

## Industry Leaders Gather for Third Growth Summit, Establish Recreational Boating Leadership Council to Address Six Priority Action Areas

CHICAGO—January 7, 2013—On Tuesday, Dec. 4, 2012, approximately 30 individuals representing diverse organizations and companies with a vested interest in the future of the recreational boating industry reconvened in Rosemont, Ill., for the third growth summit.

An all-industry effort, the growth summit meetings bring together all corners of the industry, looking ahead to address growth challenges that the marine industry will face in the near and long-term futures. In two earlier growth summit meetings, nearly 200 industry stakeholders narrowed their efforts, focusing on six priority action items: attracting younger and more diverse participants to boating; supporting industry marketing efforts; creating stronger boating advocacy and uniting to fend off unwarranted legislation that hampers boating growth; exploring issues related to the affordability of boating; and creating opportunities for growing boating through education and outreach.

In the most recent meeting, participants together created the Recreational Boating Leadership Council, a steering committee to oversee and coordinate these efforts, as well as individual committees to oversee individual priority action items. The group also appointed Matt Gruhn, President of the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas, as chairman; Jim Frye, President of the Association of Marina Industries, as vice chairman; and Thom Dammrich, President of the National Marine Manufacturers Association, as secretary.

Rather than govern, the new Council's role is to coordinate efforts and shared resources and communicate progress. During the summit, the Recreational Boating Leadership Council reviewed progress made on the six priority action areas created during the first and second growth summits, identified and discussed shared opportunities and resources to address next steps on these priorities and established leadership teams responsible for moving each priority forward.

The Council will work as a group, improving cross-sector communication and collaboration among all recreational boating stakeholder groups within each of the six priority areas with the goal of growing participation and achieving long-term growth for recreational boating. The Council will meet at least twice annually to ensure progress and share information while addressing each priority.

Attendees at the Dec. 4 Growth Summit included marine dealers, distributors, retailers, boat, engine and accessory manufacturers, trade associations, publishers, government agencies, consumer and youth organizations, banking and insurance companies, standards and safety groups, and marinas.

Leadership teams responsible for each of the six priority actions (marketing communications, youth, affordability, diversity, education, and advocacy) include:

**Marketing Communications:** The function of the marketing communications priority is to improve recreational boating industry stakeholders' understanding and support of the industry's Discover Boating and the Welcome to the Water campaigns. Responsibilities include improving communication among stakeholders about the work done through Discover Boating in order for stakeholders to leverage that work, promoting a unified effort behind Discover Boating messaging, delivering the Discover Boating message through participation events that welcome more people to the water, and incorporating key messaging from the youth, diversity, education and affordability priority areas when

appropriate. This action team will also help industry be more engaged and benefit from the Recreational Boat and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) and the Take Me Fishing campaign.

**Co-Chairs:** Joe Lewis, Mount Dora Boating Center and Grow Boating, Inc., and Carl Blackwell, NMMA and Grow Boating, Inc.

**Members:** Jim Emmons, Water Sports Industry Association; Nancy Cueroni, National Marine Distributors Association; Michael Cassidy, RBFF; Glenn Hughes, Bonnier Corp.; Dean Waite, *Soundings Trade Only*; Bill Watters, Syntec Industries.

**Youth:** The youth priority's goals are to quantify and inventory existing youth boating programs to understand opportunities and needs, explore opportunities with existing and new high school level fishing and boating club, create an industry-wide commitment to youth programs such as Sea Scouts, share news with industry stakeholders regarding their work and identify areas of opportunity.

**Co-Chairs:** George Harris, Northwest Marine Trade Association, and Keith Christopher, Boy Scouts of America

**Members:** Jack Gierhart, U.S. Sailing; Melissa Danko, Marine Trades Association of New Jersey; Randy Short, Almar Marinas; Amy Collins, *Boating Industry* magazine

**Affordability:** Because affordability is subjective, the purpose of the affordability priority is to understand buyer habits, explore opportunities for new points of entry (including certified pre-owned), provide education and access to information for boaters and potential boaters on the boat purchasing process, and better communicate the emotional and experiential benefits of the boating lifestyle. Boating affordability is a continuum with many points of entry.

**Chair:** Bill Otto, Lake Effect Financial Services/National Marine Bankers Association

**Members:** Jim Coburn, Coburn & Associates/National Marine Bankers Association, and Tom Knighten, American Sailing Association and Discover Boating

**Diversity:** Given the changing demographics of the United States and the need for understanding the challenges and opportunities of this growing diversity, the focus of the diversity priority is to quantify the business opportunity that diversity offers, promote greater diversity within the industry and encourage continued outreach to diverse audiences by industry stakeholders, understand how changing demographics impact recreational boating, and share this research and knowledge with the industry.

**Chair:** Thom Dammrich, NMMA

**Members:** Lou Sandoval, Karma Yacht Sales, and Margaret Podlich, BoatUS

**Education** The focus of the education group will be to rally the industry around Welcome to the Water on National Marina Day events in 2013, which will offer hands-on training and expand access to boating. In addition, this priority is charged with researching the extent to which a lack of skills training is a barrier to boat ownership and conducting market research on hands-on training opportunities.

**Chair:** Jon Kukuk, Nestegg Marine/Wisconsin Marina Association

**Members:** Joe Lewis, Mount Dora Boating Center/Grow Boating, Inc.; Jim Frye, Westrec Marinas/Association of Marina Industries; Margaret Podlich, BoatUS; Jack Gierhart, US Sailing; Charlie Nobles, American Sailing Association; Jonathan Sweet, *Boating Industry* magazine; and members across each represented regional marine trade association.

**Advocacy:** The advocacy priority will work to improve the industry's presence on Capitol Hill to protect and grow recreational boating. The group agreed that all members of the Recreational Boating Leadership Council will attend the American Boating Congress (ABC), held May 8-9, 2013 in Washington, DC, and encourage their respective organizations and members to attend in order to increase the

importance and impact of the event and enhance the voice of recreational boating. This action team will also serve as a clearinghouse of advocacy issues to expand industry grassroots involvement in issues impacting recreational boating. This effort recognizes that the boating industry is an ecosystem and that legislation or regulation that adversely impacts one segment of the industry will eventually adversely impact the entire industry.

**Chair:** Jim Currie, NMMA

**Members:** All co-hosts of the American Boating Congress

***The efforts of the Growth Summit are not exclusive to those listed above. We need all stakeholders to take an active role in growing our industry! The Recreational Boating Leadership Council is seeking YOUR involvement and encourages YOU to participate in the Council's efforts to grow our industry. We need you! Your voice and involvement make a difference! Please contact NMMA's Ellen Hopkins today to learn more about how you can help or volunteer for a specific priority action group. You can reach Ellen at [ehopkins@nmma.org](mailto:ehopkins@nmma.org).***

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**About the Recreational Boating Leadership Council:** The Recreational Boating Leadership Council is a group of leaders from across all segments of the marine industry working together to address growth challenges facing the marine industry. To achieve long-term growth, the council is focused on six priority action areas: attracting younger and more diverse participants to boating, supporting industry marketing efforts, creating stronger boating advocacy, exploring issues related to the affordability of boating and creating opportunities for growing boating through educational and outreach.