

Division of Boating and Waterways
August 2022

REPORT: Boating Education and Outreach, Interpretation and Education Division

PRESENTER: Melissa Miranda, Boating Education and Outreach Manager

SUBJECT: Boating Education and Outreach Unit

Program Overview:

State Parks provides essential education and outreach on boating safety and boating law. The Boating Education and Outreach Unit works closely with boating safety partner organizations throughout California to provide consistent statewide messaging to both youth and adults.

Due to the Transformation within State Parks, the Boating Education and Outreach Unit was transferred out of the Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW) and into the Interpretation and Education Division. This transition has proved to be mutually beneficial for both divisions. Funding for these programs remains in the Harbors and Watercraft Revolving Fund.

Program areas include:

- *California Boater Card (CBC)*. Implement and maintain the legally mandated CBC program that requires operators of motorized vessels to obtain a CBC. californiaboatercard.com
- *Boating Safety Courses*. Review boating safety courses from outside vendors for state compliance and maintain a listing of approved courses for the CBC. Administer the DBW home study course through maintaining National Association of State Boating Law Administrators NASBLA and state compliance; distribute course books; grade exams and mail certificates to successful test takers. californiaboatercard.com/course
- *Youth Education*. Provide free educational curriculum and supplemental resources to meet the California Education Code requirement to provide elementary age education to California students on boating and water safety. dbw.parks.ca.gov/AquaSmart
- *Outreach*. Participate at boat shows, outdoor shows, safety fairs and state and county fairs. Engage with boaters through virtual platforms. Distribute DBW publications and outreach materials to safety partner organizations and individual boaters.
- *Life Jacket Programs*. Provide access to life jackets through statewide life jacket loaner stations, life jacket trade-in events and distribution through safe boating partners. dbw.parks.ca.gov/LifeJackets

California Boater Card

On Sept. 18, 2014, Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr. signed into law [Senate Bill 941](#), which prohibits the operation of motorized vessels in California without a valid operator card developed and issued by the Division of Boating and Waterways. Possession of the card requires operators to take a boating safety education course approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) and the Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW), pass the corresponding exam, and apply and pay for the California Boater Card (CBC). As of January 1, 2022, boaters 45 years of age and younger are required to carry a California Boater Card while operating any motorized vessel on state waterways.

The Division began accepting applications in November of 2017 and has been issuing cards since February 2018. To date, the Division has received over 180,000 applications and has issued over 142,000 cards. From August 2021-August 2022, 41,150 applications were received and 31,339 California Boater Cards were issued. One of the reasons for the lower number of cards issued versus applications received is applicants are able to apply for the card prior to completing the education requirement. Once the education is verified, applicants are then emailed a temporary card while their official card is processed and mailed.

The first rulemaking package for the California Boater Card, which established the fee for the card, was approved on December 16, 2019 and is now part of the [California Code of Regulations](#). A second rulemaking package has been drafted and is in the beginning stages of the review process. This package will include how to apply for a California Boater Card, division standards for boating safety courses and exams, and explanation of exemptions.

A fourth annual program report was posted to the DBW website on April 1, 2022 as required by legislation.

Boater engagement for the CBC program is coordinated through the DBW media campaign. Outreach includes digital advertising, social media, print advertisements and in-person events. CBC marina posters are also strategically located at launch ramps and boating facilities throughout the state. Outreach will continue throughout the boating season with a focus on online advertising to accurately reach the target demographic.

Boating Safety Courses

The Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW) offers a free, NASBLA approved home study course called the California Course for Safe Boating. This is an introductory safe

boating course and is one of the approved courses that meets the education requirement for the California Boater Card program. The Boating Education and Outreach Unit within the Interpretation and Education Division oversees the home study course program.

Each home study course includes the written course and an exam packet with Scantron to record exam responses. To complete the course, the exam responses must be recorded on the enclosed Scantron and mailed to DBW for scoring. Scantrons are processed and scored by the Boating Education and Outreach Unit. A certificate of completion and congratulatory letter is mailed to each successful test taker. The certificate can then be used as verification of course completion for the California Boater Card. Unsuccessful testers are also notified through the mail. Moving forward, DBW will be offering the online e-book course option only. Boaters may request an exam answer sheet from the Boating Education and Outreach Unit.

From August 2021 to July 2022, about 4,700 courses were distributed through DBW's Online Ordering site or through safe boating partners such as the Coast Guard Auxiliary and US Power Squadrons. Aquatic centers also use the course in classrooms or as a pre-requisite to college boating courses. More than 2600 exams were requested via mail in addition to the exams in the back of the home study books. From July 2021 to July 2022, 2,644 DBW home study course exams were received and scored with a pass rate of 97.69%.

The home study course was revised last year to include updated boating safety information and received recertification through the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA). NASBLA oversees all boating safety course review and follows the National Boating Education Standard approved by American National Standard (ANSI). NASBLA certifications are valid for three years.

Additionally, the Boating Education and Outreach Unit reviews boating safety courses from outside vendors for state compliance and maintains a listing of approved courses for the CBC.

Youth Education

In accordance with Section 51879.7 of the California Education Code, the Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW) is responsible to provide fundamental water safety training for all the children of the state so that California's youth will be able to enjoy water recreation while avoiding its hazards. DBW provides the AquaSmart program and other youth outreach to fulfill this requirement.

The AquaSmart activity book was upgraded in 2017 to become a multi-grade level publication and continues to be one of the most popular publications offered by DBW. The activity book meets the current Next Generation Science Standards and is

appropriate for grades K-8. This publication is distributed at education and outreach events and to schools statewide. The activity book is also available to order through the DBW Online Ordering site. About 14,500 books were distributed to schools and through safe boating partners from August 2021 to August 2022. This number is lower than in previous years, but greater than the previous year and reflective of the COVID-19 pandemic with limited in-person engagement opportunities.

DBW's AquaSmart Live! Puppet and Game shows have traditionally been performed in-person at schools within high boating accident target areas. Due to Covid-19, there were varying restrictions in schools during the 2021-2022 school year. The AquaSmart Live! shows were presented both in-person and virtually with upgraded digital enhancements including animations and a new introduction. Schools were contacted through online e-mail blasts utilizing California Department of Education school lists.

The AquaSMART Live! shows continued to succeed reaching approximately 54,000 California students from September 2021- June 2022. During that time, 40 schools participated in 11 AquaSmart Game Show live-streams, 72 schools participated in our new Game show for 3rd-6th graders and the Live-Streamed puppet shows. Approximately 125 custom puppet show videos were produced and puppeteers visited 10 schools in person. Additionally, the Spanish version of AquaSmart Live! was requested by 12 schools, reaching approximately 720 Spanish speaking students. AquaSmart Live! was also performed at Kid's Safety Day at Millerton Lake State Recreation Area and reached approximately 200 youth. This summer, the show will be performed at the LA Best School Summer Program in the Los Angeles Unified School District where an estimated 7,000 students in the Los Angeles area will be reached.

Online streaming of the shows has been found to be beneficial and has increased access to the program especially to more rural areas in the state that this program has previously been unable to reach. Moving forward, this program will be offered both virtually and in-person depending on preference and state and local guidelines.

Outreach

Division of Boating and Waterways' (DBW) boating safety outreach is focused on areas that will engage high volumes of boaters and for an audience identified to meet a target demographic. In-person events may include boat shows, sportsmen's shows, the California State Fair, safety fairs, marina events and water tournaments. The large-scale boat events were cancelled by show organizers again this year due to Covid-19, but for the first time since the pandemic started, participation commenced at several local events including the Dana Point Whale Festival, The Women's Sailing Convention in Corona del Mar, Regional Safety Day in Elk Grove, and the California State Fair in Sacramento.

Digital engagement including social media and online advertising remain a focus for boater education and outreach. A unique benefit to digital advertising is this platform allows us to geotarget boaters in specific Accident Target Areas (BATAs) to engage the optimal audience with safe boating messaging. Our digital reach continues to evolve as online platforms offer more ways to engage with our audience. This year, we hosted a Facebook Live Event with The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary to kick off National Safe Boating Week, which garnered over 950 views. During National Safe Boating Week daily posts with safety tip videos on our social media pages included information on life jackets, sounding devices, and the California Boater Card.

Life Jacket Programs

Life jackets are used as an educational tool to promote water safety, safe boating and as an opportunity to teach proper fit and use. Throughout the past year, over 5,500 life jackets have been distributed to California boaters through boating safety partners.

Prior to Memorial Day, State Parks partnered with over 50 local marine law enforcement agencies and fire stations to provide life jackets for educational use by public safety personnel. Uses for the life jackets varied by agency but included trade-ins and distribution during stops. This partnership is mutually beneficial for positive outreach and education on safe boating and water recreation.

Life jacket loaner stations provide boaters with access to safety resources. There are currently more than 115 life jacket loaner locations throughout the state where life jackets may be borrowed. Each loaner station is operated by independent partner organizations such as marinas, fire departments and the United States Army Corps of Engineers. Some loaner stations are stand-alone boards by waterways while others may be located inside a building. State Parks provides ongoing support to loaner stations by replenishing depleted life jacket supplies to existing loaner stations and adding additional loan stations throughout the state. New loan station requests can be directed to the Boating Education and Outreach Unit.

A newer component to the life jacket loaner program is the availability of loan station kits that include all materials needed to assemble a stand-alone loaner board such as the lumber, hardware, and signage. Kits are available to order and ship from the DBW fulfillment contractor. Another new addition to this program is double sided signage that includes an English and Spanish side. This past year, 15 new, stand-alone life jacket loaner stations were added throughout California including Lake Perris State Recreation Area, Yuba River State Recreation Area, Silverwood Lake Recreation Area and the City of Lodi.

Life jackets and life jacket loan stations can be requested by contacting the Boating Education and Outreach Unit.