

Alaska Boating Safety Program

FY2005 Request: \$600,000
Reference No: 32553

AP/AL: Appropriation
Category: Health/Human Services
Location: Statewide
House District: Statewide (HD 1-40)
Estimated Project Dates: 07/01/2004 - 06/30/2007

Project Type: Health and Safety
Contact: Nico Bus
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Brief Summary and Statement of Need:

Under 41.21.010 and 41.21.020 the Department is, among other things, responsible for fostering the growth and development of recreational opportunities for the health, welfare, education and enjoyment of the public, providing consulting services to develop recreational activities and programs, providing programs and clearinghouse services on park and recreation matters, and other duties as prescribed by law. The program contributes to this mission (and the additional responsibilities prescribed by law under AS.O5.25) by working to reduce recreational boating fatalities and accidents, and promoting safe, enjoyable recreational boating in Alaska, primarily through boater education.

Funding:	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	Total
Fed Rcpts	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$3,600,000
Total:	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$3,600,000

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State Match Required	<input type="checkbox"/> One-Time Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - underway	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On-Going
100% = Minimum State Match % Required		<input type="checkbox"/> Amendment	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Bill	

Operating & Maintenance Costs:

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Staff</u>
Project Development:	0	0
Ongoing Operating:	0	0
One-Time Startup:	0	0
Totals:	0	0

Additional Information / Prior Funding History:

SLA03/CH82 - \$600,000
 SSSLA02/CH1 - \$600,000
 SLA01/CH61 - \$660,000
 SLA00/CH135 - \$660,000

Project Description/Justification:

A. Project Need

Boating fatalities rank second only to highway deaths as the leading cause of transportation related fatalities in the United States. The National Transportation Safety Board has boating safety on it's "12 most wanted" list for needed transportation related improvements.

Alaska, with over 33,000 miles of coastline, over 3,000 rivers, and more than 3 million lakes is a boaters paradise and, not surprisingly, Alaskans are "lifestyle" boaters. Studies show Alaskans own more boats than they do either ATVs or snow machines. We use our boats to enjoy our world – class recreation opportunities, as an important means of transportation, and to support subsistence. However, of all the states non-commercial boating fatality rates, Alaska's ranks among the nation's highest. Statistics compiled from 1991-2000 show an average of 25 boaters lost their lives each year on Alaska's waters; a death rate that was over 10 times the national average. Most of these fatalities were the result of a sudden

capsizing or a fall overboard, where the victim was not wearing a life jacket. Most who died had never attended a single boating safety course. Nearly all of these deaths involved operator controllable factors and could have been prevented.

Besides the tragic and needless loss of life, boating accidents cost money. Federal, state, and local agencies expend financial resources for every boating related search, rescue, emergency medical response, and body recovery. The devastation of losing a loved – one, is made even worse by the financial impact to surviving family members in medical expenses, lost income, and property.

B. Project Scope

In response to this problem, all states and territories in the nation established boating safety programs. Alaska became the last state to do so when, in July 1998, the Office of Boating Safety was designated within the Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation. As a result, Alaska secured conditional program approval from the U.S. Coast Guard, and for the first time received a portion of the federal grant funding that since 1987 was made available to every state except Alaska. With the passage of the Alaska Boating Safety Act in May 2000, Alaska qualified to receive the state's full share. The program relies entirely on these federal grant funds.

The primary mission of the Alaska Boating Safety Program is to promote safety for persons and property in and connected with the use, operation, and equipment of boats on water of the state, and the uniformity of laws relating to boat safety. The Program's subordinate objectives are:

1. Reduce Alaska's recreational (non-commercial) boating fatalities.
2. Secure the benefits available to the state under 46 U.S.C. 13101 - 13110; and take the actions necessary to continue to qualify for federal funding, under 46 U.S.C. 13102, and in accordance with the U.S. Coast Guard / State of Alaska Memorandum of Understanding.
3. Cooperate with other agencies, organizations, and individuals to provide a statewide boating safety education program that increases public awareness and the knowledge, skills, and abilities of Alaska's boaters, and that includes:
 - The production of educational materials relevant to the needs of Alaska's urban and rural boaters.
 - Support for statewide boating safety education programs for children and other high - risk groups.
 - Training, certification, and support of boating safety instructors.
 - Evaluation, on an ongoing basis, of the effectiveness of the boating safety program.
4. Support the Alaska Boating Safety Advisory Council.
5. Provide for a uniform state waterway marking system.
6. Cooperate with other state agencies to provide for boating accidents and casualties reporting, boat registration, boating safety patrol, and law enforcement training.
7. Promote the uniformity of laws relating to boating safety.

C. Approach

Because the Alaska Boating Safety Program is small compared to most other states, maintaining dynamic and productive partnerships is critical to the program's continued success. To that end, the program cooperates with the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, other state agencies, and boating organizations to provide for the program's functions, and to avoid duplication of effort. Alaska also maintains close relationships with the other states and actively participates in regional and national boating organizations in order to identify and adopt the best practices of other programs, maximize resources, and increase program quality, productivity, and effectiveness.

Many of the program's projects are accomplished through contracts with the non-profits and businesses. Contracts for printing written publications, broadcasting boating safety messages, volunteer boating safety instructor training, research, surveys, and purchasing life jackets for the Kid's Don't Float program, all support private sector jobs and contribute to the state economy. Sales of boating safety equipment, also benefits Alaska businesses.

This program receives no GF support, and has no impact on the state's operating budget. Project costs were estimated in consideration of prior year expenditures and the estimated maximum amount of funding Alaska could receive, subject to the ability to identify sufficient matching funds.

D. Program Evaluation

The multiple programs provided under this project preclude the use of a single evaluation methodology. Rather, we use several methods to measure progress in meeting our objectives.

Drowning, boating fatality, and accident statistics, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary vessel safety check pass rates, observational PFD wear rate studies, statewide boater opinion surveys, law enforcement statistics, and boating course attendance, are all tools used to capture information on boater attitudes, behaviors and to identify likely problem areas. For example, a statewide observational life jacket wear - rate study was conducted for the first time in 2001 to measure boater behaviors. In 2002, we conducted our first comprehensive statewide boater survey to assess boater awareness and attitudes. Both helped established important base – lines, and will be repeated over time to measure program effectiveness and to help identify trends. In other examples, individual course and instructor evaluations such as those conducted during boating safety classes allow us to measure both the retention levels of students and the effectiveness of course curriculum. In addition, evaluations conducted by independent professionals are used to evaluate our instructor courses.

We expect, over time, that this program will produce positive results. Nationally, similar state boating safety programs have proven to be effective. Since the Federal Boat Safety Act of 1971 (and the beginning of federal support of state boating programs), boating fatalities nationwide have decreased by 50% even though boat ownership more than doubled during the same period. The U.S. Coast Guard estimates over 27,000 lives have been saved since 1971. Similar reductions in Alaska's boating fatalities have been realized since 1998 (when state efforts began), as fatalities dropped steadily from 38 that year to 16 in 2002. The four-year average of Alaskan boating fatalities has fallen from 26 per year between 1995 and 1998, to 20 per year from 1999 – 2002, even though the number of registered boats nearly doubled during the same period. The highly regarded *Kid's Don't Float* program alone has been credited with 6 lives saved thus far. These statistics are just one indicator of the effectiveness of this program.

We expect to see continued success in reducing Alaska's boating fatalities and accidents, and further reductions in the cost to both the federal and state and local operating budgets for boating searches, rescues, and body recovery, and the economic social impacts to Alaska families that result from boating accidents.

Why is this Project Needed Now:

Alaska's non-commercial boating fatality rate ranks among the nation's highest. Fortunately, Alaska's boating fatalities have dropped since the state initiated efforts in boating safety. Without continued effort, Alaska will likely regain its position as the state with the highest boating fatality rate in the nation.

Specific Spending Detail:

By legislative intent, 75% of the federal funds received for this project are to be used for boating specific public education programs. These include developing research – based boating safety curriculum and writing text for publications such as the *Alaska Boater's Handbook* and posters, providing statewide boating safety instructor training and support, providing boating safety classes and presentations, purchasing life jackets for the *Kid's Don't Float* life jacket loaner board program, support for the U.S Coast Guard Auxiliary, developing, broadcasting, and publishing boating safety messages, and providing and supporting school programs including the *Kid's Don't Float Peer Educator Program*. While the program's emphasis is on education, some of these funds may also be used for training state law enforcement officers in marine law enforcement topics such as officer safety and boating accident investigation.

Project Support:

The Alaska Boating Safety Program has had a long list of public and private supporters, including:

United States Coast Guard
United States Coast Guard Auxiliary
Alaska Municipal League
Alaska Boating Association (ABA)
Valdez Harbor Users Association
Seward Boat Owners Association
Whittier Boat Owners Association
Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association
Fairbanks Paddlers
Alaska Marine Dealer's Association
Trails and Recreational Access for Alaskans Board (TRAAK)
Alaska Safety Advisory Council (ASAC)
State of Alaska Capital Project Summary
FY05 Governor's Capital Budget
1/4/11 2:06:46 PM

Department of Natural Resources
Reference No: 32553
Released December 15, 2004

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Kenai River Special Management Area Citizen's Advisory Board
Alaska Boating Safety Advisory Council (ABSAC)
Mat-Su State Parks Citizen's Advisory Board
Big Lake Community Council
Sitka State Parks Citizen's Advisory Board
Denali Safety Council
Alaska Department of Public Safety
Alaska Wildland Adventures
National Transportation Safety Board
Alaska Department of Health and Social Services - Community Health and EMS section
Western States Boating Administrator's Association
National Association of State Boating Law Administrators
National Safe Boating Council

Project Opposition:

Unknown

State Match Required:

A state match, currently in an amount equal to the federal grant funds received, is required. However, because the boating safety program receives no GF, this 50% match requirement has thus far been satisfied by researching and capturing other department's expenditures that can be attributable to non-commercial boating, and that are approved as allowable match by the U.S. Coast Guard, such as DMV's costs to register boats, and costs to the state for boating search and rescue. However, our ability to match these funds depends on the expenditures of other state agencies and varies from year to year. In FY03, we were unable to provide our full match.

In addition, the amount that a state spends for boating safety (as compared to the other states) in any given year is also one of two factors that determine the amount of federal funds that a state is eligible to receive in the federal grant allocation two years later.