

Department of Homeland Security
United States Coast Guard

**United States Coast Guard Auxiliary
Recreational Boating Safety Affairs Department**



State Liaison Guide



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Director for RBS Affairs

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USCG AUXILIARY RBS AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

STATE LIAISON GUIDE

1. Background - Auxiliary State Liaison Mission

The Auxiliary State Liaison Program is rooted in the *United States Code*, the National Recreational Boating Safety Program, the *Auxiliary Manual*, and the contents of this *State Liaison Guide*. The following is a brief description of these elements.

A. *United States Code (USC)*

The State Liaison Program is established by provisions of 14 U.S.C. §141 and 46 U.S.C. §13109 which authorize the Coast Guard to help states in their recreational boating programs. The State Liaison Program provides ways in which the Auxiliary can supplement state efforts in search and rescue, safety and regatta patrols, public education (PE), vessel safety checks (VSCs), verification of state maintained aids to navigation (AtoN), and other areas of recreational boating safety (RBS) as provided by the USC. In accordance with the USC, State Liaison Officers (SLOs) are responsible for communicating how the state, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), and the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary (USCG Auxiliary) may combine their respective assets to significantly enhance RBS mission implementation.

B. *Strategic Plan – National Recreational Boating Safety Program*

The *National Recreational Boating Safety Program Strategic Plan* spells out a strategy for increasing recreational boating safety efforts. The signatories of the 2007-2011 Plan represent 18 RBS organizations including the USCG and the Auxiliary. The first paragraph of the 2007-2011 *National Recreational Boating Safety Program Strategic Plan* states that the primary mission is to ensure that the public has a safe, secure, and enjoyable recreational boating experience by implementing programs that minimize the loss of life, personal injury, and property damage. Throughout the Strategic Plan, states are referred to as implementing partners.

C. *Auxiliary Manual*

The *Auxiliary Manual* (AUXMAN) establishes the Auxiliary State Liaison Program and provides the basic program elements that appear in various sections of this Guide.

D. State Liaison Guide

This *State Liaison Guide* has been developed to clearly and concisely explain the State Liaison Program. Auxiliarists who fulfill a leadership role in the State Liaison Program should become familiar with this Guide. It is designed with the online user in mind; the latest State Liaison Guide edition can be found at [State Liaison Documents](#) on the RBS Affairs website.

(1) SLO Test

Each newly assigned SLO should study this Guide carefully and then take an open book test on the Guide. This simple test can be obtained via email from the RBS Affairs Department's States Division Chief: [Pauline Longnecker](#); email: winter_dreams@msn.com.

(2) SLO Assistance

Whenever questions arise concerning contents of this Guide, you are encouraged to contact (in this order): the District Staff Officer for State Liaison (DSO-SL) (if assigned), the Auxiliary Regional States Division Branch Chief, or the Director, [RBS Affairs Department](#).

2. Leadership Roles

The following individuals play a critical role on the success of the SLO Program:

A. DISTRICT COMMODORE (DCO)

As stated in the AUXMAN, DCOs are responsible for supporting the State Liaison Program by appointing an Auxiliarist from each state in the District/Region in close coordination with the District Director of Auxiliary (DIRAUX), the state Boating Law Administrator (BLA), and the Auxiliary's Director of RBS Affairs Department (State Liaison Division). Those states within more than one district or region should have a single SLO acceptable to all DCOs. There should not be more than one SLO per state unless the state requests it. When the DCOs for a state with more than one Auxiliary district are unable to agree on a single SLO for the state, then the DCO whose district includes the state capitol will make the appointment recommendation. DCOs should coordinate this recommendation with the DIRAUX within their respective district/region.

(1) Performance Review

DCOs should review annually the performance of the SLO in consultation with the DSO-SL and the National Regional Branch Chief.

(2) Annual Planning Meeting

At the District's annual planning meeting, DCOs are encouraged to consider RBS goals that involve state partnerships as asset force-multiplication efforts. It is recommended that the DSO-SL and/or SLOs be included in planning discussions. Sample goals are found in section B(4), State Liaison Officer (SLO) below.

B. STATE LIAISON OFFICER (SLO)

(1) Qualifications

- a. An Auxiliarist appointed to serve as an SLO should be well versed in boating within the state, as well as RBS aspects of the USCG and USCG Auxiliary.
- b. The SLO must be an ambassador for the Auxiliary and the Coast Guard and must adhere to the Auxiliary's strict rules of conduct, dress code, and have overall knowledge of the Auxiliary and its missions.
- c. The SLO is expected to be familiar with the *State Liaison Guide*. The SLO is expected to take an exam to validate that they have studied the Guide ([request exam](#)).

(2) Guidance

- a. Guidance and mentoring are available from the DSO-SL if one has been appointed. The DSO-SL position is optional.
- b. Alternatively, if no DSO-SL has been appointed, the SLO can obtain guidance and mentoring from the RBS Affairs Department's Area SLO Branch Chief. For the SLO staff listing, refer to the [SLO Documents Section](#) on the RBS Affairs website.

(3) Relationships

- a. **State Boating Law Administrator (BLA)** – The SLO maintains a close relationship with the BLA and his/her staff, conferring at least semiannually, possibly in company with the Coast Guard RBS Specialist (RBSS) (described below) and the DCO. These meetings may be held at a regional or district BLA workshop. It might be possible to get on the agenda of such events to present the advantages of using Coast Guard and Auxiliary RBS assets and programs.

- b. **USCG District Recreational Boating Safety Specialist (RBSS)** – The SLO must be “in step” with the RBSS. The tasks performed by the RBSS have important consequences (including funding) for all stakeholders. Communicate regularly with the RBSS to develop a thorough understanding of Coast Guard and Auxiliary goals; this will aid in developing a unified approach to RBS efforts.
- c. **Auxiliary District and Division Staff Officers** – It is important that the SLO develops working relationships with appropriate Auxiliary district and division staff officers. The SLO should develop a good understanding of program concepts, local capabilities and limitations from these officers; this will enable an effective working relationship with all program stakeholders.
- d. **District Commodore** – The DCO and the SLO work together to develop strategies to meet state, USCG and Auxiliary recreational boating safety objectives. This relationship can be developed through the DSO-SL if one has been appointed.
- e. **RBS Affairs Department States Division Regional Branch Chief** – If no DSO-SL has been assigned, the SLO should work closely with the RBS Affairs States Division Regional Branch Chief, who will provide mentoring and general program guidance.

(4) SLO-BLA Meeting Topics/Goals

Meetings with the BLA should be preceded by prior planning and USCG and Auxiliary leadership buy-in as described elsewhere in this Guide. SLOs should use the following discussion list to develop and maintain a productive recreational boating safety program in their state:

- a. Review the previous year’s RBS accomplishments and consider how they can be improved in the current year.
- b. Discuss the Auxiliary’s National and District/Division RBS objectives and initiatives.
- c. Consider how the **National Safe Boating Week (NSBW)** can be supported, for example, suggesting that the state issue an NSBW Proclamation.
- d. **Public education** topics:
 - 1. Review the state’s boating education goals to determine what additional cooperation is needed between the Auxiliary and the state;

2. Request the BLA's support to publicize Auxiliary PE courses. This support may use state resources to disseminate this information to news media, marinas, game wardens, marine police, etc.;
 3. Encourage the BLA to use NASBLA approved PE courses if they are not already doing so;
 4. Obtain or maintain the state's recognition of appropriate Auxiliary PE courses as meeting any state boater education requirements;
 5. Provide orientation materials to all divisions and flotillas within the state concerning the state's boater education requirements.
- e. **Vessel safety check** topics:
1. Encourage the BLA to schedule vessel safety checks (VSCs) for all State vessels annually as a demonstration of the state's support of this valuable program;
 2. Confirm guidelines for conducting VSCs at state boat launching ramps.
- f. **Visual Aides** – Keep BLA staff supplied with appropriate Coast Guard and Auxiliary RBS pamphlets, posters, and videos. Determine the availability of similar materials produced by the state that could be distributed by the Auxiliary.
- g. **Operations** topics:
1. Identify where Auxiliary patrols are needed on sole-state waters;
 2. Inform the BLA and state officials of the proper request procedures for obtaining Auxiliary safety patrols on sole-state waters;
 3. Consider funding issues as appropriate;
 4. Seek the BLA's assistance when arranging for the use of state areas for Auxiliary communications sites;
 5. Consider using state-owned moorings by Auxiliary operational facilities when they are on patrol.
- h. **RBS Public Affairs** – Encourage joint state-Auxiliary participation at boat shows, marine events, and other public RBS affairs opportunities.

- i. **Joint recognition** topics:
 - 1. Work with the BLA to develop recognition for Auxiliary activities. Follow through to ensure that the recognition is given at an appropriate ceremony;
 - 2. When a state boating official deserves recognition from the Auxiliary or Coast Guard, make the recommendation to the DSO-SL or DCOS;
 - 3. District functions – Ensure that the BLA is invited to appropriate District and Division functions. Examples include speaking at a banquet or brief comments during the District Board Meeting.

- j. AUXINFO/AUXDATA statistics should be provided periodically to the BLA about PE classes, patrols, VSCs and other boating safety activities performed by the Auxiliary within the state.

- k. Changes in Auxiliary and Coast Guard policy and senior leadership that may affect state boating programs.

- l. Misunderstandings and challenges should be resolved. Establish guidelines for handling state or Auxiliary complaints so that they can be addressed quickly at the lowest level possible.

- m. Occasionally Auxiliarists contact the BLA directly about issues that should be handled by the SLO. The SLO may want to discuss this with the BLA, and set up procedures for referring these issues to the SLO first. If such policy is implemented, the SLO should contact the Auxiliarist within 24 hours.

- n. Cooperative agreements such as Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) that exist between the state, the Coast Guard, and the Auxiliary:
 - 1. A copy should be obtained by the SLO from the District Legal Staff Officer.
 - 2. The SLO works closely with the BLA, RBSS, and Auxiliary leadership to develop appropriate cooperative agreements as needed. These agreements should be reviewed regularly.
 - 3. Cooperative agreements should include current information to ensure that the Auxiliary functions as the premier volunteer RBS organization and partner of the state.

(5) Legislative Issues

- a. The SLO should remain current about all federal, state, and local RBS legislation.
- b. The SLO does not focus nor report *solely* on legislative issues because such issues are the primary responsibility of the Legislative Liaison Officer (LLO).
- c. The SLO is encouraged to attend regularly scheduled meetings of the state boating advisory council and commissions, as well as public meetings on boating matters. Attendance as an SLO will provide an understanding of current and future boating issues. In performing this task, the following guidance must be complied with:
 1. Attend these meetings in civilian clothes as an interested party only, not as an official representing the Auxiliary or the Coast Guard.
 2. An SLO also serving as an LLO, must follow the guidance provided by the current *LLO Guide* and Government Affairs Department Chain of Management.
 3. If an SLO feels that he/she should represent the USCG or the Auxiliary as an SLO or as an Auxiliarist on a legislative issue, the SLO is required to consult with the SLO's States Division Branch Chief who will work with the Government Affairs LLO Area Coordinator to assure such representation is in compliance with all established approval and guidance, including but not limited to COMDTINST 5730.
- d. A method by which SLOs, public education instructors, and other interested stakeholders can remain current in state RBS legislation and training opportunities, is to receive emails via the BLA listserv system. Each SLO should periodically remind BLA staff about the Auxiliary's BLA listserv system. To learn about this resource, go to [State Liaison Documents](#) on the RBS Affairs website.

(6) Reporting Requirements

- a. Each SLO shall submit at least one report each quarter. This report should describe your State Liaison-related activity such as meetings with BLA staff and other RBS stakeholders, as well as joint state-Auxiliary Recreational Boating Safety cooperation.

- b. SLO reports should be submitted to the DSO-SL if appointed, who will forward them to the RBS Affairs Department SLO Regional Branch Chief with copies to the DCO and DCOS. If there is no DSO-SL, the SLO should send the report directly to the SLO's Regional Branch Chief with a copy to his/her DCO and DCOS. The quarterly reports are due no later than the 15th of March, June, September, and December.
- c. The Regional Branch Chief will compile all reports and forward them to the States Division Chief, who will analyze them and forward them, along with his/her analysis to the Director for RBS Affairs.
- d. Reports should also be submitted after any meeting with the BLA or other significant events. They should also be filed with the DSO-SL (if any) or to the DCO and DCOS, as well as the RBS Affairs Department SLO Regional Branch Chief.
- e. Reports should normally be submitted via email. Reports should contain the following elements as applicable:
 - 1. SLO's name and state.
 - 2. A summary of any meetings or conferences attended. Include topics and goals pursued.
 - 3. A summary of joint state-Auxiliary RBS cooperative efforts.
 - 4. A summary of pending state legislative issues that may affect the State Liaison Program.
 - 5. A discussion of any difficulties encountered, along with actions to resolve them and assistance needed.
 - 6. State Liaison Program future plans and goals.

C. DISTRICT STAFF OFFICER – STATE LIAISON (DSO-SL)

- (1) The DSO-SL is responsible for administering the district's State Liaison Program and mentoring SLOs appointed within the District. Specific duties include:
- (2) Gather SLO reports and forward them to the RBS Affairs Department Regional Branch Chief, as well as the DCO and DCOS by the due dates listed in section (6)(b) above.

- (3) The DSO-SL works with the RBS Affairs Department Regional Branch Chief to perform an annual performance review for each SLO. The review consists of written and verbal feedback including positive aspects of performance and specific recommendations for improvement. The annual performance review should be completed no later than 1 October.
- (4) The DSO-SL will consult with their DCO or DCOS concerning new SLO appointments.
- (5) The DSO-SL should coordinate his/her efforts with their DSO-PE, DSO-VE, DSO-OP, and DSO-MS counterparts.
- (6) The DSO-SL shall explain the State Liaison Program, including specific requests of the SLOs, at the district's annual planning meetings. This will provide an opportunity to remind all participants about the need to involve states in RBS missions.

D. RBS AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT STATES DIVISION REGIONAL BRANCH CHIEFS (BC-BSS, BC-BSA, BC-BSI, BC-BSP)

- (1) Under the supervision of the States Division Chief, the Regional Branch Chiefs for Atlantic South, Atlantic North, Interior and Pacific shall establish working relationships with the State Liaison Officers.
- (2) Working relationships with SLOs include regular interaction through any appointed DSO-SLs for the assigned states.
- (3) Regional Branch Chief duties include:
 - a. Identify any issues that inhibit the smooth operation of the SLO program as it is outlined in the *State Liaison Guide*; if required, such issues should be discussed with the appropriate Auxiliary staff officers via the chain of management.
 - b. Mentor DSO-SLs and SLOs in the performance of their duties.
 - c. Solicit, compile, and analyze SLO quarterly reports, and forward them to the DVC-BS.
 - d. Work with the DSO-SLs to perform an annual performance review of all SLOs. If a district does not have a DSO-SL, the Regional Branch Chief will work directly with the district's DCO or DCOS to conduct the performance reviews.

- e. Remind DCOs of districts that lack a DSO-SL of the advantages of filling the position.
 - f. Conduct SLO workshops and training seminars as needed.
 - g. Provide information to DSO-SLs and SLOs about BLA regional/district conferences and workshops, and encourage their participation in these events.
- (4) The Regional Branch Chief should participate in the applicable NASBLA regional conference annually.

E. RBS AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT STATES DIVISION CHIEF (DVC-BS)

- (1) Under the supervision of the Director for RBS Affairs, the RBS Affairs Department States Division Chief mentors Regional Branch Chiefs, DSO-SLs, and SLOs to better understand the RBS Affairs State Liaison Program. Duties include:
- a. Assist and mentor Regional Branch Chiefs to carry out their assigned duties.
 - b. Develop and maintain a vibrant State Liaison Program with input and participation from Boating Law Administrators, District RBS Specialists, Auxiliary District Commodores, the National Executive Committee, and the Coast Guard Boating Safety Division.
 - c. Collect information about Auxiliary-state RBS cooperative efforts and inform the chain of management and leadership about these efforts.
 - d. Provide guidance on carrying out the State Liaison Program to SLO leadership listed in Section 2 above.
 - e. Maintain liaison and rapport with the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA).

F. DIRECTOR FOR RECREATIONAL BOATING SAFETY AFFAIRS (DIR-B)

- (1) Under the direction of the Assistant National Commodore for Operations Policy and Resources (ANACO-PR), and with guidance from the Deputy National Commodore for Operations Policy (DNACO-P), the Director for Recreational Boating Safety Affairs (DIR-B) aids in developing and

executing Auxiliary recreational boating safety affairs policy. Duties include:

- a. Be responsible for the Auxiliary's recreational boating safety (RBS) outreach program with external partners, boating safety organization liaisons, state boating law administrators, selected grant funding and informational resource services, and internal partners such as USCG District RBS Specialists and the USCG Commandant Offices of Boating Safety and Auxiliary.
- b. Establish and maintain partnerships with federal, state, territorial and local community agencies and organizations through the department's States Division.
- c. Establish liaison relationships with boating organizations through the department's Liaison Division, report on meetings with them, and recommend Auxiliary actions to the ANACO-PR.
- d. Provide informational and financial resource opportunities for the national membership through the department's Resources Division by using newsletters, web pages, and grants.
- e. Work with the National Commodore staff and Department directors, as needed, to provide expertise in liaison, state, and/or resource services to support the Auxiliary's RBS program.

G. USCG RBS SPECIALIST (RBSS)

- (1) Each CG District has a civilian employee called the Recreational Boating Safety Specialist (RBSS). Close contact and mutual support between the Auxiliary and the RBSS is critical.
- (2) The RBSS supports several states and may rely on the SLO's expertise to carry out the RBS mission goals in a state. SLOs should check with their DSO-SL or Regional Branch Chief for the protocol for their state.
- (3) The RBSS may organize an annual workshop for the BLAs, the Auxiliary, the U.S. Power Squadrons, and other boating safety organizations. The SLO may be funded to attend the workshop, depending on the funding availability. If the SLO is funded to attend, he/she should make every effort to participate and encourage their BLA to attend as well.
- (4) The most recent listing of RBS Specialists is available at [State Liaison Documents](#) on the RBS Affairs Department website.

H. BOATING LAW ADMINISTRATOR (BLA)

- (1) Each state has a Boating Law Administrator (BLA). This individual may be a senior member of a state law enforcement unit or a civilian in state service.
- (2) The mission of the BLA is to enhance state or territorial boating authority's ability to reduce death, injury, and property damage associated with recreational boating, and ensure a safe, secure, and enjoyable boating environment.
- (3) The BLA is involved in crafting and enforcing state boating laws, maintaining boating education and training standards, and addressing homeland security challenges on state waterways.

3. RESOURCES

A. **The RBS Affairs Department website** contains links to important RBS resources such as AuxBWiki, Coast Guard Boating Safety Division, USCG Navigation Center, National Transportation Safety Board, National Safe Boating Council, National Water Safety Congress and a list of RBS partners with which the Auxiliary has written agreements. Click on the [Documents](#) section of the RBS Affairs Department website to access applicable documents including the following:

- (1) **State Liaison Stakeholder Contacts** – This list is arranged by Region, District, and State to help the user find contact information for specific AORs.
- (2) **PowerPoint Presentation** – *State Liaison Program* - A PowerPoint presentation on the State Liaison Program is available for SLOs who are asked to make a presentation about the Program. SLOs are encouraged to modify the PPT as needed.
- (3) **BLA Listserv** – The BLA Listserv described in the SLO section above, emails interested Auxiliary stakeholders with information on legislative initiatives and training offered by the state.
- (4) **The Auxiliary Directory of Services** was established to inform the public about Auxiliary capabilities. This document is updated annually to reflect the latest missions and statistics. Each SLO should be familiar with the document and offer it to the BLA for reference.

B. The [NASBLA](#) website has valuable information relevant to the State Liaison Program from the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators.

- C. The [NASBLA Regional Associates](#) website allows the SLO to determine which regional NASBLA organization their state is assigned to so that funding might be pursued through District sources to attend the annual regional conference.
- D. The [AuxBWiki](#) provides additional support for the Auxiliary's RBS efforts in the State Liaison Program. The site is supported by the collaborative efforts of the RBS Affairs, Education, Vessel Exam and Public Affairs Departments, and provides easy access to proven ideas that promote RBS. Users are able to share their experiences, knowledge, and ideas.
- E. The [AuxDirectory](#) website is available to all Auxiliarists. You can access organizational structure, member qualifications, office and contact data. Search by clicking on the organizational unit you need or the member's last name, member number, email, qualification and office.