

Welcome to Boating and Fishing!

RBFF State R3 Program Grants

OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES

The primary goal of this project was to increase participation in boating and fishing by urban and multicultural audiences, with a special focus on including women, by building skills in a social environment at a two-day event called “Welcome to Boating and Fishing.”

Objectives:

- Provide participants professionally led, on-water boat handling training in both co-ed and women-only groups.
- Offer seminars on boating and fishing skills by professional captains and local expert guides.
- Provide hands-on trials and demonstrations of required boating safety equipment (flares, horns, and PFDs) and instruction on proper launching, retrieving and trailering boats.
- Provide a “Ladies, Let’s Fish” introductory fishing clinic followed by practice on a fishing boat.
- Remove barriers to boating (e.g., cost of ownership) by promoting area boating schools and clubs.
- Motivate the women participants to continue fishing and boating with free tech shirts.
- Host a “Women on the Water” weeknight event introducing boating opportunities (e.g., schools, classes, and boat sharing clubs) and teaching fishing basics.

RESULTS

- 18 women took on-water boating instruction “Women at the Wheel.”
- 30 women received basic fishing instruction May 6-7 and an additional 7 attended a second event. Most participants were Black or Latina.
- 24 new or returning boaters took co-ed on-water boating instruction and practiced basic maneuvers. Of these, 11 were women.
- 61 people registered for the event just for the seminars and boating skills demonstrations.
- 77% (of 9 respondents) felt they learned a lot by watching demonstrations of boat launching/retrieving and demonstrations of boating safety equipment.
- 92% (of 13 respondents) felt much more confident in their skills and abilities than before taking on-water boat handling instruction.
- 31% (of 6 respondents) said they would try boating schools, rentals or clubs this year; 50% replied “maybe.”
- 83.4% (of 6 respondents) said the instruction increased their knowledge and confidence to go fishing again.
- 80% of “Women on the Water” respondents expected to take introductory boating instruction in the next 12 months using the information they received. Excitingly enough, 80% had already gone fishing within one week of the event.

SUPPORT

“This partnership with RBFF allowed us to expand our work to recruit and retain boaters and anglers. R3 efforts underpin Maryland’s conservation work and are essential to our agency.”

- Sandi Olek, Director, Office of Outdoor Recreation

PARTNERS

- Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation
- Annapolis School of Seamanship
- Boat U.S. Foundation for Safety and Clean Water
- Marine Trades Association of Maryland & area boating clubs
- Fish Talk Magazine & Chesapeake Bay Media
- Angler’s Outfitters



Boating Safety Equipment Demos



Friends enjoying casting practice



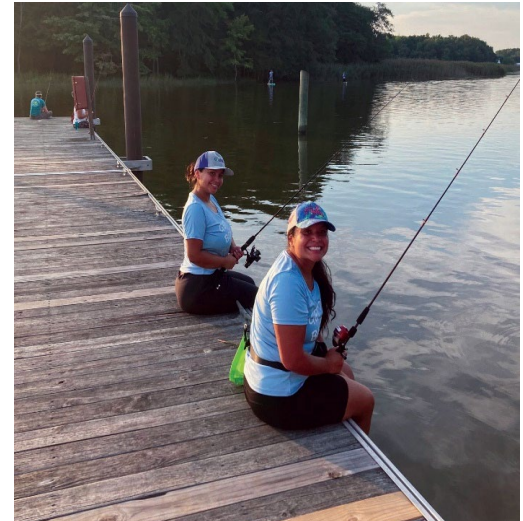
Women at the Wheel instruction

BENEFITS

- The primary benefit to our agency from the R3 Grant was being able to pay the Annapolis School of Seamanship to provide on-water boating instruction which is in high demand and extremely valuable.
- Using the School of Seamanship also made them responsible for insurance, waivers of liability, course content and providing boats and captains/instructors. They also had existing software to handle event registration.
- The grant funding also enabled us to hire a fishing boat through the School of Seamanship for the two-day event to take the new anglers out for practice and introduce them to the idea of head boats and alternatives to boat ownership to enjoy the water.
- We sold some fishing licenses because of hosting the events.



New anglers after casting practice by boat



Ladies with tech shirts and dry bag

METHODOLOGY

- Marketing efforts included DNR Facebook, Chesapeake Bay Media, Annapolis School of Seamanship and Angler's Outfitters near the event. Event information was shared with an estimated 34,433 people.
- Marketing flyer was translated into Spanish and posted on the event website; Event was promoted on Latino Outdoors and Outdoor Afro social media.
- Diverse imagery from RBFF, highlighting women and minorities, was used across all promotional products (web, social media, flyers and registration page).
- Top quality seminar speakers/teachers were recruited through local networking.
- A second event was hosted on September 12, 2023, called "Women on the Water." This event was a simpler, streamlined event for 3 hours that taught basic fishing skills and had a short presentation on the different ways to get started in boating and its benefits.
- Promotional items included dry bags (imprinted with "Take Me Fishing" and "Discover Boating") and tech shirts (imprinted with "Get On Board" and "I Like Making Waves Fishing and Boating in Maryland").

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LESSONS LEARNED & FUTURE PLANS

- Women and minorities are hungry for introductory opportunities to fishing, boating, and all manner of outdoor skills building.
- New and returning boaters are looking for hands-on instruction opportunities and don't know about schools and boat sharing clubs.
- DNR social media is an excellent way to reach minority customers.
- Having a smaller scale effort to introduce boating to new/curious audiences is a valuable and important alternative to hosting a bigger event for new/returning boaters.
- People who have never boated before would be glad to start with kayaking lessons which are easier and less costly to arrange. Kayaks fitted with fishing gear would be a logical way to combine an introductory boating and fishing clinic. ADA accessible kayak boarding piers should be utilized if possible.
- To make it easier to repeat, we will simplify our efforts to just the First Catch Trailer and boating outreach staffed by DNR and other partners and try to do "Women on the Water" 2-3 times a year. This reduces work involved in coordinating many volunteers and speakers. DNR has a fleet of kayaks and trained instructors that we hope to incorporate into a boating and fishing class.
- Maryland DNR will continue to partner with the Marine Trades Association of Maryland on Welcome to Boating and Fishing with MTAM as the lead. On-water boating instruction will have a fee but can be offset if MTAM has private sponsors.

