



2026 NASBLA Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) Leadership Academy

May 31 – June 4, 2026 | Lexington, Kentucky

Preparing the new generation of recreational boating safety leaders

Sunday, May 31

5:00 pm	<p>Academy Class Meets in Hotel Lobby Home2 Suites by Hilton Lexington Keeneland/Airport 960 Midnight Pass Lexington, KY 40513</p> <p>Attendees will take a short walk to J. Render's Southern Table & Bar. For those who prefer not to walk, NASBLA staff will provide shuttle transportation from the hotel to J Render's.</p>
5:30 pm	<p>Academy Welcome Reception J. Render's Southern Table & Bar 3191 Beaumont Centre Circle Lexington, KY 40513</p>

Monday, June 1

7:00 AM – 7:45 AM	<p>Light Breakfast (provided by Academy Hotel, Home2 Suites)</p>
<p>June 1 Academy Sessions will be held at: TownePlace Suites Lexington Keeneland/Airport 980 Midnight Pass, Lexington, KY 40513</p>	
8:00 AM – 8:30 AM	<p>Welcome & Introductions Chris Jones, <i>NASBLA Chair, New Jersey BLA</i> Tom Guess, <i>NASBLA Chief Executive Officer</i></p>
8:30 AM – 12:00 PM	<p>DISC Behavioral & Driving Forces Assessments Ryan Lisk, <i>Executive Coach, Selection Specialist, Team-Builder, Lisk Associates</i></p>



	Participants will review and interpret the DISC assessments they completed prior to the Academy, gaining insight into their communication style, behavioral tendencies, and leadership approach. This interactive session will focus on how different styles impact communication, decision-making, and team dynamics, while providing practical strategies to adapt, collaborate more effectively, and lead with greater awareness.
12:00 PM – 1:00 PM	Lunch <i>(provided)</i>
1:00 PM – 1:30 PM	RBS Management Pre-Assessment
1:30 PM – 2:00 PM	<p>Leadership Academy: Expectations, Goals & Cohort Kickoff Taylor Kirshe, <i>NASBLA Chief Operating Officer</i></p> <p>The Leadership Academy begins by setting a clear foundation for success. In this session, participants will define how they will show up as a cohort — establishing expectations, creating shared ground rules and identifying individual goals for the week. Through interactive discussion, the group will align on what it takes to fully engage, challenge one another, and maximize the value of the Academy experience.</p>
2:00 PM – 2:15 PM	<i>Break</i>
2:15 PM – 3:15 PM	<p>Leadership Lab #1: Know Your Default Tom Guess, <i>NASBLA Chief Executive Officer</i></p> <p>This Leadership Lab moves participants from self-awareness to application. Using insights from the DISC assessment, participants will work through real leadership challenges in small groups, exploring how their default leadership style shapes their responses under pressure. Through peer feedback and guided discussion, participants will uncover blind spots, challenge assumptions, and identify actions to strengthen their leadership approach.</p>
3:15 PM – 3:30 PM	Mustang Survival
3:30 PM – 3:45 PM	<i>Break</i>
3:45 PM – 4:15 PM	<p>Victim Impact Session Alex Otte, <i>Regional Executive Director, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)</i></p> <p>Using boating safety advocates and survivors of boating incidents can</p>



	bring home your program efforts with legislators and the public. The first survivor to serve as MADD Regional Executive Director will share how she's worked around the country to advance boating safety efforts.
4:15 PM – 5:00 PM	Practical Lessons of Leadership Tom Guess, <i>NASBLA CEO & Executive Director</i> This session will explore the distinction between management and leadership, highlighting the importance of both. Participants will gain an overview of engagement strategies and learn why intentional, meaningful leadership interventions matter. The session will also examine ethics, character, and integrity, equipping participants to clearly articulate their role in upholding these principles. Together, these competencies are essential for navigating the complex and evolving environment in which recreational boating safety professionals operate.
	Dinner <i>(on own)</i>



Tuesday, June 2	
7:00 AM – 7:45 AM	Light Breakfast (provided by Academy Hotel, Home2 Suites)
7:45 AM	Academy Class Meets in Hotel Lobby of <u>Home2 Suites</u>
June 2 Academy Sessions will be held at: Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife 1 Sportsman's Lane, Frankfort, KY 40601	
8:00 AM	Academy Class Departs <u>Home2 Suites Hotel Lobby</u> to KY DFW Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife 1 Sportsman's Lane, Frankfort, KY 40601
8:30 AM – 8:45 AM	Welcome – Salato Wildlife Center, <i>Frankfort, Kentucky</i> Marcus Bowling, <i>Boating Education Coordinator, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources</i>
8:45 AM – 9:30 AM	Leading Through Constraints: Making Decisions When Nothing Is Ideal Chris Jones, <i>NASBLA Chair, New Jersey BLA</i> Taylor Kirshe, <i>NASBLA Chief Operating Officer</i> This session focuses on one of the most challenging aspects of leadership: making decisions when resources are limited and priorities compete. Through a facilitated discussion and guided exercise, participants will explore how to evaluate competing demands, make informed tradeoffs, and navigate the tension that comes with difficult decisions. The session emphasizes practical decision-making and equips participants with strategies to prioritize effectively in complex, real-world environments.
9:30 AM – 9:45 AM	<i>Break</i>
9:45 AM – 10:30 AM	National RBS State Grant Program – A Financial Overview Cynthia Dudzinski, <i>Lead Grants Management Specialist Office of Auxiliary & Boating Safety, Boating Safety Division, Grants Management Branch (CG-BSX-22)</i>
10:30 AM – 11:00 AM	Sport Fish Restoration & Boating Trust Fund Tom Guess, <i>NASBLA Chief Executive Officer</i>



	<p>This session will provide an overview of the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund (SRBTF), including how it is funded, how funds are distributed, what reauthorization entails, and why it is critical to states, nonprofits, and the recreational boating safety (RBS) community. Participants will also learn about the Angling and Boating Alliance, including its membership and how it operates. In addition, the session will examine state boating programs and break down how grant funding is structured into three categories and distributed annually through the RBS state grant program.</p>
11:00 AM – 11:15 AM	<i>Break</i>
11:15 AM – 11:45 AM	<p>Emerging Trends: Paddlesports & New Users Phoebe Wallace, <i>NASBLA Education Director</i> Pam Dillon, <i>NASBLA Committee Staff</i></p> <p>This session focuses on the increasing popularity of paddlesports and provides participants with resources to provide paddlesports focused education and outreach in their state.</p>
11:45 AM – 12:15 PM	Salato Wildlife Center Walking Tour
12:15 PM – 1:00 PM	Lunch (<i>provided</i>)
1:00 PM – 1:30 PM	<p>Academy Class Travels to Canoe Kentucky Canoe Kentucky 7323 Peaks Mill Rd, Frankfort, KY 40601</p>
2:00 PM – 5:00 PM	<p>Experience Paddlesports</p> <p>Join us for a guided paddle trip down Elkhorn Creek, ideal for beginner to intermediate paddlers. This scenic section of the creek winds through a wooded valley dotted with rock beaches. The route features a rock-bottom streambed with gentle riffles, small rapids, and calm pools, and ranges from 35 to 90 feet wide.</p> <p><i>The water is classified as Class I+ and typically takes about two hours if paddled continuously. Depending on water conditions and pacing, the full experience generally lasts 2–3 hours.</i></p> <p>What to Bring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure footwear (no flip-flops) • Clothing you don't mind getting wet (quick-drying materials recommended) • Sunscreen, a hat, and glasses straps



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A life jacket will be provided, though you are welcome to bring your own if you prefer
5:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Return to Lexington
	Dinner <i>(on own)</i>



Wednesday, June 3	
7:00 AM – 7:45 AM	Light Breakfast (provided by Academy Hotel, Home2 Suites)
June 3 Academy Sessions will be held at: TownePlace Suites Lexington Keeneland/Airport 980 Midnight Pass, Lexington, KY 40513	
8:00 AM – 8:45 AM	NASBLA Boating Education-Standards and Approval Process Phoebe Wallace, <i>NASBLA Education Director</i> This session will provide an overview of the new NASBLA course approval process and demonstrate how NASBLA ensures boating safety courses meet the National Standards. Participants will learn how the states and NASBLA work cooperatively to deliver high quality Boating Safety Education nationwide.
8:45 AM – 9:15 AM	What's Data Got to Do with It? Deb Gona, PhD, <i>NASBLA Research Consultant & Committee Staff</i> Whether you <i>love</i> data or cringe at its mention, the fact is that the state and national RBS programs run on it. But finding, collecting, and using incident reports and other recreational boating data and statistics can be challenging. This session will focus on a few key sources and resources, guidance to improve the quality and <i>appropriate</i> application of that data, and some clues to help evaluate it when you want to answer boating safety inquiries and research questions.
9:15 AM – 9:30 AM	<i>Break</i>
9:30 AM – 10:15 AM	Leadership Lab #2: Resource Allocation Simulation Matt Majors, <i>NASBLA Vice Chair, Tennessee BLA</i> In this fast-paced Leadership Lab, participants will navigate a realistic scenario involving budget constraints and rising boating incidents. Working in small groups, they will be required to prioritize programs, make difficult tradeoffs, and defend their decisions. Through rapid discussion and peer challenge, participants will gain insight into how resource allocation decisions shape program effectiveness and leadership outcomes.



10:15 AM – 10:45 AM	<p>USCG Recreational Boating Safety Program Walt Taylor, <i>Senior Recreational Boating Program Specialist</i> USCG Boating Safety Division, Program Management and Operations Branch (CG-BSX-21)</p> <p>An interactive overview and discussion of the U.S. Coast Guard’s Recreational Boating Safety Program responsibilities established by statute and regulations to include the need to nurture and sustain a close collaborative relationship between the Coast Guard and States.</p>
10:45 AM – 11:00 AM	<i>Break</i>
11:00 AM – 12:00 PM	<p>Across State Lines: Strengths & Struggles Taylor Kirshe, CAE, <i>NASBLA Chief Operating Officer</i> Courtney Livingston, PhD, <i>NASBLA BOAT Program Director</i></p> <p>This interactive session brings participants together to share insights and learn from one another across states and organizations. Attendees will reflect on their agency’s strengths and challenges, review input from their peers, and help identify key topics for group discussion.</p> <p>The session will conclude with an open, facilitated conversation focused on the most relevant themes. Participants are encouraged to ask questions, share experiences, and explore practical solutions to common challenges.</p>
12:00 PM – 1:00 PM	Lunch (<i>provided</i>)
1:00 PM – 1:30 PM	<p>All About NASBLA Tom Guess, <i>NASBLA Chief Executive Officer</i></p> <p>This session serves as NASBLA 101. Participants will explore the association’s history, organizational structure, and leadership, including the Executive Board. The session will also highlight NASBLA’s policy committees and their role in advancing the organization’s work, as well as review the mission and vision, strategic plan, and the annual NASBLA Conference.</p>
1:30 PM – 2:00 PM	<p>NASBLA Connect & Online Resources Garrison Toy, <i>NASBLA Communications & Marketing Manager</i></p> <p>Join Garrison for a tour of NASBLA’s digital tools and platforms. This session will introduce key online resources, including the NASBLA website and the online community. Learn how to navigate these platforms to stay</p>



	connected, informed, and engaged with fellow professionals across the boating safety community.
2:00 PM – 2:15 PM	<i>Break</i>
2:15 PM – 3:00 PM	<p>Federal Vessel Numbering Requirements and State Implementation Rick Barrera, <i>NASBLA Committee Staff</i></p> <p>This session provides an overview of federal requirements for vessel numbering, including state-assigned Hull Identification Numbers (HINs), the Standard Numbering System (SNS), HIN formats and verification, the Vessel Identification System (VIS), and the Uniform Certificate of Title Act (UCOTVA).</p>
3:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Kentucky Historical Water Tour
6:00 PM – 7:30 PM	Dinner (<i>provided</i>)
7:30 PM	Return to Hotel



Thursday, June 4	
7:00 AM – 7:45 AM	Light Breakfast (provided by Academy Hotel, Home2 Suites)
June 4 Academy Sessions will be held at: TownePlace Suites Lexington Keeneland/Airport 980 Midnight Pass, Lexington, KY 40513	
8:00 AM – 8:45 AM	Marine Law Enforcement & the Boat Operations and Training (BOAT) Program <i>Courtney Livingston, PhD, NASBLA BOAT Program Director</i> Learn how the Boat Operations and Training (BOAT) Program supports marine law enforcement and emergency response through standardized training and credentialing. Recognized by the U.S. Coast Guard, the BOAT Program establishes a national standard for qualifications and interoperability across all levels of government. This session will highlight how adoption of the program strengthens coordination among maritime agencies and enhances their ability to serve as force multipliers nationwide.
8:45 AM – 9:30 AM	USCG / State RBS Program Assessment <i>Walt Taylor, Senior Recreational Boating Program Specialist USCG Boating Safety Division, Program Management and Operations Branch (CG-BSX-21)</i> An interactive overview and discussion of the U.S. Coast Guard’s State Recreational Boating Safety Program Assessments to include types of assessments, frequency, what to expect, and how to prepare for a successful assessment.
9:30 AM – 9:45 AM	<i>Break</i>
9:45 AM – 10:30 AM	Working With Your Legislature <i>Tom Guess, NASBLA Chief Executive Officer</i> This session will introduce participants to state legislative processes, including how a bill becomes law, the crossover process that helps maintain checks and balances, and practical guidance for navigating the legislative environment. These foundational concepts are valuable for all



	professionals, regardless of direct involvement with their state legislature, and will provide useful insight into how to effectively navigate the legislative process.
10:30 AM – 10:45 AM	<i>Break</i>
10:45 AM – 11:30 AM	<p>Recreational Boat Manufacturer Compliance – What the Other Branch (CG-BSX-23) Does Jeff Ludwig, <i>Branch Chief, Recreational Boating Product Assurance Branch (CG-BSX-23)</i></p> <p>This session will provide attendees with a foundational understanding of the requirements recreational boat manufacturers and importers must meet to legally sell boats in the United States. Participants will also learn how states can support the U.S. Coast Guard in ensuring new boats are safe for use, as well as the appropriate steps to take when a potential defect is identified.</p>
11:30 AM – 12:00 PM	<p>Owning the Message: Media, Marketing, and Social Media Strategies Matt Majors, <i>NASBLA Vice Chair, Tennessee BLA</i></p>
12:00 PM – 12:15 PM	Class & Individual Photos
12:15 PM – 1:15 PM	Lunch (<i>provided</i>)
1:15 PM – 1:30 PM	Update from Kalkomey
1:30 PM – 3:30 PM	<p>Leading More Productive Meetings Adrienne Bauer, <i>Facilitation Administrator, Eastern Kentucky University Facilitation Center</i></p> <p>Learn how to plan and lead more effective meetings with this practical session on facilitation skills. Stefanie Ashley will share techniques, tools, and processes to help you better prepare for and guide productive meetings and collaborative projects. Whether you're leading a team or participating in planning sessions, you'll walk away with strategies to make your meetings more focused and efficient.</p>
3:30 PM – 3:45 PM	<i>Break</i>
3:45 PM – 4:30 PM	<p>Leadership Lab #3: Conflict + Influence Chris Jones, <i>NASBLA Chair, New Jersey BLA</i> Matt Majors, <i>NASBLA Vice Chair, Tennessee BLA</i></p>



	<p>In this interactive Leadership Lab, participants will practice navigating challenging leadership situations involving internal resistance, political pressure, and staff conflict. Through small-group role-play and facilitated discussion, participants will develop strategies to communicate effectively, manage competing perspectives, and lead through tension. This session emphasizes practical application and real-world leadership dynamics.</p>
4:30 PM – 5:00 PM	<p>Closing Roundtable Tom Guess, <i>NASBLA Chief Executive Officer</i></p> <p>This closing roundtable invites participants to reflect on their RBS Leadership Academy experience by revisiting their initial goals and evaluating key takeaways. The discussion will focus on next steps for applying what was learned and identifying opportunities to strengthen recreational boating safety efforts moving forward. Participants will also be asked to complete a take-home RBS assessment.</p>
	<p>Dinner <i>(on own)</i></p>

*Agenda subject to change.
Updated: April 13, 2026.*