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Government and Partner Relations Committee

0810 Thursday, 6 September 2007

Call to order by R/C William E. Husted, SN

Introduction of Committee Members in Attendance

P/ C Gale Alls, SN	P/C Howard P. Barry, Jr., JN	P/R/C George A. Bruner, AP
D/Lt Verna L. Clayton, P	P/V/C Robert P. David, SN	Cdr. Dawn Flynn, P
Stf/C Richard Gercak, AP	P/C William S. Haddock, AP	R/C William E. Husted, SN
D/Lt/C Mary Ann Jensen, AP	D/Lt/C Artemas M. Pickard, SN	P/D/C Sandra W. Pierog, SN
Lt/C Lynne Warren Reynolds, AP	P/Lt/C Thomas G. Reynolds, AP	P/C Devohn Rhame, AP
P/Stf/C Fred Sellenraad, SN	P/D/C Richard Stablein, SN	P/D/C Bruce R. Theriault, AP
D/Lt/C Daniel Tompkins, JN		

Guests: Jeff Hoedt, Chief of the Office of Boating Safety, US Coast Guard

P/C Richard Gercak, AP was introduced as the Staff Commander for this Committee.

V/C Creighton C. Maynard, Jr., SN welcomed the committee members.

Approval of Jacksonville Committee Minutes

The minutes of Jacksonville meeting were approved with one correction.

“Ballast Water” Issue Update – R/C Bill Husted

USPS has developed a position statement which is posted on the NGPR home page. The cost for permitting each boat can run as high as \$1700. The following comments refer to the oral arguments presented on Monday 13 August 2007 before the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals regarding the ballast discharge decision made on 18 September 2006 by the U.S. District Court in California. This is very dangerous bill. Recreational boating needs to be exempted from this legislation. The current feeling is that the legislation which would exempt recreational boating will not pass. It appears that the issue will be referred back to the individual states to resolve.

NGPR Committee Update – R/C Bill Husted

Small Vessel Security Summit Report – USCG summit meeting had more than 300 attendees. There is a potential terrorism threat from small boats including small commercial vessels (e.g., “USS Cole incident”). America's Waterway Watch should be expanded.

Jeff Hoedt noted that the USCG statutory authority is for boats over 300 gross tons. Statutory amendments are needed for smaller craft. Two scenarios were presented: sink boat in Detroit to block Great Lakes shipping and a dirty bomb attack in the Miami area. Very little can be done immediately prior to, or at the time of, the event. Prevention is necessary. The next phase is to hold regional meetings (6 – 8 sites) to gather input from the community. The local group would put together the scenarios for attacks in that area.

Chief Hoedt noted there have been maritime incidents occurring; however, you do not hear about them in the media.

DRAFT

For boats smaller than 300 gross tons, the USCG has the authority to request identification but not the authority to take action. The operator can be written up/pay small fine for not having a valid vessel registration.

For 3 years, the USCG has been seeking rule making authority to require proof of proficiency for motor boat operators. The proposed rules would be phased in over a 5 year period. Rules would include certificate of completion of any boating safety course such as a NASBLA course, identification of the operator and a government issued form of ID – not a Federal license.

Washington Wave, sponsored by the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA), has links to a variety of topics at www.nmma.org including a list of all legislative activities in all states.

P/V/C Bob David noted that BoatU.S. opposes the USCG legislative change proposal. He further noted that the United States has not enacted UN Resolution 40. This means U.S. citizens will not be able to operate boats in Europe.

Chief Hoedt noted that most state laws do not allow reciprocity with other states. This can be a problem if state laws are rigorously enforced.

USPS Representative Reports – P/V/C Bob David

European Boating Association: There are issues with operator certification, security and environmental in the Baltic and Mediterranean. The spread of invasive species is a concern; in some places when you pull out of the water you have to clean the bottom of the boat.

National Boating Federation: USPS National Boating Federation Partnership Awards presented this year at Fall Conferences will be certificates (instead of plaques). Approximately 58-60 awards will be presented for excellence in teaching boating programs. There will be certificates for first, second and third place.

New Members: R/C Bill Husted

R/C Husted noted that the following have joined the committee: P/C Howard P. Barry, Jr., Cdr. Dawn Flynn, P/D/Lt/C Car; N. Johnson, P/C/C G. Leslie Johnson, Lt/C Lynne Warren Reynolds, P/Lt/C Thomas G. Reynolds, III, P/D/C H. Thomas Simmons, P/D/C James Spencer, Jr., and D/Lt/C Daniel Tompkins.

NGPR Committee Update (continued) – R/C Bill Husted

Partnership Reviews:

Citizen Corps is an emergency preparedness group of, primarily, first responders. The main headquarters for government operations is in D.C. with councils throughout the country. R/C Husted has been working for 1 ½ years to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This MOU would fit in with both liaison and homeland security.

There is a major local effort with the Red Cross in Florida. Hopefully, this effort to develop joint manuals will go nationwide.

There are also activities going on with the Marine Retailers Association of America (MRAA). This organization presents awards for Co-Op Charting. In addition, R/C is working toward giving the Association access to the Port Captains list and trying to increase the use of USPS University.

Assigned Tasks: There will be a new list of assigned tasks after discussions at this meeting.

Team Reports

DRAFT

Homeland Security: September is National Preparedness Month. There is a website (www.ready.gov) with information on any kind of natural disaster or terrorist attack.

Liaison – P/Stf/C Fred Sellenraad

Liaison guidelines are a work in progress. These have been updated and Homeland Security will be added as a responsibility. Guidelines are needed regarding this responsibility. The liaison offices should find out what the Coast Guard activities are in the area. District Liaison Officers are needed.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance was mentioned as a possible source of grants.

MOU Update:

There are no new MOUs to report. There was one note: The National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) funds the MRAA and Personal Watercraft Industry Association (PWIA).

Website – P/D/C Bruce Theriault

All MOUs are posted on the website. There is also a sample state MOU.

There was discussion about how often and for what reason committee members access the website. Could e-mail alerts be generated when the website changes? News Notes should be a quarterly digest for the average member. There should also be alerts to Committee members when appropriate. There should be a link to the Washington Wave.

It was noted that reorganization is occurring at USCG HQ. Admiral Brian Salerno is now a 2-star and assistant to the Commandant for Maritime Safety.

Expo 2007 Instructions

The Expo is Friday, 7 September. A total of 1,100 brochures have been printed for the Expo, the D/C meeting and the Saturday seat packets. There is to be a Power Point presentation explaining the mission of the Committee, a special banner marking the booth, and a bowl of "Life Savers" offered to visitors. Volunteers are needed for the booth. Lt/C Lynne Reynolds is coordinating the sign-up.

BREAK 0955- 1030

Individual Team Breakout Sessions

Since there were not enough Team Leaders present to break into individual teams, the committee, as a whole, discussed the individual team's goals and objectives.

Administration Team – D/Lt/C Mary Ann Jensen

The Administration Team has two goals.

1. Provide administrative support for all administration-related activities of the committee. This is an ongoing task and includes a) maintaining an up-to-date membership roster that will be routinely distributed via e-mail to committee members and portions posted on the NGPRCom website, and b) providing administrative support at national meetings (pre-meeting attendance checks, sign-in sheets, ongoing records of attendance and meeting minutes.)
2. Develop and maintain a dynamic website with up-to-date information on all activities of the committee. Three strategies had been identified for this goal. There was in-depth discussion of two of these strategies.

DRAFT

Strategy 1: Initiate the process of updating “Congressional Districts by Squadrons” pages. Probably the state legislature representatives can assist in gathering this information very quickly. It was noted that there are vast differences in areas of coverage for the squadrons. For example, Merrimac Squadron covers two states while the Atlanta squadron is in five congressional districts. The suggestion was that the list be by congressional district rather than squadron. It is fairly easy to get information about state and Federal legislatures. However, it is more important to know which state and federal committees are the most important for USPS boating interests. The NGPR Legislative Representatives must be familiar with the identities of state and federal legislative committee chairmen and members. The first step is to find out which committees are the focal points for boating, marine and wetlands legislation. Cdr. Dawn Flynn volunteered to take the lead on developing this information.

All members should be aware that you cannot contact or lobby without the permission/authorization of the Chief Commander. You can do things on your own but you cannot represent USPS.

Strategy 2: Create an NGPRCom “Members Only” section for complete roster information and other committee-only, need-to-know information. It was noted that there should not be a members-only site that lists confidential information. Websites are not secure; thus, this is an impossible goal.

Lobbying Team - D/Lt. Verna Clayton

The Operations Manual details what can and cannot be done for lobbying. P/C/C Johnson noted that anyone can call or e-mail the Chief Commander with an issue that should be addressed. The Chief Commander will contact the Operating Committee to be sure that lobbying is permissible. It was noted that the Operations Manual should provide instructions to contact the C/C, include pertinent information and provide some time estimate. This could also be posted on the website. There was a suggestion that, if there is a lobbying question, it should be referred through R/C Bill Husted.

There was discussion of what constitutes lobbying. It includes phone calls and emails. It is relatively easy at the state level to lobby your legislator, just do not say that you represent USPS. You can say that you are addressing this issue as a “boater” not as a representative of USPS. You can say you are a member of USPS but you are not speaking on its behalf.

Partners/Liaison Team – P/Stf/C Fred Sellenraad

The current definition of a Liaison Officer is very different from what it was in the past since it now includes the Partners function. Fred has been attempting to have the functions reviewed in the Districts and Squadrons. However, it is an uphill battle. Other Departments have more priority. There are 20 districts with liaison officers. He believes there should be two separate teams: Partners and Liaison.

State Legislative Team Update - Stf/C Richard E. Gercak, AP

Stf/C Gercak announced that areas A, B and C have coordinators. However, some states still need Legislative representatives. D/Lt Clayton suggested that another presentation on “How a Bill Becomes a Law” may be helpful. She had done this presentation when the committee was first formed. If the presentation was done again, SL committee members would be better able to understand how to do their jobs.

There was discussion on the possibility of having NASBLA provide information on State regulation changes. Boating Law Administrators’ regulations are as important as legislation. NASBLA also has a website. D/Lt/C Tompkins was asked to contact NASBLA and work out with them a way to get their information to USPS. State Legislative Representatives need to be aware of regulatory activities in their state.

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Guests: Col. Mike Bise, Virginia Department of Game & Fish, Law Enforcement Division
Tom Murray, Virginia Institute of Marine Science/Sea Grant
Wendy Larimer, Virginia Institute of Marine Science/Sea Grant
Dottie Daly, Thurmond Lake Sail and Power Squadron, South Carolina
Zdenka Sellenraad, D/9 and D/22
Peter Trogdon, Weems & Plath

Virginia Mandatory Education Law: George Bruner introduced Col. Mike Bise. The Virginia Department of Game & Fish, Law Enforcement Division, handles/regulates all recreational boating including hunting and fishing, boating safety, and the mandatory boating education law. Boating is the largest funding stream in his department. That department is trying to get more in tune with this boating population. The Virginia General Assembly is very conservative.

The mandatory boating education law passed in July 2007. This law only lays out general tenets. The Board can pass regulations 'to put meat on bones'. The law will be phased in; the first phase is for PWC users under age 20. This is effective 2009. It is a progressive phase in. The next phase would be 20-25 year olds. The law will take 7 years to completely implement including specific birthdates (through 2015). Licensed commercial fishermen, boats with HP of 10 or less, mates on commercial fishing boats, people from other states (if they meet home state requirements and are in Virginia waters less than 90 days) are all exempt. Any NASBLA-approved course will meet this mandatory education requirement. However, the course has to be Internet-available raising the question of how to make this an accountable process? No determination regarding proctored exams has been made. Previous NASBLA-approved courses are grandfathered in as long as proof is available. Dockside training for persons under 21 renting PWCs (20 minute training includes a demo and 10 minute video) is required. There is a 90 day grace period when first buying a boat; otherwise, a person cannot get boat registration or renewal without proof of education.

His agency also handles waterway inspections (markers, no wake zones, etc.). This would be a good activity for volunteer organizations. The title for officers in his department has changed. They are now Conservation Police Officers instead of Game Wardens. BUI offenses are treated the same as DUI offenses.

Virginia Clean Marina Program was instituted in 1999. George Bruner introduced Wendy Larimer, permanent full time marina inspector, and Tom Murray from the Institute of Marine Science, a part of the college of William and Mary. The Clean Marina program is a public/private partnership. It targets commercial marinas. There are 37 marinas certified as part of the program. This is approximately 1/3 of all Virginia marinas. The industry is very supportive. The marinas can use the Clean Marina logo, Clean Marina flag and some free advertising. The public is responding, and regulatory bodies are cooperating. In the future, there are possible financial benefits to the marinas through reduced insurance rates. Virginia is

DRAFT

also instituting a Clean Boater Program in 2007. More information is available on their website www.virginiacleanmarinas.com. Funding is primarily through grants and contracts although one full time position has been funded by the legislature (\$90,000).

The President of **Weems and Plath**, Peter Trogdon, was introduced by Bill Husted. There will be a presentation of the past, present and future of navigation tools at the Expo on Friday. Weems and Plath is a major contributor to the Expo.

Adjourned 1500.