In this issue:

A Note From The President: Ron Christofferson
SOBA 2016 Annual Boating Access Conference: Hold The Date
2015 SOBA Annual Awards Presented At SOBA's Annual Boating Access Conference On Lake Champlain, Vermont
Transportation Bill: Sport Fish Restoration And Boating Trust Fund Update
Pumpout Boat Selection And Operation Guidelines Draft Completed
TRACS Update
WSFR HQ Staff Update
Sport Fishing And Boating Partnership Council Report
What's Happening At RBFF
SOBA Presents Its Highest Honor To Stephen Kesler
AFWA News
Update From The Capitol
National Working Waterfronts And Waterways Symposium (NWWWS)
American Recreation Coalition
Discover Boating Delivers Increased Website Traffic To Participating Manufacturers
News From AMI
News From The World Of Paddlesports
NASBLA's Busy, Productive And Motivating Year
Mark Your Calendars For SOBA 2016 And 2017 National Boating Access Conferences

SAVE THE DATE

SOBA 2016 NATIONAL BOATING ACCESS CONFERENCE

October 10–13, 2016: Chattanooga, Tennessee

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT: RON CHRISTOFFERSON
SOBA Members and Boating Industry Partners:

It doesn’t seem that long ago that we were enjoying the beautiful scenery and hospitality of the Basin Harbor Club in Vermont. The 29th Annual National Boating Access Conference was a great success, thanks to Mike Wichrowski and his team who organized the conference. We also greatly appreciate all of our sponsors, exhibitors and the USFWS Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration staff who continue to participate and support the mission of our organization. If you missed the conference, the proceedings are available at www.sobaus.org under the “Members” tab.

The 2016 Conference will be hosted by Tennessee in Chattanooga, with a conference theme of "Better Access — Better Boating". Mark your calendars to be at the Chattanoogaan Hotel on October 10–13 next year for the 30th anniversary of SOBA’s National Boating Access Conference. Please stay tuned to our website www.sobaus.org for conference updates and information.

I want to welcome Scott Meister (South Carolina) and Al Wolslegel (Washington) to the SOBA Board, both of which were elected to the Member-at-Large positions. Both Scott and Al have strong backgrounds in boating facilities and grant administration. I look forward to working with them over the coming year. If you have ever considered becoming a SOBA Board Member, now is the time to talk to your Manager or agency Director about getting their support to serve on the SOBA Board. Being a Board member is rewarding both professionally and personally. Board members help the organization face new challenges, contribute to nationally-renowned technical resources, help shape how federal programs are administered and work with the leaders of other boating industry organizations. To learn more about being a SOBA Board member visit our website at www.sobaus.org or contact me at rchristofferson@azgfd.gov

Over the coming year committee members will be busy with several SOBA projects. The Pumpout Boat Guidelines publication will be available shortly, to be followed by our new Paddlecraft Access Facilities Design Guidelines. SOBA also will be working on best management practices for acquiring and implementing Boating Infrastructure Grant funding, and we are looking forward to a future project to cover the same concept for Clean Vessel Act grants.

In closing, I want our members to know that SOBA is active, solvent and doing its best to represent the interests of our member states. The Board will do its best to build upon our many past accomplishments, and will strive to promote your organization as we look to the future.

May you all have a very happy and peaceful holiday season, and thank you for what you do for boating access every day.

Regards
Ron Christofferson

SOBA 2016 ANNUAL BOATING ACCESS CONFERENCE: HOLD THE DATE!
Ed Poolos, 2016 Conference Host
Hello and Greetings from the Great State of Tennessee. Planning for SOBA’S 30th Anniversary Annual National Boating Access Conference, scheduled to take place October 10–13 in “River City”, Chattanooga, Tennessee, is well underway.

Our theme “Better Access, Better Boating” will focus on why maintenance and growth of our state waterways is so important, and in the spirit of this theme, our event will feature a variety of breakout program tracks, including Engineering, Boating Access, Clean Vessel and Boating Infrastructure, in addition to our Federal Aid Workshop, and plenary session program. These breakouts will delve into specific subject matter issues that affect all of us.

Our award winning host hotel, the Chattanooga, is a city and state favorite of many business travelers. Monday night’s opening reception will be held at the Tennessee Aquarium which plays home to a variety of fish and plant species native to Tennessee. Our event will close with our time-honored Banquet on Wednesday night, featuring a number of SOBA Award presentations.

We appreciate all of you who took the time to respond to our SOBA 2015 post conference survey. The board and I have studied these results in detail, and will be using the output to shape our 2016 conference. If you have additional speaker or topic ideas that you would like to see presented in 2016, please email them to us at info@sobus.org

Please mark your calendars for SOBA 2016, and plan to attend!

2015 SOBA ANNUAL AWARDS PRESENTED AT SOBA’S ANNUAL BOATING ACCESS CONFERENCE ON LAKE CHAMPLAIN, VERMONT

The 2015 SOBA Awards were presented at the 29th Annual Boating Access Conference in Vermont on Wednesday, September 23rd at the Basin Harbor Club on Lake Champlain, Vermont. A description of the awards and the awards process can be found on SOBA’s website at www.sobaus.org.

SOBA’s 2015 Outstanding Project Awards were presented at a luncheon on Wednesday, September 23rd. All projects had great merit and contribute to the goal of providing safe, well designed public access to the waters of our nation. The SOBA Board appreciates the time and consideration that it takes for each award submission. At the Conference Banquet on the evening of Wednesday, September 23rd, the individual awards were presented, including SOBA’s highest honor, the William H. Ivers Awards:

The 2015 recipients are as follows:

2015 SOBA AWARD WINNERS
1. Small Access Category: City of Covington, Covington Boating Access Facility

2. Medium Access Category: Talbot County, Dept. of Parks and Recreation: Oak Creek Landing

3. Large Access Category: Appalachian Power Company and the Virginia Dept. of game and Inland Fisheries: Oak Grove Boating Access Facility, Virginia

4. Marinas & Harbors Category: NONE AWARDED

5. State Clean Vessel Act (CVA): California Dept. of Parks and Recreation Division of Boating Program Excellence Award and Waterways

6. State Boating Access Program: Arizona Game and Fish Department Boating Access Program Excellence Award

7. Professional Service Award: SOBA Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force

8. Special Recognition Award: Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation

9. Outstanding Service Award: Craig Walker, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

10. William H. Ivers Award: Stephen A. Kesler, Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries

TRANSPORTATION BILL: SPORT FISH RESTORATION AND BOATING TRUST FUND UPDATE

by SOBA Vice President and ABA Member, James Adams

SOBA continues to participate as a member in the Angling and Boating Alliance (ABA). As you may remember, this group is made up of longstanding fishing and boating industry national leaders. SOBA is proud to be a Stakeholder in this important group which continues to work with both the Senate and House committees to accomplish the reauthorization language for the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund (SFRBTF) which is in the Transportation Bill. See full report update on SFRBTF within NMMA’s editorial update in this newsletter. To view the ABA’s position, visit SOBA’s website.

PUMPOUT BOAT SELECTION AND OPERATION GUIDELINES DRAFT COMPLETED

by Kate Hughes-Brown, SOBA Treasurer and Chair of the Pumpout Boat Task Force

A SOBA taskforce has created a draft guidance document for CVA state managers and potential sub-grantees entitled “Pumpout Boat Selection and Operation Guidelines”. The goal of this document is to provide unbiased information to those states considering
utilizing pumpout vessels in their CVA programs. Once finalized, the document can be used as a stand-alone reference or as part of the CVA Best Management Practices document which is simultaneously being created by another SOBA taskforce. These two documents will assist state managers and their sub grantees with a multitude of questions and selection criteria on the front-end of the vessel procurement process, with the goal of encouraging the most efficient use of CVA funds.

**TRACS UPDATE**

by Valerie Blajeski

Hello SOBA members I come baring interesting news on the TRACS forefront. Below is my summary of the October 2015 TRACS Working Group Meeting in Aurora, Colorado.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program (WSFR) presented their new outcomes framework involving results chains and how it relates to meeting the new 2 CFR 200 outcomes. Additionally, there was discussion on how WSFR intends to incorporate this framework into version 2 of the TRACS system which is due out by the end of December 2016.

What does this mean? The outcome framework is based on developing project level outcomes that feed into an overall program goal/outcome. For example Alaska’s State Boating Access Program’s overall program goal/outcome is to “complete five boating access capital improvement projects per year over a five year period” per the Alaska Department of Fish & Game’s Strategic Plan. This is our State specific, overall program goal/outcome established through our State internal processes (It should be noted that States determine their own program goal, not WSFR). Each individual boating access project that Alaska enters into TRACS will feed into this overall Program goal/outcome via a results chain. The results chain ties together all of the entered boating access projects so that it can relate to Alaska’s overall program goal/outcome.

Sounds simple enough however, in order for WSFR to have nationwide consistency in reporting rollup, you will not be able to use or input narrative objectives in Version 2 of TRACS. Standardized objectives for each individual grant program are currently being developed and have been reviewed by the TRACS working group this past October. The good news is that SOBA was given a seat at the table at this past meeting to voice their concerns and comments regarding all Boating Access program standardized objectives including the BIG and CVA programs. The bottom line with this new WSFR outcome framework that ties into 2 CFR 200 is that the results chain format creates the need to report on projects even after the grant period is closed in order to document the long term States’ program accomplishments/outcomes.

So, in a nutshell here are the new significant changes to TRACS Version 2 due out in December 2016:

- Required to use Standardized objectives-Narrative objectives will no longer be valid.
- Required to input the States’ existing program goals into the TRACS system.
- Required to report on projects after the grant period is closed.

It will be interesting to see what comes down the pipe with the new implementation of 2 CFR 200 and how this will continue to impact the evolution of TRACS Version 2 over time. In the meantime I will continue to represent SOBA at each TRACS Working Group
Meeting to ensure that all our programs have a voice at the table. If you have any questions or would like to provide input please contact me, Valerie Blajeski, Alaska Department of Fish and Game Assistant Statewide Access Program Coordinator via email at valerie.blajeski@alaska.gov.

WSFR HQ STAFF UPDATE
by Christy Vigfussion

We are pleased to announce that that Brad Gunn has been selected as the new Biologist in the Programs Branch that will be the Headquarters lead for Boating Access, Clean Vessel Act, and Boating Infrastructure Grants. Brad started with us right after Labor Day and just in time to attend SOBA’s 2015 Conference!

He has most recently been working with the Service’s North American Wetlands Conservation Act program in HQ, and prior to that he worked at the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission as an assistant chief and Federal Assistance Coordinator in the Division of Wildlife Management. He has over 26 years’ experience in the wildlife profession and a wealth of valuable experience that he brings to our programs.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Clean Vessel Act (CVA)
The Clean Vessel Act (CVA) program provides matching grants to the States, the District of Columbia, and insular areas for the construction, renovation, operation, and maintenance of pumpout stations and waste reception facilities for recreational boaters and also for educational programs that inform boaters of the importance of proper disposal of their sewage. The deadline for FY 2016 applications was December 2, 2015. WSFR Regional staff is in the process of reviewing applications, and the review will continue in the New Year with WSFR Headquarters, NOAA, EPA, and Coast Guard. We anticipate announcing awards by June 2016.

Boating Access
The Boating Access program provides grant funds to the States, the District of Columbia and insular areas fish and wildlife agencies for projects that provide access to America’s waterways by developing new access facilities or renovation and/or improvement of existing facilities. Nationwide, funding totaled approximately $51.98 million for FY 2015 from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund. The FY 2016 Sport Fish Restoration Program preliminary apportionments were signed December 2, 2015.

Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG)
During the second week of December, Paul Van Ryzin led the review and ranking process of the FY 2016 BIG Tier 2 applications with individuals appointed by the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council (SFBPC) and with WSFR Regional staff in San Diego, CA. The group reviewed 22 applications requesting approximately $19.5 million in Federal funding.
Currently, we estimate that a total of $12 million will be available in Tier 2 funding for FY 2016. Each year, the Council scores are combined with WSFR’s BIG Regional Program Coordinators’ scores to determine the final award recommendations. The Service’s Director, Dan Ashe, selects and approves the final awards.

WSFR appreciates the expertise and commitment of the ranking team in helping to select the highest-quality projects to receive BIG funding. This year, WSFR received applications from a wide variety of States proposing new slips, moorings, and related boating infrastructure to benefit the transient boating public. We anticipate announcing the awards by the end of February 2016. Note that Brad Gunn has been shadowing Paul through the ranking and awarding processes and will fully assume BIG Program responsibilities early in 2016.

POLICY UPDATES
Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG)
The Boating Infrastructure Grant Program (BIG) Final rule that published May 6, 2015 is being used for the first time as the standard for FY16 awards and it will provide policy insight and assistance during the ranking meeting. WSFR is open to hearing feedback from States as to their reaction to the new rule, what is working well, what challenges you face, etc. As we are not in the midst of rulemaking, open conversation is allowed and encouraged. Comments may be posted at: https://fawiki.fws.gov/display/CR5C8/BIG+Final+Rule.

Clean Vessel Act (CVA)
The Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) was published in the Federal Register September 14, 2015 with a 60-day comment period. Thank you to all who engaged and took the time to send thoughtful and thought-provoking comments! There are 32 comments posted on www.regulations.gov and a few more were emailed from other Federal agencies. Stay tuned to the SOBA ListServ for further information on the results and the next steps toward rulemaking.

Reminder: You may view the topics and comments from CVA open forum discussions by visiting: http://fawiki.fws.gov/display/CR5C8/CVA+Review+50+CFR+85+Home.

WSFR HQ Contacts:

Tom Busiahn
Chief, Division of Policy and Programs
Tom_Busiahn@fws.gov
703.358.2231

Lisa E. Van Alstyne
Chief, Branch of Financial Assistance and Policy Oversight
Lisa_Van_Alstyne@fws.gov
703.358.1942

Christy Vigfusson
Chief, Programs Branch
Christy_Vigfusson@fws.gov
703.358.1748

Paul Van Ryzin
Fish and Wildlife Biologist — Grants, Programs Branch
The Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council, including SOBA representatives Janine Belleque and James Adams, remain fully engaged in a multi-agency coordination effort that is evaluating options on ways to implement a possible pilot project to improve the efficiency of the permitting processes associated with boating access projects. Council member John Sprague is leading this effort for the Council. Since the Council’s special session on this topic at their February 2015 meeting, John and other Council members have met with representatives from federal agencies in Washington DC over the summer and also in the fall.

The Council remains hopeful that a pilot project will be implemented in Florida among federal agencies with the desired outcome being enhanced communication and coordination among the federal and state government agencies involved in various permitting processes. Federal agencies involved include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and National Marine Fisheries Service. The National Park Service is also involved due to their involvement coordinating this effort through the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR).

In addition to this effort, the Council’s Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) Program Tier II committee met jointly with representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program to review proposals submitted for funding for fiscal year 2015. Council committee representatives included John Sprague, Janine Belleque, James Adams, Wendy Larimer and Ed Poolos. Committee members reported that the ranking session was very successful and that the scoring process based on the new BIG program rules went very well. The full Council will meet via teleconference in early January to discuss and consider the committee’s funding recommendations. The Council will send a letter with their funding recommendations to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director in January. The Council’s funding recommendations will be combined with those of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program, with the final project selections being made by the Director.

The Council continues to work closely with the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) on several fronts. The Council is currently completing an abbreviated assessment of RBFF for fiscal years 2013–2015. This effort is being led by Council vice chair Betty Huskins. The assessment will be completed in this spring. In addition, Council members and others are reviewing and refining RBFF’s performance measures. The performance measures will also be completed in the spring of 2016. Scott Kovarovics, Council chair, is leading this effort.

The Council’s next in person meeting is scheduled for late April–early May 2016. The location will likely be in the Gulf Coast area. If you have topics that you would like the Council to consider, please contact one of the Council representatives.
WHAT’S HAPPENING AT RBFF
by Stephanie Vatalaro

RBFF Boat Registration Marketing Program Continues to Get Boats Back on the Water

The Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation’s (RBFF) Boat Registration Marketing Program continues to get lapsed boaters back on the water. Through the 2015 program, more than 45,000 boat owners were drawn to re-register their boats, leading to $1.6 million in revenue for state agencies. In all, 20 states participated in the fourth year of the Program, with more than 545,000 direct mail pieces delivered to owners of lapsed boats.

Throughout the four-year history of the nationwide program, nearly 170,000 boats have been re-registered. This leads directly to $6.1 million in additional revenue for partnering states and more boaters enjoying our nation’s waterways. RBFF is seeking to expand the program to new partner states to draw even more boaters back into their boats and onto the water. Please contact RBFF Director of State Initiatives Stephanie Hussey to join the program.

In addition to its State Marketing Programs, RBFF drives consumers to the license and registration pages on state agency websites. Last year, TakeMeFishing.org drove over 1 million referrals to state boat registration and fishing license pages and to DiscoverBoating.com for additional boating resources. So far this year, referrals to DiscoverBoating.com are up 456 percent.

RBFF Partners with AREA to Develop Recruitment, Retention, Reactivation (R3) Guidelines

RBFF and the Aquatic Resources Education Association (AREA) recently entered a new partnership to develop angler recruitment, retention and reactivation (R3) guidelines. The partnership will provide the framework for industrywide R3 programs and will look to provide recommendations that can be used by state agencies and other industry organizations to assess their angling and boating R3 efforts and address gaps to increase effectiveness and efficiency.

The guidelines will incorporate current R3 strategies developed by the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI), and will build upon the foundation provided by RBFF’s Best Practices Workbook for Boating, Fishing and Aquatic Resources Stewardship Education. The project will be conducted over the course of 18 months, with final results of the program shared in early 2017. Information and progress will be shared throughout the phases of the project. For more information, please contact RBFF Director of State Initiatives, Stephanie Hussey.

RBFF Engages Hispanics & Explores Grandparents in its Mission to Grow Fishing & Boating

As our nation’s demographics are rapidly changing, becoming increasingly younger and more diverse, RBFF is working hard to ensure future growth for boating and fishing
through its Take Me Fishing™ and Vamos A Pescar™ campaigns. There are two groups, in particular, RBFF thinks are poised to make a difference — Hispanics and grandparents.

At 55 million, U.S. Hispanics currently make up 17% of the population. Projected to grow 167% from 2010 to 2050, RBFF has already made it a priority to engage this group in boating and fishing. And it seems to be working. VamosAPescar.org has seen 730,000 visits in the first 7 months of RBFF’s fiscal year (up 80% from last year's totals), and the advertising is resonating with the target audience.

Another group RBFF is exploring is grandparents. At approximately 39 million, grandparents make up 25% of the U.S. population. With five grandchildren on average, grandparents have a lot of things younger Americans don’t: time, money, and guilt for not having spent enough time with their own children. Preliminary research indicates they’re a great target for fishing and boating, and would help get more youth involved in the sport.

If you’re not sure where to start engaging these new audiences, or need help, RBFF has many free resources for you. Visit www.TakeMeFishing.org/corporate, and click on the “Resource Center” for free research, marketing materials, photos, event planning resources and more.

SOBA PRESENTS ITS HIGHEST HONOR TO STEPHEN KESLER

SOBA's most prestigious individual award, named to honor the memory of its namesake who helped found the organization, was presented to Stephen Kesler, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries during SOBA’s 2015 National Boating Access Conference in Vermont in September.

Steve Kesler joined the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries in 1990 to specifically develop the Boating Access Program for the agency. By 1993 Steve had developed a formal and proactive Boating Access Program, and in 1993, Virginia was awarded SOBA’s State Boating Access Program Excellence Award. In 2000, Steve was awarded SOBA’s Outstanding Service Award for his many innovations in the management of Virginia’s boating access program including access site modernization, maintenance program improvements, and cost efficiency measures.

Steve and his staff of five operated, maintained and managed anywhere from 225 to 274 boating access sites each year in Virginia, depending on interest from local jurisdiction partners. Steve’s commitment to boating access did not stop there, and he was instrumental in the development of the “Operations and Maintenance Program Guidelines for Recreational Boating Access Facilities” which was completed and published in 1999. This publication was subsequently revised in 2010, and Steve also contributed to this effort.

Since 2000 Steve has been involved in the many Blueways being developed across the state of Virginia, and is recognized as the “go to” person for evaluating their plans and providing much needed guidance. Steve is currently the Grants to Localities for the Boating Access Program Manager, and for the past 3 years has reviewed over 45 applications and awarded 25 new grant boating access projects across the state of Virginia, of which 11 are now open and used by the boating public. Due to dedicated work and effort of Steve, once again in 2014, Virginia was awarded SOBA’s State Boating
AFWA NEWS

by Ryan Roberts

AFWA Hosts Drought Forum
The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency’s (AFWA’s) Climate Change, Science & Research, Ocean Resources Policy, Fisheries & Water Resources Policy, and Threatened & Endangered Species Committees hosted a Drought Forum during AFWA’s Annual Meeting in (September) in Tucson, AZ. Attendees heard from 8 different panelists representing state agencies, federal agencies, and our NGO partners. The strong message conveyed by our panel and the attendees is that as prolonged drought is likely to become more frequent — AFWA needs to help ensure that fish and wildlife are included in the state-wide and federal responses to drought. This may include getting involved in national and western policy through AFWA and the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) as well as forming a working group of drought experts to compile lessons learned and recommend necessary policy interventions.

The Forum also focused attention on the need to continue solving drought problems in a systematic way for the long term, even when conditions improve in the short term. In the next year, AFWA staff will work with state agency staff to develop this drought working group within the Fisheries and Water Resources Policy Committee. The working group will convene before the end of 2015 and report back to the AFWA Director’s at the 2016 Annual Meeting.

UPDATE FROM THE CAPITOL

by Lauren Dunn, NMMA, DC Office

Congress Passes Highway Bill, Provides Reauthorization for Sportfish Restoration & Boating Trust Fund and Ex-Im Bank
On December 3, the House & Senate approved the conference report to H.R.3763, the Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2015, and sent the bill to President Obama for his signature into law. This bill includes a reauthorization of the Ex-Im Bank through 2019 and a complete 5 year reauthorization of the Sportfish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund (SFRBTF).

NMMA has been working with its Angling & Boating Alliance (ABA) partners for nearly three years in the lead up to Thursday’s approval of the highway bill on a number of policy changes that the recreational boating and fishing community believes are needed to keep the SFRBTF the world’s premier aquatic conservation, and boating and fishing access funding mechanism. The information is provided below on what it seems are the notable policy features:

- New language regarding the $1.2 million that funds the Sport Fish and Boating Partnership Council and the four fisheries commissions but with no substantive policy or funding change from present law.
- Provisions regarding the distribution of funds to Boating Infrastructure Grants (BIG) and Clean Vessel Act (CVA) grants in an effort to find administrative fund efficiencies and to provide states with more flexibility in how they use these funds.
- Alters the $3 million Multi-State Conservation Grant Program from an off-the-top
Provides a new and different way to arrive at the Coast Guard administrative fees as a hard cost total amount off the top.

Of the total amount, $1.5M is specific for the boating survey, $2.1 is for the manufacturer’s compliance program aka Chapter 43, and the remainder ($4.3M in FY2016) for administering the state grant program (currently done with the 2% of the RBS distribution which is about $2M) and for conducting the Coast Guard Recreational Boating Safety program.

These changes represent our industry’s collective desire to protect a robust and fully functioning SFRBTF; our thanks to our members and coalition partners that helped get this bill across the finish line this year; it was an incredible effort by everyone!

**Letter from House calls upon EPA to revise 2016 ethanol mandates**

In a letter delivered this week to EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy, 184 bipartisan members of the House of Representatives called on the agency to revise its proposed 2016 ethanol volume mandates to avoid breaching the so-called blendwall. Citing many concerns echoed by NMMA, the letter expressed concerns over what will happen in the event of a breach and the subsequent requirement for more E15 to enter the market.

You can read the letter here—NMMA and our allies in the Smarter Fuel Future Coalition are encouraged by the increase number of members who are becoming aware of the flawed nature of the Renewable Fuel Standard. The EPA is expected to announce final volume numbers before a Nov. 30 deadline.

**Download NEW Grassroots Advocacy Tool Kit and Become a Better Advocate**

As part of NMMA’s on-going commitment to keep the recreational boating industry apprised of legislative work and engaged in advocacy activities, we have recently made available a new comprehensive Grassroots Tool-Kit. You can access and download it (as a PDF) right here.

The tool-kit is intended to be a resource you can turn to be a better advocate, to share our industry’s story with key influencers and decision makers, as a guide to hosting Congressional visits and much more. We hope you will use this as reference material in your daily endeavors, as we strive to make industry advocacy a 365 day reality. If you have any questions, please contact Michael Lewan at mlewan@nmma.org.

**White House Proposes Two Marine Sanctuaries**

Last week, President Obama announced NOAA’s selection of two sites to be considered as new Marine Sanctuaries, the first since 2000. The sites, chosen with broad community input and following a national nomination process, are an 875 square mile section of Lake Michigan off the Wisconsin shoreline and a 14 square mile section of the Potomac River between Maryland and Virginia. Both sites are renowned for having a collection of historically significant shipwrecks which have proved popular for visitors and fish habitats alike.

Neither proposal is finalized yet; NOAA will be engaging with stakeholder groups in a series of public meetings, as well as welcoming comments from the public up until January 15, 2016. From there, the agency will make a final determination, as well as outline site-specific requirements. NMMA will monitor the ongoing proceedings, and participate in the public comment period as necessary, to ensure that recreational activities are a part of the process.
NATIONAL WORKING WATERFRONTS AND WATERWAYS SYMPOSIUM (NWWWS)

by Patricia Harrell

The National Working Waterfronts Network partnered with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s Stem to Stern III: Boating and Waterway Management in Florida to bring together a network of businesses, local government and communities, state and federal agencies, industry associations, universities, Sea Grant programs and users from across the nation to learn and discuss working waterfront and waterway issues.

The NWWWS was an excellent venue to discuss a broad range of working waterfronts and waterway issues such as:

- Resiliency planning and implementation of marina and ports
- Vessel congregation
- Derelict vessels
- Waterway management rights of navigation
- Connecting tourists and the working waterfront
- Building innovative partnerships that support working waterfronts
- Anchoring conflicts
- Permitting issues and how can we address delays
- Bracing for working waterfront policy change

The NWWWS was held in Tampa, Florida, November 16–19 at the Tampa Hilton Downtown. Tampa was a perfect location that boasts a wide variety of working waterfronts that include a major port, commercial fishing, hotels/restaurants, and major marinas. Participants were treated to field trips to the Tampa Riverwalk and Port of Tampa, Historic Tarpon Springs Waterfront, Cortez Fishing Village, City of Clearwater Marinas and Aquarium, and City of St. Petersburg Downtown Waterfront. This area has been supported with several grants that include (4) Boating Infrastructure Grants.

For more information on the National Working Waterfront Network go the web site at wateraccess.com.

AMERICAN RECREATION COALITION

by Ben Nasta

2016 POISED TO BE A GREAT YEAR FOR RECREATION ON AMERICA’S PUBLIC LANDS AND WATERS

America’s public lands house some of the world’s greatest natural wonders, offering unique outdoor recreation opportunities in all corners of the nation. Nowhere is this more evident than on our vast network of public waters that offer unique boating experiences available nowhere else in the world.

As the National Park Service (NPS) Centennial — taking place in 2016 — approaches, federal land and water management agencies, as well as the Congress itself, have taken a great interest in outreach and promotion of these world-class experiences. NPS’ Find Your Park Campaign — their first major marketing push in 50 years — and the Administration’s Every Kid in a Park program — aimed at providing four million fourth
graders and their families an experience on public lands and waters throughout the school year — are focused on encouraging an increasingly younger and more diverse America to get outdoors and enjoy all of the healthy, active outdoor fun their public lands and waters have to offer.

The American Recreation Coalition (ARC) is at the forefront of these efforts. ARC actively supports Congressional leaders on both sides of the aisle who are taking an increased interest in improving access and visitor services on public lands and waters. Members of Congress are in the process of rewriting federal lands recreation enhancement legislation, as well as writing an NPS Centennial bill and ARC and our partners are offering valuable input. Multiple hearings in both the Senate and House — where ARC has offered testimony — have reinforced this interest. Whether we are talking about world-class fishing in Biscayne Bay National Park, taking in the breathtaking scenery of Lake Mead from onboard a houseboat, camping at sites only accessible by boat in Voyageurs National Park or any of the other great water-based activities available on public lands, we are helping Congress understand the incredible value of our public waters, and what they mean to Americans.

Enthusiasm for getting outdoors continues to grow at the state level as well. With the help of Great Outdoors Month™ Founding Sponsor The Coleman Company and numerous other partners, 13 governors hosted Capital Campouts at or near their residences in 2015 to introduce youth to fun outdoors. Many of them involved fun on the water. Here are a few great examples. In Missouri, kids had the chance to kayak in a special pool set up by Bass Pro Shops — a new partner of Great Outdoors Month™ as Governor Jay Nixon hosted the state’s first Capital Campout. In Virginia, First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe joined kids for fishing and kayaking on the James River. In Delaware, Governor Jack Markell was joined by National Wildlife Federation President Colin O’Mara as kids learned fishing skills in Brandywine Creek State Park. Excitement is already building for 2016, when we expect more than 25 governors to host Campouts. To learn more about Capital Campouts, click here.

Because of their outstanding efforts leading Capital Campouts, designing new outdoor programs and encouraging all of their citizens to take advantage of their states’ great outdoors, Governors Matt Mead (WY) and Jay Nixon (MO) are 2015’s winners of the Sheldon Coleman Great Outdoors Award — the recreation community’s most prestigious award! Governor Mead will receive his award at a ceremony featuring public and private sector leaders in Cheyenne December 9. Governor Nixon will receive his award at a ceremony in Jefferson City in January. ARC has presented this award since 1989 to an individual whose personal efforts have contributed substantially to enhancing outdoor experiences in America. The award was established in memory of Sheldon Coleman (1901–1988), longtime Chairman of The Coleman Company and a visionary champion of outdoor recreation and conservation. Winners are selected by recreation and conservation leaders from both the private and public sectors. A full account of both Governors’ efforts to help their fellow citizens enjoy their outdoors is available here.
And 2016 will feature the biggest and best Great Outdoors Month™ yet! In 2015, Great Outdoors Month™ went out on a high note when 50 Girl Scouts camped out on the South Lawn of the White House as part of First Lady Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move! Outside campaign. Even the President came out to join in the fun! Read more about the event here. We expect that energy and momentum to carry over into Great Outdoors Month™ 2016. Signature events are taking place throughout Great Outdoors Month™ that will get people of all walks of life outdoors. Starting with the National Park Trust’s Kids to Parks™ Day on May 21 and ending with the launch of the National Wildlife Federation’s Great American Campout™, at least one signature event per week will offer people a multitude of ways to get outdoors. Events like National Trails Day, National Fishing and Boating Week, National Get Outdoors Day, National Marina Day and the Great Outdoors Month Day of Service offer something for everyone. And new partners — public and private — continue to join these great efforts.

It is an exciting time for outdoor recreation. New interest from Congress focused on improved visitor services and increased outreach and promotion from the federal land and water management agencies are expanding the horizons of public enjoyment of our outdoor spaces. And involvement at the state level is greater, and more enthusiastic than ever. ARC continues to support all these efforts and forge new partnerships with both the public and private sectors to help people get outdoors. 2016 will be a great time be in the Great Outdoors!

DISCOVER BOATING DELIVERS INCREASED WEBSITE TRAFFIC TO PARTICIPATING MANUFACTURERS
by Kelly Kaylor, NMMA

The Discover Boating North American marketing campaign exceeded benchmarks in 2015 by sending more than 2.9 million visits to participating boat manufacturer websites, an increase of 66% over 2014. Marketing initiatives in 2015 included short films known as “Stories of Discovery” which feature real boaters talking about priceless moments while on the water and were featured across 10,000 websites and viewed 30 million times. One of the Stories featured country music star and avid boater, Jake Owen, which helped to attract a younger audience. The Stories of Discovery provide lifestyle content that was shared throughout the campaign. In addition, a marketing mix of advertising, public relations and social media engaged potential boat owners and drove interest and a positive perception of boating. By piquing interest through these marketing efforts, website traffic to DiscoverBoating.com and DiscoverBoating.ca increased 51% to 5.3 million visits in 2015. As website visitors transition from researching the boating lifestyle and what type of boat might be best for them on DiscoverBoating.com and DiscoverBoating.ca, the campaign facilitates a handoff to manufacturers via their websites, where people can learn about brands and models as they begin to explore boat ownership.

NEWS FROM AMI
by Wendy Larimer

Traditionally fall is the busiest time of year for AMI and this year proved to be no different.
We continue to see record-breaking numbers seeking certification through our International Marina Institute’s Certified Marina Management courses. Both the Intermediate (IMM) and Advanced classes have been full and we have had to add an additional class to meet demand. This is an indicator of a strong recovery in the marina industry, as well as recognition that marina businesses have evolved into sophisticated, capital-intensive, and highly regulated enterprises that require top professional management. Our classes involve rigorous education and training developed by the national and international marina industry.

AMI puts together the agenda and manages the annual Virginia Marine Trades Association (VMTA) conference. The event, held in November, attracted the largest attendee and exhibitor crowd to date. The popularity of the conference was prompted by the presenters including Thom Dammrich, President of NMMA, John Adey, President of ABYC, Sonya Mosely of MRAA, Mike Danko with NJ Sea Grant and Robert Smith with MYMIC Marine Technologies.

AMI’s Marina Economic Impact Model is nearly complete. This tool will enable marinas to input their gross revenues and the model will calculate the economic impact of their facility to their region. This model has been highly anticipated by the marina industry which can use it for a tool when working with government officials, grant officers and bank lenders, to show the value of their business. AMI will use the model to build a snapshot of the economic value of the industry across the US. Watch for the roll out of this model in the New Year.

Coming soon is our 2016 International Marina & Boatyard Conference, being held in Ft. Lauderdale January 27–29, 2016. Seminar topics for the conference include more resilient waterfronts, design and engineering considerations for construction projects, electric shock drowning, bringing existing marina design up to date, invasive carp, and closing the skills gap in the recreational marine industry. Speakers include coastal expert Pam Rubinoff, co-presenters Greg Weykamp and Shaun McFarlan, ex-Navy member and engineering consultant David Rifkin, and many more marina and boatyard professionals as well as four sessions produced by the American Boat Builders and Repairers Association.

IMBC will also feature two keynote speakers on day one. Professional speaker and author Connie Podesta will present the opening keynote address followed by former RI governor candidate and motivational speaker/communications professional John Robitaille. www.marinaassociation.org/imbc

Finally, I attended my fourth Working Waterfronts Symposium in Tampa in November and it was enlightening, entertaining, and truly worth the time spent. If you are not involved with the National Working Waterfronts Network, I would encourage it. There are many people working hard to not only preserve our working waterfronts, but to develop unique approaches on issues ranging from tourism to workforce development, to economic development. Find out more http://www.wateraccessus.com

NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF PADDLESPORTS
by Catherine Lloyd

American Canoe Association (ACA) State Director Program
Now in its second year, the ACA’s State Director program continues to flourish. The program supports the grassroots efforts of paddlers in each state, helping to bridge the
gap between the ACA National Office and important state-wide initiatives. Each State Director position is filled by a dedicated volunteer working to cultivate community responsibility to protect paddling environments and promote safe and enjoyable paddlesport opportunities. To view a list of recent State Director updates, please see the latest issue of the ACA’s Paddle eMagazine.

**New Prone Paddling Curriculum**

At the SEIC Meeting in October 2015, the SEIC and the ACA Board of Directors voted to approve the creation of a Prone Paddling discipline to complement the existing ACA disciplines of Canoeing, Kayaking, SUP, Rafting, Safety & Rescue, and Adaptive Paddling. An accompanying Prone Paddling discipline committee is forming for the purpose of implementing the Level 1–3 curriculum (as approved at the SEIC meeting), as well as to further develop new curriculum and initiatives to continually improve the ACA’s national instruction program.

Anyone seeking information about this new discipline may visit the curriculum page, here, or email the SEI Department at sei@americancanoe.org

**2016 ACA National Paddlesports Conference**

The [2016 ACA National Paddlesports Conference](https://www.americancanoe.org) will take place November 11–13, 2016, in Sausalito, California. Please save the date, and stay tuned to [www.americancanoe.org](https://www.americancanoe.org) for more information about the conference coming soon!

---

**NASBLA'S BUSY, PRODUCTIVE AND MOTIVATING YEAR**

*by Kim Jenkins*

2015 has proven to be a tremendously productive year for the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators. The association kicked off the new-year with a [renovated website](https://www.nasbla.org) to provide an improved visitor experience.
In February, NASBLA, in partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard, hosted a national discussion on ice rescue and training. Held Feb. 26–27 in Bay City, Michigan, the meeting served as a forum to share "best practices" in ice rescue techniques and equipment used by federal, state and local first responders to reduce risk and save lives on the ice.

In March, The Institute for Credentialing Excellence announced that it would be highlighting NASBLA’s new Certified Recreational Boating Professional Program.

ProCert was one of the 127 ICE member organizations being considered for this acknowledgement. “This recognition is based on the manner in which we have gone about developing our Certification/Credentialing Program as well as following defined development and implementation practices,” said John Malatak, manager for NASBLA’s Recreational Boating Professional Certification program.

The new Spring Aboard campaign was implemented in April, encouraging boaters to Spring Aboard by enrolling in a boating education course. Working in partnership with the states, many course providers offer incentives or course discounts for students who enroll in or complete a course during the campaign. The next Spring Aboard campaign runs April 17–23, 2016.

This past summer, NASBLA and hundreds of law enforcement agencies participated in another campaign — Operation Dry Water 2015. This year’s national boating under the influence awareness and enforcement campaign took place June 26–28. To help promote sober boating, Operation Dry Water produced a new public service announcement that focused on the campaign’s heightened awareness and high-visibility enforcement weekend.

Reports show another successful year for the campaign, with law enforcement agencies participating in Operation Dry Water in every U.S. state and territory as well as British Columbia. As of December 1, 2015, 582 local, state and federal law enforcement agencies reported participating in the three-day weekend and awareness leading up to the enforcement weekend. From those reports, we know that 278 BUI arrests were made for both alcohol and drug impairment, 125,087 recreational boaters were contacted, and 17,942 boating safety warnings and citations were issued during the three-day weekend. The next Operation Dry Water will be June 24–26, 2016.

Earlier this year NASBLA became a full partner in the International Boating & Water Safety Summit, participating in program planning, implementation, and administrative support. The 2016 Summit will be held in San Diego, California, March 3–6, 2016. In addition to general session keynotes on social marketing and updated information on drowning resuscitation, breakout sessions include paths for First Responder and Risk Management; Communications, Outreach and Marketing; Program Management and Administration; and Education and Training. Additional information can be found at www.ibwss.org.
In July, NASBLA hosted its 5th Annual Leadership Academy, drawing participants from across the country to a week-long, intensive, multi-disciplinary professional development seminar targeted toward an emerging generation of leaders moving up in our member agencies. This year’s Academy program was framed around the 10 essential domains of NASBLA’s [Certified Recreational Boating Professional Program](#).

NASBLA launched another new program during its annual conference in September — the [Maritime Professional Responders and Officers Association](#). This new special-purpose group supports and represents the individual federal, state, local, tribal, and private sector maritime public safety professional.

Through advocacy, partnership and professional development, Maritime PRO provides public safety professionals that call the water “their office” an opportunity to unite with a common purpose and interest, the chance to speak and be heard on a national level, and a forum to share ideas and enhance their knowledge, skills, and capabilities through professional development.

In an effort to identify the states’ recreational boating safety priorities and draw attention to them, the NASBLA membership developed the [Top 10 Most Wanted Recreational Boating Safety Improvements](#):

1. Reduce Boating Under the Influence
2. Increase Life Jacket Wear
3. Address Distracted Boating/Improper Lookout
4. Address Paddlesports Safety
5. Standardize State/Federal Accident Terminology
6. Mandate (or Increase) Boater Education for all Powerboat Operators
7. Advocate for Safety of Towed Water Sports
8. Support Implementation of National Boating Education Standards
9. Advocate for Nationwide Education Reciprocity for Out-of-State Boaters
10. Implement Measures of Effectiveness for RBS Program Practices

NASBLA unveiled a new blog-style website for its flagship publication, [Small Craft Advisory](#). In its newest form, the magazine provides more timely content that can be viewed on your laptop, tablet or even your smartphone. In addition, readers are encouraged to discuss the content in the comments section at the bottom of each article.

In September NASBLA announced that Washington State Parks had become the 12th agency to be [accredited](#) by meeting the national standards of the [Boat Operations and Training Program](#). The BOAT Program was created to ensure the readiness of law enforcement and emergency response boat crews throughout the country and is recognized by the United States Coast Guard as the national standard of training, typing and credentialing maritime law enforcement officers and emergency responders.

NASBLA’s BOAT Program has launched two more online modules to make it easier on marine law enforcement officers to receive the training they need to stay current:

- The [online Navigation Rules course](#) teaches students how to apply the navigation rules when taking enforcement action and investigating boating-related accidents.
- The first four modules of the foundational [Boat Crew Member](#) course can now be completed [online](#). Successful completion of the BCM course will require completion of the remaining classroom modules and underway skill practice and verification with qualified NASBLA certified instructors.
Under development for more than five years, in November, NASBLA’s National Boating Education Standards gained formal recognition as an American National Standard through the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). Effective November 18, 2015, ANSI’s Board of Standards Review approved ANSI/NASBLA 103-2016 Basic Boating Education — Power, codifying NASBLA’s national education standards as the first basic boating education standard recognized both by U.S. Coast Guard and ANSI.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR SOBA 2016 AND 2017 NATIONAL BOATING ACCESS CONFERENCES

SOBA 2016: October 10–13: Chattanooga, Tennessee

SOBA 2017: August 28–31: Anchorage, Alaska