



November 20, 2012

Joe Carro  
U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters  
2100 Second Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20593-0001

Dear Mr. Carro,

According to the RBEP-Expanded Work Plan for the U.S. Coast Guard Grant to Water Solutions Group, Inc. (Agreement No. 1102.29), enclosed is our Final Report with deliverables as indicated in our original agreement.

Our second year as a grantee with the Coast Guard has been a rewarding experience, and we are excited to see momentum build as we continue to expand and promote the offerings of RentalBoatSafety.com.

The highlight of this grant year was the production of our expanded training materials for PWC, Canoe, and Kayak rental customers (in both English and Spanish). In addition, we successfully implemented an academically assessed survey on the boating market that yielded significant insight on boating safety perceptions and attitudes. We also achieved a significant increase in traffic to the RBEP site as compared to the previous year. RentalBoatSafety.com continues to remain the *only* Spanish Rental Boat Safety resource available for end-user customers and rental liveries in the US.

Based on the results presented in this report, we believe they clearly show that Water Solutions Group, through the Rental Boat Safety Campaign, is effectively penetrating and educating the rental boat market.

It is a pleasure to partner with the US Coast Guard and to work together towards a safer experience for boaters on the water, reducing fatalities and accidents through proper boating safety training.

Feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melanie D. Bedogne", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Melanie D. Bedogne  
Executive Director  
Water Solutions Group, Inc.



**Water Solutions Group, Inc.**

2612 Taylor Road, Suite D  
Chesapeake, VA 23321  
757.301.0814

# Rental Boat Education Program- Expanded Final Report October 2011 – September 2012



## Executive Summary

Our primary objective with the Rental Boat Education Program - Expanded (2011) was to increase boating safety and reduce the number of recreational boating fatalities in the United States by focusing on the rental boat market. This included production of expanded (PWC/Paddling) rental safety training materials and a distribution/awareness campaign targeting state Boating Law Administrators (BLA's), Recreational Boat Rental companies/liveries nationwide and the individual rental boat customers.

## Methodology

Water Solutions Group focused on the following methodology to complete objectives of the RBEP-Expanded campaign:

In addition to these new technology methods, they are supported by live phone calls, postal mail, etc. As always, high-end customer service always backs up the new technology outreach.

1. Expanded Version of the RBEP: As a primary objective of this campaign, WSG produced an expanded version of the Rental Boat Education Program, which includes safety-training videos specifically targeting the needs of PWC, Canoe, and Kayak rental customers. These new resources have been added to the RBEP online resources found at [www.rentalboatsafety.com](http://www.rentalboatsafety.com), which has seen a significant increase in traffic. The RBEP-Expanded videos have been geared to a new section of the boating public, providing both engaging and informative content. In addition to the availability of materials online, one thousand (1,000) DVD's of new training materials were duplicated for distribution to liveries in need of offline viewing access.
2. Bi-Lingual (Spanish) Version of the RBEP-Expanded Materials: During this grant cycle, WSG produced a fully Bi-Lingual (Spanish) version of the newly developed PWC/Paddling training materials for use in the RBEP campaign. This included production of 250 training DVD's for use among liveries in Spanish-speaking markets in need of offline viewing access. Rental Boat Safety stands as the only Bi-lingual rental boat safety resource on the web. All resources offered on the English version of the [rentalboatsafety.com](http://rentalboatsafety.com) site is offered and marketed to Spanish-speaking markets at [es.rentalboatsafety.com](http://es.rentalboatsafety.com).
3. Marketing/Awareness Campaign: Strategically developed and employed a marketing, awareness, and distribution campaign to promote RBEP materials and resources utilizing cutting edge methods such as targeted email campaigns, press releases, twitter and search engine optimization. Strategy also included consistent follow up and communication to rental boat liveries and state BLA's across the U.S. via phone,

email, and postal mail in response to RBEP participation. Also developed new leads across U.S. as part of awareness campaign.

4. Marketing to End-Customers: Through the course of the RBEP, WSG staff reached out to and encouraged rental boat end-customers visiting the [www.RentalBoatSafety.com](http://www.RentalBoatSafety.com) site to utilize the interactive RBEP training materials and the online survey.
5. Academically Developed/Assessed Survey: Utilizing past survey responses and expert input from a Ph.D. level consultant, WSG staff launched a 19-item, academically developed survey to assess boater safety/perception in the United States. Through Google ads and incentive programs, the survey received 450 responses in a short time frame. A Ph.D. level consultant academically assessed responses/results that can be used in developing a more effective national boating safety campaign.
6. Press Releases/Media Press Kit: Enhanced marketing efforts by launching a news page on [rentalboatsafety.com](http://rentalboatsafety.com), complete with an electronic media press kit. Released and distributed several press releases in this campaign year to build awareness of RBEP programs and resources.
7. Database Tracking: WSG staff members continue to maintain an up-to-date contact database that tracks RBEP participation by all major rental boat liveries and BLA's for all states.
8. Web Link Sharing Campaign: Continued promotion of a web link sharing campaign with Rental Boat liveries and state BLA's in order to significantly increase web awareness of [www.rentalboatsafety.com](http://www.rentalboatsafety.com).
9. Additional Distribution Campaign: Adding to the previous year's efforts, developed 331 new rental livery contacts in several states across the U.S., who were then integrated into a strategic marketing, awareness, and distribution campaign to promote RBEP materials and resources.
10. Radio Appearances: In the past year, RBEP Program Manager has appeared twice on Bob's No Wake Zone Radio Show (reaching a national audience via website) to share about RBEP resources and discuss the need for safety training when renting a boat.
11. Animation Logo – Production of a visually appealing Motion GFX Package in 3D space to be used for videos produced by [rentalboatsafety.com](http://rentalboatsafety.com). The logo flies in through a 3D plane and uses 3D letters for [rentalboatsafety.com](http://rentalboatsafety.com). This animated logo will be used to promote and provide appeal to users and potential users of the site.
12. Data Backup: Secured data backup of all RBEP materials and contact databases including Full Quality Video Exports, Web Quality Videos, InDesign (Print) and PDFs (Web) for both English and Spanish.

## Results and Benefits

### Production/Distribution of *Expanded* Training Materials (PWC/Canoe/Kayak)

Informative and engaging RBEP-Expanded safety training videos and accompanying materials have been produced to address the specific safety concerns associated with the use of PWC's, Kayaks, and Canoes among the rental market. This includes development and production of these training videos and accompanying checklists for use online at [rentalboatsafety.com](http://rentalboatsafety.com) as well as in DVD format for physical distribution.

### Production of a Bi-Lingual (*Spanish*) version of the Expanded Training Materials

Adding to the fully translated *bi-lingual* version of the basic Rental Boat Education Program, RBEP-Expanded training materials were translated into Spanish and launched on the site: [es.rentalboatsafety.com](http://es.rentalboatsafety.com). This includes expanded (PWC, canoe, and kayak) training videos and downloadable checklists specifically geared for *Expanded* rental boat customers as well as in DVD format for physical distribution. *We continue to be the only bi-lingual source for rental boat safety training materials on the web.*

### Significant Increase of Traffic to [www.RentalBoatSafety.com](http://www.RentalBoatSafety.com) - **369%\* INCREASE in Web Traffic!**

As a result of new videos with content geared to a new section of the boating public, press releases and media appearances, continued link-sharing campaign, and consistent marketing/awareness campaigns among all BLA's and major boat rental liveries, [rentalboatsafety.com](http://rentalboatsafety.com) has seen a 369% INCREASE\* in web traffic this grant year as compared to previous activity (in 2010-2011), with an increased average time on the site of over 6 minutes. Of these hits, 50% of these participants are NEW visitors to the site!\* The increase in web traffic establishes that Water Solutions Group, through the Rental Boat Education Program Campaign at [rentalboatsafety.com](http://rentalboatsafety.com) is *successfully* penetrating and educating the rental boat market in the U.S.

*\*All of these numbers are verified by Google Analytics.*

### Participation Results – **Over 50,000 ADDITIONAL End-Users Reached (174K Total)\***

Based upon the results of data from the RBEP voluntary participation form alone, the Rental Boat Education Program reached a total of **50,752 additional** potential end-user customers in this campaign alone. This number is based solely upon reported number of customers reached annually through each participating livery that registered on the RentalBoatSafety.com site during the 2011-2012 campaign. Combined with those already in participation from prior campaigns, the Rental Boat Education Program currently impacts **174K** potential rental boat customers each year.

*\*All participation results are based on verifiable data gleaned from Google analytics, survey responses, or online forms completed by actual rental liveries or end-user rental customers.*

### Enhanced and Academically Assessed Survey – **450 Responses!**

Through the efforts of the Rental Boat Education Program-*Expanded*, WSG targeted the rental boat market in a national boating safety survey. The academically-designed survey was created to assess the awareness, baseline knowledge, receptivity, and interest of boaters to boating safety information, and to prepare the use of these results to assist WSG in refining a national boating safety campaign through the tools of new media and digital communication networks. Among 450 responses, results provide specific, relevant data about boater demographics, types of boats used, boating activities, Internet activities of boaters, and boating safety attitudes, knowledge, concerns, and beliefs, and more to aid in further targeting a campaign to boaters in future years that creatively reach and meet the specific needs of our rental boat population.

### Up-to-date Database of Major Rental Boat Liveries and BLA's

An up-to-date database of all major rental boat liveries and BLA's in each state has been maintained and consistently enhanced by WSG staff to keep track of contact information, marketing activities to all, the use of training materials among constituents, and feedback regarding materials. As in other areas of the RBEP, each year builds upon the previous year in order to maximize effectiveness and impact.

## **Abstract – RBEP-Expanded Safety Training Materials (in English and Spanish)**

RentalBoatSafety.com is known for their engaging and informative, rental boat safety training videos addressing the safe use of full-size powerboats. Recognizing another market of rental boat customers, they recently released a new line of safety training videos that address the needs of a broader market of rental boat customers.

Seeking a lower barrier to entry and a lower cost, many inexperienced, first-time boaters are seeking to enjoy the nation's waterways in vessels such as paddle craft and PWC's. To meet the needs of this growing boater population, through a grant from the U.S. Coast Guard, RentalBoatSafety.com added to its resource offerings two new engaging and informative training videos for PWC and paddle craft users to ensure they are properly informed and educated in the safe use of these vessels.

The Paddling training video (canoe/kayak) covers such topics as Preparation, Boarding, Navigation, Capsizing, and Life Jacket wear.

The PWC training video covers such topics as General Operation, Life Jackets/Protective Gear, Safe Maneuvering, Capsizing, and Negligent Use.

Each online video is approximately 15 minutes in length, segmented into modules, and includes a 10-question assessment on the video page that provides the viewer with instant feedback regarding their score. An accompanying checklist for review or use at a rental livery is available for download on the website.

All training videos can be viewed online at [rentalboatsafety.com](http://rentalboatsafety.com) and are iPhone/iPad/Android compatible.

As with the original safety training materials found on the website, the newly released videos and accompanying resources are also available in Spanish at [es.rentalboatsafety.com](http://es.rentalboatsafety.com). *RentalBoatSafety.com is the only bi-lingual source for rental boat safety training materials on the web.*

Rental Boat Liveries can also register online ([rentalboatsafety.com/participate](http://rentalboatsafety.com/participate)) to receive the latest online updates and to receive a free DVD copy of these resources for in-house training at their operation.

RentalBoatSafety.com, in partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard, is committed to helping rental boaters enjoy a safe experience on our nation's waterways, contributing to a better environment and experience for the boating population at large.

If you have questions about these resources or if you would like to order a free DVD copy of the training videos, please contact Water Solutions Group, Inc., USCG Grantee: [www.watersolutionsgroup.org](http://www.watersolutionsgroup.org) | 757.301.0814 or visit [www.rentalboatsafety.com](http://www.rentalboatsafety.com).