



THE STEADY HELM

Scientific Boating Safety Association



OPENING NOTES - Spring 2026

Scientific Boaters, welcome to the debut edition of *The Steady Helm*, the membership's bi-annual newsletter! In this first edition we get first hand reports from your Board of Directors, what they have been working on, and updates from their respective boating programs. Each edition will feature updates from your BOD, as well as updates from various Organizational and Individual Members across the country, training opportunities, job postings, as well as general interest topics submitted by members. Our aim is to make this as enjoyable and informative as possible, while keeping the membership in the know on what is happening in the Scientific Boating community. If you would like to share any updates from your agency/institution, job postings, boating news or images from your field ops, please feel free to email scientificboating@gmail.com.

Updates from the Wheelhouse

James Fitzgerald
UC Davis- Boating Safety Officer
SBSA- President

Greetings Scientific Boating Safety Association
Membership!

We hope all is well and you are on an even keel; it has been an exciting winter season and the winds of spring are blowing, the upwelling's return for the summer research season that lay ahead! Your SBSA Board of Directors are steadily working topside and below decks, and are excited to bring you a new communications resource, our bi-annual SBSA Newsletter. We will plan on providing updates each April and September. We also welcome any communications pieces or short articles spotlighting your institution and watercraft safety activities.

I'm excited to say that we have a large number of MOTC & MOCC courses already happening this early in the year, with many more being hosted in the weeks ahead. We have been coordinating a large number of training requests with course providers, SBSA membership and MOTC access is growing thanks to the hard work so many of you are doing!

We are thrilled to announce that our annual business meeting will be hosted by LUMCON Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium during November 10th through 12th. This will be the week immediately following DEMA in New Orleans, so we hope this increases convenience and potential for attendance with our SCUBA DSO's and BSO's. We are meeting with Ross Turlington and the executive leadership team at LUMCON to begin the planning process. They are thrilled to host and have us there and I can assure you it will be a meeting you won't want to miss! We will also be looking into SBSA meeting workshop topic ideas together, please provide us with your input and/or offer to be on the workgroup for meeting and workshop planning.

While we are on the topic of meetings, UC San Diego Scripps Institute of Oceanography will be hosting the 75th annual American Academy of Underwater Sciences Symposium, AAUS, during October 5th through 10th in La Jolla California. SBSA will be staffing a table with UCSD, and will also provide a tour of the Scripps small boat program and a pier launching demonstration. Pending any additional requests from the AAUS symposium planning team, there may be some topic additions for the symposium to strengthen and support our partnership between the scientific boating and diving communities.

Updates from UC Davis Boating Program

Here at UC Davis, Boating Safety Office, we have just wrapped up an MOTC at Lake Tahoe, and happy to report that we had participants from California Department of Fish & Wildlife and the University of Nevada Reno join our UC Davis folks.



We also just concluded a 2 day MOTC Refresher with our friends at The Marine Mammal Center (TMMC) in Sausalito, California. As we like to say, “boating and science from the Sierras to the Sea!” The MOTC refresher also included beach landings/launches and towing. The training just so happened to coincide with time sensitive science operations, to deploy and recover



a necropsy pathology team from TMMC and Cal Academy of Sciences. It was great cross collaborations amongst SBSA members with training and safe science in action!



I hope you enjoy the SBSA newsletter updates from the Directors, and as always we look forward to hearing from you. Until the next time, keep your bow into it and thanks for keeping them safe out there!

Updates from the Vice President

Brian Caccioppoli
University of Rhode Island- Manager, Small Boat Program
SBSA- Vice President

Greetings SBSA Membership! I hope you are off to a great spring, filled with fairweather boat days, and hanging up the anti-exposure PFDs and donning your Workvests!

SBSA Student Training Award applications and the new SBSA Instructor Training Award applications were due April 1st . The BOD will review applications and select and award (2) Student Training Awards and (1) Instructor Training Award. If you missed the April 1st deadline, we encourage you to submit your applications for the next submission round, closing September 1st. Please visit the SBSA website for more information: https://scientificboating.org/?page_id=1538.

The Board of Directors will also be announcing more information about the Organizational Member MOTC Award in the coming months. This award is intended to provide financial support to Organizational Members to get “over the hump” in bringing MOTC to their home institution/agency.

Updates from University of Rhode Island Small Boat Program

There are finally signs of spring in Rhode Island after an unseasonably cold winter and a record-smashing blizzard! I spent URI’s spring break at Oregon State University, helping instruct a Motorboat Operators Instructor Training Course with SBSA Training Director Dan Battaglia and SBSA’s outgoing President, Taylor Eaton on the instructor team. In the next few weeks, I will be operating URI’s newly acquired 45’ R/V Warfish, supporting Ocean Engineering / Oceanography labs. Small boat use is on the upswing now that our inland waterways are thawed and I am busy prepping our small boat fleet for the spring/summer field season. I look forward to supporting Stockton University’s MOITC/MOTC beginning April 27 and am hard at work planning an MOTC hosted at URI in June.



Updates from the Treasurer

Ian Moffitt

UC Santa Cruz- Boating Safety Officer

SBSA- Treasurer

Thanks everyone for continuing to get your dues in for 2026 organizational/individual memberships! Reminder that dues have increased from \$80 to \$150 this year so that we can continue to grow and support key member services such as E-learning and website development, student/instructor training awards, and our new OM training award. Dues can be paid via check sent to 115 McAllister Way, Santa Cruz CA 95060, or via the Paypal link on our [website](#). If you have any questions or issues with dues payments, don't hesitate to reach out directly to Ian Moffitt at imoffitt@ucsc.edu, or scientificboating@gmail.com.

Updates from UC Santa Cruz Boating Program

On the home front for me, the UCSC boating safety program has been working on an exciting collaboration with Stanford and Moss Landing Marine Lab to train a blue water dive team. The team conducted their first truly blue water dive just last week over Soquel Canyon in Monterey Bay. The UCSC boating program is using this training to help develop some common blue water boating/dive tending best practices that will be shared with this group once finalized. I've also been helping groups ramp up for field season by providing vessel checkouts, beach launch training, and assistance with

vessel/trailer inspections. Things are ramping up for a productive field season! Looking forward to hearing about all the great work you all are up to.



Rhode Island (URI). Our current draft policy outlines that final instructor qualification occurs after their first full teaching event following MOITC.



Updates from the Training Director

Dan Battaglia

Oregon State University- Small Boat Training Specialist
SBSA- Training Director

The Ides of March brought the end of voting on the draft of MOTC and Paddle Craft Training Standards document. If you missed reading that document, it can be found [here](#). Fifteen organizations participated in voting. Seven voted to accept the document and eight to reject. I think this is a very good spot to be in and we are close to crafting a solid document with strong member buy in. I will provide a deeper analysis soon, but for now, please note that the comments all centered on a couple common themes. Standby.

Updates from Oregon State University Boating Program

Currently, I am deep in our annual training at Oregon State University (OSU). The week of March 16 brought four new instructor candidates into the fold, one from OSU, one from Columbia River Intertribal Fisheries Commission (CRFIC) and two from the University of

Our OSU candidate Ben Frieberg has completed that training the week of March 23 teaching alongside our current SBSA Membership Director Nick Nechay (CSUMB), Anna Ringleman from CRITFC, and Alex Wick, and Adam Peck-Richardson from OSU. These cross agency collaborations bring variety and richness to the training field and I encourage membership to reach out to foster these relationships. Dan Feldman (CRITFC), Anya Hanson (URI), and Alex Moen (URI) will complete their qualification in June of this year.



Late April will bring another instructor development course on the Eastern seaboard as Stockton University brings their MOTC program online. Collaboration with OSU, URI, Stockton and Rutgers will add a new training resource for the region.

If membership is interested in discussing how to bring training to their home turf or develop internal programs please don't hesitate to reach out.

Updates from the Membership Director

Nick Nechay
Cal State Monterey Bay- Diving & Boating Safety
Officer
SBSA- Membership Director

Ahoy SBSA Membership! I hope everyone is enjoying our debut newsletter. If you have exciting news from your home base that you would like to share, please send it our way. This is a great platform for us to connect and stay informed about what's happening across boating programs and operations around the globe.

Many of us operate at full speed during our day-to-day responsibilities, so having time to slow down, read, and share with one another is a valuable way to stay fresh and motivated.

A topic we frequently hear from boating safety officers and marine operations managers is the range of challenges they face within their programs. It would be incredibly valuable for members to share the hurdles they encounter, along with the strategies they use to overcome them and continue improving. As a collective, we should be exchanging ideas and solutions that may benefit others—that's the goal.

If your program is struggling to secure support for running MOTC or boating safety courses, please reach out to your Board of Directors so we can explore ways to assist. Collaboration is key to success, especially in regions where budget constraints impact training—and ultimately, safety.

We're excited to welcome a wave of new Organizational and Individual Members to the SBSA fleet—welcome aboard!

We're glad to have you with us and hope this association provides you with the tools, resources, and connections you need to succeed. Don't hesitate to tap into the strength of this network—connect with fellow Boat Program Managers, ask questions, share ideas, and collaborate on training and resources.

And be sure to take full advantage of the reciprocity that MOTC provides—it's a powerful tool to help strengthen programs across the board.

Updates from Cal State Monterey Bay Boating Program

It's been a busy and exciting past few months for both me and our boating program at CSUMB. While our program is still relatively new in terms of operational scale, we've made significant strides and are firmly on an upward growth trajectory.

With strong support from our administration and our Monterey Boating Consortium, we successfully launched MOTC training for the Central Coast region in early 2025—providing training to over 50 operators from agencies and institutions across California. Looking ahead to 2026, we already have three MOTCs planned, along with an MOITC—marking a first for Monterey. These milestones are a direct result of strong collaboration across our network.





On the field operations side, we're gearing up for a busy field season filled with diverse boating and diving missions—from predator tracking sensor deployment and great white shark tagging, to supporting kelp restoration dives and conducting deep-water video analysis of fish behavior.



Updates from the eLearning Director

Carly Haack

UC Santa Barbara- Boating Safety Officer

SBSA- eLearning Director

The Scientific Boating Safety Association (SBSA) is excited to announce that access to the new Scientific Boating eLearning course is now open to SBSA Organizational Members. SBSA extends sincere thanks to the American Academy of Underwater Sciences

We are also in ongoing discussions with the CSU Chancellor's Risk Management Office to position MOTC as the baseline standard for boat operator training across the California State University system. As programs that often integrate both boating and diving operations, we carry a significant responsibility to deliver high-caliber training to our students—and MOTC provides that foundation. Fortunately, we've received strong administrative support, which has made this progress possible.

I've had the opportunity to travel to several programs and agencies to assist with MOTC and MOCC trainings—from OSU and UC Davis to MBARI in Moss Landing and NOAA on Ford Island, Oahu. Learning from a range of other lead instructors and seeing how different programs operate has been invaluable. It's a reminder that the best way to grow is to keep adding tools to the toolbox.

A huge thank you to James, Jamie, Dan B., Chad, Aaron, Ian, and Steve for the guidance and motivation!

(AAUS) for hosting this resource on the AAUS eLearning platform.

This course provides scientific boating safety content that may be used to support both MOTC and non-MOTC boating instruction. Additional details, including registration steps, course use guidelines, and contact information, are available at <https://scientificboating.org/>

To enroll students in the eLearning course, please ensure your SBSA Organizational Membership is current and your dues have been paid.

Updates from UC Santa Barbara Boating Program

At UC Santa Barbara, we have been conducting crew boat safety training designed to build confidence and preparedness on the water. During this free, one-day training, students and staff learn about essential boat safety equipment, basic vessel operation, and gain hands-on experience operating a boat off the coast of Santa Barbara. We are excited to offer this training opportunity and to support our boat crew to feel more comfortable, capable, and prepared to respond in the event of an on-water emergency.



What's Wrong With This Picture?



During the Vessel Inspection portion of an MOTC, students and Instructors noticed something off about this boat.



That's right, the side nav lights were installed incorrectly, actually flipped!

This was a great teaching moment for students and really helped drive home the importance of vessel inspections, especially when it is a new vessel or a vessel you and your team are unfamiliar with.

Luckily, it was a quick and easy fix, just needed to swap the colored lenses and we were all set for boat ops!

Updates from the Website Director

Camille Michalak
San Francisco Estuary Institute
SBSA- Website Director

Hi SBSA Membership!

I'm thrilled to have joined the SBSA Board of Directors this past February as your Website Director. I am currently working to update and improve our website and am so excited to be part of the team.

Outside of SBSA, I work with the San Francisco Estuary Institute as part of the Moored Sensor Program in the San Francisco Bay.



I've been getting my bearings as Website Director and working to keep everything on the site current as I settle in. I'd love to hear your thoughts on how the website is working for you! If you have any ideas, feedback, or features you'd like to see added as we grow, please feel free to reach out.

Message from your Board of Directors

We truly hope that you have enjoyed our first newsletter! Thanks to all of you for the work you're doing out there and for being part of what makes this community so strong.

Keep sharing, keep collaborating, and keep pushing your programs forward—we're all better because of it. Looking forward to seeing what everyone accomplishes in the months ahead.

Remember our Mission

The Scientific Boating Safety Association (SBSA) was founded in 2006 and our mission is to facilitate the development of safe and productive scientific boating operations for public and private institutions.

Members collaborate together in order to:

- Develop, review and revise standards for safe scientific boat operations, training of boat operators, and the safe operation of scientific boating programs.
- Collect, review and distribute information relating to scientific boating activities and scientific boating incidents.
- Represent the scientific boating interests of the membership before other organizations and government agencies.
- Conduct symposia and workshops to educate the membership and others in safe scientific boating programs and practices.
- Develop a spirit of cooperation among those who have dedicated themselves to scientific boating safety.

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