



THE STEADY HELM

Scientific Boating Safety Association



OPENING NOTES - Fall 2026

Scientific Boaters, welcome to another edition of *The Steady Helm*, the membership's bi-annual newsletter! In this edition we will discuss our Annual Meeting which will be held at the Louisiana University Marine Consortium (LUMCOM), the first time our annual meeting is held outside of California. We will also share first hand reports from your Board of Directors, what they have been working on, and updates from their respective boating programs.

As always, 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 SBSA Scientific Boaters!

Here we all are in the final stretches of the busy 2026 summer research season. I hope everyone is doing great out there and you all have a few port calls with some rest and relaxation on your schedules before we shift into fall and winter ops! We have several exciting updates from the wheelhouse for this issue of "The Steady Helm."

Your entire Board of Directors team is maintaining a true course and nicely making way. There have been several noteworthy and successful accomplishments this year, and we are excited to celebrate them with you all at the **2026 SBSA Annual Meeting** with our incredible hosts at the **Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium**,

[LUMCON](#), November 10th through 12th, 2026. *[Registration Information on page 3](#).

This year we have welcomed a number of new organizations and individuals, as well as some folks returning to our membership group after their voyages took them off the radar for a bit. Welcome aboard and welcome back!

It is very encouraging to work with every one of you and truly inspiring having such broad representation at SBSA to highlight our mission focus. It has been great to hear from folks expressing the importance of unity in our training and operational standards. This shared vision serves not only our individual programs; it also serves the scientists and researchers, and future generations. The collective membership affords us the opportunity to advocate on behalf of one another, and to discover fresh and innovative ways to support each other.

Updates from UC Davis Boating Program

During a recent weekend, we had an inspirational visitor here with us in Bodega Bay. During the first third of her 900-mile journey [Swimming the Length of California](#), at about mile 300, Ms. [Catherine Breed](#) stepped ashore to share her journey and answer questions from a group of energetic and curious supporters. Cat's strength, poise, and determination were on clear display as she poignantly provided us all with detailed descriptions of her experience. Yet equally impressive was the humility and collective humanity shared by her entire family and support crew. Descriptions of perseverance and selfless contributions during relentless winds, strong currents and heavy seas made it clear that it is an all-hands-on-deck endeavor. The years of in-depth planning and support contingencies required for a mission of this magnitude really struck me as similar to the efforts helping our research teams with mission planning and readiness. Cat is the clear leader for this team, yet, most importantly, she equally supports the

other leaders on her team, each with a responsibility for course correction, taking the helm, building trust, and appreciating the talent surrounding her. Cat highlighted her vision for supporting ocean science and conservation and shared the moment with messages of support and ocean health advocacy from [Mission Blue](#), the [Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary](#) and the [California SURFRIDER Foundation](#). Along with championing healthy oceans and waterways, Cat shares the goal of making our aquatic world accepting and accommodating for all who share her passion and of making it visible and inviting to those who are on the verge of discovering it while empowering young girls and women along her journey.

This recent experience made me think of the heroic missions and efforts that every one of you performs day in and day out, month after month, and year after year. Each of us inspires the others because the voyage involves all of us and takes the entire crew to achieve success. The common thread that continues to bond us is the water. Collectively making it safer and more accessible, while sharing our passion for understanding its mysteries and exploring methods to protect and heal the life energy it represents and provides for our planet.



Photo Credit: Professor Shaofeng Hsu, UCSC

This November, I hope you will be able to join us at the **2026 SBSA Annual Meeting and Conference** hosted by the **Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium, LUMCON, in Cocodrie, Louisiana.**

I expect that we will have an amazing opportunity to advance our shared visions and experiences while also gaining insights into training advancements and

experiencing the incredible research operations from our friends along the Gulf Coast.



Photo Credit: Professor Shaofeng Hsu, UCSC

With all your best intentions and focus, continue to maintain a sharp lookout and take care of others. Keep your bow into the forces because we all live downstream, and together we are making a wonderful difference. Thank you. We will see you in November; keep up the great work out there!



Photo Credit: Professor Shaofeng Hsu, UCSC

2026 Scientific Boating Safety Association Annual Meeting - November 10-12, 2026



Please submit your registration information and payments at your earliest opportunity. Conference registration can be completed at:

[Register for our SBSA Annual Meeting!](#)

Registration fees are \$225 and the deadline is October 30th, 2026.

We encourage you to share the newsletter and an invitation for conference attendance with friends and guests in your Scientific Boating communities. We will experience on-water activities, guest presentations, an introduction to Gulf Coast research operations, as well as SBSA business and membership updates. This will be a memorable opportunity for sharing and extending our boating and diving networks.

The registration page will provide you an overview for meals, and options for planning your lodging and travel.

Plan to Arrive: Monday, November 9th. The conference will commence Tuesday through Thursday, with departures on Thursday evening, or Friday morning if your travel plans hold you over Thursday night. The full conference schedule and essential participant communications will be provided to registrants in October.

Door Prize Raffle: Consider representing your institution / agency by bringing a swag item from your program to donate for our raffle table! We will be announcing winners throughout the event; we cannot wait to see what is on the table and who the lucky

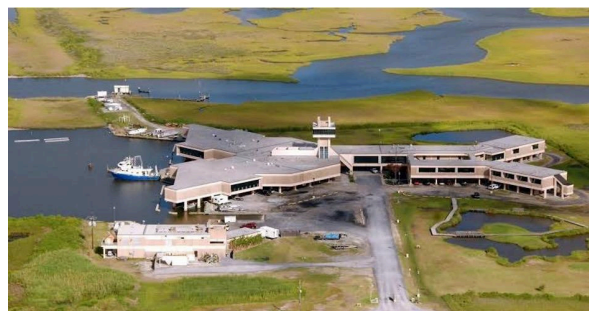
winners will be! If everyone brings an item, you might all be winners.

LUMCON (Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium)

Meet our Host: Ross Turlington, Port Captain

Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON) is absolutely thrilled for the opportunity to host this year's SBSA annual meeting. We invite you to come visit us for the first SBSA annual conference to be held outside of California. With two world-class facilities we are excited to share with you all: SBSA Conference at the LUMCON DeFelice Marine Center in Cocodrie, and an afternoon fair well tour at the LUMCON Blue Works Center in Houma. A great experience is assured. Ships, science, and salt marshes, LUMCON is the heart of Louisiana Marine Science. LUMCON increases Louisiana's coastal and marine awareness through research, education and school collaborations, aided by a top-notch Gulf research fleet.

You can be assured that LUMCON has some warm hospitality, exciting activities, and amazing Louisiana cuisine on tap for your visit. See you on the bayou! For more information about LUMCON and its assets, please visit our website at <https://lumcon.edu> . Reservations will be made with LUMCON directly at reservations@LUMCON.edu



Updates from the Vice President

Brian Caccioppoli

University of Rhode Island- Manager, Small Boat Program

SBSA- Vice President

Greetings SBSA Membership! Summer is winding down here at the University of Rhode Island, and we are looking forward to trading the humidity for cooler, crisp fall air.

This past Spring, the SBSA Board of Directors selected two SBSA Student Training Award recipients: Elika Zahedi of Moss Landing Marine Laboratories and Claire Vossler of Texas Tech University. Adelyne Wedell of University of California Santa Cruz was selected to receive the SBSA Instructor Training Award.

Congratulations to all! The Board of Directors will be reviewing the applications received for the September 1 deadline and will announce the selected recipients in the coming weeks. The next application deadline for Student and Instructor Training awards will be in Spring 2027.

I have had a memorable and productive spring and summer that kicked off with an early season MOITC/MOTC. I'd like to congratulate six new east coast MOTC instructors that completed their MOITCs in early May: Steve Evert, Elizabeth Bick, Nate Robinson and Dave Ambrose of Stockton University and Roland Hagan and Chip Haldeman of Rutgers University. Led by SBSA Training Director Dan Battaglia, and supported by SBSA members from OSU and URI, the MOITC was hosted at the Stockton University Marine Field Station in Port Republic, NJ. The course was a great success due excellent planning and coordination by all involved and the instructor team could not have been more grateful for the hospitality provided by Stockton and Rutgers.



I had the pleasure of leading an MOTC the following week at the Stockton Marine Field Station, welcoming a new group of MOTC participants and teaching alongside our NJ instructor candidates. Great work and congratulations to all!

Updates from University of Rhode Island Small Boat Program

URI hosted 3 MOTC courses from June and August, continuing to grow the MOTC training footprint in the Northeast. This year we had the pleasure of working with participants from the University of Massachusetts Boston and University of New Hampshire, with instructional support from SBSA members, Boston University and instructor candidates from NJ.

In between trainings, I've been supporting a variety of research and on-water educational cruises on our 45' R/V Warfish.



Warfish has recently been outfitted with a Universal Sonar Mount system and has been conducting multibeam sonar surveys in Narragansett Bay in partnership with the NOAA Ocean Exploration Cooperative Institute. The boat's schedule remains busy through the end of summer and into the start of Fall semester. I wish you all the best as you close out your summer and am looking forward to the SBSA Business Meeting in Louisiana!

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!

Remember 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. Thus far in 2026 we've had 47 Organizational Members (OMs) and 27 Individual Members (IMs) renew their membership or join the SBSA. We've seen some good growth this year with 10 new OMs and 12 new IMs joining since the beginning of the year. For those of you still interested in renewing your membership, it's not too late! 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, it's been a busy and productive field season. I recently participated in a swift water rescue training hosted by Sierra Rescue, which was an incredible and eye-opening experience that I highly recommend to anyone even if you don't think you'll be working on moving water. Much of the knowledge and skills learned are highly transferable to other fields and systems.



I also really enjoyed helping with the CSUMB hosted MOTC and MOTC Instructor Training Course. It was great collaborating with institutions around the Bay Area and learning from students and instructors alike.



I've also had the opportunity to get out on the water with some of our field teams. I particularly enjoy seeing first-hand how all the training and preparation pays off to get some highly impactful research accomplished.



Updates from the Training Director

Dan Battaglia

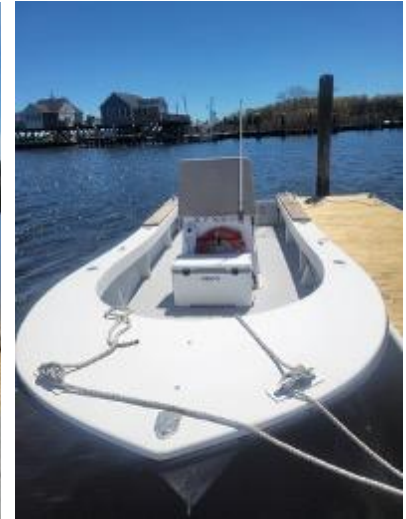
Oregon State University- Small Boat Training Specialist
SBSA- Training Director

In 2023, Steven Evert (Stockton University) and I began conversations about what the MOTC was, and how to best bring it to his program. Late April 2026 saw the culmination of those initial conversations when we conducted both MOITC and MOTC at the Stockton Marine Field Station in Port Republic New Jersey.

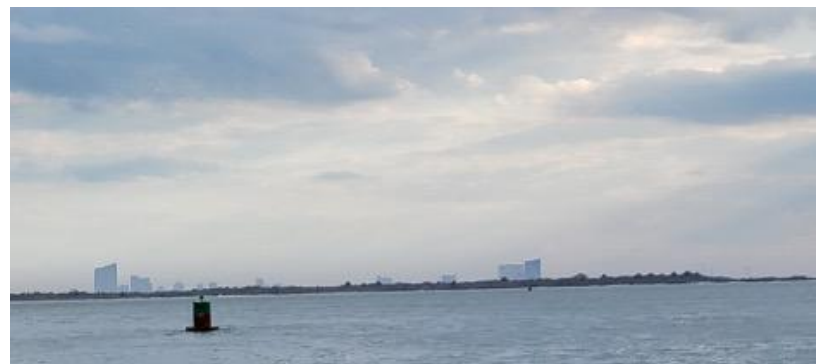


Pete Loschl (OSU) Tate Scarpaci (OSU) and I flew to New Jersey to meet Brian Caccippoli (URI) and Jamie Frost (URI). The week of April 27 we conducted MOITC with instructor candidates Dave Ambrose, Elizabeth Bick, Steve Evert, Nate Robinson (Stockton) Roland Hagan and Chip Haldeman (Rutgers). During this week we covered some history of the MOTC, teaching techniques and rubrics, practice classroom and field talks, and teaching all the components of the MOTC in boats.

Beginning May 4, Brian took over as lead and taught a four-day MOTC with Pete, Tate and Jamie alongside Dave, Steve, Nate and Chip, to a group of Stockton and Rutgers faculty and staff. The feedback on these efforts was positive. Going forward between Stockton, Rutgers and URI the Eastern seaboard has a significant density of high quality MOTC capable instructors. This collaborative arrangement brings depth to training and illustrates the true value of the SBSA.



I learned a few things from this effort. Exporting these classes is possible with good comms and teamwork. Bringing both the MOITC and MOTC simultaneously to a new institution does present some unique challenges but none that can't be surmounted. I am reminded that the physical characteristics of a place can change how certain activities are accomplished (i.e. South Jersey boat ramps are very flat). I was pleasantly surprised by the simple beauty of the region that strangely reminded me of the flat Euclidian horizons of the Alaska North Slope...with Atlantic City nearly always on the horizon.



Updates from Oregon State University Boating Program

June brought another first. OSU conducted our first MOTC near Corvallis Oregon instead of Newport. While OSU has a strong presence on the coast, the university does more boating in other parts of the state. Bringing the class to Corvallis meant that most of the instructor team could go home at night, and the majority of our participants could as well. We likely will make this an annual event.



We will be conducting MOTC in August (*class is full*) and have converted an OWM to MOTC for October 6-9 (*class is full*). Both will be in Newport, Oregon.

The Standards Document

With fits and starts I've integrated the most recent suggestions and changes to the standards and policy document. It is proving a challenge to draft a document that is both flexible, sets a solid standard for our association, but is acceptable to all our institutions, agencies and programs.

I plan to have another draft document out again by mid-October...with the goal to be an actual adoption at the business meeting in November.

Something to consider:

If some of the standards seem untenable due to lack of funding, personnel or administration support. Having an accepted policy document may assist in future justifications to further develop or fill out your programs. Accepting the policy might be a tactical decision even if meeting it today proves challenging.

Big picture:

Enrollment in MOTC seems to be starting to ramp up again after about a year of on again off again employment or funding situations for participants who need the class. This year I have at least three people explicitly disenrolled due to costs of tuition or the total cost of tuition and travel. This might lead to some necessary conversation down the line on how SBSA can further support training in an era of rising costs and shrinking budgets.

Training Director seat:

Lastly, our voting cycle includes this position. The Training Director is up for reelection this year. I highly encourage changing the people in these positions on a regular basis. So if you feel like you might want to undertake this position, consider running or nominate your best bud.

Thank you for your active participation in the SBSA and please don't hesitate to reach out for training or other conversations.

Updates from the Membership Director

Nick Nechay

Cal State Monterey Bay- Diving & Boating Safety
Officer

SBSA- Membership Director

Thank you to all of our returning Organizational Members and Individual Members that have renewed their membership with the SBSA! A special thank you and welcome to our new OM's and IM's that have joined the SBSA family. We are excited to continue supporting our membership and help new members get set up and be able to support their boating programs.

We hope that everyone is as excited as we are to go to LUMCON for our Annual Meeting! As someone who is based on the West Coast, I know I am looking forward to exploring new territory and getting to know our East Coast members.

We have received tons of inquiries from members and anticipated members on MOTC availability. This is a testament to the wonderful training that is happening around the country. The demand is very high, we see that, and are helping OMs and IMs where we can to support them running these trainings.

I look forward to talking with you all and hearing not only your successes, but also your challenges. This will help us as a board understand how we can better support you all, the membership with whatever hurdles they are encountering at their organizations or home institutions. As I have mentioned before, 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.

Updates from Cal State Monterey Bay Boating Program

We have had a busy training year so far, helping provide a huge need to a region where MOTC is desperately sought after. We are uniquely set up where we can accept outside enrollment, which many state and federal agencies take full advantage of. We are happy to support

our state partners such as California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Water Resources, NOAA, various state and private institutions, and many more. It is exciting to see the state agencies as well academic institutions prioritize safety and the standardized training that MOTC provides.



Through the collaboration of multiple institutions and agencies, CSUMB put on their first ever MOITC, a first for the Monterey region. It was an awesome two weeks with some truly gifted Instructor Candidates. The level of determination and quality of training they demonstrated during their first week and delivered during the second week MOTC was truly incredible. I would like to once again congratulate our newest MOTC Instructors (left to right): Taylor Leischner (Moss Landing Marine Labs), Addie Wedell (UC Santa Cruz), Travis Leggett (CSU Monterey Bay), Scott Chapman (Monterey Bay Aquarium), Jeff Jenkins (Department of Water Resources) & Steve Kielar (Cal Poly Maritime Academy)





We had an amazing instructor staff for the MOITC with James Fitzgerald (UCD) as Lead, Steve Monk (Cal Poly Humboldt), Ian Moffit (UCSC), Adam Henderson and Curtis Yip (DWR), Julia OHern (Marine Life Studies/CSUMB). The instructor team put in long days, but everyone always had a smile on their face, which made the two week course an absolute blast! To many more in the future!



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 more than 20 classes have registered for the Scientific Boating eLearning course in 2026, representing 13 institutions and providing access to the course for more than 200 students.

Launched in November 2025, the eLearning course provides scientific boating safety content that can support both MOTC and non-MOTC boating instruction. Additional information, including registration steps, course use guidelines, and contact information, is available at <https://scientificboating.org/>.

Since its launch, we have received very few troubleshooting questions or requests for course corrections- which we'll take as a good sign that users are finding the course easy to navigate! If questions or issues do come up, please don't hesitate to reach out to elarningsbsa@gmail.com. Your feedback is instrumental in helping us keep the course content accurate, comprehensive, and up to date.

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

SBSA extends its sincere thanks to the American Academy of Underwater Sciences (AAUS) for hosting this resource on the AAUS eLearning platform. We are looking forward to hosting a table at the annual AAUS symposium.

Updates from UC Santa Barbara Boating Program

This summer, UC Santa Barbara has conducted scientific diving and small boat operations off the Santa Barbara coast and throughout the Channel Islands. Operations have also included collaborations with local NOAA vessels to collect in-situ measurements for the [Plumes and Blooms](#) program, as well as working with local dive charter operators to locate and recover abandoned [“ghost” lobster traps](#).



UCSB continues to offer a free crew safety training class approximately monthly, providing hands-on small boat operating experience. Boat safety is also incorporated into our AAUS scientific diving course and annual First Aid/CPR/O₂ refresher training.

We continue to explore creative, practical approaches to boat safety training, including using pickleball court lines to demonstrate trailer-backing techniques, a small toy car and trailer to illustrate vehicle and trailer movement, a knot practice board for hands-on skill development, and magnetic training aids that allow us to easily demonstrate boat safety concepts during in-field instruction.



If your program has developed creative training aids or approaches that have worked well, we'd love to hear about them and share ideas across the scientific boating community.

Updates from the Website Director

Camille Michalak
Moss Landing Marine Laboratories
SBSA- Website Director

Hi SBSA Membership!

I hope everyone is having a great summer season so far. As Website Director, I wanted to share a couple of updates.

First, we'd love your help refreshing our photo galleries! If you have any photos from courses, field work, or scientific boating, please send them our way. We're always looking for fresh images to keep the website looking current and showcase our awesome membership.

Second, we've recently updated our award applications to help us better evaluate and select applicants going forward.

As always, I'd love to hear your thoughts on the website and any ideas, feedback, or features you'd like to see added are welcome anytime.



Henry C. Fastenau Award for Instructional Excellence

In dedication to the SBSA's founding president Henry C. Fastenau, this award acknowledges achievements for outstanding instructional performance and contributions to the development of safe and productive scientific boaters through education, research and the advancement of standards for scientific boating practices, certifications and operations.

Do you have anyone in mind that has gone above and beyond in their dedication to boating safety instruction? Perhaps a favorite MOTC instructor deserving of recognition? Here's your chance to nominate this person on the [SBSA website](#) for the Henry C. Fastenau Award for Instructional Excellence. The award will be presented at the SBSA Business Meeting in November.



2025 HCF Award Recipient – Ian Moffit (center)

Call for nominations:

Honoring 20 Years of Dedication to Diving and Boating Safety: *Steve Clabuesch*



Ian Moffit and the SBSA BOD were able to present Steve Clabuesch with his award this past month along with a handmade Lei and banner that Ian's wife made, his favorite order from McDonalds, and some tasty treats bought with assistance from Steve's lovely wife Cecil. Steve was also presented with a plaque honoring his service as a volunteer on the marine mammal physiology project. We all went around and told some funny Steve stories, and talked about how much he meant to us. It was quite evident that he has left a lasting impact on the group and beyond.

Many thanks to those of you who were able to attend virtually and in person. It clearly meant a lot to Steve.

Can't think of anyone more deserving of the honor.



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.

Final Message From The Helm

We truly hope that we are able to see you in November for our Annual Meeting! 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 last quarter of the year.

Safe Boating,

SBSA Board of Directors

SBSA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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