



United States Power Squadrons Educational Department

Date: September 12, 2009

Subject: Educational Department Report to the Governing Board

Overview

Fortunately, even with a difficult economy, 2009 has been favorable for our educational programs. Our new *America's Boating Course – 3rd* edition has been shipping with strong numbers since its release last November. So too are our new *Weather* and *Navigation* courses. The recently released new *Sail* course is shipping well as is the new *Marine Electrical Systems* course.

Our USPS University Seminar series has expanded the number of titles, but shipments of seminars have not kept pace with expectations even though they have been well received wherever they have been given. There are still squadrons that have not offered seminars. Squadrons clearly are more attuned to delivering courses at the local level. Based on reported successes, we are launching a new approach offering seminars with districts taking the lead. This model is being refined by District 8 in South Florida partnering with West Marine stores.

The emergence of on-line distance learning and demands of newer boaters to access self-study programs is pushing USPS to offer more programs via the internet and packaged media. We are also seeing a growing demand by local colleges and institutions to offer continuing education programs in recreational boating.

This raises the question of how the squadron can best leverage USPS educational programs as a vehicle to attract and retain members, and to help support the squadrons. The emergence of our Boat Operator Certification program is demonstrating extraordinary strong interest in hands-on training. We see this being the future for our squadrons supplementing our classroom programs. After all, it is very difficult to learn hands-on tasks over the internet, so for this they will come to us. On-the-water and related hands-on training is clearly a game-changer.

The leading hands-on training topic is boat handling. This is an area of great concern to most boaters, especially new ones. Demographic trends are showing first time boat buyers are older and an increasing number are women. These boaters may have not learned how to handle boats as youth. Thus they seek training. Also, boating authorities and the Coast Guard are emphasizing on-the-water training as a priority topic to improve boating safety.

Through our Boat Operator Certification program, we restructured to provide training and our supporting insurance now enables USPS instructors to train on the water. During the past year, we have been successfully training a substantial number of on-the-water certifiers and certifying

members with our new *Inland Navigator* BOC level. Member interest in this program has been outstanding.

At the same time, we have developed and released two classroom seminars, *Boat Handling Under Power* and *Advanced Powerboat Handling*. Heretofore, one learned how to handle a boat starting with a small boat at youth and working one's way up. Experience was gained by the school of hard knocks. Today, we can show boaters what boats do in the water and why and how to control them so they can visualize what will happen. This leads nicely to on-the-water training to practice what they have learned.

In July, we received a \$200,000 grant from the Coast Guard to develop the companion on-the-water training that matches our seminars. We are now developing effective instructor training and student boater training along with detailed video programs to supplement classroom instruction. This promises to be the most effective approach to on-the-water training as individual time at the helm is necessarily limited by boat availability and instructor time. We must use it wisely.

The convergence of our BOC training, solutions to insurance and on the water liability issues, our ongoing growing cadre of on-the-water certifiers, the support from the Coast Guard, and partnerships with other organizations such as US Sailing promises to put USPS in the forefront of this priority training topic. From there we are moving to hands-on navigation training and a host of other topics.

One of our leading objectives for the coming years is to provide advanced instructor training including content to enhance our already substantial base of instructors. We will be emphasizing hands-on training and looking to develop the teaching tools with which to best do that. Our teaching aids take on a whole new meaning with an eye toward mass producing some aids to distribute across USPS. USPS's success is wholly dependent upon having highly qualified instructors. We look to set up centralized train-the-trainer locations.

Another objective is to emphasize and further enhance the perceived value with our materials. Part of the extraordinary success with our new *Navigation* course is the hands-on software tools that come with the program. We are looking to enhance the narrative content with our seminars with color graphics and text in the seminar notes. By the same token, we are developing tools and skills by which squadrons can more confidently fill classrooms.

Lastly, we will be responding to emerging methods to reach boaters such as distance learning to introduce these boaters to USPS and migrate them into squadron life via our hands-on and other training and camaraderie.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Sweet". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

National Educational Officer