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Colonel Chad Jones
Law Enforcement Division
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
4200 Smith School Road
Austin TX 78744

Dear Col. Jones,

On behalf of the membership of the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA), I am writing to thank you and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for the outstanding leadership demonstrated by Assistant Commander Cody Jones during his recent term as Chairman of the NASBLA Executive Board during 2019-2020.

As the association's first-ever Chairman of the Board (formerly NASBLA President), Asst. Commander Jones set a high bar for all those who will follow in his footsteps. Taking over the NASBLA helm in what would turn out to be one of most challenging years in our nation's and association's history, Asst. Cmdr. Jones exhibited tremendous foresight and governance capabilities in helping the board and members navigate the difficult course brought on by the coronavirus.

Among the most significant accomplishments achieved during Asst. Cmdr. Jones's tenure as NASBLA Chair, the association launched an urgent boater education initiative with the adoption of the *Emergency COVID-19 Virtual Classroom and Testing Authorization*. The COVID-19 pandemic had an immediate impact on recreational boaters, limiting their ability to attend in-person boating education courses, and with the kick-off of the boating season looming, NASBLA wanted to be responsive to the issues states and territories were facing.

To help ease the burden that the pandemic triggered on boating education, NASBLA endorsed the use of modern video conferencing technology to present NASBLA-approved course content to students in a virtual classroom setting for the duration of the pandemic. This emergency authorization gave the course providers permission to deviate from the original course delivery method without changing the content or other requirements placed on the course, thus enabling boaters to take an approved boating education course *virtually* during the global pandemic.

Officer safety is among the association's highest priorities every year, but especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Partnering with *Louisiana State University's (LSU) National Center*

for Biomedical Research and Training/Academy of Counter-Terrorist Education, NASBLA's subject matter experts created a testing protocol for conducting safe and effective BUI enforcement boardings during the pandemic. LSU has been a leader in law enforcement animation and together we produced an advanced animated training protocol utilizing advanced avatar officers and recreational boater interaction. The video is available on NASBLA's BOAT Program website page.

As if the states' COVID impact and response were not enough of a challenge, Asst. Cmdr. Jones also led the association through a successful and historic national headquarters move, as NASBLA leadership oversaw the refitting and relocation of staff offices to a permanent facility at 1020 Monarch Street in Lexington, Kentucky just as the coronavirus outbreak was taking off. The new facility will provide not only much needed, affordable housing and training space for NASBLA's core operations, but also secures a long-term source of non-dues revenue and investment for the future.

During the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Department of Defense designated *NASBLA BOAT Course* training as *essential to national security*. Shortly thereafter the BOAT Program Team delivered training to military installations under the association's Instructor Health Guidance policy. The first classes were delivered to security forces at the Military Ocean Terminal Concord California (MOTCO). *That training allowed us to test our health safety protocol for instructors and students and has allowed training to resume to agencies who were forced to postpone last spring.*

Further evidence of the timely advances in training, training standards and course development, during Asst. Cmdr. Jones's term as Chair, NASBLA took important strides in developing core competencies for standardizing inland boat operations for marine law enforcement professionals. A lot of attention has been focused on developing a core competency boat operator's course for marine law enforcement officers who predominately work alone on confined bodies of water across this country's inland lakes and rivers. The purpose of the course was to develop marine patrol officer proficiency in law enforcement techniques and safe and efficient boat operation using assigned patrol vessels and gear under various inland water conditions. As a result, the *Inland Boat Operation and Marine Patrol Fundamentals* course was established and field-tested in fall 2020.

During 2019-2020 board year, NASBLA also worked to strengthen the national maritime training partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC). Last summer, principals with NASBLA, FLETC and the U.S. Coast Guard executed a critical new collaborative training agreement with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the three organizations. The purpose of

the MOU was to set forth terms by which the partners intend to provide personnel, policies and programs to establish, maintain, and deliver a national standard of maritime boat training. The Standard is designed to promote interoperability and to enhance the active relationship between the Coast Guard, FLETC, NASBLA and Federal, State, Local, County and Tribal law enforcement officers and rescue personnel, by providing a uniformed standard for boat training, competency achievement, credentialing and currency maintenance.

In a nod to the positive impact of its national BUI initiative, NASBLA was awarded a *2020 American Society of Association Executives 'Power of A Gold Award' for the Operation Dry Water campaign*. Operation Dry Water (ODW) is a year-round boating under the influence (BUI) awareness and enforcement campaign that was launched more than a decade ago. ODW's mission is to reduce the number of alcohol- and drug-related incidents and fatalities through increased recreational boater awareness and enforcement on the water, thus deterring and preventing tragedies related to BUI.

In accepting the national award, Chairman Jones noted, *"We are proud that the Operation Dry Water campaign is being recognized for the work being done to prevent boating under the influence and the positive impact it has on society. NASBLA, the local, state and federal agencies that participate in the campaign and our outreach partners work continuously to educate recreational boaters about the heartbreaking and life-changing outcomes that come from choosing to boat under the influence and to enforce the boating safety laws that keep others safe."*

Among other key accomplishments realized under Jones's chairmanship of the association, the National Boating Education Standards Panel (ESP) drafted five *Core-Plus Basic Boating Knowledge Standards* including facilitation of two public review processes. ESP completed the review and disposition of more than 175 public comments received during the review period for the five draft standards. This was the first review of draft standards in a new Core-Plus format adopted by the panel. This format promises to improve consistency and uniformity of all standards for Basic Boating Knowledge and speed-up the update process for all course standards.

Under development for a number of years, in 2020 NASBLA formally launched its *Certified Recreational Boating Professional* credential – otherwise known as the CRBP. This voluntary credential for recreational boating professionals is broad-based and addresses boating professionals' knowledge, performance and career achievements in key program domains. Last summer, the program began accepting applicants and on August 18, 2020, David Windsor, National Coordinator of the Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow Program, passed the exam and was awarded the first-ever CRBP national certification.

Finally, among the most far-reaching and potentially enduring RBS program achievements completed by NASBLA under the leadership of Asst. Cmdr. Jones, last summer the association's Engineering, Reporting and Analysis Committee (ERAC), in collaboration with the staff of the U.S. Coast Guard's Boating Safety Division (BSX), produced a comprehensive package of recreational boating incident reporting recommendations. The culmination of several year's effort, ERAC was successful in facilitating what turned out to be a landslide vote in favor of the bundle of recreational boating incident reporting recommendations that was put forth to the NASBLA membership. By the deadline, as many as 54 of the 56 members had cast ballots, with all 54 responding affirmatively on the measure. The package of reporting recommendations was subsequently sent to the U.S. Coast Guard for use in developing national policy and regulatory reforms.

During his tenure on the Executive Board, and especially in his recent role as NASBLA Chair, Asst. Cmdr. Cody Jones has remained deeply committed to supporting the association, the National Recreational Boating Safety Program, and the vital partnership between the states and the U.S. Coast Guard. He has worked hard to build on this successful federal/state relationship while keeping the priorities and needs our member agencies first and foremost among the association's strategic goals and objectives.

Again, please accept our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to your office and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for allowing Assistant Commander Cody Jones to serve with distinction on the Executive Board over these past years and in his vital, pioneering role last year as the association first-ever Chair of the Executive Board.

Respectfully,

John M. Johnson, CAE
Chief Executive Officer

c: The Honorable Greg Abbott, Governor, State of Texas
Mr. Carter Smith, Executive Director, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department