

INFORMING THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF IRRESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR ON THE WATER 3318FAN118231

U.S. Coast Guard Non-Profit Grant July 1, 2018 thru December 15, 2019

The objective of the *Informing the Public about the Consequences of Irresponsible Behavior on the Water* project, a federal non-profit grant of \$75,000 administered by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), is to reduce the incidence of impaired boater casualties by heightening public awareness of safer boating practices. Alcohol is the leading known cause of boating accidents.

The project's strategy uses the power of social influence to change boating behaviors. Influential celebrities were contracted to record short video public service announcements (PSA's) denouncing the use of alcohol while operating a boat. The video PSA's were distributed to boaters by a variety of methods informing, persuading and reminding boaters to avoid impairment while operating a boat.

Video PSA's were produced using celebrities such as professional anglers, professional water sports athletes, famous charter boat captains and marine related TV personalities who each pledged, on camera, that *"they don't drink alcohol on their boat and as a responsible boater, members of the public shouldn't either."* Many of the messages drew a comparison to driving a car where social norms against alcohol use are much stronger, however, the penalties for boating under the influence can be just as severe and the consequences just as deadly.

The project contracted America's most popular boating media outlets to distribute the video PSA's exclusively to boaters through traditional media such as websites and outbound electronic subscriber-based newsletters supported by social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. The media providers included *Boating, Saltwater Sportsman, Sport Fishing, WakeBoarding, Boating World, and In-Fisherman*.

The project produced and distributed fifteen celebrity endorsement video PSA's, not more than 60 seconds in length, including well-known personalities such as professional anglers Scott Martin, Bernie Schultz, Shaw Grigsby and Darcizzle; famous charter-boat captains George Poveromo, Rick Murphy, Benny Blanco and Chris Wittman; professional water sports athletes Danny Harf, Meagan Ethell, Sean Silveira, Steel Laferty and TV personalities Randy Vance, Chris Peterson and Doug Stange. Bonus distribution was provided by each celebrity's social media, some with as many as one-half million fans. Additional distribution was provided by the Water Sports Foundation's social media shared to USCG district pages.

The campaign was delivered on time and produced more than 3.4 million impressions 1.8 million from website promotions and an additional 783,982 from social media promotions. More impressive, are the results from the video PSA's which produced 204,690 views totaling more than 2,229 hours watched. Survey results show an impressive large-scale adoption of safer boating practices.

Recreational boating in America is safer as a result of the efforts provided by the non-profit grant project, *Informing the Public about the Consequences of Irresponsible Behavior on the Water*. For copies of the materials please contact the U.S. Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety & Auxiliary.

