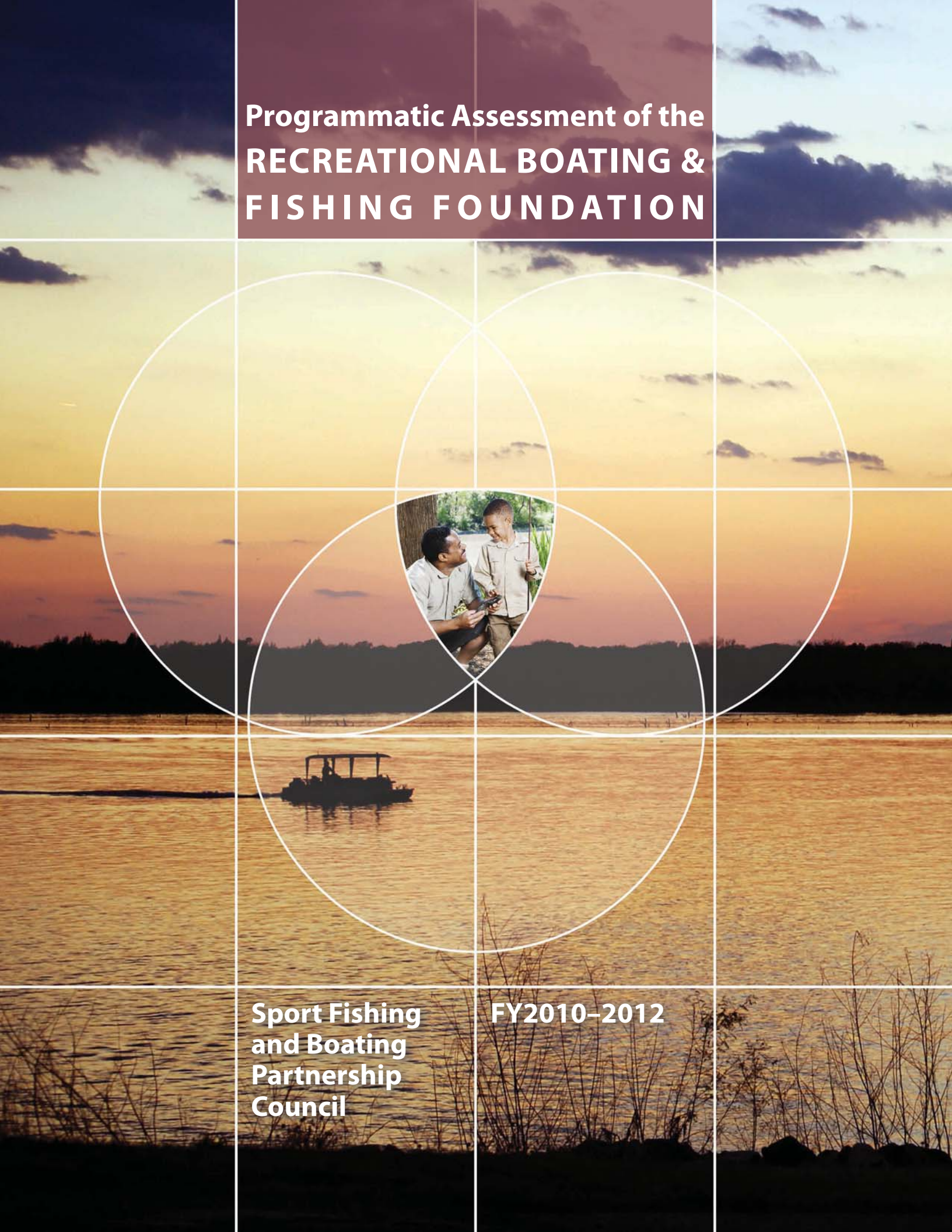
Programmatic Assessment of the RECREATIONAL BOATING & FISHING FOUNDATION



Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council

FY2010–2012

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Programmatic Assessment
FY2010–2012

Activities of the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation

Report of the 2013 *Ad Hoc* Assessment Team
to the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council

SPORT FISHING & BOATING
PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL

Approved by Council February 25, 2015

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REPORT SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

In response to declines in recreational boating and fishing participation, Congress passed the 1998 Sport Fishing and Boating Safety Act (Act). The Act requires the Secretary of the Interior to implement a National Outreach and Communication Program (Program) to address recreational boating and fishing participation and promote conservation and responsible use of the nation's aquatic resources. In response, the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council (SFBPC) developed a strategic plan for the Program and the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) was established in October 1998 expressly to carry out that plan.

RBFF is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to increase participation in recreational fishing and boating and thereby increase public awareness and appreciation of the need for protecting, conserving and restoring this nation's aquatic natural resources.

RBFF receives funding to implement the National Outreach and Communications Program from a Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund (SFR) discretionary grant, which is awarded through a competitive process. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is responsible for administering the discretionary grant and provides a detailed accounting of the RBFF program and its activities to the Secretary of the Interior. For the period 2000-2012, RBFF received $131,499,075 in SFR funding. For the time period of 2010-2012, RBFF received a total of $39,081,144.

The Act directs the Secretary of the Interior to conduct periodic reviews of the Program. Responsibility for the assessment was delegated to SFBPC, on behalf of the Secretary, through a 1999 memorandum of understanding. This memorandum states the SFBPC "will monitor the implementation of the Program, will evaluate effectiveness of the Program by communicating regularly with its stakeholders, and will regularly report findings to the Secretary and the signatories of this agreement."

The SFBPC previously undertook reviews of RBFF in 2002, 2006 and 2009. This assessment constitutes the fourth review of the RBFF and its implementation of the Program.

FY2010– 2012 Assessment

In December 2013, SFBPC empanelled a ten-person Assessment Team to undertake an independent, impartial and constructive programmatic assessment of RBFF for the period 2010–2012. Collectively, the team comprises experience and expertise in recreational boating, fishing, marketing, program analysis, economic development and familiarity with the conduct and impact of RBFF's programs.

The 2012 Assessment Team used the same evaluation framework developed for the 2006 and 2009 Assessments. The 2012 Assessment evaluated the efforts of RBFF to:

1. Address the 11 recommendations from the 2009 Assessment (Table 1);
2. Achieve the objectives derived from the Program's legislative mandate; and
3. Achieve the Consensus Measures established following the 2009 Assessment (Appendix B)

2012 Assessment Findings and Recommendations

Progress on 2009 Recommendations

Table 1 contains the 11 recommendations presented in the 2009 Assessment report and the 2012 Assessment Team's evaluation of progress toward addressing those recommendations. The table also contains page references to more detailed discussion of the status of each recommendation.

Table 1: Recommendations from the 2009 Assessment

2009 Assessment Recommendations	Progress and Recommendations, FY2010-2012
1. RBFF, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), FWS and SFBPC should work together to identify a mutually agreed-upon set of performance measures by the end of 2010. These measures should form the basis of RBFF annual reporting to the FWS, AFWA and SFBPC, and should be revisited by the four parties listed above on a regular basis.	Completed. However, the Assessment Team believes that some of the agreed-upon measures are already outdated or insufficient, and recommends that RBFF, SFBPC, FWS and AFWA review the measures and incorporate more outcome-based metrics, to the extent possible, to assess RBFF's impact on sustained participation in fishing and/or boating (page 12).
2. Expand efforts and budget to work collaboratively with state natural resource agencies in the design and implementation of marketing programs to increase boating participation and boat registrations.	Completed. RBFF did expand efforts to increase boating participation and boat registrations, and the percentage of its budget spent on boating did increase, even though actual dollars reported declined along with its overall budget. The increased boat registration efforts showed measurable successes in most participating states. RBFF is planning to expand its boater recruitment efforts, and the Assessment Team recommends development of outcome-based metrics for this recruitment work (pages 12-13).
3. Publish a biennial set of learnings based on project results and state workshops that can be shared with the full community of RBFF stakeholders.	Completed. "Learnings" were published in a "State of State Partnerships Report" in 2013; however, many states are eager for more information. RBFF should expand its efforts to disseminate learnings through increased collaboration with stakeholders (pages 13-14).
4. Develop databases and processes that allow RBFF to assess its performance relative to specific stakeholder interests (fishing, boating, education, conservation, etc.). Performance to be measured and reported on an ongoing basis to stakeholders.	Completed. RBFF has developed the databases and processes, and maintenance of the databases is a part of RBFF's regular business practices (page 14).

2009 Assessment Recommendations	Progress and Recommendations, FY2010-2012
5. Work with each state to assess RBFF's ongoing partnership and determine how RBFF can best support the state's effort to promote fishing and boating. RBFF to provide a "State of State Partnerships Report" to SFBPC biennially.	Ongoing. RBFF published "State of State Partnerships Report" in 2013, but the report did not provide an in-depth evaluation of both successes and challenges of the state marketing program so that states can understand the lessons learned for future planning. In some cases, states didn't know the report existed. Further, many states are increasingly dissatisfied with RBFF's "standardized approach," and are very interested in more collaboration with RBFF to customize marketing efforts. There remains a clear call for RBFF to further collaborate with states (pages 14-15).
6. Formally track and report to SFBPC on RBFF efforts to raise a 25 percent or greater non-federal match to the SFR funds received that year.	Completed. This recommendation was adopted as one of the agreed upon metrics tracked by RBFF. However, the requirement to raise $1.5 million in non-federal funds was suspended by the SFBPC pending the findings of this assessment. The SFBPC believes RBFF should continue to raise 25 percent or more non-federal match to the SFR funds received that year. However, the SFBPC recommends that the metric requiring $1.5 million in non-federal cash match over a 3-year period be permanently discontinued (page 15).
7. Develop a future research agenda in collaboration with stakeholders. Report on the process of addressing this agenda annually to SFBPC and FWS.	Completed. RBFF did develop a future research agenda, and its board members, which represent major stakeholders, participated in setting that agenda. However, many stakeholders have expressed an interest in being more directly involved in a collaboration to develop that agenda (pages 15-16).
8. Work cooperatively with states to ensure TakeMeFishing.org (TMF.org) pages are accurate and angler/boater-ready. Utilize state-produced information as a priority to all other information. Where such information exists, TMF.org should link to the information on the state's pages. Where such information is lacking, RBFF should help create it.	Ongoing. The effort to maintain the accuracy of state information is ongoing and depends on state agency cooperation. However, due to the advancement of state mapping tools, some RBFF efforts may be duplicative of state efforts and warrant review. Emphasis should be placed on linking to state web pages and not duplicating data at TMF.org (pages 16-17).

2009 Assessment Recommendations	Progress and Recommendations, FY2010-2012
9. Develop partnerships with appropriate stakeholders to produce and maintain "how-to" sections of TMF.org, and enhance the conservation and stewardship pages.	Completed. TMF.org has a considerable amount of "how-to" information. As with Recommendation 8, there continues to be an opportunity to make greater use of state agency, industry and NGO resources to bolster TMF.org content (page 17).
10. Undertake an evaluation of the National Youth Fishing and Boating Initiative utilizing the *Guide to Program Evaluation* as a model for determining short- and long-term impact of such programs. Distribute results to partners and initiate appropriate changes to the grants program.	Completed. RBFF evaluated the granting program and determined a formal, longitudinal evaluation would be too expensive and time-intensive. Based on initial assessment and budget cuts, RBFF and its board discontinued the grant program. Assessment results were distributed to the affected grantees, but not widely beyond that. The Assessment Team recommends RBFF work with its partners to better define and communicate its vision for youth recruitment into fishing and boating (pages 18-19).
11. Develop a Conservation Roundtable consisting of state and federal agencies and representatives from the Aquatic Resources Education Association to advise on content and messaging for RBFF's websites and outreach.	Completed. RBFF developed a Conservation Roundtable and updated conservation content on TMF.org. Additionally, RBFF has been successful in placing PSAs with conservation messages. However, there are opportunities to more proactively emphasize conservation messages in public outreach and on TMF.org (page 19).

As appropriate, some of the 2009 recommendations have been carried over into the list of 2012 recommendations (see list on page ix).

2012 Assessment Findings

The 2012 Assessment used the evaluation framework developed for the 2006 and 2009 programmatic assessments, which evaluates the efforts of RBFF relative to five questions directly derived from the legislative mandate for the National Outreach and Communications Program:

1. **Have RBFF activities had a positive impact on recruitment and retention of boaters and anglers?**
2. **Have Stakeholders found added value in the adoption of RBFF products?**
3. **Has RBFF increased the public's knowledge of boating and fishing techniques, and its awareness of boating and fishing opportunities?**
4. **How has RBFF enhanced the public's understanding of aquatic resources?**

5. **Have RBFF products and activities increased conservation and responsible use of aquatic resources by boaters and anglers?**

Based on recommendation #1 from the 2009 Assessment (see Table 1), RBFF worked with SFBPC, FWS and AFWA to develop a series of "consensus measures" to help standardize the metrics for evaluating these five questions. To do so, the group identified two overarching objectives: 1) increase participation in recreational angling and boating, and 2) increase public awareness of sound fishing, boating and conservation practices. Under each objective are a series of goals that support each objective. Finally, each goal has one or more metrics to measure RBFF's progress towards the goals and ultimately the two objectives. The 2012 Assessment reports the results of these metrics in the sections for each of the five questions, as appropriate. In addition, the 2012 Assessment Team conducted a questionnaire of state agency stakeholders and reviewed results from RBFF stakeholder surveys to complete its assessment.

Overarching Findings and Conclusions

Before summarizing the findings based on the five questions, the Assessment Team believes it is essential to highlight the most important findings and conclusions.

First, RBFF plays a vital and unique role in engaging Americans in boating and angling. It is a powerful resource for states providing marketing, research, communications and other tools that most states are unable to replicate with limited resources. It serves boaters and anglers with an extensive array of information about where and how to boat and fish. During the past three to five years, RBFF has also moved aggressively to capitalize on social media and other technology to help make boating and angling more accessible to more Americans. Overall, RBFF is advancing the goals it was established to achieve.

The Assessment Team also believes RBFF can become even more effective going forward. The findings and recommendations below represent opportunities for RBFF, its partners, and–most importantly–the American people.

IMPROVING COLLABORATION: The most important opportunity is to renew a genuinely collaborative partnership with states and other stakeholders. The assessment found declining levels of satisfaction with RBFF products and services. There is growing concern among states, in particular, that RBFF has become less effective as a partner and collaborator in addressing their evolving needs. As state needs change and questions arise about the effectiveness of longstanding programs such as the lapsed angler program, RBFF does not appear to be engaged in proactive problem solving and consultation with states. Changing this dynamic, becoming more collaborative and customizing service for stakeholders can ensure that every partner–states, industry and RBFF–will become more effective. Achieving these outcomes will also lead to success in recruiting and retaining more anglers and boaters.

MEASURING OUTCOMES: Measuring progress toward goals is essential in any organization and it can become increasingly challenging as the goals become more complicated. Following the 2009 Assessment, RBFF, SFBPC, FWS and AFWA developed specific goals, objectives and metrics for RBFF to consistently measure progress. During the assessment period, RBFF made continuous and, in some cases, dramatic progress based on those initial metrics. However, measuring progress is not a static process; it is an iterative one in which new outcomes need to be measured and existing metrics revised. And this assessment demonstrates that RBFF and its partners need to begin shifting from metrics that primarily measure outputs (visits to a web page, media stories tracked, etc.) to metrics that measure outcomes (e.g., sustained participation in fishing and boating). This is challenging work; however, it is essential in order to demonstrate progress toward the goals RBFF was created to achieve and for which it receives excise taxes paid by anglers, boaters and the industries that manufacture the products they use. The FWS National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Related Recreation (which showed an increase in fishing participation for the period 2006-2011) is one outcome-based metric that could be used.

PROACTIVELY COMMUNICATING ABOUT CONSERVATION: RBFF has a dual mission to increase: 1) participation in angling and boating and 2) thereby public awareness of the need to protect, conserve and restore aquatic resources. Opportunities remain for RBFF to proactively provide boaters and anglers with information about conservation and responsible use of aquatic resources. This finding builds on and extends recommendations in the 2009 Assessment–recommendations on which RBFF has made progress, but more work remains. Delivering conservation messaging may be more challenging than providing information about where to boat or fish, but it is equally important because quality boating and angling experiences depend on healthy habitat, clean water and productive fisheries. RBFF has a clear opportunity to leverage its digital assets and communications resources along with new, outcome-based metrics to proactively advance conservation and responsible use.

PHOTO: TAKE ME FISHING

As RBFF continues to grow and mature as an organization, these findings and the recommendations below provide opportunities for greater success in the future.

Following is a brief summary of the 2012 Assessment Team's findings for each question, along with a page reference for the section of this document that addresses the findings in more detail.

1. Have RBFF activities had a positive impact on recruitment and retention of boaters and anglers?

Most indicators suggest that RBBF has had a positive impact on recruitment and retention of boaters and anglers; however, it is difficult to determine the *direct* impact of RBFF's activities, especially on retention and on-going participation. This is not a criticism of RBFF. Instead, the Assessment Team recognizes that myriad factors influence individual decisions to participate in boating and/or fishing. There are states where fishing license sales and boat registrations have increased and RBFF is contributing to these results. However, stakeholders were split regarding their perception of RBFF's effectiveness in increasing boat registrations, fishing license sales and participation in boating and fishing (pages 19-23). In states where RBFF measured direct results of its campaigns (with treatment and control groups), 2013 program results were mixed (17 out of 19 states saw positive net revenue based on lift from the boat registration mail marketing, but only six out of 40 states saw positive net revenue based on lift from the lapsed angler mailing).

2. Have Stakeholders found added value in the adoption of RBFF products?
Stakeholder satisfaction was gauged by consensus measures, a stakeholder questionnaire administered by the 2012 Assessment Team and by RBFF's annual stakeholder surveys. Overall, the majority of stakeholders is satisfied with RBFF products and finds those products useful. However, there are signs of potential concerns that should be given close attention. Although RBFF met its objective for stakeholder satisfaction in FY2012, it fell short of the objective in FY2013 (a goal of 70% satisfaction with actual stakeholder satisfaction of 64%). In addition, RBFF's state stakeholder survey shows decreasing satisfaction with some of its programs. Finally, RBFF's industry stakeholder survey showed decreasing usefulness of some of RBFF's products and programs.

Two of RBFF's primary strategies are direct mail marketing programs for lapsed anglers and boaters. Although stakeholders rated highly the effectiveness of the boat registration program, they were split on their views of the lapsed angler program. Nearly half of respondents to RBFF's state stakeholder survey identified the lapsed angler program as one of RBFF's most important offerings, but half did not find it very effective. This difference in satisfaction likely can be attributed to differences in performance of current marketing efforts. These concerns mirrored concerns of state participants in the 2009 Assessment (pages 23-31).

3. Has RBFF increased the public's knowledge of boating and fishing techniques, and its awareness of boating and fishing opportunities?
RBFF has used TakeMeFishing.org (TMF.org) as its primary tool for increasing the public's knowledge of boating and fishing techniques, and RBFF's digital assets and TMF.org have exceeded target metrics for unique views, referrals, and behavioral influence on users' intent to boat and/or fish. These are excellent accomplishments for which RBFF should be commended.

Although RBFF met many of its target metrics, return visitors and unique visitors for "how to" pages are not meeting objectives. There is an additional opportunity for RBFF to use external content to make its "how to" pages more robust. Further leveraging external content can provide RBFF value at little cost. The Assessment Team recommends that RBFF re-evaluate the goals of TMF.org to focus on its proven value as an introductory portal to state sites that provide specific, up-to-date and relevant content (pages 31-39).

4. How has RBFF enhanced the public's understanding of aquatic resources?
RBFF has worked since its inception to design and implement a set of education programs, including developing best practices, educational grant programs and teaching materials, including "Passport to Fishing and Boating" and the "Explore the Blue Campaign." During the assessment period, RBFF made major changes in education programming, funding, and partnerships, including eliminating grant programs, launching and terminating one major partnership, and initiating a new campaign to engage the rapidly growing Hispanic population. The Assessment Team respects RBFF's expertise in marketing and its discretion to make programmatic changes. However, with the exception of the changes in the National Fishing and Boating Education Grant initiative, the Team struggled to objectively evaluate other significant changes over a short period of time because RBFF does not appear to have specific goals, objectives or criteria for developing, implementing and evaluating education initiatives. The Team recommends that goals, objectives and criteria be developed and RBFF rigorously evaluate current and future initiatives based on them. This will help future assessment teams, the SFBPC, FWS and other stakeholders to objectively and fairly evaluate such decisions (pages 39-43).

5. Have RBFF products and activities increased conservation and responsible use of aquatic resources by boaters and anglers?
Based on metrics that measure visits to conservation and responsible use pages on the TMF.org website, RBFF met objectives relevant to this question. It also met its objective to make wider use of the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund logo. However, these metrics do not demonstrate changes in boater and angler conservation knowledge or responsible use. Additionally, while RBFF has met its objectives for conservation and safety pages, the number of visits to these pages pales in comparison to the overall number of visitors to TMF.org. To draw more attention to the conservation pages, RBFF could move the conservation link to a more prominent place within TMF.org. Further, RBFF could update its conservation pages to include more dynamic information and further leverage stakeholder content to do so with little cost. Overall, there is an opportunity for RBFF to increase impact in this area by including conservation and safety messaging in its outreach and communications (pages 43-48).

2012 Recommendations

Based on the 2012 Assessment, the Assessment Team makes the following recommendations:

1. RBFF, SFBPC, FWS and AFWA should review the metrics for each consensus measure to ensure they remain up-to-date and relevant. As part of this process, the parties should focus on revising existing and/or developing new metrics to ensure, to the extent possible, they measure outcomes, sustained participation in angling and/or boating, and improved public understanding and conservation of aquatic resources over time.
2. The SFBPC, AFWA and FWS should work with RBFF to identify, to the extent possible, surrogates for certified license sales data and boat registration data that would allow RBFF to more quickly respond to changing market conditions and modify its recruitment and retention programs.
3. RBFF should engage in a genuinely collaborative and ongoing partnership with stakeholders about how to improve programs to increase and sustain participation in boating and angling in the United States. The collaboration process should include identifying specific stakeholders and their specific goals and needs. In addition, RBFF should proactively pursue opportunities to collaborate with states that want more customized services, including alternatives to the current lapsed angler program, and additional contractual services such as enhanced state agency marketing.
4. For TMF.org pages that include state information, there is an opportunity for RBFF to work with states to highlight those programs and resources that states may want to promote (e.g., banners with links to state program sites). When states do not have the capacity for state-specific information, RBFF should work closely with these states to ensure information posted on TMF.org is available and accurate. For example, make state-specific banner ad space available on TMF.org state pages to highlight state events and add links from RBFF "Where-to" pages to the most accurate state resources. If appropriate, a potential way to measure the success would be to track the number of referrals from the TMF.org to state-specific resources.
5. RBFF should establish specific programmatic goals and objectives and a process for rigorously evaluating and reporting on the effectiveness of programs designed to enhance public understanding and conservation of aquatic resources and/or sustain participation in boating and angling.
6. RBFF should work with its partners to better define and communicate its vision for youth recruitment into fishing and boating.
7. RBFF should work with SFBPC, FWS, and AFWA to develop a communications plan to proactively integrate conservation and safety messaging with fishing and boating messages and increase prominence of conservation messaging in RBFF communications.
8. The Assessment Team commends the quality of the images provided by RBFF and recommends that the image library be regularly updated (e.g., diverse ethnicity, urban backgrounds in shots, updated PFD styles).

The Assessment Team acknowledges this assessment is being finalized near the end of the next scheduled assessment period. Further, the Team recognizes that RBFF needs time to evaluate the recommendations and begin implementing them. The next assessment should recognize the compressed timeframe and evaluate RBFF's progress with that in mind.

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INTRODUCTION

In September 1998, a group of individuals dedicated to angling and boating formed the initial board of directors for a new nonprofit entity known as the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF or Foundation).

RBFF was formed specifically to recruit and retain recreational boating and fishing participants while encouraging a conservation ethic and respect for the aquatic resource. Its founding mission was "to implement an informed, consensus-based national outreach strategy that will increase participation in recreational angling and boating and thereby increase public awareness and appreciation of the need to protect, conserve, and restore this nation's aquatic natural resources." This ambitious mission was to be achieved through the pursuit of five objectives:

1. Create a top-of-mind recreational boating and fishing campaign to develop awareness, trial and continued participation;
2. Educate people how and where to boat and fish;
3. Target market segments and create messages that address each segment's specific needs;
4. Educate stakeholders on marketing, outreach and implementation of national strategies to targeted user groups; and
5. Make availability of, and access to, boating and fishing locations easy and simple.

Creation of RBFF was the direct result of efforts arising from the Sport Fishing and Boating Safety Act of 1998 (Act) which directed the Secretary of the Interior to "develop and implement, in cooperation and consultation with the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council (SFPBC or Council), a national plan for outreach and communications" directed at addressing the decline in recreational fishing and boating. The national plan was drafted with input from 11 national stakeholder meetings hosted by the SFBPC in which more than 400 individuals participated. The SFBPC drafted a Strategic Plan (Plan) for the National Outreach and Communication Program (Program), which Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt approved in February 1999.

Recognizing the need for a non-profit organization to spearhead implementation of the strategic plan, RBFF was formed. In March 1999, the FWS and RBFF signed a cooperative agreement to provide financial support to RBFF for professional marketing expertise needed to implement the National Outreach and Communications Program. In July 1999, an RBFF Chief Executive Officer was hired and began the process of hiring permanent staff and establishing an office in Alexandria, VA.

In September 1999, FWS, SFBPC and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (now the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies or AFWA) entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with RBFF establishing the framework for a "collaborative effort to implement the National Outreach and Communications Program." The MOU states the SFBPC "will monitor the implementation of the Program, will evaluate effectiveness of the Program by communicating regularly with its stakeholders and will regularly report findings to the Secretary of the Interior and the signatories of this agreement." The original MOU was in force, as amended, through 2009, when a new MOU was executed (Appendix A).

Funding for RBFF is provided through the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund. Between 2000 and 2012, the Foundation received $131,499,075 in federal appropriations from the Sport Fish Restoration account (Table 2).

Table 2: RBFF: Appropriation History

Fiscal Year*	Federal Appropriation
2000	$5,000,000
2001	$6,000,000
2002	$7,000,000
2003	$8,000,000
2004	$10,000,000
2005	$9,790,000
2006	$9,790,000
2007	$10,773,941
2008	$12,305,981
2009	$13,758,009
2010**	$13,716,383
2011**	$12,850,523
2012**	$12,514,238
Total	$131,499,075

*Funding by RBFF Fiscal Year (April 1-March 31); Federal Appropriations are previous Federal FY (October 1-September 30)–e.g., RBFF FY2013 funded with Federal FY2012.
**Years being reviewed in this assessment

Under the Sport Fishing and Boating Safety Act, the FWS serves as the liaison between the RBFF, SFBPC, AFWA and other stakeholders. The FWS is also responsible for administering the discretionary grant and provides a detailed accounting of the program and its activities to the Secretary of the Interior.

RBFF Mission and Governance

RBFF is incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and is operated as an educational organization in accordance with Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

The Foundation's mission is *"to increase participation in recreational angling and boating and thereby increase public awareness and appreciation of the need to protect, conserve and restore this nation's aquatic natural resources."*

A volunteer board of directors, serving three-year terms, governs RBFF. The board of directors consists of one non-voting representative and no fewer than four and no more than 24 directors appointed as follows:

A. Twenty-two of the directors and one non-voting representative shall be appointed by the organizations listed below and in accordance with the following:
   a. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (one non-voting representative)
      i. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service director, or designee
   b. Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (seven seats)
      i. Executive director of AFWA, or designee
      ii. State agency representative (six seats at-large, with due representation from angling and boating interests)
   c. National Marine Manufacturers Association (five seats)
      i. NMMA president, or designee
      ii. Boating industry representative (four seats)
   d. American Sport Fishing Association (five seats)
      i. ASA president, or designee
      ii. Sport Fishing industry representative (four seats)
   e. Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council (five seats)
      i. Grassroots conservation/advocacy organizations (two seats)
      ii. At-large (three seats)
B. The directors then in office may appoint up to two at-large directors.

Strategic Plans and Expenses by Program Area

RBFF has consistently worked to describe its programmatic objectives in a series of strategic plans. The organization's core focus is evident in its most recent FY2014-2016 Strategic Objectives, which focus on:

- Consumer Engagement: Increase participation in recreational boating and fishing and increase awareness of natural resource conservation among core audiences, growth segments, underserved communities and youth.
- State Engagement: Collaborate with state agencies to increase retention and win back lapsed anglers and boaters.
- Industry Engagement: Engage media outlets and endemic and non-endemic industry stakeholders to support RBFF programs through publications, promotions, partnerships and leveraging of RBFF assets.

Program expenses provide a snapshot of the organization's priorities and level of effort.

The 2009 Assessment organized functional expenses by general program area for FY2006-2009. After FY2010 (the first year of this assessment), RBFF presented its budget using a different set of strategic initiatives. For comparison with the 2006-2009 time period, the Assessment Team reorganized budgets for FY2011-2013 by program area so they are comparable to FY2010 and to provide insight about RBFF's priorities (Table 3). As is evident in total expenses, RBFF's budget has contracted due to sequestration under which a portion of the SFR trust funds has been withheld.

Table 3: RBFF's Budget FY2010-FY2013

Functional Expense/Fiscal Year	2010	2011	2012	2013
Angler's Legacy	$961,484	$202,446	$553,810	$25,497
Take Me Fishing	$7,845,159	$7,017,010	$8,054,631	$7,882,448
State Initiatives	$3,631,397	$3,111,150	$1,380,742	$1,323,997
Education	$1,167,458	$1,469,479	$1,054,000	$1,173,266
Boating	$1,322,445	$878,482*	$970,816*	$634,190*
Administration	$561,328	$550,077	$554,564	$584,729
Stakeholder Engagement	-	$493,786	$598,379	$492,878
General/ Overhead	$1,004,082	$914,500	$595,750	$629,600
Total Expenses	$16,493,353	$14,636,930	$13,762,692	$12,746,605
Non-Governmental Funding	$276,169	$314,969	$309,105	$201,142
*Note: Budget does not include personnel costs				

Note on Fiscal Years: The RBFF fiscal year runs from April 1–March 31. The federal fiscal year runs October 1–September 30. In general, RBFF reports to the FWS and SFBPC on its activities on the basis of its fiscal year. However, many references are also made to activities conducted in the calendar year (CY). This assessment attempts to be consistent and report activity either on the basis of RBFF's fiscal year (marked "FY") or the calendar year (simply the year).

Assessment Responsibility and Prior Assessments

The Sport Fishing and Boating Safety Act of 1998 requires the Secretary of the Interior undertake a review of the Plan "periodically, but not less frequently than once every 3 years." This responsibility was delegated to the SFBPC via the 1999 and 2009 memoranda of understanding, which state the SFBPC "will monitor the implementation of the Program, will evaluate effectiveness of the program by communicating regularly with its stakeholders and will regularly report findings to the Secretary and the signatories of this agreement."

In 2002, the SFBPC undertook the first review resulting in the report *Implementation of the Strategic Plan for the National Outreach and Communication Program, a progress report to the Secretary of the Interior*. The 2002 review provided a foundation for a comprehensive assessment conducted in 2006.

The *Programmatic Assessment of the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, FY2003-2006* (2006 Assessment) evaluated the efforts of RBFF relative to five questions that are tied directly to the Sport Fishing and Boating Safety Act and the National Outreach and Communications Program.

The 2006 Assessment presented a set of findings and recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior and the RBFF Board of Directors in early 2007. The assessment was intentionally designed to be replicated in subsequent years.

The 2009 Assessment examined RBFF activities from April 1, 2006, through March 31, 2009 (RBFF FY2007-2009). The 2009 Assessment Team also used FY2010 information as available and pertinent.

2012 Assessment Methodology

In August 2013 the FWS and the SFBPC hired DJ Case & Associates (DJ Case) to facilitate the 2012 Assessment. By the end of 2013, the SFBPC and FWS had approved a draft methodology and named the 2012 Assessment Team (members listed below).

Scott Kovarovics (SFBPC Vice Chairman) Executive Director Izaak Walton League of America Gaithersburg, MD	**Betty Huskins (SFBPC member)** Member, SFBPC and Southeast Tourism Policy Council Linville Falls, NC
Douglass Boyd (SFBPC member) National Board Member Coastal Conservation Association Boerne, TX	**Norman A. Schultz** President Emeritus Lake Erie Marine Trades Association St. Petersburg, FL
Gene Gilliland (SFBPC member) SFBPC member & B.A.S.S. LLC Director, B.A.S.S. Conservation Birmingham, AL	**Tom Champeau** Director of Freshwater Fisheries Management Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Tallahassee, FL
Fred Harris (SFBPC member) National Board Representative American Fisheries Society Fuquay Varina, NC	**Debbie Lininger** Marketing Coordinator Colorado Parks and Wildlife Denver, CO
Julie Tack Information Specialist Iowa Department of Natural Resources Des Moines, IA	**Kelly Kaylor** Director of Communications National Marine Manufacturers Association/ Discover Boating Chicago, IL
James Adams (SFBPC member) States Organization for Boating Access Richmond, VA	

SFBPC Liaison & Principal Investigators	
Doug Hobbs SFBPC Coordinator U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Arlington, VA	**Phil Seng** Vice President D.J. Case & Associates Mishawaka, Indiana
Brian Bohnsack SFBPC Coordinator/Recreational Boating and Fishing Liaison U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Arlington, VA	**Ed Rudberg** DJ Case and Associates Program Manager St. Paul, MN

The Assessment Team relied on a wide range of information and data to inform its analysis, including the following:

RBFF QUARTERLY REPORTS

Since 2010, RBFF has provided the SFBPC and the FWS with quarterly reports on consensus measure data and progress toward completion of recommendations in the 2009 Assessment. The FWS provided these progress reports to the Assessment Team for review.

DATA FROM RBFF STAFF

Representatives from the 2012 Assessment Team met with RBFF to obtain information and insights. Throughout the assessment process, RBFF provided additional information, including a wide range of reports, financial statements and databases prepared by its staff, consultants and others. RBFF reviewed the data presented in this assessment report for accuracy.

STAKEHOLDER QUESTIONNAIRES

To independently seek feedback from RBFF's state agency stakeholders, the Assessment Team administered an online questionnaire of state stakeholders, which targeted fishing and boating agency directors, administrators and communications staff. The Assessment Team focused on state stakeholders due to the importance of states as end users of many RBFF products. To administer the questionnaire, AFWA acted as a liaison to state agency directors and RBFF provided email contacts for other agency staff. The questionnaire was delivered in March 2014 and the Assessment Team received 78 complete questionnaires. The Assessment Team also reviewed results from RBFF's previous surveys of agency and industry stakeholders, and relied on industry and NGO representation on the Assessment Team for additional experience and expertise.

Assessment Methodology

The 2012 Assessment used the same basic evaluation framework developed for the 2006 and 2009 Assessments. The assessment evaluates the efforts of RBFF relative to five questions directly derived from the legislative mandate for the National Outreach and Communications Program:

1. **Have RBFF activities had a positive impact on recruitment and retention of boaters and anglers?**
2. **Have stakeholders found added value in the adoption of RBFF products?**
3. **Has RBFF increased the public's knowledge of boating and fishing techniques, and its awareness of boating and fishing opportunities?**
4. **How has RBFF enhanced the public's understanding of aquatic resources?**
5. **Have RBFF products and activities increased conservation and responsible use of aquatic resources by boaters and anglers?**

The 2012 Assessment Team used the same five questions as a framework and incorporated the new consensus measures that were agreed to by the FWS, AFWA, RBFF and SFBPC (Figure 1). The term *consensus measure* refers to the narrative objective and goal (e.g., increase participation in recreational angling and boating) while the term *metric* refers to specific activities or outputs that were identified (e.g., increase fishing license sales as reported by the FWS in 2015 by 5% over 2010 levels) to measure progress toward the broader objectives and goals.

PHOTO: TAKE ME FISHING

Figure 1. Structure and organization of consensus measures developed by RBFF, SFBPC, AFWA and FWS.

Objective 1: Increased participation in recreational angling and boating

- **GOAL 1:** Communicate with anglers, boaters and the general public to increase awareness of: angling and boating opportunities, boating and fishing techniques and the availability of and access to boating and fishing locations thereby reducing barriers to participation in angling and boating.
- **GOAL 2:** Collaborate with state agencies, industry and stakeholders in developing and implementing marketing and outreach strategies to recruit and retain boaters and anglers as described in the National Outreach & Communications Program.
- **GOAL 3:** Develop and implement strategies to ensure that RBFF has sufficient funding to achieve its objectives.

Objective 2: Increased public awareness of sound fishing, boating and conservation practices

- **GOAL 1:** Promote the conservation and responsible use of the nation's aquatic resources by anglers, boaters and the general public.
- **GOAL 2:** Promote safe fishing and boating practices.
- **GOAL 3:** RBFF's communications will improve the public's understanding of the contribution of recreational angling and boating to the conservation of aquatic resources.

PHOTO: MRSPIP/FLICKR

For each goal there are associated metrics that RBFF has agreed to track and annually report to the FWS (Appendix B). These metrics were implemented in RBFF's FY2012, which is why they are reported for FY2012 and FY2013 only in this report. The Assessment Team has organized each goal and its associated metric(s) under the five questions derived from the Program's legislative mandate as follows:

:: Question 1 ::

Have RBFF activities had a positive impact on recruitment and retention of boaters and anglers?

Objective 1: Goal 1: Increased participation in recreational angling and boating

Metrics:

1. Increase fishing license sales as reported by the FWS in 2015 by 5% over 2010 levels and in 2020 by 10% over 2010 levels.
2. Increase boat registrations as reported by the USCG in 2020 by 5% over 2010 levels.

:: Question 2 ::

Have Stakeholders found added value in the adoption of RBFF products?

Objective 1: Goal 2: Collaborate with state agencies, industry and stakeholders in developing and implementing marketing and outreach strategies to recruit and retain boaters and anglers as described in the National Outreach & Communications Program.

Metrics:

1. Engage all 50 states in an annual marketing improvement enhancement effort produced by RBFF designed to upgrade the marketing skills and tools of state agencies responsible for fishing and boating.
2. Demonstrate improving stakeholder satisfaction annually through a consistent satisfaction survey of stakeholder groups that is executed by an independent third party.

Objective 1: Goal 3: Develop and implement strategies to ensure that RBFF has sufficient funding to achieve its objectives.

Metrics:

1. Annually raise non-federal dollars and in-kind contributions (not including value added in purchased media buy) to equal 25% of federal dollars received.
2. The non-federal dollars raised as part of #1 must be at be at least $1.5 million in total for FY2011 to FY2013 combined.

:: Question 3 ::

Has RBFF increased the public's knowledge of boating and fishing techniques, and its awareness of boating and fishing opportunities?

Objective 1: Goal 1: Communicate with anglers, boaters and the general public to increase awareness of: angling and boating opportunities, boating and fishing techniques and the availability of and access to boating and fishing locations thereby reducing barriers to participation in angling and boating.

Metrics:

1. Increase unique visitors and return visitors to TMF.org digital assets (i.e., web, mobile, apps and future digital assets) by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 3,399,941 and 911,709, respectively.
2. Increase page views to the "where to" pages of the TMF.org digital assets by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 1,442,105 and "how to" pages of TMF.org digital assets by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 2,177,110.
3. Increase referrals from TMF.org digital assets (i.e., web, mobile, apps and future digital assets) to state fishing license purchase pages by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 853,313.
4. Increase referrals from TMF.org digital assets (i.e., web, mobile, apps and future digital assets) to state boat registration pages by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 62,861.
5. Increase referrals from TMF.org digital assets (i.e. web, mobile, apps and future digital assets) to DiscoverBoating.com by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 12,004.
6. RBFF will conduct an annual survey of people who have contact with Take Me Fishing/RBFF programs and products to determine if use of/contact with those programs or materials influenced the user's decision to boat or fish. RBFF will establish a baseline on the influence of Take Me Fishing in FY2012 and establish hard metrics for improvement over that baseline.

:: Question 4 ::

How has RBFF enhanced the public's understanding of aquatic resources?

While Objective 2: Goal 3 (RBFF's communications will improve the public's understanding of the contribution of recreational angling and boating to the conservation of aquatic resources) addresses this issue, there currently is no metric that specifically measures the public's understanding of aquatic resources.

:: Question 5 ::

Have RBFF products and activities increased conservation and responsible use of aquatic resources by boaters and anglers?

Objective 2: Increased public awareness of sound fishing, boating and conservation practices.

Goal 1: Promote the conservation and responsible use of the nation's aquatic resources by anglers, boaters and the general public.

Metrics:

1. Increase total visitors to TMF.org conservation pages by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 32,058.
2. Increase conservation and responsible use message delivery in earned PR articles and impressions of delivered messages by 10% annually over the FY2012 baseline.

Goal 2: Promote safe fishing and boating practices.

Metric:

1. Increase page views to the boating and fishing safety pages of TMF.org by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 25,939.

Goal 3: RBFF's communications will improve the public's understanding of the contribution of recreational angling and boating to the conservation of aquatic resources.

Metric:

1. Use of SFR logo on all RBFF printed and digital materials.

It is important to note that the bulk of this report is retrospective. That is, the Assessment Team primarily reviewed information and results from the assessment period (2009-2012). The Team does make recommendations on future direction based on past results, but acknowledges that, because of the truly dynamic nature of marketing and technology, RBFF has in the past and continues to react quickly to changes in the market. These quick reactions and changes do at times outpace the more methodical approach inherent in three-year reviews.

PHOTO: STEVE SAWYER/FLICKR

Before addressing the 2012 findings and recommendations, this report reviews the progress RBFF has made implementing the 2009 recommendations. This review informs some of the recommendations for the future.

Review of Progress on 2009 Recommendations

2009 Recommendation 1: RBFF, AFWA, FWS and SFBPC should work together to identify a mutually agreed-upon set of performance measures by the end of 2010. These measures should form the basis of RBFF annual reporting to the FWS and SFBPC, and should be revisited by the three parties on a regular basis.

The SFBPC established a team that included representatives from the SFBPC, the RBFF Board and staff, the FWS and AFWA. This team constructed narrative objectives and goals (defined in this report as "consensus measures") and metrics (defined in this report as specific activities that document progress toward achieving the objectives and goals) that would be used to assess RBFF's performance. RBFF has been collecting and reporting these measures since 2010. Therefore, the first portion of 2009 Recommendation 1 is complete.

While an initial set of consensus measures and metrics is complete, the recommendation also directs RBFF, FWS, AFWA and SFBPC to revisit them on a regular basis. Most of the metrics are output-based (e.g., number of visitors to a website) rather than outcome-based (e.g., increased participation in fishing and boating). Therefore, it is difficult to use these metrics to directly assess whether or not RBFF is helping to sustain participation over time. At a minimum, the measures are a surrogate or indicator of the ultimate goals the community seeks, but most are not direct measures of those goals. Therefore, the Assessment Team recommends that the metrics be revisited in 2015 to assess their efficacy. As part of this process, the Team further recommends that all metrics (current and any new ones) be outcome-based, to the extent possible, to measure the impact RBFF is making on sustained participation in boating and fishing and achieving the other goals of the Sport Fishing and Boating Safety Act.

SAMPLE MAILING TO LAPSED ANGLERS IN KENTUCKY

2009 Recommendation 2: Expand efforts and budget to work collaboratively with state natural resource agencies in the design and implementation of marketing programs to increase boating participation and boat registrations.

The first portion of this recommendation calls for increased budget for boating. Between FY2010 and FY2013, RBFF achieved this recommendation, as the percentage of its total budget allocated specifically to boating increased. During the same period however, RBFF's actual reported budget for boating marketing programs decreased. There were three major factors that explain how the percentage increased while dollars allocated to specific boating-related accounts declined. First, in FY2010, the boating budget included personnel costs that were not included in FY2011-FY2013 due to changes in accounting methodology. Therefore the FY2010 budget appears inflated by taking into account overhead/staff costs whereas the subsequent years' budgets maintain the availability of the staff, but do not account for this time in the budgets. Second, FY2013 boating budget figures do not include an additional $400,000 budgeted for TMF campaign media support specifically for boating. Finally, RBFF's overall budget decreased between FY2010 and FY2013. When all of these factors are considered, the *percentage* of RBFF's total budget allocated specifically to boating increased.

The second portion of the recommendation is about increased effort for boating (registrations and participation). Despite working with a reduced overall budget, RBFF has greatly expanded its efforts with the Boat Registration Marketing Program (lapsed boater), as evidenced by the growth of the pilot program from one state in 2008 to 19 states in 2013. In addition, the program is showing success in terms of lift/ROI, and in general enjoys high stakeholder satisfaction.

PHOTO: TAMMY MCGARY/FLICKR

In addition to the lapsed boater program, RBFF promotes boating through imagery in its paid advertisements, imagery and information on TMF.org, use of boating terms in its search engine marketing and co-production of publications such as *The Beginner's Guide to Boating* with the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA).

The Assessment Team applauds RBFF for all its good work to achieve the increase boat registration portion of this recommendation. However, there still is the increase boating participation portion of the recommendation, and current metrics do not effectively measure progress toward that outcome. NMMA's annual Statistical Abstract is one possible outcome-based metric that could be used.

At the time this assessment began, RBFF did not have a boater retention program. Therefore, RBFF had an opportunity to grow its marketing efforts beyond boater registration and focus specifically on recruitment and retention, which are directly related to boating participation. RBFF recognized this opportunity and its 2014-2016 Strategic Plan includes a strategy specific to boating retention: Strategy 2.2 "Develop retention program based on marketing programs implemented at state level."

The Assessment Team recommends that SFBPC, FWS and boating stakeholders (such as the States Organization for Boating Access, NMMA, Discover Boating and the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators) work with RBFF to develop one or more metric(s) that measure RBFF's impact on boating participation over time.

2009 Recommendation 3: Publish a biennial set of learnings based on project results and state workshops that can be shared with the full community of RBFF stakeholders.

To coordinate with its strategic priorities, RBFF combined the "state learnings" report called for in this recommendation with the "state of the states" report (called for in 2009 Recommendation #5) into the *State of State Partnerships Report*. In RBFF's view, the combined report could accomplish overall reporting more effectively by focusing on state agency participation in RBFF programs and utilization of services, as well as on lessons learned from each activity. RBFF informed stakeholders of this change with the following introductory paragraph in the report:

> *In 2011-12, as a result of input from state agencies and program learnings, RBFF began to shift its focus from product development to state-specific programs, marketing support and expertise. As a result, this report, unlike the previous*

biennial reports, focuses less on state agencies' usage of products and more on their participation in RBFF programs and utilization of services, as well as on lessons learned from each activity.

RBFF included some lessons learned in parts of the report. The report was made available on RBFF's website under "Research & Evaluations." In addition, the report was disseminated by RBFF via its *NewsWaves* email newsletter. Learnings are also disseminated via RBFF's yearly marketing workshop and quarterly webinars, when appropriate.

However, the appropriate people within some states are not getting the information. RBFF is clearly seen as the clearinghouse for lessons learned by state agencies, and many agencies are hungry for this information. The Assessment Team recommends that RBFF expand its efforts to disseminate "learnings" through increased collaboration with state (and other) stakeholders. In addition, states need to do a better job of disseminating RBFF's "learnings" internally.

2009 Recommendation 4: Develop databases and processes that allow RBFF to assess its performance relative to specific stakeholder interests (fishing, boating, education, conservation, etc.). Performance to be measured and reported on an ongoing basis to stakeholders.

RBFF assessed its database needs, and based on that assessment, implemented Salesforce.com to manage stakeholder and customer communications. In addition, RBFF has employed Data.com for database maintenance. RBFF uses the database to contact its stakeholders for the annual Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey.

2009 Recommendation 5: Work with each state to assess RBFF's ongoing partnership and determine how RBFF can best support the states' efforts to promote fishing and boating. RBFF to provide a "State of the States" report to SFBPC biennially.

With marketing expertise, dedicated staff and a national perspective on the wide range of factors influencing participation in boating and angling, RBFF is a unique resource for states. As this recommendation indicates, the relationship between RBFF and states is an "ongoing partnership." As time goes by, states' needs evolve and the partnership–the working relationship between RBFF, states and other stakeholders–must evolve as well. Feedback from state representatives on the Assessment Team and the Team's stakeholder questionnaire indicate that states believe the relationship must evolve in two fundamental ways: 1) it must embrace more collaborative, two-way communication; and 2) it should include more customized service and consultation for individual states based on their specific needs. For example, RBFF could give a limited number of state marketing grants (offered in lieu of the "prepackaged" marketing assistance that is provided to most states) to selected states that have need of highly customized approaches. Selected states would still work with RBFF on the specifics of their campaigns, to benefit from RBFF's experience and expertise.

On June 29, 2013, RBFF published the "State of State Partnerships Report 2011-2013." The report was made available on RBFF's website and is easily accessible under

"Research & Evaluations." In addition, the report was disseminated by RBFF via *NewsWaves* email newsletter. This information, including results of mail marketing efforts and results of research and pilot programs, is helpful, and many states are hungry for it. However, some states are looking for an opportunity to increase collaboration with RBFF–to customize marketing efforts in their states. The Assessment Team recognizes it is challenging for RBFF to work with such a diverse group of stakeholders. Some stakeholders want detailed collaboration and others want a "plug-and-play" program or nothing at all. But the essence of this 2009 recommendation was echoed again in the results of the Assessment Team's 2014 stakeholder questionnaire. There are state stakeholders that are eager to work with RBFF to customize the current program and take it to new heights. RBFF does solicit feedback via its yearly state stakeholder survey and its annual marketing workshops, but these venues often only provide one-way communication. Therefore, there is a real need for multidirectional communication/collaboration with states to customize RBFF's tools.

2009 Recommendation 6: Formally track and report to SFBPC on RBFF efforts to raise a 25 percent or greater non-federal match to the SFR funds received that year.

RBFF is formally tracking non-federal match dollars and in-kind contributions. Additionally, one of the metrics adopted to measure progress toward this goal requires RBFF to raise $1.5 million in cash for the three-year period ending March 31, 2013. However, because RBFF faced significant challenges securing cash match, the SFBPC and RBFF agreed to put this requirement on hold pending the outcomes of this assessment. Further discussion of this specific metric can be found later in the assessment (pages 28-29).

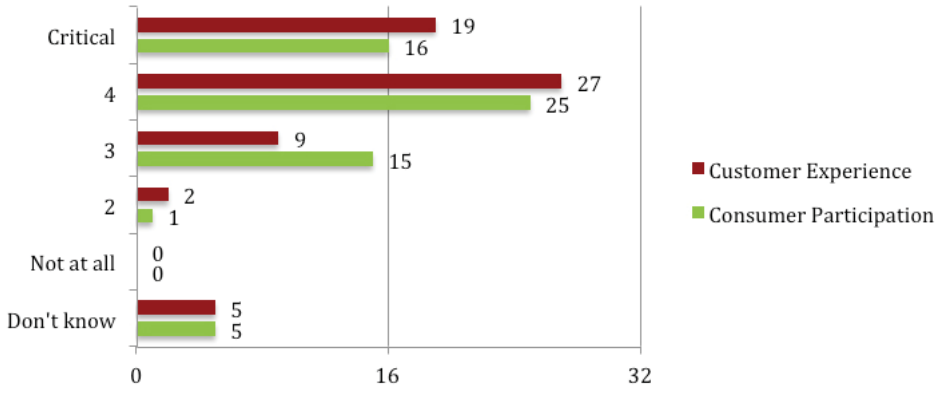
2009 Recommendation 7: Develop a Future Research Agenda in collaboration with stakeholders. Report on the process of addressing this agenda annually to SFBPC and FWS.

One of the most important services RBFF provides is conducting research that individual states or other stakeholders cannot conduct on their own. As this recommendation indicates, it is important to develop that agenda in collaboration with various stakeholders. RBFF reported that the research agenda for 2014-16 was developed during a strategic planning session held by the RBFF Board of Directors in June 2012. Although states are represented on the RBFF Board, it does not appear that RBFF engaged a wide array of state agency or other stakeholders in developing the research agenda. However, the responsibility of collaboration does not fall solely upon RBFF as an organization. Representatives from states and other stakeholders on RBFF's Board have a responsibility to be active conduits between the stakeholders they represent and RBFF.

Although RBFF did not directly engage state and other stakeholders in developing its current research agenda, respondents to the Assessment Team's state stakeholder questionnaire identified RBFF's focus on the customer experience and consumer participation as very important or critical (Graph 1). When asked to identify their future research priorities, respondents identified research on effective marketing to different segments of the population and research on how different licensing options can affect sales, which is a nice parallel to RBFF's research agenda.

However, to address needs expressed in the stakeholder questionnaire, the Assessment Team recommends that RBFF make a more formal effort to collaborate with state partners when setting future research agendas.

Graph 1: Importance of RBFF Current Research Agenda (N=62)

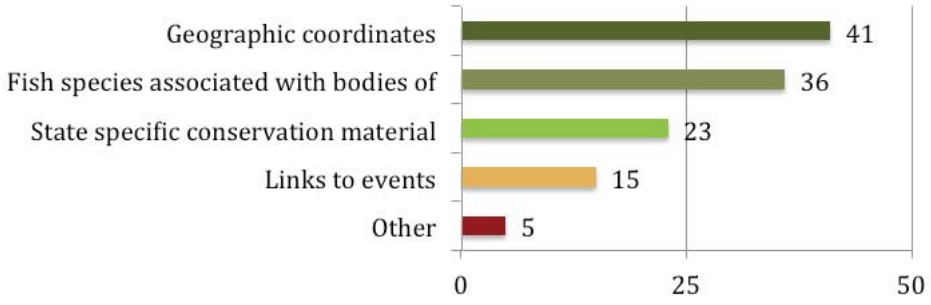


Source: Assessment Team State Stakeholder Questionnaire

2009 Recommendation 8: Work cooperatively with states to ensure TakeMeFishing.org pages are accurate and angler/boater-ready. Utilize state-produced information as a priority to all other information. Where such information exists, TMF.org should link to the information. Where such information is lacking, RBFF should help create it.

RBFF reported to the SFBPC that this action was complete, citing its ongoing efforts and relationships with states as evidence. RBFF collected bodies of water and facility data and is currently focusing on collecting fish species data. RBFF's efforts are reflected in the number of state questionnaire respondents who supplied content to RBFF for its website and digital assets. Nearly two-thirds of respondents to the Assessment Team questionnaire provided geographic coordinates and over half reported providing content regarding fish species (Graph 2). Fewer respondents provided additional state-specific conservation information or links to events.

Graph 2: Content Supplied to RBFF (N=62)



Source: Assessment Team State Stakeholder Questionnaire

When asked about the barriers to supplying content to RBFF, the vast majority of respondents identified a lack of time to do so. One respondent stated,

> *"We have supplied detailed information twice, but this third system is too complex…Our state has many streams, but few are fishable…We would have to look at each individually, and no one has the expertise and time."*

Other respondents identified the need to focus their resources upon their own state-specific mapping tools and websites, rather than providing those to RBFF.

During this assessment, members of the SFBPC and the Assessment Team expressed concerns regarding the accuracy of RBFF's mapping tool. States have experienced difficulty in changing information, have been limited by what can be uploaded and have difficulty in controlling the quality of crowd-sourced information. Additionally, many states have become increasingly advanced with their own mapping tools that can be more detailed and/or accurate than the RBFF site. This increases the risk of state and RBFF efforts being duplicative or possibly even conflicting as resources change over time. The Assessment Team reiterates the fundamental recommendation from 2009: RBFF should focus on linking to existing state-specific tools, where such tools exist, and only try to build mapping resources where no other options exist. With improvements in technology, states may have better information available on state mapping websites than on TMF.org. Adding links to state websites on TMF.org's state-specific "Where-to fish" pages would refer visitors to the most accurate information and facilitate use of state sites.

2009 Recommendation 9: Develop partnerships with appropriate stakeholders to produce and maintain "how-to" sections of TakeMeFishing.org, and enhance the conservation and stewardship pages.

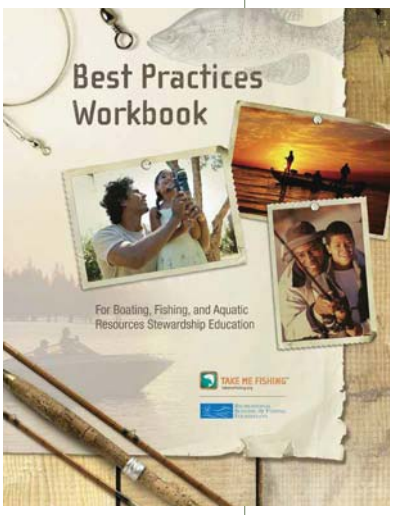
RBFF has collaborated with many state agency stakeholders to build content on TMF.org. In addition to collaborating with states, RBFF has partnered with other organizations to update TMF.org information. For example, RBFF and the International Game Fish Association collaborated to correct and expand the fish species data in the Species Explorer tool and worked with BoaterExam.com on boater safety content. Similarly, RBFF has further updated "how-to" information, aligned waterbodies with U.S. Geological Survey geological standards and migrated content to a new content management system with enhanced usability. However, as with 2009 Recommendation 8, there continues to be an opportunity to further leverage content developed by others to avoid duplicative efforts. Further collaboration with industry (particularly for how-to information) and state partners can help identify specific ways and means to minimize duplication and maximize promotion of state-specific resources that can help anglers and boaters.

SAMPLE OF RBFF NATIONAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN MATERIALS TO PROMOTE "TAKE ME FISHING"

2009 Recommendation 10: Undertake an evaluation of the National Youth Fishing and Boating Initiative utilizing the Guide to Program Evaluation as a model for determining short- and long-term impact of such programs. Distribute results to partners and initiate appropriate changes to the grants program.

RBFF's 2012 fiscal year was the first grant cycle after publication of the 2009 Assessment Report. The RFPs for the FY2012 and FY2013 grant years included the following requirement: "Program evaluation–Please detail plans for effective program evaluation based on the *Best Practices Workbook* & companion *Guide to Program Evaluation* by RBFF and submit sample evaluation instrument." Each grantee included program evaluation objectives in its proposal. The evaluation criteria were generally summative, targeting evaluation of outputs such as numbers of participants, costs and minority participation percentages. The program evaluation requirement was included in the grant agreements by reference to and inclusion of the proposal document as part of the grantee's obligations under the grant. At the end of the FY2012 grant year, RBFF staff reviewed final reports. At the end of the FY2013 grant year, final grantee reports were reviewed by the RBFF Education Task Force (ETF), which was led by Dr. Kevin Hunt, Mississippi State University.

At the January 8, 2013, RBFF Board meeting, Dr. Hunt presented the ETF update. The ETF had reviewed the *Best Practices Guide to Program Evaluation* and its applicability to the types of programs that were typically selected for funding under RBFF's National Youth Fishing & Boating Initiative. The ETF found there was a significant disconnect between the measurements of outputs (e.g., number of program participants) vs. the measurement of outcomes (e.g., development of future anglers, boaters and/or license buyers). The ETF felt that in order to truly measure outcomes, a sophisticated and expensive, long-term study would be required. There was discussion among the board as to whether such a study was practicable given youth privacy issues, budget constraints and other factors. It was decided that the entire area of education programs and youth initiatives would be re-visited in depth at the next RBFF Board meeting in June 2013.



In preparation for the June 2013 board meeting, board members were provided with a document summarizing the ETF's review of the FY2013 quarterly reports from RBFF's youth education grantees. The document also expressed some of the ETF's concerns regarding its ability to assess long-term outcomes of the grant programs. The board then engaged in a facilitated discussion regarding RBFF's youth engagement programs and their related costs in light of recent declines in the level of SFR funding available to RBFF. Following this discussion, the board voted to discontinue all youth programs except the four education grants that were then entering Year Two of a planned three-year grant cycle. The board instructed RBFF staff to reevaluate the education grants based on FY2013 final reports. The FY2013 final reports, representing the first year of the projected three-year funding term, were reviewed and staff notified the full board on August 13, 2013, that staff intended to inform the grantees of the following steps:

1) RBFF would continue funding Year Two of the grants; however, such funding would be reduced by 5% from the amount originally projected. This reduction corresponded to the 5% reduction in RBFF's FY2014 federal funding due to sequestration. Grantees would still be expected to provide a 25% match for Year Two.

2) RBFF would not fund Year Three as previously anticipated. Funding for the grants would be eliminated due to an estimated $2 million reduction in RBFF's funding for FY2015.

Thus, at the board's recommendation, RBFF did evaluate and subsequently terminate the National Youth Fishing and Boating Initiative. Going forward, the Assessment Team recommends RBFF work with its partners to better define and communicate its vision for youth recruitment to fishing and boating. (See pages 39-43 for more information).

2009 Recommendation 11: Develop a Conservation Roundtable consisting of state and federal agencies and representatives from the Aquatic Resources Education Association to advise on content and messaging for RBFF's websites and outreach.

RBFF formed a Conservation Roundtable as part of a gap analysis of its conservation content. Based on stakeholder feedback, RBFF re-launched its conservation pages on TMF.org. RBFF continues to promote its conservation messaging through public service advertising. Additionally, RBFF published 49 state conservation stories on TMF.org and now can use Silverpop, a marketing automation and email marketing software, to further communicate with stakeholders on conservation messages. However, the Assessment Team recommends that RBFF continue to look for more ways to incorporate conservation messaging into its marketing and outreach. As a specific example, the Team recommends that RBFF further emphasize its conservation content by adding a conservation link to the primary tabs on TMF.org along with "fishing," "boating," "state info" and "community."

2012 ASSESSMENT RESULTS

:: Question 1 ::

Have RBFF activities had a positive impact on recruitment and retention of boaters and anglers?

BACKGROUND

Recreational fishing and boating remain two of America's most popular outdoor pastimes. An estimated 47 million anglers went fishing in 2012, generating billions of dollars in retail sales across the country.[1] Fishing is considered a "gateway" activity leading to involvement in other outdoor activities such as boating. More than 75 million adults participated in recreational boating in 2012, owning some 17 million boats.[2]

1 Special Report on Fishing and Boating, RBFF and the Outdoor Foundation, (2013).

2 Recreational Boating Statistical Abstract, National Marine Manufacturers Association (2013).

ASSESSMENT

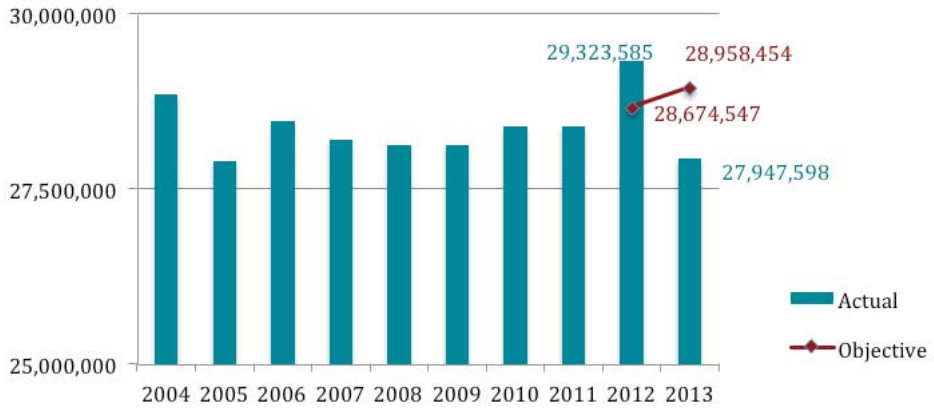
The 2009 Assessment recommended that improved metrics be developed for measuring RBFF's impact on boating and angler participation, and RBFF has adopted metrics to track fishing license sales and boat registrations.

> **METRIC:** Increase fishing license sales as reported by the FWS in 2015 by 5% over 2010 levels and in 2020 by 10% over 2010 levels.

It is important to note that while the metrics call for increases over base levels of a defined year, RBFF reports its objectives as increases over the previous year's actual.

According to FWS data, license sales totaled 28,674,547 in calendar year 2012, exceeding RBFF's goal. However, in 2013, license sales data dropped below 2012 levels (Graph 3). License sales will need to significantly increase to reach the consensus measure metric of a 5% increase over 2010 levels by 2015. Although this metric is outcome-based, there are myriad factors that influence yearly fishing license sales, and the Assessment Team recognizes that it is not appropriate to evaluate RBFF's effectiveness based on this metric alone.

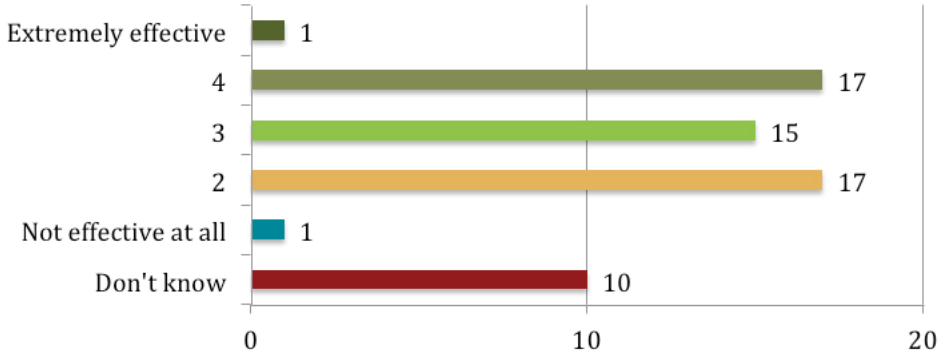
Graph 3: Yearly Fishing License Sales



Source: FWS data and data provided by RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

Perhaps more illuminating are stakeholder perceptions of the effectiveness of RBFF's program suite in increasing fishing license sales (Graph 4). Respondents to the Assessment Team's stakeholder questionnaire were equally split on their perception of RBFF's effectiveness. Eighteen respondents indicated RBFF's programs are highly effective, while the same number considered them largely ineffective (with 10 additional participants saying they did not know how effective RBFF's programs are).

Graph 4: RBFF's Overall Programs Increase License Sales (N=61)



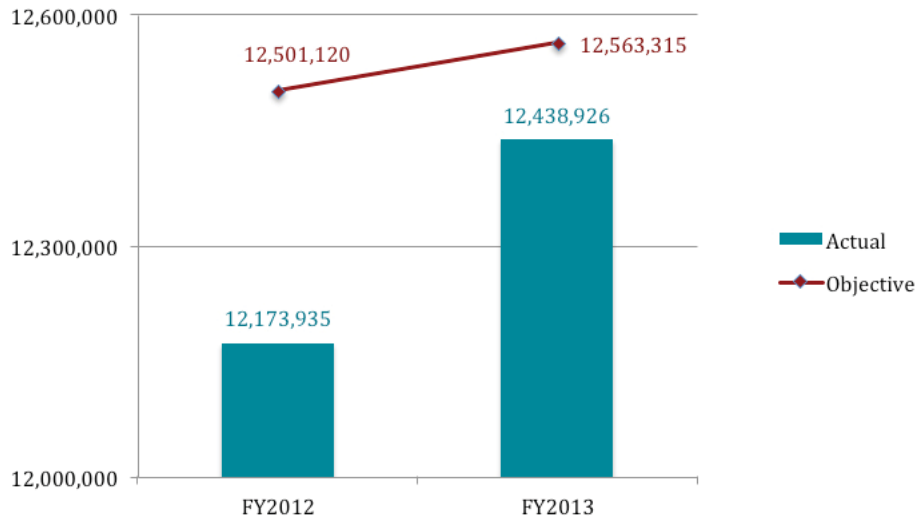
Source: 2014 Assessment Team State Stakeholder Questionnaire

Results of RBFF's State Agency Feedback Study also showed mixed perceptions of RBFF's effectiveness in increasing participation in recreational fishing. In this survey, 54% of respondents answered that RBFF is "very" or "extremely" effective at increasing participation in recreational fishing; while nearly 25% of respondents answered they "don't know."[3]

> **METRIC:** Increase boat registrations as reported by the U.S. Coast Guard in 2020 by 5% over 2010 levels.

In 2012 and 2013, actual boat registrations did not meet RBFF objectives (Graph 5) Similar to the metric for increasing fishing license sales, there are many variables beyond RBFF's control or influence that impact the number of boats that are registered in a year.

Graph 5: Yearly Boat Registrations

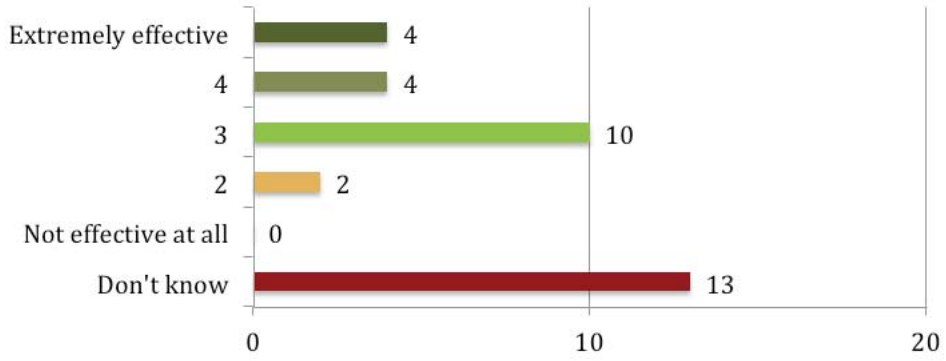


Source: RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

3 AMG Research (2014). Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation State Agency Feedback Study.

As compared to RBFF's overall impacts upon fishing license sales, a greater proportion of respondents to the Assessment Team's stakeholder questionnaire identified RBFF's programs as somewhat to extremely effective in increasing boater registrations (Graph 6). However, a plurality of respondents indicated they "don't know." RBFF's state stakeholder survey also had a lot of uncertain respondents (110 answering "don't know" out of a total of 285 responses). In many states, boat registrations are handled in a different agency than fishing licenses, which could explain the large number of "don't know" responses. It also could be reflective of the complex factors influencing boaters' decisions to register their boats, and the high degree of uncertainty about the effect that any one program or entity might have on those decisions.

Graph 6: RBFF's Overall Programs Increase Boat Registrations (N=33)



Source: 2014 Assessment Team State Stakeholder Questionnaire

Findings and Observations

Overall, it is challenging to measure the direct impact RBFF is having on the recruitment and retention of boaters and anglers. There are many complex factors influencing boating and fishing participation. This complexity is reflected in state stakeholder perceptions of RBFF's impact upon fishing license sales and boat registrations. Stakeholders are split regarding RBFF's effectiveness in increasing boat registrations, fishing license sales and participation in boating and fishing. They indicate RBFF's effectiveness is greater for boating registration than for fishing license sales—a finding that is borne out by actual lift or return on investment (ROI) of the programs. Lift refers to the differences in purchasing rates of those that received the marketing piece and those that have not. On the other hand, ROI takes into account lift along with the cost of implementing the mailing program.

Although RBFF cannot control the ultimate outcome (i.e., personal decisions to boat or fish), the Foundation was specifically established to influence that outcome, and a significant proportion of stakeholders are uncertain if RBFF is positively impacting those decisions. This is an important caution sign for RBFF, and it once again

reaffirms one of the fundamental conclusions of this assessment: RBFF must engage in more collaboration and participatory dialogue with its stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of current programs and how those programs could be improved for the future.

In addition to fishing and boating participation being complex behaviors that are affected by many variables, RBFF also has the challenge of not having real-time license sales data to guide its efforts and allow mid-course corrections. This hinders RBFF's ability to modify its programs in "real time" to increase participation and sales.

Recommendations to Increase Reach and Impact

1. RBFF, SFBPC, FWS and AFWA should review the metrics for each consensus measure to ensure they remain up-to-date and relevant. As part of this process, the parties should focus on revising existing and/or developing new metrics to ensure, to the extent possible, they measure outcomes, sustained participation in angling and/or boating, and improved public understanding and conservation of aquatic resources over time.
2. The SFBPC, AFWA and FWS should work with RBFF to identify, to the extent possible, surrogates for certified license sales data and boat registration data that would allow RBFF to more quickly respond to changing market conditions and modify its recruitment and retention programs.

:: Question 2 ::

Have stakeholders found added value in the adoption of RBFF products?

BACKGROUND

To conduct its recreational boating and fishing mission, RBFF works with, and provides support to, a large number of stakeholders from state and federal natural resource agencies, boating and fishing industries and non-governmental organizations and associations with conservation, fishing and/or boating missions. Members of RBFF's Board of Directors represent these primary stakeholder groups, and RBFF involves stakeholders, both formally and informally, in the design and implementation of its programs.

PHOTO: LAVONDA WALTON/FWS

RBFF stakeholder activities are directed at five principal audiences: 1) state agencies, 2) fishing industry, 3) boating industry, 4) federal agencies and 5) SFBPC. Each of these stakeholder groups has a dedicated interest that aligns with the "recruitment, retention and stewardship" mission of the Foundation.

RBFF focuses on supporting stakeholder efforts to increase participation in recreational boating and angling and stewardship of the nation's aquatic natural resources. Therefore, the success of RBFF must be defined, in part, by the degree to which Foundation stakeholders adopt, utilize and find value in its services and products.

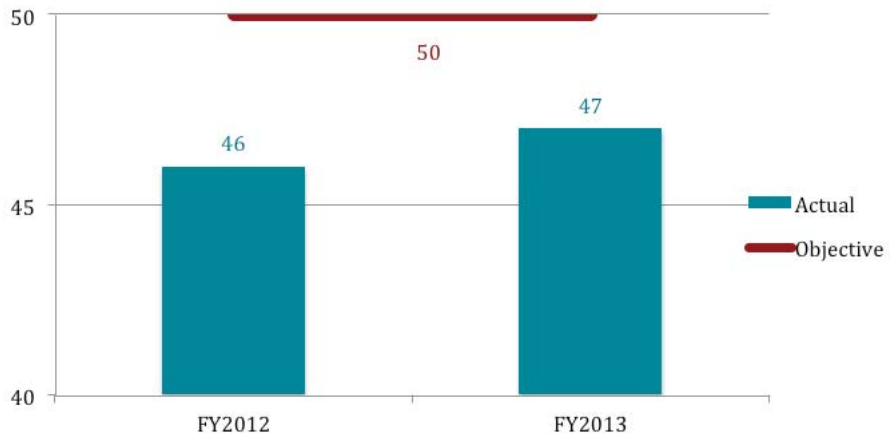
ASSESSMENT

To assess whether stakeholders have found value in RBFF's products, the Assessment Team leaned heavily upon the metrics tied to consensus measures, the Team's stakeholder questionnaire and RBFF's industry and state stakeholder studies.

> **METRIC:** Engage all 50 states in an annual marketing improvement enhancement effort (state marketing workshop) produced by RBFF designed to upgrade the marketing skills and tools of state agencies responsible for fishing and boating.

The Assessment Team commends RBFF for edging closer and closer to 100% participation from states in its state marketing workshop (Graph 7).

Graph 7: Number of States Engaged in Annual Marketing Improvement Enhancement Effort



Source: RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

State Fishing License Marketing Program

The ultimate goal of the State Fishing License Marketing Program (a direct mail marketing program to lapsed anglers) is to increase fishing license sales among lapsed anglers. However, the results of the mailing program have been mixed. Based on state reports from RBFF, only six out of the 40 participating states had positive net revenues based upon lift.[4] These results are reflected in stakeholder perceptions of the effectiveness of the lapsed angler program to increase fishing license sales (Graph 8). Only 25% of respondents to the Assessment Team's questionnaire identify the mailing program as having a high degree of effectiveness, while 38% indicate it has limited effectiveness or is not effective at all. Another 30% give the program a neutral rating.

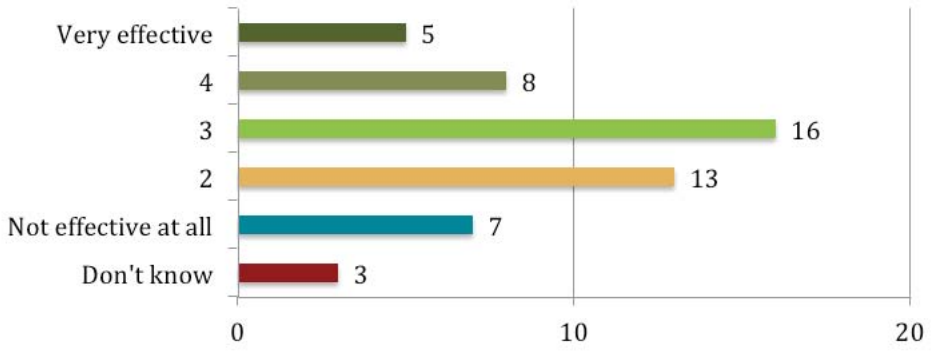
4 RBFF 2013 Fishing License Marketing Program (FY2014) State Results Summary.

In order to service so many states at one time, RBFF has standardized and streamlined programs for broad delivery, and there is very little time or latitude for customization to meet state-specific needs. While states benefit from the standardized process, current and former state agency staff on the Assessment Team and many respondents to the Assessment Team's questionnaire expressed concerns over the lack of customization to meet evolving state needs. One respondent to the Team's questionnaire explained,

> *"We continue to support RBFF's Direct Mail marketing but we believe this effort yields very limited results. A new approach needs to be developed and tested. Marketing efforts should treat states as differently as possible, the one-size-fits-all approach is not working."*

With small or negative ROI and relatively low stakeholder satisfaction, the Assessment Team recommends that RBFF actively engage state agency stakeholders to explore opportunities to provide more tailored support to states seeking that support and expertise to reengage lapsed anglers.

Graph 8: Effectiveness of State Fishing License Marketing Program to Increase License Sales (N=52)



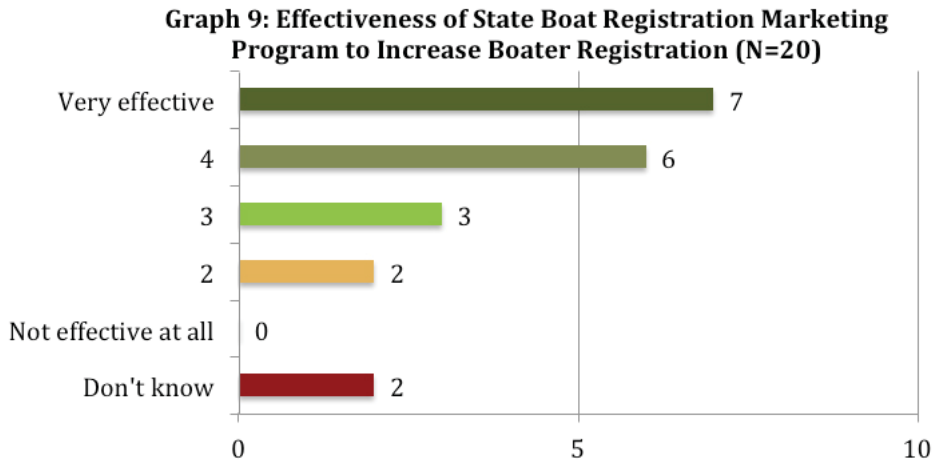
Source: 2014 Assessment Team State Stakeholder Questionnaire

Boat Registration Marketing Program

State agency stakeholders believe the Boat Registration Marketing Program (a direct mail marketing program to lapsed boaters) is more effective compared to the lapsed angler program. The majority of respondents to the Assessment Team's questionnaire working for agencies that administer boating registration find the lapsed boater program to be effective at increasing boater registrations (Graph 9). RBFF's state stakeholder survey also shows higher satisfaction with the lapsed boater program, with 73% of respondents reporting being either extremely or very satisfied.[5] High stakeholder satisfaction is likely tied to results, as nearly all (17 of the 19) states that participated had positive net revenue based upon lift.[6]

5 AMG Research (2014). Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation State Agency Feedback Study

6 RBFF 2013 Boat Registration Marketing Program (FY2014) State Results Summary



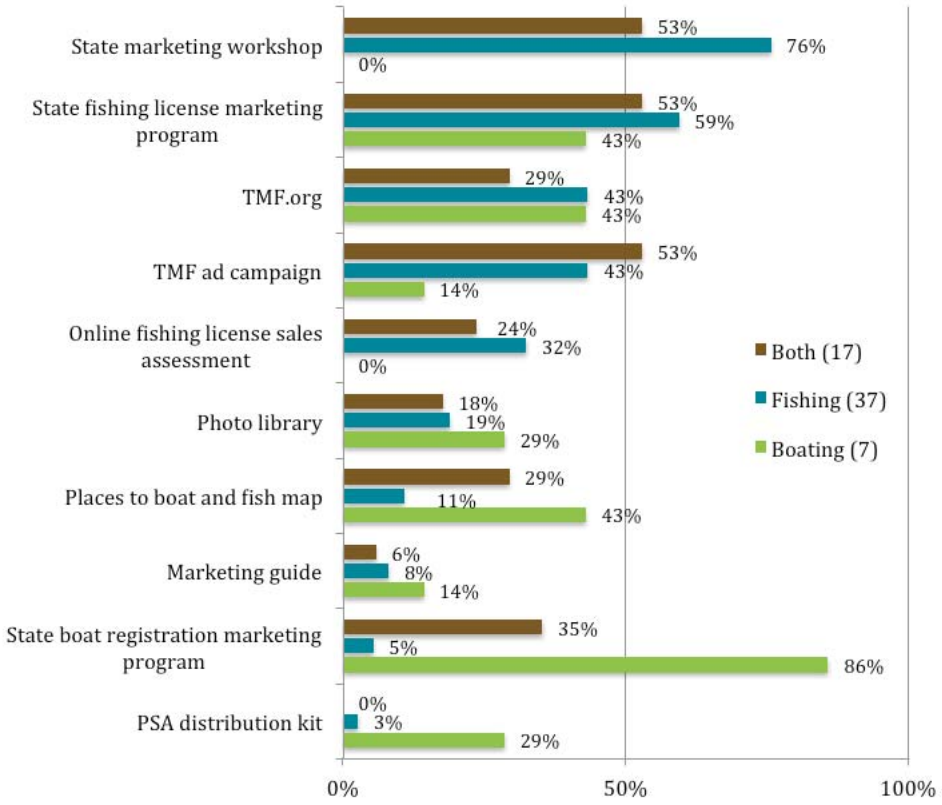
Source: 2014 Assessment Team State Stakeholder Questionnaire

Stakeholder Opinions on Most Important RBFF Program

In addition to specifically evaluating the lapsed angler and boater programs, the Assessment Team questionnaire asked state agency stakeholders to identify which RBFF program is most important. As might be expected, respondents varied greatly in their responses (Graph 10). The type of agency respondents worked for (boating, fishing or both) highly impacted respondents' answers. For fishing licensing agencies and agencies that manage fishing and boating, respondents identified their most important programs as the state marketing workshops, the lapsed angler mailing and TMF.org. Fishing agency respondents overwhelmingly identified state marketing workshops as the most important program. Boating agency respondents largely identified the lapsed boater mailing as the most important RBFF program.

No respondents from boating-only agencies selected the state marketing workshops as one of the most important programs. This may be the case because the workshops have not traditionally focused on boating issues. RBFF has looked at ways to expand the state marketing workshop to include boating agency staff. Considering budget resources, as well as boat registrations being run by Departments of Motor Vehicles (DMVs) in many states, RBFF has not additionally targeted the separate boating agencies for attendance. As RBFF continues to grow the program, it plans to consider ways to include boating agency staff, not only in the state marketing workshop, but also more broadly in implementing marketing and customer engagement strategies. The Assessment Team recognizes that engaging DMVs and other agencies will be much more difficult than engaging fish and wildlife agencies, but applauds and encourages this approach.

Graph 10: Most Important RBFF Programs



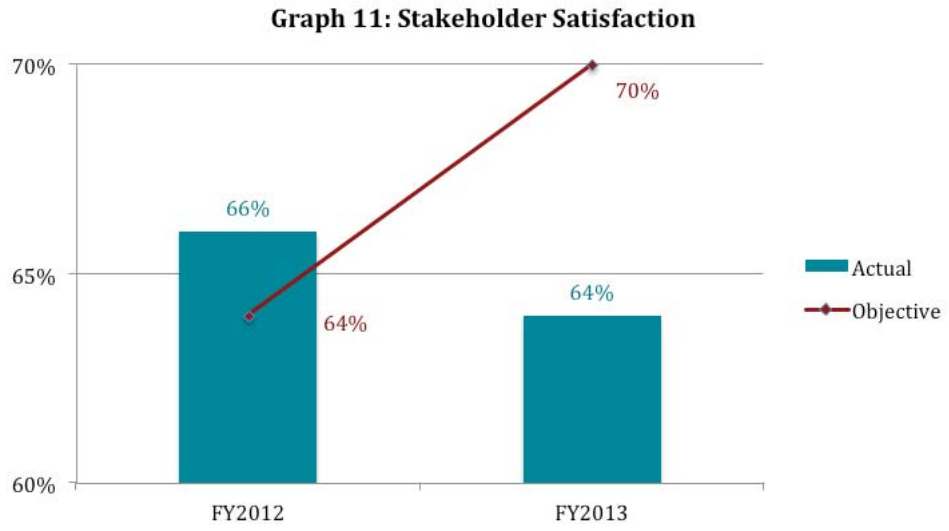
Source: 2014 Assessment Team State Stakeholder Questionnaire

METRIC: Demonstrate improving stakeholder satisfaction annually through a consistent satisfaction survey of stakeholder groups that is executed by an independent third party.

Between FY2012 and FY2013, stakeholder satisfaction with RBFF decreased slightly (Graph 11). Although the reported change in satisfaction may be within the survey's margin of error, it is clear that satisfaction did not meet RBFF's objectives. Similarly, in RBFF's "State Agency Feedback Study," four out of nine RBFF programs saw decreases in satisfaction from respondents,[7] and RBFF's 2014 "Industry and Stakeholders Study" found the perceived usefulness of six out of seven products decreased from 2013[8]. Although decreases in usefulness of three of these programs fall within the survey margin of error, the reported usefulness of TMF.org, industry research and the *NewsWaves* e-newsletter all decreased by greater than 10%. The results of these three surveys demonstrate there is an opportunity for RBFF to re-engage stakeholders to directly assess their needs and engage in a more meaningful collaboration.

7 AMG Research (2014). Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation State Agency Feedback Study.

8 AMG Research (2014). Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation Industry Stakeholders Study.



Source: RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

METRIC: Annually raise non-federal dollars and in-kind contributions (not including value added in purchased media buy) to equal 25% of federal dollars received.

RBFF gets funding through the National Outreach and Communication Program, an independent program funded from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund. Through FY2012, RBFF has received more than $131 million in SFR funding.

The initial cooperative agreement authorizing the transfer of SFR funds to RBFF for implementation of the National Outreach and Communications Program stated that RBFF "will, over the course of the five-year program, provide at least a 25% match (in-kind or non-federal funds) of the amount of federal funds provided under this and subsequent agreements." A second cooperative agreement executed in 2000 includes the same match requirement while the 2005 and 2007 agreements state that the Foundation's board of directors will "be responsible for setting annual in-kind services/contributions objectives for the Foundation and tracking the progress of the Foundation in achieving these objectives." Collectively, the legislative history and cooperative agreements provide RBFF with a clear responsibility to leverage SFR funds.[9] In addition, there is the expectation amongst stakeholders that SFR funds will be leveraged for additional funds.

In response, RBFF's Operations and Policy Manual states "RBFF shall make reasonable efforts to obtain non-federal contributions and other revenues in amounts equal to or greater than 25% of the federal funding received." This ongoing goal of raising non-federal match dollars resulted in the metric above.

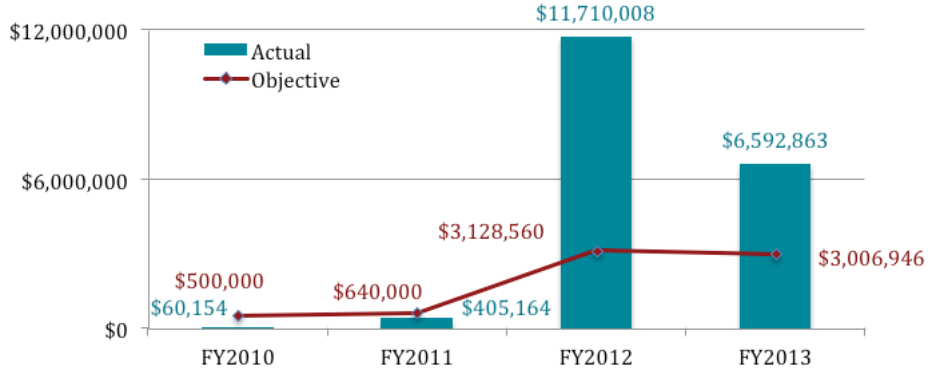
9 Cooperative Agreements between FWS and RBFF, paragraph X: 14-48-98210-9-J053 (March 1999); 98210-0-J079 (2000); 982105J004 (April 2005); and 98210-7-J005 (April 2007).

While RBFF did not reach its objective for raising non-federal dollars in FY2010 and FY2011, it drastically exceeded those goals in FY2012 and FY2013 (Graph 12).

RBFF uses PSAs to generate in-kind contribution value in order to meet its targeted 25% match to federal funds received. Therefore, RBFF tracks the dollar value of the PSA placements by media type (TV, radio or print). RBFF uses an outside contractor, Plowshare, to generate PSA placements and report on the placement details, including dollar value, broadcast dates, number of airings, stations, print publications and circulation. PSA placement for the years covered by this assessment are as follows:

- FY2013 – $6.5 million
- FY2012 – $11.6 million
- FY2011 – $4.5 million

Graph 12: Raised Non-Federal Dollars



Source: RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

METRIC: The non-federal dollars raised must be at least $1.5 million in total for FY2011 to FY2013 combined.

RBFF and the SFBPC agreed to suspend the cash fundraising metric, which does not include in-kind donations, in November 2012 pending the outcome of this assessment. During the three year period covered by this assessment, RBFF raised a total of $553,910 (Graph 13). The bulk of the dollars were raised through two large sponsorship deals with Markel Insurance and Sports Authority. Smaller amounts were raised through stakeholder sponsorships of the RBFF state marketing workshop and through individual donations (online, checks, Combined Federal Campaign, etc.). RBFF employed a development officer in the past, but is not seeking to fill the position. One concern regarding raising funds is that federal dollars cannot be used for fundraising.

The SFBPC specifically considered whether or not to continue using this metric. It determined that while it is reasonable to expect RBFF to leverage SFR funds, a metric requiring a specific cash match is not appropriate. Therefore, the SFBPC recommends this metric be permanently discontinued.

As RBFF explores how to further leverage SFR funds, the SFBPC believes one option is reaching out to state tourism agencies and other potential outdoor recreation service providers to develop cooperative marketing opportunities. For example, RBFF could meet with the Association of State Tourism Directors to begin a dialogue about partnership opportunities. RBFF could also invite state tourism directors from states with significant angling and boating participation to participate in annual stakeholder workshops.

Graph 13: Dollars Raised Towards $1.5 million in total for FY2011 to FY2013

Source: RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

Findings and Observations

RBFF has done an excellent job in getting state stakeholders to engage in one or more programs. However, the Assessment Team is concerned that the focus on achieving a fixed number of states participating has the unintended consequence of producing one-size-fits-all programs and reducing responsiveness to state needs for more customized support. Moreover, nearly universal participation is not synonymous with complete satisfaction among participants. RBFF did not meet its goal for stakeholder satisfaction, and RBFF's industry stakeholder survey showed decreasing usefulness to those in industry for most of RBFF's products and programs.

Recommendations to Increase Reach and Impact

3. RBFF should engage in a genuinely collaborative and ongoing partnership with stakeholders about how to improve programs to increase and sustain participation in boating and angling in the United States. The collaboration process should include identifying specific stakeholders and their specific goals and needs. In addition, RBFF should proactively pursue opportunities to collaborate with states that want more customized services, including alternatives to the current lapsed angler program, and additional contractual services such as enhanced state agency marketing.

:: Question 3 ::

Has RBFF increased the public's knowledge of "how-to" boat and fish, and its awareness of boating and fishing opportunities?

BACKGROUND

Take Me Fishing is RBFF's brand for building consumer awareness of boating and fishing, and for converting awareness into participation. RBFF works hard to build equity in the name, look and logo of the brand with its boating and fishing stakeholders. In 2001, RBFF developed and launched the "*Water Works Wonders*" advertising campaign, targeted towards men between the ages of 25 and 54 who own fishing tackle and/or a type of boat appropriate for fishing. The RBFF 2004-09 Strategic Plan determined that "new/different messages need to be created based on what we've learned from research, and tested against current creative for relative effectiveness." In 2005, the campaign was re-branded "*Take Me Fishing*."

TAKE ME FISHING™
takemefishing.org

In FY2008, RBFF concluded, "six years of awareness generated by *Take Me Fishing* advertising was not converting to an acceptable increase in boating and fishing participation." In response, RBFF launched a "new and improved" TakeMeFishing.org website (TMF.org) with the goal of becoming the Web's largest database of fishing and boating spots and unprecedented how-to information.

ASSESSMENT

There are six metrics that directly relate to Question 3. These metrics address the efficacy of TMF.org by measuring visitation, referrals and influence. RBFF monitors the TMF.org website's performance in a number of ways. Monthly tracking information is gathered from Google Analytics and web-related statistics such as Discover Boating web referrals, state fishing license referrals and state boating registration referrals. This information is summarized in a "dashboard," which is presented to the RBFF Board of Directors on a regular basis.

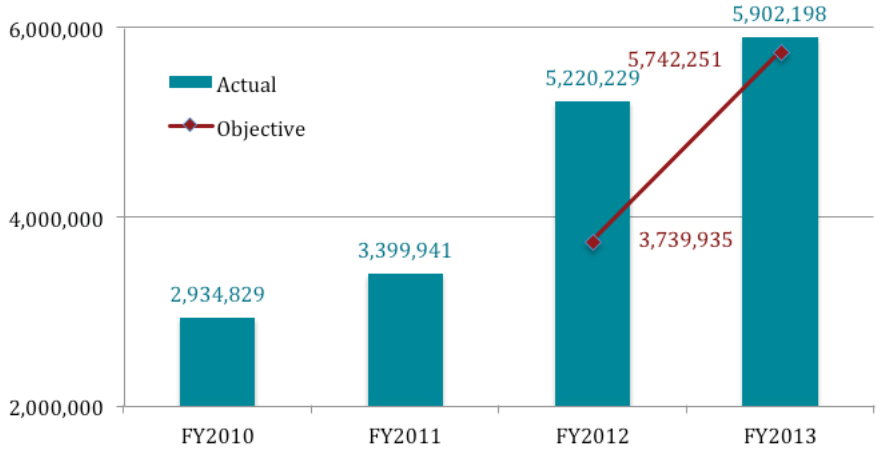
> **METRIC:** Increase unique visitors and return visitors to TMF.org digital assets (i.e., web, mobile, apps and future digital assets) by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 3,399,941 and 911,709, respectively.

Between FY2010 and FY2013, the number of unique visitors to TMF.org digital assets annually grew more than 10% over the previous year's actual value (Graph 14). In fact, the number of unique visitors to TMF.org digital assets more than doubled during the same time period. The increase can be attributed, in large part, to the launch of the

TMF.org mobile site in February 2011, which contributed 616,955 unique visitors to that measure for FY2012. Secondly, FY2012 was the year that RBFF began aggressively soliciting industry partnerships for utilizing the embeddable map tool. This tool was a large driver of traffic for the site, mainly as a result of a partnership that began with the Outdoor Channel and included a special media buy that was highly effective.

In addition, a promotion called "Catch-a-Boat" ran during this time span and was a significant traffic driver to the site. "Catch-a-Boat" was essentially a video game program built into TMF.org that allowed people to "Catch-a-Boat" for the chance to win an actual boat and other prizes. It was a popular promotion and ran multiple times, but ultimately was retired because the audience the game was drawing started to skew more towards 'gamers' than those people interested in fishing and boating.

Graph 14: Unique Visitors to TMF Digital Assets*

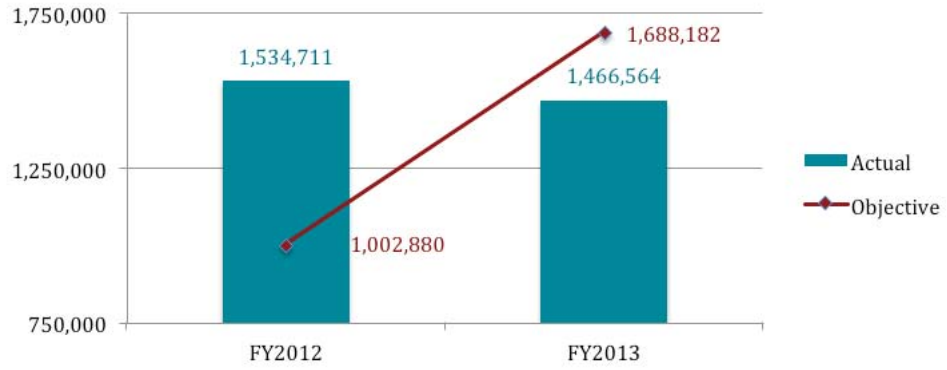


Source: RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

*Note: For any given month, a person is a unique visitor the first time they visit and a return visitor for any additional visits within that month. For RBFF's year-to-date and year-end reporting, a person can only be a unique visitor once during the reporting period and is a return visitor thereafter even if it is more than a month later.

Regarding return visitors, actual visitors exceeded the objective in FY2012, but fell short in FY2013 (Graph 15). A single year with a reduced number of return visitors may not be cause for concern if future years rebound.

Graph 15: Return Visitors to TMF Digital Assets

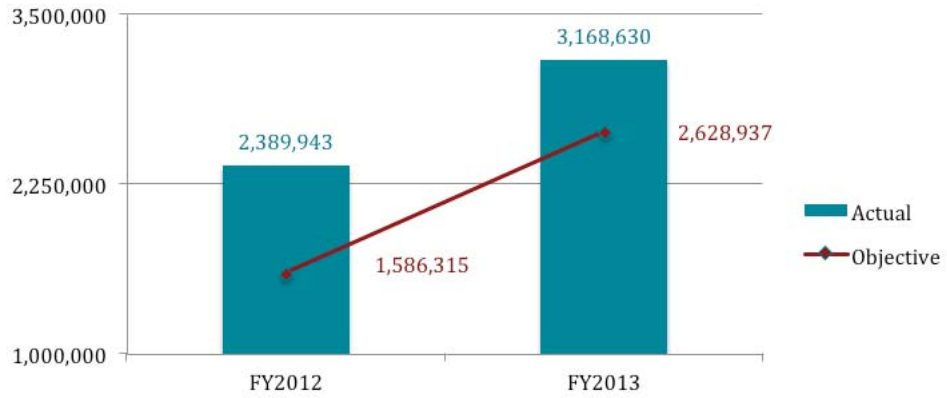


Source: RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

METRIC: Increase page views to the "where to" pages of the TMF.org digital assets by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 1,442,105 and "how to" pages of TMF digital assets by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 2,177,110.

As with unique visitors to RBFF's digital assets, the number of unique page visitors to "where to" digital assets greatly exceeded the objective (Graph 16). The number of unique visitors to "where to" TMF.org digital assets has exceeded objectives by greater than 500,000 for each year.

Graph 16: Unique Views to 'Where to' TMF Digital Assets



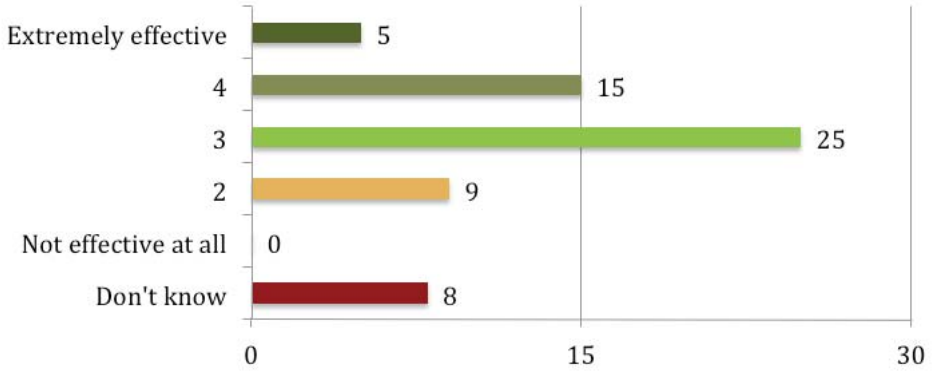
Source: RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

Although measuring visits to digital assets is valuable, understanding end users' evaluation of their experience is also very valuable. In 2011, 43% of TMF.org users reported seeking information from the website on where to fish. In 2012, the percentage of users seeking information on where to fish increased to 64%. Concurrently, RBFF also saw an increase in users' satisfaction with their experience on the website (75% in

2011 and 83% in 2012 were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied) over that same time period.[10] If both satisfaction and use of information on where to fish are increasing, one can likely assume satisfaction with the tool is generally high. The Assessment Team recognizes that end user satisfaction is the most important metric for evaluating "where to" information, and applauds RBFF for providing services that users value.

In addition to end user satisfaction, RBFF also measured stakeholder perceptions of the TMF's "where to" digital assets. On RBFF's state stakeholder survey, respondents reported the least satisfaction (38% somewhat satisfied or unsatisfied) with the places to boat and fish map.[11] This satisfaction is driven largely by the 47% of staff primarily focused on fishing who are only somewhat satisfied or not satisfied. Additionally, only about 1/3 of respondents to the Assessment Team's questionnaire find RBFF's programs or tools about where to fish to be extremely or very effective (Graph 17). The Assessment Team reiterates that state stakeholder satisfaction is not as important as end user satisfaction for this metric, but provides these results for full transparency.

Graph 17: Overall Effectiveness of RBFF's Programs to Educate About Where to Fish/Boat (N=62)



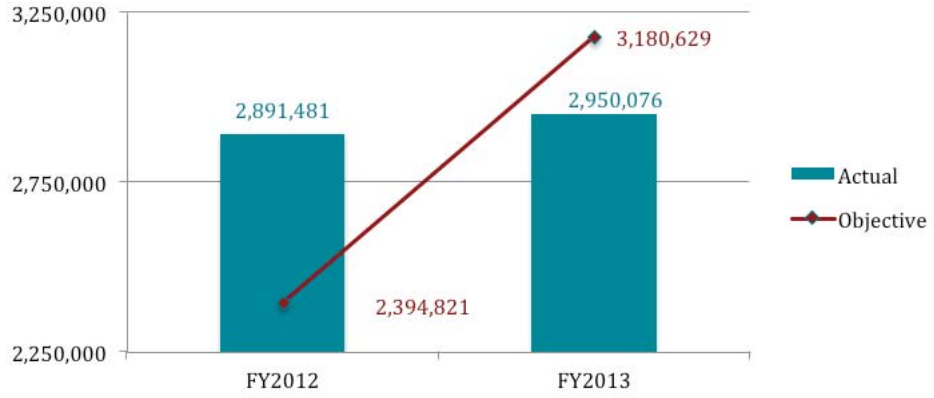
Source: 2014Assessment Team State Stakeholder Questionnaire

In FY2012, unique page views to the "how to" pages of TMF.org digital assets significantly exceeded the objective while actuals did not meet objectives in FY2013 (Graph 18). However, the actual number of unique visitors increased between the two years. To increase its reach to a greater audience, RBFF may have the opportunity to more actively use TMF.org as a portal to industry, NGO and state-generated content.

10 Strategic Marketing & Research (2012). Website Effectiveness Survey

11 AMG Research (2014). Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation State Agency Feedback Study.

Graph 18: Unique Page Views to the 'How to' Pages of TMF.org

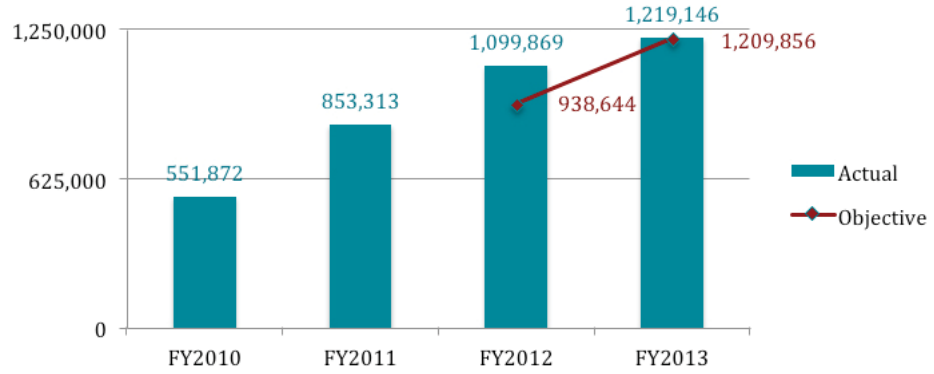


Source: RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

METRIC: Increase referrals from TMF.org digital assets (i.e., web, mobile, apps and future digital assets) to state fishing license purchase pages by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 853,313.

Since FY2011, RBFF has exceeded its objectives for referrals to state fishing license purchase pages every year (Graph 19). RBFF's search engine marketing (SEM) campaign has been very successful. Google internet searches using the terms "buy a fishing license" or "get a fishing license" usually result in TMF's referral page at the top of the search results followed by state licensing agency pages. Although referrals to state agency license pages do not necessarily result in license sales, there certainly is great benefit to RBFF acting as a portal to state agency pages due to its search engine optimization.

Graph 19: Referrals from TMF.org to State Fishing License Purchase Pages

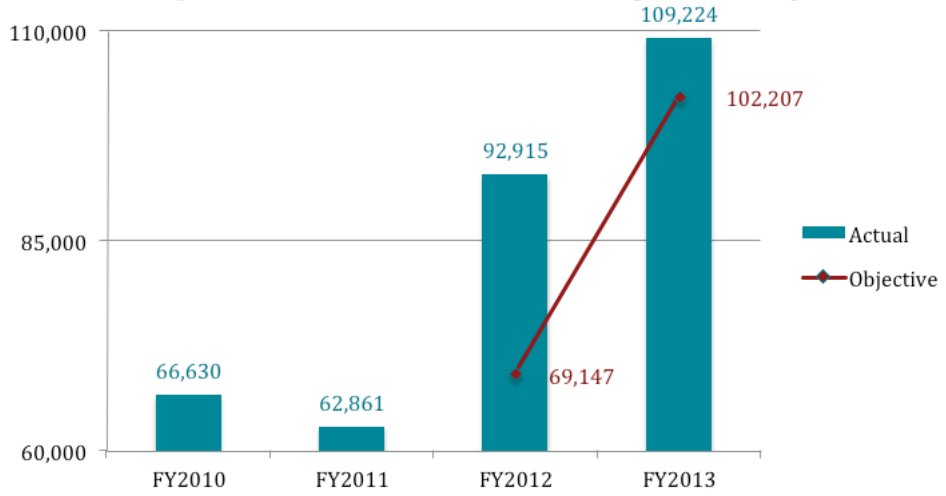


Source: RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

METRIC: Increase referrals from TMF.org digital assets (i.e., web, mobile, apps and future digital assets) to state boat registration pages by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 62,861.

After FY2011, referrals from TMF.org to state boat registration pages exceeded objectives–significantly so in FY2012 (Graph 20). The dramatic increase in referrals for fishing licenses and particularly boat registrations in FY2012 was primarily due to the launch of the TMF.org mobile site in February 2011. As a result, the FY2012 reporting includes a full year of registration referrals (47,155) from the TMF.org mobile site that were not available the prior year.

Graph 20: Referrals from TMF to Boat Registration Pages



Source: RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

In addition, RBFF increased search engine marketing (SEM) spending on boat registration campaigns significantly between years (Table 4) .

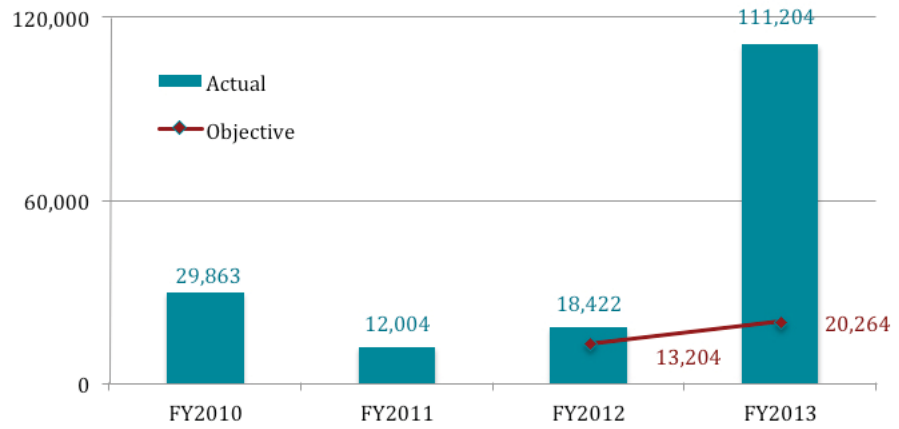
Table 4: RBFF Search Engine Spending- Boat Registration

Boat Registration Paid Search	FY11	FY12	Percent Increase
Referrals from search engines to TMF.org	47,935	99,270	107%
Budget	$25,434	$54,874	116%

METRIC: Increase referrals from TMF.org digital assets (i.e., web, mobile, apps and future digital assets) to DiscoverBoating.com by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 12,004.

DiscoverBoating.com is a website that educates the public on recreational boating, with the goal of creating interest and participation in recreational boating. As with referrals to boat registration sites, after FY2011, RBFF exceeded its objectives for this measure, and in FY2013 did so five fold (Graph 21). In September of 2012, page views for the Boat Selector Tool page on TMF.org began to be included as part of the Discover Boating referrals measure. At that time, the page had launched with Discover Boating's newly improved Boat Selector Tool widget, which NMMA and RBFF deemed as a viable referral source and agreed that its traffic activity should be included as part of the measure.

Graph 21: Referrals from TMF.org to DiscoverBoating



Source: RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

RBFF also increased SEM spending directed to the Boat Selector Tool between FY2011 and FY2012 (Table 5).

Table 5: RBFF Search Engine Spending- Boat Selector Tool

Discover Boating Paid Search	FY12	FY13	Percent Increase
Referrals	123,657	305,484	147%
Budget	$86,363.00	$187,736.56	117%

The results of the referrals to state boat registration websites and Discover Boating shows the positive results of RBFF's increased efforts to market boating and boat registrations.

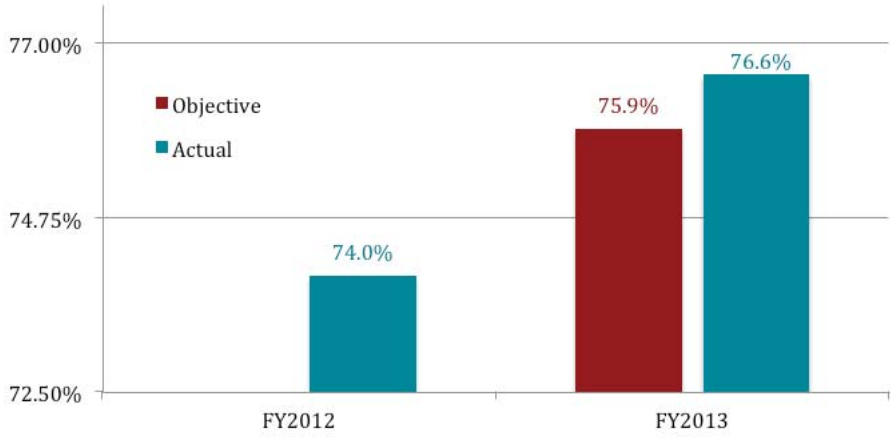
> **METRIC:** RBFF will conduct an annual survey of people who have contact with Take Me Fishing/RBFF programs and products to determine if use of/contact with those programs or materials influenced the user's decision to boat or fish. RBFF will establish a baseline on the influence of Take Me Fishing in FY2012 and establish hard metrics for improvement over that baseline.

Measuring the influence of the Take Me Fishing campaign (TMF) includes assessing the level of influence exerted on the target audience. This measurement of influence of the TMF campaign was developed in 2011 to measure the extent to which the use of/exposure to the TMF advertising campaign has achieved its desired results of influencing a respondent's behavior. It specifically measures the percentage of people exposed to the TMF branded messages who said they were more likely to participate in fishing and boating because of their exposure to the messages. This metric was developed by EurekaFacts and is based on William McGuire's article "An Information Processing Modeling of Advertising Effectiveness."[12] It can be compared from year to year as the advertising campaign is modified in terms of content or message, targeted to new sub-groups via differing media placement strategies, or expanded via increased budgets/expenditures.

12 McGuire, W. (1978). "An Information-Processing Model of Advertising Effectiveness." In Behavioral and Management Science in Marketing, eds. Harry L. Davis and Alvin H. Silk. New York: Ronald Press, 156-80.

In its first year having a specific objective for TMF's influence upon visitor behavior, RBFF exceeded its goal (Graph 22). TMF has been shown to influence a majority of visitors' behavior to boat and fish and this influence appears to be growing.

Graph 22: TMF Influence on a Person's Behavior to Boat or Fish



Source: RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

Findings and Observations

Since the last assessment, technology and how people use and find information and communicate have evolved at a rapid rate. It is challenging for any organization to keep pace with these changes. During this period, RBFF has demonstrated clear commitment to modernizing its digital assets and developing and deploying new tools that harness technology to connect people with fishing and boating. Overall, RBFF's digital assets and TMF.org have exceeded metrics for unique views, referrals and behavioral influence and for this RBFF should be commended. However, while initial visitation to TMF.org met or exceeded many objectives, underperformance in return visitors and unique visitors to "how to" pages may indicate that visitors are not using TMF.org as an ongoing resource. Additionally, these metrics measure outputs and do not address the core outcome of increasing the public's knowledge of how to boat and fish, or the public's awareness of boating and fishing opportunities.

When initially created, the mapping functionality on TMF.org far exceeded many states' capabilities and capacities. However, as technology has progressed, so too have states' individual mapping tools. Although the mapping functionality is a priority offering for many state stakeholders, some stakeholders have raised concerns over the accuracy of the data on TMF.org, and similar concerns arose during the 2009 Assessment. In addition, those states that have their own mapping function prioritize using their limited staff and resources to maintain and augment their state-specific site instead of providing and/or updating data on TMF.org.

Recommendations to Increase Reach and Impact

4. For TMF.org pages that include state information, there is an opportunity for RBFF to work with states to highlight those programs and resources that states may want to promote (e.g., banners with hotlinks to state program sites). When states do not have the capacity for state-specific information, RBFF should work closely with these states to ensure information posted on TMF.org is available and accurate. RBFF could make state-specific banner ad space available on TMF.org state pages to highlight state events and add links from RBFF "Where-to" pages to the most accurate state resources. One potential way to measure success would be to track the number of referrals from the TMF.org website to state-specific resources.

:: Question 4 ::

How has RBFF enhanced the public's understanding of aquatic resources?

BACKGROUND

One of the fundamental goals of the Sport Fishing and Boating Safety Act is to "enhance the public's understanding of aquatic resources and sport fishing, and to promote the development of responsible attitudes and ethics toward the aquatic environment."

Responding to this goal, RBFF has worked since its inception to design and implement a set of education programs, including development of best practices, educational grant programs and teaching materials. "Teach youngsters to fish and boat and they're hooked for a lifetime. By funding, informing and guiding education programs that cast a wide net, RBFF is safeguarding the future of boating and fishing" (2009 RBFF Annual Report).

PHOTO: HALLE MILLER/FLICKR

The initial focus of and priorities pursued by RBFF in its aquatic education efforts arose from the National Aquatic Education Leadership Summit organized by RBFF in 2002. RBFF invited 40 stakeholder organizations to help develop a national agenda for boating, fishing and stewardship education. From this summit, RBFF initiated a national Education Grants Program (EGP) and developed a set of best practices for aquatic education. Two other efforts, "Passport to Fishing and Boating" and the "Explore the Blue Campaign," round out RBFF's four major educational offerings in effect during some portion of the assessment period.

In 2003, RBFF developed the National Fishing and Boating Education Grant Initiative. Working in cooperation with the Future Fisherman Foundation, American Association for Leisure and Recreation and the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, RBFF initially developed the "*Physh Ed*" program, making funds available to school districts to design and implement boating and fishing as a part of their regular physical education curriculum. This program evolved into the National Youth Fishing and Boating Initiative.

RBFF developed "Best Practices in Boating, Fishing, and Aquatic Resources Stewardship Education" in 2003, providing state agencies and other organizations a methodology for designing, implementing and evaluating new and existing aquatic education programs. A "Best Practices Evaluation Guide" was produced in 2006. Developed by more than two dozen aquatic education practitioners, the publication leads educators step-by-step through the design, implementation and reporting of an evaluation process. The "Best Practices" product offering has been adopted by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and is available online at TMF.org.

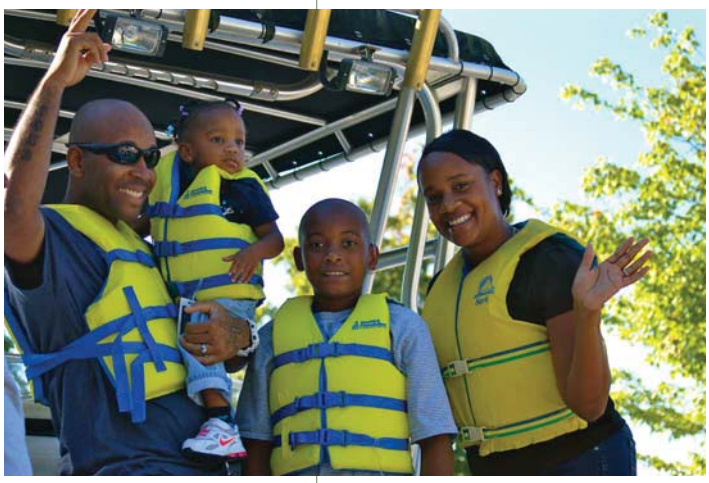


PHOTO: VA STATE PARK STAFF/FLICKR

To help introduce youth and families to fishing and boating, RBFF developed its "Passport" program. Similar to "Best Practices," the Passport program was developed by a team of noted educators and leaders in aquatic, marine and boating education based on a need identified by the National Fishing and Boating Week Steering Committee. The program provides skills, techniques and information that novices need to begin boating and fishing in their communities. Six interactive learning centers each focus on a key aspect of boating, fishing and aquatic stewardship. RBFF designed the program to be administered by volunteers, adaptable to different geographical areas, and appealing to varying age and interest groups.

ASSESSMENT

The amount of educational grant dollars distributed by RBFF varied between FY2010 and FY2013 (Table 6).

Table 6: Educational Grant Funding

Fiscal Year	2010	2011	2012	2013
Grant Dollars	$722,000	$821,413	$545,000	$659,500
Number of Grantees	5	3	3	5

During this period, student participation remained high. For example, for FY2013, the projects funded by grants had already exceeded the 123,500 students expected to go through the program in 2012-13 with over 134,000 youth participating through 9 months. However, in 2013, RBFF President/CEO Frank Peterson requested that the Education Task Force (ETF) conduct a mid-term review of the youth education projects funded through the EGP for the 2012-15 grant cycle.

At the RBFF strategic planning session held in June 2012, participants (board members, FWS personnel and some RBFF staff) were asked to rank their three highest priority RBFF programs. The education grants program was among the lower scoring programs. RBFF informed the Assessment Team that its staff and board had ongoing concern regarding RBFF's inability to thoroughly evaluate the long-term effectiveness of the various education programs it has funded over the years.

At the June 2013 board meeting, a facilitated session was held to determine what direction RBFF should take with regard to education grants and other youth programs. The board resolved to immediately defund all youth programs other than the four education grants then in place. There was some discussion of immediately defunding the grants also, but because they were just entering the second year of a three-year cycle, the decision was made to ask the staff to review the grant programs and make a recommendation regarding future grants. The board then asked for the formation of a Youth Initiatives Task Force, headed by then Chairman Michael Cassidy, to further explore what, if any, youth programs RBFF should pursue in the future. At the January 2014 board meeting, staff presented, and the board approved, a budget eliminating the education grants program effective for FY2015.

In an effort to expand its aquatic education reach, RBFF entered into a partnership with Discovery Education. Through this partnership, RBFF launched the "Explore the Blue" program in 2010. The "Explore the Blue" program provided educators with online aquatic-themed education resources designed to teach students an appreciation of the outdoors through classroom-based activities focused on boating and fishing. The resources leveraged Discovery Education's nationwide capacity to work with schools and educational systems. The program reached more than a million youth. Despite its reach and the national reputation of Discovery Education, the program was terminated by the RBFF Board in June 2013 due to concerns about the overall effectiveness of the program to recruit youth into fishing and boating. In particular, the board felt that this program was not directly increasing participation because it had no "on the water" component and there was no way to measure its ability to create future anglers and boaters. Funding for this program was redirected to an emerging Hispanic outreach campaign (see discussion below).

The "Best Practices in Boating, Fishing, and Aquatic Resources Stewardship Education" workbook was reprinted in 2010 and the "Best Practices Evaluation Guide" was reprinted in 2011. While these resources are available online at TMF.org, RBFF is no longer investing in them.

Similarly, although it is still available online at TMF.org, the "Passport to Boating and Fishing" is no longer an emphasis of RBFF. Funding for the program decreased to $2,000 for FY2013 and the board eliminated spending on the Passport in June 2013.

The elimination of the grants and other educational programs provided additional funding for new programs, including the Disney partnership and the Hispanic outreach campaign. RBFF staff and board members prioritized these investments, in part, due to the funding reduction created by the federal budget sequester.

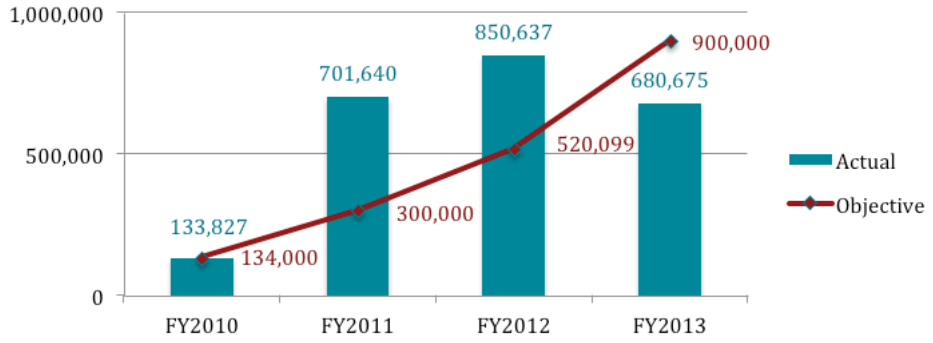
Through the Disney partnership, three resort locations offer Take Me Fishing-branded fishing and boating experiences at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. Additionally, RBFF has sponsorships on Disney Channel and Disney XD, as well as Take Me Fishing messaging in Disney's online content and mobile apps. RBFF reports that these branding

efforts result in tens of millions of media impressions, thousands of fishing experiences and a highly visible TMF brand experience at nine national events with attendance of more than 200,000 in 2013.

In addition to the Disney campaign, RBFF has launched its Hispanic outreach initiative "Vamos a Pescar." This initiative is targeted to the growing, younger Hispanic community in the United States. This campaign is designed to inform the community about and engage it in fishing and boating. The campaign will leverage TMF digital assets for a Hispanic-focused mirror site Vamosapescar.org. The campaign began as a pilot project in Florida and Texas using digital advertising, radio advertising and celebrity DJ endorsements, events and PSAs.

While not a consensus measure, RBFF has tracked youth engagement, when possible, in all of its programs (Graph 23). RBFF has a number of programs focused directly or indirectly on youth, including Explore the Blue, Anglers' Legacy, Boy Scouts Patch Program, the Zebco/Sierra Club Military Rod & Reel Refurbishment Program and also the grantees of their National Youth Fishing & Boating Initiative. To its credit, RBFF also set internal objectives for youth engagement. Although RBFF did not meet its internal objective in FY2010, it greatly exceeded its goals in FY2011 and FY2012 before falling short of its objective in FY2013.

Graph 23: Youth Engagement from Programs



Source: RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

Findings and Observations

During the assessment period, RBFF made major changes in education programming, funding and partnerships, including eliminating grant programs, launching and terminating one major partnership and initiating a new campaign to engage the rapidly growing Hispanic population. The Assessment Team respects RBFF's expertise in marketing and its discretion to make programmatic changes. However, with the exception of the evaluation of the National Fishing and Boating Education Grant initiative, the Team struggled to objectively evaluate other significant changes over a short period of time. The assessment was challenging because RBFF does not appear to have specific goals, objectives or criteria for developing, implementing and evaluating education initiatives. The Team recommends that goals, objectives and criteria be

developed and RBFF rigorously evaluate current and future initiatives based on them. This will help future assessment teams, the SFBPC, FWS and other stakeholder to objectively and fairly evaluate major programming changes.

In order to develop clear goals and objectives for education efforts, including those focused on youth, it is essential to have a broader vision for educational efforts. Significant changes were made to educational programming during the assessment period, but it was unclear to the Assessment Team whether RBFF had a guiding vision for engaging and educating young people.

Recommendation to Increase Reach and Impact

5. RBFF should establish specific programmatic goals and objectives and a process for rigorously evaluating and reporting on the effectiveness of programs designed to enhance public understanding and conservation of aquatic resources and/or sustain participation in boating and angling.

6. RBFF should work with its partners to better define and communicate its vision for youth recruitment into fishing and boating.

:: Question 5 ::

Have RBFF products and activities increased conservation and responsible use of aquatic resources by boaters and anglers?

BACKGROUND

PHOTO: RANDEN PEDERSON/FLICKR

Aquatic resource stewardship is synonymous with the conservation and responsible use of aquatic resources. These concepts are ingrained in the Sport Fishing and Boating Safety Act of 1998 and the Strategic Plan for National Outreach and Communication Program. The Sport Fishing and Boating Safety Act calls for an outreach program "to promote conservation and the responsible use of the nation's aquatic resources." The first two guiding principles for all outreach activities outlined in the 1998 strategic plan are: 1) recognize, reinforce and commit to the importance of sustainable aquatic habitat and natural resource conservation; and 2) emphasize that boaters and anglers are conservationists by demonstrating their commitment and contribution to conservation efforts. The 1999 and 2009 memoranda of understanding between RBFF, FWS, SFBPC and AFWA mirror the Act's conservation and responsible use language.

The cooperative agreements between FWS and RBFF state a performance goal of "increasing public participation in recreational fishing and boating activities and thereby increasing public awareness of the need for aquatic resource conservation."

ASSESSMENT

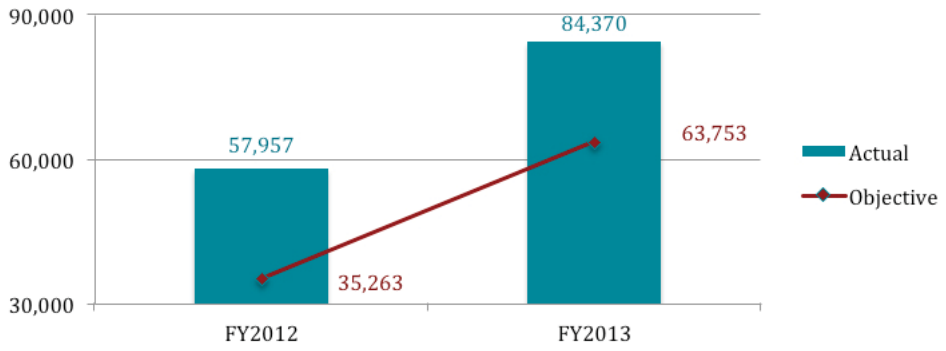
Since 2005, RBFF has undertaken a number of efforts to incorporate conservation and responsible use messages into its various websites. The 2009 Assessment noted that RBFF planned to make "responsible use" messaging and information one of the main navigation choices. However, the "Conservation" link on TMF.org is found near the bottom of the home page, where the viewer can select among fishing, boating, conservation or corporate. Once found, selecting "Conservation" takes the visitor to a page entitled "Water, Our Most Important Resource," which has information about the importance of conserving water. Additional tabs lead the viewer to sections on "Water Pollution," "Aquatic Nuisance Species," "Waterways & Habitat Preservation," "The National Fish Habitat Action Plan," "Sport Fish Restoration Program" and "Volunteer Opportunities." Conservation messaging is also accessible under "Fishing" via "Fishopedia" and "Boating" via "Boat Responsibly."

While many of the major conservation topics are covered under "Conservation," the information is largely presented via text and at times could be expanded or cross-linked to information in "Fishopedia" or "Boat Responsibly." There is also a great opportunity for RBFF to make these pages as engaging as other content found on TMF.org. For example, the page "Water Pollution" is primarily text. RBFF could be leveraging state- or region-specific content and topics in multiple forms of media such as video, pictures and tutorials.

> **METRIC:** Increase total visitors to TMF.org Conservation Pages by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 32,058.

Total visitors to TMF.org conservation pages exceeded objectives in FY2012 and FY2013 (Graph 24). However, the total number of visitors to TMF.org conservation pages is only about 1.5% of the total number of visitors to all TMF.org digital assets. In addition, RBFF's survey of TMF.org users showed only 16% of users are visiting the site seeking conservation information.[13] There is a compelling opportunity for RBFF to greatly increase the percentage of current visitors who are exposed to conservation messaging. This could happen in different ways. For example, the conservation page could be more prominent on TMF.org's home page and the conservation messaging, as done in "Fishopedia," could be more intertwined with pages receiving a higher volume of traffic.

Graph 24: Increase Total Visitors to TMF Conservation Pages



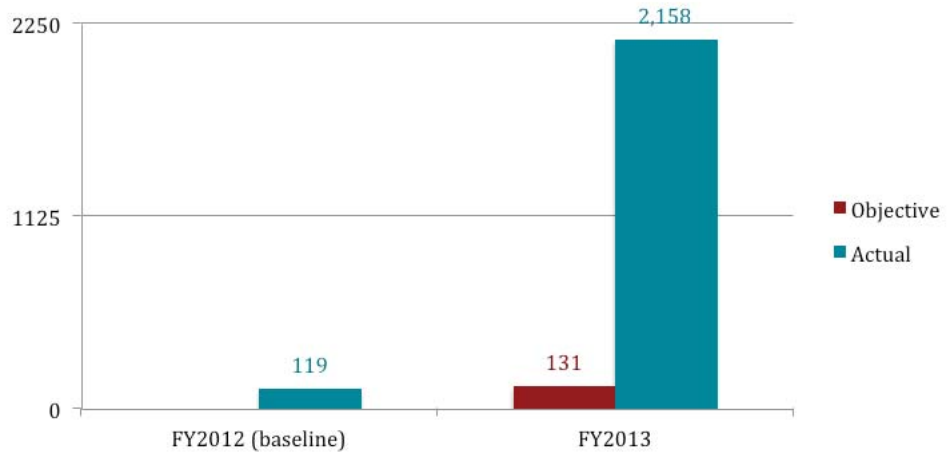
Source: RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

13 Strategic Marketing & Research (2012). Website Effectiveness Survey

METRIC: Increase conservation and responsible use message delivery in earned PR articles and impressions of delivered messages by 10% annually over the FY2012 baseline.

RBFF has been very successful in promoting conservation earned media stories (Graph 25). RBFF is actively pitching stories on a variety of topics, but strives to include conservation-specific messages in all of its PR outreach. Also, RBFF does at times pitch conservation-specific stories. RBFF exceeded its FY2013 objective 16 times over. The 2,158 number represents the total number of stories, including the total number of times a single story appeared in different print and online publications. RBFF does not separately track the number of distinct stories generated. According to RBFF, these stories all included conservation and/or responsible use messaging.

Graph 25: Conservation Earned Media Stories



Source: RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

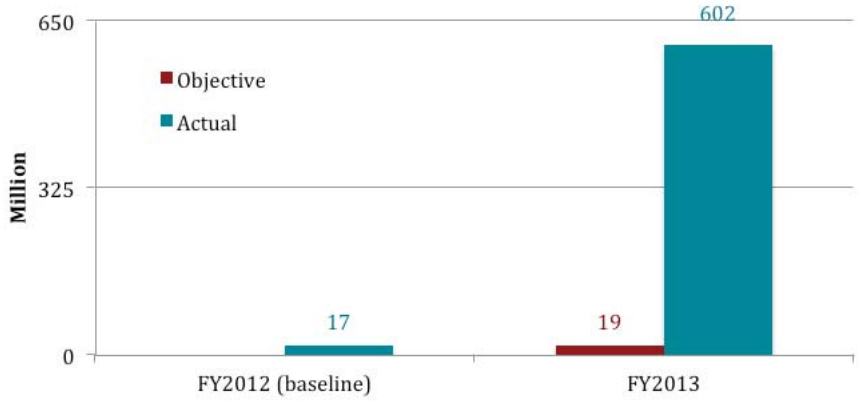
Since the SFBPC established the conservation impressions goal in October 2011 (mid-way through FY2012), RBFF has been tracking stories that include conservation and/or responsible use messages. RBFF currently uses the following key words and phrases to define conservation and/or responsible use messages within media stories:

- Conservation
- Conservation through participation
- Clean water
- Safe/responsible use of natural resources
- Safe/responsible use of aquatic resources
- Value of clean and healthy natural resources
- State conservation projects
- Environmental stewardship
- Resource stewardship

- Protection of aquatic natural resources
- Restoring aquatic natural resources
- Keeping water clean and accessible
- Sport Fish Restoration

The objective for conservation earned media impressions, (impressions are defined as the estimated number of people exposed to an article), was also exceeded (Graph 26).

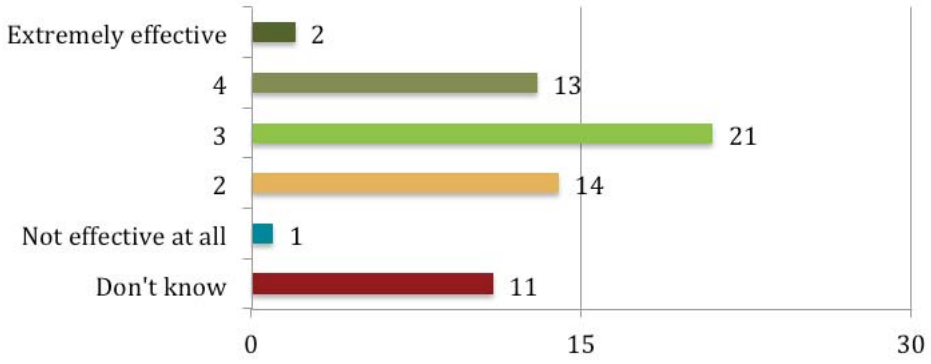
Graph 26: Conservation Earned Media Impressions



Source: RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

Although RBFF has continually met its objectives for media hits, state stakeholders are not convinced RBFF's tools, programs and service effectively educate the public about aquatic conservation (Graph 27). Respondents to the Assessment Team's questionnaire evenly split between RBFF being not effective and effective, with over half of the respondents responding "neutral" or "don't know."

Graph 27: Overall Effectiveness of Programs Educate About Aquatic Conservation (N=62)



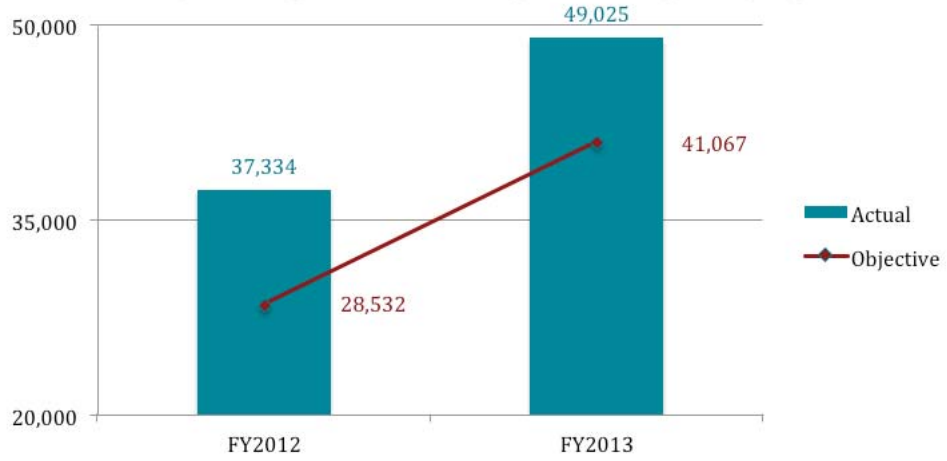
Source: 2014 Assessment Team State Stakeholder Questionnaire

METRIC: Increase page views to the boating and fishing safety pages by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 25,939.

As compared to RBFF's conservation pages, boating safety is displayed more prominently on TMF.org's website homepage. In addition, each page within boating safety has high quality video content. While fishing safety is not displayed directly on TMF.org's homepage, there is a fishing safety page found under "Fishopedia." As compared with boating safety, the content for fishing safety heavily relies upon text and is not as engaging with less use of images and video. In addition, Take Me Fishing mobile only contains boating safety information and VamosAPescar.org combines fishing and boating safety information.

Overall, RBFF is exceeding its objectives for page views of boating and fishing safety pages (Graph 28). However, the number of page views for boating and fishing safety represent less than one percent of those that view TMF.org overall.

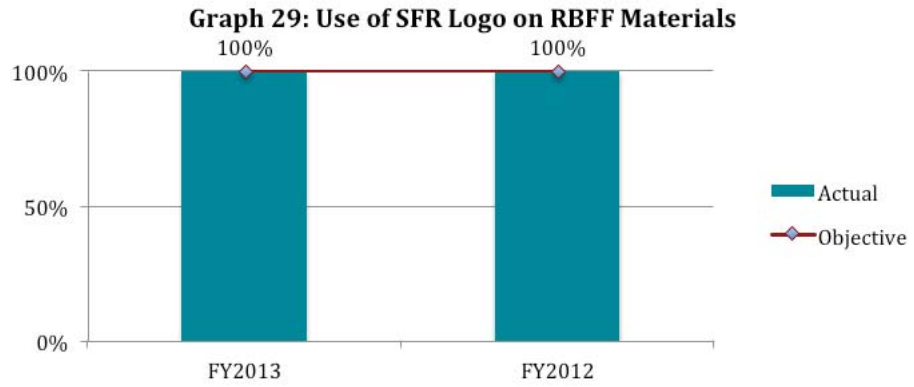
Graph 28: Page Views of Boating and Fishing Safety Pages



Source: RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

METRIC: Use of SFR logo on all RBFF printed and digital materials.

RBFF includes the Sport Fish Restoration logo on all RBFF materials (Graph 29). This has become, and appropriately so, common practice for RBFF. This metric, however, has limited value for measuring whether or not RBFF's products and services have increased conservation and responsible use of aquatic resources.



Source: RBFF yearly reports to the SFBPC and the FWS

Findings and Observations

RBFF has met or exceeded its objectives for all conservation messaging and visits. However, the number of these visits pales in comparison to the overall number of visitors to TMF.org. To draw more attention to the conservation pages, RBFF could move the conservation link to a more prominent place at the top of TMF.org. Furthermore, RBFF should update its conservation pages to include more dynamic content and further leverage stakeholder content to do so with little cost. Finally, TMF.org's broader audience may not specifically seek safety and conservation messages and information. There is an opportunity for RBFF to proactively provide this information to this audience by including conservation and safety messaging in outreach and communications efforts.

RBFF has successfully integrated the SFR logo into all its materials, and is incorporating conservation and safety messaging into many of its outreach efforts. The Assessment Team commends RBFF for this progress and assumes these practices are now part of RBFF's standard operating procedures. Consequently, the Assessment Team recommends that the use of the SFR logo should no longer be used as a metric for conservation and responsible use of aquatic resources. Rather, RBFF should work with its partners to develop new metrics, which more directly measure its impact on conservation and responsible use (see Recommendation 1).

Recommendations to Increase Reach and Impact

7. RBFF should work with SFBPC, FWS, and AFWA to develop a communications plan to proactively integrate conservation and safety messaging with fishing and boating messages and increase prominence of conservation messaging in RBFF communications.
8. The Assessment Team commends the quality of the images provided by RBFF and recommends that the image library be regularly updated (e.g., diverse ethnicity, urban backgrounds in shots, updated PFD styles).

APPENDIX A: NATIONAL MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
Between the
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
the
Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council
the
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
and the
Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation

This Memorandum of Understanding (Agreement) is entered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council (SFBPC), the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), and the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF).

I. Authorities

The Sportfishing and Boating Safety Act of 1998 (the Act), Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, 16 U.S.C. 4601, and the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), 5 U.S.C. App. 1

II. Purpose

The purpose of this Agreement is to establish a framework for a 5-year collaborative effort to implement the National Outreach and Communications Program (Program), pursuant to the Act and Presidential Executive Order 12962, with the goal of increasing public participation in recreational fishing and boating activities and increasing public awareness of the need for aquatic resource conservation. Under the Act, the Secretary of the Interior is charged with developing and implementing in cooperation and consultation with the SFBPC a national plan for outreach and communications. RBFF was established in October 1998 to implement the Program and a Strategic Plan was developed and approved by the Secretary on February 23, 1999. The Program is designed to improve communications with anglers, boaters, and the general public regarding angling and boating opportunities, to reduce barriers to participation in these activities, to advance adoption of sound fishing and boating practices, to promote conservation and the responsible use of the Nation's aquatic resources, and to further safety in fishing and boating.

III. Statement of Principles

The Service and its aforementioned partners mutually benefit from a strong constituency of recreational anglers and boaters.

Citizens who participate in recreational fishing and boating activities tend to place a higher value on aquatic resources. They are also more likely to develop a personal

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conservation ethic and to support fish and wildlife conservation efforts, including those of state and Federal resource agencies. Because of this increased awareness of the need for conserving aquatic resources, the Service and State resource agencies are better able to accomplish their missions for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

Recreational anglers and boaters help fund state and Federal conservation efforts benefiting aquatic resources through excise taxes on angling equipment and motorboat fuels. These funds are collected and then apportioned to the states and territories under the Sport Fish Restoration Program. A strong and active partnership of boaters, anglers, industry, and conservation groups supports the Sport Fish Restoration Program and the state-managed aquatic resource conservation program it funds.

After years of steady growth, since 1990 recreational boating and fishing participation did not maintain parity with the Nation's population growth, with some states experiencing actual declines in boat sales and fishing license sales. Declines are occurring in some states despite their extensive education and outreach efforts. State and Federal resource agencies, the recreational fishing and boating industries, rural economies, and aquatic resources could all suffer detrimental impacts if, in future years, fewer fishers and boaters participate in their respective activities resulting in reduced investment in restoration work due to subsequent decrease in contributions to the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund.

Outreach and communication are tools for maintaining an active constituency investing in these natural resource conservation efforts. The Program is designed to complement ongoing outreach, communication and conservation work by the signatories.

IV. Undertakings of the Agreement Participants

The Service, under the authority of the Act, provides management connectivity between signatories, the various Federal agency programs, and the grant recipient (grantee) selected that are necessary to implement the Program. The Service established a liaison position under the Chief, Division of Program and Partnership Support, to manage and coordinate Service administration of the discretionary grant, to select processes necessary to determine the grantee, and to liaison with the grantee who implements the Program. In addition, the liaison provides a detailed accounting of the program and its activities to the Secretary for annual publication in the Federal Register; manages and coordinates communication with signatories, partners, and stakeholders; and continuously seeks opportunities to expand awareness and communications of this program to the American public. The position title is the Project Officer/Liaison and is the Service's primary point of contact for the Program. The Project Officer / Liaison position reports all matters pertaining specifically to this program and the grantee to the Deputy Director.

The Program is funded by a discretionary grant awarded through a competitive grant process and in 2007, RBFF was awarded a three-year grant to implement the Program.

RBFF contributes professional expertise and experience necessary to implement the Program. The staff is responsible for daily operations of the Program; financial management/accounting; sub-grant and contract administration; annual work plan development; and annual budgeting. Per the RBFF Board Chairman, the President/CEO of RBFF is the primary point of contact for the Program.

The SFBPC will monitor the progress of the Program, will evaluate effectiveness of the program by communicating regularly with its stakeholders and will regularly report findings to the Secretary and the signatories of this agreement. The Program plan shall be reviewed periodically by the SFBPC but not less frequently than once every three years. In accordance with the FACA, the Service provides staff assistance to the SFBPC, a federally chartered advisory committee. The Service established a liaison function under the Chief, Division of Program and Partnership Support, known as the SFBPC Coordinator. The SFBPC Coordinator coordinates all interactions necessary to fulfill the advisory responsibilities of the SFBPC under the Act. SFBPC, under the authority of the Act and the Federal Advisory Committee Act, provides advice to, consults and collaborates with the Secretary of the Interior, through the Director of the Service. Consultation, collaboration, and advice will be provided to the Secretary in order to oversee implementation of the Program in a manner to satisfy the needs of the Secretary's recreational fishing and boating constituency. The SFBPC will facilitate the exchange of information and ideas between the Secretary and the SFBPC's mutual constituents. The SFBPC Chairman is the primary point of contact for the Program.

AFWA will serve as liaison with the States and the signatories of this agreement. AFWA will assist in the facilitation and coordination of State Outreach Plans with the Program required under the Act AFWA's Executive Director is the primary point of contact for this program.

V. Conflict of Interest Provisions for Service Participation

To avoid the possibility of an actual or apparent violation of ethics laws and rules, when official time is used for service as a member of the Board of Directors for the RBFF, the following will apply;

a. Federal employees may not represent anyone other than the United States before an agency or court in connection with a particular matter in which the United States is a party or has a direct and substantial interest (18 U.S.C. § 205).

b. Unless waived under applicable procedures, Federal employees are required to refrain from working on particular matters as a Government employee when the employee is serving as an officer in a private organization and the organization in which he is serving has a financial interest in those Government matters (18 U.S. C. § 208).

c. If a Federal employee's participation in a project undertaken in conjunction with a private organization was done as a part of his official duties, the employee is

prohibited from sharing in any compensation by the dual compensation provisions of law (18 U.S.C. § 209).

d. Federal employees are prohibited from using official time and Government equipment to lobby on any issue pending before the Congress (18 U.S.C. § 1913; see also the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriates Act for Fiscal Year 1999, Public Law 105-277, Division A, Title III, Section 303).

e. Federal employees are prohibited from controlling or assuming any measure of practical responsibility for the fund raising activities of private individuals or organizations (E.O. 12731); see also 5 C.F.R. § 2635.808.

Federal employees must consult their agency ethics officials and the Solicitor's Office if they have any questions about the scope of these restrictions.

VI. Period and Terms of Agreement

This Agreement will be in effect for five years from the date of execution. Authorized officials of the Service, SFBPC, or AFWA may terminate this Agreement, or any renewals, within 60-days written notification to the other parties.

Transfers of funds, contracts, or other assistance will be executed in separate written instruments in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.

The parties may revise this Agreement as necessary through the issuance of a written amendment signed and dated by authorized officials.

The parties shall comply with all federal laws relating to discrimination. These laws include but are not limited to: title VI of Civil rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 20000d-1), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 794); the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended (42 U.S.C. 6101 *et seq.*); and applicable regulatory requirements to the end that no person in the United States will, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, disability or age, will be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity conducted within the scope of this agreement.

The relationship between the Service and the other participants under this agreement is intended to enhance service to the American public through more efficient application of Service programs. All actions will be directed toward attainment of that mutually beneficial goal.

Nothing in this agreement may be construed to obligate the Service, Department of Interior, or the United States to any current or future expenditure of resources in advance of the availability of appropriations from Congress.

VII. Principal Contacts

The following individuals will be the principle contacts for their respective organization; however, either Party may substitute other individuals upon written notice to the other parties.

Rowan Gould, Deputy Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, NW, Room 3238
Washington, D.C. 20240-0001

Ryck Lydecker, Chair
Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council
4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS-3103-AEA
Arlington, Virginia 22203-1610

Matt Hogan, Executive Director
Association of Fish and
Wildlife Agencies
444 N. Capitol Street, NW, Suite 544
Washington, D.C. 20001-1527

Ken Hammond, Chair,
Recreational Boating and Fishing
Foundation
601 N. Fairfax Street, Suite 440
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2084

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Participants hereto have executed this Agreement as of the date first written above.

Rowan W. Gould — 6/9/2009
Deputy Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service — Date

Rebecca Reading — 6-5-09
Deputy Ethics Counselor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service — Date

Ryck Lydecker — 6-9-09
Chair, Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council — Date

[illegible] — 6.9.09
Executive Director, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies — Date

Kenneth S. Hammond — 6/9/09
Chair, Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation — Date

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APPENDIX B: 2012 MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council RBFF "Measures of Success" Team

FINAL SUGGESTED OBJECTIVES/GOALS/MEASURES

Objective 1: Increased participation in recreational angling and boating.

SUGGESTED MEASURES

1. Increase fishing license sales as reported by the FWS in 2015 by 5% over 2010 levels, and in 2020 by 10% over 2010 levels.
2. Increase boat registrations as reported by the USCG in 2020 by 5% over 2010 levels.

Goal 1: Communicate with anglers, boaters, and the general public to increase awareness of: angling and boating opportunities, boating and fishing techniques, and the availability of and access to boating and fishing locations thereby reducing barriers to participation in angling and boating.

SUGGESTED MEASURES

1. Increase unique visitors and return visitors to TMF.org digital assets (i.e. web, mobile, apps and future digital assets) by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 3,399,941 and 896,028, respectively.
2. Increase page views to the 'where to' pages of the TMF.org digital assets by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 1,103,956 and 'how to" pages of TMF.org digital assets by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 2,133,371.
3. Increase referrals from TMF.org digital assets (i.e. web, mobile, apps and future digital assets) to state fishing license purchase pages by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 815,081.
4. Increase referrals from TMF.org digital assets (i.e. web, mobile, apps and future digital assets) to state boat registration pages by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 57,939.
5. Increase referrals from TMF.org digital assets (i.e. web, mobile, apps and future digital assets) to DiscoverBoating.com by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 12,004.
6. RBFF will conduct an annual survey of people who have contact with Take Me Fishing/RBFF programs and products to determine if use of/contact with those programs or materials influenced the user's decision to boat or fish. RBFF will establish a baseline on the influence of Take Me Fishing in FY2012 and establish hard metrics for improvement over that baseline.

Note: As states develop capability to track referrals to resultant sales and provide this data back to RBFF, the measure should change to measure sales as a result of referrals from TMF.org digital assets. RBFF and States should work aggressively toward this.

Goal 2: Collaborate with State agencies, industry and stakeholders in developing and implementing marketing and outreach strategies to recruit and retain boaters and anglers as described in the National Outreach & Communications Program.

SUGGESTED MEASURES

1. Engage all 50 states in an annual marketing improvement enhancement effort produced by RBFF designed to upgrade the marketing skills and tools of state agencies responsible for fishing and boating.
2. Demonstrate improving stakeholder satisfaction annually through a consistent satisfaction survey of stakeholder groups that is executed by an independent third party.

Goal 3: Develop and implement strategies to ensure that RBFF has sufficient funding to achieve its objectives.

SUGGESTED MEASURES

1. Annually raise non Federal Dollars and in-kind contributions (not including value added in purchased media buy) to equal 25% of federal dollars received.
2. The non-Federal dollars raised as part of #1 must be at least $1.5 million in total for FY2011 to FY2013 combined.

Objective 2: Increased public awareness of sound fishing, boating and conservation practices.

Goal 1: Promote the conservation and responsible use of the Nation's aquatic resources by anglers, boaters and the general public.

SUGGESTED MEASURES

1. Increase total visitors to TMF.org Conservation Pages by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 32,058.
2. Increase conservation and responsible use message delivery in earned PR articles and impressions of delivered messages by 10% annually over the FY2012 baseline.

Goal 2: Promote safe fishing and boating practices.

SUGGESTED MEASURES

1. Increase page views to the boating and fishing safety pages by 10% annually from the FY2011 baseline of 25,939.

Goal 3: RBFF's communications will improve the public's understanding of the contribution of recreational angling and boating to the conservation of aquatic resources.

SUGGESTED MEASURES

1. Use of SFR logo on all RBFF printed and digital materials.
2. Increase conservation and responsible use message delivery in earned PR articles and impressions of delivered messages by 10% annually over the FY2012 baseline.

SPORT FISHING & BOATING
PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL

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