2006 Annual Report

“20 Years of Promoting Public Boating Access”

Our mission is to…

Encourage, promote and support federal and state programs that provide safe, high quality and environmentally sound public recreational boat access to the waterways of the United States and its territories.

For more information call or email us at:

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As an organization, the States Organization for Boating Access (SOBA) supports the public’s right to legal access to the public waters of this nation and works to ensure that public recreational boating facilities continue to be available. In order to communicate to its members, allied organizations and integrated individuals, SOBA presents this 2006 Annual Report.

2006 was a transitional year for SOBA, but an extremely important year to the future of SOBA. The accomplishments over the past 20 years were celebrated, but SOBA was also looking forward to ensure that it best utilizes its resources to make the most impact on boating access and to make its National Voice even stronger. The beginning of the year was spent tying up the loose ends from the previous three-year strategic plan and setting sights on a new strategic plan that would detail SOBA’s priorities for the next three years. SOBA held its long-range strategic planning meeting in February 2006. This meeting was attended by the full executive board and SOBA’s staff. The goal of this meeting was to develop a three-year strategic plan to direct and guide SOBA, to ensure success in executing its mission of supporting state and federal programs that provide high-quality public boating access. The key to the success would be by making the best use of its current resources to support its plan.

By mid-year, SOBA was finalizing the revision of the Design Handbook and distribution of the book to its membership. This book is a key reference tool that will be used not only by its membership, but also by many others within the boating industry. Another initiative, identified in the new strategic plan, was being finalized by mid-year, this was the revision of SOBA’s by-laws. The SOBA executive board identified the need to update the current by-laws. The SOBA executive team focused energies on reviewing the current by-laws and updating them to ensure that they reflected what would be the best operating practices for the organization and its membership. A great deal of care was put into this review to ensure that these by-laws, currently awaiting membership approval, would properly support SOBA and its membership for many years to come.

The following are additional strategic initiatives that are the key components to the next generation three-year strategic plan, crafted from the assessment of SOBA’s mission and goals.

Strategic Initiatives
It is critical to the future success of SOBA and its organizational goals, that it redefine its own strategies to plan for its future and to ensure its significance within the recreational boating community. In addition, SOBA needs to maintain its core member products and services and provide new ones, to meet the evolving needs of its members. The following strategic initiatives have been carefully developed to ensure SOBA’s relevance and sustainability within the boating access community, as well as, ensuring that the interests of SOBA’s members continue to be served.

During the next three years, SOBA will focus its efforts on the following strategic initiatives:

1. ENSURE SOBA CONTINUES TO BE RECOGNIZED AS A KEY VOICE IN INCREASING AND MAINTAINING BOATING ACCESS

   - Be a national voice for public boat access: SOBA will proactively contribute to ongoing conversations that affect boat access. Priorities for the next three years will be to participate in national forums and partner with organizations that support SOBA’s mission. SOBA will attend key boating access events and will continue to be represented on the boards of other organizations that share SOBA’s boating access objectives.

   - Partner retreat: Periodically organize and facilitate retreats to assemble key boating state agency directors, industry leaders, and SOBA’s executive team, to review and discuss SOBA’s strategic plan. The objectives shall be to work cooperatively to increase public boat access opportunities.

   - Expand SOBA’s partnership with private industry-SOBA recognizes that its partnership with the private sector is vitally important. SOBA and the boating industry share a common goal to maintain and enhance public boat access. SOBA will encourage and sustain these relationships by:

     o Enhancing its existing VIP Sponsorship and recognition program, by offering increased benefits for participation and/or membership for private industry (i.e. one year web-link, booths at conference, newsletter ads, conference registration).

     o Playing an active and important role on the National Marine Manufacturers Association’s (NMMA) Water Access Task Force (WATF). This task force was developed to address the national trend in decreasing boating access.
• Actively engage the membership - SOBA’s executive board recognizes there is a significant untapped resource base within its own membership. The following projects are designed to gain higher levels of involvement by the membership:
  o Improve communications with state directors of the member agencies, reinforcing the importance of boating access and SOBA’s role in state and federal resources used for increasing and maintaining access points. Use this interaction to help the directors understand the value of the SOBA membership and that in most cases annual membership dues and conference expenses are reimbursable through the Clean Vessel Act (CVA) or the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund (previously Wallup-Breaux).
  o Revise SOBA’s bylaws to bring clarity to the nominating and election process, as well as, clarifying how SOBA’s general business shall be conducted.
  o Actively recruit members to task forces by designing and resourcing projects that, when completed, provide a direct benefit.
  o Develop a promotional DVD that describes SOBA’s value statement that can be used for member and sponsorship solicitation and for use at key shows and events.

2. DEVELOP A SUSTAINABLE FUNDING MODEL TO ENSURE THAT SOBA CONTINUES TO POSITIVELY AFFECT BOATING ACCESS
SOBA must continue to manage its business affairs effectively and efficiently to maximize its impact on public boating access. It must also build on its current financial stability – SOBA currently receives annual financial support from NMMA – to provide the resources necessary to expand its implementation efforts. To do this, SOBA seeks to increase both internal (membership) and external (non-membership) support.

Expand external support:
• Attract more private industry/individuals to become active members, supporters, or high-level sponsors of SOBA and its activities and projects.
• Developing consistent funding through the many grants and trust opportunities that are available to SOBA to support boating access.
• Maintain and develop critical partnerships with organizations who share a common objective, to increase public boating access (i.e. NMMA)
• Solicit Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) National Conservation Needs (NCN) funds to create a “National Status Report” for boating access.
• Participate in the process that is underway to revamp the purpose and structure of American League of Anglers and Boaters (ALAB).

Expand internal support:
• Increase member agencies’ allocation of resources of people and money to support the strategic plan to be measured by the level of participation on task forces and the SOBA board.
• Increase in annual membership dues and national conference registration fees to meet rising operational costs.
• Expand the State memberships to encourage more individual affiliate memberships and multiple agency memberships within a given state. Increase national conference participation at all levels (exhibitors/sponsorship, members, and non-members).

3. DEVELOP AND DELIVER PRODUCTS AND SERVICES THAT CAN BE USED BY ITS MEMBERS TO MAINTAIN, INCREASE AND PROMOTE BOATING ACCESS.
Based on the analysis completed at the last strategic planning session, the Executive Board has carefully selected the following items as priorities because they would result in providing immediate assistance to its members. These items will build on SOBA’s strengths and can be achieved using existing organizational resources.

• Promote media kit: This kit was created during the last strategic planning session and it is designed to assist the states in their efforts to self promote newly created boat ramps as well as tracking the opening of new public boat facilities within a national database. This also benefits the states’ federal delegations, making them aware that a new public access has been created for their state’s boating constituency.

• Strategic Plan Template: This is a template to be used by the member states to assist them in developing an individualized strategic plan for developing public boat access, based on their own specific resources and needs. This template will be developed by a SOBA Task Force, the Executive Board, and staff and will be paid for out of the operating budget.
• **Who's Who of SOBA**: This will be an online database that lists the technical expertise of each member that can be easily accessed. This database will be available to members and non-members to serve as a reference for those seeking expert advice and input. It will be created by a SOBA Task Force, the Executive Board, and staff, and paid for out of the operating budget.

• **Needs assessment template**: This is a template that can be used by member states to assess boat access needs and to measure macro trends. This template will serve as a model that can be customized by individual states. This template will be developed by a SOBA Task Force and paid for out of the operating budget.

• **Research needs survey from SOBA to the states**: This is a survey that will help SOBA understand the unique needs of its members, which will in turn help SOBA in shaping its strategic goals to ensure that it is properly supporting its membership. This survey will be done by a SOBA Task Force, the Executive Board, and staff and paid for out of the operating budget.

• **Nationwide GIS overlay of boat ramp inventory**: This is an online national map that will identify the location of all public boat launching facilities and provide information about each location (i.e. directions, facilities, etc). This project will continue the work that was started with the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) and Grow Boating to inventory existing access points.

• **National Status Report on public boat access situation and trends**: This is a national study that will be used to track the monies spent on developing boating access and highlight nationwide access needs and their economic impact. The results of this study will be used to develop a report that will help to expose all the issues that are affecting our nation, that have resulted from the decrease in public boating access. It is anticipated that this study will reinforce the need for increased funding and support to ensure continued growth in public boating access and it is expected to highlight the positive economic impact that such growth will have on our national/regional economies. Because of the wide-ranging scope of this project, it is divided into two phases. The first phase will be to design the basic format and data values for the status report and create a plan as to how to effectively collect the data. The second phase involves collecting the data and producing the status report. Funding for this effort will be sought for via a grant from AFWA and/or NMMA’s Water Access Task Force.

In the coming months and years, SOBA will build on these strategic priorities and enhancing core membership services so that recreational boaters continue to enjoy quality and safe boating access to this nation’s waterways. SOBA would like to thank all its members for their continued support and commitment to SOBA’s mission. The organization also needs to thank all of its sponsors, especially the National Marine Manufacturers Association for its financial support.

For more SOBA information, including membership details, visit [www.sobaus.org](http://www.sobaus.org), email us at info@sobaus.org, or call 312–946–6283.

### The 2006 Executive Board Officers

- **President**: Julie McQuade, Ohio
- **Vice President**: Terry Boyd, Alabama
- **Treasurer**: Lacy Nichols, Delaware
- **Immediate Past President**: Larry Killien, Minnesota

### Committees and Chairs

- **Clean Vessel Act and Big Program**: Ed Poolos, Tennessee
- **Outreach/Technology/Education**: Kent Skaar, Minnesota
- **Design, Development and Operations**: Terry Boyd, Alabama
- **Conference Chair**: Seth Brandenberger, Montana
- **2006 Conference Coordinator**: Patricia Harrell, Florida