

Partnering with the U.S. Coast Guard & Recreational Boating Community to Implement the National Recreational Boating Safety Strategic Plan: NASBLA and the States

*U.S. Coast Guard Nonprofit Grant 1102-15
Awarded to the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators*

Final Grant Report Executive Summary

No other organization like the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) brings together nationally the state recreational boating safety agencies for public policy development, communicating strategies, coordination, information sharing, education and training. This fact is recognized in the National Recreational Boating Safety Strategic plan with NASBLA being named an implementing partner in 65% of the strategies. Additionally, the states are named as implementing partners in 48% of the strategies. Together, NASBLA and the states are THE major contributors to the implementation and success of the National RBS Program.

The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) sought and received a grant to partner with and support the states, the Coast Guard and the recreational boating safety (RBS) community in implementation of the National Recreational Boating Safety Strategic Plan (2012-2016) from October 1, 2011 – September 31, 2012. NASBLA completed this work by:

- Developing Policy Solutions and Products through our Committee Work
- Communicating Strategies to the States and Others through *Small Craft Advisory*, *NASBLA Currents* (e-newsletter) and our own online networking community – *NASBLA Connect*
- Coordinating State Program Administration and Performance Measurement at our Spring BLA Workshop
- And Engaging the RBS Community, the Coast Guard, and the States at our Annual Conference.

Although federal trust funds provide as much as one-fourth of the national RBS program's annual funding, virtually all of the program's major objectives are accomplished at the state and local levels by the state boating law administration agencies in the 56 states and territories. NASBLA is THE organization that works on a daily basis with these agencies to advance the National Recreational Boating Safety Program.

Project Description

Project Goal

The goal of the *Partnering with the U.S. Coast Guard & Recreational Boating Community to Implement the National Recreational Boating Safety Strategic Plan: NASBLA and the States* grant program was to aid the U.S. Coast Guard in carrying out the strategies in the National Recreational Boating Safety Strategic Plan, 2012-2016, in order to advance the mission of the national program - to ensure the public has a safe, secure and enjoyable recreational boating experience by implementing programs designed to minimize the loss of life, personal injury and property damage while cooperating with environmental and national security efforts.

Project Objectives

The objectives for *Partnering with the U.S. Coast Guard & Recreational Boating Community to Implement the National Recreational Boating Safety Strategic Plan: NASBLA and the States* included:

a) Developing Policy Solutions and Products that:

- enhance uniformity and reciprocity of boating safety efforts among jurisdictions;
- provide forums to encourage uniformity, reciprocity, closer cooperation and assistance in developing, administering, and enforcing state laws and regulations pertaining to boating safety;
- encourage sufficient patrol and other activities to ensure adequate enforcement of state boating safety laws and regulations;
- facilitate an adequate USCG-recognized state boating safety education program;
- enhance maintenance of USCG-approved vessel numbering system; and
- strengthen implementation of a USCG-approved marine casualty reporting system.

b) Communicating Strategies to the States and Others – providing a national RBS communications conduit to grassroots law enforcement officials and state and federal policymakers through *Small Craft Advisory*, the nation's award-winning recreational boating safety magazine; social media; NASBLA's Connected Community for online professional networking and knowledge management; and other outreach media and platforms.

c) Coordinating State Program Administration and Performance Measurement – conducting a spring workshop for boating law administrators to discuss methods, means and resources for improved administration of the state RBS programs.

d) Engaging the RBS Community, the Coast Guard and the States – hosting a dynamic, interactive annual conference that brings together boating law administrators, state staff and other RBS stakeholders.

Methodology

This proposal sought funding for the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators in four primary areas:

a) Developing Policy Solutions and Products – Research, staffing and meeting support for committee projects, products and publications, including policy staffing and travel assistance for the president and executive board and policy committees to support national RBS policy-making and partnership initiatives;

- b) Communicating Strategies to the States and Others – Production, printing and distribution of NASBLA’s award-winning magazine, *Small Craft Advisory*; the online *NASBLA Membership Directory*; NASBLA website; e-newsletters; Basecamp project management tool; Go To Meeting web conferencing service; NASBLA’s Connected Community; and NASBLA’s learning management platform;
- c) Coordinating State Program Administration and Performance Measurement – planning and logistical support for the Spring Boating Law Administrators Workshop;
- d) Engaging the RBS Community, the Coast Guard and the States – staffing, planning, logistical and program support for the NASBLA Annual Conference.

Developing Policy Solutions and Products (Committee Work)

Since its founding in 1960, NASBLA has employed a committee structure to identify issues and address needs in the recreational boating safety public policy realm. NASBLA’s committees function as the primary source, sounding board and national policy-setting forum for each of the significant program areas addressed in the National Recreational Boating Safety Strategic Plan -- enforcement, education, vessel numbering and marine casualty reporting. These committees develop best management practices, model procedures, model acts, position papers and other products that advance recreational boating safety.

The committees also play an important role with respect to shaping a national response to a given challenge, problem or issue. Some issues impacting boating safety are resolved simply through open discussion and the exchange of ideas and experience. On the other end of the spectrum, more entrenched or long-term challenges may ultimately require a statutory or regulatory response to affect the desired outcome. NASBLA committees help the Coast Guard and other policymakers at the state and federal levels determine and coordinate the appropriate response.

This highly successful process has resulted in numerous boating safety policy directives and model boating laws of national significance. These policies include the nearly nationwide acceptance of BUI laws, interstate cooperation in boating accident investigations, and nationally accepted standards for state and private boating education courses and curricula. It is only through the commitment and perseverance of NASBLA committees through initiatives carried out, in some cases over several years, that the association can develop and endorse well-constructed, rational policy measures that merit multi-state and national acceptance.

The NASBLA policy committees, and by extension the NASBLA executive board and staff, are one of the key mechanisms the association utilizes to encourage uniformity and reciprocity among jurisdictions.

In addition to the state committee members, the committees include broad representation from boating professionals throughout the boating industry, the nonprofit sector, international interests, the boating public, and federal and local agencies.

NASBLA committees include:

Education & Awareness Committee

The Education & Awareness Committee works to advance boating safety by developing recommendations based on best practices in education for the states to implement; and creating a library of state marketing

campaigns and outreach materials for other states to use. Among the issues addressed in 2012 were: supporting the Wear It and Operation Dry Water campaigns, developing and expanding the use of NASBLA Connect, promoting the use of the Seal of Safe Boating Practices, developing updates for the Reference Guide to State Boating Laws, further developing State Education Coordinator Training, and working to improve course reporting.

Enforcement & Training Committee

The Enforcement & Training Committee works to advance boating safety by researching and disseminating information on new techniques and technologies for marine law enforcement officers; developing training and credentialing programs; and addressing boating under the influence issues. In 2012, the committee assessed, evaluated and delivered Officers Water Safety & Survival training, updated law enforcement documents for Operation Dry Water, developed regional training opportunities for the new Seated Battery of Standardized Field Sobriety Tests, as well as sought and gained final passage of committee's resolution calling for mandatory officer life jacket wear

Engineering, Reporting & Analysis Committee

The Engineering, Reporting & Analysis Committee (ERAC) is charged with identifying, evaluating and analyzing data and information that can shed light on factors associated with recreational boating accidents, inform the development of boating safety policies and practices, and ultimately measure their effectiveness. To ensure that the results of boating accident research and analyses are valid and reliable, ERAC is directed to actively seek ways to advance the quality, relevance, accuracy, consistency, applicability and completeness of the data and information. For 2012, ERAC reached consensus on standardized accident report terms and definitions in five key report categories (Accident Types, Contributing Factors/Causes, Vessel Types, Activity, and Operation; provided input to USCG efforts to revise and improve the accident reporting system and processes; identified and developed guidance on accident reporting and on the application of the revised terms and definitions that emerge from the Accident Reporting Terms and Definitions Project; and examined the quality, consistency, and applicability of the human factors descriptors/data input to BARD by participating states.

Vessel Identification, Registration & Titling Committee

Recognizing that accurate vessel information is the backbone of recreational boating safety data, the Vessel Identification, Registration & Titling Committee works to advance boating safety by analyzing and advocating for thorough and precise vessel identification throughout a vessel's chain of ownership from the hull numbering to registration to titling. For 2012, the committee followed the developments on the Final Rule on changes to Standard Numbering System Regulation and kept the states updated about coming changes; assisted the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws (NCCUSL) and the states with implementation of the Uniform Certificate of Title for Vessels Act; assisted the USCG on promoting the MOU for and state participation in the VIS as well as monitored any implementation issues; and continued to try to work with the USCG Documentation Center to notify states when a state registered vessel becomes documented.

NASBLA's public policy work is a year-round endeavor. The process begins at the close of the NASBLA annual conference. Building upon or continuing the previous year's work and with suggestions for new issues needing attention, staff draft the first round of charges and proposed committee membership¹ for discussion. This

¹ Committee membership is comprised of a chair, vice chair and staff. In addition, an average of six to seven members makes up individual subcommittees. We estimate conservatively that our volunteer committee members each donate more than 25 hours per year in service to NASBLA and recreational boating safety public policy development. This equals more than \$51,000 in-kind service donated for RBS public policy development.

draft is utilized by volunteer committee chairmen and the volunteer NASBLA Executive Board to select those charges that are most critical and that address issues identified in the National RBS and NASBLA strategic plans.

After the executive board, committee chairs and staff agree on charges for the year, teleconferences commence in late fall to kick off the committees' work for the year. Charges are assigned and members work on these charges. The subcommittees and full committee meet in person – typically in conjunction with another national RBS meeting. Over the course of the meetings subcommittees discuss and debate their work and then the full committee comes together to consider all subcommittee work. Further work is assigned if needed. Work continues on charges throughout the summer. The committees convene again in the fall at the NASBLA annual conference and present their charges and work products to the RBS community and to NASBLA membership for consideration and adoption.

This grant provided funding for committee staff time, for travel for committee members to attend their respective late winter/early spring meetings and for other direct costs associated with development of committee products.

Committees met on the following dates at these locations:

Education	March 3-4, 2012	San Diego, California
Enforcement	February 28, 2012	Lexington, Kentucky
ERAC	March 2, 2012	Lexington, Kentucky
VIRT	March 2, 2012	Lexington, Kentucky

Committee Reports from these committees are attached at the end of this document. Copies of committee products may be viewed and downloaded from the NASBLA website at www.nasbla.org/grants.

Communicating Strategies to the States (*Small Craft Advisory* and other platforms)

The second grant-funded vehicle for addressing elements of the National RBS Strategic Plan involved providing – through a variety of channels – a national RBS communications conduit to grassroots law enforcement, education, accident investigation and vessel numbering & titling officials and state and federal policymakers. Key to this communication strategy is the association’s award-winning periodical, *Small Craft Advisory* (SCA). Six times during this grant year, SCA was published and distributed to more than 10,500 boating safety professionals, policy and decision-makers, state legislators, members of Congress, Coast Guard personnel and recreational boating industry leaders to keep them informed on issues impacting recreational boating safety.

In addition to a vast array of recreational boating safety news and information, issues of SCA also focused on the following special topics --

November-December, 2011	Law Enforcement
January-February, 2012	RBS Technology
March-April, 2012	Search and Rescue
May-June, 2012	Life Jackets
July-August, 2012	Boating Accidents
September-October 2012	Education

Copies of these magazines are available online for viewing and download at the NASBLA website: www.nasbla.org/sca.

For 27 years, SCA has been the primary source of RBS news and policy developments to marine officers in the field, and this group of dedicated boating professionals continues to be a primary audience for the magazine. However, the magazine’s editors also recognize a broader readership and strive to include feature stories and analysis that will inform and educate all elements of the recreational boating safety community.

Beginning this year, NASBLA Currents, our RBS e-newsletter, began delivering on a weekly basis NASBLA news and information to more than 3,500 state members, associates and other stakeholders.

NASBLA Connect – our online networking community, <http://community.nasbla.org>, provides our members and the RBS Community innovative ways to think together and build trusted communities where interactive communication and information exchange can occur. NASBLA Connect allows people to contribute, share and collaborate.

NASBLA also used this year, TOPYX, a hosted learning management system (LMS), to deliver e-learning to our members and others in the RBS community. While this LMS allowed us to being our foray into online e-learning, our needs have grown and we have now contracted for a new learning management system that will further assist NASBLA in developing a wide variety of training and education opportunities to promote standardization and uniformity in recreational boating safety public policy administration.

Other communications tools that NASBLA utilizes for RBS community engagement include Basecamp, which provides web-based project management and collaboration, and Go To Meeting, a web conferencing and online meeting platform.

Coordinating State Program Administration and Performance Measurement (Spring BLA Workshop)

Another method of advancing the goals of the NASBLA and the National RBS strategic plans is the Spring Boating Law Administrator Workshop. This two-day working session provided a mid-year opportunity for boating law administrators, key Coast Guard personnel and NASBLA staff to discuss and coordinate policy, programs and performance measures for the recreational boating safety program. Topics covered at the workshop included:

- National RBS Program Financial Grant Update
- National RBS Grant Program Discussion for BLAs
- NASBLA Program News & Updates
- 2012 Elections and How They Will Impact State Agencies
- National Boating Education Standards Panel
- Roundtable Discussion on Boating Safety Program Administration
- High Profile Events, Post Traumatic Shock & Survival Strategies
- Changes in Life Jacket Standards & Terminology
- Assessing Knowledge Retention for Online and Classroom Boating Safety Courses
- Quality Improvements in Recreational Boating Accident Reporting Data and Processes

Copies of many of these presentations are available online at www.slideshare.net/NASBLA/presentations.

This workshop attracts more BLAs than any other recreational boating safety meeting in the spring.

Engaging the RBS Community, the Coast Guard and the States (Annual Conference)

The NASBLA Annual Conference is the premier national recreational boating safety forum. Boating law administrators and others in the RBS community throughout North America learn from the experts in the field, hear about cutting-edge research and exceptional best practices, and discover new ideas for programs that minimize the loss of life, personal injury and property damage.

The NASBLA annual conference brings together approximately 300 people representing more than 100 stakeholder organizations in the recreational boating safety community, including more than 50 state boating law agencies. **No other event brings together this diverse group of RBS stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, U.S. and Canadian federal agencies, and the Coast Guard itself.**

Examples of topics covered in previous annual conferences include:

King County Mandatory Life Jacket Wear	Performance Report Part II
U.S. Coast Guard Report & National Boater Survey	Changes to the Standard Numbering System, the Vessel Identification System, and the Boating Accident Report Database – Implications for States
GPS Forensics	Changes in Life Jacket Standards
NASBLA Training Overview	Interagency Interaction
Boating Safety Professional Credential	Alabama Boater Licensing
Public Relations & Death Notifications	
NASBLA Training Overview	
Boating Safety Instructor Website	
Idaho Cold Water Training	Copies of these presentations are available on the NASBLA website at www.nasbla.org/digitalhub
HIN Validation	

Executive Management and RBS Outreach

The NASBLA president, executive director and executive board members are called upon to provide information to congressional committees and staff regarding boating safety issues of national consequence and to provide technical advice and educational materials relating to the states' experience in managing boating safety programs. The board considers and further develops project research plans submitted by committee leadership. It also monitors the committees' progress in addressing the charges set forth in the project plan.

The board allocates resources from the grant award to facilitate committee meetings, projects and products and assures that the grant is administered according to guidelines and procedures prescribed by law. The work of the board and the overall grant program is supported by the executive director and policy staff. The staff provides professional support to the board and the committees, including conference and meeting planning and onsite staffing, grant and project management, research, financial management, public information, and member support.

The NASBLA president, executive director and their designees provide liaison to other national boating safety organizations, industry and trade groups, and related associations. Through the president's office, NASBLA works to formulate national consensus among all the stakeholders in the boating community. In a typical year, NASBLA representatives participate in as many as 20-25 national and international meetings, hearings and boating safety forums, including, but not limited to, the U.S. Coast Guard, the National Boating Safety Advisory Council, the National Transportation Safety Board, the American Boat and Yacht Council, the International Boating and Water Safety Summit, the National Boating Federation, the National Safe Boating Council, the National Water Safety Congress, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, the United States Power Squadrons, National Safe Boating Week and other national recreational, safety and transportation events.

For the FY12 outreach program, NASBLA continued the successful efforts of its executive board with assistance for three interim board meetings and one final board meeting held in conjunction with the NASBLA annual conference in Mobile, Alabama. Board meetings were held as follows:

November 15-17, 2011	Lexington, Kentucky
February 27-28, 2012	Lexington, Kentucky
June 13-15, 2012	Breckenridge, Colorado
September 8, 2012	Mobile, Alabama

Minutes from these meetings are attached at the end of this document.

In addition to its annual request to fund the NASBLA president's domestic travel and liaison expenses, this proposal also requested funding assistance to permit the NASBLA president (or designee) to participate in at least two international boating safety conferences including the annual Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons meeting and the International Boating & Water Safety Summit (held in San Diego, California).