

# SCA

small craft advisory



- Program helps kids who learn differently
- NASBLA evaluates boating education
- A visit to Louisiana after the oil spill
- Technology improves night vision

**November-December 2010**

Vol. 25 No. 6

National Association of State Boating Law Administrators

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**ON THE COVER:** Available in a variety of formats, the main purpose of boating safety education courses is to teach boaters how to be safe while enjoying our nation's waters. On-water learning can also help people with learning differences gain confidence along with safe boating skills, as the boaters in the cover photograph are learning during a summer session of the Brendan Sail Training Program. *Brendan Corporation photo*



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with recycled  
content



# SCA

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The official publication of the National Association  
of State Boating Law Administrators

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# Boating safety professionals dedicated to education

With this issue of *Small Craft Advisory* focusing on boating safety education, I would like to provide some reflection and insights about boating safety professionals. The boating safety educators who comprise a large part of our membership are passionate – always going the extra mile to ensure their program may save someone's life in the future.

Having served as the Education Committee Board Liaison, I witnessed firsthand the expertise and the commitment to excellence of our Education & Standards Committee members. In 2010, this committee worked diligently to provide the membership with some excellent final products.

The Marketing and Outreach Subcommittee tested the Wear It and Operation Dry Water messages in a series of focus groups in three states. Data for these focus groups will be available in a report this fall. With many member states currently using social networking sites, this subcommittee has provided a "start up" guide for agencies that are just beginning to use social networking sites as an outreach tool.

The Standards and Best Practices Subcommittee provided the membership with a set of 14 recommended guidelines for school-based boating and water safety programs.

The Boating Course Administration Subcommittee created a set of guidelines for states and course providers on how to assess instructor competency and determine what qualifications are needed for instructors.

Additionally, a set of Delivery and Presentations Standards for online courses (Standard 9 and 10) was approved by the NASBLA membership during the NASBLA Annual Conference in September. The updated standards, which will take effect on January 1, 2012, are available at <http://www.nasbla.org>.

Across the U.S. and Canada, 94 different

states, private companies and organizations currently provide NASBLA-approved boating safety courses to recreational boaters. This number is an all-time high, yet, the Recreational Boating Statistics published by the USCG show that 86 percent of the boating fatalities for 2009 involved operators who had not taken a boating safety course.

The boating safety education courses currently available to the public are informative, comprehensive courses but we need to double our efforts to get our message out to the public to take better advantage of these courses to safely operate their boat on our waterways. Currently, 48 out of 56 states and territories target only certain types of boats or certain ages with boating education requirements. Boating safety education courses hold the key for safe and enjoyable boating.

On another matter, I am proud to announce the formal release of the Basic Crew Member Course, under NASBLA's Boat Operations and Training (BOAT) Program. NASBLA's Director of Law Enforcement, John Fetterman, along with our project partners – the U.S. Coast Guard Office of Boat Forces, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the National Safe Boating Council – established a nationally standardized course curriculum to teach basic boat crew operations to a wide variety of marine law enforcement officers, first responders and others who support recreational boating safety and related maritime public safety missions. The Basic Crew Member course is the cornerstone of the NASBLA BOAT Program, providing state and local maritime partners with established national base-line training standards that enhance our ability to make our waterways secure and safe.

Please join me in congratulating the NASBLA BOAT Program Team on another quality training program offered by this organization. You make us proud! 🌟

# Students Love Our Online Education Courses!



## Play:

It's no wonder that 40 Boater Education Coordinators have approved BoaterExam's online course over the past 5 years. Coordinators know that any student completing one of our state approved online courses has been exposed to all boater education topics in a fully narrated, interactive study guide – successfully answering 100's of illustrated exam questions.

Our goal is to get more boaters out on the water having fun. **Securely and safely.**



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# We get letters

Dear Editor,

Just a note to let you know that I enjoyed the 50th anniversary edition of SCA very much. It brought back fond memories of a great time in my life.

I am very proud of the work that we did in those early years that led to the foundation of a viable and valuable organization for the boaters and water users of our nation and extension to the world. Many of the issues that we worked on are still in place, with the numbers changing considerably.

I would have loved to have been with you in person for the 50th, but I was there in spirit.

Keep up the good work.

Dale Morey

Retired Wisconsin Boating Law Administrator  
Past NASBLA President (1982)

Editor,

I'm an experienced mariner having served as Flotilla Commander in the Auxiliary, a Squadron Commander in the US Power Squadron (JN), hold a current 100-ton Master's License, and have sailed extensively in the Mediterranean & Baltic along with over two-dozen deliveries along the entire East Coast as well as cruising sections of the Mississippi, Thames, Shannon, Northern Border Caledonia, Danube, Milk, Jota, Snake and Columbia Rivers.

In most of my capacities, Safe Boating programs dominate and encourage the wearing of Life Jackets. Manufacturers have joined the effort by creating very comfortable and flexible Life Jackets of various designs and functions. Even the photos of Tactical Operators in the may-june 2010 issue of Small Craft Advisory show everyone wearing a Life Jacket or PFD!

So, I must sadly observe that all too many folks in "leadership" positions are not helping these efforts.

I've attached several photos of Law Enforcement personnel who are NOT wearing Life Jackets while afloat. These include Sherriff's Deputies, US Navy personnel, NYC Fire & Rescue, and Norfolk City Police. In fact, the ONLY personnel consistently wearing Life Jackets are Active Duty Coast Guard and Auxiliary members when on the water as well as the Civil Service lock tender.

The final straw came for me when President Obama joined the Superintendent of Acadia National Park aboard a lobster boat during his family's recent holiday in Bar Harbor,

ME. In the news films, the only person actually wearing a Life Jacket was Superintendent Sheridan... Not our President, not the First Lady, not their teenage daughter, and most blatantly... not their 8-year old daughter. Maine State Statute requires the wearing of Life Jackets in Maine waters by everyone under the age of ten.

So, just how are we members of "America's Volunteer Guardians" supposed to look a boater straight in the eye who's not wearing a Life Jacket, and encourage THEM to wear a Life Jacket at all times when boating when they see, time after time, folks who are expected to be Leaders, failing to wear theirs?

Sincerely,

Capt. W. Tom Sawyer, Jr.

Dear Captain Sawyer:

*I want to thank you for taking the time to send us a passionate and articulate letter reflecting an issue that, despite our aggressive efforts to promote boating safety practices within the recreational boating community, remains an issue that I'm most concerned about within marine law enforcement. Based on our last poll of our*

*state members, only 32 of our 56 member state and territory agencies have a mandatory wear policy for law enforcement. It is truly our shame.*

*I too have spent most of my life on and around the water. Life jackets were mandatory in our family, and before I was allowed to power my first motorboat at the age of 12, my mother insisted that I complete and pass*

*a basic seamanship and piloting course. Unleashed on the waters of Casco Bay I was free to explore and fish to my heart's content, until the day my mother saw, through a set of binoculars, that I was not wearing my life jacket. I lost all boating privileges for a week (which seemed an eternity). My mother, if she were still with us, would surely have given the Obama family a good counseling and poor Superintendent Sheridan would have lost his boating privileges for eternity. In her absence we did send an informational letter to Michelle Obama and hope that she will join us in helping to promote safe boating practices.*

*That first boating class charted the future course of my life. Almost immediately following college I entered the*



*Maine Marine Patrol and over a career spanning 32 years I worked under, on and above every inch of the state's coastal waters. Throughout my career I made a reputation for myself as a safety advocate within both the commercial fishing industry and the recreational boating community.*

*My first general order when promoted to Deputy Chief was the mandatory wearing of life jackets for all Marine Patrol Officers and passengers on any Bureau-owned vessel. This policy did not make me the most popular among the Officers - but it quickly became part of our uniform.*

*I have retired from the Maine Marine Patrol and currently serve as NASBLA's Director of Law Enforcement. I also serve on the USCG National Boating Safety Advisory Council. In both of those capacities I have strongly advocated for a national mandatory wear policy for all marine law enforcement. As professionals we strive to set an example of best practices on the water, which includes wearing a life jacket.*

*Here at NASBLA we are committed to increasing the wear rate of life jackets and I can assure you that with every ounce of my energy, I will continue to work toward 100% compliance with a national mandatory wear policy for marine law enforcement.*

*Capt. Sawyer, thank you for your letter, your observations and for giving me the opportunity to again pitch for the mandatory wear of life jackets.*

*Sincerely,*

*John C. Fetterman*

*NASBLA Director of Law Enforcement*



Jeff Wheeler (left), deputy chief of the U.S. Coast Guard Office of Boat Forces, receives the 2010 Nextgov Award during a ceremony held on May 27 in Washington, D.C. NASBLA Vice President Jim Graybeal represented the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators, the organization that nominated Wheeler for the award. Staff photo

Wheeler won the award for his work with NASBLA in the creation of NASBLA's Boat Operations and Training (BOAT) Program. Through this initiative, he brought together the community of maritime law enforcement officers and emergency responders throughout the country to develop a single system to train federal, local and military organizations to protect the nation's ports. Wheeler, along with the other seven winners, received the award in May at a formal luncheon held in Washington, D.C., during the Gov 2.0 Expo.

To learn more about the Boat Operations and Training Program, visit <http://www.nasbla.org/BOAT>.

## Editor lands APEX Award

*Small Craft Advisory* editor, Kimberly Jenkins, was recognized in July with an award from the Annual Awards for Publication Excellence Competition (APEX). Created in 1988, APEX is an international competition for writers, editors, publications staff and communicators in corporate, nonprofit and independent settings.



Jenkins garnered an Award of Excellence in News Writing for her article "North Carolina's Formula for OWI Success" (May-June 2009). This article was part of an issue focusing on the dangers of boating under the influence.

While the state of North Carolina usually ranks eleventh or twelfth in the nation for the number of registered boats, the Tarheel State is typically in the top five for operating while intoxicated (OWI) cases. The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission provides its officers with comprehensive training, which boosts the officers' confidence in detecting boaters who are operating under the influence. Plus, officers are constantly vigilant about detecting inebriated boaters.

The APEX judges evaluated more than 3700 entries. Of those, 100 Grand Awards were presented to honor outstanding work in 11 major categories, with 1,132 Awards of Excellence recognizing exceptional entries in 127 categories. 🌟

## Byline correction

In the printed version of the July-August 2010 issue of *Small Craft Advisory*, the story on p. 27, headlined "Boating accidents" bore the byline John Malatak, who'd written the previous issue's article on that page. The July-August article was actually written by Michael J. Baron, Program Operations Branch, Boating Safety Division, Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety, U.S. Coast Guard. SCA deeply regrets the error.

## Wheeler receives Nextgov Award

NASBLA extends sincere congratulations to Jeff Wheeler, deputy chief of the U.S. Coast Guard Office of Boat Forces, for being selected as one of only eight recipients of this year's prestigious Nextgov Award for innovative and bold program development.

Nextgov Awards is an inaugural program to recognize federal managers who overcame bureaucratic inertia and political resistance to establish innovative processes that improved government operations and citizens' lives.

# THERMAL IMAGING: THE

*By Andrew Cox, Commercial Maritime, FLIR Commercial Systems Inc.*

How would you feel if you witnessed an officer on your boat responding to a call armed with only a cap-and-ball side-arm and wearing no armor or communication equipment?

What would go through your mind if your local fire department responded to a four-alarm fire with a horse-drawn water tank and Dalmatians boasting no self-contained breathing apparatus or Nomex gear?

That's how I feel every time I see a first-responder vessel without a thermal imager. The technology is tested, proven and affordable. So what's the holdup? My guess: Education.

We're all familiar with traditional light intensification night vision, with its green hue and active infrared LED illumination. Most of us still rely on this technology from the 60s to complete our nighttime missions safely. We're also all-too familiar with the limitations of this technology. It "blooms-out" in certain lighting conditions (meaning the level/gain of the device is temporarily overcome by intense illumination) and it becomes worthless when there's no ambient star or moon light. It also comes with the same limitations as the human eye. We can't make out camouflage objects or see through the slightest obscurations with our cumbersome little Russian-built friend. No, it's not the best, but it will have to do. Or will it?

A better option is thermal imaging. It's been around for 40 years, it's been tested & trusted by every branch of our armed forces, and it's surprisingly affordable. With this technology on the precipice of broad commercialization, be prepared to see it everywhere, even on your agency's response boat.

## **Time-tested technology**

Cultivated in the mid 60s, thermal imaging started with a super-cooled, few-pixel element with lots of moving parts and mediocre reliability. Its detector elements were expensive and the materials were very exotic. Today's detectors are built on silicon wafers – just like the chips in your computer – so they're affordable and extremely reliable. Many of today's imagers have over 307,000 heat-sensing pixels, each capable of detecting temperature differences of just 1/40th of a degree. Each slight temperature difference is displayed as a different color or shade of grey on the user's display screen, giving us a heat-picture, or thermal image.

## **Superior capabilities**

Thermal imagers allow an operator to see objects clearly at night, and even in broad daylight. Because every object in the world has a unique "heat signature," we are able to distinguish objects that would otherwise be completely invisible to the human eye.

On search and rescue missions, thermal night vision cam-

eras let us see survivors in the water from greater distances than we ever could before. Their wide fields of view let us search large areas quickly and much more effectively than we can with a narrow-beamed searchlight looking for reflections. This saves time, and saving time saves lives.

And because these imagers allow us to see camouflaged objects, we can easily pick out subjects and vessels that may not want to be found. Even getting on scene is faster and easier due to the imager's ability to see land, unlit buoys and vessels, and partially submerged objects. For firefighting missions, thermal imagers allow us to see through the smoke and pinpoint the exact source of the blaze.

## **More affordable than you think**

You probably think you have an idea of what these systems cost. Maybe you've even applied for a grant to get one on your agency's vessel, but they are not on every boat yet. They're not nearly as prevalent as GPS or radar, and you're probably thinking, "Duh, it's way more expensive than my radar."

But that's what's changed. In just the last year, prices of handheld thermal imagers have dropped to below \$3,000. Many departments that operate on lakes and rivers are forgoing a radar system altogether and use thermal imaging cameras as their primary collision avoidance system.

Because these units give you a picture of your surroundings, the scene requires no interpretation like radars and plotters. Operators require less training and can use these imagers with greater reliability and fewer missed targets than older radar systems.

## **Proven versatile and vital**

The most recent developments in the technology let us integrate thermal imagers with other gear on the vessel. We can slew the camera and track radar targets automatically to reduce operator workload. We can use the plotter cursor to move the imager, allowing us to search an area with greater efficiency than ever before. We can even broadcast the video back to a command post on land, so the whole team can use the video images we capture to complete the mission faster, and with the highest probability of success.

If you haven't done so yet, I urge you to look into the grants for this equipment in your area. Because it helps with such a broad range of missions, funding is available from the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and many state programs.

Quite simply, thermal imaging works where the human eye and other technologies fail. Thermal cameras create images from heat that is always there, they produce their own contrast, and they work best when we need them the most. Thermal imaging is the only technology that provides true 24/7 capability. ☼



# NEW NIGHT VISION

These photographs all show the same scene.

CCD camera

The first image is from a CCD camera (what your eyes see).

Traditional night vision

The second is what is seen through traditional night vision equipment.

Thermal imaging

And, the third is what thermal imaging reveals.

# New course aimed at paddlers

*From Ninth Coast Guard District Auxiliary and Boating Safety Branch*

Officers of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Watercraft Northern Region, in partnership with the Ninth Coast Guard District, helped launch the Coast Guard Auxiliary's new paddlesports education effort in the Great Lakes region and beyond.

Fourteen boating education instructors from Coast Guard Auxiliary regions in New England and the Midwest, as well as United States Power Squadrons boating education instructors from Ohio and Pennsylvania, attended the all-day training session at the Division of Watercraft's Cleveland office.

Produced by Boat Ed, the new Auxiliary course, called the Paddlesports America Course, features a four-hour classroom-based curriculum. To allow participating Auxiliary and Power Squadrons instructors to get as much out of the course material as possible, Officers Bill Staiger, Rich McCullough and Rich Lowry expanded the training to eight hours, allowing for additional hands-on demonstrations and an in-depth question-and-answer period. Participating Auxiliary instructors will train other Auxiliary members in "train-the-trainer" sessions.

"Without the support of the Division of Watercraft, we could not have kicked off this education effort as successfully as we did," said Frank Jennings Jr., the Ninth Coast Guard District's Recreational Boating Safety Program Manager. "The Division of Watercraft has been a leader in paddlesports education for some time. We benefited greatly from the wealth of that experience, which helps ensure the future success of public Coast Guard Auxiliary paddlesports education."

The Paddlesports America Course is a milestone in that it marks the first time the Coast Guard Auxiliary has officially offered a public boating education course specifically designed for paddlers. Anne Lockwood, the Auxiliary's National Education Director, championed the effort to expand the organization's course

catalog after successful Auxiliary-led Paddlesports America Course pilot programs. The addition of the course was approved during the Auxiliary's annual National Training Conference in January.

"This exciting new course has been well received by Auxiliaryists," said Lockwood. "This audience is multiplying rapidly, and we now have the excellent tools to reach out and teach all novice paddlers so they will also be safer boaters."

According to the National Marine Manufacturing Association (NMMA), 2009 sales of canoes and kayaks totaled 343,600. Of that figure,

*Ohio Division of Watercraft Northern Region Manager Bill Staiger discusses the different types of paddles used for canoes and kayaks.*



*Ohio Division of Watercraft Officer Rich Lowry discusses the proper way to exit a sit-on-top kayak, while Dick Hilmer, a First Coast Guard District Auxiliarist, demonstrates. USCG photos/Frank Jennings Jr.*

kayaks numbered 254,000 units sold while canoes numbered 89,600. In a recreational boating market where "traditional" boats reign supreme, paddlecraft continue to post impressive sales figures.

"Current economic conditions, coupled with the

modest cost of entry-level paddlecraft, have contributed to a surge in the popularity of paddlesports," Jennings said. "Unfortunately, there are a lot of folks buying paddlecraft today who then take to the water with little or no education."

Jennings added, "The Auxiliary's new Paddlesports America Course is an introductory course ideally suited for those new to paddling. An educated paddler is a safer paddler. The safer the paddler, the more fun spending time on the water becomes."

Public class dates for the Paddlesports America Course will be announced as part of the Coast Guard Auxiliary's fall/winter boater education class offerings. 🌟

# Radio Disney helps reach current, future California boaters

*By Melissa Langeland, Associate Boating Educator, California Department of Boating and Waterways*

The California Department of Boating and Waterways (DBW) has a proven successful partnership with Radio Disney that enables the department to reach a unique market comprised of families with children under the age of 16 and their parents. Boating and aquatic safety information is disseminated to boaters through a life jacket trade-in and through the use of radio, Internet and community events.

For the past 11 years, Radio Disney and DBW have collaboratively hosted a life jacket trade-in spanning Northern, Central and Southern California. Participants trade in old or outgrown life jackets for a new, properly fitting, USCG-approved life jacket. Over one thousand boaters and water enthusiasts are outfitted with properly fitting life jackets each year. Serviceable life jackets that are traded in are redistributed by boating partners to boaters who are caught without proper life jackets on board.



*For over a decade, the California Department of Boating and Waterways and Radio Disney have teamed up to host a life jacket trade-in program in California. Over one thousand boaters and water enthusiasts are outfitted with properly fitting life jackets each year. California DBW photos*



*The Radio Disney Road Crew also represents DBW at community events and provides interactive activities that educate and entertain participants. Participants take away invaluable knowledge of boating and water safety.*

The Radio Disney Road Crew also represents DBW at community events and provides interactive activities that educate and entertain participants. The events range from fairs and festivals to cultural events and boating- and water-related events. Participants take away invaluable knowledge of boating and water safety.

Radio Disney's creative team designs and produces catchy radio announcements. Messages vary from water safety tips to messages that invite

listeners to community events where the Road Crew will be on hand representing the department. Events are also promoted on Radio Disney's website calendar of events. In addition, events are accessible on their website to provide further education on boating and water safety to participants.

Through this partnership, children learn safety messages they will carry with them throughout their lives and parents learn to be positive role models for their children to learn from. ★

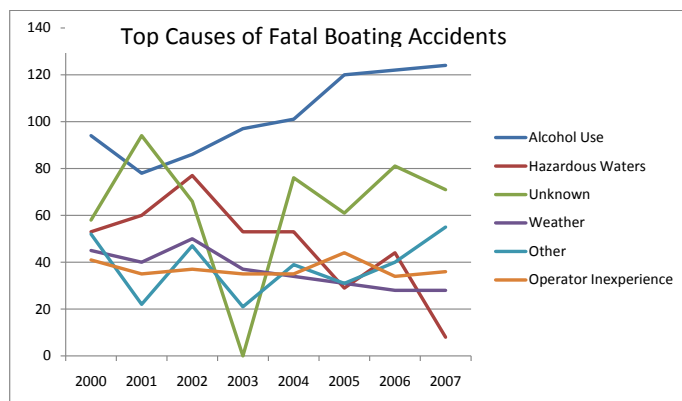


# NASBLA examines boating education

*By Gail Kulp, Executive Director, Sea Tow Foundation*

Mandatory boating safety education is gaining acceptance in the recreational boating safety (RBS) community. In recent years, BoatU.S., SeaTow, the Marine Retailers Association of America (MRAA), and the National Boating Safety Advisory Council (NBSAC) have had mandatory education topics top their agendas. Also, articles on mandatory boating education have been printed in Soundings, Boating Industry and even USA Today.

"We are glad to see that others are getting on board and realizing the important role boater education plays in boating safety," said Terry West, immediate past president of the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA). "NASBLA has understood the correlation between education and safety for many years. We formally adopted a pro-mandatory education stance in 1998."



In 2007 NASBLA released a policy position stating that it "endorses the efforts by its member states to require mandatory boating education for recreational boat operators. NASBLA will support the efforts of its member states to draft and submit bills to their state legislatures for this purpose."

In the summer of 2008, NASBLA was awarded a grant from the U.S. Coast Guard to evaluate NASBLA-approved boating education. This one grant actually encompassed three separate but related projects:

## Conducting a Risk-Based Analysis and Update of the National Boating Education Standards

Since the adoption of the National Boating Education Standards in 1998, the NASBLA Education Committee has revised the content of these guidelines eight times. However, a comprehensive evaluation of the Standards

had not taken place since the original guidelines were implemented.

The resulting grant project undertook a massive analysis of the boating accident and fatality data from the last 11 years to determine if the National Boating Education Standards were addressing the identified risks. The research team consisted of the original members that worked on developing the Standards in 1996-98. Dr. Stuart Cottrell, associate professor of natural resources recreation at Colorado State University, and Dr. Alan Graefe, professor of outdoor recreation at The Pennsylvania State University, were the lead researchers on this project. In addition, Dr. William Hug, professor at the California University of Pennsylvania, assisted with the quality control aspects and report writing. An oversight committee, made up of stakeholders in the recreational boating education community, provided insight and knowledge on boating safety education.

The data from the U.S. Coast Guard Recreational Boating Statistics was separated into four categories to compare the 1997-2007 statistics, revealing some key trends:

- All USCG Reportable Accidents
  - Careless/reckless operation has remained the primary cause of accidents followed by operator inattention throughout these 11 years.
  - Alcohol-related accidents have seen a general increase since 2003 along with those accidents caused by excessive speed.
- Causes of Fatal Accidents
  - Alcohol use is the leading cause of fatal accidents with an overall increase since 2001.
  - Many causes of fatal accidents are listed as "unknown" or "other," leading to additional questions regarding how to prevent these fatalities.
- Non-Fatal Accidents with at Least One Injury
  - Passenger/skier behavior and careless/reckless operation have remained the highest non-fatal accident causes since 2004.

In 1998, the National Boating Education Standards were finalized after a two-year process of research and development funded through a grant from the U.S. Coast Guard. The Standards were developed to communicate to boating educators the minimum boating safety information that should be included in a boating safety course and it was recommended that the content of the Standards be taught in a course lasting between six and eight hours.

- Non-Fatal Accidents with Reportable Damage or the Loss of a Vessel
  - Alcohol use tends to be the primary cause of vessel damage or loss.

Based on the results of the statistical analysis, the researchers and oversight committee members determined that 19 standards and 27 rationales needed to be amended to better address the risks posed to recreational boaters. In addition, although the content of the testing standards was not evaluated and did not change due to the work involved in this project, the percentage of test questions that address each Standard was changed so that a higher number of questions covering the most critical areas of boating safety will be asked.

The oversight committee members determined that the final exam for a boating safety course was too short to allow for sufficient focus on all of the Standards. However, because many states have regulations or legislation requiring that the final exam include only 50 questions, it was not possible to change the length of the exam at this point. Therefore, in order to increase the focus of reducing accidents and fatalities, the oversight committee revised the weighting of the test question categories.

The NASBLA membership unanimously approved the revised Standards in September 2009, with the revised Standards going into effect on January 1, 2010, for all course providers submitting a course for review or re-approval after that time. A copy of these Standards can be found on the NASBLA website under the “Education” tab.

The final product of this grant was the “Successful Instructional Strategies for Boating Safety Education” document. Developed as a joint effort between the researchers and the advisory committee, this document will serve to recommend and communicate successful instructional strategies to boating safety course instructors.

## Assessing the Efficacy of Distance Learning Boating Education Courses

The second project within the 2008 boating education grant was to determine learner acquisition of boating knowledge in distance learning courses versus classroom



*Researchers and the advisory group review boating accident and fatality data as part of NASBLA's Risk-Based Analysis of the Standards project.*

instruction. Prior literature searches on this topic found that most studies confirmed no significant differences between distance learning and classroom learning, however, there was a lack of educational research specific to recreational activities such as boating. Due to the relatively small numbers of certificates issued as a result of home-study or correspondence courses, it was determined that this study would define distance learning as any course taking place on the Internet.

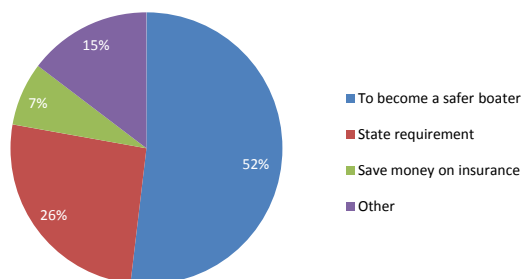
Researchers working for the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) worked closely with NASBLA staff to design a project to test learner acquisition, also known as retention. The study was designed to compare the mean difference scores between a content-knowledge test administered immediately after a student completed a boating safety course and an identical test administered four months later.

Because classroom courses are commonly viewed as the “gold standard” for boating safety, it is necessary to collect empirical evidence of knowledge retention rates for classroom training before comparisons to online courses can be made. A secondary study to measure the retention rate of students who complete an online boating safety course was recently approved for funding by the U.S. Coast Guard and the data collected in this new study will be compared to the data collected in the efficacy study.

NASBLA identified 11 states in which boating safety education is approved online and in the classroom. Working with the state education coordinators, copies of the 25-item initial content knowledge test were distributed to classroom boating safety course instructors. Potential study volunteers were asked prior to taking a boating safety course if they were interested in participating in a study to improve boating safety courses should they pass the end-of-course exam. The only requirement for participation was that each

*continued on page 12*

**Reasons why people took a boating safety course**



participant needed an active e-mail account and access to the Internet in order to complete the second half of the study four months later. Participants were assured that there would be no consequences taken for those who received a failing score on the content-knowledge test. Incentives were offered to encourage participation.

Data was collected between mid-February and October 2009. Data used for analysis included participant test scores from the initial and retention tests, in addition to responses from short questionnaires regarding age, gender, boating experience, and boating frequency. Of the 525 people who expressed interest in being part of this study by completing the initial questionnaire and 25-item test, 186 returned to complete the retention study, resulting in a 35% response rate. Respondents included 128 males and 58 females with an average age of 41; however, ages varied widely from 9 to 73 years. None of the participants reported being issued any boating citations since taking their boating safety course and two people reported the occurrence of non-injury accidents.

The primary research question was to identify the level of knowledge retention based on the scores of the 25-item test administered immediately after completing the course and again four months later. Based on the sample of 186 participants who completed the study, degradation of knowledge was found between the initial and retention test scores. The mean score of the test administered after completing the

course was 20.7 and the mean score four months later was 19.0, resulting in a statistically significant difference score of 1.7. A full copy of the report with the results can be found on the NASBLA website.

Work on the second half of the study to measure the knowledge retention for students who have completed an online boating safety course will begin this fall.

## Development of a Set of Delivery and Presentation Standards for Online Boating Education Courses

Fifteen NASBLA-approved boating education “distance” courses are currently offered by both private course providers and state boating agencies throughout the U.S. Although some of these courses are characterized as correspondence or home-study courses, the majority of them (12 total) are online courses offered via the Internet. Due to the relatively small numbers of certificates issued as a result of home-study or correspondence courses, it was determined that this study would define distance learning as any course which takes place on the Internet.

Note: It is interesting to note that the NASBLA-approved distance learning courses are mislabeled as “courses” and should actually be called electronic books (e-books) with a final exam. While classroom courses have instructors present and involve student interaction, the NASBLA-approved distance learning courses lack both of these features. Despite this, we will continue to refer to them as courses throughout this article.

While the content of online courses is driven and controlled by the National Boating Education Standards, the methods of course delivery and presentation vary greatly from course to course. This goal of this project was to create a set of delivery and presentation standards for online boating safety courses. Dr. Joi Moore, Ph.D., of the University of Missouri School of Information Science and Learning Technologies was the lead researcher. Researchers affiliated with the Information Experience Lab at the University of Missouri (IE LAB) also assisted in the study of human-computer interactions. An advisory committee, comprised of stakeholders in recreational boating education, was also a key component in this project.

The first stage of the project entailed evaluating the usability of the existing NASBLA-approved online boating safety courses. This was accomplished both through the feedback from attendees at the Florida and Minnesota boat shows and in the IE Lab with the help of volunteer course participants. At the boat shows, attendees were recruited to experience the online boating safety courses and provide

### Frequently missed questions on the Retention Test:

1. According to the Navigation Rules, what is the give-way vessel's responsibility?
  - a. to maintain course and speed
  - b. to take early and substantial action to keep well clear**
  - c. to use hand signals to communicate to the passing vessel
  - d. to keep astern of the other vessel
2. How many fire extinguishers are required aboard an 18-foot powerboat with installed fuel tank(s)?
  - a. none
  - b. one**
  - c. two
  - d. three
3. Which of the following is the major cause of fatalities involving small boats?
  - a. being run over by large boats
  - b. being swamped by waves and sinking
  - c. falling overboard and drowning**
  - d. loading the boat with too many people



their opinions on how easy it was to find information within the courses and what they thought of the overall course design. Participants at the IE Lab were tasked with going through the first chapter or unit of online boating safety courses and then answering content-related questions to determine whether the design and presentation of the courses allowed them to learn the material. These participants were also asked for their opinions on ease of use and overall course design.

Based on the results of both parts of the study, the researchers provided recommendations for online course information organization and presentation. In relation to instructional design and message design, improvements could be made to the organization and presentation of website content to motivate and assist the user with learning the content. While the websites provide meaningful information for boating safety education, in many of the websites the information is presented in a “dense” and un-motivating fashion that can cause learners to skim through the information. A good design strategy would be to minimize line lengths to approximately 60-75 characters per line and to position related media near the text.

Navigation and consistency were other common issues with the websites. For example, a table of contents that also serves as the navigation to the major sections is important for easy access to the information.

Also, when evaluating the courses, it was learned that participants wanted more interactive “drag and drop” activities and they also wanted all of the information on a topic to be presented on one page with scrolling rather than splitting the information into multiple pages that required clicking and moving from page to page.

When comparing the participants’ overall usability responses with their scores on the content-related questions in the IE Lab it was found that as the participants’ content-related scores declined, the usability scores also declined. This indicates that knowledge retention could be directly related to the way in which the course is designed and delivered.

Since completing the study, a number of the online courses have changed the format and presentation of their course content. Some of the courses were in the process of updating their content in order to renew their approval while others chose to update their content or presentation of content for other reasons. The researchers and NASBLA had no control over this.

The results of this research led to the creation of a set of delivery and presentation standards for online boating safety



*Data was collected from boaters between mid-February and October 2009 for NASBLA’s Efficacy of Online Learning grant project. In the picture above, Gail Kulp works with a boat show attendee who’s taking a boating safety test in Minneapolis. Staff photos*

courses. As the advisory committee and researchers began to develop a set of Delivery and Presentation Standards to be applied throughout the U.S., they drew heavily upon the requirements that had already been developed by individual states. In addition, the grant advisory committee requested that a literature search of related research be conducted to provide any justification for some requirements found in a number of state policy documents related to the delivery and presentation of online boating safety courses.

The results of the research and literature search influenced the content of the proposed Delivery and Presentation Standards and proposed additions to the NASBLA Testing Standards. The Standards require that online courses be designed in such a way so that students must navigate through chapters in a timed format. This requires them to remain on each page of the text for a specified period of time before being permitted to proceed. At the end of each chapter, a quiz must be presented to the students and the students must pass the quiz before being permitted to proceed to the next chapter. Additional information on the proposed Delivery and Presentation Standards (also known as Standards 9 and 10) can be found on the NASBLA website. The NASBLA membership voted to accept these additions to the National Boating Education Standards at the NASBLA Annual Conference on September 13, 2010. These additions will go into effect on January 1, 2012, for all course providers.

*Editor’s Note: This article was written when Gail was the education and standards director for NASBLA. She has since moved on to become the executive director for the Sea Tow Foundation. We wish her well. ★*

# Taking a different tack on learning

By Kimberly Jenkins

One day on the water Jim Muldoon watched in amazement as the big, beefy crewmen on his racing sailboat asked his young son, Jimmy, which sails to use and where the sheets and other lines were stored. What was amazing was the air of authority Jimmy projected when giving directions to the men.

Normally Jimmy, who was born with severe dyslexia, would remain quiet and withdrawn – at least on land. But on the water, Jimmy became a different person – full of confidence, determination and self-esteem.

“He didn’t know left from right, and yet he was telling them port from starboard,” recalls Muldoon. “That’s a skill you learn by feel and intuition. It’s not something you have to read a book or study to learn.”

## Learning by doing

Muldoon was on to something. Often kids with learning differences are incorrectly viewed as less intelligent and less capable than other children. What’s really going on is that they simply learn differently. And, what Jim was witnessing was how feeling the wind and sea spray and seeing the waves stimulated his son to learn without reading or listening to lectures.

According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities (<http://www.ncld.org>), learning disabilities are neurological disorders that can make it difficult to acquire certain academic and social skills by affecting the brain’s ability to receive, process, store and respond to information. The term “learning disability” is used to describe the seeming unexplained difficulty a person of at least average intelligence has in acquiring basic academic skills.

Observing his son’s transformation on the water was the impetus for Jim Muldoon, founder and chief executive officer of METCOR – a government relations and high technology training company – to create the Brendan Sail Training Program. Realizing that his son’s confidence grew along with his sailing ability, Muldoon wanted to give other young people that opportunity for growth and development.

“Because of their differences,” said Muldoon, “the system can step on these kids pretty hard.”

**“It is understood that youth with learning disabilities learn differently, often by doing rather than hearing, watching or reading about something.”**

~ James Muldoon



The Brendan Sail Training Program helps youth with learning differences build confidence and improve their self-esteem through sailing education. Brendan Corporation photos

This perception was particularly true nearly three decades ago when Jimmy was a young student. Muldoon said his son went to one of the best school systems in the country, only to sit in the same classroom for three straight years. With his learning differences, Jimmy simply wasn’t grasping the concepts being presented.

“It is understood that youth with learning disabilities learn differently, often by doing rather than hearing, watching or reading about something,” said Muldoon.

## On-water classroom

Jim took this learning by doing philosophy into account when creating the Brendan Sail Training Program, which was founded in 1983. Designed for students ages 11 to 18, the Brendan Program

introduces students to the joys of sailing from sail safety (Muldoon says that all participants wear life jackets while on the water) to capsizing drills, land and sea practice and even



to buoy races. Through the program, Brendan students also learn to work, to depend on themselves and their classmates, and to accomplish a goal. With its well-rounded curriculum, the program helps improve the students' relationships with their peers and promotes self-esteem, confidence and maturity. The end result is a strong sense of accomplishment and enhanced self-worth.

Named after the mythical Irish saint, Brendan the Navigator, the Brendan program is the only sailing program in the Mid-Atlantic region that serves children and teens with moderate learning differences, including dyslexia and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

Muldoon said he learned everything by trial and error when developing the program. He began with a focus on dyslexia. Over the years he has expanded it to include students with other differences, including attention deficit disorder and autism.

The program conducts weeklong sailing camps at St.



*Through the Brendan program, students not only gain skills in sailing, they also build social skills and develop their self-confidence.*

Mary's College of Maryland and in Annapolis and Atlanta every summer. The program offers both beginner camps and an advanced overnight camp.

Given the participants' varied learning backgrounds, Muldoon said time in the classroom is minimized in the program, while demonstrations are maximized.

**A June 2010 report from the Data Accountability Center reveals that nearly 2.5 million students are currently receiving special education services for learning disabilities in the U.S.**

## Who was Brendan?

The Brendan Sail Program was named after Brendan the Navigator, patron saint of sailors, mariners, navigators, travelers, older adventurers and even whales.

A missionary and notable sailor born in Ireland in 484, Brendan is known for the many monasteries he founded as well as his extensive journeys. One journey in particular contributed to his fame. He is said to have taken a seven-year voyage with a number of monks (the actual number varies from 14 to 60) in search of the Land of Promise. The vessel for this adventure was a leather boat measuring just 26 feet in length. Brendan and the group of monks are reputed to have discovered America, some 900 years earlier than Columbus did.

In 1977 Tim Severin, a British explorer, historian and writer, re-enacted Brendan's sea journey. He successfully sailed across the Atlantic in a small leather boat built as it would have been in the 6th century, proving that Brendan's legendary journey from Ireland to North America was possible.

"Hands-on activity is much more effective with these kids," he said.

The program incorporates two other tactics that differentiate it from other education programs. Brendan uses more instructors – typically a 4 to 1 student/instructor ratio. And instructors take a little more time in teaching the students, providing clear instructions and being sure to transition slowly from one activity to the next.

## Do you know what my son did?

The program continues to find success not only in teaching the students how to sail but also in boosting their self-confidence. To give an example, Muldoon recalls an encounter he had with a student's mother a couple years ago at the program's graduation.

First he explained that at the conclusion of the training, students take their parents sailing – alone.

"Near the end of the graduation program, a woman came over, pointed her finger at me and asked, 'Do you know what my son did today?'"

Fearing the worst, Muldoon said he kept quiet.

"The woman then said that her son had showed off," said Muldoon. "She said he'd never had anything to show off before."

Many kids end up helping with the program, including Muldoon's son Jimmy who currently sits on the Brendan board of directors. Students in the advanced course serve as peer instructors to the beginners.

Muldoon works with the school system and various associations to spread the word about the sailing program. Personal referrals also account for many of the new students.

With the sailing program achieving such success, Muldoon hopes that the Brendan program will help raise awareness about learning differences.

"I hope that my program will get other people to do similar programs in other areas," said Muldoon. 🌟



# Officers undertake multifaceted mission to battle oil

*By John C. Fetterman, NASBLA Director of Law Enforcement*

On April 20, 2010, an explosion rocked and sank BP's Deepwater Horizon oil drilling platform, killing 11 workers on the rig 50 miles off the coast of Louisiana and leaving the well spewing millions of gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico. Curious about how state agencies were dealing with such a catastrophe, I headed to Louisiana several weeks after the explosion to visit with the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) agents.

My trip to Louisiana was orchestrated by LDWF, with a lot of hard work by Lt. Spencer Cole, who made arrangements for a very effective two-day visit. During my trip I had the opportunity to learn about the history, environment, coastal communities and the officers as they met the challenge of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

## On the front lines

An LDWF agent named Dan Varnado picked me up at the airport in New Orleans. During the hour-long drive to Baton Rouge, Dan explained that it was the height of boating season in his patrol area, north of Lake Pontchartrain, and one of his busiest times of the year for boating safety. With the oil spill, he, like all other agents across the state, was on a four-day deployment to the coast. My first reaction was that the deployments must be taking a toll on his primary patrol area and on his family. I shouldn't have been surprised when he replied, "No, not really. I just work a little harder when I get back...besides they need us down there on the coast."

Capt. Cliff Comeaux picked me up the next morning for a scheduled flight on the Department's aircraft to Houma, La., and the BP Incident Command Post. On our way to the



*An aerial view of the larger islands reveals the extent of the damage. Staff photos*

airport Cliff told me what I'd heard many times before.

"Our agents are out on the front lines as sensors for our department. This isn't a new role for them, the circumstances are very different but we have long been known as not just the face of the agency but the primary contact with the fishermen, boating public, the community and even the oil industry," said Capt. Comeaux.

Flying over oil refineries and all the support indus-

tries, it became quickly evident that I was in oil country. This part of the state was the jumping off point for the offshore oil fields. It was also plain to see it was the last patch of solid ground before the expansive marshland extended seaward.

Expecting to find a rough oil town after landing, I was surprised to see affluent neighborhoods scattered between industrial lots filled with oil industry equipment and supply yards, all well maintained and seemingly modern. What lay beneath the surface was the uncertainty of the future. The President's moratorium on offshore oil drilling was bringing this community to a screeching halt.

**"This event has thrown us all.  
There is so much we don't know  
and especially we don't know what the  
lasting effects will be on our  
environment, our fisheries and our state."**

*~ Lt. Col. Jeff Mayne, Louisiana Boating Law Administrator*

LDWF Lt. Chad Hebert met us at the Houma airport. As we drove to the BP Incident Command Post, he reflected on his district and the impact this event was having on his officers.

"We have brought in the people and re-

sources we need to monitor this event. Working a region that spans both sides of the Mississippi outflow, our biggest challenge is patrolling the closed fishery areas. For some fishermen it is a matter of survival and the catch rewards of fishing in the closure outweigh the cost of being caught. It's a 24/7 job right now," said Lt. Hebert.



During the morning briefing at the BP Incident Command Center, the BP Incident Commander, Mike Utsler, recognized the shining star of the day. "Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries rescued 86 birds in the Grand Terre area within the last 72 hours," he announced. "Their tireless commitment to patrolling, monitoring and follow-up on wildlife in distress reports have proven responsive and effective."



*After patrolling the Grand Isle area this boat will be hauled out and taken to the decontamination site for cleaning.*

## Sobering statistics

As Mike reviewed some statistics for the assembled command team it was obvious that this spill had a long way to go before being resolved. The drilling report reflected that the two relief wells being drilled were making some progress. Estimates showed that approximately 10,000 barrels of fluid – a combination of oil and water – were brought to the recovery ship "Enterprise" the previous day. Against the growing out-flow estimates it didn't impress the crowd within the center. In all, at day 48, there were 23 skimmers working at the oil spill source offshore and in excess of 10,000 people working exclusively on the spill.

After the briefing I talked with Utsler about his take on the contribution and role of LDWF. Mike was quick to point out three main mission elements:

- Serve their primary mission of enforcing the closure zones;
- Provide a second set of eyes on the oil spill and can report where they see oil;
- Work with BP to make sure that we are doing more good than harm in the strategies and tactics designed to combat the oil spill.

As we flew out of Houma airport for the return flight to Baton Rouge, I couldn't help but feel that despite all the media coverage I had seen and read over the last 50 days, none of it came close to the reality of this oil spill. I wrapped up Day 50 of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill with a good feel for the command and control taking place in Louisiana at multiple levels.



*This small patch of marsh vegetation has been totally eradicated by exposure to the oil.*

The next day we were flying to Grand Isle – Ground Zero in Louisiana.

## Impact on boating

In my hotel room, I received a call from Lt. Col. Jeff Mayne, Louisiana's boating law administrator. Over dinner we discussed the events and observations I had made in Houma. Jeff explained the resilience of the coastal communities in Louisiana and how they have recovered from so many natural disasters.

"This event has thrown us all," he said. "There is so much we don't know and especially we don't know what the lasting effects will be on our environment, our fisheries and our state."

The Deepwater Horizon oil spill became yet another setback in the recreational boating activity along the Louisiana coastline. Louisiana saw a decline in the number of registered boats after being hit by multiple hurricanes over the last five years. The fear today is that fishery closures and a fouled coastal environment will further negatively impact boating activity and registrations.

Lt. Col. Mayne worried about the state's ability to generate boating safety dollars and the negative impact falling registration numbers will have on his Recreational Boating Safety allocation in the Coast Guard's scoring of the Sport Fish Restoration & Boating Trust Fund– a problem across all the Gulf States.

"Louisiana is a big boating state and we need the ability to maintain those programs that keep our waterways safe," he explained.

## The intricacies of the delta

On Day 51 Capt. Cliff Comeaux and I left Baton Rouge airport for Grand Isle, La. As we flew southeast we entered the delta marshland where few roads exist and the beautiful bayou country gave up a few of her secrets as explained by our Pilot Brian Dorsa.

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Having worked as an oil company seaplane pilot in the 1980s, he recounted the thousands of hours flying seaplanes into this bayou country. He explained the exploration canals that had been dredged into the marshland, creating straight-line canals throughout the sponge-like, fragile landscape.

To me, it appeared to be a manmade systematic dissection that exposed the wetlands to the predictable erosion I had heard so much about. Brian pointed out sugarcane plantations that were once productive but now only could be seen as underwater outlines with a few patches of ground remaining and the ruins of buildings. The only trees sprouted along the banks of the dredged exploration canals; the dredging debris created enough solid ground that almost every canal was now tree-lined. Without man's intrusion, the entire area would have been intricate "lace-like" marshland.

Pilot Dorsa also pointed out the levy system which maintains a channeled outflow for the Mississippi River. The levy system borders the main outlet of the mighty river to allow deep draft vessels to transit the lower Mississippi. The levy system also prevents the rich sediments from being deposited into the delta region; they are in fact pushed out over the continental shelf. As the delta disappears, there is nothing to rebuild the effects of erosion. That analysis was most pronounced as I looked at the airplane's electronic navigational mapping screen. The Garmin map indicted land mass that, as



*The BP Incident Command Center in Houma, La., served as headquarters. All the foreground parking was built to accommodate the volume of participants during the Deepwater Horizon event.*

I looked down, no longer exists.

As we approached open water between the marshland and the barrier islands we began to see the signs of the real impact of the Deepwater Horizon spill. Capt. Comeaux pointed out that normally this time of year the entire Barataria Bay area would have been wall-to-wall shrimp boats. We saw none. What we did see were numerous boats tending boom material around the edges of the marsh and the many small nesting islands.

It had been several days since the heavy crude had been swept ashore by wind and tide, but the effects were evident. Most of the heavy crude had not been recovered by skimming efforts, but rather it had swept back out to sea by a changing wind and tide. The oil sheen from light crude still

*An officer informs a fisherman about the latest fishery closures following the oil spill.*

covered the entire area, and where pockets of the heavy oil had invaded the fragile marsh grass, the cleanup and containment was slow.



## **Teamwork crucial to cleanup**

Along the beaches of the barrier islands, where workers could access the oil, efforts were intense. Workstations were set up along every stretch of workable beach area. Booms were placed midway up the beach to prevent further intrusion, and on the water side of the containment workers could be seen working the waterline.

Encampments were set up to give workers refuge from the heat and sun. Wearing protective suits, they were allowed to work only 20 minutes out of every hour. Ice, water and cooling fans were provided to rehydrate workers during the 40-minute rest periods. Governor Jindal succeeded in gaining permitting approval to conduct sand dredging operations to pump deepwater sand onto areas of the eroding barrier islands to help protect the almost un-cleanable marshes from additional oil intrusion.

Landing at the LDWF Marine Laboratory, we met with the lab director, Myron Fischer. Working with NOAA, LDWF needed to create a fishery management plan that was enforceable.

Myron explained, "I try to make sure all of the fishery closure zones are straight lines and in boxes to help the Enforcement Division and the public. That way it is more enforceable for our agents on the water and easier to understand for the public."

The Louisiana fisheries are the lifeblood of the coastal communities. Commercial and recreational fishermen account for almost the entire population of this community, and as we flew into Grand Isle and landed, we saw that traditional activities had ceased. The focus of the laboratory, the fishermen and the community became focused on just one thing – oil.

Director Fischer also pointed out that within the facility they have berthing and classroom facilities to accommodate about 40 personnel. For the last several weeks they opened their doors to the Louisiana National Guard and in that same space housed over 100 Guardsmen. As Capt. Comeaux and I toured the berthing unit we found classrooms stacked

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The term "vessel of opportunity" refers to any resident vessel capable of supporting oil cleanup, including fishing vessels capable of towing oil booms, small crew transport vessels, airboats – basically anything that floats with propulsion.



head-to-toe with military cots, and every bunkroom, which normally housed four to six people, was converted to house twice as many.

As we entered the law enforcement office at the lab, I was introduced to Capt. Chuck Comeaux. As we got acquainted we had some fun with the similarity of his name to Capt. Cliff Comeaux. But we soon got down to the sobering business of the day.

Capt. Comeaux had assembled his on-duty agents in the briefing room as he pointed out the daily assignment board.

"We have a daily planning board where we keep track of who is in what vessel and how many agents and boats we have patrolling which areas. We usually have four or five agents in the Grand Isle area at any one time, but now we have been having anywhere from eight to 10 agents here," he said.

Looking at the room full of young officers I saw the concern on their faces as they briefed me on the missions they had performed over the last month. Fishery closures were a big part of the mission and they were concerned about the product integrity of Louisiana seafood.

"It will only take one oil-soaked shrimp in the open market to shut this place down for years," said one agent.

Capt. Chuck Comeaux explained, "This area was having a great shrimp season and the shrimpers were getting a good price. This is the best price for shrimp in the last five years."

It wasn't hard to piece together that, with the threat of long-term fishery closures, the risk of being caught, for some, outweighed the huge return.

As I looked at

the planning board, the day's mission was about security. Governor Jindal was due to arrive at 11:30 a.m. along with a press corps, and most of Capt. Comeaux's assets were assigned to that detail. The security mission and VIP interest in the Grand Isle District kept Capt. Comeaux and his agents busy on almost a daily basis – and when the press and dignitaries left, they still had the nighttime closure patrols.

## A multifaceted mission

Fishery closures, security, media transport, oil recovery worker transports, wildlife biologists, boom deployment, security and reporting were but a few of the daily tasks these agents had been performing every day. I was about to see firsthand the extent and scope of this complicated mission. Agent Nicholas Guillory was taking me and Capt. Cliff Comeaux on a water tour of the area affected around Grand Isle.



*Earlier this spring, this Louisiana fisherman was towing for shrimp in what was characterized as the best shrimp catch in years. Following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, he piloted what was referred to as a vessel of opportunity to tow for oil that invaded the prime fishing waters of the coast of Louisiana.*

As we left the Marine Fisheries Laboratory, Agent Guillory explained that this time of year would typically be the height of the shrimping season as well as the height of recreational boating activity in the Grand Isle patrol area. Assigned to this area, he was familiar with the community and the fisheries. As we patrolled the channel out of Grand Isle we passed a marina. Nick said, "Normally this place would be packed with recreational boats and charter outfitters – as you can see it is all but abandoned."

Once out in the open in Barataria Bay I was surprised to see so few vessels working the spill area. Agent Guillory explained that most of the remaining crude oil was on the beaches and the few boats we saw were actually trying to skim the surface for any residue tar balls and oil sheen. The inshore shrimp boats proved to be well suited for towing oil boom material and the outriggers, which would normally tow their shrimp nets, were equally suited to tow the oil booms. Once a vessel captured any amount of surface oil the captain would call for a tender vessel which would pump any surface oil from inside the boom.

The waterline was covered with oil. At the end of each day these vessels had to return to a decontamination station on Grand Isle to be cleaned with any recovered oil captured inside a boom area next to the dock. Unlike these larger boats, Agent Guillory had to tow his patrol boat at the end of each day to a decontamination station. Once in the recovery or decontamination station, the entire boat was pressure washed by a crew in protective suits and the water and recovered oil captured for processing.

"Just a little added time to my day after a very long patrol," said Nick Guillory.

Agent Guillory recounted a patrol he had done a few days previously to determine the proximity of heavy surface crude oil to Grand Isle. He was approximately 16 miles offshore when he first entered the surface oil. The oil quickly became so thick that it slowed his boat to a crawl. Almost trapped in the heavy crude, he looked around and saw sev-

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*An officer mans the LDWF Command Post in Hopedale, La.*



eral sea turtles struggling in the oil. Agent Guillory managed to rescue six sea turtles that day and get them back to the fisheries lab for transportation to the wildlife rescue facility.

This incident was so representative of the multi-mission job marine officers do every day and why they are so effective in disasters such as this. Any day may begin with a plan, but the ability to adapt and evolve is crucial as any mission may morph into something entirely un-planned. It's training and experience on the water that prepare these officers for whatever comes along.

As we approached a cleanup crew working the edges of the marsh, vacuuming oil from inside a deployed boom, Nick explained the risks associated with the cleanup of oil once it reaches the marsh grass. In many cases it will do far more damage and expose additional marshland to any return of the heavy crude oil.

To illustrate his point we went to two very different areas to examine the effects close up. The first was a small clump of marsh grass — all that's left of what just a few years ago was a much larger island. It was plain to see that what the oil touches, it kills. The second area was a marsh — its edges appeared burnt or dying from the oil exposure. However, these remnants could act as a barrier for further intrusion into the fragile vegetation. For areas such as this, cleanup is virtually impossible.

We returned to the Marine Fisheries Lab around noon, but our day wasn't over yet. We were flying to Hopedale, a small fishing port on the west side of the Mississippi River. Hopedale was the site of the first forward command post established by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. It was believed that the outflow of the Mississippi River would force the surface oil from Deepwater Horizon to the east. This was the area where experts feared oil would first make landfall. What no one expected was that a large arm of oil would break from the spill site and head northwest. It was that long arm of surface oil that impacted Grand Isle.

By Day 51, the massive surface oil threatened this part of the state and was continuing to move closer to shore and the coastal states east of Louisiana. LDWF was one of the first responders to set up a command post at Hopedale, and as we flew into the small canal that provides water access to this fishing port, it was obvious that the community had gone through a rapid transformation.

51 days earlier this small access point had been dominated by a fuel dock with a converted trailer that served as the marine store, an oyster shucking facility, and a series of pole barns that provided storage for small commercial and recreational boats. Following the oil spill, it had transformed

into a small city. Acres of oil boom material dominated newly created fields, multiple command posts, temporary lodging and an air-conditioned tent serving as a cafeteria providing hundreds of meals. LDWF dominated the command presence and was clearly the focal point of coordination.

The bays inside the Louisiana barrier islands, on the east side of the Mississippi River, are the state's prime oyster territory. These bays and bayous extend east protected by a thin line of barrier islands threatened by the massive offshore oil growing in volume daily. LDWF agents in this area more than doubled the normal district complement following the oil spill, with LDWF trucks and trailers lined up in a field behind



*Officers consult the daily planning board in the LDWF Law Enforcement Office, on Grand Isle, La.*

the command post. I saw as many as 20 department vehicles with trailers. Capt. Comeaux explained that they were all out on patrol. Agent patrols in this area were focused on tracking the progression of the oil slick, oil boom security and maintaining fishery closures outside of the barrier islands. Most fisheries remained open inside the islands, but product testing meant that this fishery season would be

short-lived.

Flying back to New Orleans at the end of Day 51 I reflected on what I'd seen and the agents I had met in Louisiana. This is a breed of officer unique to law enforcement who serves a common mission — to provide public safety, resource protection and emergency preparedness. Nationally, we must do a decent job in recruitment and training because these officers, like so many around the country are passionate about their job and experts in their field.

Marine officers around the country carry the institutional knowledge of the changing marine environment and how it is used by recreational and commercial interests. Every day these officers interact with the recreational boating public, the commercial fisheries and their USCG partners in search and rescue operations and maritime security efforts. And now the LDWF agents are also interacting with their agency biologists in protection of the wildlife and marine environment. They are the sensors providing vital intelligence to the command posts, they are on-the-scene coordinators of both public and private responders, and they are the best resource on the water to tell us when eventual recovery is complete.

As a nation we must continue to support and credit these officers, not just in what they are capable of performing today in support of the safety and security of our maritime domain but also as our best indicator and sensor of the painful recovery ahead for the Gulf of Mexico and the waterways of our nation. 🌟

# Contests, grant available for innovative boating education programs

By Joyce F. Shaw, National Safe Boating Council, Contest Committee Chair

The National Safe Boating Council serves as an advocate for boating safety and education and a unifying resource for organizations that seek the goal of safer boating through education. In celebration of its mission to be the foremost coalition to advance and promote a safer recreational boating experience through education, outreach and training, the Council offers two annual contests and one grant. These award opportunities recognize individuals and organizational partners in the boating community that create innovative programs designed to improve boating education and raise awareness of recreational boating safety-related issues.

## BoatU.S. Boating Safety Youth Program Award

This program recognizes individuals and organizations that have developed and successfully implemented innovative youth boating education programs that target safety issues and concerns of national interest. To qualify for the award, a program must integrate safety practices into the program and be targeted toward students 18 years of age or younger. Selection priority is given to unique or creative programs that promote a primary goal of increasing boat safety and safety awareness. The Boating Safety Youth Program Award is sponsored by the Boat Owners Association of the United States (BoatU.S.), patron level member of NSBC.

## Alcohol Awareness Impact Award

This award provides an opportunity to recognize one program each year that demonstrates an effective prevention and awareness strategy to address the misuse of alcohol while boating. The goal of the AAI Award is to promote activities that educate the community

about dangers of consuming alcohol while boating. To qualify, a program must provide a preventative strategy to eliminate consumption of alcohol while on the water. Unique programs and

*"The ACA receiving the BoatU.S. Boating Safety Youth Program Award is a distinct honor and credit to all who put a great deal of effort into the opportunity to engage more youth in paddlesports and boating through schools and organizations with outdoor participation in mind. The added component of the cash award has allowed us to schedule and conduct training for educators and program providers in a broader fashion."*

*— Jeremy Oyen, ACA Director of Safety, Education and Instruction/ Recreation Outreach*

those that emphasize boating safety will be most favorably considered.

Both the BoatU.S. Boating Safety Youth Program Award and the Alcohol Awareness Impact Award are awarded annually. Each carries a cash prize of \$2,500 and a commemorative trophy. The award packages also include an expense-paid trip for a representative of the winning program to attend the International Boating and Water Safety Summit. Applicants agree to send a representative to the Summit to receive their award; time is allowed in the Summit agenda for each recipient to present a 45-minute workshop about the award-winning program. The next IBWSS will be held in Savannah, Georgia, March 6-9 2011.

Full contest descriptions along with application forms may be found online at the NSBC website, [www.safeboatingcouncil.org/awards](http://www.safeboatingcouncil.org/awards). Applications are due by December 31 each year. Award monies may be used to purchase necessary equipment, audio/visual aids, printing, teaching aids, program promotion and advertisement, rental time of pool or waterfront facilities, transportation to on-the-water sites or other costs associated with the advancement of the program. Funds may not be used as wages or salaries for instructors.

## OMC Foundation "Take 'Em Boating" Grant Program

The purpose of this grant is to promote and develop interest in boating for future generations. Funded by the OMC Foundation on behalf of the former employees of the Outboard Marine Corporation, the "Take 'Em Boating" Grant seeks to continue their legacy by promoting interest in boating safety, environmental awareness, and the marine industry. The Take 'Em Boating Grant encourages organizations to develop creative and innovative programs to get kids into boats and on the water, and to demonstrate benefits of water-related activities.

The \$5000 grant is awarded annually to the selected youth program that safely gets kids into boating activities while promoting the future of the marine industry through environmental education, safety awareness and boating enjoyment. Applications are accepted each year between October 1 and December 31.

NSBC welcomes the opportunity to encourage and recognize projects that have made lasting contributions to the interest of boating safety. For inquiries about contests and/or grants contact the National Safe Boating Council at 703.361.4294; [office@safeboatingcouncil.org](mailto:office@safeboatingcouncil.org); and <http://safeboatingcouncil.org>. ☺



## Boating deaths increased in 2009

The U.S. Coast Guard's Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety's Recreational Boating Statistics 2009 report reveals a 3.81 percent increase in boating accident deaths and a 0.81 percent increase in related injuries, even though the number of boating accidents decreased 1.23 percent.

The Coast Guard recorded 736 deaths, 3,358 injuries and approximately \$36 million in property damage, stemming from 4,730 recreational boating accidents in 2009.



*Recreational Boating Statistics 2009 shows that while boating accidents decreased, boating-related injuries and deaths increased last year.*

The fatality rate, a measure of the number of deaths against the number of registered recreational boats, increased from 5.6 in 2008 to 5.8 deaths per 100,000 registered recreational boats in 2009.

Operator inattention, operator inexperience, excessive speed, improper lookout and alcohol consumption rank as the top five contributing factors to recreational boating accidents. Alcohol consumption continues to be of major concern in fatal boating accidents and is listed as the leading contributing factor in 16 percent of deaths. Eighty-

six percent of boating accident deaths occurred on boats where the operator reportedly had not received boating safety instruction.

"The data in the 2009 publication echoes the message that life jacket wear is critical," said Rear Adm. Kevin Cook, the Coast Guard's Director of Prevention Policy. "Nearly 75 percent of the 736 people who died in boating accidents in 2009 drowned, and 84 percent of those victims reportedly were not wearing a life jacket. The two most important things boaters can do to prevent the loss of life is to wear a life jacket and take a boater education course."

To view the Recreational Boating Statistics 2009 report, visit [http://www.uscgboating.org/statistics/accident\\_statistics.aspx](http://www.uscgboating.org/statistics/accident_statistics.aspx).

## U.S. Coast Guard celebrates 220th birthday

U.S. Coast Guardsmen throughout the country celebrated both the service's 220th birthday and its rich and diverse history on Aug. 4, 2010.

The Coast Guard, which traces its founding to Aug. 4, 1790, is a multi-mission, maritime, military service and the smallest of the five Armed Services. The Coast Guard began when the first Congress authorized the construction of 10 vessels to enforce tariff and trade laws, prevent smuggling, and protect the collection of federal revenue. The first vessel, the Revenue Cutter Massachusetts, was built in Newburyport, Mass., and home ported in Boston.

As America's lifesavers and guardians of the seas, Coast Guard men and woman have committed themselves to protecting and securing our nation with honor, respect and devotion to duty for more than two centuries.

Vice Commandant Sally Brice-O'Hara delivered a special birthday message in honor of the occasion. In it she praised the Coast Guard men and women for their efforts.

"I could not be more proud of the work you have done and continue to

do every day. You exemplify the Coast Guard's motto, Semper Paratus, Always Ready. To our shipmates and families, Happy Birthday, United States Coast Guard."

## New Coast Guard Auxiliary National Commodore targets boating deaths



*National Commodore Jim Vass*

Jim Vass of Port O'Connor, Texas, was named the new National Commodore of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary for the 2010-12 term. Commodore Vass has charged the Auxiliary with reducing deaths

on our waterways.

"We need to recommit ourselves to improving recreational boating safety and making a serious dent in reducing the recreational boating death growth rates," Commodore Vass said.

2009 saw an increase of 3.8 percent in recreational boating deaths because people fail to wear life jackets, are inattentive, and consume alcohol while operating boats. Nearly 75 percent of the 736 people who died in boating accidents in 2009 drowned, and 84 percent of those victims reportedly were not wearing a life jacket. "Our waterways should be fun, not places where you lose your life," commented Vass.

Commodore Vass began his association with the Coast Guard Auxiliary in 1991 and has served in a host of positions at the local, regional and national levels. Most recently he was the national vice commodore. He holds qualifications as an instructor, vessel examiner and boat coxswain. His awards include the Coast Guard Auxiliary Medal of Operational Merit, Commendation Medal, Service Award, the Coast Guard Unit Commendation and Coast Guard Meritorious Team Commendation.

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary cre-

ated by an Act of Congress in 1939 is the uniformed civilian component of the U.S. Coast Guard supporting the Coast Guard in nearly all its missions.

## Muldoon honored for contributions to recreational boating safety

More than two dozen sailing and boating-related organizations, includ-



*James Muldoon was recently honored by a number of sailing and boating-related organizations for his commitment, leadership and achievements in the field of recreational boating and boating safety. St. Mary's College of Maryland photo*

ing the U.S. Coast Guard, Special Olympics Maryland, and US SAILING, recently joined together to honor James P. Muldoon, avid sailor and community leader, for his commitment, leadership and achievements in the field of recreational boating and boating safety. Muldoon is founder and CEO of METCOR, a government relations and high technology training company.

Sheila Hixson, chair of the Ways and Means Committee of the Maryland House of Delegates, presided over the surprise tribute, which was held at St. Mary's College of Maryland on Aug. 7 during the Governor's Cup Yacht Race weekend. "We have no doubt that Mr. Muldoon will make many more contributions to the recreational boating community in years to come, but we wanted to take this opportunity to thank him for all he has done over the past four decades," Hixson said.

Captain Mark Rizzo, chief of the Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety for the U.S. Coast Guard, called Muldoon

"one of the Coast Guard's most caring and compassionate partners." He went on to praise Muldoon's support for the Coast Guard Foundation and his 11 years of service as chairman of the National Boating Safety Advisory Council.

Maryland Comptroller Peter Franchot represented the Governor in presenting Muldoon with the Chesapeake Bay Ambassador Award. "You have selflessly shared your knowledge and passion," Franchot said of Muldoon, "and in so doing you have brought enlightenment and opportunity to many young people, tomorrow's stewards of the Bay."

Also on hand to pay tribute to Muldoon was Pat Ewing, program director of Brendan Sail Training Program for Students with Learning Differences, a program founded by Muldoon. Ewing participated in Brendan nearly three decades ago. Now he passes those lessons along to a new generation of youths.

"Jim's contributions are evident all around us, in the water of the Chesapeake and in the confidence of the students he helped to put out there," Ewing commented. "Through the Brendan Sail Training Program, he has made sailors out of a lot of people who never would have had the opportunity, and the world is a better place because of it."

After listening to tribute after tribute with similar heartfelt messages, the normally stoic Muldoon had tears in his eyes. "I am truly humbled," he said, as he thanked those who had gathered to honor him.

Muldoon has long been actively involved in international sailing and boating-related organizations. As evidenced by the many groups that gathered to honor Muldoon, he has made tremendous contributions to the boating community. He has held more than 30 leadership positions over the years, including chair of the Department of Homeland Security's National

Boating Safety Advisory Council, member of the Board of Directors and chair of the Development Committee for the Coast Guard Foundation, founder and president of The Brendan Sailing Training Programs for Youths with Learning Differences, founding board member and vice president of the National Sailing Hall of Fame, and president of United States Sailing Association.

## Wisconsin officer's planning saved headaches

Conservation Warden Mike Cross, with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, has seen a lot during his tenure as an officer working on the Mississippi River, where vessels from personal watercraft to commercial barges and towboats share the meandering channels. In recent years, large numbers of high-speed, offshore racing boats have brought speed and excessive boat noise concerns to the river as well.

The announcement by the city of Prairie du Chien that potentially 15,000 to 20,000 country music fans would be coming to the river in August of 2010 was obviously more than a single officer could handle. Therefore, Warden Cross began coordinating with federal, state and local agencies in June 2010 to plan for "Country on the River."

Several planning meetings were held with the affected agencies to prepare for the Aug. 6-7 event. A number of strategies were implemented to reduce the risk to public safety on the water, including the establishment of a temporary slow/no-wake zone, mooring restrictions, staffing of multiple shifts of officers, the setup of an alcohol testing center near the Command Center, and news releases to the local media.

The preparations paid off. The on-water problems were minimal even during peak visitation to the festival grounds with 14,000 people partying only a block off the river. A single operating while intoxicated arrest was made on the water. However, as

*continued on page 24*



continued from page 23



*Spearheaded by Warden Mike Cross of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the coordinated boating safety and enforcement efforts local, state and federal law enforcement agencies resulted in a safe environment for a large country music festival this summer. Wisconsin DNR photo*

fight on the festival grounds began to overwhelm local police staffing, the “water force” of state, federal and county officers were called in to quell the crowd.

Event organizers reported that \$250,000 in beer sales took place in two nights. To end such an event without any serious problems with visitors on the water was a direct result of the excellent planning and coordination of law enforcement on the Mississippi River.

## Building begins on new National Law Enforcement Museum

Ten years after Congress authorized the project, construction of the new National Law Enforcement Museum in Washington, D.C., is now under way. The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF) formally broke ground on Oct. 14, 2010, at the future site of the museum in the 400 block of E Street, NW.

U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder spoke at the ceremony, highlighting the recognition the Museum will give to law enforcement officers across the

nation and throughout history. Also in attendance was U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano, along with hundreds of other law enforcement, corporate and government leaders, surviving family members of officers killed in the line of duty and citizen supporters.

“Today marks a major milestone for this important institution,” said Craig W. Floyd, NLEOMF Chairman and CEO. “With this groundbreaking, we are taking a historic step in realizing our mission to tell the story of American law enforcement through

exhibits, collections, research and education.”

Scheduled to open in late 2013, the 55,000-square-foot, mostly underground institution will be a world-class experiential Museum with high-tech interactive exhibitions. The Museum will include a vast collection of law enforcement artifacts and dedicated spaces for research and education.



*Officials with the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund broke ground for the new National Law Enforcement Officers Museum on Oct. 14, 2010. NLEOMF photo*

The mission of the National Law Enforcement Museum is to tell the story of American law enforcement through exhibits, collections, research and educa-

tion. For more information, visit <http://www.LawEnforcementMuseum.org>.

## Grants awarded to combat invasive species

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced on Aug. 24, 2010, that nearly \$600,000 will be awarded to nine projects targeting three of the highest priorities from the Quagga-Zebra Mussel Action Plan for Western U.S. Waters (QZAP).

“As quagga and zebra mussels spread to the Western United States, they can have devastating ecological and economic impacts as already seen in the east and central United States. We must address the spread of these invasive aquatic species, which threaten our Nation’s natural resources, water delivery systems, hydroelectric facilities, agriculture, and recreational boating and fishing,” said Ken Salazar, Secretary of the Interior.

Invasive species are among the primary factors that have led to the decline of native fish and wildlife populations in the United States and one of the most significant natural resource management challenges. A paper published in 2005 in the journal *Ecological Economics* estimated the cost of invasive species impacts to be approximately \$120 billion each year in the United States.

Once established these invasive mussels can clog water intake and delivery pipes and dam intake gates. They adhere to boats, pilings, and most hard and some soft substrates. The mussels negatively impact water delivery systems, fire protection, and irrigation systems and require costly removal maintenance. The spread of quagga and zebra mussels across the West brings the potential to extend devastating impacts into a geographic area already challenged with severe water-related problems.

For a full list of the QZAP projects and for more information on aquatic invasive species, please visit: [www.fws.gov/fisheries/ans](http://www.fws.gov/fisheries/ans).



## Oregon's aquatic invasive species prevention program sees results

It's been a little over a year since the Oregon Legislature directed the Marine Board and the Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to implement an aquatic invasive species prevention program paid for by Oregon boaters.

With a new law that went into effect in January 2010, all non-motorized boats 10 feet or longer are required to carry an aquatic invasive species prevention permit. Motor boat owners automatically pay a \$5 surcharge on their boat registrations. Out-of-state residents using motorized boats are required to carry a \$22 non-resident transferable permit and non-motorized out-of-state residents a \$7 transferrable permit. Currently available permits are good for one calendar year.

Between January and September, 128,900 permits were issued, generating \$680,094 in revenue for the program. The money funded five mobile decontamination units and inspection teams; signage at boat ramps and other access points; education materials such as brochures, posters, and rack cards; and training for marine officers and various boating and environmental groups.

The Marine Board and ODFW recognize more work needs to be done. The agencies are working to improve the permit process so boaters can more easily comply in 2011. They also want to inspect more boats as the program evolves. Both agencies are committed to continuing education and outreach on the ground and weave prevention skills into the collective consciousness of all boaters.

For more information, visit <http://www.boatoregon.com>.

## Boaters unconcerned about accuracy of navigational tools

A recent survey revealed that 64 percent of boaters are not concerned enough about the accuracy of their navigational aids to seek out or make

updates. The information comes from a recent survey of 7,570 recreational boaters by the Alliance for Safe Navigation (<http://www.allianceforsafenavigation.org>), which strives to raise boater awareness about the importance of up-to-date navigational information.

Intended to measure the use and awareness of available updates to navigational tools, the survey revealed a general lack of concern among recreational boaters regarding the accuracy of their navigational data. While most boaters use aids such as GPS, electronic charts and paper charts, 79 percent fail to track the updates – issued weekly by the U.S. Coast Guard – that are necessary to maintain the accuracy of their navigational aids. These updates, called Local Notice to Mariners, contain critical information about changes such as shifting shoals, moving buoys and newly submerged obstructions, and they can be easily accessed by boaters.

Unlike commercial mariners, who are required by law to carry up-to-date charts, recreational boaters are not held to the same regulation. In fact, recreational boaters aren't required to have any charts onboard.

The alliance encourages mariners to recognize the high number of changes made to their charts and to keep their electronic and paper charts accurate. Sponsored by NOAA, the alliance is made up of BoatU.S., Jeppesen, OceanGrafix, the Sea Tow Foundation for Boating Safety and Education, and the United States Power Squadrons.

## New research shows how anglers, boaters use social media

The Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF) has revealed new research that helps define the impact of anglers and boaters in social media. The Social Media Audit, conducted by RBFF and Magnet 360, evaluated anglers and boaters in three market segments – new, casual and avid.

Key findings include: (1) Fishing and boating are very popular topics in social

media, (2) More people share experiences about fishing and boating in social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, and (3) Avid anglers and boaters tend to post more in forums, where the conversation is focused on specific topics like techniques, equipment and repair.

"We knew it was important to learn how anglers and boaters are using social media in order to more effectively reach them with our program and product information," said RBFF President and CEO Frank Peterson. "We hope this research will not only help us inspire participation in boating and fishing, but also help guide our stakeholders' marketing and communication outreach efforts."

Additional key findings about boaters

- Facebook is the lead channel with posts by individuals sharing their own boating experiences.
- Forums have engaged followers/participants. Content is technically focused on equipment, repair and buying/upgrading boats. Strongest forums are at the state/regional level and cater to avid boaters.
- Twitter comes in third with posts best summed up as real-time "shout outs" from people socializing on boats.

The methodology and full study is available at <http://www.RBFF.org>.

## Kentucky's Lake Cumberland sets new record

Exactly 1,651 boats gathered and tied up on Aug. 14, 2010, on Lake Cumberland in south-central Kentucky and broke the Guinness World Record for the largest boat tie-up, said Mike Janela, official on-site judge for the event.

A certificate was presented to officials with the Lake Cumberland Association following a count by air and by water. Guidelines for the record category stipulate that all participating boats must be connected together in a single line for at least one minute and have at least one person on board during this minute.

The previous Guinness World Record for the largest boat tie-up was 1,454 boats set at Lake Norman, N.C., in 2004. 🌟



**Jeff Hoedt**

Chief, Boating Safety  
Division Office  
of Auxiliary and  
Boating Safety  
U.S. Coast Guard

## Education – A first tier priority

Great strides have been made to improve safety in the realm of recreational boating. With casualty numbers increasing through the early 1970s, and with a continuously growing boating population for decades beyond, we actually witnessed a significant decrease in boating deaths through the 1990s.

The additional success witnessed in this fact is that, as new requirements and campaigns were implemented, boaters were even more drawn to the water to participate in one of the best recreational activities in our nation. They know that boating is tremendously fun and relatively safe.

The real question is, what's happening now? The number of registered boats has stabilized rather than grown over the past 11 years. Many of us thought that when this growth slowed down or stopped that the number of deaths would decrease even faster. Unfortunately, that isn't the case. (The number of unregistered kayaks has grown during this period.)

The number of deaths per year since 1999 has stabilized; and, in fact, it has gone up the past two years. That is concerning to many of us in the boating safety community. Our current initiatives are not reducing the deaths and injuries further, implying that we may have maximized the benefits of these initiatives.

To help us figure out a way to resolve this dilemma, many volunteers from across the boating community have given their time and talent to revise our National Recreational Boating Safety Program Strategic Plan. These discussions have helped to focus our office's concentration on two tiers of potential strategies that have the most potential to significantly reduce the number of casualties. Each tier is based on its probable impact. Thus, the first tier would be expected to prevent more casualties.

That said, let me begin with the second tier. It includes two strategies. One involves the boating under the influence initiatives, such as enhanced officer training, standardized afloat sobriety tests, and Operation Dry Water (stronger enforcement activities). The other strategy involves propeller strike avoidance initiatives, such as new regulations, propeller guard standards and new campaigns.

These are very important areas to address, as perhaps dozens of lives could be saved and hundreds of serious injuries could be avoided each year due to the potential success of these initiatives.

Even more positive results could stem from the successful implementation of the first tier strategies. The four issues to be addressed here include initiatives that will

- greatly increase the wearing of life jackets by boaters (to a 70-85% wear rate),
- greatly increase the operation skill level of boaters,
- produce public awareness campaigns that will successfully alter the behavior of select boaters (those behaviors that result in accidents and casualties), and
- greatly increase the safety knowledge of boat operators.

The fourth item on this list is of particular note in this issue of *Small Craft Advisory*, as it relates to education. More boat operators need to be educated according to the national standard in a faster implementation period than is happening at this time. Most boaters are either exempt from having to be educated right now, or the time period before they must be educated could be decades away. A quicker fix is needed.

Some states have implemented a five- to ten-year phase-in for select boat operators to be certified. That's what is needed nationwide and is what you will continue to see our Program emphasize – whether at the federal level, as endorsed by the National Boating Safety Advisory Council and recently introduced in Congress in S. 3639; or at the state level as more states move toward faster phase-in periods.

Data has shown that boating safety education is an effective tool. It can work for boaters of all ages. And, it can be essential in further reducing the number of boating accidents and casualties. To get more information on boating safety education, particularly concerning opportunities for our younger boaters, please read Wayne Stacey's article on the next page.

There's a wealth of education activity taking place – but we're hopeful that this is just the tip of the first tier iceberg. ☺

# Is it time for a national initiative to educate the next generation of safe boaters?

*By Wayne Stacey, Program Operations Branch, Boating Safety Division,  
Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety, U.S. Coast Guard*

Safety is rarely the first thing on a child's mind when jumping into a boat. That's why those of us in boating safety have come to recognize the importance of reaching out to youngsters with innovative safety education programs, both in the classroom and online.

Educating the next generation of boaters is vital to the success of our mission, and there are many excellent programs out there trying to educate our future boaters. For example:

- The Coast Guard Auxiliary in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers offer two great courses designed for children: Boating Fun – Adventure on the Water and Waypoints. The Coast Guard Auxiliary also offers the Boats, Water and Kids course. These courses are well received by many school districts throughout the United States.
- Boating Safety for Kids is offered through local squadrons of the United States Power Squadrons. Backed by a book and DVD, this program educates kids about life jackets, onboard boating safety, man overboard drills, the dangers of hypothermia and other potentially life-saving topics.
- The National Safe Boating Council developed Boating Safety Sidekicks ([www.boatingsidekicks.com](http://www.boatingsidekicks.com)), a web-based program that provides booklets, quizzes, puzzles, and other activity materials. Sidekicks also includes the “Just for Kids” section of Commander Bob’s Boating Safety Notebook where kids’ questions about seamanship and safety are addressed.
- The National Water Safety Program of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (<http://watersafety.usace.army.mil>) includes an online children’s section, introduced by Bobber the Water Safety Dog. USACE provides cartoons, coloring pages, games and curriculum materials for teachers.
- BoatSafeKids ([www.boat-safe.com](http://www.boat-safe.com)), sponsored by International Marine Educators Inc., offers games, quizzes, and answers to children’s questions about boating safety. Many states – Maryland, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Delaware and others – have either developed their own children’s boating safety program or adapted Sidekicks to their specific state. The California Department of Boating and Waterways has taken an alternate approach with AquaSMART ([www.dbw.ca.gov/AquaSmart](http://www.dbw.ca.gov/AquaSmart)), a program that offers extensive curriculum materials at no charge to educators to encourage schools to teach boating safety in the classroom. The program is divided into three sections serving grades K-2, 3-5, and 6-8. A more advanced boating safety course for older students is offered at the high school level.

## Boating safety basics for children

Children like to mirror adult behavior, so fortunately it doesn’t take but a few minutes to give them some basic – and life-saving – skills, especially if parents reinforce the lessons with their own safe boating practices. Because boating is largely a family activity, these safety programs encourage children – and their parents – to:

Wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket at all times when on or near the water.

Know how to swim, with and without a life jacket.

Remain seated when a boat is under way and never sit or stand on the sides of the boat.

Keep safe while helping others. For example, extend an oar or throw a life ring, life jacket or rope to someone who has fallen overboard, instead of jumping in to help them.

With adult supervision, and depending on the age of the child, children can even be taught to use basic safety equipment, including flares, fire extinguisher, and the marine VHF radio, in case the adult in charge is injured and unable to respond. Children are eager to learn and, with proper instruction, come to understand that these are not toys but equipment to be used in emergency situations. And... they may very well save a life!

The rationale underlying all of these programs – and there are many others out there – is that early education is the key to building the next generation of responsible boaters. Various studies have shown that when children are taught discipline, self-restraint and a few simple rules on how to keep themselves and others out of harm’s way they develop productive patterns of behavior that stay with them for the rest of their lives. It stands to reason that the more those of us in boating safety can do to educate children, the easier our job is going to be years down the road.

But instead of approaching children’s boating safety education in a piecemeal fashion, as we are now, perhaps it’s time to consider a unified, national message with a catchy tagline directed at youth. ☘





**Matthew Long**  
NASBLA Government  
Affairs Director

# Building relationships

We build relationships every day. Be it thanking a coworker for a job well done or helping a neighbor with some handiwork, almost everyone goes through the process of building and enhancing relationships and partnerships on a daily basis. This same process is just as important, if not more so, when it comes to grassroots advocacy.

Grassroots advocacy is a form of support that takes place among concerned constituents, rather than from organizations. The term refers to the organic way in which this form of advocacy grows. While the seed may be planted by someone, it is completely up to the citizen how far it will grow. This style of advocacy is especially important to NASBLA and its members.

There are over 100,000 government advocates who represent their groups in the halls of Congress. Officials at every level of government hear from hundreds of interests daily. The challenge is to differentiate NASBLA from all of the other groups. The answer is grassroots interaction.

Elected officials are more relaxed when they are “back home.” There are fewer distractions, so they can pay full attention to the issues. As the saying goes, “all politics is local,” and officials at all levels of government place a large emphasis on local issues and their constituents. All of these factors greatly increase the value of grassroots advocacy.

In addition to asking NASBLA members to visit with their members of Congress in Washington, the association requests that all state boating law administrators begin the relationship building process with their elected representatives. If NASBLA is going to remain a leader in advancing recreational boating safety through public policy, then we need to strengthen our relationships with those who make public policy.

This simple process – not of active lobbying, but of developing a partnership – is

achieved in many ways. One of the most important tools NASBLA members have in their advocacy quiver is the ride-along.

Both members of Congress and state boating law administrators benefit from a Congressional ride-along. Legislators get to meet more of their constituents and learn firsthand about recreational boating safety enforcement. You and your staff bring your interests and concerns directly to the individuals who can address them. And your staff feels proud of their work, sharing it with Senators and Representatives.

A ride-along educates a policymaker about recreational boating safety in general and your agency or department in particular. By “putting a face” on recreational boating safety, the ride-along prompts a legislator to return your call and hear your opinion when crucial issues arise.

Another simple way of fostering closer relationships with your members of Congress is through a regularly scheduled update meeting. After you’ve met with the member and/or his or her staff, suggest to them a twice-a-year, or even quarterly, sit-down meeting to brief them on what you and your agency and department have accomplished and what you are planning for the future. This allows them to stay up on what is going on back home and it gives you the opportunity to keep your issues in the forefront. While you may not be asking for anything during these briefings, it will make it easier for you to approach the Congressional office when something important does arise.

Just as you build partnerships with user and industry groups, it is equally important to foster these friendships with your elected representatives. Simple actions such as ride-alongs and briefings will help your office stay relevant in the eyes of policymakers. ✪



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lessons that kids can get excited about.**

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## 2010-2011

## RECREATIONAL BOATING SAFETY CALENDAR

### DECEMBER

**13-17**  
National Association of  
State Boating Law Administrators  
National Boating Accident  
Investigation & Analysis –  
Level I Training  
Phoenix, Arizona  
<http://www.nasbla.org>  
[sam@nasbla.org](mailto:sam@nasbla.org)  
859.225.9487

### 2011 JANUARY

**14-16**  
National Boating Safety Advisory  
Council  
Winter Meeting  
Orlando, Florida  
<http://homeport.uscg.mil/NBSAC>  
[Jeffrey.A.Ludwig@uscg.mil](mailto:Jeffrey.A.Ludwig@uscg.mil)

**19-20**  
Colorado River Law  
Enforcement Association  
Annual Conference  
Laughlin, Nevada  
<http://www.dbw.ca.gov/crlea/index.htm>

**24-28**  
National Association of State  
Boating Law Administrators  
National Boating Accident  
Investigation & Analysis -- Level I  
Fort Meyers, Florida  
<http://www.nasbla.org>  
[sam@nasbla.org](mailto:sam@nasbla.org)  
859.225.9487

**26-30**  
US Sailing  
National Sailing Programs  
Symposium  
Clearwater, Florida  
<http://www.ussailing.org>  
[karendavidson@ussailing.org](mailto:karendavidson@ussailing.org)  
401.683.0800

**28-29**  
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary  
National Training Conference  
St. Louis, Missouri  
<http://www.cgaux.org>

**31-FEBRUARY 5**  
United States Power Squadrons  
Annual Meeting  
Orlando, Florida  
<http://www.usps.org>

### MARCH

**1**  
National Association of State Boating  
Law Administrators  
Executive Board Meeting  
Lexington, Kentucky  
<http://www.nasbla.org>  
[ron@nasbla.org](mailto:ron@nasbla.org)  
859.225.9487

**2-3**  
National Association of State Boating  
Law Administrators  
Boating Law Administrators  
Workshop  
Lexington, Kentucky  
<http://www.nasbla.org>  
[ron@nasbla.org](mailto:ron@nasbla.org)  
859.225.9487

**4-5**  
National Association of State  
Boating Law Administrators  
Enforcement & Training  
Committee Meeting  
Lexington, Kentucky  
<http://www.nasbla.org>  
[chris@nasbla.org](mailto:chris@nasbla.org)  
859.225.9487

**5-6**  
National Association of State Boating  
Law Administrators Education &  
Outreach Committee Meeting  
Savannah, Georgia  
<http://www.nasbla.org>  
[tom@nasbla.org](mailto:tom@nasbla.org)  
859.225.9487

**5-6**  
American Canoe Association  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Savannah, Georgia  
<http://www.americancanoe.org>  
[cstec@americancanoe.org](mailto:cstec@americancanoe.org)  
540.907.4460, ext 104

**6-9**  
National Safe Boating  
Council National Water  
Safety Congress  
International Boating  
& Water Safety Summit  
Savannah, Georgia  
<http://www.safeboatingcouncil.org>  
<http://www.watersafetycongress.org>

**19**  
National Association of State Boating  
Law Administrators  
Vessel Identification, Registration &  
Titling Committee Meeting  
Chattanooga, Tennessee  
<http://www.nasbla.org>  
[ron@nasbla.org](mailto:ron@nasbla.org)  
859.225.9487

**20-23**  
International Association  
of Marine Investigators  
Annual Training Seminar  
Chattanooga, Tennessee  
<http://www.iamimarine.org/iami>  
[iamimarine@aol.com](mailto:iamimarine@aol.com)

**25-26**  
National Boating Federation  
Annual Meeting  
San Diego, California  
<http://www.n-b-f.org>  
410.573.1494

### APRIL

**1-3**  
National Boating Safety Advisory  
Council Spring Meeting  
St. Louis, Missouri  
<http://homeport.uscg.mil/NBSAC>  
[Jeffrey.A.Ludwig@uscg.mil](mailto:Jeffrey.A.Ludwig@uscg.mil)

### MAY

**17**  
Safe Boating Week  
Congressional Reception  
Washington, D.C.

**21**  
Inflatable Life Jacket  
World Record Day  
<http://www.readysetinflate.com>  
[outreach@safeboatingcouncil.org](mailto:outreach@safeboatingcouncil.org)  
703.361.4294

**21-27**  
National Safe Boating Week  
<http://www.safeboatingcampaign.com>

### JUNE

**4-12**  
National Fish & Boating Week  
<http://www.takemefishing.org>

**5-8**  
Western States Boating  
Administrators Association  
Annual Meeting  
Las Vegas, Nevada  
[http://bit.ly/\\_wsbaa](http://bit.ly/_wsbaa)

**11**  
National Marina Day  
<http://www.nationalmarinaday.org>

**15-17**  
National Association of State Boating  
Law Administrators  
Executive Board Meeting  
Santa Fe, New Mexico  
<http://www.nasbla.org>  
[ron@nasbla.org](mailto:ron@nasbla.org)  
859.225.9487

**24-26**  
Operation Dry Water  
<http://operationdrywater.org>  
[orgeditor@nasbla.org](mailto:orgeditor@nasbla.org)