

Meeting Notes

National Recreational Boating Safety Coalition

June 15, 2016

The Coalition met at the offices of AAA in Washington, DC. Tom O'Day chaired the meeting.

Attendance

Tom O'Day (NRBSC); Steve Blackistone (NTSB); Bruce Johnson (USCG Auxiliary); David Dickerson (NMMA); Gale Alls (USPS); Vann Burgess (USCG);

National Association of State Boating Law Administrators

Charlie Sledd was unable to attend the meeting due to a last minute commitment. However, he provided the following information to be shared with coalition participants:

The 2016 Operation Dry Water (ODW) campaign is planned for the weekend of June 24-26. This will be the eighth year that law enforcement agencies and boating safety partners have teamed up for the national three-day boating under the influence (BUI) heightened enforcement weekend. The program will be larger this year than in the past, with a number of additional agencies participating. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.operationdrywater.org/>

The 2014 NASBLA annual conference will be held September 11-14, 2014 in Seattle, Washington.

Coast Guard

Vann Burgess reported that 2015 boating fatality statistics are now available on line at: http://uscgboating.org/statistics/accident_statistics.php. There were 629 boating deaths in 2015 and they have been below 700 for the past 5 years. The Coast Guard can provide more detailed accident data analyses for those who may be interested.

This led to an extended discussion about accident causes and prevention strategies. All of the leading causes relate, in some way, to operator distraction. Alcohol involvement in fatal accidents has significantly declined, to about 14-16 percent of fatalities. The Coast Guard is now working with the states to develop tests that can be used to identify drug impairment. The technology exists to identify the presence of drugs. However, it has not yet been possible to identify an impairing level of marijuana.

There also are logistical challenges to conducting drug tests on the water. The Coast Guard conducts about 45,000-50,000 boardings each year, with about 95 percent involving recreational vessels. The states conduct about 1.5-1.7 million boardings per year.

The Coast Guard has not yet announced grants to national non-profit organizations, but it is expected soon. The new Coast Guard authorization bill will lead to small increases in grants to the states.

National Transportation Safety Board

Steve Blackistone briefed coalition participants regarding NTSB's ongoing investigation of last

October's sinking of the cargo ship El Faro off the coast of Florida during Hurricane Joaquin. Two separate search missions have located the ship and the vessel data recorder (VDR), at a depth of about 15,000 feet. The USNS Apache will conduct a third mission tentatively scheduled for early August to recover the VDR, which is expected to provide valuable information about the time period leading up to the sinking.

The Board recently completed its investigation of a collision between the bulk carrier Conti Peridot and tanker Carla Maersk in the Houston Ship Channel near Morgan's Point, Texas, March 9, 2015. In addition to specific recommendations regarding operations on this body of water, the report also emphasized the need for effective communications, which is important for the safety of both commercial and recreational vessel operations.

State Legislative Action

Tom O'Day will distribute an updated summary of gaps in boater education and PFD law and 2016 legislative activities. The summary has been revised to emphasize the length of time it will take for states with a "born after" exemption in their law to cover all boaters.

Most states have adjourned their 2016 sessions.

David Dickerson (NMMA) led a discussion of some legislative activities related to recreational boating safety in the states in 2016.

Arizona - The legislature failed to pass a PFD requirement for sailboards and paddleboards.

Minnesota - Enacted a requirement that CO detectors be required in the enclosed areas of all boats. ABYC has developed standards for requirement that CO detectors be installed in all new construction that will take effect in August, 2017.

Oregon - The Fish and Game Commission is reaching out to the non-powered boating community regarding a proposal to require them to purchase permits to operate. They will be seeking to have this included in the Governor's legislative proposal for 2017.

Virginia - Tom O'Day briefed the coalition on the recent Virginia Boating Safety Alliance meeting. Speaker Howell has long been the obstacle to enactment of a PFD requirement for children and Alliance leadership believes the best strategy is to wait until 2018 before making another push to enact a bill.

Next Meeting

The coalition will meet again on:

Tuesday, October 18. Please note that this is a new date from previously scheduled.

Tom O'Day will provide an advance agenda closer to the time of the meeting.

Coalition participants were urged to provide updates, especially regarding state legislative developments, to Tom O'Day for circulation between meetings. There are numerous organizations on the Coalition's mailing list that do not regularly attend meetings, but are interested in such updates.