Dear SOBA Members and Boating Industry Partners:

As the winter cold gives way to the more pleasant spring temperatures, I hope this newsletter finds you all in good spirits and ready to spend more time on the water. I noted in the previous edition that there always seems to be a lot going on, and the first few months of 2017 were no exception. I guess everyone staying busy is a good sign, and means great things are happening for boating access facilities.
nationwide. As you will see throughout this edition, the SOBA Board and membership continue to be heavily involved in the programs and issues affecting the boating public.

In February, the SOBA Board voted to approve Lorene Reid for our vacant Member-at-Large position. Per our Bylaws, Lorene will serve in this role until the next regular election at the 2017 national conference. Lorene is currently the Federal Assistance Coordinator for the State of Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Resources Division, and has a diverse background in managing and implementing grant programs both in government and private industry. We are excited to welcome Lorene to the Board, and look forward to working with her on the many different issues important to our members.

In early March, the SOBA Board met in Spokane, Washington concurrent to the North American Wildlife & Natural Resources Conference. This strategy allows direct contact between the Board and several other groups routinely present at the conference. For example, a presentation was given to the Executive Board of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies on the issues being addressed by SOBA, and our Board met with the senior leadership of the Washington D.C. Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration program staff to discuss ongoing issues and upcoming events.

Planning and coordination for the 2017 National Boating Access Conference in Anchorage, Alaska continues to be a high priority for the Board, and the dynamic duo of Paul Cyr and Valerie Thompson are doing a great job of preparing a conference to benefit all SOBA members. Registration is open and available on the SOBA website, as is the link for making hotel reservations, so make your preparations as soon as possible. If you need a justification letter, there is also one available on the SOBA website.

I hope you find some time to go enjoy the spring weather and make use of your favorite boating facility.

Ron Christofferson
President

JOIN US IN ANCHORAGE FOR SOBA’S 31ST NATIONAL BOATING ACCESS CONFERENCE
by Paul Cyr — SOBA 2017 Conference Chairman and Host

Registration is open! Please see registration pricing, attendee justification letter and the agenda by clicking here.

**Pure and Wild Access** is the conference theme chosen to reflect Alaska’s unique challenges in developing and maintaining access in a rugged state that is over twice as large as Texas, but with fewer developed roads than New Hampshire. Conference educational sessions will include engineering techniques and topics relating to access in Alaska, but will also include valuable subject matter related to access issues affecting us all.

Anchorage — the largest City in Alaska (approximate population of 310,000), is
surrounded by beautiful mountains and provides a variety of nearby recreational opportunities. Expect long days (about 16 hours of daylight) and a temperate climate (about 62° F daytime highs and 47° F at night). We look forward to seeing you and are hoping that you can come early or stay longer to enjoy what our beautiful state has to offer!

Important Facts

WHEN: August 28 to August 31  
WHERE: Hilton Anchorage, in downtown Anchorage.  
Book your hotel rooms HERE ($229 / night)  
REGISTRATION: Register for the conference HERE

Agenda

A full exhibitor hall with vendors will be set up directly across from the presentation rooms. See the latest agenda HERE but check SOBA’s website often for the most up-to-date information. In general:

DAY 1 (August 28) — Federal Aid training and updates; opening reception at the William Jack Hernandez Hatchery.

DAY 2 & 3 (August 29–30) — Educational sessions and presentations; topics will relate to engineering, CVA, BIG, invasive species, and environmental compliance and resource impacts. Awards luncheon and banquet on August 30.

DAY 4 (August 31) — Boating access projects site trip out of the port of Whittier via tour boat.

Information to Remember

USE OF USFWS FUNDS TO HELP YOU ATTEND THE CONFERENCE  
SOBA reminds conference attendees that certain costs are eligible under USFWS grants (Boating Access, CVA), in particular, memberships and certain conference costs. See the applicable OMB Circular for more details.

LACY NICHOLS EDUCATION FUND:  
Did you know that you can use the Lacy Nichols Education Fund to help you attend the conference? Click HERE for more detail.

If you have any items you would to donate any items to the Silent Auction benefiting the Lacy Nichols Education Fund, or you would like to sponsor any part of the conference, please contact Paul Cyr (paul.cyr@alaska.gov) or Libby Yranski (lyranski@nmma.org).

2017 ANNUAL AWARDS NEW CRITERIA AND FORM — ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS  
by Preston Smith, Awards Chair
SOBA is accepting nominations for the 2017 Awards Program through **May 31**. Nominations should be forwarded to **Preston Smith**, Preston.Smith@vdh.virginia.gov, (804) 864-7468. SOBA has revamped its awards categories to reflect all of the hard work and programs conducted by SOBA’s membership. Nominations are being accepted for the following awards:

- The William H. Ivers Award
- Outstanding Service Award
- Professional Service Award
- Special Recognition Award
- State Program Excellence Awards**
- Outstanding Project Awards**
- President’s Project Award**

**Represents new criteria or award categories

SOBA has also created a new simpler uniform nomination form for all categories. For a complete description of the awards, their criteria and the NEW nomination form, please click here.

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**NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2018 BOARD OF DIRECTORS ARE NOW BEING ACCEPTED**

by Janine Belleque, Nominating Committee Chair

SOBA is currently seeking candidate nominations for at-large Board Member positions. Individuals nominated to serve on the SOBA board must be a member and be able to secure a letter of support from the director of the member state agency. Please consider serving on the Board and submitting a nomination for the 2018 SOBA Board. Nominations close Monday June 1st, 2017. Please send your nominations to Janine Belleque, SOBA Past President and Chair of SOBA’s Nominating Committee: Janine.Belleque@oregon.gov. For more information please click here.

**Nominations should include the following information:**

1. Name of Nominee, address and contact information (including email address);
2. Brief statement outlining why the nominee would like to be a board member;
3. Short background editorial on the candidate in question (work history, boating access experience/interests, etc.); and
4. Reference (optional).

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**2017 SOBA MEMBERSHIP DUES REMINDER**

2017 SOBA Membership dues were mailed in November. If you don’t know if your organization/state has paid, haven’t submitted payment or if you need another copy of your invoice, credit card link or any other information, please contact Nakia Rounsaville at nrounsaville@nmma.org or 312-946-6264. Membership dues must be paid in order to receive the member price for registration at the conference.

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**RBFF NATIONAL BOAT RAMP DATABASE**

by Ron Christofferson
As you may be aware, one of the goals of the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) is to develop a comprehensive database of boat ramps across the nation as a service to the boating public and state agencies. In addition to making it easier to find a boat ramp in your area, or when visiting from another state, the RBFF web pages provide a conduit for sending visitors to the individual state agency web pages for more specific information. SOBA is in the process of assisting RBFF with the collection of basic data on boat ramps nationwide. An earlier trial effort with four test states was very successful, resulting in an additional 2,200 boat ramps being added to the RBFF database, which was an overall increase of 60% for the subject states.

The importance and function of the RBFF database and websites was made even more obvious when it was reported that over 96,000 visitors last year had been referred to state agency web sites specifically for the purpose of registering watercraft. With over 6 million views annually of RBFF digital mapping of where to boat and fish, our collective effort to improve and expand the database is a win-win opportunity for every state. As a member of SOBA, if you receive a request to assist with this effort by providing some basic boat ramp data, I strongly encourage you to take the time to help fulfill this project, which ultimately benefits your own state. Please contact Ron Christofferson for more information.

USFWS UPDATE
by Brad Gunn

Happy spring everyone! We hope you get ample opportunities to spend some time afield and on the water as the season progresses! Here’s some of what’s going on with the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) Boating Grant Programs.

Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG)

The BIG program offers two levels of funding, Tier 1 and Tier 2. Tier 1 may be competitive within the States and provides a maximum Federal award of $200,000 per State annually. The Service Director makes final grant selections for Tier 1 and Tier 2 funding. Twenty-nine States and/or territories requested a total of $5,193,291 in BIG Tier 1 funds to fund 39 applications and offered a total non-Federal cost share of $2,939,787. All 39 applications have been recommended for funding.

Tier 2 funds are nationally competitive and typically for larger-scale projects with a maximum Federal award of $1.5 million per grant. Tier 2 applications are reviewed and ranked by a committee made up of Service WSFR grant specialists and industry and state representatives assembled by the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council (Council). WSFR and Council rankings are weighted equally when preparing recommendations for funding to the Service Director. This year we received 26 eligible Tier 2 projects from 12 States. Ten projects were recommended for a total Federal share of $8,587,429 and non-Federal cost share of $9,172,637. The Tier 2 projects are estimated to contribute approximately 400 new, renovated or newly protected slips, plus other amenities—including restrooms, showers, wave attenuators, and navigational aids—for the use and enjoyment of the transient recreational boating public. Formal announcement of the awards are expected in April.
Clean Vessel Act (CVA)

The FY 2017 Clean Vessel Act (CVA) applications have been reviewed and scored by WSFR staff. We sent our recommendations to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Coast Guard for their review. Their responses are due by April 7. We will address any input they have and send the CVA award approval documents forward to the Service Director. The CVA award announcement is scheduled for May 17, 2017 at the American Boating Congress meeting.

ONLINE PROJECT ASSISTANCE FROM FWS NOW AVAILABLE IN FLORIDA

by Victoria Foster, National IPaC Coordinator, USFWS

Florida boaters and marine event coordinators can now receive 24-hour online assistance with planning projects through the Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) website. IPaC is an online tool which provides information on protected species and habitat that may occur in a specific area.

In December 2016, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) introduced a new IPaC feature—an online list of questions to determine whether projects comply with the current FWS’ Florida Manatee Key (2013, Florida wide) and Guidance to Proceed with Marine Events Authorized by the U.S. Coast Guard (2016, South Florida only).

Qualified projects receive a consistency letter from IPaC which can be submitted with the Federal permit application to streamline the project review process.

For more information, visit IPaC at https://ecos.fws.gov/ipac/. A short video showing the new feature can be found at the top of the IPaC homepage or here.

WSFR COORDINATORS MEETING, LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS

by Scott Meister

The Southeast Region’s 45th Annual Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) Program Coordinators’ Meeting was held in Little Rock, Arkansas March 27–30, 2017.

The 3-day meeting began Monday evening with a welcome social at the Old State House. Tuesday morning kicked off early with a trio of USFWS leaders including Southeast Regional Director Cynthia Dohner, Deputy Assistant Director Bob Curry, and Southeast Region WSFR Program Chief Mike Piccirilli. Director Dohner emphasized the strong partnerships in Region 4 between the states and USFWS, stressing that maintaining these relationships was a core goal moving forward. Director Curry provided his priorities for 2017 which include reducing the backlog of audit findings, developing a strategic communication plan for WSFR, evaluation of WSFR administrative funding needs, and finalizing an agreement with states on the future of TRACS enhancement. Chief Piccirilli wrapped up the session with great data on WSFR accomplishments including
maintaining 1900 boat ramps, 90 shooting/archery ranges, producing 5 million fish in 41 hatcheries, and reaching 142,000 students through aquatic education.

Tuesday brought detailed training from Ryan Oster of the USFWS National Conservation Training Center on a wide range of topics including budget justifications, indirect costs, and sub-award details. The day’s session was wrapped up with an open-ended questions and answer session with Chief Piccirilli, giving states the opportunity to address any topic of concern. A productive end to a productive day.

A large portion of Wednesday’s sessions gave the state of Arkansas the opportunity to highlight the incredible work that is being done on the ground with WSFR funds including a look at Chronic Wasting Disease in Arkansas deer, an overview of river basin studies in the state, fish hatchery efforts and advances, and the opportunities provided for waterfowl hunting thanks to Green Tree Reservoirs. In contrast to the terrestrial Arkansas projects, Director Ruth Gomez and her staff from the US Virgin Islands provided an excellent series of four presentations on WSFR work in the islands including expansion of boat access sites, utilization of Fish Attracting Devices, current aquatic education & outreach initiatives, and the hard work being done to protect the masked booby. Wednesday’s agenda wrapped up with separate 2-hour breakout sessions of Wildlife Restoration/State Wildlife Grants, Sport Fish Restoration, and a Fiscal session led by Sherry Martin, USFWS.

Looking to the future, WSFR staff promise to keep us all updated moving forward. After such a well planned and executed 3-days I can’t wait until next year when the Southeast Region puts our heads together again over the greatest conservation program in history.

SPORT FISHING AND BOATING PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL UPDATE

by Scott Kovarovich, Council chair

The long standing partnership between the Department of the Interior and the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council (Council) was solidified further on March 2, 2017 when Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke issued Secretarial Order 3347 on his very first day in office. Among other items, the Secretarial Order requests input from the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council on recommendations to enhance and expand access to public lands and waters and improve habitat for fish and wildlife. More information on the Secretarial Order can be found on the Department’s web site (www.doi.gov).

The Council met via teleconference in January to review and approve recommendations from its BIG Tier II Ranking Subcommittee. The Council’s subcommittee members met jointly with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program staff members to review BIG Tier II proposals in early December. After the full Council’s approval, the funding recommendations were forwarded to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for consideration within the final project selection.

A major focus of the Council at its November 2016 meeting was development of recommendations for the new Administration concerning boating and angling.

The next Council meeting will be held in June in Washington, DC. SOBA members are encouraged to contact Janine Belleque with possible agenda topics. One of the likely
topics will be an update on the continued efforts of the Council's pilot project to improve the boat access permitting processes with federal agencies. On the west coast, Janine has worked closely with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to increase knowledge of boat access construction processes and terminology. On the east coast, John Sprague has continued to work with federal agencies in Florida to improve the process. Partly as a result of this, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Florida office has made some recent improvements in their processes that is resulting in efficiencies. I encourage you to read the newsletter article "Online Project Assistance from FWS Now Available in Florida" and share it within your states. The Council believes actions such as this will improve the federal permitting process.

The Council looks forward to continuing to work closely with SOBA to expand access for boating nationwide.

ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES UPDATE
by Ryan Roberts

The Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies is proud to announce that Project WILD has joined the Association. Project WILD was previously run by the Council for Environmental Education (CEE). The Project WILD brand (Project WILD, Project WILD Aquatic, Flying WILD, and Growing Up WILD) brings conservation education through more than 30,000 educators per year, promoting responsible stewardship of natural resources in the United States and several other countries. http://www.projectwild.org/

2016 Annual Report

2016 was a year of value — value to partners and value to North American Conservation. You can see this theme throughout this year's Annual Report.

You'll also see throughout its pages highlighted efforts about the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish & Wildlife Resources, and reflecting the four strategic goals of the Association: (1) Fish & Wildlife Funding, (2) Policy and Legislative Advocacy, (3) Coordinated Conservation Initiatives, and (4) Membership Support and Coordination.

60 in 60 Toolkit Launched to Increase Fishing Participation

The Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF) announces the release of its 60 in 60 Toolkit. The Toolkit, which includes research, best-practices and free resources, aims to help fishing and boating stakeholders increase participation from the current 46 million anglers to 60 million anglers by 2021, contributing to gains in boating and conservation.

RBFF UPDATE
by Stephanie Vatalaro

Increased participation in fishing and boating greatly benefits the industry. With that in mind, the Recreational Boating &
States Organization for Boating Access

Fishing Foundation kicked off its 60 in 60 goal in 2016 to increase the current angler base of 46 million to 60 million in 60 months (by 2021). Since its inception, the goal has gained significant support from key industry organizations and influencers.

Knowing that the 60 in 60 goal will take a concerted effort from the entire industry, RBFF has released key resources to assist industry and state agency stakeholders recruit, retain and reactivate (R3) more anglers and boaters to help make the 60 in 60 goal a reality. A new 60 in 60 Toolkit includes all the necessary information, resources and state-by-state goals to maintain consistency across the industry and bring us closer to 60 million participating anglers. Head to TakeMeFishing.org/60in60 to learn more.

State Boat Registration Marketing Program Launches

Now in its sixth year, RBFF’s successful Boat Registration Marketing Program launched on April 1. The 2017 program will again utilize letters encouraging owners of lapsed boats in 19 partnering states, with Illinois joining this year’s program, to re-register their boats.

Through the 2016 program, over 50,000 boats were re-registered across 18 states. Both response rate and lift were high, 10.97% and 7.57%, respectively. In all, $1.92 million in gross revenue was collected, directly benefiting the states who partnered with RBFF on the program. As a result, it’s estimated that over $152,000 in Sport Restoration and Boating Trust Fund dollars were contributed by this program.

More information on the Boat Registration Marketing Program and how you can get involved can be found in the RBFF Resource Center.

RBFF Releases Retention and Reactivation Toolkits

Effective recruitment, retention and reactivation (R3) efforts are critical to the sustainability of the fishing and boating industry. To support stakeholders in implementing their own R3 efforts, RBFF has developed two new toolkits. The Direct Mail & Email Marketing Toolkit to Reactivate Lapsed Anglers takes lessons learned from RBFF’s Fishing License Marketing Program and packages all the necessary resources into an easy-to-use toolkit. Similarly, the First-Time Buyers Retention Email Campaign Toolkit is the result of RBFF’s 2015 partnership with the Georgia Wildlife Resources Division on a program to target new anglers with the hopes of creating lifelong anglers.

Learn more about the toolkits, which can be applied to your boating programs, and by visiting the RBFF Resource Center.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE UPDATE

by Corita Water
**Could the National Park Service Help on Your River?**

A great idea for improving the economy, environment, and health in your community might be ready to take off! If you envision a trail, river, or park project where you live, the National Park Service might be able to help. That's right — the people who bring you America's national parks, like Yellowstone and Shenandoah, also help Americans protect and enhance the things that can make their own communities great.

A national network of professionals in conservation and recreation planning is ready to work with community groups, nonprofits, tribes, and state and local governments to design new trails and parks, conserve and improve access to rivers, and create new recreation opportunities.

Locally-driven applications are being accepted until June 30. See program details and apply now [nps.gov/rtca](http://nps.gov/rtca).

**Become Part of the National Water Trails System**

Do you manage a water trail that deserves national recognition? Water trail managers around the country all play an integral role in the success of the National Water Trails System. You, too, can contribute by proposing a water trail for designation.

Applications for designation should be submitted by November 1 and May 1 each year; edits can be completed on a continual basis. Applications are reviewed by a team of water trail specialists and agency representatives. Successful applications demonstrate the implementation of best management practices. The recommended trail nominations are forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior for review and designation.

Submit your application at [www.nps.gov/WaterTrails/](http://www.nps.gov/WaterTrails/)

**BOAT U.S. UPDATE**

by Susan Shingledecker

Spring is always a busy time at Boat U.S. as boaters around the country are gearing up for boating season.

Our Government Affairs team has been busy with federal and state issues. On the federal side we are watching the priorities of the new administration as revealed by the recent budget proposal. The good news for SOBA programs is we feel the structure of the trust fund keeps these core programs stable, though we recognize how other cuts could impact boating programs. To date, ethanol issues and the renewable fuel standard has not been at the forefront, but we expect to see more movement on that in the summer. It is a busy time of year for state legislative activity and our team is engaged in state issues around the country. One trend we have seen is a few states (CA, OR and HI) looking at repealing the second home mortgage interest deduction — which can impact boating. As always if you hear of legislative issues in your state and are looking for the boater perspective feel free to reach out to us at [govtaffairs@boatus.com](mailto:govtaffairs@boatus.com)

Over at our nonprofit Boat U.S. Foundation for Boating Safety and Clean Water we have lots of exciting work going on.
• Did you know last summer with the help of our towers we removed two derelict fishing nets from the offshore from Ocean City, MD? [https://p.widencdn.net/pndepx/00002_1](https://p.widencdn.net/pndepx/00002_1) This Spring and Summer we will be working to remove a derelict vessel as well as part of our grant from the NOAA Marine Debris program. The vessel we initially targeted is playing hide and seek, so we are looking for another opportunity preferable in the Great Lakes or other Coastal areas. If you know of a good opportunity contact us at cleanboating@boatus.com

• Have you seen our Boat Burn report and videos? We wanted to explore how quickly boat fires spread with this hand’s on test and give boaters some lessons learned about onboard fires. Get a first-hand look at the test with this video

• Boat U.S. is pleased to be able to bring hands-on training opportunities to more boaters. This year we partnered with Discover Boating to offer hands on training in both power and sailboats at the Miami Boat show. The initial feedback was very strong and we are exploring other avenues to help make boaters safer and more confident with more robust training opportunities.

• We have exciting news about our free online course — it is now approved to meet California’s new education requirements. If you have already taken that course check our our free Clean Boating course. Also, applications are available for our Grassroot Grants and Life Jacket Loaner Programs. Course and other program information can be found at [www.boatus.org](http://www.boatus.org)

Lastly, BoatU.S. has a new mobile app with a number of new features including a map to locate the closest life jacket loaner sites. Did you know the fastest way to call from a tow on the water is by using the mobile app? You can find it in the Android or Apple stores.

### AMI UPDATE

by Eric Kretsch

Since our last update in December, the Association of Marina Industries (AMI) held its annual International Marina and Boat Yard Conference (IMBC) in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Those attending IMBC saw great attendance and early reactions to keynote speakers and seminars indicate this was a very successful year. In other news, the International Marina Institute (IMI) is extending its reach by offering classes in a greater variety of locations; National Marina Day has a new partner; AMI’s Legislative Committee is ramping up for the American Boating Congress; and the 2017 Wage Rate Survey is still available for participation by U.S. and Canadian marinas.

AMI would like to thank all attendees of the 2017 IMBC and would truly appreciate that any attendees complete a conference evaluation survey. This survey was sent to all attendees via email, but for more information please contact Kayce Florio at kflorio@marinaassociation.org.

The International Marina Institute (IMI) held, for the first time since 2008, a West Coast IMM course in Seattle. Students learned from experts in many fields related to successful marina management as well as toured multiple marinas on Puget Sound. This August, IMI will be visiting the “Land of 10,000 Lakes”, Minneapolis, MN to hold an Intermediate Marina Manager course. The course will be held August 13–17, 2017; the
IMM course brings you one step closer to becoming (or employing) a Certified Marina Manager (CMM). For more information on the August IMM course please contact Merritt Alves at malves@marinaassociation.org.

This summer, National Marina Day will be National Marina Days: Summer of Giving. Held from Memorial Day to Labor Day, marinas are encouraged to plan events that celebrate boating while giving back to any charity they choose. AMI is proud to suggest Folds of Honor, a charity dedicated to providing the families of America’s fallen and disabled service-members with educational scholarships, as our recommended charity. To find out more about National Marina Days: Summer of Giving please contact Michelle Umberger at mumberger@marinaassociation.org or visit nationalmarinaday.org.

In May, AMI is co-hosting the National Marine Manufacturers Association’s (NMMA) American Boating Congress (ABC) along with several other boating organizations. AMI will be holding a Legislative Committee meeting during the event open to any AMI member that is attending the ABC. This meeting will focus on federal legislative priorities for the 115th Congress. If you are an AMI member and have any questions regarding ABC or AMI’s Legislative Committee please contact Eric Kretsch at ekretsch@marinaassociation.org.

Finally, the 2017 Wage Rate Survey is still open for participation by marinas and will be open until April 21st. This survey is produced in partnership with Marina Dock Age Magazine. This year marinas located in Canada are encouraged to participate. Given participation is high enough AMI will release a 2017 Canadian Wage Rate Report. This survey is intended to provided marina managers the means to compare the salaries of their employees to others in the same region across the US and Canada. To participate please visit here. If you have any questions please contact Eric Kretsch at ekretsch@marinaassociation.org.

IMPACT OF DISCOVER BOATING CAMPAIGN ASSESSED DURING GROW BOATING SUMMIT

Members of the Grow Boating Board of Directors, the National Marine Manufacturers Association’s (NMMA) Boat, Engine, and Marine Accessory and Component Division Boards, the Marine Retailers Association of Americas (MRAA) Board of Directors, and invited guests, unanimously agreed to continue the industry-funded marketing campaign—Discover Boating—due to its ability and impact in attracting new boaters while providing strategic direction to evolve the program. The decision was made during a two-day Grow Boating Summit in December.

Throughout the two-day Summit, which was partially underwritten by Wells Fargo Commercial Distribution Finance, the group learned from leading researchers and marketing experts from outside and within the marine industry on new boat sales and the overall economy, consumers’ buying behavior and shifts in expectations, marketing trends and impacts, and how the Discover Boating campaign has performed during the past decade.

To learn more about key insights from the Grow Boating summit, click here for the full press release.
Register for American Boating Congress — We Need Your Voice on Capitol Hill!

Hundreds of recreational boating industry professionals are expected to descend upon Capitol Hill May 15–17, 2017 to attend the American Boating Congress (ABC), and we're calling on you to join us. ABC 2017 will provide attendees the opportunity to meet with the Trump Administration and the 115th Congress, in addition to network with fellow industry advocates, take part in a series of new issue workshops and meet with key policy makers as part of the program's 'Hill visits'.

NOTE: If you're a past attendee and haven't received a personalized registration link or are new to ABC and interested in attending, visit http://www.nmma.org/government/abc/registration.

President Trump Orders EPA to Rescind Controversial “Waters of the U.S.” Rule

President Donald Trump issued an executive order directing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to start a formal review of the “Waters of the United States” (WOTUS) rule, which expands the number of waterways federally protected under the Clean Water Act. The executive action to fix the WOTUS rule comes after a highly contentious fight which pitted agriculture, environmental, real estate developers and manufacturing interests.

“Safety Risks in Shared Waterways” Report Addresses Paddle Craft Safety

The National Transportation Safety Board has released Safety Risks in Shared Waterways, a report recommending several changes to reduce the risks associated with crowded waterways, particularly where paddlers and commercial vessels use the same areas. The report investigates ways to improve safety for paddlers because of a rising number of near-misses and strikes by commercial vessels unable to avoid or see canoers, kayakers, and standup paddle boarders. Paddle craft have increased by nearly 22 percent between 2008 and 2014. The diversity of waterway users and their differences in experience, navigational knowledge, and boat-handling skills exacerbate the safety risk. The report’s recommendations address the need to identify and mitigate risks associated with shared waterways and training and education for recreational vessel operators.

Trump’s Budget Blueprint and Potential Impact to Boating Industry

President Trump’s FY 2018 Budget Blueprint was released last month, with full budget details expected in May. The FY2018 budget, if enacted, would offset a ten percent increase in defense spending ($603 billion) with a ten percent decrease in non-defense spending ($462 billion), which includes a $1.5 billion (11.7 percent) decrease for the Department of Interior (DOI), a $1 billion cut for the Army Corps of Engineers (16.3 percent), and a reduction of $2.6 billion (31.4 percent) for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), departments which have a significant impact on the recreational boating industry.

DOI Budget Summary

The DOI is responsible for managing branches that impact the boating community including National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These departments
are integral to providing boating access within the National Park System, promoting fish
habitat restoration, and the disbursement of dollars to state agencies through the $600
million Sport Fish and Restoration Boating Trust Fund.

The budget proposal includes reducing funding for acquiring Federal land by more than
$120 million and outlines that available discretionary funds would instead be focused
on investing in and maintaining existing national parks, refuges, and public lands.
Further cuts include the National Wildlife Refuge fund ($480 million), which maintains
the Fish and Wildlife Service’s 563 wildlife refuges throughout the country and
important destinations of recreation for outdoor enthusiasts.

While the proposed $1.5 billion decrease in spending will make new projects difficult
and hardly begin to tackle the $12 billion maintenance backlog in the National Park
System, NMMA is hopeful the DOI will reach out to stakeholders for innovative public
private partnerships and new ways to engage and attract outdoor enthusiasts.

**EPA Budget Summary**

The budget proposal recommends eliminating more than 50 EPA programs and grants.
Cuts to the EPA could impact the Clean Water Programs throughout the country,
monitoring point and non-point pollution sources in fresh and salt water, Great Lakes
Restoration, the Chesapeake Bay Restoration, invasive species and emission levels
and standards.

The budget proposal also eliminates the beach monitoring program, which monitors
water quality, bacterial concentrations and has the authority to close beaches if they
impact human health.

Clean and accessible water is essential to recreational boating, especially in the Great
Lakes where threats of invasive species are real and in the Chesapeake Bay, where
boating is a popular pastime and contributes to tourism and the local economy.

The budget does propose increased investment in water infrastructure systems
including $2.3 billion to the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds, a
$4 million increase, or roughly two percent, over 2017 levels. It would also fund the
Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act program at $20 million, level with the
amount provided in 2017 through the continuing resolution last December.

**Department of Commerce (NOAA and NMFS) Budget Summary**

The budget proposes the elimination of over $250 million in targeted NOAA grants and
programs related to coastal and marine management, research, and education. Cuts to
NOAA would impact scientific research such as ocean surveys and estuarine research.
Specific cuts to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) are still unknown but
could negatively affect saltwater fishing policy, regulation and monitoring. The
President’s budget proposal includes eliminating the SeaGrant program, which
supports pragmatic research and grants on the country’s bodies of water.

The growth of the 11 million saltwater recreational anglers and its inherent ties to
recreational boating make NMFS of particular importance to our industry and an
agency NMMA looks forward to continuing engagement.

NMMA will continue to monitor the budget process as it unfolds on Capitol Hill,
including the looming April 28 deadline for the FY 18 budget. Contact Nicole Vasilaros