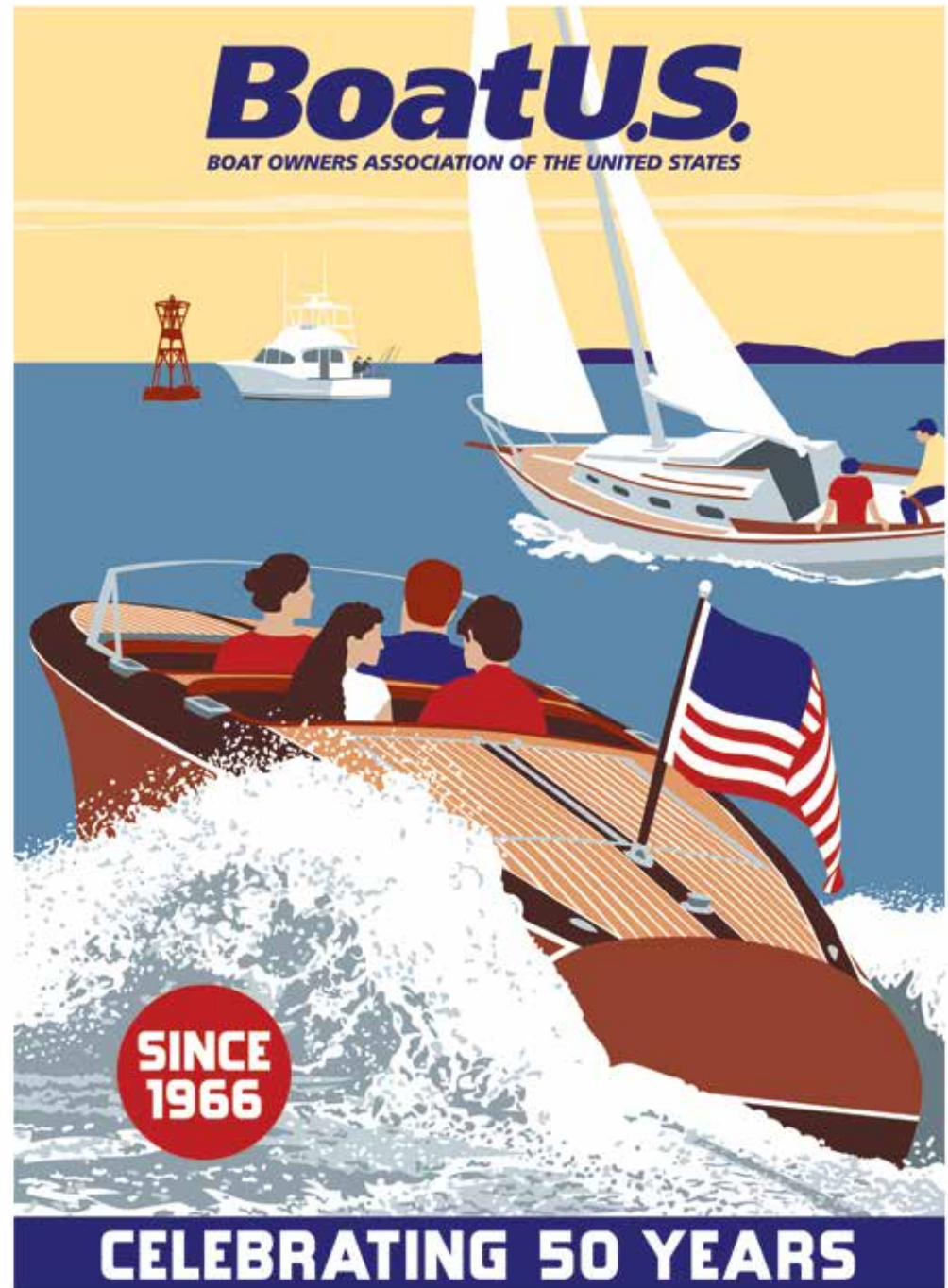




# The History of BoatU.S.

To get a free copy of the BoatU.S. 50th Anniversary poster on the right, email [publicrelations@BoatUS.com](mailto:publicrelations@BoatUS.com)



# The 1960's



1963

## PRINCETON UNIVERSITY AND YALE

**LAW** School graduate Richard Schwartz heads out on the Chesapeake Bay with a friend who had just bought a new boat. A short distance from the dock, the boat is boarded by the U.S. Coast Guard, who cites the boat owner for having a faulty engine-compartment ventilation system. Schwartz is stunned to discover that boat manufacturers have no liability for meeting government safety regulations, and the U.S. Coast Guard has no jurisdiction over the manufacturers to make sure they build a safe boats – so the Coast Guard was going after boat owners. Schwartz asks his boating friends if anyone is fighting for their interests – and the answer was no.



1964

**THE CAMPAIGN TO CREATE** the nation's largest recreational boating association kicks off. Richard Schwartz registers the name "Boat Owners Association of The United States" with the acronym "BoatU.S."



# 1966

**DICK ELLISON JOINS SCHWARTZ** and in March and they launch Boat Owners Association of The United States (BoatU.S.), based on a vision of service, savings and representation for the nation's boat owners, and log their first 1000 members. The first BOAT/U.S. Reports newsletter is published and a *New York Times* article quotes Schwartz stating 100,000 as the fledgling association's target goal for membership.

# 1967

**"WE'LL GET YOU, SCHWARTZ!"** These angry words were uttered to Schwartz by a boat manufacturing industry lobbyist in the heat of a Capitol Hill hearing on boating safety and consumer rights. In his testimony, Schwartz angered some in the room by telling lawmakers that boat owners were being unfairly targeted and ticketed by the U.S. Coast Guard for improper engine compartment ventilation on brand new boats. BoatU.S. also begins to offer the first recreational boat insurance policies in plain English, instead of using the old, often unintelligible Lloyd's of London language, marking the beginning of consumer-friendly boat insurance innovations BoatU.S. will provide its members.



# The 1970's



1970

**GAS IS** \$.59 per gallon.

**THE BOATU.S. CONSUMER PROTECTION BUREAU** was launched to bridge the gap between boaters and manufacturers or dealers. Since then, the Bureau has helped tens of thousands of boat owners resolve disputes with the marine industry, shared information on recalls, and has established an effective dispute resolution program with manufacturers and marine dealers.

1971

**THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT VICTORY** comes to BoatU.S. when President Nixon signs the Federal Boat Safety Act of 1971 – which Schwartz helped to write – into law giving the U.S. Coast Guard authority to regulate boat manufacturers, enacting a defect law for newly manufactured boats, and creating the U.S. Coast Guard Office of Boating Safety, which still works to reduce recreational boating injuries and fatalities.



# 1973-74

**DURING THE OPEC OIL EMBARGO,** BoatU.S. polls its members to assess the effect the fuel shortage is having on the availability of marina fuel. The answer: fuel was tight but not unavailable. BoatU.S. spreads the news and helps allay unnecessary anxiety among boaters.



# 1977



**ON MARCH 28,** Alexandria Virginia Mayor Frank Mann cuts a ribbon across BoatU.S.' new national headquarters at 880 South Pickett Street and marks the opening of BoatU.S.' first official retail store. A decade earlier, an incidental listing in the Association's newsletter for the "Boating Buy of the Month," a floating flashlight, was so popular that offerings grew into a retail store. Boating supply and equipment distributors refuse to sell products to the unknown association, so Schwartz focuses on "orphans" - competing products new to the market that other distributors refused to carry. By 2003, there are 62 BoatU.S. Marine Centers across the US and a wholesale division.

## **BOATU.S. MEMBERSHIP**

is nearly 30,000 and the annual BoatU.S. boating supply catalog grows to 18,671 products in 753 pages.



# 1979

**SCHWARTZ IS APPOINTED** by the U.S. Coast Guard Commandant to represent recreational boaters on the influential National Boating Safety Advisory Council, an acknowledgement of BoatU.S.' growing influence on the national boating safety stage.

# The 1980's



1980-81

**GAS TOPS** \$1.00 per gallon.

**IN APRIL**, a U.S. Department of Energy proposal to save fuel by banning weekend boating is defeated by intensive lobbying efforts by BoatU.S. including a deluge of 35,000 letters from BoatU.S. members

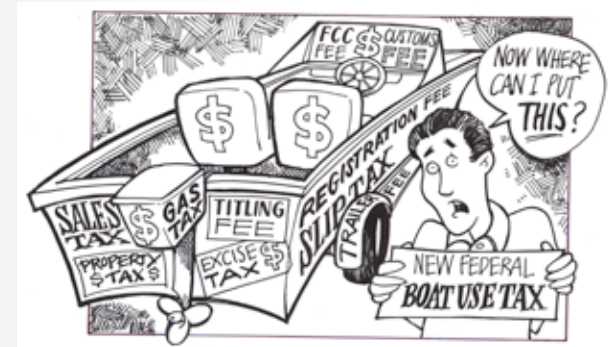
**AFTER TWO YEARS OF WORK**, President Carter finally signs the Recreational Boating Safety and Facilities Improvement Act, authorizing \$60 million in boating fuel taxes to be spent on boating safety programs and boating facility improvements over the next three years.

**THE BOATU.S. FOUNDATION** for Boating Safety is established to respond to safety education needs in an era of increased boating popularity and decreased public funding.



1982

**ON OPENING DAY** at the Annapolis Boat Show, Richard Schwartz proudly announces that BoatU.S. has reached 100,000 active members.



**1982-92 BOATU.S. LEADS THE SUCCESSFUL FIGHT** to repeal the Federal Boat "User Fee" Tax, saving recreational boaters up to \$600 annually.

1983

## THE BOATU.S. FOUNDATION FOR BOATING SAFETY

works with the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the United States Power Squadrons to develop a toll-free “boating safety course hotline” for the public to find local boating safety courses. Calls to the hotline nearly triple in just one year and eventually reach 50,000 calls a year by 2001. The service, now found at BoatUS.com/courseline, is still the largest source for course listings in the country.

## THE FIRST BOATU.S. CATASTROPHE

**TEAM** is established to assist the Houston Yacht Club following the disastrous landfall of Hurricane Alicia. Comprised of expert marine surveyors, claims adjusters and heavy equipment operators, in subsequent years the team becomes the “gold standard” for service to insured boaters after storm-related disasters. As a result of what it learns, BoatU.S. sets course to become the nation’s expert at hurricane damage avoidance for boats and marinas, offering free preparation materials for boat and yacht clubs, marinas and boatyards.



## BOATU.S. MARINE INSURANCE

**PROGRAM** launches a Damage Avoidance Program featuring a newsletter, *Seaworthy*, that takes a look into insurance claims files to inform boat owners how to avoid similar accidents and mishaps.

As a result of the U.S. Coast Guard no longer offering non-emergency assistance to boaters where towboat companies existed, the BoatU.S. Insurance policy becomes the first in the nation to feature on water towing coverage to its insureds.



1984

**AFTER MUCH** lobbying by BoatU.S., Congress passes legislation establishing the federal Wallop/Breaux Trust Fund. The practical “user pay, user benefits” program uses federal boat fuel and fishing tackle taxes to protect natural resources and enhance recreational fishing and boating opportunities. Now called the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, it continues to well serve as the backbone of boating safety, infrastructure, clean water and fisheries conservation funding in the United States. Since its inception, more than \$7.5 billion has been collected and allocated to the states.



**ON CAPITOL HILL** BoatU.S. first argues that recreational boats should be treated under the tax code the same way as second homes and recreational vehicles, convincing Congress to retain the IRS interest deduction for boat loans.

# The 1980's

1985

**BOATU.S. LAUNCHES** the Boat Finance and Documentation program.



1986

**BOATU.S. CELEBRATES ITS 20TH** anniversary and welcomes its 200,000th member.



**OFFERING JUST 12 LETTER COLORS**

and seven font styles, the BoatU.S. Graphics Department is created to offer affordable boat name graphics. Today, a wide range of letter and background colors and over 80 fonts are offered, as well as easy online and custom design services along with Top 10 boat names list, a directory of over 8,000 boat names and a "Oops Guarantee."



# 1987

**AFTER FUTILE ATTEMPTS AT FIGHTING** Federal budget cuts to the U.S. Coast Guard and Coast Guard Auxiliary for non-emergency towing service, BoatU.S., through a network of locally owned and operated licensees, begins providing options to all members for on water assistance including towing, fuel drop off, battery jump-starts and soft ungrounding services. Today, TowBoatU.S. offers the largest on water towing fleet in the nation with over 300 locations and 600 red towing response vessels, responding to over 70,000 requests for assistance each year.



# 1988

**THE BOATU.S. FOUNDATION FOR BOATING SAFETY** kicks off its inaugural Annual Grassroots Grants program designed to help local community groups promote boating safety education. In the 26 years since, the Foundation has awarded more than \$1.3 million in funds to local organizations, including clean water topics since 2000.



# 1989



**BOATU.S. MEMBERSHIP** reaches 300,000 members.

# The 1990's

1990-1991

**GAS IS** \$1.16 per gallon

**BOATU.S. IS** instrumental in eliminating the federal tax on diesel fuel used in recreational boats and also successfully lobbies to eliminate the FCC VHF radio marine radio license requirement for recreational boats less than 65 feet operating in US waters.



**GROWING AT AN INCREASING PACE,**  
BoatU.S. membership reaches 400,000.

1992-1993

**THE NON-PROFIT**

BoatU.S. Foundation completes an extensive inflatable life jacket study that eventually leads to U.S. Coast Guard approval of inflatable devices.



**DICK ELLISON RETIRES** after 28 years of service to the nation's boat owners.



# 1994

**BOATU.S. TOWING CREATES A 24-HOUR TOLL-FREE DISPATCH** line to a fledgling “brick” cell phone market to respond to members’ needs. The dispatch system pioneers the use of computer mapping to find the closest towboat while connecting the boater directly with the towboat captain through teleconferencing.



**THE NON-PROFIT** BoatU.S. Clean Water Trust is established to develop some of the first environmental stewardship information for boaters. The Trust works with states to create Clean Marina programs and raised boaters’ awareness on issues like trash disposal, boat sewage, and fuel spills. Also in 1994, the BoatU.S. Foundation undertakes a groundbreaking study on the causes of nighttime boating fatalities after the death of two Cleveland Indian baseball players in an evening accident in a small bass boat. The study results in the development of a High Risk Night-time Boater Profile that is still referenced today.



**BOATU.S. MEMBERSHIP** reaches 500,000.



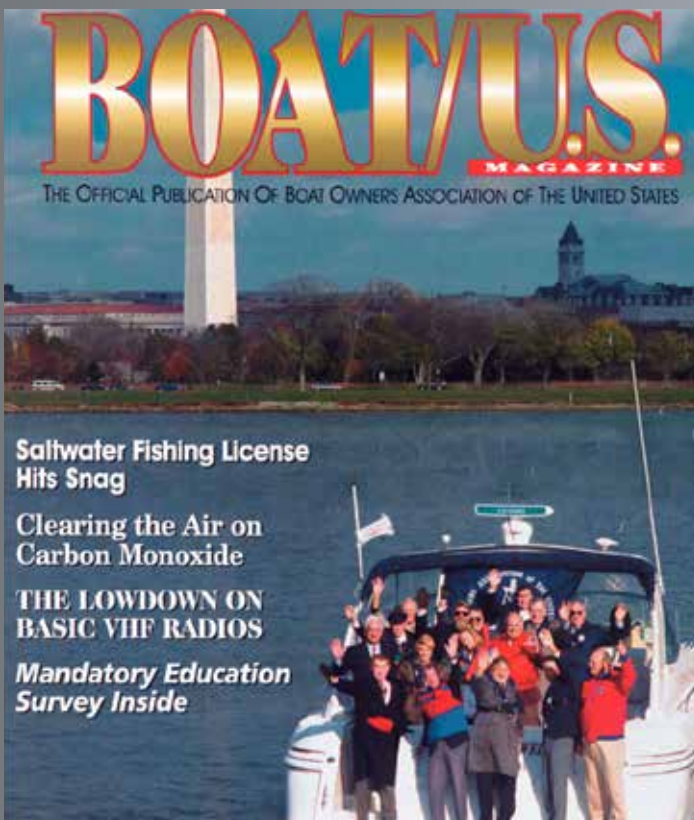
# 1995

**THE BOATU.S.** Cooperating Marina Program is created to give members exclusive discounts at marinas and other boating related businesses such as tackle shops and guide services. Today, BoatU.S. members enjoy up to 10 cents off per gallon of fuel at over 360 participating marinas, while over 800 marinas and boatyards also offer up to a 25% discount on transient slip fees.



**THE BOATU.S.** Foundation for Boating Safety starts renting life-saving 406 MHz Emergency Position Indicating Rescue Beacons (EPIRBs). To date, the Foundation has rented EPIRBs over 5,000 times with 29 activations. 71 lives have been saved.

# The 1990's



1996

**IN THE** 30th anniversary year, the Association replaces the tabloid-form newsletter, *BOAT/U.S. Reports*, with a full-color *BoatU.S. Magazine*, which today is the widest read boating magazine in the U.S. with a circulation of 530,000.



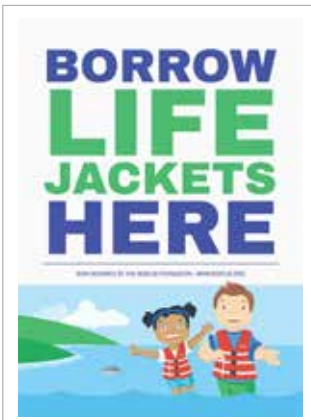
**THE BOATU.S.** Foundation launches the first and now the only free online Boating Safety Course in the nation. Numerous revisions of course content and animations have helped it remain one of the most popular courses available – to date over one million boaters have registered for the course that now meets the boating safety requirement in 34 states.

**THE BOATU.S.** Clean Water Trust “Help Stop the Drops” clean fueling campaign is created to encourage boaters and marinas to fuel cleanly and safely. A decade later, nearly 1,000 marinas have participated educating boater and fuel dock staff to help to keep small spills out of the water.



# 1997

**THE BOATU.S.** Foundation starts the “Life Jacket Loaner Program for Kids.” Today, it is the nation’s largest child life jacket loaner program loaning out over 140,000 life jackets each year at nearly 600 locations, from marinas, boat clubs and restaurants to firehouses, marine police, and TowBoatU.S. ports.



**FOR THE** first time, BoatU.S. stores open to non-members and offer a member rewards program. Today BoatU.S. members enjoy the highest rewards program level - 4% back – with purchase at West Marine stores.



# 1998



**BOATU.S. LAUNCHES** the Trailer Assist & Towing program offering 24-hour dispatch of roadside assistance for trailer boaters since most auto clubs won’t tow boat trailers. Today, for an additional \$14 to BoatU.S. membership, “Unlimited Trailer Assist” provides up to 100 miles of on road towing for both the tow vehicle and boat trailer, tire service, ramp winching, key lock-out, and fuel drop-off service as well as two special editions of *Trailer Magazine* just for trailerboaters. Trailer Assist relies on a nationwide network of 18,000 roadside towing companies that can handle both tow vehicles and boat trailers.



# 1999

**BOATU.S. OPENS** an online store that is described as “the biggest boating supply store on the Internet” with over 28,000 items and a “tech tips” library offering advice on “everything from anchoring to zinc.” These now updated tech tips live online in the BoatTECH section of BoatUS.com.



# The 2000's



2000

**GAS IS** \$1.48 per gallon

**BOATU.S. BECOMES THE SECOND LARGEST** employer in Alexandria, VA with over 500 employees. Richard Schwartz creates the Sea Scout National Flagship Award to recognize local organization or "Ship" excellence and mark the 90th anniversary of Sea Scouting. The BoatU.S. Foundation and the BoatU.S. Clean Water Trust merge to become the BoatU.S. Foundation for Boating Safety and Clean Water.

2001

**THE BOATU.S. FOUNDATION** earns the prestigious Summit Award from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), its highest honor. Given for the Foundation's Online Boating Safety Course, the award shows how associations can leverage resources to solve problems and improve world conditions.

**THE BOATU.S. FOUNDATION ISSUES FOUNDATION FINDINGS #35**, one of the first looks at the new image stabilized binoculars. Prices for the "revolutionary" technology can run upwards of \$5000 (or about \$6,750 in 2015 dollars). To date, 54 independent tests have been done giving boaters a practical look at how safety and environmentally friendly products perform on the water, including "green" boat cleaning products.



## 2002-2003

### IN POST 9/11 AMERICA

and for the first time, the BoatU.S. Annual List of Top Ten Boat Names contains monikers with patriotic flavor. "Liberty" and "Victory" now appear at #1 and #2 spots respectively.



### IN JANUARY THE

**BOATU.S. PRODUCT DIVISION** – a 900+ page catalog, 62 retail Marine Centers and wholesale operation - is sold to West Marine and a unique partnership created to offer BoatU.S. membership and towing services at all 300+ West Marine stores.

### IN SEPTEMBER BOATU.S. ACQUIRES

**VESSEL ASSIST** Association of America, the largest on water towing fleet on the Pacific Coast. The move adds 100 towboats in 26 ports from San Diego to British Columbia, nearly 30,000 new BoatU.S. members, and a new West Coast 24-hour dispatch center connected to a coastal mountaintop high-site VHF communications system which provides radio communications far out to sea – a unique aspect not found with any other on water boat towing company.

**THE FOUNDATION** receives a prestigious national Public Service Award for the Life Jacket Loaner Program for Kids from the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators.

## 2004-2005

### THE MOST DEVASTATING 14-MONTH

**PERIOD** for boaters from hurricanes with seven major storms making landfall: Charley, Ivan, Jeanne, Dennis, Frances, Katrina, Wilma. The BoatU.S. CAT Team rises to the occasion and successfully handles more insurance policy claims during that period than any other time (even with Super Storm Sandy in 2012 which was the largest single event in BoatU.S. history).



**THE FIRST-EVER** BoatU.S. National Collegiate Bass Fishing Championship is held on Lake Lewisville, TX.



## 2006

### THE BOATU.S.

**FOUNDATION** and the Personal Flotation Device Manufacturers Association present a \$5,000 award to the winner of the first ever Life Jacket Design Competition at the Miami International Boat Show.



### AFTER A DISTRICT COURT DECISION,

the EPA starts wrestling with a proposed operational permit that could be required for each boat in each state. BoatU.S., working with the marine industry, launches a massive two-year lobbying effort arguing for practicality based on hard science. Congress passes the Clean Boating Act, exempting recreational boats from permits intended to address ocean-going ships and offshore sources of invasive species. Today BoatU.S. continues to work with the EPA on rules and regulations affecting boaters.



# The 2000's



2007

## THE BOATU.S. FOUNDATION WINS

*MotorBoating's* "Best of the Year Award" for its EPIRB Rental Program and BoatUS.com receives an average of 500,000 visitors monthly.



**BOAT AMERICA CORPORATION**, the stock company that provides the services to BoatU.S., is sold by an ESOP to a Berkshire Hathaway owned subsidiary, National Indemnity Company. Most recently, on January 1, 2015, BoatU.S. is transferred to GEICO, another Berkshire Hathaway company, to better align for growth. BoatU.S. remains dedicated to its role as the nation's leading advocate and organization for boaters, fighting for their rights, and helping them enjoy their time on the water by providing the best services – insurance and on water towing – as well as savings, safety, and clean water efforts.

## TO DRAW NATIONAL ATTENTION TO THE LOSS

of working boatyards and marinas, BoatU.S. partners with the Virginia Sea Grant Extension Program to convene the first-ever National Working Waterfronts and Waterways



Symposium in Norfolk, Virginia. The forum showcases legal, legislative and cooperative solutions to preserving water access

before a national audience of policy makers, elected officials, land use planners and scholars. Since then, three successively larger solution-gathering national symposia have been held in 2010, 2013, and 2015.

# 2008

**IN AN EFFORT TO HELP** the storm-struck marina industry recover after years of intense hurricane activity and ensure boaters have dockage for their boats after a storm hits, BoatU.S. holds the first ever, two-day Marina Hurricane Preparation Symposium designed to reduce damage to and the loss of boats and marinas to storms. Over 220 marina



operators, salvors, surveyors, boating businesses and BoatU.S. CAT Team members attend.

# 2009

**IN MAY**, joining a chorus of boat, car and engine manufacturers including the National Marine Manufacturers Association and environmental groups such as the Sierra Club, BoatU.S. says “Not so fast” to a petition brought by the corn ethanol lobby to the EPA to increase the amount of ethanol mandated in gasoline from 10% (E10) to 15% (E15).



**JUST FOUR YEARS AFTER IT BEGAN**, the 2009 BoatU.S. National Collegiate Bass Fishing Championship registers a record 286 student anglers representing 73 universities making it the largest collegiate bass fishing tournament ever held to date. Today, BoatU.S. remains an event sponsor while over 600 colleges have fishing clubs, making it one of the fastest growing team sports in the U.S.



**THE BOATU.S. ONLINE CONSUMER PROTECTION DATABASE** reaches its 10,000th entry, and it remains the only nationwide database of consumer complaints and safety information reported by boat owners, the U.S. Coast Guard, manufacturers, marine surveyors and marine technicians.

**BOATU.S. MAGAZINE'S** major redesign also receives a 2009 APEX Award in the category of “Most Improved Magazines and Journals” (now regularly 96 pages).



**IN JULY, BOATU.S. MEMBERS** have on water towing service at the first location on the Hawaiian archipelago, Vessel Assist Oahu.

# The 2010's



2010

**GAS IS \$2.78 per gallon**

**RENTED AT THE LAST MINUTE**, an EPIRB from BoatU.S. Foundation saves three lives off the California coast.



2011

**BOATERS, MARINE AND TOURISM**

**INTERESTS** are urged to attend the City of St. Augustine, Florida, Draft Anchoring Ordinance Meeting on May 26 to discuss options for regulating transient vessel anchorages. Florida Anchoring Rights remain at forefront on BoatU.S. lobbying efforts today.



**BOATU.S. OFFERS** the first smart phone App – the BoatU.S. Towing App – that helps recreational boaters call for a tow in a hurry, greatly improving towboat response times due to the accuracy of the GPS technology. A 'Call Now for a Tow' button automatically provides BoatUS Dispatch Centers with critical information before voice communication takes place.



**ON EARTH DAY** the BoatU.S.

Foundation and BoatU.S. Headquarters staff in Virginia build 400 fishing line recycling line bins that are given out at no cost. When Hurricane Irene strikes

# 2012

# 2013

the mid-Atlantic, the value of pre-storm “Haul-Out” reimbursements to insureds totals over \$216 Million. This innovative BoatU.S. Marine Insurance Policy benefit helps prevent both boat and marina damage by paying up to half of the removal cost to lift boats out of the water and store on land. It is one of many boat insurance innovations BoatU.S. offers its members, including being the first to offer boat insurance policies in easily understood terms.



**BOATU.S. HAND DELIVERS** over 15,000 comments from concerned boaters, sailors and anglers to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) demanding that the agency not go forward in its plans to allow a private company, LightSquared, to build up to 40,000 ground stations for a new nationwide broadband wireless telephone network. These stations put the future reliability of the Global Positioning System (GPS) across the United States – and the ability of mariners to safely navigate – at risk. The plans fail to win government support.



**OVER 65,000 RECREATIONAL BOATS** are damaged or lost when Superstorm Sandy strikes the Northeast’s most densely populated boating region, making it the single-largest industry loss to recreational boats since the Association began keeping track in 1966. BoatU.S. mobilized its largest-ever Catastrophe Team with nearly 100 members working with hundreds of professional boat haulers, marina staffers, TowBoatU.S. companies, crane and barge operators in over a dozen states. The BoatU.S. CAT Team salvages thousands of boats from the NY-NJ region and as far north as Maine and inland to Michigan.



**AFTER PILOTING** Boat Owners Association of The United States through seven presidential administrations, creating the country’s largest on water towing fleet, and growing the Association to be the nation’s most powerful advocate and friend for over half a million members, BoatU.S. Chairman and Founder Richard Schwartz retires at age 83.



**THE U.S. COAST GUARD ESTIMATES** that 80% of all DSC VHF mayday calls have no vessel location and BoatU.S. campaigns to educate boaters to connect their DSC VHF to their chartplotter or GPS.

**IN DECEMBER,** BoatU.S. urges boaters to speak up about proposed access changes to Biscayne National Park, Florida, a boating and fishing mecca east of Miami. Also in December, BoatU.S. speaks up for America’s boat owners at EPA ethanol hearings on Capitol Hill. While supportive of renewable fuels, BoatU.S. continues to work for a fuel supply that works in marine engines, both new and vintage.

# The 2010's



2013

## OF THE 600+ RED TOWING VESSELS

**NATIONWIDE**, the TowBoatU.S. towing fleet gets its first bright pink towboat when TowBoatU.S. Detroit paints its vessel pink in honor of breast cancer research and donates a portion of revenue to its cause. Also in 2013, the BoatU.S. 24-hour Dispatch Center takes its 500,000th call for assistance on the water.



**AT THE SMITHSONIAN MUSEUM** of Natural History in Washington, DC, the newly updated Sant Ocean Hall reopens to include the display of a NOAA/BoatU.S. Foundation fishing line recycling bin, one of several thousand bins BoatU.S. employees have constructed and the Foundation has distributed to keep discarded fishing line from harming fisheries.

2014

**AFTER A GROUNDSWELL** of grassroots recreational boater support driven by BoatU.S. and its partners, the Florida House of Representatives votes down a legislative amendment that would have thrown out a statewide effort to develop consistent and rational anchoring options for cruising boaters, negatively impacting anchoring in some of the most important areas along Florida's coasts.

**BOATU.S. TOWS 1,800** boats nationwide over the Memorial Day holiday weekend, the traditional kick-off of the summer recreational boating season. On the busiest boating day of the year – the July 4 holiday period – over 4,500 requests for assistance have historically been logged.

**IN CHICAGO**, BoatU.S. urges area boaters to speak out against a proposal that would require all self-serve gas stations in the city to sell gasoline with higher levels - 15% - of ethanol (E15). It is defeated.



# 2015

**THE TOTAL HULL VALUE** of all boats insured with BoatU.S. Marine Insurance Program reaches \$7.4 Billion, while a much-needed specialized insurance policy for peer-to-peer rental networks is offered to boaters for the first time.

**IN A MOVE TO ALIGN** its on water towing service under one national brand, BoatU.S. changes the name of its West coast-based Vessel Assist towing fleet to TowBoatU.S.



**FOUNDER RICHARD SCHWARTZ** crosses the bar February 11, 2015, at the age of 85.

