

Department of Homeland Security  
United States Coast Guard

**United States Coast Guard Auxiliary  
Recreational Boating Safety Outreach Directorate**



**State Liaison Guide**



Approved November 2021

# USCG AUXILIARY RBS OUTREACH DIRECTORATE 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 Coast Guard Auxiliary Strategic Plan, 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 Plans*

Both the Coast Guard and the Auxiliary Strategic Plans emphasize the importance of promoting and improving recreational boating safety plans [which are updated periodically](#).

### 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* is provided to clearly and concisely explain the State Liaison Program. All 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 Outreach 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 Outreach Directorate's Districts Liaison Division Chief who is identified on the RBS Outreach website.

**(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 Districts Liaison Division Branch Chief, or the Division Chief, Districts Liaison RBS Outreach Directorate.

**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 Division Chief of RBS Outreach Directorate, Districts 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 requested by the state. 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 Regional Branch Chief, Districts Liaison Division, RBS Outreach Directorate.

**(2) Annual Planning Meeting**

At the District's annual planning meeting, DCOs are encouraged to consider RBS goals that involve state partnerships as a key asset. 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 shall be well versed in boating within the state, as well as in RBS initiatives and priorities 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 must possess an 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. To request the exam, contact the Division Chief, District Liaison Outreach Directorate.

## (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 may obtain guidance and mentoring from the RBS Outreach Regional SLO Branch Chief. For the SLO staff listing, refer to the RBS Outreach website or the Auxiliary AUXOFFICER directory.

## (3) Relationships

- a. **State Boating Law Administrator (BLA)** – The SLO shall maintain a close relationship with the BLA and his/her staff and shall confer with the BLA at least monthly, possibly in company with the Coast Guard RBS Specialist (RBSS, described below), and if possible, the DCO. These meetings may be held at a regional or district BLA workshop. It may be possible to get on the agenda of such events, so as to present to the workshop, the advantages of using Coast Guard and Auxiliary RBS assets and programs. If the BLA is not available, the SLO should have another contact to work with regarding the states activities. If the SLO is not able to contact the BLA after several attempts, the SLO should follow the chain of leadership for assistance.
- 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. SLOs should 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 develop 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 shall work together to develop strategies to meet state, USCG and USCG Auxiliary

recreational boating safety objectives. This relationship can be developed through the DSO-SL if one has been appointed.

- e. **RBS Outreach Directorate District Liaison Division Regional Branch Chief** - If no DSO-SL has been assigned, the SLO should work closely with the RBS Outreach District Liaison Division Regional Branch Chief, who will provide mentoring and general program guidance.
- f. **Education Directorate - BA-ETR (Branch Assistant - Regulatory Requirements)**- The SLO should regularly consult with the BA-ETR in the Education Directorate to compare each other's results of monitoring of state law changes that affect the Auxiliary including the Education Directorate.

#### **(4) SLO-BLA Meeting Topics/Goals**

Meetings with the BLA should be preceded by appropriate planning, and the SLO should obtain the prior “buy-in” of USCG and Auxiliary leadership to these plans; 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, the SLO might suggest that the state issue an NSBW Proclamation.
- d. Pending legislative issue regarding boating/water safety.
- e. 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. This should be accomplished in coordination with the National Public Education Directorate, which is ultimately responsible for such certification.

5. Provide orientation materials to all divisions and flotillas within the state concerning the state's boater education requirements. To keep abreast of such state changes the SLO should inquire about any anticipated changes that a state may make to the PE requirement. All new changes should be communicated to the District and National PE Directorate.
- f. 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.
- g. 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.
- h. 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 the use of state-owned moorings by Auxiliary operational facilities when they are on patrol.
- i. RBS Public Affairs – Encourage joint state-Auxiliary participation at boat shows, marine events, and other public RBS affairs opportunities.
- j. 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 making brief comments during the District Board Meeting.
- k. AUXINFO/AUXDATA statistics should be provided periodically to the BLA detailing PE classes, patrols, VSCs and other boating safety activities performed by the Auxiliary within the state. In

October, the SLO should provide statistics to the BLA for their end of the year reports to Coast Guard.

- l. The SLO should remain current on changes in Auxiliary and Coast Guard policy and senior leadership that may affect state boating programs.
- m. 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.
- n. Occasionally Auxiliarists contact the BLA directly with respect to issues that should properly 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.
- o. Procedures for 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 Staff Officer-Legal or the RBSS.
  - 2. The SLO shall work 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 report *solely* on legislative issues because such issues are the primary responsibility of the Legislative Liaison Officer (LLO).
- c. An SLO also serving as an LLO should send a separate report or updates to the ANACO-CC with copies sent to the Regional Branch Chief and Division Chief of the Districts Liaison Division, RBS Directorate.
- d. 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- and not as an official representing the Auxiliary or the Coast Guard.
2. Public Appearances  
Auxiliarists may appear and testify as private citizens at legislative hearings or political meetings without Coast Guard approval. If Auxiliarists appear and/or testify as a private citizen on a matter related to the Coast Guard or the Auxiliary, they must provide the Chief Director and the local Director with advance notification. If Auxiliarists appear and/or testify in a private capacity, they may not wear the uniform, use an Auxiliary title, or otherwise indicate that they represent the Coast Guard or the Auxiliary. ( AUXMAN Ref Chapter 5.C.1)
3. State and Legislative Hearing Dealing with RBS.  
Auxiliarists may appear and testify in an official capacity (i.e., assigned to duty, in uniform and using their Auxiliary title) at State or local legislative hearings on matters relating directly and strictly to RBS when determined to be in the best interest of the Department of Homeland Security and the Coast Guard. Legislative testimony will normally be limited to appearances before legislative bodies with jurisdiction over boating safety matters when official testimony will help educate the legislators on factual matters. Policy and Procedures for Approving the Participation and Testimony of Coast Guard Employees Before Non-Federal Executive or Legislative Proceedings, COMDTINST 5730.4, provides additional information and guidance. (AUXMAN REF Chapter 5 C.2.b).
4. Processing and Approval of Requests for Official Testimony  
Immediately upon receipt of such a request, an Auxiliarist shall notify the appropriate District Commodore (DCO) via the Auxiliary State Legislative Liaison Officer (SLLO). The DCO shall expeditiously review, endorse, and forward the request to the Director. A positive endorsement shall include the recommendation of a knowledgeable Auxiliarist to testify. The Auxiliarist identified to testify should be a resident of the state in which the testimony will occur. The Director shall expeditiously consult with the District RBS Specialist and the District Staff-Legal Officer to determine whether the hearing relates directly and strictly to RBS and if Auxiliary participation will be in the best interest of the Department of Homeland Security and the Coast Guard. To assist all parties in making such determinations, due consideration shall be given to paragraph A.3 of Chapter 2 and the Auxiliary cornerstone mission of improving the knowledge, safety skills, and operating environment of recreational boaters. Consideration shall also be given to the potential impacts of such an appearance on other



regional matters involving the Coast Guard or department that may be subject of recently completed, ongoing, or anticipated review by the individual or committee that is conducting the hearing. If time is of the essence due to short advance notice of invitation to testify, then the Director shall contact the District Duty Legal Officer for a timely determination. The District RBS Specialist shall inform the Boating Safety Division (CG-5422) and shall assist the SLLO and Auxiliary National Legislative Liaison Committee (NLLC) to prepare the Auxiliarist to testify. In all circumstances, the Director shall obtain prior approval by the District Commander, or their designated representative, after obtaining the concurrence of the District Legal Officer, or duty attorney after normal working hours. (AUXMAN Ref Chapter 5.C.2.b)

- e. One method by which SLOs, public education instructors, and other interested stakeholders can remain current in state RBS legislation, education classes and training opportunities is to use the NASBLA State Template Launch under Education.

#### **(6) Reporting Requirements**

- a. Each SLO shall submit at least one report each quarter. This report should describe the SLO's State Liaison-related activity such as meetings with BLA staff and other RBS stakeholders, as well as instances of joint state-Auxiliary Recreational Boating Safety cooperation. A report should be submitted if there is activity that needs to be reported to update the Change of Leadership. These reports should also be sent to the respective Division Commander(s) located in the State.
- b. SLO reports should be submitted to the DSO-SL if appointed, who will then forward them to the RBS Outreach Directorate SLO Regional Branch Chief Districts Liaison Division, 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 of the Districts Liaison Division 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 Outreach.
- 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 Outreach Directorate Districts Liaison Division 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. Reports must detail 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 taken to resolve them and assistance needed.
6. State Liaison Program future plans and goals.
7. Services provided along with hours and number of volunteers who assisted with VE, PE, PA and OP RBS missions with State or Agency activities.

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

The DSO-SL is responsible for administering the district's State Liaison Program, and mentoring SLOs appointed within the District. Specific duties shall include:

- (1) Gathering SLO reports and forwarding them to the RBS Outreach Directorate Regional Branch Chief, Districts Liaison Division as well as to the DCO and DCOS by the due dates listed in section (6)(b) above.
- (2) The DSO-SL works with the RBS Outreach Directorate Regional Branch Chief, Districts Liaison Division, 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.
- (3) The DSO-SL will consult with their DCO or DCOS concerning new SLO appointments.
- (4) The DSO-SL should coordinate his/her efforts with their DSO-PA, DSO-PE, DSO-VE, DSO-OP, and DSO-MS counterparts.
- (5) 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.
- (6) If there is not an appointed DSO-SL, the SLO will report directly to the Regional Branch Chief, Districts Liaison Division, RBS Outreach Directorate.

**D. RBS OUTREACH DIRECTORATE DISTRICTS LIAISON DIVISION  
REGIONAL BRANCH CHIEFS (BC-BDS, BC-BDA, BC-BDW, BC-BDP)**

- (1) Under the supervision of the Districts Liaison Division Chief, the Regional Branch Chiefs for Atlantic South, Atlantic North, Atlantic West 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-BD.
  - 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 District 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 if possible.

**E. RBS OUTREACH DIRECTORATE STATES DISTRICTS DIVISION  
CHIEF (DVC-BD)**

- (1) Under the supervision of the Director for RBS Outreach, the RBS Outreach Directorate Districts Liaison Division Chief mentors Regional Branch Chiefs, DSO-SLs, and SLOs to better understand the RBS Outreach 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 RECREATIONAL BOATING SAFETY OUTREACH (DIR-B)**

- (1) The Director for Recreational Boating Safety Outreach (DIR-B) aids in developing and executing Auxiliary Recreational Boating Safety Outreach policy. The duties of the DIR-B include:
  - a. Be responsible for the Auxiliary's recreational boating safety (RBS) outreach program with external partners, boating safety organization liaisons, state boating agencies, informational resource services, and internal partners such as USCG District RBS Specialists and the USCG Commandant Offices of Boating Safety and Auxiliary.
  - b. Assist with those partnerships which include federal, state, territorial and local community agencies and organizations through the RBS Outreach Directorate's Districts Liaison Division.
  - c. Work with the National Commodore staff and Directorate 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 on the RBS Outreach 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 the ability of the state or territorial boating authority 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 Outreach Directorate 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.

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

C. The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators NASBLA Regional Associates website allows the SLO to determine to which regional NASBLA organization their state is assigned; so that funding may 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 Outreach, Education, Vessel Exam and Public Outreach Directorate, 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.