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National Recreational Boating Safety Coalition (NRBSC) Meeting: The last meeting of the NRBSC, was held in Washington DC, on 23 March, 2016. Handed out were the latest RECREATIONAL BOATING SAFETY REQUIREMENTS and LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY Nationwide. It was a good meeting, chaired by Tom O' Day, and attendees from USCG, NTSB, USPS, NASBLA, NMMA and Safe Kids. Details of the meeting, should be available soon. Some highlights of the meeting are as follows: Vann Burgess of the USCG, reported \$2.2 million more in grant funding is available this year. The Boating Safety Advisory Council (BSAC), meets April 21-23, in Arlington Virginia, the meeting times and agenda are in the Federal Register and meetings are open to the public. The new Chairman of BSAC is Dan Maxin. The latest CG report indicates boating fatalities are at a record low. He also reported that a major fire occurred at Doziers Marina, in Urbana, Virginia, which totally destroyed two boats.

Steve Blackistone, NTSB, Director of Government Affairs, reported more on the investigation of the sinking of the El Faro. The first expedition found the top two decks, but still have not found the Voice Data Recorder. The second expedition will be leaving from Norfolk, Virginia, the middle of April, to continue the investigation. Also, the Houston shipping channel has been a major problem area, with two significant accidents. NTSB was going to conduct a Shared Waterway Forum, but the Board decided not to hold a forum, but rather to produce a study or special investigation report that would address the issues.

It was also reported that in the Aids to Navigation (ATON) upgrade "the current plan is not to remove ATONs, but beacons will be added." In this regard, NBF Resolution 2015-1, stated we are **"in Opposition to the Replacement of Visual Aids to Navigation with Electronic Aids to Navigation."** The Resolution further stated that "It is recognized that Electronic Aids to Navigation serve a valid purpose, and are a valuable asset to the nation's navigable waterways, but the Visual Aids to Navigation System should never be considered obsolete."

Libby Yranski of NMMA, stated that if boats in Florida have an EPIRB installed, the cost of registration is reduced. The next NRBSC meeting will be on June 15th.

New York Petitions the EPA to Declare the St. Lawrence River a NDZ: As reported by Trade Only, the U.S. EPA determined that a no-discharge zone can be established for the NY portion of the river. The NY Dept. of Environmental Conservation petitioned the EPA to take action to prohibit sewage discharge from boats. The U.S. EPA determined that a NDZ can be established for the NY portion of the river, which is 114 miles long. The state and federal agencies determined that the St. Lawrence has enough pump out facilities to remove waste from all types of vessels.

The question is, whether a NDZ is required at all. As stated by Donna Morrow of the Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources: "It has been illegal to dump raw sewage anywhere inside three nautical miles of the coast since 1972, per the Clean Water Act."

Since this is the case and all recreational boats are equipped with either Type 1 or Type 2 Marine Sanitation Devices, which treats the waste, or a holding tank, which must be evacuated at a pump out facility and no raw sewage is dumped into the waterways, a NDZ is not required.

Virginia Legislation for Ethanol Free Gas at Marinas: As reported last month, SB557, that would seek an exemption at qualifying marinas from the EPA's ethanol mandates and allow ethanol free gasoline to be sold at marinas passed by unanimous votes, was approved by the Governor and will be effective 7/1/2016. We do not know if the exemption has been approved by the EPA yet, but hopefully more states will take this initiative and seek exemption from the ethanol mandates.

Cheaper Gas Prices, More Ethanol & Politics: As reported by Trade Only, gas prices were the lowest in 12 years during the January-March quarter of 2016 and because of this boats will see much more running time during this boating season. Meanwhile, ethanol continues to be a curse on boating and we might just be losing the war against it. While experts concede the average price could rise up to 25 cents per gallon by Memorial Day, overall prices will remain low compared to recent years. Specifically, the national average according to AAA, as of March 31 was \$2.06 for a gallon of regular gas, which was the lowest average price going into April since 2009.

The recent rise in gas prices is mainly due to higher oil costs, increased demand, refinery maintenance and the change to summer-blend gasoline. What it isn't attributable to is ethanol. While industry continues to push for revisions of the Renewable Fuel Standard that mandates ethanol be blended into our gas supplies in increasing amounts, we see more and more E15 hitting the market, increasing the political difficulty of getting justifiable revisions.

Here's an interesting look at today's political perspective. Nearly every Republican who won the Iowa caucuses since 1980 strongly backed the idea of ethanol. Bob Dole in 1988 and 1996 was dubbed "Senator Ethanol." George W. Bush promised to "strongly support" the corn-for-energy industry, creating the Renewable Fuel Standard we so need to change now.

But this year, along came Senator Ted Cruz, who's been unabashedly critical of federal support for ethanol, including the Renewable Fuel Standard, which he sees as "market-distorting corporate welfare." Nevertheless, in spite of a big corn-industry-funded campaign to stop Cruz, claiming he was an existential threat to the special benefits corn receives from the government, he actually won the caucus. (Disclaimer: this is not an endorsement of Cruz).

Where do the rest stand? Donald Trump had no position initially, but now supports a "higher ethanol mandate." John Kasich likes the fuel standard "the way it is." Hillary Clinton says she plans to "boost the production of fuels like corn-based ethanol." And Sanders favors a "robust" renewable fuel standard.