

## **Nonprofit Organization Grants:**

Coast Guard Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety  
Recreational Boating Safety

Federal Grant Title: National Non-Profit Organization Grant Program  
Federal Agency: United States Coast Guard  
Funding Opportunity Number: DHS-USCG-2020-001  
Type of Funding: Cooperative Agreement  
CFDA Numbers: 97.012  
CFDA Descriptions: Boating Safety Financial Assistance

Grantee: Water Sports Foundation  
Grant Number: 3320FAN112027  
Grant Title: Increasing Awareness of Safe Boating Practices: A National Public Relations Campaign  
Period of Performance: 1 year grant

Award Amount: \$89,000.00

### **Summary:**

Through creative and strategic new ways of communicating with the boating public, this project utilizes media, both mainstream and niche, via a national public relations campaign to promote recreational boating and paddling safety. Unlike paid advertising media, public relations are a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.

In addition to developing its own new content, this project also promotes existing safe boating materials developed by other USCG approved projects.

This project is specifically targeted to deliver USCG Notice of Funding Opportunity Area of Interest #2 accomplishing the tasks of;

1. Informing the boating public about the inherent risks associated with boating.
2. Persuading the boating public to adopt safe behaviors and to remind them of these behaviors.

This project continues to inform and remind the public, adding momentum to the current positive culture shift toward safer boating and paddling.

<https://www.watersportsfoundation.com/>

# The Water Sports Foundation, Inc.

The Non-Profit Division of the Water Sports Industry Association (WSIA)

A One-Year Proposal to the  
United States Coast Guard Office of Auxiliary & Boating  
Safety  
FY2020 Boating Safety Non-Profit Grant Funds

Fiscal Year 2020 Supporting  
The National Recreational Boating Safety  
Strategic Plan 2017-2021  
Area of Interest Item #2 – Outreach

**INCREASING AWARENESS OF SAFE BOATING  
PRACTICES:  
A NATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN**

**3320FAN112027 FINAL REPORT**

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## **Increasing Awareness of Safe Boating Practices: A Public Relations Campaign 3320FAN112027 Final Report**

On August 13, 2020, the Water Sports Foundation (WSF) entered into a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Coast Guard's office of boating safety to manage a \$89,000 non-profit grant award titled *Increasing Awareness of Safe Boating Practices: A Public Relations Campaign*.

The objective was to reduce boating casualties by informing the boating public with a minimum of 65 million safety message impressions about inherent risks associated with boating, persuading the public to adopt safer boating behaviors, and reminding them of these behaviors. The outcome of this project was to create a boating public that is more informed and aware of the inherent risks associated with boating. A further outcome was to reduce casualties including property damage, injuries and deaths.

A media impression, or simply an impression as they are often called, refers to any interaction a person has with a message. The exact definition will vary depending on the medium, but for online marketing it is the number of people who encounter or scroll by an ad or content on websites, social media, electronic newsletters, video players and similar platforms.

The project's plan was to utilize public relations strategies and techniques to deliver safety messages through American news media. By August 25, 2021, the campaign had delivered 601 million impressions, nearly ten times its goal of 65 million.

Through a closed-bid procurement process, the WSF sourced Kenton Smith Marketing as its public relations contractor. The project strategy included the development of a [Media Resource Center](#) website as a *one-stop-site* for journalists looking to produce custom stories promoting boating safety. Once the site was developed, the campaign worked to bring recreational boating safety topics to the forefront of today's consumer and boating trade media.

The WSF's media center website launched April 1, 2021, as the world's most comprehensive repository of boating safety information containing more than 330 individual pages. Content was sourced from a variety of manufacturers and existing organizations such as NSBC, NASBLA, RBFF and BoatUS, just to name a few.

The [Media Center](#) includes 13 menu options on topics such as press kits & fact sheets, charts & infographics, statistics reports & data, boating safety programs, boating safety education, blogs podcasts & editorials, downloadable graphics, social media content, a rights-free photo library, a rights-free video library, a welcome center, a list of WSF contacts, and a list of safety experts available to journalists for interviews and quotes. All this is valuable information for journalists. The website hosted more than 8,700 visits serving more than 19,000 page views.

The campaign targeted three distinct audiences including American consumers, current and prospective boat owners, and marine industry stakeholders. An email list of more than 4,000 outdoor journalists was procured. Over a five-month period between April and

August 2021, seven skillfully written press releases were emailed to outdoor recreation journalists, producers, writers, editors, bloggers, and meteorologists in both consumer media and marine industry trade media. Special emphasis was placed on outlets serving America's top ten boating states.

The press releases were delivered in advance of popular boating weekends such as Memorial Day and Independence Day when journalists were most receptive to boating stories. Press release subject matter was carefully considered to create interest. For example, the first release was titled, [12 Top Boating Safety Tips for the Busy Memorial Day Weekend...and Beyond](#). By June 30, three press releases had produced more than 465 million gross media impressions.

The project focused on major tenants of boating safety such as always wearing a Coast Guard approved life jacket, the dangers of consuming alcohol while operating a boat, the importance of using an engine cutoff device and the recommendation to take a boater/paddler education course.

Consumer news media outlets that used the press releases in their original form or as the basis for their own custom articles included [Yahoo News](#), [USA Today](#), [Yahoo! Finance](#), [San Francisco Chronicle](#), [PR Newswire](#), [Arizona Patch](#), [Texas Patch](#), [Business Insider](#), and [Men's Journal](#).

In addition to these placements, the WSF communications team also secured and coordinated one-on-one media interviews with regional media, resulting in positive news coverage in the following publications: *Portland Press Herald*, *Detroit News*, *Columbus Dispatch* (Ohio), *Akron Beacon-Journal* (Ohio), *Naples Daily News*, *Ft. Myers News-Press*, *Myrtle Beach Sun News*, and the [Greenville Reflector](#) (North Carolina) just to name a few.

The campaign also included a variety of broadcast interview platforms such as two live interviews with [The Weather Channel](#), two interviews with KTBC TV7 in Austin Texas, interviews with [WXMI TV17 FOX](#) in Grand Rapids Michigan, and seven other regional television and radio stations.

The project included marine media support such as multiple feature stories and a podcast interview in *Boating Industry* magazine, an op-ed piece in [Boat Trader](#) magazine, multiple stories in [Soundings Trade Only](#) magazine, two segment interviews on Captain Bob's "No Wake Zone" in Lake of Ozarks, stories in *BoatUS* magazine, [SpeedontheWater.com](#), [Paddling.com](#), *Marina Dockage* magazine, and boating safety stories in the following consumer magazines, *Boating*, *Sportfishing*, *Florida Sportsman*, [Lakeland Boating](#), *Pontoon & Deckboat*, *Great Lakes Boating*, *Great Lakes Scuttlebutt*, *In Fisherman*, *Waterway Guide* and *Cruising Odyssey*.

Industry stakeholders including NMMA, MRAA, WSIA, NASBLA and NSBC also featured key media coverage successes.

Pursuant to project outcomes, this campaign used sophisticated analytic tracking software from the Meltwater media tracking platform to measure quantitative results producing

601,140,419 media impressions, nearly ten-times the project’s objective of 65 million, which substantially validates the outcome of a *more informed and aware* boating public.

The total number of media outlet pickups and the number of gross media impressions are much greater than the WSF’s project designers expected. It’s important to note that these numbers are not in the WSF’s control and may not necessarily be sustainable.

The *Increasing Awareness of Safe Boating Practices: A Public Relations Campaign* project was completed on time, within budget and attained all its campaign goals and objectives including making millions of Americans more aware of a wide variety of basic boating safety. There were no unexpected changes.

Based on the evidence based results presented above, the Water Sports Foundation concludes that the recreational boating public is more informed and aware of the inherent risks associated with boating and boating is a safer leisure time activity as a result of the efforts provided by the U.S. Coast Guard administered non-profit grant project *Increasing Awareness of Safe Boating Practices*. For more information contact the Water Sports Foundation at [www.WaterSportsFoundation.com](http://www.WaterSportsFoundation.com).



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