President's Message

Dear SOBA Members and Partners:
I'm hoping the snow has stopped until next winter and we can all start to enjoy spring and look forward to a busy boating season. It is amazing how fast the months fly by and how quickly the 2014 National Boating Access Conference "Setting the Right Course" is approaching. Tom Jones and his Arkansas team are busy organizing an agenda that will be educational and beneficial to your work with boating access. Watch for updates via the SOBA ListServ, and for updated postings of conference information as it becomes available. Take note to check in every so often on SOBA's website at www.sobaus.org. SOBA 2014: October 6–9, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Online registration will be offered for our Arkansas conference, which we hope will simplify the registration process, improve efficiency and reduce the margin for errors. We hope to launch this by the time you are reading this newsletter, so keep an eye out for separate notification in your emails. You can make your hotel reservations immediately with the Wyndham Riverfront — click here for online booking, and be sure to scroll down the page to access SOBA's conference portal.

As a reminder, the Lacy "Nick" Nichols Education Fund is available to help offset your travel costs or bring a second person to the 2014 National Boating Access Conference. This is an excellent resource if you are having difficulty securing finance to attend SOBA's conference. The Lacy E. "Nick" Nichols Education Fund provides a resource to members who have a desire to further their knowledge and expertise in boating access and related issues through continuing education, who are in good standing, and who have made contributions to SOBA in some way. Please promote this resource among your colleagues to encourage participation in Arkansas. We have streamlined the application process for ease of use — click HERE for more information. If you have questions, or would like to discuss this further, contact Craig Walker at craigwalker@utah.gov

The current reauthorization of the Sport Fish Restoration & Boating Trust Fund (Trust Fund) will expire in September 2014. The Trust Fund is a small part of the Federal Highway Bill. SOBA has been very fortunate to have James Adams participate on the Steering Committee with the Angling and Boating Alliance (ABA). SOBA is one of twelve members on this Committee who have worked together to develop a Coordinated Statement on the reauthorization of the Trust Fund. Because the Trust Fund is such a small portion of the overall Bill, most people are unaware that it is a part of the Bill. If you can, please reach out to your elected officials, local boating and fishing organizations and individuals who directly benefit from the Trust Fund, and educate and inform them on the status and importance of this Trust Fund. As the Federal Highway Bill moves through Congress, we will work to keep members updated using the SOBA ListServ.

The SOBA board of directors hosted their spring 2014 board meeting in Denver, Colorado, to coincide with the North American Wildlife & Natural Resources Conference. This gave us the opportunity to meet with AFWA's Executive Board of Directors, and some senior FWS personnel. We had two excellent meetings which fostered further discussions and plans on how SOBA can partner more effectively on joint initiatives with both these groups, to advance SOBA's mission.

SOBA will shortly be sending out its 2014 "Call of Board Members". Being a Board member is extremely rewarding both professionally and personally. Board members help the organization face new challenges arising from reauthorization, contribute to nationally renowned technical resources, help shape how federal programs are administered, work with the leaders of other boating industry organizations, and affect long-term positive change within the world of boating access. Please give thought to running for a board seat, or pass along the name of someone whom you think might be interested. I am honored to be part of SOBA's board. Its members are a group of highly motivated, passionate people interested in improving, expanding, and promoting boating access. Since I joined the board in 2011, I have learnt much from my peers, and have forged strong, long lasting connections and relationships that will benefit SOBA now and into the future. Being a board member has also allowed me to build up a network of friends and colleagues from coast to coast. I cannot tell you how rewarding the experience has been, and I encourage you strongly to consider running for a board seat.
The SOBA Board is always looking for ways to improve communications among its colleagues, share expert knowledge and develop guidelines, best management practices or other technical documents to benefit our members and ultimately the boaters. If you have ideas, suggestions or would like to participate on a task force or committee, please contact me. I would love to hear from you. Finally, I look forward to seeing many of you in North Little Rock in October.

Janine Belleque: SOBA President
janine.belleque@state.or.us

Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council Update — Spring 2014
by Thom Dammrich, President

Spring 2014 is finally here. At least that is what I keep telling myself. Fortunately things have thawed out enough for the annual dyeing of the Chicago River for St. Patrick’s Day. I am also happy to report that this also brought out a large smile on the face of SOBA’s Executive Director Bernice McArdle.

2014 is promising to be a busy year for the Council and also one of change. The current Council term is set to expire soon and we are awaiting appointment decisions by the Secretary of the Interior. Many current Council members requested reappointment. There will be new faces, though, as some members will not be returning. Roy Eicker, Director of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, will be missed. His duties as Director keep him constantly busy, and his work in representing coastal states during his stint over 2 Council terms was very much appreciated. Ryck Lydecker, Assistant Vice President for Government Affairs at BoatUS has retired and is looking forward to enjoying time with his wife, children and grandchildren. While they each made significant contributions to the Council during their tenure, I would be remiss to not specifically recognize Ryck for his commitment to and participation on the Council since his initial appointment in 2000. Over his years of service on the Council, Ryck was a tireless advocate for recreational boating and the programs at the Fish and Wildlife Service that help provide the infrastructure to support boating opportunities. I am pleased that SOBA recognized Ryck’s efforts by awarding him the Outstanding Service Award previously. With some luck of the Irish, the Council will be reappointed by the time this newsletter is published.

The Council remains very busy and engaged in many activities. Most prominently, we are currently completing an assessment of the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation. This is the Council’s fourth assessment of RBFF. An important part of this is soliciting feedback from state agencies and other stakeholders. We are working through AFWA and state agency directors to get this information out to a wide range of stakeholders, not just those agency stakeholders that are participating in RBFF’s lapsed angler and boating registration efforts. The assessment is schedule to be completed by June. The Council’s Boating Infrastructure Grant Program subcommittee met jointly with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service representatives in Atlanta to review fiscal year 2014 proposals. There were 24 proposals submitted and their requests exceeded the available funds. The Council approved funding recommendations and forwarded them to the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service for his consideration.

The Council remains actively involved in several national issues, including helping promote the development of a national outdoor recreation policy, advising the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation, and also participating in aspects of the Fish and Wildlife Service’s National Wildlife Refuge visioning process to ensure that anglers and boaters are represented in the strategic vision for refuge system.

Finally, it is with mixed feelings that we learned that longtime SFBPC Coordinator Doug Hobbs is transitioning into other responsibilities with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Doug has represented the Council well for many years in this role and I am proud that SOBA chose to recognize him for his efforts at SOBA’s annual meeting last fall in Portland. Doug’s service will be missed but he has agreed to help transition his replacement, Brian Bohnsack. Many Council members have worked with Brian in his role as the FWS liaison to the RBFF. We look forward to Brian picking up where Doug left
Angling and Boating Alliance finalizes position on Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund reauthorization

The Angling and Boating Alliance (ABA) recently completed a nearly year-long process to establish its policy positions regarding reauthorization of the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, which must be either reauthorized or extended by the end of this September. The ABA is an ad hoc coalition of national recreational boating, angling, outdoor recreation interests, conservation groups, and state boating safety and natural resources agencies committed to the sustainable future of the Sport Fish Restoration & Boating Trust Fund ("Trust Fund").

The mission of the Alliance is to protect the Trust Fund, lead a national advocacy effort for the Trust Fund's reauthorization as part of the Federal Highway Bill during the 113th Congress, and communicate the importance of the fund to the Administration. The Alliance has reached consensus agreement on reauthorization priorities and statutory changes to ensure the Trust Fund's continued vitality and success as a "user pays, public benefits" program.

If accepted by Congress and enacted into law, ABA's policy positions will result in increases in the total Recreational Boating Safety account and the distribution to the states as well as increases in the total Sport Fish Restoration account and distribution to the states; an increase in the distribution to Clean Vessel Act program and the Boating Infrastructure Grant program. The ABA proposal presents both a consensus of the angling and boating stakeholders and quite simply, a better way to do Trust Fund business. NMMA will keep members apprised regularly of our progress over the next several months. Questions? Contact Jeff Gabriel at jgabriel@nmma.org.

News from the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies:
by Ron Reagan

It was good to see many of you in Portland, Oregon last fall at SOBA's Annual National Boating Access Conference and, more recently, to meet with members of the SOBA Board in Denver in mid-March, during the AFWA conference. By continuing to strengthen the partnership between SOBA and AFWA, we will make great strides to advance the conservation of our nation's fish and wildlife resources and how it is funded, and to achieve our shared participation goals.

Let me focus my update on two major developments at the Association. First, we are implementing a comprehensive legal strategy in keeping with AFWA's 2013–2015 Strategic Plan. By that, I mean we are laying the foundation for engaging legal issues with more focused consideration through the development of a brief bank; a law practicum in partnership with a law school; training opportunities for practicing lawyers and judges; and development of pro bono law practice relationships.

In sum, we want to bring the same credible voice to the legal dimension of governance in this country that we have done with our work on Capitol Hill and with federal agencies—all in support of the Public Trust Doctrine and the unique management contributions of state fish and wildlife agencies for long-term public benefit, use and support.

Secondly, the Association is standing up a Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources. We are excited that this initiative will be co-chaired by John L. Morris, founder of Bass Pro Shops, and Dave Freudenthal, former Wyoming governor.

The Blue Ribbon Panel will comprise visionary leaders from the conservation community, recreational business and extractive resource industries. We trust our Panel will chart a national course for completing the sustainable wildlife funding equation in this country. We will announce the list of invited panelists in the coming months.
Finally, we just published AFWA’s Annual Report for 2013, which vividly portrays our work on a host of national conservation issues. Inside the pages, we delve into the questions, “Why AFWA? Why Now?” and we share our perspectives on why our organization does not and cannot rest on its 100+ year history. To receive a printed copy, please contact Laura MacLean at lmaclean@fishwildlife.org or click on the Annual Report link from AFWA’s web site at www.fishwildlife.org to download it.

Thank you for this opportunity to share some thoughts from the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies.

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**Enhancing Fishing Access through a National Assessment of Recreational Boating Access:**

*Project Update from James Adams*

As SOBA’s Project Manager for this important initiative, I am happy to report that SOBA (and its partners) have completed the above national assessment. The third year of applying to the AFWA Multi-State Conservation Grant Program for funding yielded an award for us in January 2013! Thanks to Responsive Management for working alongside us for all three applications: our efforts (and patience) resulted in an excellent outcome. The final report is being completed as you read this, and SOBA will notify you within the next few weeks to advise you when you can view the report online.

Thanks are extended to SOBA’s partners for helping us complete this project:

- Mark Duda: Responsive Management
- Thom Dammrich: National Marine Manufacturers Association
- Frank Peterson: Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation
- Ryck Lydecker: Boat US and
- Wendy Larimer: Association of Marina Industries.

The project had 4 objectives:

1. Determine whether a lack of boating access has contributed to the decline in boating/fishing participation.
2. Provide a baseline assessment of the adequacy and availability of, obstacles and challenges to, and priorities for boating access against which future access improvements can be measured.
3. Develop recommendations and strategies for improving access that address the key access-related factors limiting participation among boaters, anglers, and other outdoor recreationists.
4. Design an assessment tool (such as a survey) to evaluate boating access that can be replicated and has universal application but is adaptable in scope and provides strategic guidance for actions by federal, state, and local agencies and NGOs. (e.g., SOBA, RBFF, etc.).

Valuable information was learned from the 6 focus groups and over 3000 telephone surveys to boaters. I will not spoil all the great information that is available in the final report, and the following topics are some of the major themes and findings you will be able to access:

- The importance of boating and boating access
- Satisfaction with boating access
- Amount of boating access
- Quality of boating access
- Specific access problems
- Maintenance of existing access vs. creation of new access

So, please be on the lookout for an email from SOBA’s List Serv shortly, with details on how to access this excellent and useful tool.
WSFR Branch of Policy Update
by Lisa Van Alstyne and Paul VanRyzin

WSFR published a proposed rule for the Boating Infrastructure Grant Program on March 28, 2012. We received 22 responses from the public during the 60-day comment period that ended May 29, 2012. Fifteen of the responses contained comments applicable to the proposed rule and 11 asked for more time to review the proposed rule. Some comments expressed full support and others suggested changes. The comments we received were substantial, but because many commenters requested more time for review we determined that rather than going directly to a final rule, we will publish an amended proposed rule for further public comment.

The amended proposed rule is routing to the Federal Register. We anticipate it will publish before the end of March and give the public a 90-day comment period. When the amended proposed rule publishes, WSFR will distribute instructions for how to comment. States may receive this information through the SOBA List Serv and/or their WSFR Regional Offices.

We need all interested parties to read the amended proposed rule and comment. Your comments make the rule and the program stronger. Comments should include both support and suggestions for changes. We must receive comments through the official channel, as all comments become part of the public record. The Federal government maintains official rulemaking records at www.regulations.gov. You may review the March 2012 proposed rule and comments at: http://www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=FWS-R9-WSR-2011-0083-0001.

We may not discuss comments off the record, but if you have any questions about process, please contact Lisa_Van_Alstyne@fws.gov or Lisa at 703.358.1942.

Boating Infrastructure Grants Update

WSFR appreciates the expertise and dedication of members of both SOBA and the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council in helping review and rank proposals for BIG Tier 2 projects. SOBA President Janine Belleque served on the Council’s ranking committee this year.

Committee members met with WSFR Headquarters and Region staff in Atlanta, Georgia in early February, bringing a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the review process. The Council’s input is combined with WSFR’s analysis provided by Regional program coordinators, resulting in the selection of the highest-quality projects that will have exceptional results for recreational boaters throughout the United States.

Currently, the Committee’s list of recommended BIG Tier 2 projects is being reviewed by Service leadership. We expect to begin notifying states of the awards in early April. With over $14 million to award through Tier 2 this year, we expect approximately 85% of applicants to receive funding. Stay tuned!

CVA Rulemaking

The Service published the Clean Vessel Act final rule March 10, 1994. In June 2008, the Sportfishing and Boating Partnership Council issued a report containing recommendations for improving CVA. We have addressed some recommendations through the Request for Applications, but we need to address others through rulemaking. Congress has also made some legislative changes since 2008, most notably removing the coastal preference. Experience in the program and changing priorities make it necessary for us to update the rules.

Using information gathered over the past several years, we are drafting an updated rule. We will share the first draft within the Service, including WSFR Regional Coordinators. After we address internal comments, we will post the second draft for partner review and comment. We hope to have the first and second drafts out for comment during 2014, targeting a proposed rule in early 2015.
At this time, we are open to comments, concerns, and areas of support from all interested parties. We may freely discuss any aspect of the program or the rulemaking. We plan to present some webinars during the pre-rulemaking process in order to engage a larger audience and allow for a larger discussion. We will also ask for some time during the SOBA Conference for pre-rulemaking discussion. If you have comments or want to talk about anything CVA from now until the proposed rule publishes in the Federal Register, please contact Lisa_Van_Alstyne@fws.gov.

The Clean Vessel Act Program

It is spring, and even though many areas of the country thought that winter may never end, soon boaters will be removing their shrink wrap and getting things "ship shape." States and marinas will also be preparing by getting their pumpouts ready and checking for needed repairs and replacements, as well as areas that need new services. Outreach to boaters will ramp into gear with brochures printing, ads going into magazines, staff preparing for workshops and boat shows, and thoughts given to new ways to use current media to inform and educate boaters on the importance of using pumpout to "Keep Our Waters Clean." This is where the Clean Vessel Act program really goes into action! This is when the public can truly engage in all of the good work the CVA State Coordinators do all year long. This is also when those same Coordinators anxiously await the results of the next round of CVA funding.

The Service received 31 applications from 18 States, requesting over $16.6 million for 2014 Clean Vessel Act funding. Available funding this year is a little over $11.2 million, making 2014 a truly competitive cycle. The applications are currently under review in Headquarters and will then go to the Coast Guard, NOAA, and EPA for a 30-day review period. Following the other agency review, we will forward to the Director for approval. We anticipate an announcement in May 2014.

This year emphasizes the need for States to focus on good applications. As you prepare for a new boating season, we recommend this is a good time to be thinking about your current program and planning for next year's applications. As you implement your programs, think about what is working well and should continue, what are the needs you wish you could fulfill, and if you can add new initiatives that will enhance your current program. Each year, preparing for your applications should begin well before we publish the Request for Applications. Your Regional Coordinators are good resources to assist you in identifying strengths and weaknesses, suggest new or improved methods or approaches, and give you overall advice. Do not be afraid to use the connections you make through SOBA with other State coordinators, as they may be your best friends as you together work for the same goals. Many States start talking and find there are projects they can work on together that strengthen both programs. We have found the CVA group always gives exceptional support to each other and are always willing to share ideas.

WSFR wishes you a successful and fun 2014 boating season!

NOAA Fisheries Commits to Develop a National Recreational Fishing Policy

Spurred on by the sportfishing and boating community, the new policy will better integrate recreational fishing into NOAA Fisheries' mission

WASHINGTON — An announcement by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that NOAA Fisheries will develop a national recreational fishing policy was greeted enthusiastically by sportfishing and boating leaders who have urged the agency to adopt exactly this approach to define and coordinate efforts throughout the federal government, and particularly the National Marine Fisheries Service, to advance saltwater recreational fishing.

NOAA Fisheries' announcement capped off its national 2014 Saltwater Recreational Fishing Summit held April 1–2, in Alexandria, Va. Leaders from the saltwater recreational fishing and boating community met with NOAA Fisheries' leadership to assess recent progress, identify goals and strengthen ties between NOAA and stakeholder groups.

"With the 'Vision for Managing America's Saltwater Recreational Fisheries' report as our guiding
document, we came to the NOAA Summit with a clear vision for where saltwater recreational fisheries management must go,” said American Sportfishing Association President and CEO Mike Nussman. “NOAA is clearly listening, as evidenced by their immediate commitment to accomplish the first goal of the report: to establish a national policy for saltwater recreational fisheries management. We’re looking forward to working with NOAA to accomplish this goal, as well as the other key recommendations presented in the report."

The announcement comes on the heels of a recent series of meetings on Capitol Hill during which the Commission on Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Management, co-chaired by Johnny Morris, founder and CEO, Bass Pro Shops and Maverick Boats President Scott Deal, presented recommendations from "A Vision for Managing America's Saltwater Recreational Fisheries." This new report outlines recreational fisheries management issues that need to be addressed in the congressional reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act, the law that governs the nation's marine resources. Chief among those recommendations is the establishment of a national policy for recreational saltwater fishing.

"In order for our nation to understand and embrace the positive aspects of recreational saltwater fishing in this country — be they the economic, cultural or quality-of-life benefits — our fisheries managers need to have policies and laws that reflect recreational interests," said Deal. "NOAA has demonstrated it is ready to develop those policies."

The commission, composed of anglers, scientists, former agency administrators, conservationists and economists, as well as prominent members of the industry, wants to ensure that saltwater recreational fishing becomes a priority of NOAA’s National Marine Fisheries Service. In 2011, approximately 11 million Americans saltwater fished recreationally, making them one of NOAA’s largest organized constituencies and one with a substantial economic impact.

"America's 11 million saltwater recreational anglers spent $27 billion in 2011, generating more than $70 billion and sustaining 450,000 jobs," said Whit Fosburgh, president and CEO of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. "The importance of this economic sector — and its contributions to fisheries habitat and conservation via excise taxes, donations and license fees — cannot be ignored. We commend NOAA Fisheries for acknowledging it."

Contributors to the work of the commission include the American Sportfishing Association, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Berkley Conservation Institute, Center for Coastal Conservation, Coastal Conservation Association, Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation, International Game Fish Association, National Marine Manufacturers Association, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and The Billfish Foundation, as well as Bass Pro Shops and Maverick Boats.

FOR TWITTER — Use #MarineVision2014 to comment on this landmark report.

Read "A Vision for Managing America's Saltwater Recreational Fisheries."

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**News from RBFF**

by Steve Miller, Wisconsin

The RBFF Board held its winter board meeting (January 2014) in Orlando, Florida at Disney World. The purpose was to see firsthand how the "Disney Strategic Alliance" was progressing. RBFF board members saw how the "Take Me Fishing" brand is placed on boats available for rent, and fishing equipment available for use at the Disney Parks. The Board also received an overview of other Disney and Take Me Fishing related activities via Disney radio and TV and events at local fairs and celebrations. I was greatly impressed at the thousands of people this initiative is touching. I also learned that Disney only has about 40 strategic alliances worldwide so to have one with RBFF is quite impressive.

The Board was also updated on the Hispanic outreach plan initiated in 2013 See this news article for a description of the initiative: [http://news.takemefishing.org/hispanic-pilot-states](http://news.takemefishing.org/hispanic-pilot-states). The Board learned
that RBFF is using "responsive design" technology for its website. This technology allows RBFF to maintain its web site content as it normally would, but then the content is automatically adjusted to fit a mobile device from a smart phone to a tablet. It was interesting to learn that more and more folks are using a smart phone or a tablet as a substitute for a computer for internet access, thus the need to have websites originally designed for a computer to be able to adjust to these mobile devices.

If you haven't ever visited the RBFF website, I encourage you to do so. There is a tremendous about of material on the site, including a boat ramp finder. Here is the web address: http://takemefishing.org/corporate/

And SOBA members and colleagues are encouraged to sign up for RBFF's monthly newsletter "NewsWaves". The March 2014 edition can be found here.

**Interested Candidates Needed for SOBA's 2015 Executive Board of Directors**

SOBA has a seven-member Board, which includes the Past President. Nominations may be submitted for President, Vice President, Treasurer and three Members-At-Large. Terms for officers and at-large positions are one year (renewable) beginning after the annual conference.

A slate of officers and at-large Board members for 2015 will be elected at our annual conference in Little Rock, Arkansas during the business meeting on Wednesday October 8th. The Nominating Committee will select the slate based on nominations received from member states.

Individuals nominated to serve on the SOBA board must a member and be able to secure a letter of support from the director of the member state agency. The SOBA board is a working board and members are expected to participate in monthly conference call meetings, travel to quarterly face-to-face meetings including the annual conference, and take on committee or task force assignments. SOBA will cover your travel, room and stipend for meals for all business meetings. SOBA board members are not paid to be a board member. Serving on the SOBA board is rewarding both professionally and personally. 2015 Board members will help the organization face new challenges arising from reauthorization, contribute to nationally renowned technical resources, help shape how federal programs are administered, work with the leaders of other boating industry organizations, and affect long-term positive change within the world of boating access.

Please consider serving boating access by submitting a nomination to serve on SOBA's board. Nominations close Monday June 9th, 2014. A formal "Call for Board Members" will be distributed under separate cover shortly. If you would like to discuss the role of a board member, please contact President Janine Belleque: jbellegue@osmb.state.or.us or Past President James Adams: James.Adams@dgif.virginia.gov;

**News from the Capitol**

by Lauren Dunn, NMMA

**The American Boating Congress Needs Your Voice!**

Each year, the American Boating Congress (ABC) brings industry leaders like you together to champion recreational boating, formulate public policy and present a unified front on issues that impact marine businesses. In 2013, NMMA members, co-hosts and industry stakeholders completed more than 250 meetings on Capitol Hill! Elected officials listen when their constituents talk. Your voice is our most valuable asset.

Learn more about ABC and why you should attend through articles from two of our cohosts, Soundings Trade Only and Boating Industry Magazine. Are you new to ABC? Welcome! To register, please visit this link. If you have any questions regarding registration, please contact Courtney
New regulations within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary could significantly impact boating and fishing in the Keys

The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) is revising the Sanctuary's rules that regulate boating, fishing and other activities. The FKNMS already designates management zones and areas where boating and fishing are either limited or prohibited. The revised 10-year plan, which will be in place in 2015, will likely enlarge those areas. Michael Belitzky, representing NMMA and PWIA, will be attending the Ecosystem Protection Working Group's public meetings this week, advocating for common-sense, workable boating and fishing regulations that will promote environmental sustainability and protect important marine environments for future generations. The Ecosystem Protection Working Group is developing recommendations for marine zoning which could close or limit fishing and boating areas. Boaters and anglers are concerned that some of the changes under consideration may be counterproductive or overly restrictive. Some of the recommended changes concerning boaters and anglers are:

- Unsupported Boundaries of Expanded Protected Areas: Expanding protected areas will push anglers and boaters into smaller areas, cause heavy congestion and increase conflicts among recreational, commercial, charter fishermen, divers and boaters. The boundaries of the protected areas should be drawn using current data, scientific analysis and economic impacts.

- Unworkable "Special Permit" System: Implementing a special permit system could require boaters and anglers to take tests, display decals and obtain a special fishing stamp to boat and fish within the sanctuary. This unfairly targets recreational users and places a strain on law enforcement that currently operates with limited resources.

- Unenforceable User Fees: Requiring "user fees" ONLY for recreational boaters and anglers is unjust and will be difficult to collect and enforce given the myriad access points.

- Prohibition of Catch-and-Release Fishing In Protected Areas: Creating "no-take zones" within protected areas will hurt anglers, decrease tourism and cause significant economic hardship on businesses in the Keys.

NMMA, working alongside ASA and CCA, has organized a coalition to mobilize boaters and anglers to speak out against more closures, no take zones, special permits and user fees. For a list of upcoming meetings please click here. Questions? Please contact Michael Belitzky at mbelitzky@nmma.org for more information.

NMMA Asks Congress to Provide Critical Operations and Maintenance Support to the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway

NMMA joined the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway Association during its legislative fly-in on February 26 to request that in Fiscal Year 2015 Congress continue the FY 2014 practice of establishing individual allocations for maintenance of navigation projects. The Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway (AIWW) extends almost 1200 miles from Norfolk, Virginia to Miami, Florida. Some lengths consist of natural inlets, saltwater rivers, bays, and sounds; others are man-made canals. As many as 13,000 recreational boaters make the annual migration from the northeast to Florida. A boater will spend an estimated $300 per day leading to thousands of small business jobs for communities along the waterway.

Congress authorized the creation of the AIWW in 1919 with construction of the entire waterway completed in 1940. The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) estimates it can maintain the waterway at a current cost of approximately $20-30 million per year. The USACE is authorized to maintain the waterway at a depth of 12 feet for most of its length, but inadequate funding has prevented that. Shoaling, a serious problem along several sections of the waterway, has created hazardous conditions for boaters and commercial traffic. Several sections have reduced depths ranging as low as two to seven feet.
The AIWA requests that Congress specifically allocate an appropriations line item for additional dredging needs for commercial, low-use inland waterways. Also, NMMA and the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway Association has requested that Congress include language from the House of Representatives version of the Water Resources Reform & Development Act (H.R. 3080) that requires the Corps of Engineers to provide an assessment of operation and maintenance needs of the entire Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway and the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. NMMA will keep readers updated as new information is available. Questions? Contact Michael Belitzky at mbelitzky@nmma.org.

CALL FOR SOBA 2014 AWARDS: Your Nominations Are Worth The Effort

The States Organization for Boating Access (SOBA) is happy to announce a call for its 2014 awards nominations. Each year SOBA requests nominations for the following awards:

- The William H. Ivers Award
- Outstanding Service Award
- Professional Service Award
- Special Recognition Award
- State Boating Access Program Excellence Award
- State Clean Vessel (CVA) Program Excellence Award
- Outstanding Project Awards in Four (4) categories: 1) small, 2) medium, 3) large, and 4) marina and harbors

The awards will be presented at SOBA's 28th annual conference in North Little Rock, Arkansas, October 6th through 9th, 2014

Your Nominations ARE Worth the Effort

Recognition of outstanding work is very important and all too often outstanding work goes unrecognized. The SOBA Awards Program allows us to help you by recognizing outstanding achievement of your staff, your peers, and the many cooperators and partners you work with. The SOBA Executive Board makes an extra effort to recognize outstanding work; a nomination in itself is a statement of recognition and definitely worth the effort!

How to Nominate

A complete description of the awards criteria and nomination forms are available on the SOBA website: [www.sobaus.org](http://www.sobaus.org).

SOBA Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force Making Progress

by Craig Walker

The SOBA AIS Task Force was initially expecting comments on the AIS BMP Manual from 15 reviewers identified at the 2013 SOBA Conference in Portland. However, during later discussions, additional reviewers from the Pacific State Marin Fisheries Commission, Western Regional Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species, and the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force indicated that they would be providing their comments as well. In order to allow for broader review of this material, the deadline for comments was extended. At this time comments have been received from eight reviewers and we are awaiting additional input.

After completion of what we hope turns out to be a rigorous review process, we will begin to develop the final document of a comprehensive guidance tool for SOBA members in preparation for the 2014 SOBA Conference in Little Rock. Thanks again to all the Task Force members for their continued
participation in this process. Thanks also to all those who volunteered to review the BMP manual. As mentioned previously, the eventual goal of the SOBA AIS Task Force is to produce a BMP Manual that is endorsed by the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (ANSTF) and embraced by boater access/marina development administrators. For more information on ANSTF and other regional AIS control programs, visit the SOBA website at www.sobaus.org or contact Craig Walker at craigwalker@utah.gov

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**Association of Marina Industries: Activity Update**

by Wendy Larimer

The Association of Marina Industries (AMI) has been working to expand its support to marinas and state trade associations. AMI believes that state trade associations are the glue that holds a marina industry together and gives it strength in each state. For this reason we have enthusiastically entered into membership alliances with two state trade associations.

AMI finalized a membership affiliation agreement with the Kentucky/Tennessee Marina Association (KY/TN MA) whereby all KY/TN MA members become full members of AMI with access to all membership services and benefits in addition to their membership to KY/TN MA.

This new alliance will give KY and TN members both regional and national level support in the industry. AMI and KY/TN MA will collaborate on programs and projects that support and promote marinas and recreational boating in Kentucky and Tennessee. Additional AMI benefits include discounted training and certification, and access to AMI's network of professional speakers and educators through AMI's training subsidiary, the International Marina Institute (IMI), specifically providing content and support to KY/TN MA's annual conference. AMI and KY/TN MA will work collaboratively to increase membership in both organizations from that region.

AMI has also formed an affiliate agreement with the Virginia Marine Trades Association (VMTA) whereby every marina and boatyard member of VMTA will automatically become AMI members, and where AMI will take on the management of the association.

VMTA currently holds about 100 members from all reaches of the state, but would like a greater membership and more focus to the purpose of the association. By bringing the benefits of AMI to its membership, VMTA hopes to attract more marinas to their group and, in turn, build a stronger association. VMTA is the sole voice for the marine industry in the state, working to keep their members apprised of government and regulatory actions, bringing more training opportunities to the industry, building an informative annual conference, and creating a platform for industry networking. By working with AMI, the association will expand its resources and build better communication with the Virginia marine industry. AMI will benefit from the collaboration, by having a strong source on the ground in one of the biggest boating states in the US.

A final way that AMI has recently been supporting the marina industry is by holding bigger and better educational and networking events. The 12th annual International Marina & Boatyard Conference (IMBC) saw a 12% increase in numbers making it the most successful show in five years. The 2014 IMBC exhibit hall included New Product Demos at exhibitor booths and a Marina Trends Exhibit co-sponsored by AMI and Marina Dock Age magazine. The conference also featured a new Marina Design and Engineering breakout track and more than 25 educational seminars including six small group, hands-on workshops. The next IMBC will take place January 28–30, 2015, at the Tampa Convention Center in Tampa, FL.

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**Farewell SOBA Colleagues**

from Andy Goldbloom
After twenty-eight and a half years working for the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, I am retiring effective March 31st. I started my career for TPWD as an outdoor recreation planner, conducting research and helping write the state outdoor recreation plan. In the early 1990s, I became the head of a newly created Greenways Program focusing on river access issues and acquiring and developing the 2 rail-trails in the state park system. These early years, reinforced an appreciation for both trail and water based recreational activities. I developed the program and managed the federal Recreational Trail Program for Texas since its first year of funding in 1993. Over the next 20 years we funded around 400 trail projects, distributing over $45 million of federal funding to local projects around Texas.

In 2002, a re-assignment to another manager, resulted in administration of the Boating Access portion of the Sport Fish Restoration funds, including the Clean Vessel and BIG programs coming to me as "other duties as assigned". I always loved boating, owned a few boats, and welcomed becoming involved with these programs and the boating community in Texas. Those boating programs also gave me the excuse to attend my first SOBA conference in Tampa Florida. The interaction with fellow SOBA members and the boating community became the most pleasurable experiences of my career. So much so, that I found myself offering to host the 2009 SOBA Conference in Corpus Christi. I was also proud to serve on the SOBA Board of Directors from 2009-2012. Looking back on my SOBA tenure, I am proudest of helping transform the Monday CVA workshop that Ed Pooles created at the Tampa conference into a Federal Aid workshop for future conferences. This "Fed Aid Day" continues to help state and federal government employees justify travelling out of state to attend to National Boating Access Conference. I will forever treasure my time on the SOBA board and the relationships I developed with fellow board members and the folks at NMMA, particularly Bernice.

As for the future, my true aspirations are to be a ski bum for the rest of my life! To that end, I am getting ready to head to Lake Tahoe as we speak. If anyone ever wants to cross paths with me, it is a good bet that this is where they will find me the first few weeks of April. I'm excited about the future and the various opportunities that seem to be out there. Good luck to y'all, I plan on keeping in touch, hope you do the same.

Yours Truly
Andy Goldbloom