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For Immediate Release



1st California Boating Congress Broaches Critical Marine Industry and Recreation Issues with State Legislators

More than seventy marine industry leaders and boating advocates congregated at the California State Capital on March 8th, organized by the Marine Recreation Association (MRA), to meet with legislative representatives, and "chart the future of boating policy in California"

Kevin Ketchum, Immediate Past President of the MRA, welcomed attendees to the morning session at the Hyatt Regency Sacramento, a prelude to meetings in the afternoon at the Capital. "I'm blown away by the participation today," he said. "One way or the other we are all associated with recreational boating, which is one of the pillars of the California image and lifestyle." He reminded the attendees that based on National Marine Manufacturer Association data, the total annual economic impact of recreational boating in the state is more than \$8.9 billion, with 826,596 registered vessels, and accounting for approximately 71,700 jobs statewide.

David Dickerson, Director, NMMA, followed the opening comments with a presentation covering the "State of the U.S. Recreational Boating Industry," stating, "we are here to be authentic representatives of our brand to the government, which has not been supportive of our industry in the past." Mr. Dickerson provided more industry economic data on the national and state sides, and then shifted his discussion to the NMMA's boating advocacy efforts, focusing on the "Discover Boating" campaign, and the evolving ethanol



(E15) regulations that threaten the industry. He also reviewed the NMMA's BOATPAC initiative and the upcoming American Boating Congress, scheduled for May 9-11, 2016, in Washington DC.

Ramona Fernandez, Chief, Boating Operations, California Division of Boating & Waterways, provided an overview of DBW programs and expenditures, and followed up later with more information regarding DBW grant funding for the Abandoned Watercraft Abatement Fund and Vessel Turn-In Program, designed to remove and prevent abandoned recreational vessels and other marine debris in state waterways.

Kevin Ketchum educated the group about the Copper TMDL dilemma in Southern California harbors, and the potential expansion of cumbersome regulation and testing statewide, which would have a huge negative impact on the industry and recreational boaters.

The continuing water hyacinth disaster in the California Delta was covered by Bill Wells, Executive Director, California Delta Chambers & Visitors Bureau, and a member of the Delta Protection

Commission Advisory Committee. The state DBW and other agencies have improved eradication efforts recently, but this highly-invasive weed continues to have serious negative impact on both recreational and commercial boating activities.



*Mark Sanders - R.J. Lorenzi - Greg Gibeson - Jerry
Desmond*

Bill Krauss, the MRA's Lobbyist with The Apex Group, spoke during lunch giving attendees "Tips for Talking with Your Legislator," emphasizing the need for consistent and straightforward communication.

After lunch, CBC attendees moved to the State Capital for a series of small group meetings with their respective state legislators and staff. More than forty representatives from the state assembly and senate met with Boating Congress constituents to discuss pertinent marine industry concerns. MRA Board Member, RJ Lorenzi, commented afterwards, "I think it was very worthwhile to meet with so many legislative representatives in this environment. I think we gave them a lot of economic and demographic information they lacked before, and this type of interaction can only help in the future."

The 2016 California Boating Congress was the result of collaboration between the MRA and eight other boating related groups, including California Yacht Brokers Association, National Marine Manufacturers Association, California Marine Affairs and Navigation Conference, California Parks Hospitality Association, California Sport Fishing League, California Delta Chambers & Visitors Bureau, Sacramento Valley Marine Association, and the Worldwide Boaters Safety Group.

For additional information about the Marine Recreation Association, and all of its activities and interests, please contact Mariann Timms by phone at (209) 334-0661; email at mra@marina.org or online at <http://marina.org>.