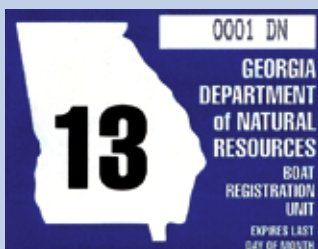
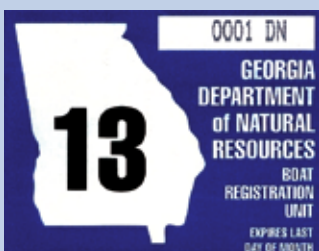




- Nearly perfect registration system
- Standardizing the titling process
- National database helps states



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**small craft advisory**

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

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## Vessel ID critical to boating safety and security



**Terry West**  
NASBLA President



**John Johnson**  
NASBLA Executive Director

Accurate vessel information is the backbone of recreational boating data. From sales and marketing data to boating safety statistics, everything ties back to a hull identification or registration number.

Registering a vessel is the first touch point states have with their recreational boaters and it's an activity that allows our programs to periodically keep in touch with our boating constituents.

The Federal Boating Act of 1958 directed that the U.S. Coast Guard develop and administer a uniform numbering system for all of the states and further allowed for statewide registration systems. The Act intended to establish a valid identification system to aid in law enforcement and investigations, search and rescue, and vital recreational boating safety and other functions.

NASBLA has long worked on registration and titling issues. One of our very first resolutions was "to study the possibilities of serial numbering of hulls, or some other method of identification, which would make feasible the issuance of Certificates of Title." Our commitment to accurate and effective registration and titling continues today through the work of our Vessel Identification, Registration & Titling Committee.

The events of September 11, 2001, and ongoing homeland security efforts have added new dimensions to the role of and reasons for an accurate, reliable vessel identification system across all U.S. jurisdictions. The creation of standards, sound measures, appropriate data and information collection methods, and meaningful numeric targets for numbering and titling program performance is likely to become increasingly important to achieving the broader goals associated with national

recreational boating safety – and security – programs.

Annual state reports to the U.S. Coast Guard with information on the numbered vessels is used by the USCG to publish the annual Boating Statistics report required by 46 U.S.C. 6102(b) and in the allocation of federal funds to assist states in implementing the Recreational Boating Safety Program. These boat registration statistics also serve research and marketing purposes beyond the original intent.

A more recent development in vessel identification is the introduction of the Vessel

Identification System (VIS). Conceptualized by Congress more than 20 years ago, VIS consists of registration and ownership data from participating VIS states and Coast Guard's National Vessel Documentation Center.

*Editor's Note: For a thorough history and explanation of the importance of VIS for national security and boater safety, see Vann Burgess's article on pp. 8-9.*

NASBLA has worked with the Coast Guard over the past two decades on a multitude of attempts at a vessel identification system. Today, we're glad to say that there is a Vessel Identification System up and running and more than 30 states and territories are participating in the system.

NASBLA encourages the participation of all states and is working with the Coast Guard through our Vessel Identification, Registration & Titling Committee to bring on board the remaining states. It is critical that all states and territories join the VIS to enhance our country's maritime domain awareness and thus our maritime domain safety and security. ✪

**Accurate vessel information is the backbone of recreational boating data.**





## NASBLA adds law enforcement director

NASBLA has hired Maj. John C. Fetterman, recently retired coastal boating law administrator for Maine, as the nonprofit's new director of Law Enforcement. In this capacity, Fetterman will work to integrate and coordinate law enforcement programs within NASBLA and to im-

prove the nonprofit organization's law enforcement program value to its members.

"John's wealth of subject matter expertise, management experience, depth of relationships with key national policymakers, and passion for maritime safety and security position him to make a huge contribution to our mission and our strategic objectives," said NASBLA Executive Director John Johnson. "Additionally, John's knowledge of NASBLA people and programs and his commitment to the success of our law enforcement programs will result in a very short learning curve and his ability to immediately integrate with our ongoing operations."

## West appointed to BoatU.S. National Advisory Council

NASBLA President Terry West is one of three key appointees to the Boat Owners Association of The United States' (BoatU.S.) National Advisory Council. Lenora Clark, vice chair of the California Boating and Waterways Commission, and Anne Sacks, president of the Recreational Boaters of California, are the other two appointees.

The Council was created over 30 years ago to advise and guide the over half-million-member association on federal and state issues critical to recreational boaters. Throughout the years they have debated policy topics ranging from unfair fees and taxes to today's hot-button issues such as the increasing levels of ethanol in fuel, boating access, safety issues such as boater education, the government's small boat threat strategy and more.

## Magazine lands two awards



*Small Craft Advisory* and its editor have been recognized with two awards from the Kentucky Government Communicators Association (KAGC), a nonprofit organization that brings together professionals whose primary jobs involve communicating with media, the public, legislatures, stakeholders and other entities.

At an awards reception on Dec. 7,

2009, Kimberly Jenkins, editor for the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA), was presented with the Award of Excellence (first place) in the News Writing category and the Award of Merit (second place) in Feature Writing in this year's competition, which honored materials produced during the 2008 calendar year.

Jenkins earned top honors for her article "Navigation Rules Key to On-Water Safety," which appeared in the May-June 2008 issue of *Small Craft Advisory*. With 80 percent of all recreational boating accidents occurring due to human error, Jenkins wrote the article to call attention to the ongoing problem of Navigation Rules violations. The article also provides safety information for readers, including marine patrol officers and boating safety education instructors, to pass along to recreational boaters in an effort to bolster safety on the nation's waterways.

Jenkins received second place for "To Require or Not to Require." She wrote this article, published in July-August 2008, to draw attention to the added element of risk encountered by officers who perform law enforcement duties on the water. The article also discusses requiring boating law enforcement officers to wear life jackets while on the job, an issue NASBLA has been on record in support of since 1993.

## NASBLA revises Boating Education Standards

In the last 15 months, NASBLA has been working on a grant project to complete a risk-based analysis of the National Boating Education Standards. This grant has been funded through the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund and administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.

Dr. Stuart Cottrell of Colorado State University was the lead researcher on this project. His research team included Dr. Alan Graefe from The Pennsylvania State University and Dr. Bill Hug from California University of Pennsylvania. The researchers worked with members of the NASBLA Education & Awareness Committee to analyze the National Boating Education Standards based on the past 10 years of boating accident statistics provided by the U.S. Coast Guard. Revisions were made to the Standards based on the results of this research.

On September 28, 2009, the NASBLA membership formally approved the changes to the National Boating Education Standards. These revisions went into effect on Jan. 1, 2010, for all boating safety courses submitted for review and approval after that date. A copy of the newly revised standards and application materials can be found on the NASBLA website. In addition, the NASBLA test forms have been revised to reflect the changes in the standards. Copies of the new test forms can be obtained by contacting Gail Kulp, director of Education and Standards, at [gail@nasbla.org](mailto:gail@nasbla.org).

NASBLA NEWS CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

# NASBLA TREASURES ITS MEMBER STATES

[PART 3]



In 2006 the California Department of Boating and Waterways launched a media and outreach campaign to encourage boaters to be responsible while operating their boats. *California Department of Boating & Waterways photo*

This is the third installment in a series of articles to feature our member states and their boating safety programs. We greatly appreciate the contributions these agencies continue to provide in the ongoing journey to reduce boating-related fatalities and make the nation's waterways even safer and more enjoyable.

## CALIFORNIA

California's boating safety program was established around 1959 as a result of the U.S. Coast Guard turning over boating safety responsibilities to the states.

The Department of Boating and Waterways (or "Cal Boating" for short) was created to help develop convenient public access to the waterways and promote on-the-water safety. Funded by vessel registration fees, boating fuel tax dollars, and boating facility construction loan payments, Cal Boating's programs include:

- officer training, financial aid and equipment grants for the more than 100 local and state agencies that provide boating law enforcement;
- voluntary education for boaters
- loans for the construction of marinas and grants to build boat launching ramps;
- aquatic pest control in the Sacramento San Joaquin Delta; coastal beach erosion control;



The Metropolitan Police Department's (MPDC) Harbor Patrol in Washington, D.C., was established in 1861 as the first specialized police force and has operated continually ever since. *MPDC Harbor Patrol photo*

- vessel

sewage pumpout stations grants; and

- helping local agencies pay for abandoned vessel removal.

In 1976 Cal Boating developed the first home study boating safety course. In 1983 legislators passed the first state law enabling Cal Boating to provide elementary and middle schools with boating safety materials and courses. In 2002 Cal Boating formulated the nation's first personal watercraft course for law enforcement officers.

With eight full-time, two part-time and 10 contracted employees, Cal Boating provides law enforcement training and certification, subvention, boating safety education and outreach, and training grants to organizations for boats for training and teaching boating safety. The agency also pioneered the National Safe Boating Council's Wear It! Campaign. In addition, Cal Boating builds and supports Boating Instruction and Safety Centers that are run by universities and colleges to provide boating safety training for both children and adults.

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

In 1861, the Metropolitan Police Department's (MPDC) Harbor Patrol was established as the nation's first specialized

police force and has operated continually ever since.

What started as a one-man operation expanded in the 1880s to 14 officers under the command of Lieutenant J. R. Sutton, the first Harbor Master. An

extract from patrol

archives reads, "...the Harbor police are a terror to the wharf rats and river thieves who ply their vocation on the river front. They also patrol the wharves to promptly discover fires thereby preventing disastrous configurations."

Today's Harbor Patrol consists of 19 well-equipped and highly trained officers and sergeants under the command of the Harbor Master. Though the law enforcement mission remains the same, the Patrol's duties have greatly expanded.

One of the specialized duties is Underwater Search and Recovery (USR). The Harbor Patrol USR Team consists of 13 certified divers equipped with the latest dive technology including underwater metal detectors, 600kHz and 1200kHz sonars, and underwater communications equipment that enables the divers to stay in constant contact with surface personnel. Harbor Patrol officers are also certified in air/sea rescue, ice rescue, accident reconstruction, marine mechanics, and boating safety instruction.

The Harbor Patrol provides an excellent boating safety program. Harbor Patrol representatives are available to speak about boating safety to any interested group or organization in the District of Columbia. A four-lesson basic boating safety course is given free of charge to the public. The Patrol awards each indi-





vidual who successfully completes the course with a certificate.

## SOUTH DAKOTA

With more than 1100 square miles of water, South Dakota offers residents and visitors a variety of boating opportunities. Celebrating its 100th anniversary last year, the state Department of Game, Fish and Parks was established in 1909 to perpetuate, conserve, manage, protect, and enhance South Dakota's wildlife resources, parks and outdoor recreational opportunities for the use, benefit and enjoyment of the people of the state and its visitors, and to give the highest priority to the welfare of the state's wildlife and parks, and their environment, in planning and decisions.

With 79 full-time and seven part-time employees, the department's Wildlife Division undertakes a wide variety of duties, including law enforcement, boating safety education and boating safety outreach. Since South Dakota's public waters come in a variety of shapes and sizes, the Department of Game, Fish and Parks provide conservation officers access to specialized watercraft that enable them to work on the water regardless of the conditions. Snowmobiles are commonly used for patrol purposes and to assist with wildlife damage complaints.

## VERMONT

Vermont is known for its excellent opportunities for outdoor recreation. With over 700 bodies of water, the state contains many lakes and rivers that offer great boating opportunities to be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.

The Vermont State Police started a small boating program in 1959 with only a handful of employees. Now the agency's Marine Division has 35 part-time

officers, two full-time officers and 17 patrol boats. The Division's mission is to ensure that boaters operate their vessels in accordance with the rules and regulations set forth by the Vermont General Assembly for the protection of persons, property and environment.

To achieve the law enforcement and boating safety missions, the Marine Division Unit employs Vermont State Police Auxiliary Troopers. The Auxiliary Troopers have been a part of the Vermont State Police cadre since 1960. Although their main mission is to support the Marine Division Unit, they are always available to aid and assist with the full-time mission of the Vermont State Police.

Additionally, the unit is charged with promoting boating safety education statewide. Vermont established mandatory education in 1991 with everyone born on or after Jan. 1, 1974 required to have completed a boater safety course to operate a motorized vessel. Over the last 18 years, the state's number of boating accidents and fatalities have decreased.

## WEST VIRGINIA

Over 2,000 miles of navigable, fishable streams in West Virginia comprise more than 19,000 surface acres of water. The state also has 21 large lakes over 100 acres in size that cover 20,118 acres of fishable and boatable waters. There are 41 small impoundments covering 1,068 acres and 30 ponds managed by the Division of Natural Resources covering 204 acres. With all this water, boating is a popular activity in West Virginia.

The Law Enforcement Section of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources is primarily responsible for the enforcement of the game and fish laws



and rules. In addition to other law enforcement duties related to littering, forestry, state parks, and environmental/solid waste, the section's 114 officers carry on a continuing boating safety education program, enforce recreational boating laws, develop various public safety announcements and perform a range of safety outreach efforts. ★

TOP LEFT: With 79 full-time and seven part-time employees, the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks' Wildlife Division undertakes a wide variety of duties, including law enforcement, boating safety education and boating safety outreach. *South Dakota Dept. of Game, Fish and Parks photo*

TOP RIGHT: The Vermont State Police started a small boating program in 1959 with only a handful of employees. *Vermont State Police photo*

ABOVE: The Law Enforcement Section of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources is primarily responsible for the enforcement of the game and fish laws and rules. *West Virginia Division of Natural Resources photo*

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(But not necessarily in that order.)



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## NASBLA NEWS CONTINUED

### Spring BLA Workshop goes to D.C.

NASBLA's fifth Spring Boating Law Administrator (BLA) Workshop will be held in Washington, D.C., April 13-14, 2010, in conjunction with a Congressional Reception to celebrate NASBLA's 50th Anniversary. This annual workshop provides BLAs from around the country an opportunity to meet with their peers in an open exchange on current and emerging issues affecting boating program management. The Congressional Reception will be held on the evening of April 14.

### Policy committees prepare for spring meetings

NASBLA Policy Committees are gearing up for their spring meetings. The committee schedule is:

- Education & Awareness, March 27-28, Daytona Beach, FL
- Enforcement & Training, March 24-25, Lexington, KY
- Engineering, Reporting & Analysis, TBD
- Governmental Affairs, February 24-25, Washington, D.C.
- Vessel ID, Registration & Titling, March 26-27, Lexington, KY

### Training available for officers

With grant assistance from the U.S. Coast Guard, NASBLA offers a variety of training opportunities for marine patrol officers.

*Upcoming courses are scheduled as follows:*

#### Accident Investigation & Analysis Level 1 – Comprehensive

Chock-full of information, this course is designed to provide investigating officers with all the tools they need to completely and accurately investigate a recreational boating accident. The training also provides critical data to help shape boating safety regulations across the country.

- March 22-26 – Spokane Valley, Washington
- April 12-16 – Milwaukee, Michigan
- April 26-30 – Denver, Colorado
- May 17-21 – Syracuse, New York

#### BUI Detection & Enforcement

This three-day course is designed to provide officers with the comprehensive knowledge and skills necessary to reduce the number of alcohol-related accidents and fatalities and to foster a stronger and more visible deterrent to alcohol use on the water.

- February 23-24 – Oklahoma, Oklahoma
- March 10-12 – Anchorage, Alaska

The Accident Investigation & Analysis and BUI Detection & Enforcement training courses are intended for active local, state or federal marine law enforcement officers. Registration is limited, so be sure to apply early by visiting [www.nasbla.org](http://www.nasbla.org). Call 859.225.9487 for details. ☎



## UCOTA for Vessels devised to foster uniformity

By Kimberly Jenkins

For the last five years, the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) has been working with the National Conference of Commissioners of Uniform State Laws (NCCUSL) to standardize the process of titling boats. Dubbed UCOTA for Vessels (with UCOTA meaning Uniform Certificate of Title Act), the act is nearing completion.

### Vehicle titling launched the process

The original Uniform Certificate of Title Act (UCOTA) was born on the vehicle side of titling and registration. Although UCOTA was first conceived in the early 1950s by NCCUSL to standardize procedures among the states for issuing certificates of titles and the recording of liens on motor vehicles, the act did not receive much support among the states. Only three states implemented it in its early days.

With new technologies and the resulting changes in the ways that business is conducted, NCCUSL decided a new UCOTA was needed to

provide uniformity in the recording and discharging of liens on vehicles as well as recognition of electronic certificates of title. NCCUSL initiated the effort to rewrite UCOTA in 2003, publishing the final version in November 2005 and recommending its enactment to the various states.

UCOTA proposes uniform rules for paper and electronic certificates of title for motor vehicles, including basic rules for creation and transfer of certificates of title and the perfection of security interests through the certificate of title system.

UCOTA for Vessels has been moving much more smoothly, says Clayton Boyd Walden, chief of Florida's Bureau of Titles and Registrations. Walden, a longtime member of NASBLA's Vessel Identification, Registration & Titling (VIRT) Committee, has been serving on a subcommittee charged with monitoring UCOTA's progress. He says that one reason the vessel act is taking shape more quickly is that basic issues had been ironed out during UCOTA's development.

### Boat titling lacks uniformity

Although NASBLA supports titling in all states, not all states actually title boats. Reasons for this run the gamut from political to logistical. In the political realm, legislators do not want to support laws that will add fees for their constituents. Logistical concerns involve the headache of revamping a state's

current system and coordination between agencies to set up a new titling system. And other states have simply felt no need to implement titling as their boat registration system is getting the job done. With the anticipated implementation of UCOTA within the next couple of years, it is hoped that the current roadblocks to titling will be overcome.

Boats are required to be titled in 39 states and territories, while no title is available in 16 states. In Mississippi boat titling is optional. And, in the states that do title boats, many of the laws do not follow NASBLA's model act, resulting in inconsistent legislation. State laws vary widely on what sizes and types of vessels and motors to which the titling law applies, as well as what is exempted.

In order to promote uniformity in state boat titling, NASBLA's VIRT Committee promulgated a Model Act for Vessel Titling. Originally adopted by the NASBLA membership in 1996, a revised version of the NASBLA Model Titling Act was approved by the NASBLA membership in 2005. In 2008, NASBLA further revised the model act to add provisions for "branding" a salvage or non-repairable title.

### Drafting nears completion

NCCUSL's Drafting Committee has been crafting an act to establish a certificate of title system for boats. NASBLA's VIRT Committee began tracking UCOTA's progress in early 2005 with an eye to being prepared for helping insert language to accommodate vessel titling when the time came.

"NCCUSL has been very good about bringing in all the players and not drafting the act in a vacuum," says Walden. "The committee members take into consideration the impact of what they do."

Walden added that the U.S. Coast Guard, the National Documentation Center, NASBLA, boat manufacturers and lenders have all been included and involved in the drafting process.

The Drafting Committee will present a draft act for initial consideration at NCCUSL's July 2010 Annual Meeting and is expected to present its act for final approval in July 2011. If the act is ratified at that 2011 meeting, then NCCUSL members will begin lobbying to encourage state legislators to enact the legislation.

### Provide feedback

In the meantime, boating law administrators are encouraged to review the current draft and provide feedback to NASBLA's VIRT Committee before the March 5-6, 2010, meeting of the Drafting Committee. The draft as well as a comparison draft can be viewed online at <http://www.nccusl.org/Update/CommitteeSearchResults.aspx?committee=330>. Please direct all comments to Sam Lynch, VIRT Committee staff member, at [sam@nasbla.org](mailto:sam@nasbla.org). ☺

**Boating law administrators are encouraged to review the current UCOTA for Vessels draft and provide feedback.**

# VIS provides real-time information

*By W. Vann Burgess, Senior RBS Specialist, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Boating Safety Division*

In 1988, Congress passed a law requiring the U.S. Coast Guard to develop a comprehensive vessel identification system to provide vessel information for law enforcement, search and rescue, finance, and other purposes. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Coast Guard initiated several projects to define the requirements for such a system. A contract was awarded in 1995 to develop the Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement (MISLE) system to replace and combine the Marine Safety Information System (MSIS) and the Law Enforcement Information System II (LEIS II).

The Vessel Identification System (VIS) was to be a subcomponent of this project. VIS, as authorized under Title 46 United States Code Chapter 125, is a database designed to store and provide access to information on vessels registered and titled by an individual state and vessels federally documented under the laws of the United States.

Unfortunately, VIS suffered several system performance problems, and the correction of these performance problems was not possible and the system was not implemented. During the course of this process, the Coast Guard noted two factors that complicated the implementation of VIS: 1) not all vessels had unique identifica-

tion numbers and 2) state participation in the system was strictly voluntary and many states were unwilling or unable to commit the funds needed to participate.

**With over 88,000 miles of coastal tidal shoreline in the United States, our maritime border is massive.**

### **Real-time information needed for security**

Following the events of September 11, 2001, the need for the availability of real-time information for law enforcement and security purposes became vividly apparent. With over 88,000 miles of coastal tidal shoreline in the United States, our maritime border is massive. Add to this very large and very diverse border area over 12.5 million state registered vessels, over 200,000 U. S. documented recreational vessels, and millions of unregistered/undocumented vessels, you can begin to see the enormity of the task our federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies face in protecting our nation's coastal borders.

Recognizing the problem, the Coast Guard conducted a gap analysis of the maritime domain to discover what we couldn't "see." One of the things that became overwhelmingly ap-

parent was the fact that, given the large number of recreational boats, contact with the operators of these boats by law enforcement was at best minimal. When contact was made, the ability of the officer to identify the operator and verify ownership was very difficult, especially if the boat was registered in a different state. There was no national database in place that could be easily accessed to give an officer any verifiable information on ownership of a vessel.

Recognizing that this gap needed to be closed, the Coast Guard again moved forward to develop a usable Vessel Identification System to provide this much needed information. In discussions with our state partners, it became apparent that there were concerns with the security of the information to be stored in the VIS database. The primary concern was that the information should only be available to law enforcement agencies for the purposes of enforcement, titling and registration, security, and search and rescue. The protection of the privacy of individuals was considered paramount. As a result of these discussions, it was decided that non-law enforcement entities would be excluded from access to the VIS database.

Other concerns expressed dealt with the fact that a large percentage of the states did not collect all the information required for participation under regulation. Recognizing what was in the best interests of both the Coast Guard and the states, it was decided to grant waivers for the data elements not collected by certain states. This would allow for at least a minimal population of the database with the more critical elements - with the idea being as states modernized their numbering and titling systems, more and more data would be available in future years.





## VIS goes online

In September 2007 the VIS database was placed online and began to be populated with data as states began to sign Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) to participate. Info-Link Technologies Inc. was the contractor chosen to populate the database for VIS. Their primary role is to gather the information from the states, and then convert the data into the format used for the database. Info-Link was chosen because they already had a business relationship with a majority of the states collecting much of this same information.

Currently 31 states and territories have signed an MOA for participation in VIS. As participants, these states have secured access to a secure database for the vessel and vessel owner information of these 31 states and all vessels documented by the Coast Guard. States participating with NLETS (National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System) can access VIS via their existing login portals. If not, they are provided a secure web-enabled login directly to VIS.

The data available in the system for state numbered vessels is accurate to at least within the last 30 days, and the information on documented vessels is real time as the information comes directly from the Coast Guard's MISLE system. This information can be used to verify ownership of a vessel while the officer is on scene in a law enforcement or security situation, as well as to identify abandoned vessels or vessels involved in an accident or search and rescue case. With a single point of entry into the system, this prevents the time lost in trying to contact an individual state agency, and the information is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

## States urged to sign up

The advantages of this type of system are obvious, yet there are still 25 states not participating. Some states are facing barriers to participation such as state privacy laws, or their system of numbering doesn't provide a unique identifier for each record. Another barrier has been that the state cannot provide the information in a format that Info-Link has been able to translate into the system. The Coast Guard feels that most of these barriers can be overcome with discussion between the system administrators, Info-Link, and the state. The Coast Guard is engaging the states in these discussions and working to resolve these issues.

Time is of the essence. The partnership between the states and the

Coast Guard is as critical as ever. With the growing threat to the United States from global terrorism, it has become imperative to share as much information with each other as possible for the protection of our nation's waterways and our citizens. The Vessel Identification System provides one more tool to help close a critical gap in our nation's safety and security. The Coast Guard strongly encourages those states not yet participating to re-energize their efforts within their state to resolve any issues preventing participation in VIS and work with the Coast Guard to bring this system up to its full potential. ☪

**Time is of the essence.  
The partnership  
between the states  
and the Coast Guard  
is as critical as ever.**

*Yamaha Motor  
Corporation USA photo*

The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators supports the Vessel Identification System and urges all states to participate. In a resolution passed by its membership in September 2008, NASBLA states that **"the success of the Vessel Identification System depends on the full participation of all states."**

Further, the resolution calls on member states who have not done so to work cooperatively with the U.S. Coast Guard to expeditiously develop and implement the Vessel Identification System.

# Arizona develops nearly perfect registration system

Responsible for registering watercraft in Arizona for over 40 years, the state's Game and Fish Department provides several methods for boaters to renew their watercraft registrations.  
*AGFD photos*



When you think of Arizona (Arid Zone), you might think of the hot dry desert. The only water you might see is a mirage... a figment of your imagination. But actually, Arizona has quite a bit of water. Arizona waters are very diverse, just like the topography of the state. We have everything from mountain lakes surrounded by ponderosa pine forests to lakes in the middle of the desert. We even have lakes in the sprawling metropolis of Phoenix, the nation's fifth largest city. All of these lakes offer a wide variety of recreational opportunity. Not surprisingly, where there's water, there's going to be boats. In fact, the state currently has 139,000 active boat registrations.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) is the administrative agency responsible for registering watercraft in the state of Arizona. The authority to register watercraft was transferred from the Motor Vehicle Division to AGFD in 1968.

## Registration Options

Arizona offers several ways for owners to renew the registration of their watercraft. Customers can opt to visit an Arizona Game and Fish office, send a check through the mail or go online to process a registration renewal. Transactions other than renewals require customers

to come in to one of our seven offices or conduct the transaction through the mail. Fulfillment for mail-in and Internet renewals is completed at our Phoenix Headquarters.

The option to renew a watercraft registration over the Internet began in 2003. Online activity is limited to renewals and to boat dealers submitting applications for registration for new boats. Currently, 35 percent of all renewals are handled online.

Customers appreciate the added convenience that online renewals offer. Initially the system provided a 10-day temporary registration and allowed customers to immediately use their watercraft. We now provide a 30-day temporary registration for online renewals.

Beginning in January 2009, authorized boat dealers had the option to enter their new boat applications over the Internet. This gives dealers access to print a 30-day temporary registration, allowing their customers to use their new boat immediately. All of the evidence, including the bill of sale and the Manufac-

*By Madelynn Fenske, Watercraft Registration Program Administrator, Arizona Game and Fish Department*

turer's Statement of Origin, is sent to the Department for verification. Once the information is approved, the registration certificate and decals are generated and mailed to the customer.

Also in January of 2009, the Arizona Game and Fish Commission authorized a two- and a three-year renewal option. Prior to that, customers were limited to renewing a registration for only one year on a staggered cycle. While the new option has created more difficulty for the Department in terms of programming and decal stocking, our customers seem to appreciate the additional option.

Because Arizona does not title watercraft, the complexity involved in the registration process is extremely challenging. There are literally hundreds of document types that can be presented to demonstrate ownership. Intensive training is required for staff and an outstanding watercraft database is critical for tracking all this information.

Over the years, the Arizona Game and Fish Department has developed a watercraft registration database that is extremely intuitive and allows us to complete our transactions with a 98 percent error-free rate. Like a speedboat, the registration database would be worthless without good operators. Staff training is key to operating and maintaining any system.

## Staff Training

Our registration system is only as good as the employees collecting the evidence and entering the data. New employees get their feet wet with on-the-job training before they attend the formal training session given at AGFD headquarters. In order to learn the basic principles of the registration system,



new staff is paired with tenured employees and their immediate supervisor to job shadow. Once they know the basics, formal training is provided.

The watercraft registration training program is not for the faint of heart. The two-day intensive class covers all aspects of the registration system.

### Performance Objectives obtained through the training:

- Correctly process new boat applications, transfers, renewals, and duplicate registrations;
- Identify incomplete or insufficient documentation (applications, forms and evidence) submitted;
- Identify correct hull identification formats;
- Conduct boat inspections and issue hull identification numbers;
- Correctly identify boat types, user types, joint severalty codes and transaction codes;
- Respond to public records requests.

### The training itself consists of:

- Presentation on laws, Commission Rules, and internal procedures;
- Hull identification lecture (IAMI PowerPoint) given by law enforcement personnel.

#### References and Materials:

- NASBLA Numbering and Titling Manual
- Laws and Commission Rules
- The Watercraft Procedures Manual
- The Watercraft Database
- Workbook and review pages
- Test

### Performance and Quality Assurance Measures

In addition to training, all transactions and corresponding evidence are reviewed by the Administrative Office.



The AGFD's highly accurate registration database is due in large part to the intensive training undertaken by all employees.

Errors found are tracked and given to the appropriate supervisor for quality control and training purposes. If employees understand what was done incorrectly, they won't continue to make the same mistakes. Additionally, all documented watercraft registration processes and procedures are reviewed annually to ensure that information is as up to date as possible.

### Registration Database

The Department is very fortunate to have a computer programmer dedicated to watercraft registration. As a result, requests for updates or enhancements to the watercraft database are quickly and easily accomplished.

Through the years and the many requests for statistical reports, we discovered discrepancies in our data that have led to "clean up" projects. For example, a canoe would be listed in the database with an inboard jet engine (pretty much impossible), or a 40-foot houseboat labeled as a personal watercraft (PWC). The customer completing the application stated that yes, that 40-foot houseboat is my "Personal Watercraft." Of course this could be attributed to a keying error or the customer just filling out the application incorrectly. Again, training....training....training.

### What AGFD did...

To ensure that our data is correctly entered, we developed a program that only accepts valid boat type and prop type combinations. A printout was

produced of the incorrect combinations that were currently on our database and staff worked diligently to fix them. This took some time, but it was well worth the effort.

We did the same for the hull identification number formats. The system is programmed to recognize the Straight Year, Model Year, and New Formats.

If a customer service representative enters an invalid hull number, the system will return an error message. Either the representative keyed the information incorrectly, or the boat requires an inspection.

The boats that are currently in the database with invalid or missing hull numbers are reviewed when the boat is transferred to a new owner. Boats that are older than 1972 are given a state-issued hull number.

To ensure that we are as accurate as possible with customer addresses, we use an address standardization program from the U.S. Postal Service.

One of the most useful enhancements to the database is the ability to add comments to the boat record. A comment may be used to alert a customer service representative of any pending action such as a possible litigation, civil disputes, and/or interstate notices to name a few.

As the Watercraft Registration Program Administrator for the state of Arizona, I find that while our systems are good and our staff well trained, nothing replaces the level of ownership in the program. Each AGFD staff member has accepted a level of personal accountability that ultimately makes it successful. In my 22 years with the Department, it has been a pleasure to be part of this ever-evolving registration program, and we're not done yet. We continue to look at the future and ways to improve. ☼

# GETTING BOATERS BACK ON THE WATER

## Direct mail pilot program increases boat registrations in Oregon

Boat registration renewals are up in Oregon, thanks in large part to a direct mail effort developed by the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF) in partnership with the Oregon State Marine Board (OSMB) and the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW). The Lapsed Boat Registration Pilot Program, an extension of RBFF's ongoing direct mail efforts with state fish and wildlife agencies, resulted in 765 lapsed boat registrations during the evaluation period and generated more than \$20,000 in net revenue. The new registrations also generated an estimated \$25,000 in additional revenue to the state of Oregon through state gasoline taxes and allocations from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund.

"These findings demonstrate the power of continuous communication with your customers," said RBFF President and CEO Frank Peterson. "These additional renewals will help support critical boating safety programs and boating infrastructure efforts in Oregon."

### Overview & Key Findings

In April 2009, 17,159 people with lapsed boat registrations were sent direct mail pieces reminding them about the importance of renewing their registration. These Oregon boat owners had not renewed their registrations since 2007, and owners who fail to respond to renewal reminders are typically dropped off the registration scrolls. Each boat owner received one of three different remittance forms, which targeted both angler and non-angler households. Angling households received a form tailored to fishing enthusiasts and non-angling households received either a standard form or one with a boating safety message. A separate group of lapsed boaters was set aside as a control group for comparison, and their owners received no remittance forms.

**Based on a comparison of boat owners who received the mailing and those who did not, the program resulted in:**

- 765 lapsed boats registered during the 42-day evaluation period.
- A higher response rate among the treatment groups (more than two times greater) than the response in the control groups, resulting in a lift of 4.5 percentage points.
- \$21,292 of new net revenue from lapsed boat registrations over and above the cost of the direct mail program.
- \$25,406 estimated additional revenue from state gasoline taxes (\$23,278) and allocations from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund (\$2,128).

"We are thrilled with the results from our pilot program, which was built on a detailed examination of boat registration data and market research in Oregon," said OSMB Director Paul Donheffner. "RBFF and ODFW were instrumental partners in this effort and we will continue to explore new ways to reach Oregon's boaters and increase participation in the sport."


The full evaluation report is available in the "Research" tab on [www.RBFF.org](http://www.RBFF.org). ☘

### NEXT STEPS

RBFF plans to work with up to four new states in 2010 to pilot similar efforts.

"We are encouraged by the results in Oregon," said RBFF State Initiatives Director Stephanie Hussey. "Moving forward, we hope to create a nationwide program to increase boat registration renewals and get more lapsed boaters back out on the water."

For more information or to get involved, contact Stephanie Hussey at [shussey@rbff.org](mailto:shussey@rbff.org) or 703.778.5152.



## BOAT REGISTRATION RENEWAL REMINDER

Your boat registration expired December 31, 2007 for the boat shown below. Renew now and receive new registration that will expire December 31, 2010.

CERTIFICATE OF NO.	MANUFACTURER	MODEL YEAR	LENGTH	FEE DUE
<p><i>If this boat has been sold or ownership changed, please read the reverse side of this form.</i></p> <div> <h3>Float away from life's worries – Go Boating</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6,150 lakes</li> <li>• 111,619 miles of rivers and streams</li> <li>• 296 miles of coastline</li> </ul> <h3>All saying Come Play</h3> </div> <div> <p>Renew your boat registration... <b>EASY AS 1, 2, 3</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Renew online Log on to <a href="http://www.boatoregon.com">www.boatoregon.com</a> and click on the decal image or renew online now link. Enter your certificate number and PIN (see below). While you're there, you can also update your address and contact information. The online receipt is a 30-day permit, so you can get your boat on the water right away.</li> <li>2. Renew by mail Return the remittance slip below along with a check or money order for registration fee due [see amount below] in the enclosed envelope.</li> <li>3. Renew in person Visit your nearest agent and renew in person to receive a temporary permit allowing you get your boat back on the water. For a complete list of agents and locations, log on to <a href="http://www.boatoregon.com">www.boatoregon.com</a>.</li> </ol> <p>Questions? Call the State Marine Board at (503) 378-8587</p> </div>				

PLEASE DETACH THIS SLIP AND RETURN WITH PAYMENT

☐ Check here to change your address and



# NSBC announces 2010 contest and grant deadlines

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

The National Safe Boating Council (NSBC), a longtime partner of the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators, serves as an advocate for boating safety and education and a unifying resource for organizations that seek the goal of Safer Boating through Education.

In celebration of its mission to be the foremost coalition for advancing and promoting a safer recreational boating experience through education, outreach and training, the NSBC joins with its patrol level partner organizations to offer two annual contests and one grant. These award opportunities recognize individuals and organizational partners in the boating community that create innovative programs designed to improve boating education and raise awareness of recreational boating safety-related issues. Boating law administrators are urged to encourage personnel to apply for these opportunities:

## **BoatU.S. Boating Safety Youth Program Award**

Boat Owners Association of the United States (BoatU.S.) sponsors the Boating Safety Youth Program Award, which recognizes individuals and organizations that have developed and successfully implemented innovative youth boating education programs that target safety issues and concerns of national interest.

The goal of the BSYP Award is to encourage the development of innovative boating safety education programs directed at youth. To qualify, a program must integrate safety practices into the program and be targeted toward students 18 years of age or younger. Selection priority is given to unique or creative programs that promote a primary goal of increasing boat safety and safety awareness.

## **MillerCoors Alcohol Awareness Impact Award**

MillerCoors sponsors the Alcohol Awareness Impact Award, which recognizes one program each year that demonstrates an effective prevention and awareness strategy to address the misuse of alcohol while boating.

The goal of the AAI Award is to promote activities that educate the community about dangers of consuming alcohol while boating. To qualify, a program must provide a preventative strategy to eliminate consumption of alcohol while on the water. Unique programs and those that emphasize boating safety will be most favorably considered. An evaluation of the sponsoring organization's related services and programs is also a consideration.

Each of the above award packages provides the recipient with a \$2500 cash prize and commemorative trophy. Each also includes an expense-paid trip for a representative of the winning program to attend the International Boating and Water Safety Summit to receive the award and give a 45-minute presentation on the winning program.

Award monies may be used to purchase necessary equipment, audio visual aids, printing, teaching aids, program promotion and advertisement, rental time of pool or waterfront facilities, transportation to on-the-water sites or other costs associated with the advancement of the program. Funds may not be used as wages or salaries for instructors.

The deadline to apply is December 31, 2010. Full contest descriptions along with application forms are posted online at [www.safeboatingcouncil.org/awards](http://www.safeboatingcouncil.org/awards).

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

The NSBC developed its Take 'Em Boating Grant to promote and develop interest in boating for future generations. Funded by the OMC Foundation on behalf of the former employees of the Outboard Marine Corporation, the Take 'Em Boating Grant seeks to continue their legacy by promoting interest in boating safety, environmental awareness, and the marine industry. The Take 'Em Boating Grant encourages organizations to develop creative and innovative programs to get kids into boats and on the water.

The NSBC awards the \$5000 Take 'Em Boating grant annually to a selected youth program that encourages kids 6-18 to boat safely and promotes the future of the marine industry through environmental education, safety awareness and boating enjoyment. Applications from organizations, companies and agencies are accepted each year October 1-December 31, with the winner announced in early spring.

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

*Virgil Chambers, NSBC Executive Director (left), Veronica Floyd, NSBC Chair (center left) and Ruth Wood, BoatU.S. Foundation President (right) present Megan Piersma, Alaska Office of Boating Safety, with the Boating Safety Youth Award during the 2009 International Boating & Water Safety Summit.  
NSBC photo*



## Harbor Patrol with defibrillator saves boater's life

On Oct. 3, 2009, the Olympia (Wash.) Harbor Patrol crew responded to an emergency call for assistance from a sailing vessel announcing that a crew member appeared to have suffered a heart attack. The vessel was approximately a half mile north of the city limits when the Olympia Police Harbor Patrol crew proceeded to intercept the vessel. The crew of the sailing vessel had commenced cardio pulmonary resuscitation when the patrol boat pulled alongside the sailboat and two crew members boarded the boat with one of the Automated External Defibrillators (AED) that the patrol boat carries on board.

The patrol crewmembers activated the AED and Olympia Medic Four was alerted to the inbound patient. Emergency medical technicians met the boat at West Bay Marina and transported the patient to the hospital.

The two Cardiac Science Powerheart® AED devices were placed on the patrol boat in 2007 through the donations of Capitol Medical Center and Cardiac Science Corporation. The harbor patrol crewmembers routinely train on the use of the devices for just such an emergency as occurred on that October afternoon in the local harbor area. The Olympia Harbor Patrol is one of the few marine law enforcement units in the area with AED devices on board.

## Paddlesports to increase revenue for boating access in Ohio

An updated registration fee schedule, approved last July, for non-motorized watercraft in Ohio provides additional funding for the maintenance and upgrade of non-motorized boat access and enhances recreational opportunities for paddlesports enthusiasts.

Implementation of the Waterway Conservation Assessment Fee increases the non-motorized watercraft registration by \$5. No changes were made to

the registration fee schedule for motorized watercraft. The revenue generated by the registration of canoes, kayaks, non-motorized sail boats, rowboats and inflatable boats will be deposited in the Waterways Safety Fund and used to maintain and upgrade existing non-motorized boat access sites such as canoe and kayak launch sites.

The income will also help fund management of the Ohio Water Trails and Ohio Scenic Rivers programs, each administered by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Watercraft. The Waterways Safety Fund is used to fund state boating programs.

The registration for non-motorized watercraft will be \$17. Alternative registration decals will be \$22. The new fees do not include the standard writing fee of \$3 received by watercraft registration agents. Ohio watercraft registrations are valid for a three-year period and are collected by the ODNR Division of Watercraft.

## Addresses for docks expected to enhance safety on lakes

Missouri boaters and emergency responders hope a new state requirement that takes effect this year will mean faster response times to some emergency calls. The new law requires dock owners on all lakes in Missouri and Missouri's Lake of the Ozarks operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to post on their dock the closest street or other land address.

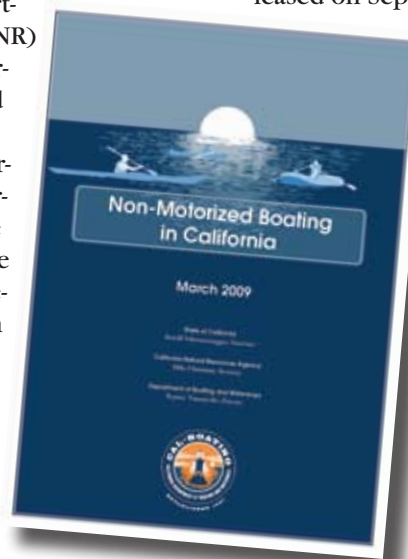
In an emergency, valuable time can be saved if dispatchers are able to quickly determine where to route response personnel. The information on dock signs will be just as useful in nonemergency situations. The signage will help lost or stranded boaters report their locations when calling for assistance. If each dock has address information posted, a quick point of reference can be obtained.

The Missouri State Water Patrol, the Army Corps of Engineers and Ameren

UE Corporation (which manages Lake of the Ozarks) have been working to spread the word about the importance of the new law to affected dock owners.

## Cal Boating releases non-motorized boating report

Non-motorized boating has skyrocketed in California, becoming the fastest growing segment of recreational boating in the state according to a report released on Sept. 21, 2009. *Non-*



*Motorized Boating in California*, initiated by the California Department of Boating and Waterways (DBW) to help address the lack of information about the demographic, shows that non-motorized boating

contributed \$1.7 billion to California's economy in 2006.

"This report tells us that the popularity of non-motorized boating is on the upswing and that we can expect thousands of new boaters to enjoy the waterways in the coming years," said Raynor Tsuneyoshi, director of DBW and California's boating law administrator. "...this report will serve as an important planning tool for meeting boaters' needs."

The report, the first in-depth study of non-motorized boating in the United States, provides information on all aspects of non-motorized boating, including the numbers and types of boats and participants, and the economic importance to the state. The report was conducted over a 12-month period during 2006 and 2007. Key findings include:

- An estimated 2.5 million Californians participate in non-motorized boating,



generating more than 48 million non-motorized boater user days.

- About 1.7 million rafts, canoes and inflatable boats are being enjoyed on California's waterways; this number is expected to continue to grow rapidly.
  - Kayaks are the most common type of boat, followed by inflatable boats.
- The full report is available at [www.dbw.ca.gov/Reports/N-M\\_Boating.aspx](http://www.dbw.ca.gov/Reports/N-M_Boating.aspx).

## New boater fees fund aquatic invasive species prevention

Oregon boaters will soon be on the front lines of a war against aquatic invasive species. Beginning Jan. 1, 2010, operators of all registered boats (power and sail) and manually powered boats 10 feet or longer are required by a new law to purchase an Aquatic Invasive Species Permit to fund prevention and control programs.

The environmental protection law, created by the 2009 Oregon Legislature, is designed to protect Oregon's waters from destructive invaders including the quagga and zebra mussels that are rapidly spreading across the nation degrading water quality, depleting native fish and waterfowl populations and costing millions of dollars in maintenance of water and power facilities. The new program will be implemented by the Oregon State Marine Board and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

### New Fees:

- Registered boaters will pay an automatic \$5 surcharge as part of their boater registration.
- Out-of-state motorboat operators need to purchase an annual permit for \$22.
- Non-motorized boat operators need to purchase and carry an annual permit for \$7. The permits are required for both residents and nonresidents and are

transferable to other non-motorized craft, but every vessel on the water must have a permit.

The Oregon State Marine Board and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife are implementing the new Aquatic Invasive Species Program, which will include education outreach, voluntary boat inspections and decontamination of infected boats to stop the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species. For information, visit <http://www.boatoregon.com/OSMB/programs/09LawsFAQs.shtml>.

## ACA lands Telly Award

In answering the question "*Life jackets float. Do you?*" the American Canoe Association (ACA) earned itself a prized Telly Award last summer.



In its newest boating safety education video titled *Life Jackets Float. Do You?* the ACA discusses the importance of life jackets while sharing a great deal of river safety information. The video features a narrator on a short (13-minute) journey that is both entertaining

and eye-opening as viewers discover the many challenges moving water presents.

The video earned the ACA a bronze Telly Award in the 30th annual competition. The Telly Awards honor the very best local, regional and cable television commercials and programs, as well as the finest video and film productions and work created for the Internet. With over 13,000 entries from all 50 states and around the world, the 2009 event



An eight-year-old who pledged to wear his life jacket while boating won a shopping spree at Bass Pro Shops. *Indiana DNR photo*

was one of the most competitive and successful in the history of the Telly Awards.

*Life Jackets Float. Do You?* is available from the ACA for \$9.95. Call 540.907.4460, ext. 103 to order your copy today.

## Young boater wins with WEAR IT INDIANA

A young boater from Indiana has learned that safety pays. Spencer Paton, 8, a Cub Scout from Greenwood, Ind., won a \$1000 Bass Pro Shops/Tracker Marine shopping spree from the WEAR IT INDIANA campaign.

On Sept. 23, 2009, Indiana Department of Natural Resources Director Robert E. Carter Jr. drew Paton's name from nearly 3,000 pledge cards signed by boaters over the 2009 boating season at WEAR IT INDIANA campaign venue sites statewide. The young shopping spree winner had signed a pledge card at the Indiana State Fair stating he would wear his life jacket when boating.

Paton said that he always wears his life jacket when he's fishing from a boat with his grandfather.

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources wishes to thank Bass Pro Shops and Tracker Marine for their strong corporate sponsorship of the WEAR IT INDIANA campaign during the 2009 boating season.

BOATING BRIEFS CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

## ACA announces new leadership

Wade Blackwood has been selected as the fifth executive director of the American Canoe Association (ACA), a member-based nonprofit organization that promotes fun and responsible canoeing, kayaking, and rafting. A graduate of Hampden-Sydney College, Blackwood served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Honduras and earned an MBA from William and Mary's Mason School of Business.

In addition, longtime ACA volunteer, life member, instructor trainer educator, and current staff member Christopher Stec has been named as the ACA's Chief Operating Officer.

Representing the interests of over 50 million people in the U.S. who kayak, canoe and raft annually, the ACA actively advocates paddlesports education as well as recreational access to and stewardship of America's vast water trails. ACA is also dedicated to providing

people of all abilities the opportunity to paddle on America's waterways.



## BoatU.S. Foundation calendar spurs safety message

Most boating parents tell their kids they have to wear their life jacket because it's the law. However, getting young boaters to embrace life jackets just got a little easier with the 2010 BoatU.S. Foundation Life Jacket Loaner Program Wall Calendar. The calendar offers 12 months of photos – submitted by

boaters – showing kids staying safe on the water by wearing life jackets provided by the Foundation's no-cost Kids Life Jacket Loaner Program (LJLP).

The calendar is available in three sizes with pricing starting at \$18.95. A portion of each sale goes back to the Foundation to support the much-needed program, which lends out over 90,000 life jackets each year at over 500 locations across the country. The program has saved three youngsters' lives to date.

"The calendar will help kids get familiar with these lifesaving devices – and remind them all year round how much fun it is to go boating," said LJLP Program Manager Alanna Keating.

To order your calendar, go to [BoatUS.com/Foundation/nauticalstore](http://BoatUS.com/Foundation/nauticalstore). ☼

# Look:

Only BoaterExam.com offers a fully-animated online learning environment. Students have the choice of reading through the illustrated course material, or they can simply sit back and watch the fully-narrated animations. Not just entertaining – the more than **150 animated shorts** tackle boating safety topics where moving pictures are essential.



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**Matthew Long**  
NASBLA Government  
Affairs Director

## Upstream without a paddle

The recreational boating universe is in constant flux, as new technologies and craft are developed and created. One of our chief responsibilities at NASBLA is to keep up with these latest developments and monitor them for their potential impact on health and safety on water. We also engage in matters relating to national maritime law enforcement as well as issues that will benefit the recreational boating community as a whole. This responsibility is not taken lightly and is one that has had tremendous positive impact on the boating public.

This stewardship of safety and law enforcement takes many forms from active engagement by the state and territorial boating law administrators to promulgating standards, model acts and policy positions. One such policy position, taken in September 2007, relates to a critically important safety issue and yet is one that has not seen a ripple of activity nationwide.

In 2007, the NASBLA Numbering and Titling Committee submitted a policy position on registering non-powered vessels that was later adopted by the full NASBLA membership. This position statement is simple and concise and reads as follows:

"Because of the number of advantages to registering non-powered vessels and especially identifying vessels for homeland security purposes – NASBLA supports registration of motorized and non-powered vessels, which may include alternative methods of numbering non-powered vessels."

Sounds simple, right? Unfortunately, that has not been the case.

For the uninitiated, "non-powered vessel" is the term used to identify watercraft such as canoes, kayaks and other vessels propelled by paddles, oars or poles. This

particular kind of watercraft has, by all reports, grown dramatically in recent years and is believed to have surpassed the number of motorized watercraft in many states. I say "by all reports" because without a registration process for these watercraft, the states do not have a definitive way of accounting for their number. Because of that abnormality, we really know next to nothing about this unique class of watercraft.

There are three chief reasons to advocate for the registration/numbering of non-powered vessels: it would allow for user buy in to the resource; law enforcement and homeland security reasons; and, finally, to better engage these users in the broader recreational boating community.

Due to the simple fact that these vessels do not use motorboat fuel, they cannot be included within the Wallop-Breaux funding mechanism. Even if a state registers/numbers them, the state's allocation will not be able to reflect non-motorized craft unless federal law is changed. Because of that, these users do not participate in the unique "user-pay, user-benefit" system.

While the federal law will not likely be changed anytime soon, if a state were to register these watercraft, then those registration fees could be used in-state to pay for resources used by the users. This includes defraying the costs of acquisition and development of access sites, river safety programs, barrier float systems, rescue training, portages and campsites.

Currently, paddlers use all of these benefits afforded to them; however, they do not participate in the cost of them in the same way other recreational boaters do. Creating a system where a state could register these watercraft and receive the commensurate fees would greatly enhance the state's ability to continue with these programs, especially in difficult fiscal times.

There is also a tremendous law enforcement/safety need for registration as well. Currently, there is no way to match an

individual to a non-powered vessel. In the event that a vessel is abandoned, capsized or stolen, law enforcement officials need to be able to identify the owner. This is especially important in a capsized situation where search and rescue may be needed. The funds derived from this registration would also help pay for search and rescue operations for lost and drowned paddlers, as most boating fatalities are capsizing and falling overboard incidents involving small boats and canoes. This is all of ultimate benefit to the owner.

Finally, registration or another numbering system is an important way of engaging the boating public when needed. When there are important changes to the law, or other issues of importance to the boating public, state boating law officials have no way to contact paddlers directly. For motorized boaters, it is a simple matter of sending these notifications to their address on file from their registration, saving them the hassle of learning about the changes when it is too late. Registration for paddlers would allow them to be included in these important updates, saving them time and hassle.

U.S. Coast Guard statistics show that in 2008, there were 12.7 million registered motorized recreational vessels in the United States. There are millions more non-motorized watercraft in use as well. However, for the simple reason that these vessels are not registered/numbered in many states, they are not able to fully participate in the recreational boating community. This means that water trails, access points and search and rescue operations for them are not paid for by the user and in future years, programs such as access development may diminish without further buy-in from the user.

It is essential that paddlers pay into the larger community in some way in order to ensure that their preferred method of recreating can grow into the future and not become a victim to tough economic times. ❖

When it comes to boating programs, you may not realize the long history that exists with registration (numbering) and titling; also, you might not realize just how important these programs are.

In the United States, it was the First Congress in 1789 that enacted the initial laws requiring the “Registering and Clearing” of vessels (Chapter 11). The purpose of this act was to identify “any ship or vessel,” to secure a bond on the vessel, and to collect fees and allowances. Further, this act complimented another act that regulated the collection of duties imposed on the tonnage of ships or vessels.

It appears that the vessels that were being referenced in these laws were those that were used for commercial purposes. However, these weren’t all large ships – the laws even specified the requirements for those vessels of less than 20 tons burden and not less than 5 tons.

## Does “5 tons” ring a bell?

Think about the current Coast Guard documentation specifications. The vessel must be at least of 5 tons burden to qualify to be documented. And today, like in 1789, these vessels must “cause the name of such vessel and of the place to which she belongs to be painted on her stern” using letters “of not less than three inches in length.” (Now, it’s 4 inches for documentation; but we still use 3 inches for state numbering of vessels.)

You may be interested to know that the first federal law specific to “licensing” recreational vessels was enacted in 1848. The act for licensing yachts went into effect then. It allowed for “yachts used and employed exclusively as pleasure vessels” to be licensed. Such license allowed for these vessels “to proceed from port to port of the United States without entering or clearing at the customhouse.” This license prohibited the transporting of merchandise or passengers for pay on the vessel; and, of course, there was a bond that had to be submitted. Later, in 1870, an amendment to the 1848 act was adopted regarding yacht clubs.

For more current history on the federal laws regarding vessel numbering and titling, Mike Baron offers some great information in his article on the next page.



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

## BOAT NUMBERING & TITLING DATES BACK TO THE 1700s

But at the same time as the 20th century federal laws were being enacted, let’s not forget about the state and local laws regarding boat registration and titling.

Some of you history buffs will be able to go back further, but I can share with you that many states were registering boats in the early 1900s. Some states and local governments even used larger metal license plates for registering the boats in those early days, like those used for cars. (Seems kind of strange that these plates had to be nailed or bolted into the boat ~ holes + water = ?). Others used small metal tags that had to be attached to the boat.

These plates and tags were issued primarily for taxing purposes at the state and local levels. However, some of them, along with the early 1900s federal law on boat registration, also focused on the use of the registration for identification purposes. This identification assisted when dealing with situations where the recreational boat was being used for illegal purposes (moving contraband) and for safety purposes.

By the late 1950s, the registration of recreational vessels had grown so much, and so many layers of government had become involved in the process, that we experienced major overlapping in re-

quirements. It was common to see where a single recreational boat would have to have multiple registrations/licenses to operate on a single body of water. The operator might have had to purchase a federal number, a state registration and a local permit; and, if they boated on multiple waterways within a state, they might have had to acquire numerous local permits.

For the most part, these multiple forms of registration were combined into a single registration in 1958, with the enactment of a new federal law. This law allowed for the states to have their vessel numbering system approved by the Coast Guard. When their system was approved, the state numbering of the vessel was then in lieu of any federal numbering. Most states came into compliance with the new numbering system by the early 1960s. Today, every state has an approved system. Thus, the Coast Guard no longer numbers recreational vessels.

The primary reasons for identifying a boat through the close of the last century included safety, law enforcement, taxing, and ownership/financial purposes. Following 2001, another essential benefit is gained from this program – our nation’s protection from possible maritime security threats. As more states choose, thankfully, to participate in the Vessel Identification System (VIS), they choose to help to divert or effectively respond to a possible attack whereby a recreational vessel may be used as a platform to cause us harm.

Currently 25 states, five territories and the District of Columbia provide their vessel registration and titling data to a centralized database maintained by the Coast Guard. Approved federal law enforcement and defense agencies, along with those participating state law enforcement agencies, can then quickly access this database to find out details about the vessel, which they can use to appropriately respond to the situation.

As you can see, boat registration, numbering and titling have a long history and provide a fascinating story. Moreover, they provide essential benefits to our maritime way of life here in America. Bravo Zulu to all of you involved in this program. Thank you for what you’ve done and continue to do. 🌟



# A new age for boat numbering and titling

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

During his broadcast, former NBC Today Show Weatherman Willard Scott would send birthday greetings to those viewers who reached milestones in longevity, particularly those reaching the century mark.

When asked to write an article on Registration & Titling, I was somewhat hesitant to accept. How could I write a scintillating article on something as tedious as the registration of recreational vessels? As I began to research ideas for the article, my attitude changed from hesitancy and tedium to one of bemused interest. As I looked into this topic, I realized its paramount importance to the recreational boating safety community, and discovered it is nearing its 100-year anniversary.

The Federal Motorboat Act of 1910 mandated the responsibility to the federal government to regulate recreational boating in the United States. It was the passage of the Federal Numbering Act of 1918 which instituted a numbering system for all undocumented vessels, and in 1958 the Federal Boating Act shifted the responsibility of numbering undocumented vessels from the federal government to the states. Recognizing that this is an abbreviated history and there have been regulatory updates, changes and tweaks, believe me when I say the topic of registration and titling is alive and well in the United States.

According to the 2008 Recreational Boating Statistics, there were 12,692,892 registered boats in the United States and its territories. These numbers are astounding to me as they represent so much and have such a huge impact on the recreational boating world. Having an approved numbering system in place is a requirement to be eligible to receive financial assistance through the State Recreational Boating Safety Grant Program; it is also required to participate in the Vessel Identification System (VIS).

## So what is new and exciting in the world of registration and titling?

The NASBLA Registration & Titling Committee completed a rewrite of the Model Act for Vessel Titling, which was presented last year at NASBLA's conference in Corpus Christi. The Coast Guard is currently working on a regulatory project that will include aligning terminology used in the Boating Accident Report Database (BARD), Standard Numbering System (SNS) and Vessel Identification System (VIS). This regulatory project should enhance the effectiveness of all three systems by ensuring that they are all using the same terms. A Notice

of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) is expected to be published this spring.

The Boating Safety Division has been working with the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws (NCCUSL), otherwise known as the Uniform State Law Commission, to develop a Uniform Certificate of Titling Act for boats (UCOTA for Vessels). The drafting committee consists of commission members and observers from members of interested organizations such as NASBLA, the Coast Guard, NMMA, and banking interests. It is hoped that by having the observers take an active role in the drafting process, all stakeholders' interests will be well represented and prevent barriers to passing a usable and much needed uniform law.

The group's work is similar to the UCOTA for automobiles. The lessons learned in this first effort have greatly assisted in avoiding problematic issues relating to this sort of legislative effort. The group is seeking to develop a template for a uniform state law that provides for protection of the boat owner and the lien holders, while providing consistency of information for law enforcement at the federal, state and local levels.

It is the intent of the drafting committee not to interfere with existing federal laws and regulations but to work as closely within these existing laws to promote uniformity. Once a final draft is completed and passed by NCCUSL, it is hoped each state will adopt it as their state law for titling of boats. The drafting committee hopes to have a first reading of a draft by the spring of 2010. A second reading is expected in the spring of 2011 with final adoption by the summer of 2011.

You can see that even though this vital part of our boating safety program is reaching an advanced stage of maturity there is still a lot happening. It is imperative that we continue to work together to care for this program. ☼



**Robin Freeman**  
National Directorate  
Commodore for Recreational  
Boating Safety  
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

# Boat numbering plays role in safety



It had been a long day. About 100 Auxiliaries from around District 11 had converged upon Lake Powell for an operational training exercise and the weather had not cooperated. The winds howled, the lake was as rough as any ocean on a small craft advisory day, and we'd been pushed about, rocked and rolled, covered in spray with each push of the bow through the chop. At last the training exercise ended and it was time for dry clothes and dinner!

Right after dark, as the last of the gang hung out enjoying fellowship and recounting the wild weather day, we got a call from National Parks saying there was a disabled houseboat in distress, and they wanted us to go assist. My first thought was, "Gee, a houseboat on Lake Powell – well that narrows it down."

In our classes, our Auxiliary instructors teach the federal requirement regarding proper numbering on the boat. Likewise our vessel examiners have "numbering and registration" first thing on the check sheet, and if the numbers aren't 3-inch-high block-style letters in a color that contrasts with the hull color, we're supposed to withhold the Vessel Safety Check decal. Given that it's a federal regulation was always enough for me, but this night at Lake Powell I got a different perspective!

We launched a boat large enough and capable of towing a houseboat in those howl-

ing wind conditions, and set out with electronics bristling. We headed for the position reported, and once we got there discovered there were a lot of houseboats. Granted, at that time of night not too many were actually on the water rather than snuggled up on shore, but enough to make it difficult. Our coxswain drove in and out of coves and his forward lookout scoured every shoreline. We finally found our disabled houseboat. Had we had the registration numbers, I do believe our search would have been much faster, given of course that the numbers were applied according to federal regs.

To sum it up, Nathanael G. Herreshoff, an innovative and brilliant designer, sailor and boatbuilder, said, "There are only two colors to paint a boat, black or white..." There are a lot of white boats out there and the registration number, displayed in a contrasting color as per the regulations, easily discernable, may mean the difference between getting the help needed or having the help pass by looking for another boat. As the latter is not a desirable outcome, we will continue to stress the importance of the registration numbers on the boat. ★





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## 2010

# RECREATIONAL BOATING SAFETY CALENDAR

### FEBRUARY

#### 11-15

Miami International Boat Show  
Miami, Florida  
[www.miamiboatshow.com](http://www.miamiboatshow.com)

#### 23-24

NASBLA Boating Under the Influence  
Detection & Enforcement Training  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma  
[www.nasbla.org](http://www.nasbla.org)  
859.225.9487 [chris@nasbla.org](mailto:chris@nasbla.org)

#### 24-25

NASBLA Governmental Affairs  
Committee Meeting  
Washington, D.C.  
[www.nasbla.org](http://www.nasbla.org)  
[matt@nasbla.org](mailto:matt@nasbla.org) 859.225.9487

#### 27-28

American Canoe Association  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Fredericksburg, Virginia  
[www.americancanoe.org](http://www.americancanoe.org)  
[kcosgrove@americancanoe.org](mailto:kcosgrove@americancanoe.org)  
540.907.4460

### MARCH

#### 10-12

NASBLA Boating Under the Influence  
Detection & Enforcement Training  
Anchorage, Alaska  
[www.nasbla.org](http://www.nasbla.org)  
859.225.9487 [chris@nasbla.org](mailto:chris@nasbla.org)

#### 18-20

US Sailing Spring Meeting  
Providence, Rhode Island  
[www.ussailing.org](http://www.ussailing.org) 401.683.0800  
[KatieOuellette@ussailing.org](mailto:KatieOuellette@ussailing.org)

#### 22-26

NASBLA National Boating Accident  
Investigation & Analysis  
Level 1 Training  
Spokane Valley, Washington  
[www.nasbla.org](http://www.nasbla.org)  
859.225.9487 [chris@nasbla.org](mailto:chris@nasbla.org)

#### 24-25

NASBLA Enforcement & Training  
Committee Meeting  
Lexington, Kentucky  
[www.nasbla.org](http://www.nasbla.org)  
859.225.9487 [chris@nasbla.org](mailto:chris@nasbla.org)

#### 25-26

NASBLA  
Executive Board Meeting  
Lexington, Kentucky  
[www.nasbla.org](http://www.nasbla.org)  
859.225.9487

#### 26-27

NASBLA Vessel Identification, Regis-  
tration & Titling Committee Meeting  
Lexington, Kentucky  
[www.nasbla.org](http://www.nasbla.org)  
859.225.9487 [sam@nasbla.org](mailto:sam@nasbla.org)

#### 27-28

NASBLA Education & Awareness  
Committee Meeting  
Daytona Beach, Florida  
[www.nasbla.org](http://www.nasbla.org)  
[gail@nasbla.org](mailto:gail@nasbla.org) 859.225.9487

#### 28

National Boating Federation  
Annual Meeting  
Daytona Beach, Florida  
[www.n-b-f.org](http://www.n-b-f.org) 757.898.8151

#### 28-31

National Safe Boating Council and  
National Water Safety Congress  
International Boating & Water Safety  
Summit  
Daytona Beach, Florida  
[www.safeboatingcouncil.org](http://www.safeboatingcouncil.org)  
[www.watersafetycongress.org](http://www.watersafetycongress.org)

### APRIL

#### 12-16

NASBLA National Boating Accident  
Investigation & Analysis  
Level 1 Training  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
[www.nasbla.org](http://www.nasbla.org)  
859.225.9487 [chris@nasbla.org](mailto:chris@nasbla.org)

#### 12

Southern States BLA Association  
Annual Conference  
Arlington, Virginia  
[nasbla.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3326](http://nasbla.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3326)

#### 13-14

NASBLA Spring BLA Workshop  
Arlington, Virginia  
[www.nasbla.org](http://www.nasbla.org)  
[ron@nasbla.org](mailto:ron@nasbla.org) 859.225.9487

#### 26-30

NASBLA National Boating Accident  
Investigation & Analysis  
Level 1 Training  
(city TBD), Colorado  
[www.nasbla.org](http://www.nasbla.org)  
859.225.9487 [chris@nasbla.org](mailto:chris@nasbla.org)

### MAY

#### 5-6

National Marine Manufacturers  
Association  
American Boating Congress  
Washington, D.C.  
[www.nmma.org/abc](http://www.nmma.org/abc)

#### 17-21

NASBLA National Boating Accident  
Investigation & Analysis  
Level 1 Training  
East Syracuse, New York  
[www.nasbla.org](http://www.nasbla.org)  
859.225.9487 [chris@nasbla.org](mailto:chris@nasbla.org)

#### 22-28

National Safe Boating Week  
[www.safeboatingcampaign.com](http://www.safeboatingcampaign.com)

#### 23-25

Personal Flotation Device Manufac-  
turers Association  
Annual Conference  
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho  
[www.pfdma.org](http://www.pfdma.org)

### JUNE

#### 5-13

National Fishing & Boating Week  
[www.rbff.org](http://www.rbff.org)

#### 12

National Marina Day  
[www.marinaassociation.org/nmd](http://www.marinaassociation.org/nmd)

#### 12-13

American Canoe Association  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Fredericksburg, Virginia  
[www.americancanoe.org](http://www.americancanoe.org)  
[kcosgrove@americancanoe.org](mailto:kcosgrove@americancanoe.org)  
540.907.4460

#### 13-17

Western States Boating  
Administrators Association  
Annual Conference  
Park City, Utah  
[www.nasbla.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3325](http://www.nasbla.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3325)

#### 25-27

NASBLA  
Operation Dry Water  
[www.operationdrywater.org](http://www.operationdrywater.org)

### AUGUST

#### 30-SEPT. 4

United States Power Squadrons  
Governing Board Meeting  
Bellevue, Washington  
[www.usps.org](http://www.usps.org) 888.367.8777

### SEPTEMBER

#### 10-14

NASBLA Annual Conference  
Honolulu, Hawai'i  
[www.nasbla.org](http://www.nasbla.org)  
[ron@nasbla.org](mailto:ron@nasbla.org)  
859.225.9487