

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-2021-001
Type of Funding:	Cooperative Agreement
CFDA Numbers:	97.012
CFDA Descriptions:	Boating Safety Financial Assistance

Grantee: Water Sports Foundation
Grant Number: 3321FAN201128
Grant Title: Increasing Awareness of Safe Boating: A National Public Relations Campaign
Period of Performance: 1 year grant

Award Amount: \$100,000.00

Summary:

This project uses a national public relations campaign to increase and improve coverage of boating and paddling safety in mainstream and specialist media. This project is moving into its second season as recreational boating safety's national public relations campaign.

In addition to developing its own new content, this project also promotes existing safe boating materials developed by other projects where an overabundance of high-quality materials already exists in the form of video PSA's and written articles as well as through resources provided by other recreational boating safety organizations. The project's comprehensive website repository, the Media Resources Center, includes existing ever-green boating safety content and is shared with media professionals as a quick look-up reference for journalists and producers developing stories including consumer targeted safety materials.

The project will continue to develop relationships with national mainstream media to supply them with timely reminders of important boating safety subjects such a life jacket wear, avoiding boating while impaired and use of ECOS among many others. While the initial project application offered to deliver 65 million impressions, WSF will deliver at least 350 million boating safety impressions.

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

The Water Sports Foundation, Inc.

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

A One-Year (15 month) Project for the
United States Coast Guard Office of Auxiliary & Boating Safety

INCREASING AWARENESS OF SAFE BOATING: A NATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN 3321FAN201128

FINAL REPORT
July 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022

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3321FAN201128 FINAL REPORT

The objective of *Increasing Awareness of Safe Boating Practices: A National Public Relations Campaign* was to reduce boating casualties by informing the public with safety messages about inherent risks associated with boating to effectively reduce casualties. This project increased and improved coverage of boating safety in U.S. media by employing state-of-the art public relations techniques to generate news stories that increase awareness of safer boating practices.

Campaign Preparation

The project included the development and promotion of the National Boating Safety Media Center website where journalists can find accurate statistics, rights-free photo and video, subject-matter expert listings and other resources critical to producing boating safety stories for television, radio, newspaper and online news outlets. The site recorded more than 24,000 users.

The WSF contracted with two leading marine public relations (PR) firms to carry out the campaign. The WSF staff and the PR firms worked together to research and draft press releases, develop and maintain proprietary media lists, and maintain the National Boating Safety Media Center. The campaign distributed press releases to national, regional and local news media and the marine trade press through PR Newswire and direct email. The PR firms followed up with individual contacts to leading news media in support of each press release.

Each milestone was achieved including cultivating one-to-one media relationships and building greater awareness among the boating industry. This also included a series of press releases and related supporting online materials timed to coincide with peak boating weeks leading into the 2022 Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day holidays, when national news outlets are most receptive to boating news. Throughout the project, the WSF continuously developed its proprietary list of more than 6,100 outdoor journalists. Each press release delivered top recreational boating safety news right to the desktop of leading news media. The press release schedule was as follows:

The boating safety story and related first press release entitled, “Water Sports Foundation Suggests Six Top Tips for Enjoying a Fun and Safe Holiday Boat Parade” was delivered to journalists on December 2, 2021 in advance of popular local and regional holiday boat parades.

On March 16, 2022 the safety story and related press release entitled “Water Sports Foundation Reports Pandemic Spike in Online Boater Education” was delivered in advance of the North American boating season.

On April 12, 2022 the WSF delivered the “As Record Numbers of Paddlers Take to the Water, Accidents Surge” safety story and associated press release.

As National Safe Boating Week approached, on May 3, 2022 the WSF delivered the “10 Important Tips from the Water Sports Foundation to Keep Boaters Safe this Busy 2022 Boating Season” boating safety story and related press release.

On June 13, 2022, in advance of Independence Day weekend, the WSF delivered the boating safety story and press release entitled “Hundreds of Thousands of New Boaters and Paddlers Expected Fourth of July Weekend.”

And lastly, on August 15, 2022 in advance of Labor Day weekend, the WSF delivered the boating safety story and press release entitled “Boating Safety Has Improved Nationally Says

Increasing Awareness of Safe Boating: A National Public Relations Campaign

Water Sports Foundation, Resulting in Fewer Incidents and Fatalities.”

Campaign Highlights & Quantitative Measurement

The campaign generated 264 individual news stories, including pick-ups from *Yahoo News*, *Yahoo Finance*, multiple regional television and radio stations, *The Chicago Sun Times*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Palm Beach Post*, *The Broadcast Retirement Network*, *Men’s Journal*, and others. The campaign also resulted in two live interviews on *The Weather Channel*.

Earned media coverage generated by the campaign produced more than 501 million recreational boating safety media impressions. This total surpassed the campaign’s media impressions goal of 350 million by more than 43 percent. The following is a summary of campaign traffic highlights, as provided by Meltwater monitoring services through the WSF’s public relations contractors.

FY21 Combined Total Media Impressions:	501,808,452
Project Media Impressions Goal:	350,000,000
Over Delivery:	151,808,452

The two 4-minute live interviews on *The Weather Channel* were conducted with the WSF executive director in early morning prime time in advance of Memorial Day and Independence Day holidays. The interviews reminded boaters of the WSF’s four primary tenets of recreational boating safety, which are 1) wear your life jacket, 2) avoid impairment, 3) engage the engine cutoff switch device and 4) take a boater or paddler safety course to learn more.

Project Management

The WSF executive director and content director worked with the media providers’ project management teams to ensure all program milestones were met on time and on budget. The WSF employed a financial compliance consultant to assist in program management and reported regularly to the WSF Board of Directors. All planned activities were accomplished, and the project was completed on September 30, 2022.

In-Kind Delivery

According to its 2022 annual single audit, the Water Sports Foundation negotiated with its media partners for in-kind media contributions worth \$677,790, which added substantial value to its recreational boating and paddling safety projects including this project.

Project Monitoring – Qualitative Measurement

Since 2011, the WSF has conducted annual surveys of boater’s attitudes and behaviors regarding safety. The surveys provide a qualitative metric of progress in boater’s attitudes toward life jacket wear, paddler education, weather awareness, boater education and other safe boating priorities. Boaters completed 4,849 surveys during the project.

The results were compared with results of surveys conducted before the project began and showed measurable improvement in boating safety behavior, including increased life jacket wear and interest in boater education, and a decrease in impaired boating.

Conclusion

The impressive results substantiate the project’s outcome of a *more informed and aware* boating public. 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 national leisure time activity as a result of the efforts provided by this project. For more information contact info@WaterSportsFoundation.com.