**Special Report on the Recreational Boating Incident Reporting Policy Project of the U.S. Coast Guard, the States, and NASBLA: An update on project status and next steps**

**--Report to be delivered by Seth Wagner, FL, ERAC 2018-2019 Vice Chair, on behalf of ERAC and the project workgroup, at NASBLA Business Meeting, October 1, 2019, Anchorage, Alaska**

**[Seth: Alter the introductory remarks as you see fit, depending on the placement of this item on the final agenda. Also if you’d like to recognize the presence of workgroup members or bring them in on any questions that the meeting attendees might have, be advised that Susan Weber, Vann Burgess, Jeff Decker, Cody Jones, John Girvalakis, Penny Kanable, Joe McCullough, and Stacey Brown are expected to be in attendance; recognition of Dan Hesket and Mark Brown’s participation on many of the discussions, and Verne Gifford’s contributions would also be in order.]**

Most of you are familiar with this national policy project—from previous NASBLA conferences and workshops, messages about it, or from actually participating in the process we’re using to build consensus around the project’s recommendations. For any of you not as familiar with it, I’ll briefly describe its purpose.

This project began in November 2017 with the assignment of a workgroup made up of Coast Guard, State and NASBLA/ERAC representatives. It was purposely designed to

* take a broad look at the recreational boating incident reporting structure and procedures in the National RBS Program;
* develop—and build stakeholder consensus around—recommended changes and updates to the structure and procedures; and then,
* move the consensus recommendations forward to the Coast Guard to inform the direction it takes in drafting national reporting policy – that is, both via regulation and policy.

The Coast Guard identified the scope of the topics that would be up for consideration in the project—basically any and all aspects of the national reporting structure and systems. But ERAC took primary responsibility for NASBLA’s participation and for assuring strong State participation in the consensus-building. In that respect, it’s been **THE** major charge on our plate for the last two committee cycles. And this is just the first phase of the project. In the second phase, we’ll craft recommendations for the future online reporting system and database (what’s currently known as BARD) to accommodate the policy and regulatory recommendations, and for developing Best Practices and guidance for implementing them.

We have a more detailed status report in our 2018-2019 written committee report and three of its appendices, so I’ll just highlight the major activity during this cycle and what you can expect as we move forward.

* We conducted two stakeholder review / comment periods in the first half of this calendar year.
* The first was for the NASBLA Executive Board, Coast Guard leadership and key personnel, and the full ERAC committee. The second comment period included all of those stakeholders, but was expanded out to all states—primarily via the BLAs—after the workgroup resolved feedback received during the first review.
* That second “open comment” period began at the end of March, and though we had originally set a comment deadline of May 10, we continued to receive comments from the States through June.
* The first week of August, the project workgroup received more comments for consideration from the Coast Guard’s Boating Safety Division, via transmittal from Chief Verne Gifford. Those comments were in addition to the input of the Coast Guard representatives to the workgroup throughout the project.
* **At this time, on behalf of the project workgroup, I’d like to extend a big THANK YOU to ALL of the participants in the process to date. Across both comment periods, representatives from 43 States, some of our Associate members, and Coast Guard personnel submitted feedback of some sort on some or all of the project recommendations. Your input was and will continue to be absolutely critical to a successful outcome.**
* Many of you did not offer specific comments or suggestions for changing the proposed recommendations, but did respond with overall support for the project.
* Others, along with expressing general support, also targeted some areas of disagreement and offered alternatives.
* The upshot is that **almost 170 comments and questions affecting 76 of the 133 or so recommendations or sub-recommendations have required some consideration and action on the part of the project workgroup** before we can deliver a refined product to the States for final consideration and vote.
* So far, the workgroup has had six (6) teleconferences to discuss and resolve the feedback.
* As of last week, the group had given a once-over to all of the comments, and in cases where the feedback touched on a minor issue or need for clarification, the workgroup has already made some preliminary adjustments.
* When we return to our respective States after this conference, the workgroup still needs to go back and tie up loose ends, gather a little more information from some of the commenters, engage some key partners in further discussions on a couple of issues, and come to consensus internally.
* Fortunately, the support for the overall project and the areas of agreement and consensus from the States and the Coast Guard far outweigh areas of disagreement.

So, what can you expect to see when we next communicate with you?

* We’ll post the project workgroup’s responses to all comments and questions received from all parties on the NASBLA Connect online discussion community that was set up to accept comments.
* We’ll distribute the list of refined consensus recommendations and all of the supporting materials to all of the States and other stakeholders in this process.
* We’ll conduct national teleconferences to go over any changes and give an opportunity for any further discussion. Depending on the timing—and if there is a need—we can have additional talk time at the State RBS Workshop in February. Obviously, we hope that we can move all of this forward before then.
* Assuming there is general agreement on the revised recommendations, the workgroup will send the final product on to the Executive Board for its approval, and then move the package forward to you, the NASBLA membership, for a formal vote of acceptance. The expectation is that the Board will use the interim business voting procedure outlined in the NASBLA Bylaws.
* Assuming acceptance, the consensus package will be delivered to the Coast Guard to inform its drafting of regulatory and policy language for the national reporting requirements, structure and systems.
* And, finally, in a follow-up action—something we have not done in the recent past—the Board will put forward a call to the States – along with instructions – to individually petition the Coast Guard to initiate a regulatory project based on and referencing the consensus recommendations accepted by membership.

I don’t want to go too far over the time allotted, but I do want to close with a few suggestions as we push this project over the finish line.

* One is a reminder about “consensus.” As a workgroup, we’re doing our best to account for different perspectives, consider objections, and do our best to resolve them. Ultimately, though, we remember that consensus does not necessarily mean 100 percent agreement. But, it does mean that far more of the stakeholders than not agree with the recommendations to some degree and accept them.
* And second, as this moves forward, we ask that you continue to think about the recommendations in terms of what “could and should be” rather than the getting stuck in current policies and practice.

**[Seth: add any final comments, etc., as you see fit. Offer thanks again for the strong participation; encourage continued participation in these final steps…]**