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Press Contact: D. Scott Croft, 703-461-2864, SCroft@BoatUS.com Photo Available: <http://www.boatus.com/pressroom/previewImg/459.jpg>
Caption: Enlisting the the grass-roots support of local boaters can help communities gain access to the water.
Photos of all projects are available

Five Communities Show How Boating Access Can Be Improved

BoatU.S. Access Awards Highlight Success Stories to Share

ALEXANDRIA, Va., December 16, 2009 -- When pigs fly. A snowball's chance in hell. These colorful expressions have accurately portrayed the odds for success that communities have often faced when trying to improve access to the water for recreational boaters. However, with today's announcement of five 2009 BoatU.S. Recreational Boating Access Award winners <http://www.boatus.com/gov/accessaward/winner_2009.asp>, there is proof that naysayers can be overcome. By learning from these winning examples, communities across the U.S. can succeed with their own waterfront access plans and begin to enjoy the economic benefits that boaters bring to merchants, restaurants and service providers.

Boat Owners Association of The United States (BoatU.S.) created the award program in 2007 to highlight successes in protecting water access as boaters and communities were losing marina slips, service yards and boat launching areas. This year's winning projects - in Oregon, Florida, and Ohio - offer a range of innovative solutions for communities struggling to keep their waterfronts open to boaters, anglers, and citizens.

The 2009 BoatU.S. Recreational Boating Access Award Winners:

On the Oregon Coast, Polishing a Gem

In 2003 the Port of Siuslaw (pronounced sigh-YOU-slaw), which lies adjacent to Florence (pop. 8700) on Oregon's mid-coast, began discussions with the community on how to revitalize the entire port. However, the process took time and by 2007, the former recreational boat transient dock was literally cut off from the town because it was deemed too decrepit and dangerous, leaving no transient boater access to Florence. Working with the community including a group of supportive commercial fishermen and citizens as well as the Oregon State Marine Board, a comprehensive plan was created. But without enough funds to do the project, the Port had to rely heavily on media publicity efforts to secure a combination of an urban renewal tax credit and Marine Board, federal Clean Vessel Act, Boating Infrastructure Grant and port matching funds to complete the project. Today, the dock provides a welcoming and safe access to the town's historic area, offers boat sewage pumpout services, and is a safe haven from Pacific storms. Florence is now gaining renewed interest from transient boaters as well as tourists - who all spend money in town.

At Kissimmee Lakes FL: Stopping the Freight Train In Florida, the Kissimmee River Valley Sportsmans Association (KRVSA) was able to stop and turn the "train" around, literally at the last minute, when it saved critical public boating access on Lake Kissimmee in Central Florida. On the day the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) was set to transfer Shady Oaks Fish Camp and The Speight Family Ranch

to a big developer -- who had no future plans to offer public boating access -- KRVSA intervened and stopped what everyone thought was a done deal.

Instead, after spirited discussion, SFWMD agreed to set aside 136 acres of waterfront property from the ranch and provide \$1 million for launch site improvements. The District agreed to cede the property to Polk County, which initially balked but later agreed to accept the land and maintain the property as a county park. When completed next year, the 136-acre Shady Oaks parcel will provide the second publicly owned vessel launch facility on Lake Kissimmee, and will include campsites, vessel launch facilities and other amenities for a diverse group of users. To top it off, the KRVSA backed an effort by the Florida Airboat Association to have Florida state policy changed, so that "surplussed" lands bought with tax dollars cannot be sold to any private developer until government agencies have decided not to accept them.

In Florida, The Tax Man Cometh

In Florida, an Access Award went to Raymond Graziotto, President and COO of the Loggerhead Club & Marina, a chain of 11 marinas located around the state, and a board member of the Marine Industries Association of Palm Beach County, for his work in leading the effort to gain passage of FL Amendment 6. The Amendment will move forward a plan to provide some tax relief for water dependent businesses. Prior to Amendment 6, some marine-related businesses were receiving property tax bills under a system of "highest and best use" taxation, which allowed counties to tax on the potential use of the land, such as a high-end condo development with hundreds of units, instead of the current use of the property. Some marinas had their tax bills double in just two years, threatening Florida's \$18 billion marine industry. Graziotto provided seed funding, led fundraising efforts to hire attorneys and brought the issue to voters who overwhelmingly approved the measure.

On Lake Erie, Village Leaders Rehab an Underutilized Lakeside Asset
Small towns can win at access too, and in North Perry, OH on Lake Erie, the Village Council and Mayor, winners of a 2009 Access Award, can prove it. In 2001 the Lake County Coastal Plan Committee embarked on an ambitious agenda that included recognizing the need for public boating access improvements, so it asked local communities for their wish list - gaining critical grassroots support in the process. The Council and Mayor of North Perry, pop. 1,000, found kindred spirits in the Coastal Plan Committee and used the Plan to help redevelop a run down, unprotected, single launch ramp on the turbulent lake into a full fledged harbor with a safe, protected three-lane launch ramp with docks, fishing facilities, swimming beach, walking trails and park for the community. They had to overcome regulatory issues and the shifting coastal sands of Lake Erie, going so far as to have the proposed new harbor's design wave-tank tested to ensure the sand would continue its movement down the shoreline even in the biggest storms. Now also a critical a harbor of refuge, the new access point's 16 transient slips will contribute to the long-term economic development of the village and surrounding communities.

A Strong State Agency + Affordable Ramp Construction = New Access in Ohio
The Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Watercraft is one of the few state-level boating agencies in the U.S. that is significantly involved with the boating access issue, helping local

communities with funding, planning and other resources. With two grants from the agency in 2003 and 2007 providing a majority of the funds, the Village of Tuscarawas in northeast Ohio was able to build a new ramp at a location on the Tuscarawas River that was formerly only available to paddle sports enthusiasts. The ingenious new ramp incorporates two pre-fabricated concrete and wire mats that were simply lifted into place on top of a bed of gravel on the river bottom. This construction method was faster, easier and less expensive, eliminating the need for erecting expensive cofferdams and poured concrete, and was also easier on the environment. Boater access to the river is now possible year round no matter where the varying seasonal water level may be, and ramp erosion from river currents as well as boaters' powerloading maneuvers has been solved. A gravel parking lot, lighting and floating boarding docks completed the project.

For information on the annual awards as well as a look at the projects and winners including photos and video, visit www.BoatUS.com/gov/AccessAward <<http://www.boatus.com/gov/accessaward/>>

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About BoatU.S.:

BoatU.S. - Boat Owners Association of The United States - is the nation's leading advocate for recreational boaters providing its over half million members with government representation, programs and money saving services.