



2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Collaboration • Collegiality • Consensus Building

Continuous Improvement • Equality • Stewardship

AN A CS B T A





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2024 – 2025 EXECUTIVE BOARD



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West Virginia
Board Member

NASBLA is governed by an Executive Board composed of a chair, vice chair, treasurer, four board members and the CEO, who serves as an ex officio member. Each member is committed to advancing boating safety and uses their term in office to further NASBLA's mission of promoting safe, enjoyable and secure boating.

a message from the **CEO**



THOMAS E. GUESS, CRBP
Chief Executive Officer



On behalf of the Executive Board, our members, partners and staff, I am pleased to present the *2025 NASBLA Annual Report*. Each year brings its own challenges and opportunities, and 2025 has been an exceptional year in NASBLA's 65-year history.

A bit of history helps us appreciate how far we have come. On July 2, 1956, Congressman Herbert C. Bonner, chair of the U.S. House of Representatives, Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, began hearings on issues in recreational boating. His leadership resulted in the Federal Boating Act of 1958, which encouraged states to work with the U.S. Coast Guard to enforce boating safety laws. This collaboration led to the idea of a national meeting of the states. The first gathering of state officials was held on April 12, 1960, in Washington, D.C., at the invitation of the Coast Guard's Merchant Marine Council. That date is considered NASBLA's anniversary. The association's first annual meeting was held Nov. 28-29, 1960, in Chicago, and by 1963, NASBLA had adopted a constitution and bylaws and established its first committee on enforcement. Since then, the organization has grown, evolved and adapted — changes that remain essential to keeping NASBLA relevant and effective.

On March 7, 2025, I had the honor of beginning my role as NASBLA's CEO. Since then, I have attended the State Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) Workshop, committee meetings and the Education Seminar, where I met with the Executive Board, staff, committees, partners and boating law administrators. I have engaged closely with the U.S. Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety, attended the International Boating and Water Safety Summit in Phoenix, and worked with the Angling and Boating Alliance in Washington, D.C., to support reauthorization of the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund. I also met with Ron Regan, CEO of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, to discuss and begin laying the groundwork for a NASBLA-AFWA memorandum of understanding in support of our shared mission on recreational boating and sport fishing issues.

This year, we launched the National Paddlesports Committee Honors Program to recognize individuals who promote paddlesports safety through social media. 12 nominees will receive the inaugural annual recognition in 2025. We also began transitioning away from providing association management services to external organizations, concluding eight years of staffing support for the Life Jacket Association. This decision allows NASBLA to refocus resources on its core mission and the National Recreational Boating Safety Strategic Plan. At the same time, we are conducting a broad review of NASBLA programs to evaluate their return on investment, legal and liability considerations, and relevance. While adjusting long-standing programs is never easy, these changes are vital to maintaining NASBLA's strength, relevance and value to its members.

We also completed the third and final grant in a three-year project to strengthen prosecution of boating under the influence cases, in partnership with the National District Attorneys Association (NDAA). The final report will be published this September. The Boat Operations and Training (BOAT) Program continued to grow, expanding training to more federal, state, territorial and local agencies. We reached a milestone of 35,000 National Standard certificates issued since 2010 and added a BOAT Program and Member Services Specialist to strengthen operations and member support. In September 2024, we celebrated the 65th NASBLA Annual Conference in New Orleans, hosted by then-BLA Clay Marques and our Louisiana partners. During the event, we also welcomed three new Executive Board members: Chris Jones of New Jersey, David Trader of West Virginia and Danny Rodriguez of Arizona.

Our Engineering, Reporting and Analysis Committee began piloting the collection of distraction data with four states to address operator inattention and improper lookout, two leading causes of recreational boating incidents.

On March 1, we published *ANSI/NASBLA 500-2025, Investigative Training for Boating Incidents*. Developed with government, industry and nonprofit partners, this standard enhances consistency and quality in training boating incident investigators nationwide.

In June, we hosted the *NASBLA RBS Leadership Academy* in Lexington, Kentucky, with 21 participants completing the program. Many graduates will receive their diplomas at this year's conference in Des Moines. The Certified Recreational Boating Professional (CRBP) program reached a milestone with 13 new credential holders since the 2024 Annual Conference, and we are proud of their accomplishments and commitment to advancing recreational boating safety. At its March meeting, the Executive Board decided to temporarily pause the CRBP while updating the program. NASBLA will work with a vendor to ensure the certification process is more robust, accessible and credible moving forward.

In February, the Executive Board met with Coast Guard leadership in Washington, D.C., including Rear Adm. Shannon Gilreath, assistant commandant for capability, and Rear Adm. Wayne R. Arguin Jr., assistant commandant for prevention policy. The discussions helped reestablish dialogue and collaboration on the NASBLA-USCG memorandum of understanding, the RBS Strategic Plan and the BOAT Program.

This year also brought important staff milestones. Taylor Kirshe, CAE, was promoted to chief operating officer, and Garrison Toy was promoted to communications and marketing manager. Congratulations to both for their leadership and accomplishments. We also welcomed Jenn Joyner, our new BOAT Program and Member Services Specialist, who joined us from the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources.

Finally, I extend my deepest gratitude to NASBLA's mission partners, strategic partner, equipment partner and conference sponsors. Your financial and programmatic support make our annual conference and member programs possible. Special thanks to mission partners Teledyne FLIR/Raymarine and SAFE Boats International for their continued technical and financial support of the BOAT Program and NASBLA; to strategic partner Kalkomey for guidance and support of online education programs; to equipment partner First Watch Gear for providing equipment and life jackets for the BOAT Program; and to the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) and the Personal Watercraft Industry Association (PWIA) for their generous support of the annual conference. We are also grateful for the steadfast support of the U.S. Coast Guard, including the Office of Boating Safety and the Office of Boat Forces, as well as our many other partners in government, commerce and nonprofit sectors.

Thank you for being part of NASBLA's mission. We look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Guess, CRBP
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Raymarine



meet the **STAFF**



JOHN FETTERMAN
Deputy Executive
Director



TOM HAYWARD
Chief Financial
Officer



TAYLOR KIRSHE, CAE
Chief Operating
Officer



RICK BARRERA
Committee Staff



ANGELA BOONE
Office Manager



MARK CHANSKI
Education Director



PAM DILLON, CAE
Project Specialist



DEB GONA, PH.D.
Research Consultant



JENN JOYNER
BOAT Program & Member
Services Specialist



**COURTNEY
LIVINGSTON, PH.D.**
BOAT Program Director



RON SARVER, CAE
Chief, Knowledge &
Learning Management



GLADYS THOMPSON
Association Accountant



GARRISON TOY
Communications &
Marketing Manager

2024 FINANCIALS



2024 REVENUE BREAKDOWN

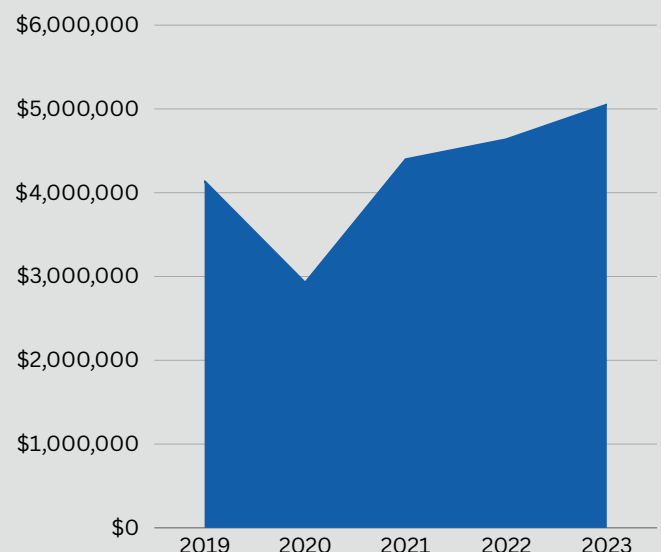
Training Programs	\$1,842,259	45%
Federal Grants	\$1,413,324	35%
Member Dues	\$346,640	8%
Rental Income	\$332,345	8%
Association Management	\$93,168	2%
Sponsor Income	\$35,260	1%
Other	\$27,918	1%
2024 Total	\$4,090,914	

(Audited financial statements and the 2024 990 tax filing are available on the NASBLA website on the "About NASBLA" page.)

In 2024, NASBLA returned to revenue levels more consistent with previous years. In 2023, the association delivered an extraordinary number of BOAT Program training courses to compensate for postponements during the COVID-19 pandemic and to accommodate agencies using deferred Port Security Grant Program funding. Revenue from training courses declined \$654,000, or 26%, from 2023. Federal grant revenue also fell \$387,000, or 22%. Revenue for the year totaled \$4,090,914, down 19% from 2023. NASBLA closed 2024 with net assets of \$1,330,265, a decrease of \$49,950 from the prior year.

5-YEAR REVENUE

Year	Revenue
2023	\$5,048,888
2022	\$4,634,696
2021	\$4,396,537
2020	\$2,922,992
2019	\$4,133,907



top ten ACCOMPLISHMENTS



1. WELCOMED A NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

After a yearlong search, NASBLA named Thomas Guess executive director and CEO. With 37 years in recreational boating safety, he began his tenure in March 2025.

2. NATIONAL PADDLESPORTS COMMITTEE HONORS (NPCH) PROGRAM

The NPCH Program was launched to honor individuals who promote paddlesports safety on social media, with 12 nominees selected for the 2025 inaugural recognition.

3. COMPLETED THE THIRD AND FINAL BUI PROSECUTION GRANT

NASBLA concluded a three-year initiative with the National District Attorneys Association to strengthen BUI prosecutions. The final report will be released in September 2025.

4. TRANSITIONED AWAY FROM ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT SERVICES

On July 31, 2025, NASBLA concluded its management services with the Life Jacket Association, allowing it to focus on member needs and the RBS Strategic Plan.

5. EXPANSION OF THE NASBLA BOAT PROGRAM

The BOAT Program grew in 2025, offering training to more federal, state, territorial, and local agencies, supported by a new BOAT Program and Member Services Specialist.

6. PUBLISHED A NEW AMERICAN NATIONAL STANDARD

On March 1, 2025, NASBLA published *ANSI/NASBLA 500-2025, Investigative Training for Boating Incidents*, establishing a new national standard for boating incident investigations.

7. REACHED 35,000 BOAT PROGRAM CERTIFICATES ISSUED

Since 2010, the BOAT Program has issued more than 35,000 National Standard certificates to maritime law enforcement and first responders nationwide.

8. LAUNCHED PILOT PROGRAM FOR DISTRACTED DATA COLLECTION

NASBLA recruited four states to pilot the collection of operator distraction data, focusing on inattention and improper lookout, two leading causes of recreational boating incidents.

9. WORKED WITH THE ANGLING & BOATING ALLIANCE

NASBLA once again supported the reauthorization of the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund. As part of this effort, NASBLA is also renewing its partnership with the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies through a new partnering agreement.

10. RECEIVED A CLEAN 2025 FINANCIAL AUDIT

NASBLA received a clean audit from Blue & Co., LLC, reaffirming strong financial management and stewardship.

NASBLA's BOAT PROGRAM



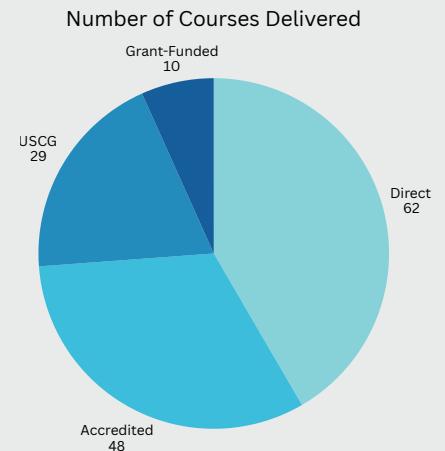
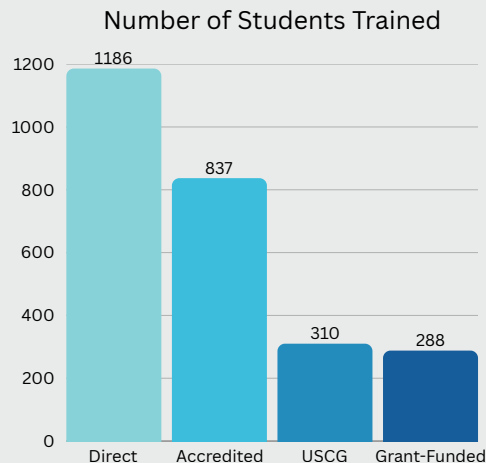
A YEAR OF GROWTH, INNOVATION, AND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

The NASBLA Boat Operations and Training (BOAT) Program has once again demonstrated its critical role in strengthening the nation's maritime response capabilities. From October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025, the program delivered 149 training courses, reaching 2,621 students across a wide spectrum of maritime disciplines. This year's achievements reflect not only the program's operational reach but also its strategic evolution toward greater professionalism, specialization, and interagency collaboration.

The BOAT Program's training efforts spanned the globe this year, offering courses through a combination of direct instruction, accredited agency partnerships, federal collaboration, and grant-funded initiatives. This multi-channel delivery model ensures that the BOAT Program remains accessible, scalable, and responsive to the diverse needs of maritime agencies nationwide.

In FFY 2025, NASBLA strengthened leadership by appointing three program managers overseeing Tactical Operations, Boating Incident Investigation, and Fire Boat Operations. A major milestone was formally establishing the Fire Boat Program as a standalone initiative. Previously part of the broader response curriculum, it now operates independently under its own manager, creating a modern, mission-ready training program for fire departments serving ports, harbors, and inland waterways.

TRAINING DELIVERY: A NATIONAL FOOTPRINT



TRAINING TOTALS

**RUNNING NUMBERS
FROM OCTOBER 1, 2024 -
SEPTEMBER 30, 2025**

149

NASBLA BOAT Program courses
delivered across the nation.

2,621

students trained by the BOAT Program.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

At the heart of the BOAT Program's success is its dedicated and highly skilled instructor cadre. As we approach the end of FFY 2025, the program includes 267 instructors, a mix of fully credentialed professionals and those actively progressing through the program's credentialing process.

These instructors are more than just educators - they are subject matter experts, mentors, and operational leaders who bring real-world experience into every classroom and training scenario. The BOAT Program's high standards for instructor development ensure that every instructor is equipped to deliver consistent, high-impact training.

By maintaining these high standards, the program not only ensures instructional excellence but also reinforces its national credibility and trust among partner agencies. These instructors are the lifeblood of the program, and their professionalism directly contributes to the safety, preparedness, and effectiveness of maritime responders across the country.

ELEVATING PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

The BOAT Program has strengthened the professionalism and credibility of its instructor cadre. The break-in instructor process now incorporates evidence-based training practices to ensure instructional quality is measurable, consistent, and aligned with adult learning principles. The after-action report process was also enhanced to generate more meaningful, actionable data. Standardized feedback collection across all course types enables program managers and instructors to identify trends, refine learning objectives, and apply insights across multiple disciplines. Additionally, a new expense and compensation management system was introduced to streamline and professionalize instructor reimbursements. Collectively, these updates strengthen internal operations and reinforce the program's reputation as a national leader in maritime training.

STRENGTHENING FEDERAL PARTNERSHIPS

The BOAT Program has enhanced its collaboration with the U.S. Coast Guard, a cornerstone partner in maritime safety and security. This year, the Coast Guard established a panel of field subject-matter experts to work directly with NASBLA on curriculum improvements and maintenance, ensuring all Coast Guard-related courses remain current, relevant and operationally sound. This partnership reflects a shared commitment to excellence and underscores the importance of interagency coordination in supporting national maritime preparedness.

LOOKING AHEAD: INNOVATION AND RESPONSIVENESS

As the maritime environment evolves, the BOAT Program is updating course materials to meet agencies' changing needs. By adapting to new technologies, addressing emerging threats and refining instructional methods, it remains agile and mission focused.

With a strong foundation, expanding partnerships, and a clear vision, NASBLA's BOAT Program is well-positioned to continue leading in maritime training and operational readiness.



committee, panel & task force **REPORTS**



BOAT PROGRAM ADVISORY PANEL

Chair: Casey Zolper, *Delaware Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Control*

Over the past year, the BOAT Program Advisory Panel (BPAP) conducted a comprehensive review of NASBLA's BOAT Program Accreditation model, assessing its alignment with national standards. This review ensures the program remains a robust, credible framework for delivering high-quality, standardized maritime training across jurisdictions. BPAP's work strengthens the integrity and professionalism of the BOAT Program by evaluating and refining current practices. These efforts help agencies nationwide rely on NASBLA training as a benchmark for operational readiness and instructional excellence, enhancing the program's credibility and supporting its continued growth as the National Standard in maritime law enforcement and response training.

EDUCATION & OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Chair: Chelsea Hofmeier, *Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks*

[Click here for the full report.](#)

The Education & Outreach Committee had an exceptionally productive 2024-2025 committee year with committee members meeting an impressive 63 times to advance boating safety education nationwide. The committee made significant strides across all five assigned charges, demonstrating remarkable dedication to strengthening boating education and outreach programs.

The committee's most notable achievement was developing the "Ser CAPTAIN" formula, an innovative mnemonic that provides a step-by-step process for boating educators, law enforcement, and the public. The formula stands for Serviceable Condition, Check All Protocols, Trust Approved Information, Not Opinions. This logical, legally grounded approach supports proper personal flotation device (PFD) use and the enforcement of PFD requirements. The Life Jacket Association formally endorsed the initiative with a letter of support following the committee's presentation at its annual conference in May 2025.

Substantial progress was made on the Boating Education Student Assessment Question Bank, with the charge team meeting 31 times and approving 249 questions. The team has completed the required number of questions for 26 of the 37 testing categories, in accordance with NASBLA policy for course delivery platforms and student assessments. The Boating Education Toolkit charge team hosted eight monthly Water Cooler Meetings and is planning dashboard updates related to boating education.

The committee also launched promising initiatives, including a collaboration with ERAC on boating education opportunities for boat livery operators through a 13-question survey, and establishing contact with the National Weather Service for the Boating Fun Index project. These ongoing efforts position the committee for continued success in advancing boating safety education nationwide.

ENFORCEMENT & TRAINING COMMITTEE

Chair: Carleton Richardson, *Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife*

[Click here for the full report.](#)

During this committee cycle, 19 state members and five associate members worked on eight approved charges. The following highlights summarize key accomplishments.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) hosted the Operation Dry Water (ODW) National Kickoff Event on July 2, 2025, in Green Bay, Wisconsin. With strong committee support, NASBLA's Operation Dry Water marked another year of outstanding success. The enforcement weekend, held July 4–6, involved more than 485 agencies, including state, county, local, and U.S. Coast Guard units. Performance data will be published once all reports are received. At the 2025 NASBLA Annual Conference, NASBLA will present the Officer of the Year, Media, and Regional Law Enforcement awards.



The micro-learning charge continues to expand video content in the NASBLA e-Learning Center. Pennsylvania successfully leveraged academy training to capture video topics supporting Inland Boat Operations and Marine Patrol Fundamentals course presentations. The video library now includes more than 24 videos on small vessel operations and maintenance. The Engine Cut-off Switch (ECOS) charge made progress toward a mandatory wear policy across all 55 member organizations, with seven additional states adopting the policy this cycle, leaving 12 states yet to implement it. The National Training Survey was redesigned for 2025 and will be released in fall 2025.

ENGINEERING, REPORTING & ANALYSIS COMMITTEE (ERAC)

Chair: Tamara Terry, *Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of State Parks and Watercraft*

[Click here for the full report.](#)

In 2025, ERAC charges spanned topics from the content of an upcoming national boating survey to the meaning of terms used to record vessel ownership for incident reporting purposes. But it was activity associated with three charges that sparked coordination between ERAC teams and between individual states and furthered two long-standing goals — the effective gathering and presentation of timely, committee-developed guidance tools, resources, and policy products for producers and users of recreational boating incident reports and other boating data; and an improved understanding of key human performance indicators through the consistent collection of data, especially on distractions associated with the top contributing factors in recreational boating incidents.

For the first, as a reorganization of the Lighthouse section of the NASBLA website was scheduled for completion in summer 2025, the Best Practices team — collaborating with the Lighthouse charge group — updated major ERAC products originally released in the 2015-2018 timeframe. The intent was to ensure content on the redesigned pages would reflect recent policy changes and be relevant in today's boating environment. Toward the second goal, to bolster collection of distraction data via codes tied to “operator inattention” and “improper lookout,” the Human Factors team coordinated collection methods and instructions between two states initially, brought a third online, and now anticipate a fourth and potentially fifth pilot state by the end of the year. A tool with instructions and the supplemental incident report form will be released in the fall to assist more states that

FINANCE & GRANTS COMMITTEE

Chair: Sean Landon, *Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of State Parks and Watercraft*
[Click here for the full report.](#)

During the 2024–2025 committee cycle, the Finance & Grants Committee focused on enhancing support for states in navigating compliance and funding processes.

At the direction of NASBLA Chair Joe McCullough, an ad hoc committee was formed to review and recommend updates to Commandant Publication 16755.3B, “State Recreational Boating Safety Grant Programs” (State Guide). The committee’s proposed revisions will be submitted to the U.S. Coast Guard for review and consideration.

Additionally, the committee developed a Mitigation of Compliance Issues resource, providing states with a process for addressing compliance matters not directly related to the Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) program. This resource was approved by the NASBLA Executive Board on July 22, 2025, and submitted to the U.S. Coast Guard.

These initiatives underscore the committee’s ongoing commitment to helping states effectively manage federal grants and maintain alignment with national compliance standards.

NATIONAL BOATING STANDARDS PANEL

Chair: Mark Brown, *Public Member, retired Oklahoma Highway Patrol*

The National Boating Standards Panel (BSP) published *ANSI/NASBLA 500-2025, Investigative Training for Boating Incidents*, on March 1, 2025. Following this milestone, BSP work groups turned their focus to two priorities: the *K-12 Personal Flotation Device (PFD) Education Standard* and the *Towed Water Sports Education Standard*.

Led by Kelli Toth, the K-12 PFD work group met regularly to review public comments, resulting in the third draft of the standard. BSP is now advancing to the next steps under ANSI policy. The standard establishes entry-level knowledge for students in kindergarten through 12th grade on the importance of wearing PFDs and sets minimum requirements for course development, with flexibility for program- and age-specific adaptation. Work will continue through 2025.

The Towed Water Sports Education Standard work group, convened in 2024 and led by Gwendolynn Flynn, has been meeting weekly and making significant progress on its first draft. Once finalized, the standard will align with ANSI/NASBLA boating education standards and provide the knowledge, safety principles, and best practices needed to reduce risk, minimize conflicts, and address environmental concerns nationwide.



PADDLESPO RTS COMMITTEE

Chair: Billy Doss, *Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Law Enforcement Division*

[Click here for the full report.](#)

A new initiative involved collaboration with the Paddlesports Trade Coalition (PTC) to provide training for paddlesports retailers, outfitters, and livery staff, with Wendy Flynn (Conn.) serving as lead. In January, the team launched a “Survey of Paddlesports Retailer and Outfitter Training: Current Practices and Needs,” which received 73 responses from retailers and outfitters. Based on the survey results, the team is compiling a list of recommended safety materials to train and orient new paddlesports staff.

The Microlearning and Outreach Needs Assessment team, led by Phil Hager (Md.), developed a comprehensive process to recommend and publicly share safety videos for boating educators. Their initial focus was on video resources supporting the *Presenter’s Guide to Paddlesports Safety – Kayak*.

Building on work from the previous cycle, the Outreach to Paddlecraft Liveries & Retailers Best Practices/National Paddlesports Committee Honors (NPCH) team, under the leadership of Kim Jackson (Ariz.), announced the NPCH in February 2025. Applications were reviewed, and 12 recipients will receive 2025 recognition, including a certificate and a one-year authorization to use the NPCH logo. Official recognition will be announced at the NASBLA Annual conference, with certificates presented at events such as PTC Colab ’25 and ACA PaddleFest in Charlotte, North Carolina, Oct. 16-19, 2025.

The Paddling Course & Instructor Proposal team, led by Virgil Chambers, developed curriculum and tools for an introductory paddling program for state boating educators that aligns with ANSI On-Water Skill Standards. Using insights from the 2024 nationwide survey, the team created the *Presenter’s Guide for Paddlesports Safety – Kayak*, which provides introductory on-water paddlesports safety information for new paddlers. The guide was introduced at the 2025 Education Seminar and was field-tested by Pennsylvania and Virginia in preparation for its final release in early 2026.



VESSEL IDENTIFICATION, REGISTRATION & TITLING (VIRT) COMMITTEE

Chair: Maria Perez-Allen, *California State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways*

[Click here for the full report.](#)

The VIRT Committee advanced several national initiatives to improve consistency and modernization in vessel registration and titling. Texas passed a Uniform Certificate of Title for Vessels Act (UCOTVA), effective Jan. 1, 2028.

In partnership with the International Association of Marine Investigators (IAMI), the committee developed a Model Act for the Titling of Outboard Motors. The NASBLA Executive Board approved the act on July 22, 2025, with final approval scheduled for a membership vote at the NASBLA Annual Business Meeting on Sept. 17, 2025.

The committee also collaborated with the U.S. Coast Guard on revisions to the Compliance Guidance for Hull Identification Numbers (HINs), submitted in May 2025, with a related breakout session planned for the NASBLA Annual Conference. A dashboard registration and titling survey was distributed to states and territories, and follow-up is underway to publish the results on the VIRT dashboards and collect updated decals and forms.

A new pictorial guide for engine and propulsion types, approved by the NASBLA Executive Board in July 2025, was shared in the *BLA Brief*, the August VIRT Newsletter, and online under VIRT resources.

At the request of the U.S. Coast Guard, the committee also developed a Best Practice Document for Digital Certificates of Number (CONS), approved July 23, 2025, and distributed via the *BLA Brief*, VIRT Newsletter, and the VIRT webpage under “Best Practices.”

During the reporting period, the committee published four VIRT Newsletters and remained focused on advancing uniformity and modernization nationwide.

WATERWAYS MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE

Chair: Peter Francis, *Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection*
[Click here for the full report.](#)

The NASBLA Executive Board authorized the 2025 Waterway Management Task Force to examine current and future waterway management needs of NASBLA members and make recommendations based on survey results for potential waterway management charges and initiatives.

The Survey of State Needs launched in January 2025 and received 135 responses representing 51 states and territories and 10 American Indian Tribes. Jonathan Hsieh of the U.S. Coast Guard’s Boating Safety Division analyzed the survey results and shared them with task force members and survey respondents. The survey identified several topics with the greatest impact on state waterways, including recreational power and sail vessel use, human-powered recreation, and cargo, commercial fishing/trolling, construction, and work boats. Wakes and conflicts between motorized boats and paddle or rowing craft were cited as key challenges, with reckless watercraft use — such as excessive speed or alcohol — and user inexperience or lack of education identified as primary drivers of those conflicts.

Respondents indicated that public outreach, information, and signage are the most effective strategies to meet public needs and reduce user conflicts. Other waterway management priorities for states included response planning, law enforcement, education and public outreach, and rules and regulations.

The Task Force noted that while research and best practices exist for many of these topics, NASBLA currently lacks a process to maintain and update this information systematically. Based on these findings, the Task Force recommends that NASBLA charter a Waterway Management Committee in 2025–26 to develop an electronic resource library of peer-reviewed content addressing the issues of highest importance to states.

Waterway Management Task Force Chair Peter Francis will present Results of the Waterway Management Survey – Recommendations for State Consideration at the NASBLA Annual Conference on Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2025.



fiscal year 2025

RBS GRANTS

As a result of the Fiscal Year 2025 National Nonprofit Organization Recreational Boating Safety Grant Program applications, NASBLA was awarded funding for seven grant projects, detailed below. The time period for these grants is July 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025.

BOATING INCIDENT INVESTIGATION & GPS FORENSICS COURSES

NASBLA continues to strengthen the quality and consistency of boating incident investigations nationwide through targeted training and federal support. Funded in FY23 for a three-year period, the program entered its final year in FFY25, delivering specialized courses in Boating Incident Investigation and GPS Forensics.

As recreational boating activity grows across the country, so does the demand for skilled officers who can conduct thorough, technically sound investigations. These courses equip law enforcement personnel with the knowledge and tools needed to accurately document, analyze, and report boating incidents—ultimately improving the reliability of national incident data.

A central component of this initiative is the integration of GPS forensics, a rapidly evolving field that draws on data from onboard vessel navigation systems. With GPS technology now standard on most new vessels, officers increasingly recognize its value in reconstructing events and supporting legal proceedings. By training officers in both traditional investigative techniques and emerging digital tools, NASBLA helps agencies build more complete and defensible accounts of on-water incidents.

To sustain and expand this critical training, NASBLA has submitted new grant proposals to continue offering the courses at no cost to agencies, enhance curriculum content, and further solidify NASBLA's role as the national standard in maritime law enforcement training.



BOATING SAFETY DASHBOARDS

With support from a U.S. Coast Guard grant, NASBLA continued to maintain and enhance the Boating Safety Dashboards—an essential resource for strengthening the recreational boating safety community’s understanding of key program data. The dashboards consolidate information ranging from state grant performance metrics to survey data on state boating safety laws and regulations.

Developed for recreational boating safety (RBS) program managers and other stakeholders, the dashboards provide timely, user-friendly access to research, U.S. Coast Guard data, and state-level boating safety statistics. By integrating information from multiple trusted sources, they help decision-makers design data-driven policies and programs that improve recreational boating safety nationwide.



BOATING UNDER THE INFLUENCE DETECTION & ENFORCEMENT TRAINING

Under a multi-year grant awarded in FY23, NASBLA delivered a comprehensive suite of Boating Under the Influence (BUI) Detection and Enforcement training programs. Now in its final year of funding, the initiative supported BUI Train-the-Trainer courses, Advanced BUI Detection and Enforcement courses, and BUI Instructor Workshops.

These programs are designed to strengthen the ability of marine law enforcement officers to identify and address impairment on the water, whether caused by alcohol or drugs. The Train-the-Trainer model enhances sustainability by equipping experienced officers to return to their agencies and train colleagues, multiplying the program’s impact across jurisdictions.

Because impaired operation remains a leading cause of serious boating incidents, this training is critical to improving public safety and supporting consistent enforcement practices nationwide. To sustain and expand access, NASBLA has submitted new grant proposals to continue offering the courses at no cost to agencies, enhance curriculum content, and further solidify NASBLA’s role as the national standard in maritime law enforcement training.

BUI AWARENESS & ENFORCEMENT CAMPAIGN: OPERATION DRY WATER

Operation Dry Water (ODW) is a year-round national campaign focused on reducing alcohol- and drug-related incidents and fatalities on the water. The initiative engages local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies in every U.S. state and territory.

The 2025 ODW heightened awareness and enforcement weekend took place July 4–6. Data from this year's campaign is still being analyzed, and final results will be released following NASBLA's Annual Conference.

The 2025 ODW National Kickoff Event was held July 2 in Green Bay, Wisconsin, hosted by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The event featured participation from the Brown County Sheriff's Office, the City of Green Bay Police Department, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), and U.S. Coast Guard Station Sturgeon Bay.

This project, awarded three years of funding in FFY23, is now in its final year of support in FFY25, marking the close of the current grant cycle.

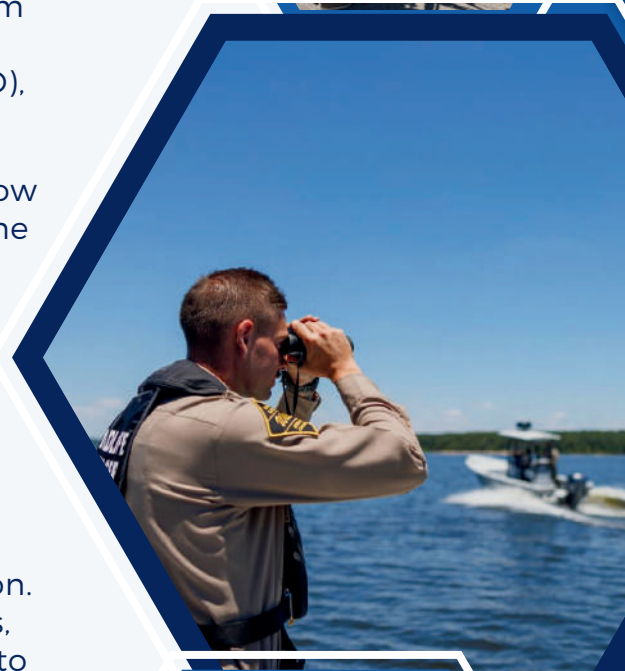
DELIVERY OF TRAINING FOR COURTROOM PREPARATION: EFFECTIVELY PROSECUTING BOATING UNDER THE INFLUENCE

2025 marked the completion of three consecutive U.S. Coast Guard nonprofit grants awarded to NASBLA in partnership with the National District Attorneys Association. Alcohol remains a leading factor in fatal boating incidents, and NASBLA has long trained maritime law enforcement to detect BUI.

The grants developed training to improve courtroom preparation and collaboration between officers and prosecutors. The first helped officers communicate arrest decisions in court. The second trained prosecutors on maritime detection and arrest procedures, addressing frequent case dismissals.

The final grant delivered three regional live trainings, reaching 32 additional prosecutors nationwide. Sessions, including a module on seated sobriety testing, were recorded and are now available in NASBLA's eLearning Center with a monograph and supporting resources.

Special thanks go to BUI Program Manager Todd Radabaugh and Erin Inman, Director of the National Traffic Law Foundation, for their leadership.



NATIONAL BOATING SAFETY EDUCATION STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT



This year, the National Boating Safety Education Standards Panel advanced two major initiatives. The K-12 Personal Flotation Device (PFD) Education Standard moved forward after a full review of public comments, resulting in a third draft now progressing through the ANSI approval process. The standard establishes basic PFD knowledge requirements for students from kindergarten through high school, giving curriculum developers a foundation for age-appropriate water safety programs and ensuring consistent safety messages nationwide.



Work also began on a new Towed Water Sports Education Standard, with the first draft in development. Designed to complement existing NASBLA boating education standards, it will establish safety principles and best practices for activities such as water skiing, wakeboarding, and tubing, while also addressing user conflicts and environmental concerns.

In 2026, the panel aims to complete and publish both standards. The K-12 PFD standard will continue through ANSI review, and the Towed Water Sports Standard will move into public review. Together, these efforts mark significant progress in boating safety education, providing research-based tools to improve knowledge and prevent incidents.

STANDARDIZING STATE RECREATIONAL BOATING SAFETY STATUTES & REGULATIONS: NASBLA & THE STATES



NASBLA brings together the states' recreational boating safety agencies to promote standardization and reciprocity — a critical function, as state programs are responsible for carrying out more than 95 percent of all boating safety expenditures nationwide.

This grant provides funding to help NASBLA facilitate and share model policies, programs, standards, strategies, and best practices developed through its policy committees. It also supports NASBLA's coordination of collaborative, hands-on events such as the State RBS Workshop, the RBS Leadership Academy, and the NASBLA Annual Conference.



nasbla **EVENTS**

BOAT PROGRAM NATIONAL INSTRUCTOR DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

In January 2025, NASBLA hosted the BOAT Program National Instructor Development Workshop in Lexington, Kentucky, marking a return to in-person engagement after a brief hiatus. More than 50 credentialed instructors, along with representatives from the U.S. Coast Guard, industry partners, and program sponsors, participated in two days of professional development, collaboration, and innovation. Sessions allowed instructors to refine teaching techniques, share best practices, and stay current with evolving technologies and training standards.

A highlight was the Instructor of the Year Award, presented to Jason Judy for his teaching excellence, technical expertise, and dedication to maritime safety. Peer-nominated, the award reflects deep respect within the instructor community.

Industry partners, including Teledyne FLIR/Raymarine and First Watch, showcased the latest advancements in maritime safety equipment, keeping instructors informed of available tools and resources.

The workshop reinforced the BOAT Program's commitment to instructional excellence and strengthened community among instructors. The next workshop will be held in Clearwater, Florida, in December 2025, returning to Lexington in 2026.



STATE RECREATIONAL BOATING SAFETY (RBS) WORKSHOP

The 2025 NASBLA State Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) Workshop was held in Lexington, Kentucky, March 11-12. The two-day event brought together state agency representatives — including boating law administrators, education and enforcement coordinators — and members of the U.S. Coast Guard, with 42 states represented. The workshop provided a valuable forum for networking, collaboration, and sharing best practices among professionals responsible for recreational boating safety nationwide.

The workshop featured presentations on state grant programs, partnerships, NASBLA initiatives, abandoned and derelict vessels, and other key topics shaping the future of recreational boating. Attendees also participated in an interactive session to support the development of NASBLA's new strategic plan, offering input on priorities, goals, and strategies that will guide the organization in the years ahead.

This annual meeting gives boating authorities the opportunity to learn about current and emerging issues affecting boating program management, exchange ideas with peers, and strengthen relationships that support effective state recreational boating safety programs. The workshop fosters collaboration, enhances knowledge of program resources, and reinforces NASBLA's commitment to advancing safety, education, and enforcement initiatives.

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

All six NASBLA policy committees met March 13, 2025, in Lexington, Kentucky, immediately following the NASBLA State RBS Workshop. The committees — Education & Outreach; Enforcement & Training; Engineering, Reporting & Analysis (ERAC); Finance & Grants; Paddlesports; and Vessel Identification, Registration & Titling (VIRT) — reviewed the progress of ongoing initiatives and shared updates on current charges.

Each committee also discussed priorities for the upcoming committee year, identifying key focus areas and strategies to advance NASBLA's mission in recreational boating safety. These meetings provided members with an opportunity to collaborate, exchange expertise, and align efforts across programs, ensuring continued support and guidance for state boating authorities nationwide.





EDUCATION SEMINAR

The second annual Education Seminar took place March 14-15 in Lexington, Kentucky, immediately following the State RBS Workshop and policy committee meetings. This day-and-a-half event was designed for recreational boating safety education professionals and focused on key topics, including paddlesports safety, updates on life jacket regulations, and best practices in state education programs. Additional sessions explored effective boating safety messaging and strategies for building strong partnerships. The seminar concluded with a live flare demonstration, providing a hands-on learning experience for attendees.



RECREATIONAL BOATING SAFETY (RBS) LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

NASBLA hosted its 15th annual RBS Leadership Academy June 1-5 in Lexington, Kentucky. This year, 21 students participated, gaining insight into a variety of topics relevant to the RBS community. Throughout the week, participants engaged with representatives from NASBLA, the U.S. Coast Guard, and other subject-matter experts. Discussions addressed the National Recreational Boating Safety State Grant Program, the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, partnerships within the recreational boating community, boating safety education, and NASBLA resources available to members. Graduates of the class will be recognized during the business meeting at the NASBLA Annual Conference on Sept. 17 in Des Moines, Iowa.



OPERATION DRY WATER

To launch the 2025 Operation Dry Water (ODW) weekend, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, in partnership with the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA), the U.S. Coast Guard, Brown County Sheriff's Office, Green Bay Police Department, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), held a press conference in Green Bay, Wisconsin. The event took place Wednesday, July 2, at South Bay Marina.



Each year, the campaign includes a three-day heightened awareness and enforcement weekend aimed at operators who choose to boat under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The 2025 enforcement weekend ran Friday, July 4, through Sunday, July 6, nationwide. NASBLA staff are finalizing the results, which will be published after the annual conference.

operation dry water 2024 AWARDS

OPERATION DRY WATER OFFICER OF THE YEAR

The 2024 Operation Dry Water Officer of the Year Officer Jacob Wild of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). Over the 72-hour Operation Dry Water weekend, Officer Wild made three BUI arrests, including one where the impaired operator attempted to flee the scene of a boating incident. His swift action prevented further danger. For more than four years, Officer Wild has served the Orange and Seminole counties areas of Central Florida and is a founding member of the FWC Boating Under the Influence Task Force. His leadership in BUI enforcement and proactive approach to public safety have been instrumental in advancing boating safety across the state.



REGIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AWARDS: SOUTHERN REGION

The 2024 Southern Region Law Enforcement Award was presented to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) Enforcement Division. During the three-day weekend, the LDWF Enforcement Division made 25 arrests for operating a vessel while intoxicated, involving individuals impaired by both alcohol and drugs. Agents conducted over 7,628 public contacts and issued 407 citations during the weekend, contributing to safer waters. Their proactive efforts also included a robust public awareness campaign featuring press releases, interviews, and social media outreach to emphasize the dangers of boating under the influence.



MEDIA AWARD

The 2024 Operation Dry Water Media Award winner is the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), Division of Law Enforcement. Captain Rachel Bryant accepted the award recognizing FWC's comprehensive media campaign for Operation Dry Water, which included the national media kickoff event July 3, 2024, in Destin, Florida. The campaign included digital billboards, radio broadcasts, and streaming video ads statewide. In partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard, Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and other organizations, FWC successfully raised awareness about boating safety and the dangers of impaired boating.





NASBLA

2024 ANNUAL CONFERENCE & BUSINESS MEETING



The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries hosted NASBLA's 65th Annual Conference in New Orleans, Sept. 17-19, 2024. The conference kicked off Tuesday, Sept. 17, with opening ceremonies and the chair's reception. Sessions on Wednesday and Thursday focused on program administration, law enforcement, education and outreach, training, and more. The annual NASBLA Awards Banquet also took place, recognizing educators, law enforcement officers, and outstanding individuals making a positive impact on recreational boating safety.

The NASBLA Business Meeting on Sept. 18 covered a variety of topics, including policy committee reports, recognition of Leadership Academy graduates, election of executive board members, model acts, policy positions, and bylaw changes. Joe McCullough was elected NASBLA chair for the 2024-2025 year. Aaron Kerr was elected vice chair, and Wanda Roberts was elected treasurer. Danny Rodriguez, Matt Majors, Chris Jones, and David Trader were elected as board members.

There were 50 states and territories represented at the 2024 NASBLA Annual Conference. The event brought together local, state, and federal recreational boating safety professionals, industry leaders, and nonprofit organizations to explore challenges, solutions, and new ideas and technologies that help boating professionals and boaters promote and maintain a safe, enjoyable environment on the water.



2024 national AWARDS



To accomplish its mission, NASBLA pursues a range of strategic objectives with the support of many individuals and organizations. In recognition of their invaluable contributions, NASBLA annually honors outstanding individuals and groups through its awards program at the Annual Conference, celebrating achievements in recreational boating safety.

JOHN M. JOHNSON LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

In 2024, NASBLA had the privilege of presenting three Lifetime Achievement Awards to leaders whose dedication and service have left a lasting mark on recreational boating safety.

At the 65th NASBLA Annual Conference in New Orleans, NASBLA honored **Paul Barnard**, a U.S. Coast Guard veteran with more than 30 years of service. Barnard is recognized for his innovative work in recreational boating safety, including building the Eighth Coast Guard District's program from the ground up, advancing international outreach, and contributing to landmark initiatives such as South Carolina's mandatory boating safety education law and Louisiana's first Spanish-language boating safety course.

Also recognized was **Betsy Woods** of the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency. Over nearly 30 years, Woods has led Tennessee's boating education and grant programs, awarding more than \$20 million in grants and certifying more than 50,000 students. Named NASBLA's first Boating Educator of the Year in 2011, she has provided leadership that has made a lasting impact on boating education nationwide.

A third award was presented to **Captain Stephanie Weatherington** of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. With 29 years of service, she is the longest-serving Boating Law Administrator in recent NASBLA history. A past NASBLA president, Weatherington has chaired multiple committees and provided leadership that continues to strengthen the boating safety community.



Paul Barnard



Stephanie
Weatherington

BOATING SAFETY AWARD

First presented in 1992, the Boating Safety Award recognizes individuals from state or local government who have made significant contributions to recreational boating safety. The award honors exceptional performance across program areas such as enforcement, education, search and rescue, navigational aids, and registration and titling.

Officer Specialist Gilbrando Resendez

of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has been a dedicated advocate for boating safety since joining the agency in 2018. With more than 24 years in law enforcement and marine patrol, he logged over 1,100 hours on the water in 2023. His efforts included investigating boating incidents, removing derelict vessels, and inspecting more than 270 boats, resulting in over 500 warnings and 180 citations. Following Hurricane Idalia, he coordinated the repair of damaged navigational markers in Upper Tampa Bay, and in February 2023, he rescued two individuals from an overturned kayak during a severe storm, demonstrating his commitment and courage.

Sergeant Nate Thompson has served with the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office for more than 20 years, with most of his career dedicated to marine law enforcement. His work has impacted thousands of boaters across Oregon through education, enforcement, and community engagement. Thompson has patrolled a wide range of waterways, from rivers and lakes to the Pacific Ocean, and served as a lead instructor at the Marine Law Enforcement Academy. In 2023, he led his team to more than 7,000 boater contacts—one-fifth of the statewide total—underscoring his leadership and dedication to boating safety.



Ofc. Specialist Gilbrando Resendez



Sergeant Nate Thompson

PAMELA S. DILLON BOATING EDUCATORS OF THE YEAR

The 2024 Northern Region Educator of the Year is **Christopher Calhoun** of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. An aquatic resource program specialist, he has dedicated 35 years to advancing boating safety and water rescue education on Pennsylvania's waterways.

Scott Murdoch of Colorado Parks and Wildlife has been named the 2024 Western Region Educator of the Year. A district wildlife manager in Grand Lake, he has long combined patrol duties with public education and continues to promote safe boating practices across South Park reservoirs.

The 2024 Southern Region and National Educator of the Year is **Marcus Bowling** of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. A 25-year veteran of the department, he has served as boating education coordinator since 2019, bringing extensive knowledge and experience to the role.



Marcus Bowling

BUTCH POTTS BOATING LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS OF THE YEAR

Officer Montana Michelson of the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency has been named the 2024 Southern Region Officer of the Year. In 2023, Michelson demonstrated unwavering commitment to boating safety and enforcement, becoming an essential part of District 21's boating efforts. His dedication and expertise have made a lasting impact on boater safety in Tennessee.

The 2024 Western Region Officer of the Year is **Deputy Adam Peterson** of the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office. For the past four years, Peterson has excelled in marine law enforcement across Oregon through education, public outreach, enforcement of boating under the influence laws, incident investigation and community service.

Conservation Officer James Fogarty of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Division has been named the 2024 Northern Region and National Officer of the Year. Since joining the DNR in 2016, Fogarty has gone above and beyond routine duties, taking on special assignments, assisting with recruitment and exams, and representing the agency through public speaking and media outreach.



Conservation Officer
James Fogarty

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Kalkomey is all about creating outdoor enthusiasts. Kalkomey's platform connects millions of people with the outdoors every year. Established in 1995, Kalkomey has partnered with state agencies to provide boater education.

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We thank you for your ongoing support of the
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2025 Annual Report

1020 Monarch St., Suite 200
Lexington, Ky. 40513
859.225.9487
www.nasbla.org

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