**Government Relations Committee Report**

**Annual Meeting**

**October 18, 2013**

Jim Muldoon, Chair

**US Coast Guard Strategic Plan 2012-2016—**The Strategic Plan of the National Recreational Boating Safety Program describes the U.S. Coast Guard's (USCG) goals and strategies to ensure the public has a safe, secure and enjoyable recreational boating experience by implementing programs that minimize the loss of life, personal injury, and property damage while cooperating with environmental and national security efforts. US Sailing is one of 28 USCG boating safety partner signatories to the document. The plan focuses on implementing programs in two main areas: increasing life jacket wear and expanding on-water education. Through USCG grant funding USCG boating safety partners are making progress in these areas. The 2012 USCG boating statistics report references 4515 accidents that involved 651 deaths, a 14.1% decrease in the number of deaths as compared to 2011. US Sailing’s Government Relations Committee will continue to convey US Sailing’s support of the USCG’s Strategic Plan while in parallel, working to advance the organization’s relationship with other boating safety partners. For a complete copy of the USCG’s Strategic Plan visit <http://www.uscgboating.org/assets/1/workflow_staging/News/489.PDF>

**OUPV licensing process—**Current U.S. Coast Guard regulations require individuals who operate an Uninspected Passenger vessel that carries 6 or fewer passengers for hire to obtain an OUVP (**O**perator of **U**ninspected **P**assenger **V**essel) license (Regulation: Title 46 Part 10 – Merchant Mariner). Sailboat and powerboat instructors who receive remuneration for teaching courses to fee-paying students are subject to the application of this Merchant Mariner law. Obtaining an OUVP credential is a complicated, expensive and lengthy process. Over the last year, the US Sailing’s Government Relations Committee has been working with the National Boating Safety Advisory Council’s (NBSAC) Prevention Through People Subcommittee to design a solution that will provide acceptable OUPV-type credentials to qualified instructors so instructors can continue on-the-water education activities. The Subcommittee will be officially reporting its progress on discussions with the US Coast Guard at the next NBSAC meeting tentatively scheduled for December 2013. Complete legislation can be found at <http://cfr.regstoday.com/46cfr10.aspx#46_CFR_10p221>

**Propeller Guard Testing—**For over a decade, US Sailing’s Government Relations committee has supported the need to enhance the safety of individuals in the water around boats. Rather than mandate propeller guards on all boats, the Committee supported customized solutions based on the situational marine environment. As a result of US Coast Guard (USCG) grant, on September 11, 2013 a “Propeller Guard Test Procedure Report” was released, intended for use by developers of propeller guard devices and independent third party testing entities to test propeller guard products in a consistent and repeatable manner. The report outlines the process for evaluating how a boat performs in the water with different types of guards and the process for assessing the level of protection it offers individuals in the water near boats. The test procedure was developed for the USCG by the American Boat and Yacht Council and may be viewed and downloaded at [www.uscgboating.org/safety/default.aspx](http://www.uscgboating.org/safety/default.aspx).

**US Coast Guard Grant Funding—**In the last ten years, US Sailing has been awarded over $1.5 million dollars in grant funding from the US Coast Guard. While annual grant funding remained under $50K for the first 6 years, after years of creating a solid foundational relationship, in 2010 USCG grant funding to US Sailing increased dramatically to over $300K. Over the last three years that funding has continued to increase even while the USCG pool of available funding has decreased by 50%. In 2013 US Sailing was awarded $444K to administer a powerboat training grant and develop skill-based standards for On-Water recreational boating. US Sailing’s Government Relations Committee will continue to advance US Sailing’s reputation within the USCG and spearhead grant application activity, with the next round of applications due in January 2014. For information on the USCG’s grant program visit <http://www.uscgboating.org/grants/nonprofit_grants.aspx>

**Ethanol Blended Gasoline—**Since the introduction of ethanol blended gasoline, the recreational boating public has incurred hundreds of millions of dollars in damage to powerboat engines that are not designed for this type of fuel. Now, 15% ethanol blended gasoline (E15) is being slowly introduced to the market, increasing the potential for widespread engine damage. Since February of this year six bills have been introduced in the Congress to address concerns related to ethanol blended gasoline. US Sailing’s Government Relations Committee has been and will continue to advise lawmakers on the negative impact ethanol has on marine engines, the need for a gasoline labeling requirement and the value of a public awareness campaign to educate the boating community on the proper use, purchase and storage of E10 and E15. For details visit <http://www.opencongress.org>and search for ethanol.

**GPS Update—**Since 2011, US Sailing’s Government Relations Committee has been tracking the efforts of LightSquared Subsidiary LLC, a company seeking Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approval to provide a wholesale, nationwide, wireless broadband network integrated with satellite coverage. At issue is LightSquared’s intention to combine its existing satellite communications services with a ground-based network using a radio band that is right next to the primary (Global Positioning System) GPS frequency. In April of this year, the FCC granted special temporary authorization allowing LightSquared to test terrestrial operations in the NOAA band. Most recently, in August, the FCC requested comments on LightSquared's July 15, 2013 report that provided an "overview of the assessments" on handset interaction with GPS devices.The US Sailing Government Relations Committee will continue to monitor FCC oversight of this issue and educate lawmakers of the need to protect the GPS system from any negative influence associated with LightSquared activity. For details on this issue visit <http://www.gps.gov/>

**Life Jacket Labeling—**The US [Coast Guard](http://strongmail1.multiview.com:80/track?type=click&eas=1&mailingid=2071450&messageid=2071450&databaseid=Mailing.DS71450.2071450.56336&serial=17035652&emailid=joanne.dorval@metcor.com&userid=34133760&targetid=&fl=&extra=MultivariateId=&&&2046&&&http://www.uscgboating.org/) has been working to redesign the labeling for life jackets to more effectively convey safety information to recreational boaters. On August 14, 2013, a Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) was published, proposing to remove references to type codes in the USCG’s regulations on the carriage and labeling of Coast Guard-approved personal flotation devices (PFDs / life jackets). PFD type codes are unique to Coast Guard approval and are not well understood by the public. Removing these type codes from regulations would help facilitate implementation of new industry consensus standards for life jacket labeling that will more effectively convey safety information. This step would also offer an opportunity to harmonize future US life jacket regulations with requirements in Canada and in other countries. US Sailing’s Government Relations Committee has been actively involved in this issue for several years and will continue to support the development of a new labeling system for life jackets to better serve and enhance the safety of recreational boaters. To read the NPRM visit <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-08-14/pdf/2013-19677.pdf>

**Sequestration / Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Safety Trust Fund—**Sequestration is an enforcement mechanism applied to reduce spending and to cut the U.S. Federal Deficit. The Budget Control Act of 2011 requires that 7.6% of the nation’s Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Safety Trust Funds be “sequestered”, or withheld, from distribution to the states. This legislation has negatively impacted recreational boating initiatives across the country and in particular the activities of the US Coast Guard’s National Boating Safety Advisory Council (NBSAC). US Sailing’s Government Relations Committee has been working to educate Congressional leaders on the need to continue funding safety programs that directly impact public safety on U.S. waterways. To read about the **Sport Fish Restoration & Boating Trust Fund visit** <http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/GrantPrograms/SFR/SFR.htm>

**Boater access and working waterfronts—**Working waterfronts, lands, infrastructure and waterways, e.g. ports, small recreational boat harbors and fishing docks, are essential to the livelihood of the entire marine community. Due to an increasing demand for waterfront property and an ever-growing population in coastal areas, access to, use of and ownership of waterfront properties has become increasingly cost prohibitive for the recreational boater, especially as property values and taxes in costal zones continue to rise. These mounting costs have caused many boatyards and marinas to close, further restricting recreational boater access to the waterways. Since working waterfronts are vital to a functioning marine economy and necessary to facilitate a thriving recreational boating industry, US Sailing Government Relations Committee has been working to support current legislation, “Keep America's Waterfronts Working Act of 2011” which will “ … establish a Working Waterfront Grant Program to award matching grants … to preserve and expand access to coastal waters for … water-dependent coastal-related business.” For details visit <http://www.opencongress.org/bill/112-h3109/show>