vessel staging area unless the vessel is numbered and a certificate of the number has been issued to the vessel by the Division of Parks and Wildlife (CPW).¹¹ Specifically exempt from this registration requirement are:¹²

- Vessels that are neither motorboats nor sailboats,
- Vessels holding a valid marine document issued by the federal government,
- Vessels that are in Colorado for less than 60 consecutive days and that are numbered in accordance with applicable federal law or in accordance with the numbering system of another state,
- Vessels from a foreign country that are temporarily using the waters of Colorado,
- Vessels that have been exempted after CPW has found that the numbering of vessels of such a class will not materially aid their identification, and
- Sailboards.

A motorboat is any vessel propelled by machinery, whether or not such machinery is the principal source of propulsion.¹³ This includes personal watercraft,¹⁴ which are designed to be operated by a person sitting, standing or kneeling on the vessel, rather than the conventional manner of sitting or standing inside the vessel.¹⁵

Individuals who are between 14 and 18 years old can operate a motorboat if they:¹⁶

- Complete a boating safety course approved by CPW; and
- Possess a boating safety certificate issued by the boating safety course provider.

A sailboat is any vessel propelled by the effect of wind on a sail. However, any vessel propelled by both sail and machinery is deemed to be a motorboat.¹⁷

¹¹ § 33-13-103(1), C.R.S.

¹² § 33-13-103(1), C.R.S.

¹³ § 33-13-102(1), C.R.S.

¹⁴ § 33-13-102(1), C.R.S.

¹⁵ § 33-13-102(3.3), C.R.S.

¹⁶ § 33-13-107.1(2), C.R.S.

¹⁷ § 33-13-102(4), C.R.S.

To register a vessel, the owner must file an application with CPW and pay the applicable fee.¹⁸ The application solicits a variety of information about the owner and the vessel itself (such as hull material, length, type of fuel used and the primary purpose of the vessel) and proof of ownership.¹⁹

Once approved, CPW must issue a registration to the owner stating the number issued to the vessel.²⁰ All vessel registrations expire on December 31 of the year of issuance.²¹ All fees are credited to the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Cash Fund for the administration of Article 13 of Title 33, C.R.S.²² Failure to register a vessel constitutes a Class 2 petty offense and is punishable by a fine of \$100.²³

The vessel registration certificate must be pocket size and must always be on board the vessel when the vessel is in operation. Failure to comply with this requirement is a civil infraction and is punishable by a \$50 fine.²⁴

Registration numbers must be painted or attached to each side of the bow on the forward half of the vessel, consist of block characters that are at least three inches in height, be of a color that contrasts with the color of the background and read from left to right.²⁵

Although canoes, kayaks, sailboards and non-motorized rafts are not required to secure a registration, they must be marked with the owner's name and current address in a legible, clearly visible and durable fashion. Failure to properly mark such craft constitutes a petty offense punishable by a fine of \$15.²⁶

If there is probable cause to believe that a vessel is not in the lawful possession of the operator, every CPW officer and other peace officer may seize and hold such vessel.²⁷

If the seizing agency determines that the vessel was lawfully possessed, the agency may return the vessel and require that a hull identification number be obtained.²⁸ If the agency determines that the vessel was not lawfully possessed, the agency may commence a court action to determine whether the vessel should be destroyed, sold,

¹⁸ § 33-13-104(1), C.R.S.

¹⁹ 2 CCR § 405-2-200(1), Division of Parks and Wildlife Rules.

²⁰ § 33-13-104(1), C.R.S.

²¹ § 33-13-103(2), C.R.S.

²² § 33-13-104(4), C.R.S.

²³ § 33-13-103(4), C.R.S.

²⁴ § 33-13-104(2), C.R.S.

²⁵ § 33-13-104(1), C.R.S.

²⁶ § 33-13-103(5), C.R.S.

²⁷ § 33-13-105(1), C.R.S.

²⁸ § 33-13-105(4), C.R.S.

converted to the use of the seizing agency or otherwise disposed of.²⁹ If the court orders the vessel sold, the proceeds are credited to the state's General Fund.³⁰

No person can operate a personal watercraft unless every person on board wears a personal flotation device approved by the U.S. Coast Guard.³¹

Every vessel operating on Colorado waters must have the following on board:³²

- One personal flotation device approved by the U.S. Coast Guard and in a readily accessible place of storage for each person on board, except sailboard operators who can wear a wet suit;
- When in operation during hours of darkness, a light sufficient to make the vessel's presence and location known to all other vessels within a reasonable distance; and
- A vessel that is not entirely open and if it is carrying any inflammable or toxic fluid in any enclosure, must have an efficient and/or mechanical ventilation system.

Any violation of the aforementioned requirements is a petty offence, which is punishable by a fine of \$100.³³

²⁹ § 33-13-105(3), C.R.S.

³⁰ § 33-13-105(7), C.R.S.

³¹ § 33-13-106(1), C.R.S.

³² § 33-13-106(3), C.R.S.

³³ § 33-13-106(5), C.R.S.

Program Description and Administration

In a sunset review, the Colorado Office of Policy, Research and Regulatory Reform (COPRRR) is guided by sunset criteria located in section 24-34-104(6)(b), Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.). The fifth and sixth sunset criteria question:

Whether the agency operates in the public interest and whether its operation is impeded or enhanced by existing statutes, rules, procedures, and practices and any other circumstances, including budgetary, resource, and personnel matters;

Whether an analysis of agency operations indicates that the agency or the agency's board or commission performs its statutory duties efficiently and effectively.

In part, COPRRR utilizes this section of the report to evaluate the agency according to these criteria.

Colorado's vessel registration program (Program) is administered by the Division of Parks and Wildlife (CPW), which is housed in the Colorado Department of Natural Resources.

Table 2 highlights the Program's total expenditures and the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) employees working with the Program in fiscal years 19-20 through 23-24. Importantly, these FTE are partially funded by the Program but are not solely dedicated to it.

Table 2
Program Expenditures and FTE

Fiscal Year	FTE	Expenditures
19-20	1.04	\$66,100
20-21	0.97	\$109,815
21-22	0.89	\$64,934
22-23	0.94	\$115,657
23-24	0.88	\$107,296

In fiscal year 24-25, CPW devoted 1.18 FTE to the Program. The FTE are as follows:

0.29 FTE Administrator IV - This person manages the Program's day-to-day operations. This position manages full-time and temporary staff, reconciles revenue and serves as the subject matter expert for boat registration procedures.

0.27 FTE Program Assistant I - This position is in charge of inventory and consignment control and serves as a primary liaison for dealers.

0.62 FTE Administrative Assistant II - These positions act as the Program's customer service representatives, providing face-to-face and telephone-based customer service at the Program's headquarters in Littleton.

CPW's boating safety program is funded through two primary sources: the fees CPW collects for registering vessels and a grant awarded by the U.S. Coast Guard under the Federal Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) Grant Program. The Program comprises only a portion of the duties conducted by CPW staff related to boating safety.

Table 3 illustrates the Program revenue from fees in fiscal years 19-20 through 23-24.

Table 3
Program Revenue from Fees in Fiscal Years 19-20 through 23-24

State Fiscal Year	Revenue from Fees
19-20	\$3,164,886
20-21	\$3,164,083
21-22	\$2,709,165
22-23	\$2,843,451
23-24	\$2,837,870

Revenue from fees fluctuated slightly over the course of the reporting period.

Table 4 highlights the grant dollars awarded to Colorado under the RBS Grant Program for boating safety.

Table 4
Program Revenue from RBS Grant Program Funds

Federal Fiscal Year	U.S. Coast Guard Grants
19-20	\$1,001,338
20-21	\$1,121,403
21-22	\$1,180,175
22-23	\$1,133,505
23-24	\$1,157,060

Revenue from the RBS Grant Program remained relatively stable over the course of the reporting period.

Registration

The eleventh sunset criterion questions whether the scope of practice of the regulated occupation contributes to the optimum use of personnel.

In part, COPRRR utilizes this section of the report to evaluate the program according to this criterion.

Any boat with a motor or sail is required to obtain a registration from CPW, including jet skis, ski-doo's and personal watercraft. In order to secure a registration, an applicant is required to complete an application, obtain an aquatic nuisance species (ANS) stamp from CPW and pay the applicable fee. An ANS is a plant or animal that harms lakes, reservoirs, rivers and streams. ANS can also include non-native viruses and parasites that may cause disease in fish.³⁴ Typically, registrations are processed by CPW staff within two to four weeks.

Additionally, applicants for a registration are required to include one acceptable proof of ownership document such as:³⁵

- A bill of sale that includes both the seller and buyer's printed names and signatures, the vessel's identification number, make, model and year, as well as the date of sale;
- A previous registration certificate issued by a governmental entity that lists the applicant as a registered owner;
- A manufacturer's certificate/ statement of origin;
- A certificate of title;
- Any court issued document proving ownership; or
- A physical inspection form completed by a CPW agent.

Once a registration application is processed by CPW staff, a registration number is assigned to the vessel. The registration number must be painted or attached to each side of the bow on the vessel.

The registration number is required to be displayed in the following manner:³⁶

- Read from left to right in block characters of a good proportion,
- Be a minimum of three inches in height,
- Be a color that contrasts with the color of the background,
- All letters and numbers must be maintained in a manner so to be clearly visible and legible at all times,

³⁴ Colorado Parks and Wildlife. *Aquatic Nuisance Species*. Retrieved September 17, 2025, from <https://cpw.state.co.us/aquatic-nuisance-species>

³⁵ Colorado Parks and Wildlife. *Registration Application*. Retrieved September 9, 2025, from <https://cpw.widen.net/s/tmsfcgmkqv/boatohvsnowmobileregistration>

³⁶ Colorado Parks and Wildlife. *Register a Boat*. Retrieved September 9, 2025, from <https://cpw.state.co.us/register-boat>

- The yearly decals must be placed on the left side of the registration number on both sides of the vessel, and
- No other number can be carried on the bow of the vessel.

All vessel registrations are valid until December 31 of the year of issuance. The current registration fees are as follows:

- Vessels less than 20 feet - \$35.25
- Vessels 20 feet to less than 30 feet - \$45.25
- Vessels 30 feet or greater - \$75.25

The current fee for the aquatic nuisance species stamp for Colorado residents is \$25 and it is \$50 for non-residents.

The following are exempt from the registration requirements:³⁷

- Boats propelled manually (canoes, kayaks, paddleboards and non-motorized rafts);
- Foreign vessels;
- Vessels that have a valid registration and are numbered correctly in the state of principal use and not used in Colorado for more than 60 consecutive days; and
- Non-resident racing boats on the day before and the day of and at the site of a CPW-authorized race.

Importantly, canoes, kayaks, paddleboards and non-motorized rafts are not required to be registered with CPW, but they must be marked with the owner's name, and current address in a legible, clearly visible and durable fashion.

Table 5 illustrates the total number of registered vessels in calendar years 2020 through 2024.

Table 5
Total Vessel Registrations in Calendar Years 2020 through 2024

Calendar Year	Vessel Registrations
2020	79,972
2021	78,959
2022	70,564
2023	71,999
2024	71,616

As Table 5 indicates, the total number of vessel registrations declined by just over 10 percent during the five years examined. With the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, CPW, as

³⁷ Colorado Parks and Wildlife. *2025 Boating Handbook*. Retrieved September 9, 2025, from <https://cpw.widencollective.com/assets/share/asset/okpaia5lmz>

well as all other conservation agencies across the country, saw historical increases in most, if not all, user groups, including registrations and licensing as the public went outside for recreation purposes. CPW saw historically high numbers of fishing licenses sold, attendance in parks, hunting applications and other registrations. The decline in vessel registrations from calendar years 2020 and 2021 highs, to approximately 71,000 registrations in 2024 is likely related to conditions during the pandemic, and a return to the mean once the pandemic was over.

Boating Safety Course

The eleventh and twelfth sunset criteria question whether the scope of practice of the regulated occupation contributes to the optimum use of personnel and whether entry requirements encourage equity, diversity and inclusivity.

In part, COPRRR utilizes this section of the report to evaluate the program according to these criteria.

Although not part of the Program, CPW's boating safety courses are a beneficiary of it. Vessel registration fees, along with RBS Grant Program funds and course participant fees (\$15 per person), fund these boating safety courses offered by CPW personnel. Private entities can also offer boating safety courses, but they do not receive funding from CPW and they establish their own fees.

Although anyone can take a boating safety course, Colorado requires all individuals 14 to 18 years of age to successfully complete a CPW boating safety course before operating a vessel in the state.

Table 6 illustrates, for the five fiscal years indicated, the number of in-person and online boating safety courses completed.

Table 6
Boating Safety Courses

Fiscal Year	CPW in-person Courses	Online Courses	Total Courses Completed
19-20	576	951	1,527
20-21	433	1,025	1,458
21-22	238	1,039	1,277
22-23	347	880	1,227
23-24	710	973	1,683

As Table 6 indicates, there were more online courses completed than in-person courses in each of the last five fiscal years.

Complaints

The tenth sunset criterion requires COPRRR to examine whether complaint, investigation and disciplinary procedures adequately protect the public and whether final dispositions of complaints are in the public interest or self-serving to the profession or regulated entity.

In part, COPRRR utilizes this section of the report to evaluate the program according to these criteria.

CPW received no formal complaints of vessels failing to be registered in the past five fiscal years. Rather, enforcement is primarily achieved through boat safety inspections. While the focus of such inspections is to ensure that a vessel is equipped in accordance with the law (i.e., floatation devices, engine cutoff switches and proper lighting), a component includes verification of registration.

As a result, the data in Table 7 illustrate, for the fiscal years indicated, the number of safety inspections performed by CPW officers. Note that local law enforcement agencies can also conduct similar inspections, but those are not reflected here.

Table 7
Boat Safety Inspections

Fiscal Year	Number of Inspections
19-20	22,200
20-21	18,180
21-22	11,540
22-23	11,540
23-24	13,100

As Table 7 indicates, there was a decrease in the number of inspections from 22,220 in fiscal year 19-20 to 13,100 in fiscal year 23-24. Generally, the decrease is attributable to less staff to oversee the program.

If a vessel is not registered, and is not exempt, a citation can be issued. Table 8 illustrates the number of registration violations issued by CPW officers. Note that local law enforcement agencies can also issue citations for failure to register, but those are not reflected here.

Table 8
Registration Violations

Fiscal Year	Number of Violations
19-20	18
20-21	22
21-22	44
22-23	44
23-24	70

Oftentimes, CPW officers may simply issue a warning if a vessel is not registered. This is particularly true if there are both safety and registration violations. Since the registration violation is viewed as administrative in nature, greater emphasis is placed on the safety issues.

Regardless, citations for registration violations entail a fine of \$100.

Analysis and Recommendations

The final sunset criterion questions whether administrative and statutory changes are necessary to improve agency operations to enhance the public interest. The recommendations that follow are offered in consideration of this criterion, in general, and any criteria specifically referenced in those recommendations.

Recommendation 1 – Continue the vessel registration program indefinitely.

The first sunset criterion asks whether regulation is necessary to protect the health, welfare and safety of the public.

Colorado’s vessel registration program (Program) is administered by the Division of Parks and Wildlife (CPW), which is housed in the Colorado Department of Natural Resources. The funds raised through the Program, in turn, fund a variety of CPW activities, including boating safety inspections, boating safety educational courses and physical infrastructure such as boat ramps and affiliated parking lots at state parks.

Boat ramps and parking lots contribute to state’s welfare by enabling Coloradans and tourists to utilize the bodies of water at which such facilities are located.

Program registration fees also at least partially fund CPW’s boating safety activities. These activities include boating safety inspections and boating safety courses. In 2024, there were 44 accidents on Colorado’s waters, resulting in 21 deaths, 18 non-fatal injuries, and 10 included property damage.³⁸ Thus, recreational boating can be dangerous and efforts to reduce that danger clearly increase the public’s health and safety.

Additionally, the Program ensures that the state continues to receive Federal Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) Grant Program dollars. This is a federal matching program that brings in more than \$1.1 million to the state each year. In order to receive these grant funds, the state must maintain a vessel registration system that complies with federal requirements. The Program satisfies this requirement.

The Colorado Office of Policy, Research and Regulatory Reform has conducted several sunset reviews of the Program, including in 1995, 2010 and 2015. These sunset reviews did not recommend substantive changes to the Program. Indeed, as long as RBS Grant Program dollars are tied to maintaining a compliant vessel registration program, it appears likely that such a program will continue. In the event the federal program changes, CPW can seek legislation independent of a sunset review to ensure continued state compliance.

³⁸ 2024 *Recreational Boating Statistics*, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Coast Guard, Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety (2025), p. 58.

Therefore, the General Assembly should remove the Program from the sunset schedule by continuing the Program indefinitely.