



The USPS Experienced Boater Program

A Squadron Guide

*Another Tool From
The Power Of One Program*

Introduction

This document is intended to provide you with information on using the USPS Experienced Boater program to facilitate the recruitment of experienced boaters into your squadron. You may have already recognized the fact that recruiting experienced boaters is not a new idea and that there is already an informal process for doing so. We have not “reinvented the wheel” with this program. The rationale for introducing the Experienced Boater program is three-fold:

- To increase your awareness of the opportunity to add knowledgeable individuals to our membership;
- To provide a level of standardization for the existing ad hoc process for recruiting these individuals;
- To provide enabling tools that you can use to facilitate the process

In short, the Experienced Boater program is intended to make it easier for squadron members to recruit friends, relatives, and other acquaintances who are experienced boaters without requiring them to take a course to relearn basic safe boating skills. In addition, this program provides a vehicle for recruiting other experienced boaters through the use of a brochure targeted directly at them.

Program Overview

The Experienced Boater program has two basic elements:

- Program materials
- The Process

The program materials include this guide, the *Experienced Boaters!* information brochure, a copy of *The Squadron Boating Course* student manual or *BoatSmart*® student manual, a membership application, and other appropriate documentation similar to that given to your boating course students. Each of these items serves a specific purpose in the process. This guide, for instance, provides instructions to help squadron members through the process of recruiting experienced boaters in a straightforward and consistent manner. The *Experienced Boaters!* brochure provides a vehicle to assist members in sharing that information with non-member experienced boaters. The student manual(s) can be used to assist the nonmember experienced boater to prepare for the qualification exam. In addition to the above materials, you are encouraged to include any other materials that will help prepare the candidate for membership in USPS.

The process for recruiting individuals through the Experienced Boater program has been intentionally designed to provide the maximum flexibility to squadrons while still complying with USPS regulations regarding member eligibility. This means that, within the guidelines of USPS regulations and this program, each squadron can determine which membership qualifying examination (*The Squadron Boating Course*, *BoatSmart*, or *America's Boating Course*) to administer. Working in conjunction with the candidate,

each squadron can determine how to assist the individual to prepare for the examination. You are only asked to allow the experienced boater to choose if and how they need to prepare for the examination. Should a candidate elect to undertake a pre-examination review, you are encouraged to offer any mutually agreeable method to accomplish this. This may include attending one or more sessions of your safe boating course (if in session at that time) or review using the appropriate course student manual.

Questions & Answers

Q1. Is this Experienced Boater program something new?

A1. No. As stated, this program merely formalizes an existing process that is used to obtain membership status for experienced boaters.

Q2. Why are we introducing this program if the process already exists?

A2. The program is being introduced for several reasons.

First, it enables us to obtain valuable new members who do not need to relearn basic safe boating skills nor wish to participate in a complete traditional safe boating class in order to take the eligibility examination.

Second, the program provides a standardized way to conduct the process of recruiting experienced boaters, and also serves to highlight the opportunity to acquire valuable new members from among the community of experienced boaters.

Finally, the program provides a vehicle (the *Experienced Boaters!* brochure) to facilitate explaining the program and USPS membership to non-member experienced boaters.

Q3. Is this initiative intended to replace the need for my squadron to conduct public boating courses and recruit new members from those classes?

A3. No! This initiative is not intended to replace your existing public education and recruiting efforts. It is intended solely to complement them. USPS requires all squadrons to conduct public boating courses. This is one of our primary missions. Consider this initiative as just one more tool for helping your squadron achieve its growth goals.

Q4. Where should I look for member candidates for the Experienced Boater program?

A4. An obvious and simple place to start is by determining if your relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers, or other acquaintances are experienced boaters who might

enjoy USPS membership and benefit from the opportunity to expand their boating skills. You can use the *Experienced Boaters!* brochure to acquaint such individuals with USPS and the opportunity for “fast track” membership afforded by this program. In addition, this brochure lends itself to being used at many public venues, including boat shows, marinas, yacht clubs, boating clubs, marine retail outlets, nautical flea markets, and other such locales. The brochure can be a valuable “take away” at events where a USPS sponsored or staffed booth or display table exists. When used in this manner, you should use the red rectangular box on the back panel of the brochure to provide local contact information. Note that the back panel already includes telephone and internet contact information for USPS headquarters.

- Q5. I know an experienced boater who has previously passed a US Coast Guard Auxiliary safe boating course. Where does this person fit in with the Experienced Boater program?
- A5. The Experienced Boater program is aimed at individuals who have acquired boating experience on their own, but who have never completed a NASBLA-approved safe boating course. Remember that passing any NASBLA-approved course satisfies the USPS membership qualification requirement. Any individual who has passed such a course, including the qualifying USCG Auxiliary courses is already eligible for USPS membership. Likewise, if you know that the candidate needs or would benefit from participating in a regular public course, you should encourage the individual to do so before taking an examination.
- Q6. What happens if an experienced boater obtains a copy of the *Experienced Boaters!* brochure that has no local contact information?
- A6. The *Experienced Boaters!* program brochure will always contain the USPS HQ telephone number and website address. In this event, USPS HQ will respond to the inquiry by answering any questions the individual may have concerning USPS or the program, and will refer the individual to a local squadron based on the individual's location. If the individual is willing to provide his own contact information (name, telephone number, or e-mail address), HQ will also contact the squadron to which that person was referred. In these instances, you are urged to respond to the interested party quickly.
- Q7. Who is responsible for guiding the non-member experienced boater through the membership qualification process?
- A7. The answer to that question is likely to vary from squadron to squadron. Remember. The program is designed to provide maximum flexibility to each squadron. Ideally, if a current squadron member is acquainted with the experienced boater, then that member would typically be the best person to guide the candidate

through the process and to serve as the “new member assistant” or “mentor” as well. In cases where the experienced boater initiated the request, the squadron should decide who the responsible individual is. Among the logical choices is: Squadron Education Officer, Boating Course Chairperson, or Membership Chairperson.

- Q8. Where can I obtain the *Experienced Boaters!* program materials?
- A8. During the pilot program, you may download the electronic version of the brochure and print or reproduce it locally, providing that you create them as two-sided color copies so that they may be distributed as tri-fold brochures. Please make every effort to ensure the quality and professional appearance of the resulting brochure. First impressions are lasting. Make a good first impression. There is also a squadron program guide and an introductory PowerPoint presentation located on the web site. The website link you can use to access the program materials is: www.usps.org/national/executive/expboater or locate the Experienced Boater Program link on the Executive Department pull-down menu on the USPS members' home page.
- Q9. Where do I go to find the Experienced Boaters Examination?
- A9. There is no specific Experienced Boater examination at this time. By design, the choice of which examination to administer to the experienced candidate is left to each squadron. It is essential, however, that you administer a NASBLA-approved examination such as the ones used in conjunction with *The Squadron Boating Course*, *BoatSmart*, or *America's Boating Course*. Of course, the examination should be administered so as to conform to USPS practices. You should plan to administer a properly proctored examination.
- Q10. Will the Experienced Boater program meet the requirements of my state? When the experienced candidate passes the exam, will he or she qualify for my state's certification for completion of a safe boating program?
- A10. The primary objective of this program is to recruit new members from the experienced boater population as expeditiously as possible. Each state may mandate its own specific requirements for safe boating education certification. Some states have no requirements at the present time. Others require a minimum number of hours of classroom education and/or the inclusion of state-mandated questions in the course's final examination. To the extent that a candidate resides in a state that mandates additional requirements for obtaining a state-recognized certificate of completion for a boating safety course, the squadron will need to make provisions to satisfy those requirements. In states where the student must merely pass a proctored exam which includes state-sanctioned test questions, the local

squadrons can easily incorporate those questions in the examination administered to the experienced boater, just as they do for regular students. Where the state mandates classroom attendance in order to qualify, the squadrons will need to make their own provisions to satisfy those requirements. This can be an issue in cases where the experienced boater is interested only in obtaining the state certification.

Q11. What if my state requires that the examination must be proctored by a certified instructor?

A11. Remember that USPS also requires proctored examinations. Where a state mandates specific criteria for administering examinations for the purpose of state-recognized certification, then we have little recourse but to comply with them. In such cases, the squadron should plan to make available an "approved" resource to proctor the exam for the candidate. We acknowledge that this potentially adds somewhat to the workload of certified instructors. However, one mitigating factor is the current USPS strategy to certify all instructors, and eventually, even classroom proctors.

In such cases, the squadron may need to request that the candidate wait a reasonable period of time so that additional candidates could be scheduled for the examination. Alternatively, the district might consolidate the administration of the examination for multiple squadrons.

In the final analysis, the aim of the program is to qualify experienced boaters for USPS membership. USPS does not currently require examinations to be proctored by certified instructors.

Q12. Can we use the standard Boat Smart exam with the appropriate state questions added? This would be the same as used in a Boat Smart class.

A12. Yes. You can use any of the approved examinations that you already use with your public safe boating courses. As mentioned, the choice of examination is up to you so long as it is NASBLA-approved and conforms to USPS practices.

Q13. If a candidate wishes to study review material prior to taking the examination, what materials are available for this purpose?

A13. In such cases, you should plan to provide the candidate with the course material or student guide that corresponds to the examination you will administer. That is, if your squadron normally gives the BoatSmart course and examination, you should provide a copy of the BoatSmart student manual to the candidate. As new NASBLA-approved examinations become available, you should review them and

select the course material that best matches the scope of those examinations. Whether or not the candidate is charged for such course materials is left to each squadron's discretion.

Q14. What happens if an experienced boater candidate fails to pass the examination?

A14. We must recognize that "experienced boater" is a relative term. Many experienced boaters may have knowledge gaps. They may even have forgotten information included in your examination but which they made limited use of in their experiences. To minimize the chance of failure, it is important that the squadron contact for the experienced make an attempt to ascertain the experienced boater's knowledge level and currency if at all possible. If the squadron contact believes the candidate needs review – or should complete a regular boating course—then he or she should suggest that to the candidate. We recommend, however, that the decision be ultimately left to the candidate. Should the candidate fail to successfully pass the examination, all is not lost. It is important that the squadron contact avoid making comments that would cause the candidate embarrassment. Rather, this is an opportunity for review of areas that were answered correctly and those requiring review. If possible, schedule an appropriate review session with the candidate. Attempt to get the candidate to schedule a re-examination as soon as possible. In the worst case, counsel the candidate to participate in a regular boating course, if indicated. Above all, maintain an optimistic outlook for the candidate.

Q15. Do you plan to use the current membership application?

A15. Yes, the Experienced Boater program will use the current application that includes the "most influential person" line for Power of One tracking. No changes in application are anticipated.

Q16. How long will the Experienced Boater program last? Does it have an expiration date?

A16. This Experienced Boater "program" is actually a promotional campaign to increase awareness of the opportunity to acquire high-quality new members from among the experienced boater population. It is hoped that the *process* described by this program becomes a permanent fixture in every squadron's membership toolkit.

In addition, it is our intention to periodically update the program with additional deliverables, such as the capability to download and administer the examination electronically using a PDA device, and are also evaluating the potential of using internet based examinations as well.

Q17. How will the success of program be measured?

A17. There are two primary metrics that HQ is interested in. These are the number of examinations given and the number of members who join as a result. We will rely on local/district coordinators to help us collect and track that information as well as to provide feedback to fine-tune the process.

In a broader sense, however, the success of this program will be determined by you. The program is founded on a simple and flexible process for tapping into a community of able candidates, and yet the critical element of the process will be the personal interactions between enthusiastic squadron members and the experienced boaters who, in many cases, are already acquainted with those members. If each squadron member works at it with enthusiasm, we cannot fail.

NOTE: For the purposes of tracking results during the pilot test (1 February 2005 through 31 December 2005), you are requested to report any recruitments achieved through use of this initiative or through the use of the Experienced Boater program deliverables to your District commander or membership chairperson. In addition, to help us improve the program and the materials, please send your feedback and suggestions for improvement to either of the two individuals listed below:

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