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# SCA

small craft advisory

- **Outstanding Officers Applauded**

- **Achievers Honored with Awards**

- **Law Enforcement Essential to Safety**

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## ABOUT THE COVER

Lieutenant David G. Pfiffner, with the Nevada Department of Wildlife, was named Boating Officer of the Year by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators. Pfiffner was given this honor for his more than 20 years of work in the Las Vegas area. He was cited for his contribution to boating safety on Lakes Mead and Mohave as the game warden supervisor and for his role in arresting drunken boaters.

*Nevada Department of Wildlife photo*



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

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## Law Enforcement Officers Vital to Boating Safety



Richard Moore  
NASBLA President

It's time to 'fess up. Do you know how it feels to have a law enforcement vehicle or boat pull up behind you and all of a sudden see the flashing lights come on? If you're like most of us, you know that sinking feeling far too well because of personal experience. If not, you probably can relate to that twinge of anxiety that comes with passing a law enforcement vehicle and immediately wondering, "Was I going too fast?" or "Am I going to get stopped?" There's just something about unexpected interaction with law enforcement officers that makes most folks a little apprehensive, most likely because they aren't completely sure everything is in order or if they are totally compliant with the law.

In the marine environment, law enforcement officers in most states are authorized to briefly stop any boat to simply inspect safety equipment, whether or not there is any obvious violation. Compliance with safety equipment carriage requirements is vitally important for the safety and well-being of the boat operator and any passengers, and the only way to ensure that a boat operator is in compliance is to perform a brief safety equipment inspection. However, this interaction is usually so much more than merely a simple equipment inspection.

Officers are probably the most vital means of providing information to the boating public. They are knowledgeable of the local waterways and can offer plenty of information about areas to avoid. Their inspection efforts often force a boat owner to look at equipment that may have been stored for quite some time and identify items that need to be replaced so they will be available in case of an accident or other critical situation. Perhaps an even greater role is that of serving as a one-on-one educator to the boating public during each stop.

Boating law enforcement officers nationwide performed over half a million vessel inspections

last year, which is a phenomenal task in itself. When you consider how many people may have been on those boats, the number of people on our nation's waterways who had opportunity to learn something important from an officer is huge. We sure didn't teach that many students in a year's worth of boating safety classes.

Perhaps the most important point here is this: We need to ensure that marine law enforcement officers are fully aware of the most important boating safety "snippets" – the main points that all boaters need to know. One might be "Most boating accidents involve someone running into something such as another boat or a fixed object, so it's really important to slow down a little and really pay attention to what's happening around you on the water." Another, which is of particular importance for people in smaller boats (usually 21 feet or less), might be "We see far too many people drown after unexpectedly falling out of a boat your size and smaller, and many of them knew how to swim. That's why we wear an inflatable life jacket while on the water, and it would be great if you did, too."

Our law enforcement efforts are a vital part of the overall recreational boating safety program, and its real value is in making people safer on the water. We will be able to maximize our effectiveness when we take advantage of the opportunities to inform boaters of the most critical boating safety messages and don't merely serve in purely an enforcement role. Our thanks go out to all those officers who serve as enforcers, guardians and educators. It is through their commitment that we collectively accomplish the mission of making boating safer and more enjoyable. ■



John Johnson  
NASBLA Executive Director



## Florida BLA Receives PWIA Boating Safety Leadership Award

The Personal Watercraft Industry Association (PWIA) presented Capt. Richard Moore, Florida boating law administrator, with the 2008 Boating Safety Leadership Award during the 49th Annual National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) conference in Clearwater Beach, Fla., in September. Capt. Moore is the second recipient of this annual award from PWIA, which recognizes a single individual in the boating law community who has displayed significant effort in promoting boater safety.

"This award is in appreciation for Richard's hard work to make Florida's waterways safer," said Maureen Healey, executive director of PWIA. "His dedication and outstanding leadership in promoting boater education and safety help keep boating one of America's greatest pastimes."

Capt. Moore has been instrumental in laying the legislative groundwork for several boating safety initiatives in the state of Florida. As captain of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Boating and Waterways Section, he has been leading the charge for the state legislature to increase Florida's minimum age requirement to operate a personal watercraft from age 14 to 16. While the legislation has not yet passed, Moore continues to promote and push for the measure.

"The personal watercraft industry has been one of our biggest champions behind boater education and safety," said Capt. Richard Moore. "We share the same belief that an educated boater is a more responsible, safety conscious operator. It is an honor to receive this award and I look forward to our continued collaboration."

PWIA is a longtime member and supporter of NASBLA. The personal watercraft industry works across the country with state boating law administrators advocating for all or parts of its model legislation to be adopted. The model bill requires PWC operators to pass an approved boating safety class, be

at least 16 years old to operate a PWC (18 to rent), operate PWC only during daylight hours; the law also establishes no-wake zones within 100 feet of shore or swimmers and punishes reckless operators.

## We Get Mail

Dear Editor:

I appreciate very much receiving copies of the Small Craft Advisory. It always contains excellent information, which is regularly used in our local boating safety courses. I have a question concerning information on page 8 of the July-August 2008 issue. This contains the following statement: It is important to note that an inflatable PFD must be worn in order to meet the U.S. Coast Guard carriage requirement.

Although I believe that was at one time correct, I cannot find where that is set forth as a current requirement for recreational vessels. Information from the USCG website does not seem to indicate that inflatables must be worn to be counted as meeting minimum requirements.

Please inform me where I may find this requirement.

Thank you,  
Dick McGaughy

Dear Mr. McGaughy,

Thank you so much for taking the time to write about the information in our latest issue of Small Craft Advisory. Your message has provided me with the opportunity to learn something new.

The folks in the U.S. Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety explained that the carriage requirements state that an inflatable must be used in accordance with its label. When that particular article was written, the labels on the inflatables available to boaters did state they needed to be worn. However, following my conversations with the Coast Guard, I've learned that – due to newly developed technology – there are now a few inflatable PFDs that do not have to be worn to be in compliance with the federal carriage requirement.

With technology changing almost daily, it's hard to keep up with all the new advances. Thank you for bringing this to our attention. ■

# Attendees Applaud Annual Conference

By Kimberly Jenkins



The results are in and folks are saying that NASBLA's 49th Annual Conference was a hit, according to survey results following the event. Nearly all (99 percent) of the survey respondents indicated they were extremely satisfied with their entire experience at this year's conference.

More than 300 people devoted to boating safety and enforcement converged in Clearwater Beach, Fla., for the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators' (NASBLA) 49th Annual Conference, held Sept. 5-10, 2008. The yearly event provides a forum for boating law administrators, marine patrol officers, boating safety educators, marine industry leaders and others to discuss issues regarding recreational boating safety, connect with peers and recognize individuals for achievements.

The preconference events included a New BLA (Boating Law Administrator) Orientation. The new BLAs include Junior Tuiaosopo, American Samoa; Paul Suba, Guam; Joel Wilkinson, Maine; George Agganis, Massachusetts; Anthony Turner, Michigan; Kay Inos, Northern Mariana Islands; Pam Dillon, Ohio; Dan Martin, Pennsylvania; Andy Alban, South Dakota; and Bob Lutz, Vermont. In addition to this orientation, board meetings and committee briefings were held before the conference.

The conference kicked off on Sept. 7 with the opening ceremonies. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission welcomed the audience to the conference, then played a powerful PowerPoint presentation listing the 77 people who died in Florida boating accidents in 2007. This worked to focus everyone's attention on why we do what we do in the realm of recreational boating safety. Rear Admiral Sally Brice-O'Hara, deputy commandant for Operations, U.S. Coast Guard, served as the evening's keynote speaker. She recognized NASBLA President John Fetterman and urged everyone to expand their communications to the public via newer media. She commended the boating coalitions for improving the safety record and discussed the National Recreational Boating Safety Strategic Plan, praising the National Boating Safety Advisory Council for its direction.

Following the opening ceremonies, the president's reception, held in honor of the National Safe Boating Council's 50th Anniversary, was a social event designed to welcome

the conference attendees. With more than 25 exhibits to visit, the conference attendees spent the rest of the evening in the Exhibit Hall.

The first full day of the conference, Sept. 8, began with a Working Session for boating law administrators (BLAs). During this meeting, BLAs discussed the organization's progress over the past year and charted the course for the upcoming year. Meanwhile, a Marketing Workshop was held for any non-BLA conference attendees. Amber Williams, director of strategic planning for Glass McClure, conducted the workshop, which focused on how to create an effective marketing program.



Following lunch, NASBLA's annual business meeting was held. This served to wrap up the previous year's business, as well as begin the next year's work. Each committee reported on its work during the year and presented any action items on which the board needed to vote.

Following committee reports, NASBLA signed two memoranda of agreement (MOA). One was with the SRI/National Center for Maritime & Port Security to work together to seek funding to conduct a study to assess gaps in domestic security related to maritime security and make recommendations on how the waterborne law enforcement resources of NASBLA member states can be used to fill those gaps. The second MOA was with the Canadian Power & Sail Squadrons to work together to identify opportunities to strengthen international collaborative efforts including fostering mutual support for the NASBLA National Education Standards and the Training and Educational programs established by CPS.

Also during the meeting, NASBLA members elected the new Executive Board members:

- President – Richard Moore, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Vice President – Terry West, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- Treasurer – Ray Tsuneyoshi, California Department of Boating and Waterways



- Members-At-Large – George Green, Oklahoma Highway Patrol; Ron Jendro, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; and Jim Graybeal, Delaware Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Control
- Immediate Past President – John Fetterman, Maine Department of Marine Resources

That evening, attendees enjoyed the annual awards banquet, during which high achievers in the realm of boating safety and enforcement were recognized and applauded for their efforts.

*Editor's Note: A summary of these awards is on pp. 8-10.*

The event's general sessions began on Sept. 9, with an energetic and engaging presentation by Jones Loflin. He discussed ways to make the most of the time spent at a conference and explained that a conference provides information and tools that help in a person's job or program. He challenged the audience to write down new ideas they encountered during the conference and to try to overcome the fear of new ideas that sometimes inhibits people.

Next, Dr. Geoffrey Godby, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Management at Penn State University, discussed the future of recreational boating. He explained that the high level of competition for an individual's leisure time along with increasing fuel costs, a higher volume of water traffic and increasing regulations are working to decrease boating participation. He also cited the

aging population, hectic lifestyles, competing recreational options, global warming and shorter vacations as reasons for the declining interest in outdoor recreation.

David Zierden, state climatologist for Florida, discussed the differences between climate change and global warming and explained how water level predictions and climatologic forecasts will affect boating in the United States.

Participants were shuttled to a local yacht club for lunch. After dining, everyone was encouraged to visit with exhibitors who were demonstrating their boats and related equipment. Following lunch, participants could select from a variety of breakout sessions covering topics including volunteer search and rescue, homeland security, Florida's "Wear It" campaign, staged boat collisions, Texas marine officer death investigation, mandatory education and a paddlesports-based boating safety course.

The final day of the conference, Sept. 10, Capt. Mark Rizzo and Jeff Hoedt provided information concerning several recreational boating safety and small vessel security issues from the U.S. Coast Guard perspective. This includes such items as accident reporting and statistics, life jacket wear projects, boating under the influence initiatives, the Vessel Identification System, legislative issues on reauthorization of

continued on page 6



1. Rear Admiral Sally Brice-O'Hara with the U.S. Coast Guard, served as the keynote speaker for the opening ceremonies of the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators' annual conference. She urged the audience to expand their communications to the public using new media. Staff photos

2. Attendees were treated to lunch one day at the marina where several exhibitors displayed and demonstrated their boats.

3. During the annual business meeting, NASBLA members approved resolutions, witnessed the signing of agreements, learned about the organization's latest initiatives.

4. Larry Johnson, professional speaker, author and corporate culture expert, closed the conference by discussing the importance of incorporating absolute honesty into corporate communications.

5. Jones Loflin kicked off the conference's general sessions with an energetic and engaging presentation about making the most of the time spent at a conference.



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increasingly unbelievable or invisible to many consumers. More and more, the public expects an authentic two-way conversation. Providing a means for two-way communication, such as a blog, message board, or other social media tool, will bring about more trust for an organization.

Mark Duda, executive director of Responsive Management, provided the preliminary results of a review of boating education programs. He collected data from the boating law administrators and state education coordinators on the effectiveness of boating education programs in their states. From this research, Duda identified the top issues in recreational boating safety: not wearing life jackets, alcohol use, lack of education, and accidents. He also pinpointed the types of education/outreach that are the most effective: media, public service announcements, school programs. Duda also surveyed registered boaters. From this, he learned that most boaters feel boating is "somewhat safe" to "very safe" in their states. Boaters view alcohol, reckless/careless boat operation, and operator/boater inattention as the main reasons for boating accidents.

Closing the conference, Larry Johnson, professional speaker, author and corporate culture expert, discussed absolute honesty. He explained that whether it is fear of reprisal, natural timidity, or not wanting to hurt someone's feelings, many people avoid telling the truth when the truth needs to be told. This truth avoidance is present in the workplace; however, avoiding the truth can hurt a company or organization. Johnson discussed how to establish a standard of communication that encourages open discussions and healthy debate, tells the truth, speaks plainly, and, most of all, is guided by a moral and ethical sense of right and wrong. ■



## CONFERENCE continued from page 5

the Trust Fund and mandatory education, regulatory projects on propeller strike avoidance measures and numbering of vessels, and the Strategic Plan of the National Recreational Boating Safety Program.

Next, Ben Martin, an association executive, discussed social media and how agencies can use it to their advantage. According to Martin, social media is people talking to other people on the Internet. Forms of social media include instant messenger, blogs, podcasts, message boards, social networking websites, e-mail, and much more. Using social media can help an organization build trust with its constituents. Traditional advertising/marketing is unidirectional and is becoming





## A COMMUNITY WHERE NONE HAS EXISTED BEFORE ...

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Both the magazine and the website provide a wide variety of topics relevant to their shared mission and include contact information at the conclusion of each article to encourage more specific agency-to-agency exchange.

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# Association Acknowledges High-Achievers

*Each year, the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) honors outstanding individuals and groups for their contributions to recreational boating safety.*

*At its 2008 Annual Conference in September, NASBLA presented awards to several individuals. Following are summaries of this year's honorees.*

## President's Special Award

This year, NASBLA President John Fetterman selected four individuals for special recognition for their contributions this past year to boating safety and NASBLA. He presented the 2008 President's Special Award:

- **Mark DuPont**, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, for the extensive time and effort he has devoted to assisting the nonprofit organization in furthering its training initiatives.
- **Madeleine Fenske**, Arizona Game and Fish Department, for the extensive time and effort she has devoted to NASBLA's Vessel Identification, Registration & Titling Committee
- **Rob Henry**, National Transportation Safety Board, for the valuable counsel and insight he provided to the nonprofit association during the past year.
- **Alfred E. Johnson**, U.S. Coast Guard, for his ongoing dedication and perseverance to boating safety while serving in the First Coast Guard District.

## Boating Safety Award

**Emily King**, public information & education section manager for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' Watercraft Division, received the 2008 Boating Safety Award for her tireless efforts and outstanding performance in the recreational boating safety program. King is the first person to have been honored with this award a second time. The award is sponsored by the National Safe Boating Council.

King has dedicated her life to making others prepared to boat safely. She is a 30-year veteran with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Watercraft and nationally recognized as an expert in boating education and river

rescue. She has been a member of the NASBLA Education Committee for more than a decade and has been instrumental in the development of NASBLA's *National Boating Education and Testing Standards*. She has also been active in adding to the pool of test questions used throughout the United States and Canada. She has been essential in crafting the new *Paddlesports Standards* through her work on both the Paddlesports Committee and the Special Risks Committee.

King is a member of the National Safe Boating Council's Board of Directors, chair of the NSBC Training Committee and an instructor for the Boating Safety Instructor Certification Course.

An avid boater, King is also an instructor trainer in canoeing, sailing, personal watercraft, kayaking and swift water rescue. She was a member of the 1996 U.S. Olympic Rescue Team for the whitewater slalom event on the Ocoee River in Tennessee.



*Emily King, with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, received the 2008 Boating Safety Award for her career-long dedication to boating education.*



*Vice Admiral David P. Pekoske, commander of the Coast Guard Pacific Area, received the 2008 NASBLA Award for his ongoing support of mandatory boater education.*

## NASBLA Award

**Vice Admiral David P. Pekoske**, commander of the Coast Guard Pacific Area, is the recipient of the 2008 NASBLA Award for his ardent support of the boating safety programs that provide a safe and enjoyable boating environment.

Vice Admiral Pekoske has partnered with the NASBLA leadership on many fronts. Most significantly, he recently spearheaded efforts to call for mandatory boating safety education language in the reauthorization of Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Safety Trust Fund. He reached out to members of the boating safety community in multiple efforts to rally support for the community to come together in building consensus language for this very important reauthorization around a Coast Guard and NASBLA model. Through his efforts, Vice Admiral Pekoske has created a partnership environment that helped propel NASBLA forward into cooperation with the highest levels of Coast Guard leadership.

## Bonner Award

**Jeff Johnson**, boating law administrator of Alaska and past NASBLA president, received the 2008 Bonner Award for his outstanding leadership qualities.

Johnson began his career with Michigan State Parks and the U.S. Forest Service before becoming a park ranger with the Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation. He was an on-scene coordinator during the Exxon Valdez oil spill and later transferred to the division's front office to manage restoration projects associated with





Jeff Johnson, Alaska boating law administrator, received the 2008 Bonner Award for his outstanding leadership qualities and tireless support of recreational boating safety programs.

the spill. A marine safety instructor for more than 20 years, Johnson developed the division's powerboat operator training policy and certification program, the first such program in the state.

Named by the governor as Alaska's first official boating law administrator in 1998, Johnson worked closely with a coalition of key partners to draft the "Alaska Boating Safety Act" and to garner public and legislative support for its passage. The Act was signed into law in May 2000.

Johnson hosted both the 2000 Western States Boating Administrators Association (WSBAA) and the 2001 NASBLA conferences, served two terms as WSBAA President, has served on several NASBLA committees, and is past chair of the Paddlesports and Conference committees. He has served on the NASBLA Executive Board, working his way through the ranks to serve as president in 2006.

Johnson has not only built a legislative mandate within his state to promote boating safety but he and his staff have also pioneered several initiatives that have been replicated nationally, including life jacket loaner boards, cold water sudden immersion educational videos and printed materials.

### Lifetime Achievement Award

President Fetterman bestowed three Lifetime Achievement Awards this year:

- **Randy Edwards**, boating law administrator for Iowa and past NASBLA president, joined the Iowa

Department of Natural Resources in 1975 and currently serves as the assistant chief of the Law Enforcement Bureau.

He has been Iowa's boating law administrator since 1996. During his tenure as BLA, he has remained steadfastly involved with NASBLA. He has chaired both the Numbering & Titling and Boats & Associated Equipment committees twice. He has also served on the Education and Law Enforcement committees. He was elected president of the Northern Association of Boating Administrators in 2000, which placed him on NASBLA's Executive Board. In 2002 he was appointed as NASBLA's liaison to the Lewis and Clark Bi-Centennial Commemoration Event.

Edwards ascended through the ranks of the Executive Board, serving as president in 2005. Under his leadership, NASBLA adopted a strategic plan and restructured its governance model. This evolution has allowed NASBLA to move forward under the dynamic challenges of today's world.

In January 2004, Edwards was appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to a three-year term on the National Boating Safety Advisory Council.

- **Augusto "Kiko" Villalon** came to the United States in 1960 as a refugee from Cuba. He ended up in Little Rock, Arkansas, and answered an ad for a draftsman at a boat factory. Shortly thereafter, Villalon became assistant chief engineer and in 1963 began writing standards for the old Boating Industry Association.

In 1965 Villalon joined the American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC). In 1969 he was asked to join a group chartered by Congress to re-write the Boat Safety Act of 1940 and update the standards. That work was the basis for the Federal Boating Safety Act of 1971.

Villalon moved to Florida in 1976 and started Marine Concepts that conducted pre-production work to get a new boat model ready for manufacturing. All this time Villalon continued to volunteer for ABYC, testing boats and writing new and better standards. In the late 1980s Villalon was also appointed to the National Boating Safety Advisory Council and served two terms.

In 2002 the Coast Guard and NBSAC conceived the idea of a Tiger Team that could respond to recreational boating accidents nationwide and pinpoint any issues that involve the construction of safer boats. Ancillary to the Tiger Team, Villalon's company, Ancon Marine Consultants Inc., prepares boating accident reports for the Coast Guard on a daily basis.

- **Virgil Chambers**, executive director of the National Safe Boating Council (NSBC), served in the Navy then joined the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, where he served as chief of the Boating Safety and Education Division from 1978 to 1996. He developed and implemented the Pennsylvania Public School Boating and Water Safety Program. He also founded the National Association for Search and

Rescue water rescue training program and served as director of this national program from 1987 to 1997.

Chambers is an accomplished regional, state, national and international author and presenter. He wrote the original BoatU.S. Foundation Online Boating Safety Course. He is also certified as a lifeguard, lifeguard instructor, water safety instructor, canoeing instructor and boating instructor.

Chambers has been the executive director for the National Safe Boating Council since 1996, where he serves as the technical content advisor in direct support of the Council's education and information programs. He is responsible for the planning



Virgil Chambers, executive director of the National Safe Boating Council, received both a Lifetime Achievement Award and the 2008 National Boating Safety Leadership Award for his unwavering support of boating safety throughout his career.

and development of the year-round national boating safety awareness campaign administrated by the U.S. Coast Guard. He also serves as a representative of the Council to national and international boating and water safety organizations.

### National Boating Safety Leadership Award

**Virgil Chambers** also received the prestigious William B. Garner National Boating Safety Leadership Award. NASBLA's developed the Garner Award to recognize and commend the accomplishments of those rare individuals whose vision, persistence and willingness to go beyond the status quo puts them on the frontier of recreational boating safety. It honors those men and women whose outstanding effort and achievement have elevated state or federal policy interventions to heights not previously attained.

"Chambers is a dedicated, honorable and true professional in every aspect as well as a good sincere friend of NASBLA," said NASBLA President John Fetterman.

Chambers has attended nearly every NASBLA education function since 1978, along with actively participating in the development of the NASBLA education standards, the NASBLA education testing standards, and was the creator of the training program that teaches the education course providers what the

standards mean with direction to enhancing the curricula being developed and taught nationwide. He has been an advocate for helping NASBLA with several reauthorizations of the boating safety trust funds as a participant at American League of Anglers and Boaters meetings and negotiations with other boating partners. He participates in numerous other venues including the National Boating Safety Advisory Council and the Recreation Boating and Fishing Foundation.

### Legislative Award

**Senator Bill Nelson** was selected as the recipient of NASBLA's Legislative Award in gratitude for his co-sponsorship of the Clean Boating Act, which exempts the nation's recreational boaters from an onerous and unnecessary court ruling that would have had devastating results.

"Senator Nelson's commitment to the recreational boating community ensures that millions of boaters may continue to enjoy this great American pastime and also ensures that the states may keep their attention focused on issues of safety and security on our nation's waterways," said NASBLA President John Fetterman.

A former astronaut, Senator Nelson has spent a lifetime serving the people of Florida and their many interests, including the millions of boaters and anglers in the state.

Senator Bill Nelson was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2000 after serving six years as a member of the Florida Cabinet. He currently serves on the Senate Commerce, Armed Services, Budget, Foreign Relations, Intelligence, and Aging committees and is recognized as the leading congressional expert on NASA.

### Life Member Award

**Bob Brown**, from South Dakota, received the 2008 Life Member Award. This award is given to former members of NASBLA who no longer serve in that capacity, either through a change in duties, retirement or other reasons. Brown served as South Dakota's boating law administrator from March 2003 to April 2008.

### Distinguished Life Member Award

**Brad Hokanson**, the boating law administrator for Guam, received the 2008 Distinguished Life Member Award in recognition of his previous service to NASBLA. This award is given to those members of NASBLA who served as a committee chair or board member during their boating career but are no longer associated with NASBLA either through a change in duties, retirement or other reasons.

## Tennessee Agency Receives Inaugural Innovations Award

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency received NASBLA's first Innovations in Technology Award. NASBLA in conjunction with its Mission Partner, Boat Ed, developed the Innovations in Technology Award to recognize programs or initiatives that demonstrate the highest level of innovation leading to advances in boating safety.

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) received the 2008 award for their "Report Beam" boat accident reporting system. Officers take notes at the scene of an accident, then input the six-page report on the Report Beam software application. Report Beam has an interactive diagramming feature that lets officers show the positions of boats, passengers, trajectories, speeds, images from Google Earth and more. The report is uploaded to the TWRA database that day, from the scene of the accident or anywhere officers can access the Internet.

Use of Report Beam provides consistency, a more professional report, and speeds the reporting process. The new format ensures the integrity of the report and makes copies instantly available to courts, the U.S. Coast Guard and other interested parties without days of searching or duplicating.



*Ken Ripley accepts the 2008 Innovations in Technology Award from NASBLA President John Fetterman on behalf of the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency. Cindy and Kurt Kalkomey, representing NASBLA Mission Partner Boat Ed, assisted in the presentation.*





**Boating Law Enforcement**

# **2008 OFFICER OF THE YEAR**

**[www.NASBLA.org](http://www.NASBLA.org)**

## ***2008 Boating Law Enforcement Officers of the Year***

*The responsibilities of today's marine enforcement officers encompass a diversity of disciplines. Boating officers are responsible for much more than enforcing laws. They must also educate the public, save lives, facilitate wildlife conservation, protect citizens, help secure our nation, among numerous other duties. Often these officers go well beyond the call of duty. We honor these boating law enforcement officers in the following pages.*

*The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) began awarding the Boating Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award in 2000 to recognize outstanding boating law enforcement officers. Each state selects a boating law enforcement officer. These officers then compete for one of three regional awards. The three regional officers of the year then vie for the national award. This year we had candidates from 41 states and territories nominated for this program. The officers described in the following pages represent the top boating law enforcement officers in the nation.*



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# 2008 boating officer of the year NATIONAL RECIPIENT



Lieutenant  
**David G. Pfiffner**  
Department of Wildlife  
**Nevada**

## Nevada Game Warden Named Boating Officer of the Year

Lieutenant David G. Pfiffner, 51, of North Las Vegas was named Boating Officer of the Year by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators. Working for the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), Pfiffner was given this honor for his more than 20 years of work in the Las Vegas area. He was cited for his contributions to boating safety on Lakes Mead and Mohave as the game warden supervisor and for his role in arresting drunken boaters.

The Officer of the Year award is given each year by NASBLA to one officer from the 56 states and territories. Officers first are picked by the states and then by region. The final pick is announced at an awards ceremony during NASBLA's annual conference.

"I was really surprised by this award," said Lt. Pfiffner. "The most important thing to remember is that this is a team award. I am honored, but it has to be shared with the other wardens who work every day in Nevada."

Lt. Pfiffner is a leader in boating safety on the Colorado River system. He is the lynchpin of a regional education and enforcement program. He makes boaters safer in his area through tireless devotion, painstaking planning and nearly flawless execution.

As the game warden lieutenant that supervises Nevada's busy Southern Boating Region, he orchestrates every aspect of law enforcement in the area and directly supervises more than 15 officers. These duties used to be shared between two supervisors. However, over a year ago, Lt. Pfiffner began covering all supervisory responsibilities for both positions, becoming the only supervisory presence for NDOW in the state's most critical boating area.

Lt. Pfiffner also serves as part of the law enforcement management team helping to direct boating safety issues on a statewide as well as regional and consequently national basis. Aside from his duties to Nevada, Pfiffner also coordinates operating under the influence checkpoints with several local, state and federal law enforcement agencies in Nevada and neighboring Arizona. His leadership in the OUI arena has resulted in hundreds of arrests in his career in this busy, booze-prone area of the California, Nevada, Arizona Tri-State region.

"When Dave started we didn't even think about drunken boating," said Rob Buonamici, chief game warden at NDOW. "Dave built our operating under the influence program. He has personally arrested dozens of drunken boaters and has been instrumental in reducing accidents. He is one of our most dedicated people, and we are not at all surprised that he took top honors in the country this year."

Boat accidents on the Colorado River, Tri State region exceed 90 percent of reportable accidents in Nevada and a high percentage for both Arizona and California. Lt. Pfiffner is responsible for ensuring that every boat accident is investigated promptly and properly.

Nevada's Southern Region has a very active boating education program. Until early last year, no boating education personnel were stationed within 400 miles of this critical area in Nevada. With the addition of Las Vegas' first full-time educator, Lt. Pfiffner continues to show a willingness to provide law enforcement staff for boating education programs in the region. He provides support, personnel and a serious commitment to public activities in this area, including boat shows, marina day and all public activities in this area.

*Sponsored by ACR Electronics Inc., this award is given in recognition of outstanding service to recreational boating. It symbolizes the highest level of achievement among boating law enforcement officers in the United States.*

## ACR Electronics Sponsors Annual National Boating Officer Award



More than 10,000 people owe their lives to ACR Electronics Inc. Based in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., ACR, a Cobham plc company, designs and manufactures a full range of safety and survival products and accessories. Recognized as the world leader in safety and survival technologies, ACR has provided safety equipment to the aviation and marine industries as well as to the military since 1956 and the outdoor industries since 2003.

With the company's focus on saving lives, Ron Crowder, executive director of sales, has happily been sponsoring the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators' annual Butch Potts Boating Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award since 2006.

NASBLA developed the award program to recognize and honor outstanding service to recreational boating. The award symbolizes the highest level of achievement among boating law enforcement officers in the United States.

Since its founding in 1956, ACR has endeavored to provide the best electronic life support and signaling equipment modern technology can devise. This commitment to the quality of its products catapulted the young company into the forefront of the safety and survival industry. ACR rapidly became established as a leading supplier to search and rescue communities, both commercial and governmental. ACR's continuing commitment to excellence and the high quality and dependability of its equipment have made the company a world leader in the dynamic field of safety and survival.

For marine markets, ACR manufactures a complete line of safety and survival products, including emergency position indicating radio beacons, personal locator beacons, emergency VHF radios, man overboard lights, emergency life jacket lights, search lights, search and rescue transponders, and safety accessories. The quality systems of this facility have been registered by UL to the ISO 9001:2000 Series Standards. To focus on this innovative technology, ACR has introduced a dynamic, new "The Science of Survival" theme for its line of marine, outdoor, aviation and military products.



# 2008 boating officer of the year REGIONAL RECIPIENTS



Master Officer  
**Rob Vickroy**  
Department of Natural Resources  
Indiana

## NORTHERN Region Recipient

Master Officer Rob Vickroy with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources has been consistent throughout the years in his boating enforcement and boater education duties. He is assigned to Franklin County, which contains Brookville Reservoir – the third largest reservoir in Indiana. This reservoir receives an estimated 1.5 million visitors annually. Officer Vickroy is a dependable officer who is self-motivated and needs little supervision. He is an advanced boat accident investigator who does thorough investigations in reconstructing accidents.

His enforcement efforts for 2007 were impressive, with 27 enforcement actions, including a boating while intoxicated arrest. His boater education performance is also notable, having conducted 58 boater education public appearances in 2007. He stays active in the local school systems by providing outdoor education classes.

On January 17, 2007, Officer Vickroy received information from the Franklin County Sheriff's Department that a 75-year-old was stranded in high water after having driven around a high water sign. Officer Vickroy was able to get within approximately ½ mile of the victim. He donned his swift water vest and, armed with another life jacket and his throw bag, waded across the frigid flooded field to the victim's stranded truck. He helped the victim get to higher ground. They were then transported across the field to safety by jon boat. For this action, Master Officer Vickroy received the department's Life Saving Award.



Officer  
**Mark Fuller**  
Alabama Marine Police Division  
Alabama

## SOUTHERN Region Recipient

Officer Mark Fuller with the Alabama Marine Police Division is a well-rounded officer who has shown a dedication to duty that goes beyond the norm. He is well respected by his peers and a leader within his district, with many of the junior officers seeking his counsel on various enforcement matters. He is one of the lead enforcement officers in his district, checking nearly 800 boats and making over 100 arrests during the 2006-07 fiscal year.

Officer Fuller began an active campaign to combat a growing problem he saw in his patrol area – underage drinking and boating. In 2007, there were 40 illegal possession of alcohol by a minor cases on his lake, with Officer Fuller making 34 of these himself. He took a proactive approach and teamed up with the Benjamin Russell High School Media Class to further combat underage drinking

on the water. Together they produced Sink or Swim, a video highlighting the dangers of underage drinking and boating and the lasting impact it can have on the lives of all those involved. This video was distributed to enforcement, educational and community agencies across the nation and has garnered Officer Fuller and the BRHS Media Class an Award of Merit from the National Water Safety Congress.

Officer Fuller is an active, well-respected member of his community and has formed good working relationships with other agencies in his area. His integrity, enthusiasm and dedication to the boating public he pledged to serve have made him a standout officer.

# 2008 boating officer of the year NORTHERN STATE RECIPIENTS



Corporal  
**Casey Zolper**  
Department of  
Natural Resources  
Delaware

Corporal Casey Zolper is a well-rounded agent whose dedication to the Delaware Department of Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Section is evident in his impressive record.

Casey Zolper began his career with Delaware Fish and Wildlife Enforcement as a seasonal agent. He was selected to attend the Delaware State Police Academy in 2001. In 2002, he became a full-time Fish and Wildlife Agent. Four years later he became Delaware's first Fish and Wildlife K9 Officer.

In 2007, he made 3,270 contacts, 416 of which were vessel boardings. He had four search and rescues. In one rescue he was the first vessel on scene. Three individuals were in the water after tipping their kayaks in the Delaware Bay. Hypothermia was setting in on all three. Corporal Zolper pulled the most serious individual on board his vessel and returned to his port to meet emergency vehicles. If not for Corporal Zolper's quick response to the scene and getting the individual to an emergency facility, the individual may have died.

Additionally in 2007, Corporal Zolper had 232 underway hours with 828 boating enforcement hours during that time. He made 103 arrests, responded to 108 public service complaints and prosecuted three operating under the influence cases. Corporal Zolper has attended over 500 hours of training, including K9, S.R.T. and boating public relations. He completed a three-week SWAT certification school in April 2007 and is a member of the DFWF Special Response Team. Corporal Zolper has worked nearly 60 hours of public relations duties, where he provided boating safety education courses while giving lectures and demonstrations on his K9-program.



Conservation Police  
Officer  
**James Byron**  
Department of  
Natural Resources  
Illinois

Conservation Police Officer James Byron has 23 years of conservation law enforcement experience. Boating has always been of special interest to him. He is a boat owner himself and continues to strive for excellence in the area of marine safety – both on and off the water. CPO Byron assists in patrolling a very busy water patrol district, including Peoria/East Peoria and approximately 95 miles of the Illinois River. In his district, he is the “go to” guy on a wide variety of marine/boating questions and has shown leadership and initiative, setting a good example for other officers.

CPO Byron promotes safe boating. He has participated in multiple district-wide safety enforcement details promoting operating under the influence and dam safety awareness. He has developed and constructed several displays to educate the public on carbon monoxide poisoning and the dangers of low-head dams.

CPO Byron currently serves on the Recreational Boat Safety Committee (RBSC). As a member, he has assisted in the development of a new boat accident form, which has reduced the amount of time officers and administrative staff spend completing and transferring information into the Coast Guard Boat Accident Reporting Database. CPO Byron also assisted in revising the “Passenger for Hire” form, an administrative rule in response to the *Ethan Allen* Accident, improving the safety of passengers throughout the state. CPO Byron has been instrumental in reducing the amount of fraudulent boat registration applications, assisting law enforcement and registration personnel in identifying numerous registration and titling violations.

CPO Byron serves on the newly developed Boat Accident Team. He helped develop the team's protocol in responding to and investigating serious personal injury/fatal boat accidents. His knowledge and experience in investigating numerous accidents are an asset to the team.



Officer  
**Burt Walters**  
Department of  
Natural Resources  
Iowa

Conservation Officer Burt Walters is assigned to Clayton County in northeast Iowa, which borders the Mississippi River. He routinely works very closely with the officers from his district and Wisconsin Conservation Wardens enforcing boating laws, conducting noise enforcement assignments, undertaking boating while intoxicated efforts, and conducting education programs.

In 2007, Officer Walters spent over 400 hours on navigation patrol activities. He covered four boating accidents, one of which was a fatality. He was also involved with locating several “lost” boaters and anglers on the river and its backwaters and responded to a number of distress calls on the water. Officer Walters also works closely with the department's seasonal water patrol officers, assisting with training and coordinating their time, activities, and enforcement and educational efforts. Officer Walters serves as a lead instructor on the agency's Swiftwater Rescue Team and is a key member of its Ice Rescue Team. These two teams spend a good deal of time training officers from the Department of Natural Resources, as well as from other agencies, water and ice rescue techniques and survival skills. He is also a certified EMT.

During his tenure working the Mississippi River, Officer Walters has been learning the rich history of this unique area on the Upper Mississippi. He shares that information willingly with others in an effort to enhance their experience with this extraordinary natural resource.





Officer  
**Dennis Knuth**  
Department of  
Wildlife & Parks  
Kansas

At the age of 64, Officer Dennis Knuth continues to show enthusiasm and dedication toward his professional career setting standards in recreational boating safety that younger officers have trouble obtaining. Officer Knuth's district of assignment sets in southeast Kansas, where officer Knuth has taken the lead in performing recreational boating safety checks completing over 250 checks per year and mentoring younger officers to a standard nearing the same.

Officer Knuth utilizes his experience to educate adults and children to the importance of recreational boating safety and life jacket usage, while performing his law enforcement duties and conducting educational programs and classes. Officer Knuth's rapport with the public is exceptional, including the work done with many bass fishing tournaments to promote the proper boating equipment required and the wearing of life jackets. Officer Knuth always makes himself available to assist other officers and other divisional employees with their job tasks to accomplish the goals of the agency.



Officer  
**Chris Hilton**  
Department of  
Marine Resources  
Maine

Officer Chris Hilton joined the Maine Marine Patrol in June 2007. A recent graduate of Unity College, he was hired by the Department of Marine Resources, as a seasonal employee, to focus on areas of high concentrations of recreational boating and fishing activity. After a brief orientation and training period, Officer Hilton went to work primarily within the Kennebec River watershed – a popular area for recreational boating activities. Officer Hilton's efforts and success in this area went far beyond agency expectations.

During the summer and early fall months Officer Hilton generated more than 250 hours under way on the river and compiled over 250 boating safety violations. He also documented over 100 nighttime boat hours, patrolling for both recreational fishing and boating violations, including several serious boating under the influence violations. Officer Hilton's energy and focus was built around making positive contacts and education. The Department received numerous complimentary calls from recreational and commercial boaters who indicated that Officer Hilton provided a positive image of himself and the agency and that his presence on the river made it a safer place to recreate.

During a BoatU.S. National Advisory Council meeting, Chairman Tony Gibbs led a discussion about "harassment of boaters, post 9/11," explaining that the challenge to today's boaters is the migration of police officers into the maritime environment who prior to 9/11 didn't patrol on the water. Untrained and aggressive boating enforcement has been viewed as harassment. Chairman Gibbs then related a story about a personal boating experience he had while boating with family and friends in Maine. The story was an example of a well-trained professional Marine Patrol Officer who actually added to an enjoyable day on the water. Mr. Gibbs was speaking about Officer Chris Hilton.



Officer  
**Robert Akin**  
Environmental Police  
Massachusetts

Throughout his career, first as a Coast Guard Boatswains Mate/Coxswain from 1989 to 1998, and then as a Massachusetts Environmental Police Officer from 1998 to present, Officer Robert Akin has embodied the attributes of an outstanding marine patrol officer. During his time as an Environmental Police Officer assigned to the Coastal Bureau, Officer Akin has developed a commendable list of achievements, including life-saving rescues and enforcement efforts with arrest and prosecution numbers second to none in the department.

At the request of the Command Staff to develop a curriculum of training for marine law enforcement, Officer Akin began the Environmental Police "Boat Operations and Tactics Team." He developed a marine law enforcement curriculum that has been utilized as a standard of training. His ability to expertly operate any of the Environmental Police patrol boats from personal watercraft to 40'+ offshore vessels adds value to the service he has offered as an instructor.

Officer Akin's ability to garner partnerships and reach out to other agencies is tantamount to the professionalism he brings to marine law enforcement. Since the inception of boat operation training program by Officer Akin, the Massachusetts Environmental Police have been requested to provide this training to a wide range of marine law enforcement officers throughout the commonwealth with Officer Akin as the lead instructor. This training has been utilized by law enforcement officers at no cost to the agencies wishing to participate. Officer Akin has been available to support this initiative both on duty and off, spending countless hours on course development and the coordination of its execution in the field. The impact of his efforts in marine law enforcement can be recognized by the professionalism displayed by those he has trained.

# 2008 boating officer of the year NORTHERN STATE RECIPIENTS



Conservation Officer  
**Greg Patten**  
Department of  
Natural Resources  
Michigan

Conservation Officer Greg Patten has been an officer for 22 years assigned to Muskegon County. His work area is adjacent to Lake Michigan and includes several lakes and two large river systems. This area is heavily populated with a large seasonal influx of anglers and recreational boaters.

Officer Patten places strong emphasis on marine enforcement throughout the year. He works on marine safety compliance with all user groups, including cold-water hunting situations. Officer Patten worked several concentrated patrols with the U.S. Coast Guard targeting charter boat regulations in addition to the legally mandated inspections.

Officer Patten is frequently requested by law enforcement agencies and constituent groups to provide marine safety education. During the past year, he provided an educational presentation to the Muskegon Power Squadron and training to the U.S. Coast Guard.

Officer Patten maintains an exceptional working relationship with the U.S. Coast Guard Station Muskegon. Some examples of this working partnership during the past year include working a rocket launch safety zone on Lake Michigan, numerous joint patrols utilizing both DNR and U.S. Coast Guard watercraft, on-the-water charter boat joint patrol and assisting with on-water training scenarios. Officer Patten also maintains partnerships with local county sheriff's departments and public safety agencies. Officer Patten conducts frequent boating under the influence enforcement patrols, often in partnership with the Coast Guard and county marine divisions. Officer Patten is often contacted by the Coast Guard to assist with BUI cases.

Officer Patten's community service includes a public radio show promoting marine safety and numerous other marine safety public appearances. Officer Patten annually attends and assists the Coast Guard, Grand Haven Charter Boat Association and others with the Indian Trails Spring Lake outing, which consists of providing handicapped individuals with a boat ride on local charter boats.



Conservation Officer  
**Scott Fritz**  
Department of  
Natural Resources  
Minnesota

Well-respected in his community, Conservation Officer Scott Fritz is a 22-year veteran of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. He produces some of the highest boating safety enforcement activity in the region. In addition, he takes time in his contacts to explain the law and the reasons for it. He is very active in the PFD Panda award program to reward youngsters who are observed wearing their life jackets. Officer Fritz works very closely with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources conservation wardens and the sheriff's water patrols. He also assists local fire service personnel, providing rescue training.

Officer Fritz is aware of the importance of boating safety education. Each year he makes it a high priority to instruct at the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary boating safety class. To reach younger boaters, he makes a point to speak to elementary schools often. He is also very good at maintaining regular contact with his local newspapers.

Officer Fritz is always willing to assist in search and rescue/recovery operations. When torrents of rain caused flash flooding in the area in August 2007, Officer Fritz responded to a call around 2 a.m. on Aug. 19 to attempt a rescue of three citizens whose car had been washed off the roadway, and four potential rescuers whose two jon boats had already succumbed to the creek's current. He encountered some of the "worst conditions you can imagine." It was pitch black and pouring rain. Pine Creek near La Crescent had become a roaring river nearly 20 feet deep. Fritz and other rescuers – their lives on the line – made five trips with the airboat to save six of the seven from the churning waters. (The seventh victim died before the first two rescue attempts were made.)



Conservation Officer  
**Sean McKeehan**  
Game & Parks  
Commission  
Nebraska

Conservation Officer Sean McKeehan was one of several officers arriving at the scene of a double-fatality boating accident on July 4, 2007. A 60-year-old male was operating a boat that struck and instantly killed a 57-year-old female who was standing at the rear of her boat with her 60-year-old husband. The husband died 11 days later from injuries sustained in the accident. The boat operator, who tested .177 BAC, was charged with two counts of manslaughter. The operator, who had no prior criminal history, was sentenced to six to 20 years in prison for manslaughter.

As a result of the complete and professional investigation and concise reports of Officer McKeehan, defense attorneys had no choice but to negotiate the best case they could for their client. Officer McKeehan utilized the skills and knowledge he acquired from the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators' Level 1 Comprehensive and Level 2 Advanced boat accident investigation courses he had successfully completed. Because of many hours of work and preparation of an exacting investigation, the officers spent no time in court. Officer McKeehan's supervisor reports that Officer McKeehan spends a considerable amount of time conducting recreational boating law enforcement and his cases are seldom challenged in court. The professional manner in which this difficult investigation was conducted resulted in the saving of many hours that could have been in court and added to the efficient operation of the criminal justice system in eastern Nebraska.





Trooper I  
**Keith Trotman**  
State Police  
New Jersey

Assigned to the Marine Services Bureau, Special Operation Section, Trooper I Keith Trotman is a 10-year veteran of the New Jersey State Police. Exemplifying what it means to be a trooper, he displays courage, professionalism and a true dedication to duty that extends to his diligent work with the recreational boating community. His knowledge and experience in this arena, coupled with a caring attitude, enables Trp. Trotman to educate boaters effectively. This education, along with discretionary enforcement, has led to a safer boating community and marine environment.

Trp. Trotman was involved in two critical incidents in 2007 in which his actions saved lives. The first occurred on April 2, 2007, when Trp. Trotman, along with two other troopers, responded to a report of a suicidal female on a bridge spanning the Delaware River. Local law enforcement personnel talked with the subject while a NJSP patrol vessel was positioned below the subject. The female jumped from the bridge, landing in the frigid, swift-moving water. Trp. Trotman quickly rescued the subject from the water and administered first aid. Trp. Trotman's quick and decisive action saved the woman's life. On June 4, 2007, Trp. Trotman quickly responded to the report of a subject in the water within the shipping channel of the Delaware River. He maneuvered his patrol vessel to where the subject had last been seen. As he approached, the subject surfaced and again submerged. Realizing that the subject was not going to resurface, Trp. Trotman cut the power to his vessel, removed his self-inflating life jacket and entered the water. He quickly located the drowning individual and brought him to the surface. Trp. Trotman clung to the side of his patrol vessel, while holding on to the victim, until assistance arrived. In this incident Trp. Trotman displayed courage, professionalism and a disregard for his personal safety to save the life of another.



Warden  
**Chris Knutson**  
Game & Fish  
Department  
North Dakota

Chris Knutson has been stationed in the Devils Lake district since he was hired as a permanent employee with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department in 2001. In that relatively short amount of time, he has become very knowledgeable about North Dakota's largest natural lake, Devils Lake, which has grown to about 100,000 acres.

Warden Knutson spends a majority of his time patrolling in and around Devils Lake by vehicle, boat, snowmobile and ATV. His value to the Enforcement Division is felt year-round as his district includes an excellent fishery and a four-season tourist destination spot. Warden Knutson's knowledge of Devils Lake has proven to be a valuable asset not only in his boating, hunting and fishing law enforcement efforts but also in search and rescue events. Many times he has navigated the rough waters of Devils Lake, mainly at night, to locate lost or overdue boaters during the summer boating season.

By far the most difficult search and rescue missions involve duck hunters who get themselves in jeopardy on big water in October when the dangers multiply with the cold weather and overloaded duck boats. On one particular occasion, Warden Knutson was called out to locate two nonresident duck hunters that had capsized their skiff and were up to their necks in water-filled waders in some backwater cattail slough connected to the big lake. By the aid of a GPS, the officer guided the search and rescue boat over the sandbar to the slough where the hunters, who were nearly hypothermic, were rescued.



Officer  
**Melissa Kocher**  
Department of  
Natural Resources  
Ohio

Melissa Kocher is a six-year officer with the Division of Watercraft. She is very knowledgeable about the role of a watercraft officer and is always willing to work with others to answer questions or teach others what they need to know. Officer Kocher has excellent customer service skills and is always willing to go the extra mile to assist boaters, treating them with courtesy and respect. Officer Kocher will work with the boater on a problem, calming them down when necessary, and then work to solve their problem. If she is unable to solve the problem, then she will do some research and advise the boater how to proceed to solve their problem. If it takes a little longer than her scheduled hours, she will stay long enough to help the boater with their problem. This respect and courtesy is not just something this officer wears for the job, but is part of her personality and respect for others.

Officer Kocher is a leader in both the office and Division. She loves a challenge and frequently volunteers for groups and committees. She has served on the Education Strategic Committee, the Field Officer Training Committee and the River Rescue Group, just to name a few. Officer Kocher is well liked and respected by Parks and other groups she works with. She worked with various ODNR divisions and other agencies to develop an annual festival for Caesar Creek State Park. Many times other professional organizations will request Officer Kocher to do programs and classes because she does a great job.

# 2008 boating officer of the year NORTHERN STATE RECIPIENTS



Waterways  
Conservation Officer  
**Gary Slutter**  
Fish & Boat  
Commission  
Pennsylvania

Waterways Conservation Officer Gary Slutter is the longest-serving field officer working for the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, having served as a waterways conservation officer for over 25 years. WCO Slutter is assigned to the Western Schuylkill/Northern Berks district, which includes Blue Marsh Lake, the 1150-acre U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lake that is one of the busiest boating waters in southeastern Pennsylvania, as well as several smaller lakes and 18 miles of the Schuylkill River.

WCO Slutter administers a very active boating safety and law enforcement program in his district. During 2007 he logged 69 days of on-water boat patrol, totaling 329 hours. He conducted over 1,200 boardings and issued 352 warnings, as well as 154 citations, for boating law violations. In addition to his active law enforcement program, WCO Slutter presented the Commission's eight-hour basic boating course five times during the year. He also provided boating safety information and canoeing training to 175 children who attended the 2007 Schuylkill County Youth Field Day. In addition, WCO Slutter presented boating safety information to the public at numerous other events, including various outdoor sports shows and fairs, and various functions involving groups such as sportsmen's clubs, the Lion's Club and the Boy Scouts. WCO Slutter was instrumental in the founding of the Blue Marsh Lake Safety Council, a group dedicated to promoting safety, and in particular boating and water safety, to users of Blue Marsh Lake.

In addition to his outstanding work in areas of boating safety and boat law enforcement, WCO Slutter also serves as a Field Training Officer and a CPR/First Aid instructor, providing training to the Commission's law enforcement officers in both the southeast region as well as at the agency's training school.



Officer  
**Richard Browning**  
Department of  
Environmental  
Management  
Rhode Island

Richard Browning served as a Coast Guard boatswain's mate third class at Station Castle Hill in Newport before graduating from the University of Rhode Island. He joined the Department of Environmental Management in April 2004 and has been a very active and effective field officer in the department's Division of Law Enforcement Marine Patrol. He makes many cases in both the marine fisheries and boating safety. He's instrumental in educating boaters, enforcing boating and fishing laws, and rescuing boaters in distress, among other duties.

One night in August 2007, Officer Browning was off duty and fishing with friends. A call came from another boat in the area reporting that the captain was having a health problem. The sea conditions had deteriorated to the point that the water was quite rough. Officer Browning had the skipper of the boat he was on maneuver in close, and he leapt to the boat with the stricken boater.

After determining that the captain, David Preble, was suffering a severe allergic reaction to peanuts, Officer Browning performed first aid and put out a call for any boat with allergy medicine. He obtained and administered the medicine to the victim. He also treated Preble for shock. Browning contacted the Coast Guard to arrange a helicopter evacuation. When the helicopter arrived, the pilot instructed the stricken vessel to operate heading into the wind and seas to facilitate the evacuation of Preble. Because none of the passengers on the vessel could operate it, Browning again leapt from one vessel to the other, this time with the semiconscious Preble in his arms. Browning helped put Preble into the helicopter and Preble was taken to a hospital. Doctors told Preble that after his two-hour ordeal, he had been within 15 minutes of dying.



Conservation Officer  
**John Murphy**  
Department of  
Game, Fish & Parks  
South Dakota

Conservation Officer John Murphy patrols one of the busiest boating areas of the state. His district includes significant portions of Lake Oahe and Lake Sharpe, two very large reservoirs on the Missouri River that are nationally known for excellent walleye fishing. In addition, Lake Sharpe has developed into a trophy smallmouth bass fishery. This top-notch fishing brings anglers from all over the north-central portions of the United States. During the months of October through January, the waters around Pierre become home to numerous waterfowlers who pursue their quarry on the water. Cold-water boating activity presents unique challenges for boating safety professionals like Officer Murphy.

The area's waterways also host numerous special events, including nationally sponsored fishing tournaments, boat races and regattas, raft races, over-water aerial displays, and water-based historical reenactments. Always willing to help, Officer Murphy is involved with practically every event, in his boat, patrolling and keeping people safe. He is the most consistent officer in the state for being on the water whenever significant recreational boating activity occurs.

In addition to his diligent on-the-water patrols, Officer Murphy has successfully completed boating accident and advanced boating accident investigation courses. He also authors numerous boating and water safety articles throughout the year for the local newspaper in an effort to educate the public concerning boating safety issues. Officer Murphy also regularly trains with the Pierre area Dive Rescue Team as well as the local county emergency management agency. He has taken the lead for the Department of Game, Fish & Parks numerous times to ensure that water-based search and rescue training is conducted properly. During real-life events, Officer Murphy is always there to assist local responders for as long as needed. Additionally, he is the lead officer for both Region 2 and the Department of Game, Fish & Parks for putting together the training on new side-scan sonar equipment.





Auxiliary Trooper  
**Paul Cucinelli**  
State Police  
Vermont

Auxiliary Trooper Paul Cucinelli formerly worked as a full-time Vermont State Police Officer, assigned to many duties during his career, including Road Patrol, executive security, and undercover narcotics enforcement. Upon his retirement from full-time law enforcement, Cucinelli had a desire to remain involved in law enforcement in some way, but not to the extent of a full-time job. He became an Auxiliary Trooper in early 2007 and immediately became active within the boating safety community.

Auxiliary Trooper Cucinelli has been instrumental in bolstering the agency's law enforcement presence in the northwest corner of Vermont and Lake Champlain, the area's largest body of water. He produced more boating safety inspections than any other employee in that sector, as well as more violations written as either tickets or warnings in that sector of the state. He has interacted with the boating safety community in such a way to inspire trust and confidence in the agency's patrol and is regularly sought out by the public for safety information. His demeanor and application of the laws is such as to make it known that law enforcement officers are not there to "spoil the fun," but to ensure the fun continues safely for all boaters. Auxiliary Trooper Cucinelli portrays the meaning of true professional in his daily work routine and ethic.



Conservation Warden  
**Mitch Groenier**  
Department of  
Natural Resources  
Wisconsin

Mitch Groenier, a Wisconsin Conservation Warden since 1991, has been stationed in Waukesha County his entire career and is responsible for several lakes in one of the state's most populated areas. Exemplifying the image of a boating enforcement officer, Warden Groenier has established an excellent relationship with his local law enforcement boat patrol to ensure consistency, provide training, and foster shared information and enforcement efforts. His hard work has produced well-organized, focused patrol efforts that directly influence boating safety on lakes in his area.

Warden Groenier's efforts to promote boating safety and save lives can be illustrated by his efforts to address boating problems associated with the annual boating event called the Okauchee Lake Tie-Up. This "boating party" draws hundreds of people and typically results in participants operating boats while intoxicated and various other boating- and criminal-related issues. For the 2007 event, Groenier worked with the local boat patrol to add extra officers to the area during the event. The increased law enforcement presence resulted in 15 OWI arrests and approximately 70 citations for safety violations on the water during the event. Additional arrests were made on land after the event.

Warden Groenier emphasizes safety education and gives presentations about boat safety to an average of 15 classes annually in Waukesha County as well as numerous safety fairs. He has developed an excellent relationship with the volunteer instructors in his area and has had a huge impact on recruiting and retaining the instructors involved with boating safety. Warden Groenier has also been heavily involved in conducting a weeklong boat training session for newly hired wardens. In 2007, he developed a session that involved firing training ammunition from boats.

## *How to Nominate a Boating Officer*

The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators' Butch Potts Memorial Award, known more commonly as the Boating Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award, is presented annually to the boating law enforcement officer who has made outstanding contributions to the field of boating law enforcement.

To be considered for this recognition, a nominee must be a commissioned, certified or sworn peace officer authorized by his or her respective state to enforce the recreational boating safety laws of that state. Posthumous nominations are not eligible. In addition, a nominee should have performed an outstanding service to the agency or state in any facet of recreational boating safety including but not limited to enforcement, education, search and rescue, outreach, innovation, partnership, BUI enforcement, accident investigation, community service, and heroic action.

The award program consists of three levels: state, regional and national. State nominees are selected by the state boating law administrator. State nominees continue to regional competition where they are reviewed and one winner per region is selected by the three regional awards committees. Regional award winners are submitted to NASBLA's Awards Committee for review and selection of the recipient of the national Butch Potts Memorial Award.

Nomination forms are sent electronically to each state boating law administrator in January of each year. Additional information on the program is available online at [www.nasbla.org](http://www.nasbla.org).

# 2008 boating officer of the year SOUTHERN STATE RECIPIENTS



Corporal  
**Chris Majors**  
Game & Fish  
Commission  
Arkansas

An exemplary officer, Cpl. Chris Majors has worked 10 years as a wildlife officer stationed in Baxter County. Baxter County has 73 total river miles (White, Norfork and Buffalo National rivers) and two large lakes, which draw millions of visitors each year. In 2007, Cpl. Majors conducted 553 hours of boating patrols and was involved with 98 officer violator contacts.

What really sets him apart from other officers is his dedication to boating under the influence (BUI) enforcement. For the last three years Cpl. Majors has averaged 26 BUI arrests per year for a total of 78 arrests. He works with other local wildlife officers as well as other agencies to plan law enforcement patrols on area lakes and rivers, placing a high priority on BUI enforcement. Cpl. Majors has also discovered a new way to work boating enforcement, using a helicopter for aerial patrols of Lake Norfork to spot boating violations. This innovative technique has proved to be very effective.

Cpl. Majors is very active in boating education. In 2007 he organized 14 boating education classes. He also did something no other officer in this state has done -- he organized a "hands-on" boating education class for Calico Rock School. The theme of this event was boating safety, and students were allowed to operate almost every type of watercraft imaginable under the direct supervision of an officer. This is now going to be an annual event. In addition he organized and conducted more than 10 school programs and spoke to various local clubs and organizations about the importance of boating safety. Cpl. Majors also conducts classes and training for the Baxter County Sheriff's Department Boating Patrol Unit officers and Reserve Officers. Cpl. Majors routinely assists the National Park Service and the sheriff's department with countless search and rescue operations as well as special events.



Officer  
**Michael Pratt**  
Metropolitan Police  
Department  
District of Columbia

Officer Michael Pratt has been a police officer for 15 years with the District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department. He has been assigned to the department's Harbor Patrol Unit for seven years and has been a certified Police Rescue Diver for the past six years. During his tenure at Harbor Patrol, Officer Pratt has been a motivated, dedicated, hard working officer. He enlists the help of his fellow officers when necessary to complete a given task. He also eagerly assists anyone else who asks for his help, always going out of his way to assist. When extra help is needed, Officer Pratt makes himself available day and night, even coming back to work on short notice. During emergency callbacks, Officer Pratt is usually one of the first officers on the scene, ready and eager to take emergency action in any type of situation.

Throughout 2007, Officer Pratt continued to display his motivation, dedication and pride for his job. He conducted 179 on-board safety inspections, issued 91 citations for safety and boating violations, issued 69 citations for registration requirement violations, terminated countless voyages due to safety violations, and participated in numerous dive operations, recovering evidence, property and one body. Officer Pratt was second among all divers in actual underwater hours. In addition to his river patrol and dive responsibilities, Officer Pratt is a certified Interspiro SCUBA technician and is in charge of maintaining all dive equipment as well as the Search and Recovery dive truck.

Officer Pratt conducts himself professionally on and off duty and maintains a strict code of ethics in all that he does. He is always trying to improve his skills and aggressively pursues and attends training that will make him a more effective river patrol officer. Officer Pratt is an integral part of the Harbor Patrol.



Officer  
**Robert "BJ" Johnston**  
Fish & Wildlife  
Conservation  
Commission  
Florida

Robert "BJ" Johnston began with the FWC in 2004 and works in Levy County, a very rural county with vast wooded areas, freshwater springs and rivers, and more than 50 miles of very remote and challenging coastline. As remote as this area is, many people participate in a wide range of year-round boating activities. For an FWC Officer, these attributes result in plenty of work for someone like Officer Johnston who is willing to work alone for long hours in a wilderness setting.

Navigating the inshore and coastal waters in and around Levy County is especially tricky and requires significant local knowledge even in the daytime, which is one reason why the local Coast Guard station relies so heavily on the partnership with FWC for the knowledge and abilities of officers like Johnston. Coastal boaters in Levy County's maze of coastal creeks and bays littered with shallow oyster bars and very few landmarks commonly find themselves in perilous situations. Officer Johnston routinely responds to distress calls on these waters, finding stranded and disoriented boaters. His efforts undoubtedly result in lives saved.

His consistent boating under the influence enforcement effort also saves lives. On one day as the weather was deteriorating, Robert found a truck and trailer parked at a remote boat ramp. Suspecting that the truck belonged to a man in a small boat he had checked offshore earlier in the day, Robert was preparing to launch a boat to start looking for the man when he noticed a small boat approaching the ramp. The operator was okay, but he was quite impaired. This was just one of the individuals who would have loaded his boat and attempted to drive on the highway had Officer Johnston not intervened.





RFC  
**Byron Young**  
Department of  
Natural Resources  
Georgia

RFC Byron Young has reached the place where training, experience and motivation come together for success. A responsible officer, he has a contagious, positive outlook that inspires his co-workers and is well received by the public. RFC Young continually seeks any training available to enhance his boating safety skills.

RFC Byron Young remains the best in Georgia at education on the water, and Lake Allatoona is a safer place because of his dedication. In 2007, he gave 35 boating safety programs, including presentations at a kids camp and the Atlanta Boat Show as well as eight major media ride-alongs and two articles in local newspapers. He also worked with Safe Kids of Cherokee County to have 120 infant and children life jackets donated for giveaways on the water. RFC Young has been his region's Boating Safety Officer of the Year three of the past four years.

Having witnessed firsthand the tragic effects of drownings and body recovery, RFC Young understands the need for specialized equipment. He worked with a Lake Allatoona fishing guide to have a high-definition sidescan sonar donated and installed on a patrol boat. He used the sonar on 14 events to locate items for the FBI, search and rescue, night navigation, and body recovery.

RFC Young worked 915 boating safety hours in 2007. More than 300 hours were on-the-water patrols and included 413 boat checks, 148 violations documented, work/assistance in 16 boating incident investigations, 12 search and rescues, and more than 100 hours of night navigational light enforcement. He was involved in eight boating under the influence arrests, three of which were assists to other officers. He also assisted 36 stranded boaters over the past year. He often volunteers for duties, such as search and rescue operations, meeting with bass clubs and working with dive teams for training.



Conservation Officer  
**Jerrod Alley**  
Department of Fish &  
Wildlife Resources  
Kentucky

Conservation Officer Jerrod Alley joined the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources in 2004. His record of enforcement includes 570.5 hours of boating enforcement, including 245 boat inspections, 132 total violations, 15 boating under the influence arrests, 41 drinking in public violations, six possession of marijuana arrests, one possession of controlled substance violation, 13 insufficient life jacket violations, one theft case, one boater education violation, among numerous other boating-related violations.

Officer Alley teaches boater education at Conley Bottom Resort, Wayne County High School and Camp Earl Wallace, a conservation camp. He is actively involved in Sportsman's Club events in Russell and Wayne counties and legislative dinners at Wolfe Creek Dam. Officer Alley has assisted fellow conservation officers in developing checkpoints on the water near known party hotspots and trouble areas. This has led to several boating under the influence arrests and worked as a deterrent to possible violators. He also actively works to develop new strategies to include specific problems such as reckless operations on personal watercraft and navigation light violations. Officer Alley's accident experience includes assisting fellow officers in four fatal boating accidents on Lake Cumberland. He has also worked numerous non-injury boating accidents, investigated three drownings and assisted with body recoveries in surrounding counties.

An example of his heroic action and dedication includes responding to an out of control boat call in which the operator was ejected and the boat was circling in a high-traffic area. Another occasion he responded to a houseboat suspected of being operated by terrorists en route to Wolfe Creek Dam. In a similar situation he responded to a call of suspected explosives being placed in the area of Wolfe Creek Dam.



Corporal  
**Walter K. May**  
Department of  
Natural Resources  
Maryland

Corporal Walter K. May, a 26-year veteran of the Maryland Natural Resources Police, is a true professional in both conservation and boating safety enforcement. His commitment to quality is demonstrated in the use of discretion in issuing citations versus warnings, his prioritization of duties, and the caliber of offenses detected. He addresses serious violations in an aggressive and effective manner, he stays abreast of trends in enforcement and seeks to enhance the capabilities of the agency, and he is innovative in his enforcement techniques. In addition, his reports, evidence handling and time management skills are outstanding. Corporal May actively endeavors to cultivate professional contacts with the community by reaching out to county residents and educating them in the ethical use of Maryland's natural resources, and he is consistently one of the most productive officers in the Western Region. Corporal May's expertise, experience and professionalism, together with his service as a member of the Underwater Operations Unit and an Emergency Medical Services instructor, has resulted in his selection as the Maryland Natural Resources Police Officer of the Year for 2007.

# 2008 boating officer of the year SOUTHERN STATE RECIPIENTS



Patrolman  
**Frederick Guthrie**  
State Water Patrol  
Missouri

Patrolman Frederick Guthrie Jr. is a 14-year veteran with the Missouri State Water Patrol. A dedicated water patrol officer, he projects a highly professional image and conducts all duties in a caring and helpful manner. Patrolman Guthrie is assigned to the waterways of Northwest Missouri and routinely works remote areas with little or no backup. He is highly motivated in various aspects of the Water Patrol and serves as a district firearms instructor and a member of its SWAT Team. He is also known for his ability to establish great working relationships with other agencies.

Patrolman Guthrie placed his life in jeopardy on June 22, 2007 to rescue storm victims, illustrating his commitment and character. At approximately 10:30 p.m., a severe thunderstorm hit Smithville Lake in Northwest Missouri. Severe lightning and heavy rain were accompanied by winds up to 60 miles per hour, resulting in six-foot waves. The Water Patrol received reports that several boats were swamped or capsized near the Route W Bridge. Patrolman Guthrie immediately set out to provide assistance. However, he quickly determined that his patrol boat was not capable of negotiating the rough water and returned to his marina to find an alternate response plan. A few moments later, he learned that a woman was thrown from one of the boats. The victim was not wearing a flotation device and had struggled to reach a buoy where she was clinging for her life. Risking his own life in a boat that was not designed for such conditions, Patrolman Guthrie negotiated several miles of exceptionally violent water to reach the woman. He retrieved the weakened victim and took her to shore for medical care. Patrolman Guthrie then returned to the area where the boats had capsized to look for other boaters until all victims were accounted for.



Lieutenant  
**Norman Watts**  
Wildlife Resources  
Commission  
North Carolina

Lt. Norman Watts is committed to making the waterways safer and providing an enjoyable experience for everyone. His knowledge and experience in the areas of enforcement, education, innovation, search and rescue, and partnership have made him invaluable to the state of North Carolina.

Enforcement has always been a high priority in Lt. Watts' approach to keeping the waters of his area safe. He was one of the first officers in North Carolina to be certified with and use a portable breath test instrument. He has attended various schools and seminars to aid in his enforcement duties. He serves as a mentor to young officers in boating enforcement and spends a week at the N.C. Wildlife Officers Basic School teaching new recruits the techniques of both day and night boat operations. He also ensures that his officers are equipped and trained to meet the public's need for boating safety education. Lt. Watts developed the Law Enforcement and the Emergency Responder's Boating Safety Course to help educate emergency responders that operate boats during natural disasters and hazardous conditions.

Lt. Watts works very closely with the U.S. Coast Guard and various state and county agencies to respond to and assist with search and rescue missions. He and the officers he supervises logged many hours in 2007 on victim recovery missions. In the last several years Lt. Watts has taken on the additional responsibility of partnering with the U.S. Coast Guard to direct security for the annual "Carolina Cup Classic" in Elizabeth City. This high-speed boat race is held in a congested part of the Pasquotank River, and boater safety is the utmost concern. The race committee meets monthly throughout the year, and Lt. Watts attends several meetings to address upcoming safety concerns.



Officer  
**Jim Capps**  
Department of  
Natural Resources  
South Carolina

Officer Jim Capps joined the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources in February 2006. He has a very strong work ethic and approaches his job with enthusiasm, dedication and pride. He is dedicated to boating law enforcement and safety on the waterways. His efforts to enforce boating laws and boating under the influence detection and deterrence have made a difference in boating safety, earning him a reputation with fellow officers and the public of being a truly dedicated and professional law enforcement officer.

Officer Capps' former career as a deputy sheriff has given him a well-rounded background in law enforcement. In 2007, his efforts in boating enforcement resulted in 435 hours on boating patrols while inspecting 937 watercraft. He also led the state for boating under the influence cases. He is eager to share his knowledge of boating law enforcement with fellow officers and has been active in training newly hired officers. He has been an asset to the Department of Natural Resources by motivating and training newly hired officers in proper boating enforcement.

Officer Capps has a great desire to help keep the waterways safe and works hard to assist in educating the boating public through field contacts, courtesy boat inspections, public presentations and general conversation with people in the field on boating safety. He also sets up and participates in boating safety pre-launch checkpoints to perform courtesy checks of safety equipment and registrations and makes routine patrols in high-traffic areas as well as "hidden" areas where alcohol and drug activities have been reported. Officer Capps has an exceptional ability to identify impaired boaters and follows field sobriety testing thoroughly to make an arrest where needed. He has done an excellent job in presenting cases in court, successfully prosecuting violators.





Officer  
**Tim Singleton**  
Wildlife Resources  
Agency  
Tennessee

Officer Tim Singleton is assigned Area 31, a region that is extremely popular for recreational boating. He consistently does an outstanding job in the boating aspects of his job -- tireless in his efforts and eagerly accepting any assignment while enforcing the boating laws without fear or favor and always with a courteous demeanor.

Officer Singleton's law enforcement work indicates his superior dedication to enforcing boating safety laws, rules and regulations. His performance in 2007 proved to be an outstanding service to the state of Tennessee. He checked 1279 boats, issued 31 court citations for boating violations plus another 11 warning citations. While on boating patrol, Officer Singleton conducted several courtesy inspections at the marinas. He performed field sobriety tasks on Tennessee boaters, resulting in two boating under the influence arrests. He also assisted five stranded boaters.

Committed to enhancing his skills, Officer Singleton completed ECIR II Intoximeter training and attended an Emergency Vessel Operation Course as well as a Boating Under the Influence refresher course. His educational efforts involved monitoring three exams where 26 students were certified to meet the requirements. He also taught three boating safety courses to 28 students at Camp Monterey. In addition to providing educational materials to local marinas, boating supply stores and schools, he established computer testing sites for individuals needing to meet the mandatory education law.

Excelling in outreach, Officer Singleton was featured in 10 newspaper articles on boating safety and held a public exhibit on boating safety at a county fair. He worked with the faculty at Burks Middle School to establish a nine-week after-school program for students interested in boating safety. He also presented a unique concept to the local schools -- an accelerated reading program that stressed boating safety while generating a greater interest in books and reading among the middle school students.



Game Warden  
**Derwin "Alan"  
Biggerstaff**  
Parks & Wildlife  
Department  
Texas

Alan Biggerstaff has been a marine officer for 20 years. His professionalism and dedication to the citizens of Texas go beyond the call of duty. Self-motivation and professionalism have established him as a hard-working, diligent and productive employee.

During 2007 Warden Biggerstaff filed over 500 boating safety citations/warnings. He has established a strong network within the public schools, working with teachers to bring boating safety programs to the students. Warden Biggerstaff stays involved in his community, sharing his passion for cooking by preparing meals for various local organizations. He uses such opportunities to teach youth about boating and water-safety.

Warden Biggerstaff's water-safety enforcement efforts have made area lakes safer. He organizes and coordinates boating safety patrols and boating while intoxicated operations for task force weekends. He ensures all tasks are completed before he leaves and takes time to encourage and counsel co-workers when they are down to help maintain positive attitudes. His partnerships with other organizations helped secure a Game Warden Office on the banks of the lake, enhancing agency goals of providing quality education and enforcement; effective search and rescue operations; and other assistance to boating enthusiasts. Biggerstaff's efforts recently led the way and resulted in 22 BWI arrests on area lakes. While Game Warden Biggerstaff is a team player, he also steps up as a leader. When he is part of a team effort, he is the first to arrive, gets everything set up, addresses the logistical needs, works the hardest, and usually produces the most activity. Biggerstaff serves as the department's liaison with local marine agencies. His many years of experience, dedication and vast knowledge of boating safety have gained him the respect of his fellow game wardens, marine officers and first responders, who often seek his assistance -- which he willingly gives.



Senior Officer  
**Joe Dedrick**  
Department of Game  
& Inland Fisheries  
Virginia

Since his employment in 1971, Senior Officer Joe Dedrick has continuously demonstrated the highest professional and civil service standards to Virginia's citizens while remaining mindful of protecting the public. Coordinating between local agencies and his fellow officers, he leverages all available resources. His assignment of officers to peak boating times optimizes the detection of boating under the influence and reckless operation. The region leader in BUI cases last year, he accounted for one-third of the total region BUI arrests. Since the BUI law was enacted on July 1, 1989, he has made over 50 such arrests in his efforts to protect the boating public. Among the 30 officers assigned to Region 5 last summer, Senior Officer Dedrick conducted the third most boat patrols.

Senior Officer Dedrick has been involved over the years with multiple search and rescue operations with the U.S. Coast Guard on the Chesapeake Bay. At the Lake Anna SWEEP Operation last year, Dedrick was a shift leader responsible for briefing seven fellow officers from other parts of the state before their shift. The officers conducted a highly successful operation involving 37 dedicated boat patrols with six boating safety checkpoints in the "largest concentration effort ever" on Lake Anna. He debriefed each shift, providing a clear and concise report of relevant data to his chain of command.

Senior Officer Dedrick began his career at a time when boat work was not one of the agency's high priorities but he quickly saw its importance to public safety. He fully embraces the teamwork concept. Many officers reduce their enforcement effort after many years of service. However, after almost 40 years of service, Senior Officer Dedrick remains a role model of motivation and dedication to us all.

## 2008 boating officer of the year WESTERN STATE RECIPIENTS



**Trooper  
Jeremy Baum**  
Division of Alaska  
Wildlife Troopers  
Alaska

Trooper Jeremy Baum has worked for the Division of Alaska Wildlife Troopers for five years in Ketchikan, on Revillagigedo Island in Southeast Alaska. He is one of four AWT personnel stationed in Ketchikan. The four troopers have over 6000 square miles in their patrol area, with over 2000 miles of coastline.

In 2007, Trooper Baum logged more than 600 hours of marine patrol time aboard patrol vessels, ranging from 14' to 70', including seven days at sea aboard the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter "Liberty." During the patrol aboard the Cutter, he was part of a small boat boarding team who rescued a commercial fishing vessel crewmember who had fallen overboard without a life jacket. Vessel trip reports from the Ketchikan-based 28' patrol vessel "Compliance" reflect that Trooper Baum patrolled nearly 4000 miles in 2007.

During his marine patrol efforts Trooper Baum deals with a multitude of duties and contacts a wide variety of watercraft users each day. Many of these are recreational boaters simply enjoying the scenery, but a higher number of them are engaged in fishing or hunting while utilizing recreational watercraft to access remote areas. Trooper Baum is also required to contact commercial fishing vessels and sport charter fishing vessels. Trooper Baum has done an outstanding job working closely with the local boaters to ensure they comply with the state's boating safety laws.

Trooper Baum is tireless in his efforts as demonstrated by the time he spent conducting marine patrols, the distances he traveled, and the enforcement actions he took. During 2007, his personal enforcement statistics reflect an increase in general boating violations, with a lower number of violations for personal flotation devices. He uses good judgment and takes appropriate actions when dealing with the boating safety violations he detects.



**Sergeant  
Doug Schuster**  
Mohave County  
Sheriff's Office  
Arizona

Sgt. Doug Schuster is a 19-year veteran with the Mohave County Sheriff's Office. For the last 10 years he has served as boating safety supervisor on Lake Havasu. Throughout his career, Sgt. Schuster has been an exemplary officer and has received numerous awards and honors. This includes receiving one of the highest honors a boating officer can receive, saving the life of another.

One typical day patrolling Lake Havasu, Sgt. Schuster observed an overturned watercraft with several panicked people in the water. Upon learning that a five-year-old boy was trapped in the bow of the sinking watercraft, he acted without hesitation or regard for his own safety. Diving under the overturned boat, he located and freed the boy. Although this may be looked upon as a heroic act, it is very typical of Sgt. Schuster.

Sgt. Schuster has logged well over 5,000 hours at the helm. In his tenure he has made over 300 arrests for impaired operation of a watercraft. In addition, Sgt. Schuster has motivated his personnel to aggressively enforce alcohol violations resulting in consistently leading all Arizona watercraft law enforcement agencies in OUI arrests. Furthermore, Sgt. Schuster has investigated hundreds of serious boating accidents and supervised countless additional accident investigations. He has the experience, skill and knowledge to be highly regarded in the field of boating accident investigation and reconstruction.

In addition to his law enforcement contributions, Sgt. Schuster is a strong proponent of boating safety education. In an effort to prevent future tragedies, he implemented a training program for the three local schools and is responsible for teaching boating safety to over 500 children in grades 1 through 3. When not in the school system teaching the community's youth, Sgt. Schuster is very active in educating the adult community. Each year he attends safety fairs, parades and other events to promote boating safety.



**Sergeant  
Kathy Curtice**  
Fresno County  
Sheriff's Department  
California

Sergeant Kathy Curtice joined the Fresno County Sheriff's Department in 1992 and has supervised the Boating Enforcement Unit since 2003.

On June 16, 2007, Sgt. Curtice saved the lives of two people who had fallen into the Kings River in Fresno County. While driving by the river, Sgt. Curtice noticed something pink bobbing in the water and slowed her vehicle in an effort to identify the object. She noticed people on the opposite bank waving and pointing toward the water. Believing that someone was in the water needing assistance, she donned her department-issued personal flotation device and grabbed one throw bag. She drove downriver of the victim and ran to the river's edge to lob the throw bag to the victim. At the river's edge, Sgt. Curtice discovered there were actually two unconscious victims floating on the water about 20 feet from shore. Sgt. Curtice threw one end of her throw bag to a bystander, telling him to hold it. Grasping the other end of the throw bag, she dove into the cold, swift water and swam toward the victims. Sgt. Curtice grabbed a juvenile female first and rolled her face up. While holding onto the juvenile and the throw bag, Sgt. Curtice attempted to grab the adult but couldn't reach her. Using the throw bag rope, bystanders pulled the officer and the juvenile ashore, where the juvenile regained consciousness. Meanwhile, the adult female drifted closer to shore and was pulled from the river. Sgt. Curtice administered CPR to the woman and revived her.

Also during 2007, Sgt. Kathy Curtice supervised the investigation of a hit and run boating accident in which a motor boat struck a young child on a kneeboard and then fled the scene. The investigation led Fresno County's Boating Enforcement Unit to Southern California where they first seized a boat, then ultimately arrested two Southern California men believed responsible for the hit and run accident. Both men were held and stood trial.



Sergeant  
**Daron Brown**  
Twin Falls County  
Sheriff's Department  
Idaho

Sgt. Daron Brown has 20 years' law enforcement experience, 13 of which he has served as the lead marine deputy for Twin Falls County. The county marine law enforcement program has excelled under his leadership. In addition to his on-the-water duties, Sgt. Brown is responsible for rural patrols including snowmobile and ATV enforcement as well as ranch operations. He serves as the county's lead officer for the animal control team and is a volunteer hunter education instructor. Sgt. Brown is also a decorated firearms instructor. In 2004 he created the three-day "Marine Officer Survival and Tactics" training course for state marine deputies. The training includes a half-day of classroom instruction to teach use of force principles and arrest techniques for water-based scenarios, a half-day range qualification for handgun/shotgun/rifle using vessel simulators, and two days of on-the-water live fire drills and arrest techniques.

Twin Falls County is home to many opportunities for boaters, and Sgt. Brown pioneered a local training program for officers to maximize county resources during the busy boating season. Sgt. Brown is also very active in education. As a senior instructor, he brings his broad knowledge base and years of experience to the state's marine law enforcement academy. Sgt. Brown is also actively involved in public boat safety education, having taught many classes over the years. He has recently coordinated with a local insurance agency to host a boat safety education course in return for discounted rates for boaters. Sgt. Brown has helped instruct hundreds of students from state, federal and county law enforcement agencies at the academy and marine officer survival and tactics training. Sgt. Brown's dedication to marine law enforcement on both the state and county level for many years makes him a deserving candidate for this recognition.



Game Warden  
**Kerry Wahl**  
Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Montana

During his eighteen-year career with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Game Warden Kerry Wahl has spent a vast majority of his time regulating and educating Montana's boating public. Wahl first became interested in water safety 18 years ago while working as a park ranger stationed at the Tongue River Reservoir. He worked many hours with the area wardens in their water safety endeavors.

When Wahl was hired full-time nearly 10 years ago with the enforcement division, he was first stationed in Harlowton. There, his water work was limited, but as a motivated warden, he soon assisted with water safety work at the infamous Cooney Reservoir, which offered a myriad of problems concerning boating safety. Warden Wahl not only performed routine safety patrols but also assisted with vessel safety inspections as well as boating under the influence patrols with the local wardens and the sheriff's department.

In 2003 Wahl moved to the Dillon district, which encompasses the Clark Canyon Reservoir and the Beaverhead and Big Hole rivers. He has been instrumental in water safety in his district. Over the past several years, he has seen a dramatic increase in the number of recreationists in his area. He consistently deals with a wide range of boaters, each category having their own potential problems. A big challenge has been the conflict between the traditional users – primarily anglers – and the new boating public. He has taken the time to help resolve contentions between the two groups through education efforts. Warden Wahl has stepped up his patrols on the heavy use days with the advent of special patrols relating to safety issues and boater ethics. Warden Wahl has done a tremendous job integrating his training, experience and knowledge of both flat water and whitewater into his work with the department.



Deputy  
**Steve Dangler**  
Multnomah County  
Sheriff's Department  
Oregon

Deputy Steve Dangler has been a productive member of the Multnomah County Sheriff's River Patrol for the past few years. After finishing at the top of his class at the State Marine Academy five years ago, he began setting and meeting goals for personal excellence in marine law enforcement. His performance and commitment to excellence along with his well-rounded and effective approach to marine duties have re-set the standard of excellence for Oregon's MLE program.

Deputy Dangler demonstrated continuous excellence during 2007 (as well as in preceding years) with dedication and extraordinary effort, resulting in the highest quality of service to Oregon boaters. He has taken community policing tactics from the land to the water. He is always nearby when his community needs him. His relationship with the public for doing his job well is the driving force behind his success.

Deputy Dangler has been working extremely hard on ridding the waters of theft and burglary. He worked on one particularly large theft case for over eight months, making 10 arrests and issuing 14 criminal citations. Deputy Dangler also discovered a civil dispute that sparked his interest -- a local business had been selling boats and not paying the prior owners who had left their boats on consignment. He found that over \$350,000 was owed to innocent parties and 10 were boats involved. Most of the new owners and prior owners have been contacted about the situation.

Deputy Dangler has also put forth an incredible effort on community boater and water safety education. He has worked with the Portland Boat Show, Sportsman Show, Kid Fest, Salmon Fest, Police Activities League, Portland Community College, Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Citizens Academy, as well as various schools, community groups and organizations in the area. He has helped educate over 8200 individuals in boating and water safety.



# 2008 boating officer of the year WESTERN STATE RECIPIENTS



Park Ranger  
**Richard Droesbeke**  
Division of State  
Parks & Recreation  
Utah

Richard Droesbeke began his career with the Utah Division of State Parks and Recreation in 1992. He worked at several boating park areas before moving to the main office as the Division's first boating education specialist. He has been involved with boating safety, law enforcement and education activities his entire career.

Droesbeke recently became park manager at Bear Lake State Park and continues to focus on boating safety. He has designed a boating safety display at the marina. Park employees were surprised and impressed to see the new park manager routinely performing boating safety patrols. As the Division's boating education specialist, Droesbeke maintained and updated three boating safety courses. Droesbeke has been instrumental in designing several boating safety programs, including a PFD-Loaner program. Implemented in seven boating areas, this program provides life jackets to boaters on the busiest waters in the state.

In May 1995, Droesbeke co-taught the first youth personal watercraft education class in Utah, and he is still an active boating safety instructor. Droesbeke has established, fostered and maintained crew of more than 70 volunteers, whom he has certified as Boating/PWC Instructors. He has developed curricula and conducts classes for new instructors as well as annual refresher classes for current instructors. Droesbeke has participated as an active member of NASBLA's Education Committee for the past nine years. He was instrumental in reviewing boating education courses and helped establish a formal course review process.

Droesbeke is very involved in the community and works with local law enforcement officials on a statewide basis to improve community law enforcement relations. He also spends numerous hours speaking to a variety of private, public and governmental groups. While working out of the main office, Droesbeke always felt an obligation to get out and perform boating safety and law enforcement patrols, and he has assisted many Parks with boating patrols over holiday weekends and holidays.



Deputy  
**Chris Bedker**  
King County  
Sheriff's Office  
Washington

Deputy Chris Bedker has been a marine deputy with the King County Sheriff's Office Marine Services Unit since 2000. 2007 was an exceptional year for Deputy Bedker. He demonstrated superior leadership skills and his personal effort made a difference for the safety of Washington residents on the waters of King County.

In 2007 Deputy Bedker was tasked with training two new deputies and provided field training instruction and guidance to the new officers. The new deputies have since demonstrated excellent abilities when responding to boaters in need, completing vessel inspections, and responding to rescue call-outs on the water.

Deputy Bedker also had an outstanding year in boating education. He worked with a high level of enthusiasm and energy patrolling the busiest lakes in King County. He served as the lead deputy in scheduling spring classroom activities and taught water safety to young children in school districts throughout the county.

Deputy Bedker is a standout in assisting boaters and rescuing people in challenging circumstances. In May 2007, Deputy Bedker arrived at the scene of King County's first water accident of the year, an early summer rafting accident. He was the first person able to reach the young girl involved in the accident, even though his outstanding work was not able to save her life. The next month Deputy Bedker was called on during the early morning hours of an all-night high school graduation party when a swimmer was missing. Deputy Bedker brought the victim to the surface for aid personnel. The supervisory staff of the sheriff's office took special notice of Deputy Bedker's commitment to his job when another missing swimmer call went out, and Deputy Bedker changed his weekend plans and responded to assist his unit with recovery efforts at a state park.



Officer  
**Ryan Kenneda**  
Game & Fish  
Department  
Wyoming

Ryan Kenneda has served as a Wildlife Law Enforcement Officer with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department since December 2004. Officer Kenneda has quickly become an effective and professional watercraft officer who is committed to boating law compliance as well as watercraft safety. Officer Kenneda's primary duty from May through August is watercraft enforcement on Flaming Gorge Reservoir and other smaller waters.

In 2007, Officer Kenneda led the state in documented boating law violations with 129 watercraft citations and warnings. Officer Kenneda consistently performs his duties in a professional manner and seeks new approaches to increase law compliance and safety awareness. He frequently teams with other officers to provide an effective enforcement presence throughout the boating season. Officer Kenneda has earned a reputation with the public as being fair, respectful and helpful. He always takes time to educate and inform, provide helpful advice, or assist with boaters in distress.

Officer Kenneda is committed to watercraft safety education and has provided safety programs for children in local communities. He also performs numerous off-water boat and registration inspections.

Accident investigation is a part of Officer Kenneda's watercraft safety patrol duties. Officer Kenneda and his partner handled a challenging boating under the influence incident with an accident in 2007. An individual in a jet boat ran over another recreational boat. The individual was smiling and laughing as he went over and even turned to smile and wave at the accident victims. Officer Kenneda's detailed investigation led to a successful prosecution of the case.

He continually seeks new training and experience and effectively applies what he learns to his duties. In 2007, Officer Kenneda excelled at the U.S. Coast Guard Marine Patrol Officer Course.

# Training on Oregon's Rough Rogue Gives Law Enforcement a "Run"

By Ashley Massey, Public Affairs Specialist for the Oregon State Marine Board

Oregon is home to a plethora of boating opportunities thanks to its diverse waterways: the Pacific Ocean, 6,150 lakes and over 111,619 miles of rivers and streams. One body of water, the Rogue River, is not only famous for its namesake beer but it's also famous for being one of the most exciting – and dangerous – rivers in the state. This year alone, the Rogue River has claimed the lives of four rafters. For this reason, the Oregon State Marine Board conducted intensive, hands-on drift boat training with an emphasis on rescue and recovery for law enforcement assigned to marine patrols.

Oregon's Rogue River has various whitewater rapids that flow 215 miles through the mountains and valleys of southwest Oregon, and empty into the Pacific Ocean at the town of Gold Beach. The river flows from the Cascade Range through the Rogue Valley floor, past cities, towns and agricultural areas in three counties. Boaters with a full spectrum of skills run

this river and, experienced or not, law enforcement train and prepare for the hardest kind of situations for rescue and recovery.

"What makes this school unique is the 1:1 student/teacher ratio," said Dale Flowers, Law Enforcement Training coordinator for the Oregon State Marine Board.



*The Oregon State Marine Board recently conducted rigorous drift boat training focusing on rescue and recovery for law enforcement assigned to marine patrols. Oregon State Marine Board photos*

"We pair up a student and instructor who work well together, because ultimately they need to learn from each other."

Drift boat operations on a hazardous river give students an opportunity to experience exactly the same conditions as the people they are there to protect. The September 2008 drift boat school trained 19 law enforcement students from all over the state.

"Day one begins with everyone in the water. Students and instructors need to show they can accomplish a self-rescue," said lead instructor Deputy

Ernie Fields. "There are many skills to learn and a lot of them you just don't pick up automatically. Students also learn how to use a throw bag for rescue, practicing on themselves. Instructors and students must also work together to swim to shore."

Drift boat training also includes learning the fundamentals of reading the river and maneuvering.



*As shown above, the Oregon State Marine Board works with local media to help inform boaters about river safety. Key points include scouting the river, know the river flows, and going with someone experienced. Here, lead instructor Deputy Ernie Fields is interviewed by a local television station doing a story on river safety.*

"Everything is hands-on. Students and instructors need to demonstrate physical skills, and communicate really well with each other to make the learning productive while maintaining safety," Fields added.

No doubt about it, drift boating takes practice. Each day the students drifted various sections, beginning with class I rapids. "One of the biggest things we all learned from each other was so basic, yet easily overlooked," Fields explained. "We focused the students' attention the first day to lifting their vision down river – to see the whole run versus the next 10 feet in front of the boat."

The next day, instructors would build on the skills from the day before and attempt a more difficult rapid (class II). "It's easy to see how people get into trouble by looking directly in front of them and ultimately row into a hazardous situation," Fields explained.

This training helped build skills that turn law enforcement into professional river runners. "We have a new perspective, from the eye of the average Joe," Fields added. "When the law enforcement students leave this training, they have a new respect for the river and the people who run it. They now know firsthand what will get folks into trouble because they had to avoid the same mistakes themselves." ■

## **Boaters' Habits Factor into Waterway Management Decisions**

The University of Florida Sea Grant Program, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, and Collier County's Coastal Zone Management Department are collaborating on a two-year recreational boater study in Florida's Collier County. The study will provide a science-based, proactive approach to coastal resource management and will capture the concerns and needs of recreational boaters.

Boaters receive questionnaires in which they are asked to describe recent boating trips, travel patterns and preferences, and those issues important to them as local boaters. The study will provide information as to where boaters access the water, their boating activities and destinations, and travel routes on the water. Returned questionnaires will be tabulated into a geographic information system database. Results will be turned into maps that will be compared with maps of waterways, infrastructure, natural resources and management zones.

The boating study will have several practical applications for waterway management decisions and will help address several boating issues within the county. Specifically it will help managers and community leaders address boating access, waterway maintenance, congestion hot spots, potential user conflicts and safety management, resource protection, and education needs within the county. The baseline data collected can also improve the county's chances of acquiring future funding for the creation and/or maintenance of county boat ramps and artificial reefs.

For more details on the boater study, contact Bryan Fluech, Collier County Sea Grant Extension Agent with the University of Florida Extension Service, at [fluech@ufl.edu](mailto:fluech@ufl.edu).

## **Delaware Officers Investigate Fatal Boat Crash**

An early morning boat crash on the C&D canal left one man dead

and a second injured, with an investigation underway by Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control Division of Fish and Wildlife Enforcement agents.

Fish and Wildlife agents responded to the scene at 3:30 a.m. on Oct. 5 on the north side of the jetty at the east canal entrance near Delaware City, where a 25-foot Crownline had struck the jetty and remained perched there.

The vessel was seized, pending completion of the investigation.

The boat owner and operator was pronounced dead at the scene. A passenger was admitted to Christiana Hospital with a broken jaw and other injuries.

In addition to Fish and Wildlife Enforcement, the U.S. Coast Guard and the Delaware Fire Company responded to the accident scene.

Alcohol appears to be a factor in the accident, according to Fish and Wildlife Enforcement spokesman and Boating Safety officer Sgt. Gregory Rhodes.



*A boating outing turned fatal in Delaware when the boat hit a jetty.*  
Delaware Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Control photo

## **Study Quantifies Impact of Recreational Activities in Louisiana**

A recent study on the economic impact of fish, wildlife and boating in Louisiana found that those activities in 2006 had a \$6.75 billion impact on the state economy, created nearly 77,000 jobs and generated nearly \$450 million in tax revenue for state and local governments.

The study, conducted for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, found that recreational boating had an economic impact of \$1.3 billion in the state. It created about 15,000 jobs and generated \$81 million in state and local tax revenues.

The study found that powerboats ranging in length from 16 to 24 feet were the most prevalent in the state. They accounted for nearly 170,000 of the 320,000 boats in the state.

Fishing in Louisiana is also a major boost for the economy. In 2006, anglers statewide spent \$592 million on everything from lodging and boat mooring to taxidermy and processing, according to the study.

Recreational fishing accounted for \$1 billion in retail sales and had a total economic impact of \$1.7 billion. It accounted for more than 18,100 jobs in the state.

According to the study, hunters statewide spent \$594 million in 2006 on everything from licenses to an array of hunting gear. An estimated 239,000 residents in the state hunted.

## **Sciulla Sets Sail for New Horizons**

*BoatU.S. Magazine* Editor and Publisher, Michael Sciulla, ended a 28-year career with Boat Owners Association of The United States in October. He is joining the American Recreation Coalition as a senior fellow working on recreational policy issues and a National Geographic Society book on scenic waterways. Sciulla will continue contributing to *BoatU.S. Magazine* as editor-at-large through 2009.

As founding editor of *BoatU.S. Magazine*, Sciulla transformed an eight-page association newsletter he inherited in 1980 into the most widely read boating publication in the world, with a circulation in excess of 650,000 and a readership topping one million. In 2008 he launched the digital edition of *BoatU.S. Magazine*.

While serving as editor of the association's flagship publication Sciulla also directed the association's lobbying operation from 1980 to 2006 as senior vice president and



director of Government and Public Affairs. He was a key player in the passage of a number of federal laws, including the establishment of the Aquatic Resources (Wallop-Breaux) Trust Fund in 1983, as well as reauthorizations of the law in 1988, 1993 and 1998.

### International Team of Rescuers Cited for Heroism

Three members of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and one member of the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary received the Silver Medal Award from the Association for Rescue at Sea (AFRAS) “for demonstrating outstanding skill and decision-making in a heroic rescue” of 13 people from a sinking boat last spring.

The Silver Medal Award is the highest search and rescue award given to members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary by a civilian organization. The ceremony was held in Washington, D.C. on September 25, 2008.

On April 25, 2007, approximately 20 miles from Homer, Alaska, the *Halibut Endeavor*, a 39’ charter fishing boat with 11 passengers and two crew on board, began taking on water and issued a distress call. Training about 20 miles away was a high-speed 27’ Coast Guard Auxiliary boat manned by an international crew of Coast Guard Auxiliarists: Shane Taylor of Anchorage, Richard Liebe of Anchorage, Raymond Miller of Fairbanks, and Mike Cupit, on loan through an exchange program from the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary. When they heard the call for help, they raced to the aid of the distressed boat.

The Auxiliarists found the rear of the *Halibut Endeavor* close to submersion with

the 11 passengers positioned at the front of boat apparently in an effort to keep the boat from tipping over into the 39-degree water. After quickly assessing the situation the Auxiliary crew moved the rescue boat into position and pulled the 11 passengers to safety. Seconds later, the distressed boat rolled onto its side, forcing the rescue boat to pull back to a safe distance. The rescue boat again maneuvered next to the *Halibut Endeavor* to save the two crew members only seconds before the boat sank.

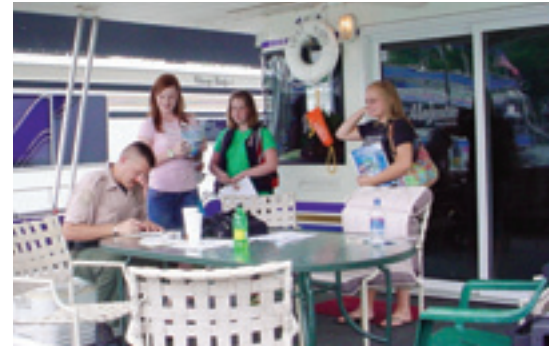
### Kentucky Marina Gets Onboard with Boater Education

A partnership between Grove Marina and the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources provided boating education students on Laurel Lake in south-central Kentucky with a new opportunity this year. During the summer, boater education classes were taught on the water – from the rental houseboats at Grove Marina.

Last winter, Sgt. Jason Bolton sought a new location for the boater education classes for the Laurel Lake area. Classes had been offered at the community center, about 15 miles from the lake, and suffered from poor attendance. Last year only seven students took the boating class, with just three testing successfully. With the on-water classes this year, 41 students, both young and old, attended, with 40 testing successfully.

Of those who attended, a majority arrived via the water. Many of the adult boaters who dropped off students ended up staying to attend the classes as well. The classes were offered monthly through the Kentucky boating season, with additional classes offered on holiday weekends.

Special thanks to the owner of Grove Marina, Curt Corey, who let officers use his personal boat to give the classes on the Labor Day Holiday.



*Boaters were able to take boating safety classes on the water, thanks to a partnership between the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources and a local marina.*

Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources photo

### Historic Amendment Protects Boating, Fishing Access

On Sept. 26, 2008, President George W. Bush signed an amendment to a 1995 Executive Order to protect recreational boating and fishing access on federal waters and marine protected areas. The amendment also ensures that fishing will be managed as a sustainable activity in national wildlife refuges, national parks, national monuments, marine sanctuaries, marine protected areas or any other relevant conservation or management area under federal authority.

This amendment provides new and clear direction to federal agencies charged with management of natural resources.

“We applaud the President for recognizing the role recreational boaters and anglers play in conservation,” said National Marine Manufacturers Association President Thom Dammrich. “This Order re-establishes a long-standing federal policy to allow and encourage access to public lands and waters for recreational purposes consistent with resource protection.”

NMMA worked closely with the American Sportfishing Association along with the Billfish Foundation, Center for Coastal Conservation, Coastal Conservation Association, International Game Fish Association and the Congressional Sportsmen Foundation to finalize this amendment. ■



*A Coast Guard Auxiliary Rescue boat returns to port following a dramatic rescue at sea.*

USCG Auxiliary photo

## Communication – A Culture of Change



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

Over the past few years, an evolution has occurred within NASBLA, a change in the way business is conducted and even a change in the format of the NASBLA conference. This year, the business meeting was held at the start of the conference instead of at the end; any debates over issues were conducted at interim meetings instead of at the business meeting; the awards were presented in a different format; and the list goes on.

For some of us, any change to our standard operating procedure is a challenge. Yet, change is typically the result of an evolution. Over the past few years, NASBLA has been evolving quickly and effectively. It's not that the prior way of doing business was wrong. In fact, it was right considering the circumstances. Nevertheless, those circumstances have changed, and we have to change with them.

Consider the following quote from a very well known American politician:

I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and constitutions, but laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths discovered and manners and opinions change, with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times. We might as well require a man to wear still the coat which fitted him when a boy as civilized society to remain ever under the regimen of their barbarous ancestors.

~Thomas Jefferson

NASBLA has been living true to this statement. It has created a culture of change that has brought it into the current social, political and environmental times. I see it working effectively to enhance its organizational aspects and the achievement of its mission. NASBLA is working more effectively with its partners; it's adopting progressive resolutions and action items; and it's on a path to success that has evolved from the former way of doing business in order to adapt to this new climate.

Thus, change can be good. We can use what we learned from the past to become even more effective at what we do in the future – whether we talk about the evolution of administering, the evolution of working within a political realm, and even the evolution of communicating.

Along with everything else, communications have changed too. In fact, during the NASBLA conference, one of the session speakers addressed this very topic. Ben Martin showed us how technology has changed drastically, and how convenience, costs and effectiveness have guided us into a new culture for communications, whether we're using search engines, blogs, distance learning, cell phones, and so much more.

The key to all of this change is effectiveness. We need to reach the right audience with the right message that will change behavior and help us to achieve our ultimate goals. For boating safety, that's the saving of lives, the reduction of accidents and injuries, and providing a quality experience for the recreational boating public.

Of course, there's much to learn. It will be a challenge. But, who better to take on that challenge than you? So, go on, take on that challenge, strive to be an effective communicator, and throw off that coat that you used to wear when you were young. It's time for a new coat.

# Effective Communications

By Michael J. Baron, Boating Safety Division Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety U.S. Coast Guard

During a conference earlier this year, a boating law administrator brought up the question “How do we communicate with compliant boaters?” Shouldn’t that question be “How do we communicate with ALL boaters in the course of our daily business?”

Author Carl W. Buechler once said, “They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.” This is especially true when communicating with boaters during some sort of enforcement encounter, such as a boarding to ensure compliance with boating safety carriage requirements. Did you ever think of the stress the boater experiences simply by seeing a marine law enforcement officer? Just think about how you feel when you see those flashing blue lights in your rearview mirror.

As professional enforcement officers, we must take this into account when pulling alongside a vessel to conduct a boarding. Now we fully realize that each encounter is going to be different, and there will be times that the task direction will be one-way (i.e. “Keep your hands where I can see them!”). However, when dealing with a “lower risk boarding,” simple, sincere actions on your part can keep the operator and crew at ease as you conduct business.

As you inspect a piece of equipment, explain to the boater what information you are seeking. For example if you are inspecting a life jacket, point out the U.S. Coast Guard Approval Number and explain what “good and serviceable” means and why this is important. Not only are you taking an important step by educating the boater but you are also filling in some of that uncomfortable silence as the boater anxiously waits to see if the life jacket is going to make the grade. This works especially well if children are onboard, who may be feeling that their parents have done something wrong because they have been stopped by a boat with a blue light and people with guns are now on board.

While interacting with the public, be aware of the messages you are sending with your body language. Dr. Albert Mehrabian, professor emeritus of psychology at UCLA, conducted studies dating back to the 1960s and his findings showed that when communicating 7 percent of the message is received through the spoken word, 38 percent through the tone of your voice, and 55 percent through your body language or nonverbal cues. So it’s not just what you are saying, but also how you are saying it.

In a historic letter to the commanding officers of the newly commissioned Revenue Cutter Service, Alexander Hamilton, the father of the Coast Guard recommended that the officer’s deportment be marked with *prudence, moderation, and good temper*. He went on to say, *they will always keep in mind that their countrymen are freemen, and, as such, are impatient of everything that bears the least mark of a domineering spirit. They will, therefore, refrain, with the most guarded circumspection, from whatever has the semblance of haughtiness, rudeness, or insult*. While these words, written June 4, 1791, were specifically for members of the Revenue Cutter Service, these recommendations have stood the test of time. They are as appropriate today as they were 217 years ago and can still apply to all maritime law enforcement professionals.

Remember, as professionals, we all should treat those we encounter with respect, and by employing and demonstrating effective communication skills and even temperament it will enhance the encounter for everyone involved. When people see a uniform, they expect you to have an answer to all their boating safety questions. So where do you get this sought-after information? Well, you could read the Code of Federal Regulations (CFRs) or various state codes, which will have all the information you need and then some.

For your own personal development, you may want to consider attending the Marine Patrol Officer Course (MPOC) held at the Coast Guard’s Maritime Law Enforcement Academy Charleston, S.C. Not only will you learn the federal carriage requirements, but you will also have ample situations to work on your communication skills and public speaking abilities by taking part in structured classroom presentations. There are also opportunities for role-playing during a series of various interactive boarding scenarios. For further information on MPOC, visit <http://www.uscg.mil/mlea/>. Here is the schedule of upcoming classes.

## CLASS SCHEDULE: Marine Patrol Officer Course (MPOC)

Class Number	Dates	Course Description
01-09 MPOC	Dec. 1-12, 2008	Instructor Development Course
02-09 MPOC	Jan. 26-Feb. 6, 2009	Instructor Development Course
01-09 MOCA	March 2-13, 2009	Tactical Course
02-09 MOCA	Mar. 23-Apr. 3, 2009	Tactical Course

We need to continue to remind ourselves that in our high-tech world of today where “texting,” e-mail and voicemail have replaced the simple phone call, we must never forget the importance of using all of our personal communication tools effectively when we deal face to face with the public. ■



## Help Take the “Search” Out of Search and Rescue



Commodore Ed Sweeney  
National Directorate  
Commodore for Recreational  
Boating Safety  
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

It was a picture-perfect, late-summer day off the Oregon coast, with bright sunshine, unseasonably warm temperatures, and relatively little wind. Miles offshore was a 40-foot sport fisherman boat, with four men aboard fishing.

All was going well until late in the afternoon. Miles from shore with no land in sight, the vessel struck an underwater object. Within minutes, it was taking on water quickly, overwhelming the bilge pumps. The skipper and crew quickly assessed the situation and realized that the vessel was going to sink quickly – and they were all alone in a vast ocean, with no other vessels in sight.

At this point, none of the men was wearing a life jacket. They knew they would be in the water for a while before help arrived (if it ever did arrive), so they began frantically searching for life vests and anything else that might help keep them afloat.

The skipper realized their only chance of survival would be to call the Coast Guard. He quickly got on the radio and sent a MAYDAY message. The Coast Guard responded with the usual questions, asking the position of the vessel, the nature of distress, number of people on board and a description of the vessel. The skipper radioed back that the vessel was taking on water quickly, with four people on board, but he did not know with any degree of certainty their position.

The skipper told the Coast Guard that they left their hailing port at 0600 that morning. He added, “We went out about four or five miles and then headed south. I’m not really sure where we are right now, but we need help!”

By now the vessel’s stern was almost underwater, and the skipper realized the radio would die at any moment. When asked by the Coast Guard if he could see land, or at least tell them the depth of the water they were in, the skipper replied that they “were somewhere off the Oregon coast in about 800 feet of water.” The radio then shorted out, leaving the Coast Guard with little information.

These four men were lucky – very lucky. Although they spent a long, cold night bobbing in the Pacific Ocean, they were discovered by a Coast Guard helicopter, some 20 miles offshore, shortly after sunrise the next morning.

“Finding them was like searching for the proverbial needle in the haystack,” said a local Coast Guard official. “The only thing that saved them is they were able to transmit a depth reading before their radio quit, so we had a general idea of where to look.” The Coast Guard was able to calculate their last known position based upon the water depth, combined with time/speed/distance calculations.

This incident highlights several important points that boaters need to be made aware of to help avoid such situations.

**1. Know your vessel’s position at all times:** The most important detail the Coast Guard needs when you call for help is the vessel’s position. Without it, finding a distressed vessel can be nearly impossible. Prudent mariners maintain a ship’s log and regularly update their vessel’s position using reliable navigation tools. With this information, boaters needing help can provide authorities with a relatively accurate place to begin looking.

**2. Always file a float plan:** A float plan includes who is on board, the vessel’s expected route, and the boater’s expected time of return, among other items. The plan is filed with a friend or someone else on shore, NOT the Coast Guard. If the vessel is not back within a reasonable time from its expected return, the holder of the float plan should contact authorities and provide the plan’s details.

**3. Carry an EPIRB when cruising offshore:** An EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon) broadcasts a vessel’s position to a satellite, which in turn notifies the Coast Guard. If buying an EPIRB is not possible, boaters can rent an EPIRB from BoatU.S. for a small fee.

**4. Be prepared before disaster strikes:** Always wear a life jacket and have your distress signals and communication devices on your person. This saves valuable time in the event of a disaster.

Simple procedures such as those outlined above can go a long way in helping to take the search out of search and rescue, as well as increase a boater’s chances of surviving a disaster at sea. ■

## APPROVAL RATING

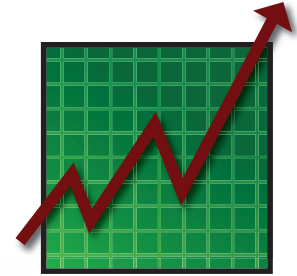
\*“Will you recommend BoaterExam.com to others that need their boater education card?”

**YES! 97%**

**NO 3%**

Total of 2556 respondents

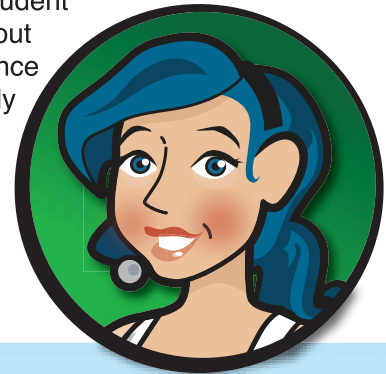
\*Question #10 from BoaterExam Online Survey



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Cell: **1-613-324-7333**  
e-mail: **kerry@boaterexam.com**





## JANUARY 2009

7-10 **US Sailing**  
National Sailing Programs Symposium  
San Diego, California  
401.683.0800  
www.ussailing.org

12-16 **NASBLA**  
National Boating Accident Investigation  
& Analysis – Level 1 Training  
Lake Lanier, Georgia  
859.225.9487  
chris@nasbla.org

## FEBRUARY 2009

5-7 **NASBLA**  
Executive Board Meeting  
Tampa, Florida  
859.225.9487  
info@nasbla.org

9-13 **NASBLA**  
National Boating Accident Investigation  
& Analysis – Level 1 Training  
Portland, Oregon  
859.225.9487  
chris@nasbla.org

12-16 **Miami International Boat Show**  
Miami, Florida  
www.miamiboatshow.com

17-22 **United States Power Squadrons**  
Annual Meeting  
Anaheim, California  
888.367.8777  
www.usps.org

## MARCH 2009

2-3 **NASBLA**  
Enforcement & Training  
Committee Meeting  
Lexington, Kentucky  
859.225.9487  
chris@nasbla.org

4-5 **NASBLA**  
Boating Law Administrators Workshop  
Lexington, Kentucky  
859.225.9487  
info@nasbla.org

9-13 **NASBLA**  
National Boating Accident Investigation  
& Analysis – Level 1 Training  
Springfield, Missouri  
859.225.9487  
chris@nasbla.org

13-14 **NASBLA**  
Vessel Identification, Registration & Titling  
Committee Meeting  
Portland, Oregon  
859.225.9487  
deb@nasbla.org

13-15 **Harrisburg River Rescue  
& Emergency Services**  
Water Rescue and Emergency  
Response Conference  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania  
717.236.5999  
www.harrisburgriverrescue.org  
kettererssq@verizon.net

15-18 **International Association of Marine  
Investigators**  
Annual Training Conference  
Portland, Oregon  
www.iamimarine.org

## APRIL 2009

4 **National Boating Federation**  
Annual Meeting  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
610.461.6621

4-6 **National Boating Safety Advisory Council**  
Spring Meeting  
Orlando, Florida  
202.372.1062  
jeffrey.a.ludwig@uscg.mil

18-19 **NASBLA**  
Education & Outreach Committee Meeting  
Panama City, Florida  
859.225.9487  
gail@nasbla.org

19 **NASBLA**  
Waterways Management  
Subcommittee Meeting  
Panama City, Florida  
859.225.9487  
matt@nasbla.org

19-22 **National Safe Boating Council and  
National Water Safety Congress**  
International Boating & Water  
Safety Summit  
Panama City Beach, Florida  
www.safeboatingcouncil.org  
www.watersafetycongress.org

20-24 **NASBLA**  
National Boating Accident Investigation  
& Analysis – Level 1 Training  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
859.225.9487  
chris@nasbla.org

## MAY 2009

3-5 **American Boating Congress**  
Washington, D.C.  
202.737.9750  
www.nmma.org/abc

6-7 **NASBLA**  
Executive Board Meeting  
Lexington, Kentucky  
859.225.9487  
info@nasbla.org

16-22 **National Safe Boating Week**  
www.safeboatingcampaign.net

18-22 **NASBLA**  
National Boating Accident Investigation  
& Analysis – Level 1 Training  
Rockland, Maine  
859.225.9487  
chris@nasbla.org

## JUNE 2009

21-24 **Western States Boating  
Administrators Association**  
Annual Conference  
Boise, Idaho  
859.225.9487  
info@nasbla.org

## SEPTEMBER 2009

21-25 **US Sailing**  
Annual General Meeting  
League City, Texas  
401.683.0800  
www.ussailing.org