

Report of Bill Gossard
National Boating Federation Secretary on the proceedings of the
Western States Boating Administrators Association Conference
Bend, Oregon May 11-13, 2015

The Western States Boating Administrators Association (WSBAA) Conference was opened on the morning of May 11, 2015 by President Ron Jendro's report on his activities for the 2014-2015 year. Closely followed by reports from the various United States Coast Guard Districts. Dan Shipman, 13th District led off and reported that the United States Coast Guard and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration are working to put in place a sound reporting system that is not too expensive for the Columbia River Bar. Mike Folkert, 17th District reported that he continues to work on the Arctic Safety Program, Rescue 21 DS Calling, and Kids Don't Float Program.

A brief business meeting ensued in which two new states joined the WSBAA – Oklahoma and Kansas.

Next a report was provided by Larry Grimes Director of Response, USCG; BoatEd was introduced as well as BoaterExam. The Coast Guard contractor that inspects boats at manufacturing locations, PPG was introduced. This group buys boats from manufacturers and tests them for stability, capacity and numbering. The company is focusing on vessels under 20' and does not test stern drives. The Brunswick Boat Group attended and indicated that their range of small boats for law enforcement includes 24 rigid inflatable models, 10 aluminum boat models and 24 other commercial models for patrol duties. Coleman attended with its life jacket line.

The State reports followed and I will only summarize the major points of interest:

Alaska—the Boating Law Administrator Jeff Johnson reported that Alaska fatalities have been dropping and that recently a survey indicated that 13% of adults are wearing life jackets. The rate for children wearing life jackets is nearly 95%.

Arizona—the Boating Law Administrator Tim Baumgarten reported that there are about 124,500 boats registered in Arizona. Arizona still has not addressed mandatory Boating education. Casualties in boating have fallen 19% from last year and over a 10-year period fatalities have fallen 33%. Internet boating safety education courses have increased by 75% in Arizona.

California – the Boating Law Administrator Ramona Fernandez indicated that casualties in California were based on 524 accidents reported and include 260 injuries and 39 fatalities. Sixty-nine percent of the fatalities did not wear a life jacket. Ramona indicated that California will have its education fully geared up in 2018 and that a task force is being formed that will determine the requirements for boating safety education and an RFP will be issued for bid.

Colorado—the Boating Law Administrator Chris Wahlers indicated that the use of marijuana has not been determined yet in boating. However, he did report that of 12 fatalities in 2014, 9 involved paddlecraft.

Guam and Hawaii – the Boating Law Administrators provided reports but they did not address any serious safety concerns as fatalities are very low in these 2 reporting jurisdictions
Idaho—the Boating Law Administrator David Dahms reported that in a 5-year period that there were 27 fatalities involving non-motorized vessels and 25 fatalities involving motorized vessels. There are issues involving the high cost of search and rescue in the non-motorized area as these boaters do not provide any support to the state program as they are not registered. There is no mandatory boating education program in Idaho, however, about 900 students take Idaho’s boating education program each year.

Utah- the Boating Law Administrator indicated that Utah’s fatalities had dropped between 2013 and 2014.

Washington State—the Boating Law Administrator Wade Alonzo reported on Washington State’s new strategic planning cycle that will be implemented in 2016. This plan could specify waters where mandatory life jacket wear will be required for both motorized and non-motorized vessels based on safety data.

Wyoming—the Boating Law Administrator Aaron Kerr reported that his state is using 6 loaner PWCs very effectively in its safety enforcement program. He also highlighted a public initiative in Casper, Wyoming as a result of a fatality on rapid waters that was awarded NWSC commendation at the IBWSS in 2015.

Oregon—the Boating Law Administrator Randy Henry indicated that Oregon has issued 317,000 boater education cards and is seriously looking at non-motorized vessels. The same issue that Idaho addressed non-payment by these vessels for any safety rescue services is becoming an increasing attention getter.

On Tuesday, April 12, 2015, the session began with a report by Joe Carro, United States Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety representative. An entertaining speech but nothing remarkable was addressed. Pam Dillon provided the NASBLA report and basically announced that the IBWSS would be held in San Diego on March 6-9, 2016 and NABLA Annual Conference on September 12-16, 2015 in Wichita, Kansas.

Mitch, BoaterEd and Bill Gossard, BoaterExam provide reports on on-line education trends including blending and the increased use of boaters of the on-line courses. This theme was supported by Pam Dillon, NASBLA education, who reported that on-line and book courses are now at a 50-50 split. Pam also likes the blended e-learning approach and “chunking” and the ability to be interactive with the students.

Bill addressed issues of interest to the National Boating Federation including our effort on halting a shift to Ethanol 15 and also the issue of e-lozan usage. He invited any members of WSBA and associates that we would welcome them as members or associate members.

The conference concluded the evening of the 12th May with a fine dinner for the approximate number of 100 persons. May 13, 2015, those who were brave, ventured out in frigid waters for a rafting adventure.