

# Continued Waves of Success

Stakeholder Annual Report 2023



RECREATIONAL  
BOATING & FISHING  
FOUNDATION

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**As America rebounded from the pandemic, RBFF set out on a course to broaden the appeal of fishing and boating, and keep new anglers and boaters hooked. Outreach to women began growing from campaign to core strategy. Diversity moved to the heart of attracting — and retaining — newcomers. State, industry and federal partnerships became more robust. Now, with new outreach launched, the way ahead is clear, new waves of success are in sight.**



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## Message from RBFF Board Chairman

My passion for fishing and boating brought me to my career, then to RBFF's board, and now to my new position as chairman of RBFF's board. Although new to the role of chairman, I'm already excited about where RBFF is headed.

Our FY24-26 three-year strategic plan orients us in the right direction. It focuses consumer engagement on women, who are "making waves" and hold influence with both male and youth participants, with a new creative campaign. It also works especially well to focus retention and reactivation efforts through better integration of state, federal, and industry stakeholder engagement processes. On the state engagement side, we've achieved meaningful progress over the past several years, as evidenced by improving state agency recruitment, retention and reactivation (R3) scorecards. Following the strategic plan, we're hoping now to continue raising the bar for state agencies and apply some of these best practices to our federal and industry partners. Towards this goal, we're standing up an industry engagement task force this year, and leaning in to how we can work with its retail segment. Trade associations will be helping as well, by leveraging communication, messaging, research insights and best practices.

Overall, our vision going forward is to continue recruiting diverse new audiences to fishing and boating while also capitalizing on retaining and reactivating the massive surge of participation we saw during COVID. When the country was struggling during the pandemic, fishing and boating were critically important to people's quality of life. Fishing and boating enhanced their lives immeasurably at a

time when they needed to get outdoors and tap into these sources of mental, physical, and social well-being. Now, our purpose is to keep fishing and boating top of mind in the competition for choice of leisure activities, especially when people want to connect with friends and family outdoors. Reversing the "leaky bucket" trend in participation churn will be critical to our success.

Our continued/heightened focus on women anglers and boaters will help with that. Through RBFF's research, conducted in partnership with global market research firm Ipsos this past year, we learned interesting insights about recruiting and retaining women's participation in angling and boating, and what some of the potential barriers to participation are for women. Stakeholders will be putting this research to work to improve retention, and RBFF's new research-guided, recruitment-focused consumer marketing is about to launch. The campaign's theme, "Find your best self on the water," and its premise that we all can be the best versions of ourselves while out on the water are fantastic.

We truly believe folks are healthier, happier and more resilient when they are out on the water, enjoying fishing and boating — so ours is a just cause we can all support. We are eager to rise and meet the challenges before us. After all, the water is open to everyone, and it beckons us to respond!



**Craig Bonds**  
*Chairman of the Board*

## Message from RBFF President and CEO

My first full year as RBFF's President and CEO was an incredibly exciting year. First, RBFF had to apply for its funding. Second, we had to develop a new three-year strategic plan which included how to contend with fall-off from the huge COVID-era spike we saw in fishing and boating participation. There were many moving parts, but our board and entire team worked very hard collaboratively to achieve success.

This joint effort was especially true with the strategic plan. The board actively applied its wealth of knowledge and experience to its development. The new plan focuses more intently on bringing customers back year after year. This is critical because even if we bring in 12 million new or reactivated anglers each year, if lapsed anglers drop to more than 12 million yearly (as it did after the COVID spike), our model is not sustainable. In our new strategic plan, we will work closely with our state, industry, and federal partners to have them take the lead on retention — on bringing that leaky bucket number back to a more reasonable number.

The good news is that stakeholders are now better prepared than ever to do this. Thanks to the last several years of effort, almost 80% of state agencies now have a full-time marketing person, and 60% have a full-time angler R3 coordinator. These positions and this approach did not exist five or six years ago. We now plan to help our federal partners enhance their R3 marketing efforts.

As for our industry partners, they enthusiastically supported this year's programs. Looking ahead, we think industry retailers can play a key role in retention. In fact, retailers may be our best opportunity for moving the needle toward keeping those participants.

Meanwhile, RBFF will focus on recruitment. Our own consumer engagement campaign is the flagship of what we do, and last year it was exceedingly successful. Our Take Me Fishing brand is at a four-year high for recognition, and the campaign drove "intent to fish" or "intent to fish from a boat" to incredibly high levels. Now we are set to begin a whole new campaign, to launch early FY24. The new campaign will focus heavily on women. Our testing showed that more than 85% of men and women found the campaign ad appealing and said they were likely to go fishing after watching it. In addition, RBFF consumer outreach will be targeting demographics that are important to the future of fishing: youth, Hispanic, and African American communities. We are already starting to bring in more diverse anglers. I am extremely proud of the work RBFF has done in this regard.

My thanks to our board and all our stakeholders for their extraordinary contributions during this year of transition. I cannot believe how fast the year went by. It has been gratifying. It has been productive. And the best is yet to come.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Chanda".

**Dave Chanda**  
*RBFF President and CEO*





Continued Waves of  
**Participation**

## PARTICIPATION

Two years ago, millions took to fishing and boating for the first time as a healthy refuge from the pandemic. Millions have stayed with it, valuing their time on the water as a continuing source of fun and memories — for themselves and their families. These anglers and boaters plus this year’s surge of newcomers boosted participation well beyond pre-pandemic trendlines, even in the wake of those who returned to other activities and are now ready to be lured back.

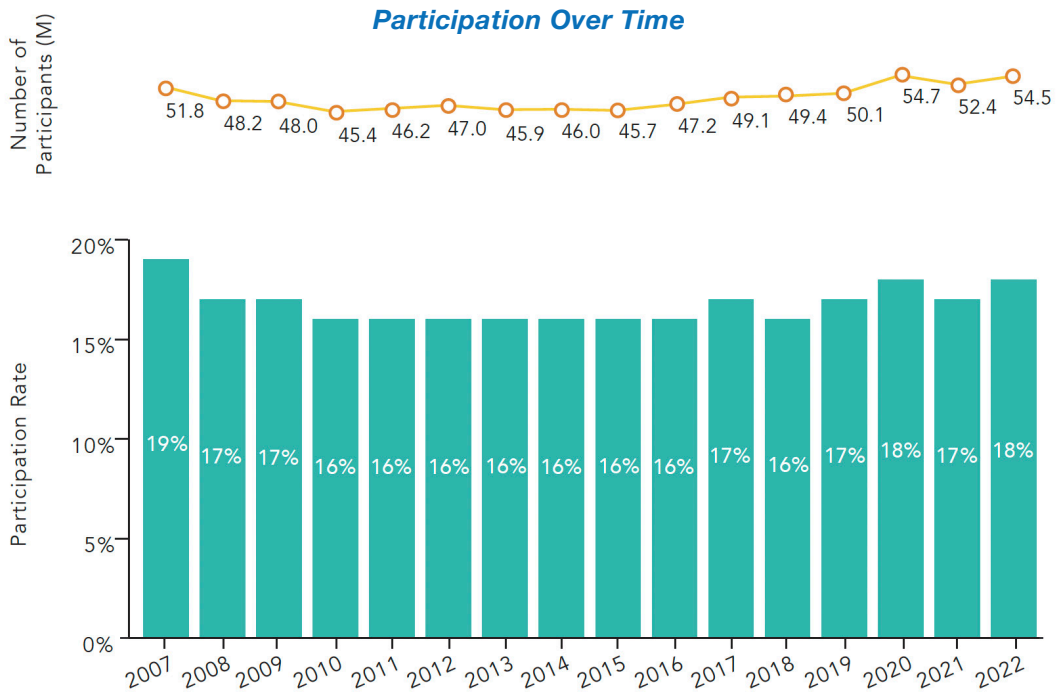


**Americans went fishing**  
4.1% increase\*

**17.9%** Participation rate  
Up 3.9%\*

**4.4M** Fished for  
the first time

**14M** New & returning participants  
12M ready to be lured back!





**Diversity, the source of participation’s future high-water marks, continues to grow:**

**WOMEN**  
2.1% increase\* **19.8M**

**HISPANIC AMERICANS**  
Highest on record  
Up 7.3%\* **5.1M**

**BLACK AMERICANS**  
8.2% increase\* **4.5M**

**YOUTH (AGE 6-17)**  
Up 2.7%\* **12.7M**

**FEMALE YOUTH**  
Up 2.6%\* **7.8M**

*Much of the credit for this [recreational fishing] increase is directly attributed to the efforts of RBFF.”*

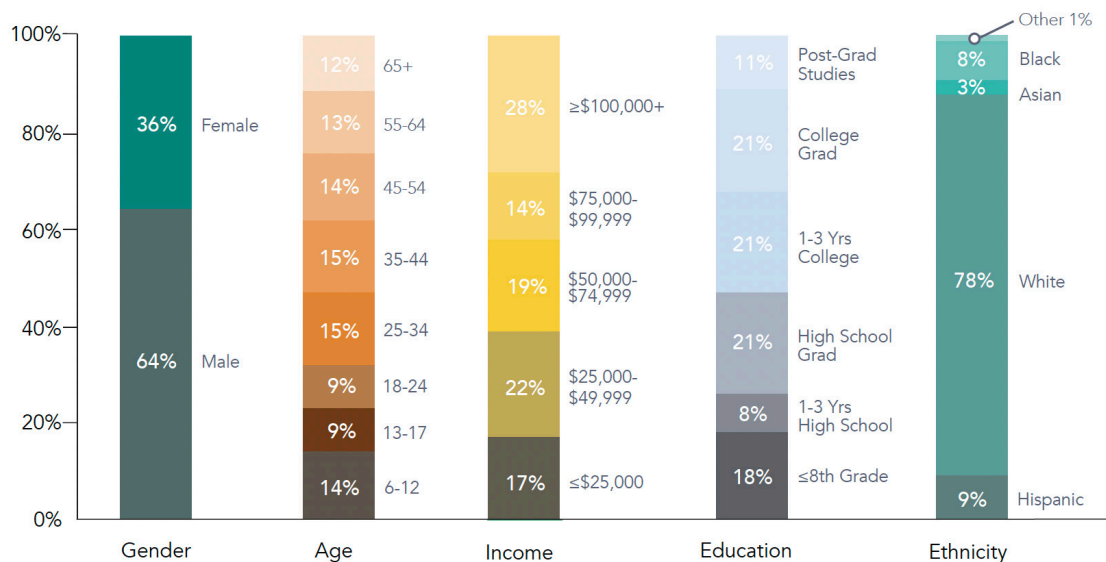
*Steven Leath, Ph.D., Executive Director, Council to Advance Hunting & Shooting Sports*

*The clear results of RBFF’s data-driven initiatives are no surprise because the level of the work they do is exemplary.”*

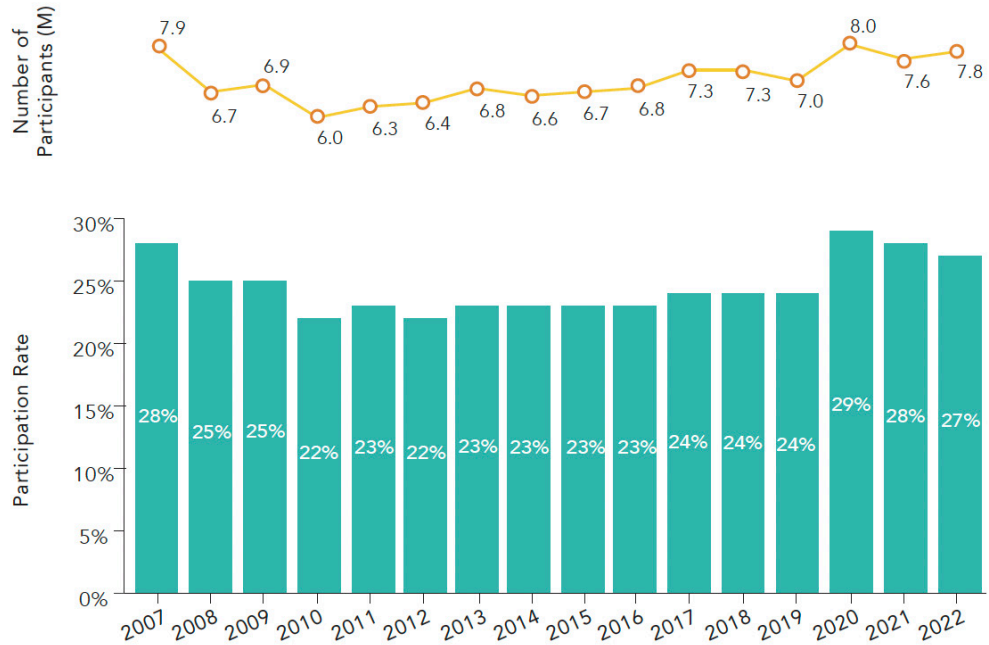
*Anne Dunbar, Show Director, IBEX*

\*All increases are year over previous year

**Who Participated?**



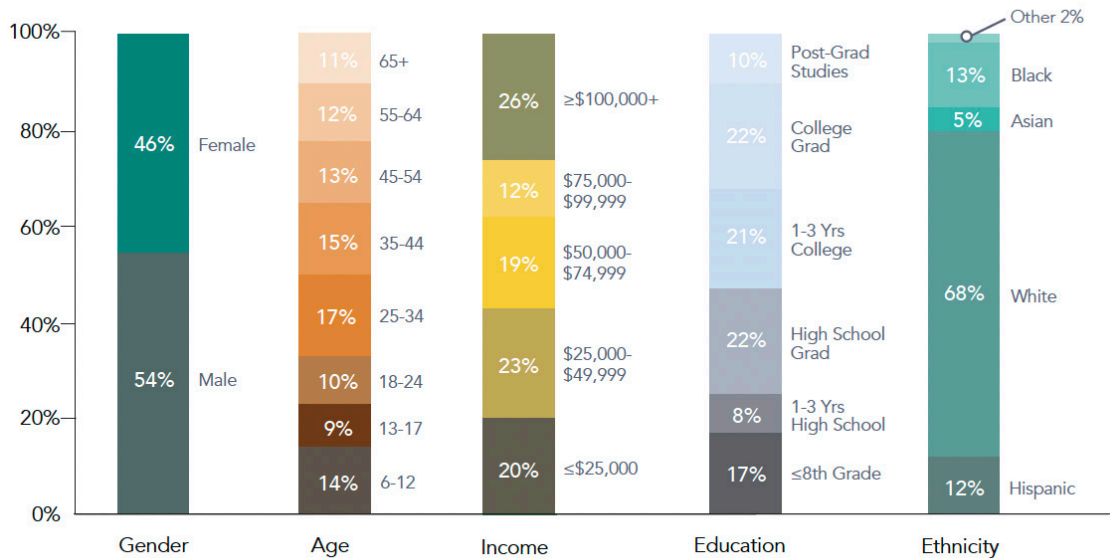
### Youth Participation Over Time



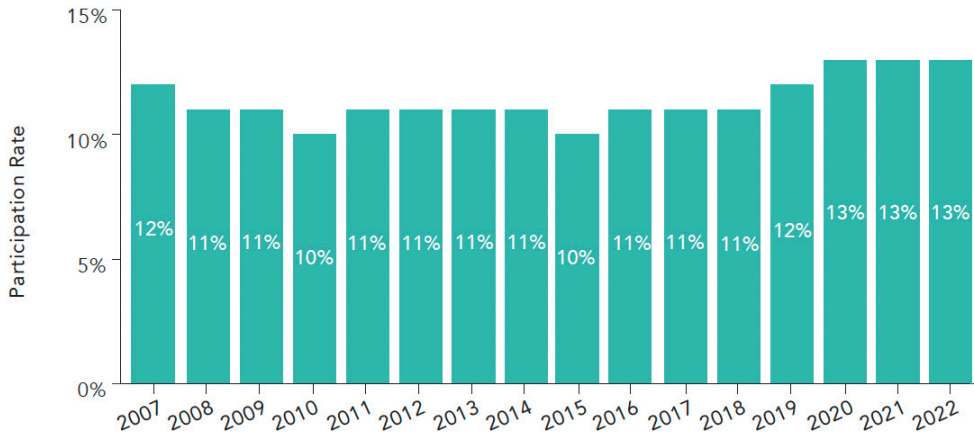
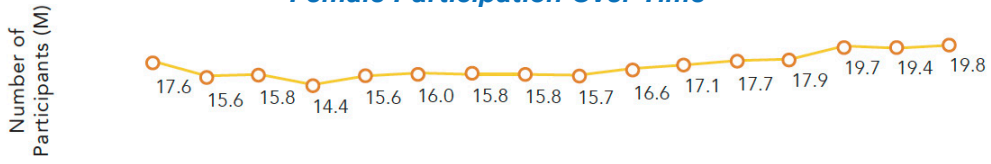
*"I've followed your progress over the years, and it has been one of the most successful organizations of its kind that I have seen."*

Tom Rosenbauer, Chief Enthusiast,  
Fly Fishing Outreach and Education, Orvis Rod & Tackle

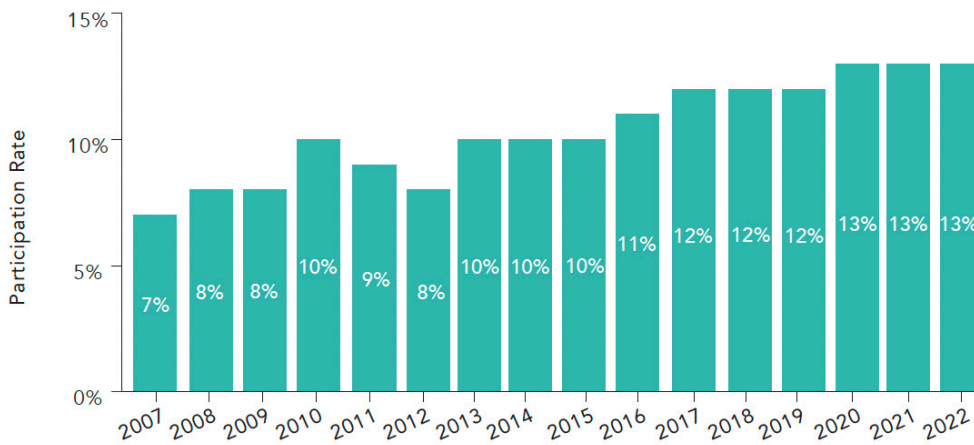
### Americans Considering Fishing



### Female Participation Over Time



### Hispanic Participation Over Time







Continued Waves of

# Consumer Engagement

## CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

Where's the best place to cast a line for new anglers and boaters? RBFF connects with consumers through innovative, award-winning advertising, PR, social media campaigns, digital properties, and in-person experiences. Increasingly, behind every program, message and branded webpage is RBFF's strategy of appealing to female consumers, to multicultural communities, and to young people — encouraging all to see themselves reeling in a fish or relaxing on scenic waterways. This year's outreach successfully attracted consumers, even as RBFF prepared to launch major new consumer initiatives in FY24.

### TAKE ME FISHING

RBFF's flagship brand continued to resonate with consumers. Now in its 18th year, Take Me Fishing™ branded images, messages and media connected with new audiences at historically high levels.

In FY23, RBFF reached a total of 43.73M visits across all Take Me Fishing digital properties, each an opportunity for consumers to get precise, practical pointers on how to fish and boat, as well as next steps for trying it. The website alone produced 2.1 million direct, immediate referrals to state license pages. RBFF's consumer social media outreach won healthy catches, while views and engagement clicks of posted videos, influencer content, and other messaging reached high-water marks.

The success of RBFF's consumer outreach caught the attention of media outlets. Earned media placements — stories created by and appearing in both consumer and trade publications — increased, as did donated Public Service Announcement (PSA) placements of Take Me Fishing advertising.

**Paid Advertising** **395M**  
*Reach*

**Paid Advertising** **4.86M**  
*Clicks*

**YouTube Channel** **32.7M**  
*Paid placement views*

**TakeMeFishing.org &  
VamosAPescar.org Websites**

**OVER  
13M**

*Total visits and referrals to our  
state partner pages*

**Social Media** **9.74M**  
*Paid postings* **IMPRESSIONS**

### Non-paid organic social postings

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**Video views**  
300% increase\* **26M**

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**Impressions**  
754% increase\* **53M**

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**Clicks**  
145% increase\* **341K**

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**Influencers**  
Impressions **1.64M**

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9% average engagement rate  
for Instagram and TikTok

Exceeds industry average by 492%

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### PSAs

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**Airings** **67,080**

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**Impressions** **300.4M**

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**Donated  
media value** **\$14M+**

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Radio and television,  
English and Spanish versions

### Earned Media

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Consumer Media  
**Impressions** **3.38B**  
18% increase

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Consumer Media  
**Earned Placements** **2,000**  
3% increase\*

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Placements in TodayShow.com,  
Yahoo!News, Austin Travels, Outside  
Voices Podcast, Forbes, Fortune,  
Accuweather, Wide Open Spaces, Travel  
Pulse, Outdoor Life, Miami Herald, The  
Charlotte Observer, Fox TV, Disney  
Parks Blog and Modern Retail.

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Trade Media  
**Reach** **2.7M**  
18% increase\*

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Placements across the main fishing and  
boating trade media outlets, including  
The Fishing Wire, Boating Industry,  
Fishing Tackle Retailer, Soundings Trade  
Only, Outdoor Wire, Marina Dock Age,  
Sport Fishing Magazine,  
and Angling International.

\*Increases are year-over-year

## WOMEN MAKING WAVES

RBFF's Women Making Waves campaign began in 2018 as a targeted effort to increase nationwide participation by reaching out to women through photos, messages, influencer stories, and an array of social media tactics that women can relate to. From the beginning, the campaign went beyond welcoming women on board fishing and boating to helping them realize the positive role these activities can play in their lives.

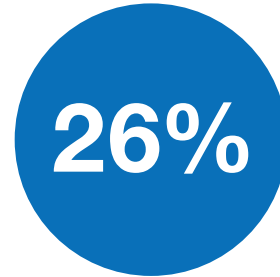
This year, as the campaign gradually picked up energy and grew in prominence, RBFF prepared to make Women Making Waves a major force across all its upcoming consumer engagement. Preparations included:

- Forging a diverse network of dozens of social media personalities, content creators, and amplifiers.
- Conducting a major study into the benefits, behaviors and barriers that female anglers experience.
- Translating these connections and insights into a new, powerful consumer campaign.

Thanks to this unprecedented preliminary work and overwhelmingly positive response to the ad campaign's testing, RBFF expects its FY24 women's-oriented consumer outreach to be a splashing success.

### *The Opportunity*

**If we can increase female participation levels to match male participation levels, we have an opportunity to increase nationwide participation 26%.**



### *FY23 Impact*

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Outperformed RBFF's general consumer market assets by nearly

**8%**

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**Video**  
Completion rate

**85%**

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## FEMALE FAM TRIP

RBFF celebrated National Fishing & Boating Week by hosting a diverse group of female media members on an exclusive Media Trip to enjoy fishing and boating experiences on Seattle's Puget Sound and Lake Washington. The trip included a fly fishing training and on-the-water experience, a salmon fishing excursion, and a boat cruise sponsored by Yamaha for this select group of female-only writers and journalists.

RBFF also invited two social media influencers and Wave Maker Ambassadors as female spokespeople to share their personal experiences as women in fishing and boating. The Washington Department of Natural Resources Agency was also present at the trip, presenting to the team of journalists and participating in all fishing and boating experiences sharing their local and national conservation expertise to the media trip attendees.

The fun and engaging trip generated an extraordinary amount of earned media coverage and social media content, all of which continue to give rise to more stories, posts, and women anglers and boaters.

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**Impressions** **3M**

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**Total engagements** **334K**

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**Video views** **1M**

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**Traffic-driving  
Post-link clicks** **333K**

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## GET ON BOARD

As RBFF made way for its FY24 campaign launch, the successful Get on Board campaign continued to lure newcomers to the water. Created three years ago as a response to the unprecedented experience of the pandemic, Get on Board reached diverse new audiences through fully integrated national marketing anchored by a 30-second video on the health and wellness benefits of boating and fishing. The campaign's hashtag #TheWaterisOpen multiplied the impact of TV, print, radio and digital media buys, as did public relations and influencer media.



## DISNEY ALLIANCE

Because fishing as a child is the strongest predictor of fishing as an adult, RBFF’s partnership with Disney Media and Walt Disney World Resort continues to be an invaluable hook for securing fishing and boating’s future. It aligns RBFF and Disney in connecting fishing and boating with family fun, the positive values of enjoying the outdoors, and encouraging youngsters and their families from across the country’s diverse communities to try fishing and boating.

### Disney Media

This second year of RBFF’s partnership with ABC’s hit show Holey Moley again turned the Take Me Fishing brand and message into a special miniature golf hole. The “Take Me Fishing™ Fishing Hole” was featured in multiple episodes of Holey Moley, in airings on other Disney-related platforms, in promotional content, and social amplification.

Take Me Fishing brand messages also appeared across Disney’s digital video properties, including Hulu, Hulu Brightline Geolocator (including interactive consumer-Take Me Fishing features), Disney XP, Disney Channel Worldwide, Disney linear programming’s Disney XD, Disney Junior, and Disney Channel. Bonus Take Me Fishing PSAs aired on Disney stations FX, National Geographic, and other Disney channels.

### Walt Disney World® Resort

Anglers and would-be anglers worldwide experienced Take Me Fishing-branded fishing and boating excursions at well-stocked waterways within beautiful Walt Disney World® Resorts. Experienced guides provided participants with fishing tips, and memories to last a lifetime.

*“This has been a great experience. I’ve learned I can fish, which is fantastic. I can definitely see myself doing this with family and friends, or even by myself.”*

*Emma Sarraga at Walt Disney Resorts*

### International Women’s Day

RBFF and Disney Content Creators teamed up for a day on the water, sharing the fun on social media.

#### Molly McCormack

**@mammoth\_club**

11 posts

259.5K Reach

68.3K Views

21K Engagements

#### Sally Butan

**@thebutanclan**

3 posts

11.1K Reach

30.3K Views

1.5K Engagements



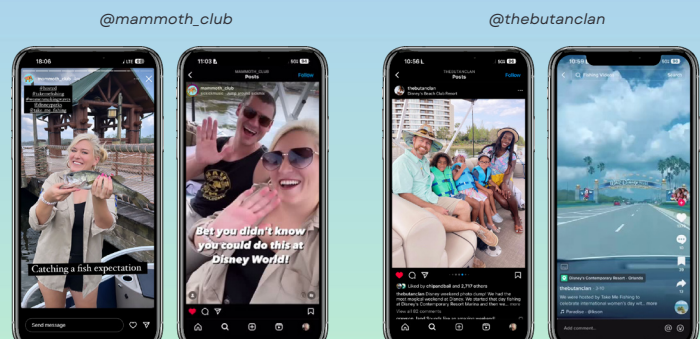
**Molly McCormack**

@mammoth\_club



**Sally Butan**

@thebutanclan





## AWARDS

RBFF consumer outreach won multiple awards during the year.

RBFF's Get on Board consumer marketing campaign won the 2022 National Boating Industry Safety Award from the Sea Tow Foundation in conjunction with their Boating Safety Advisory Council.

Marine Marketers of America (MMA) awarded RBFF two of its coveted Neptune Awards for marketing, one for its Influencer Collaboration campaign and another for its Public Relations campaign bringing female media members to Seattle for a fishing & boating trip of a lifetime.

***“RBFF takes a leadership role in promoting positive role models and setting the tone for the industry. Our own messaging efforts benefited greatly.”***

*Casey Shedd, President, AFTCO, American Fishing Tackle Company*

***“RBFF has displayed exceptional leadership in generating positive and interactive personal experiences for millions of consumers. RBFF should also be commended for its pioneering efforts to engage and grow a more diverse audience.”***

*Matt Gruhn, President, MRAA*







Continued Waves of  
**Stakeholder Engagement**

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Increasingly, RBFF's crew of stakeholders — state, industry and federal partners — are working together to achieve more than any single stakeholder could on its own. Innovative programs, proven in one sector, are being adopted and adapted to other sectors, while new programs that require multiple partners are reeling in support. By coordinating efforts, leveraging resources and combining strengths, RBFF and its stakeholders are reaching common goals of greater, sustained, conservation-wise participation. This is the wave of our future.

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## REACHING MULTICULTURAL MARKETS TOGETHER

RBFF and stakeholders are plugging the leaky bucket of lost anglers by engaging consumers and reaching out to diverse, urban consumer groups.

### **Mobile First Catch Centers™**

Take fishing to the people — especially to young people living in urban communities. That's the premise behind RBFF's Mobile First Catch Centers, which bring hands-on fishing opportunities and conservation education to multicultural audiences in metropolitan areas across the country.

State agencies operate the centers and their programs, with industry stakeholders such as Pure Fishing, Bass Pro Shops, and Zebco providing needed

equipment, from the mobile trailers that house the centers to rods, reels, nets, coolers, and more. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also partnered in FY23 on Mobile First Catch Centers in Rhode Island and Maryland.

This past year, Mobile First Catch Centers created fishing enthusiasts where there were none before, and made way for more mobile experiences just around the bend.

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# 29

**Take Me Fishing™ Mobile First Catch Center Trailers**  
in 25 States + DC

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### **George H.W. Bush Vamos A Pescar™ Education Fund Grants**

Launched in 2014 with a donation provided by industry leader and Bass Pro Shops Founder and CEO Johnny Morris, the George H.W. Bush Vamos A Pescar™ Education Fund propels fishing and boating experiences and conservation education for Hispanic families.

Industry stakeholders continue to generously contribute to the Education Fund, while state agencies provide matching funds. Combined resources are subgranted to local organizations to provide programs. This year's grants support 16 local organizations in eight states, with California and Florida supporting programs provided by five different local organizations.

### **George H.W. Bush Vamos A Pescar™ Education Fund Grants Statistics**

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**16** programs  
in 8 states

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**\$221,000**

**Total funds awarded**

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### **State R3 Program Grants**

RBFF's ongoing successful State R3 Program Grants, now in its ninth year, were funded to help bolster states' capacity to recruit, retain and reactivate (R3) anglers and boaters, especially among America's urban, multicultural audiences. Proposals are reviewed and selected by representatives from industry, federal agencies, NGOs and RBFF.

This year, grants were awarded for programs spanning the country, from Utah, Nevada and Texas to Kansas and Iowa on to Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Maryland and Florida. The programs themselves focused on reaching the Hispanic community, digital marketing, female anglers and boaters, and retention and reactivation.

### **State R3 Program Grants Statistics**

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**10** programs  
in 9 states

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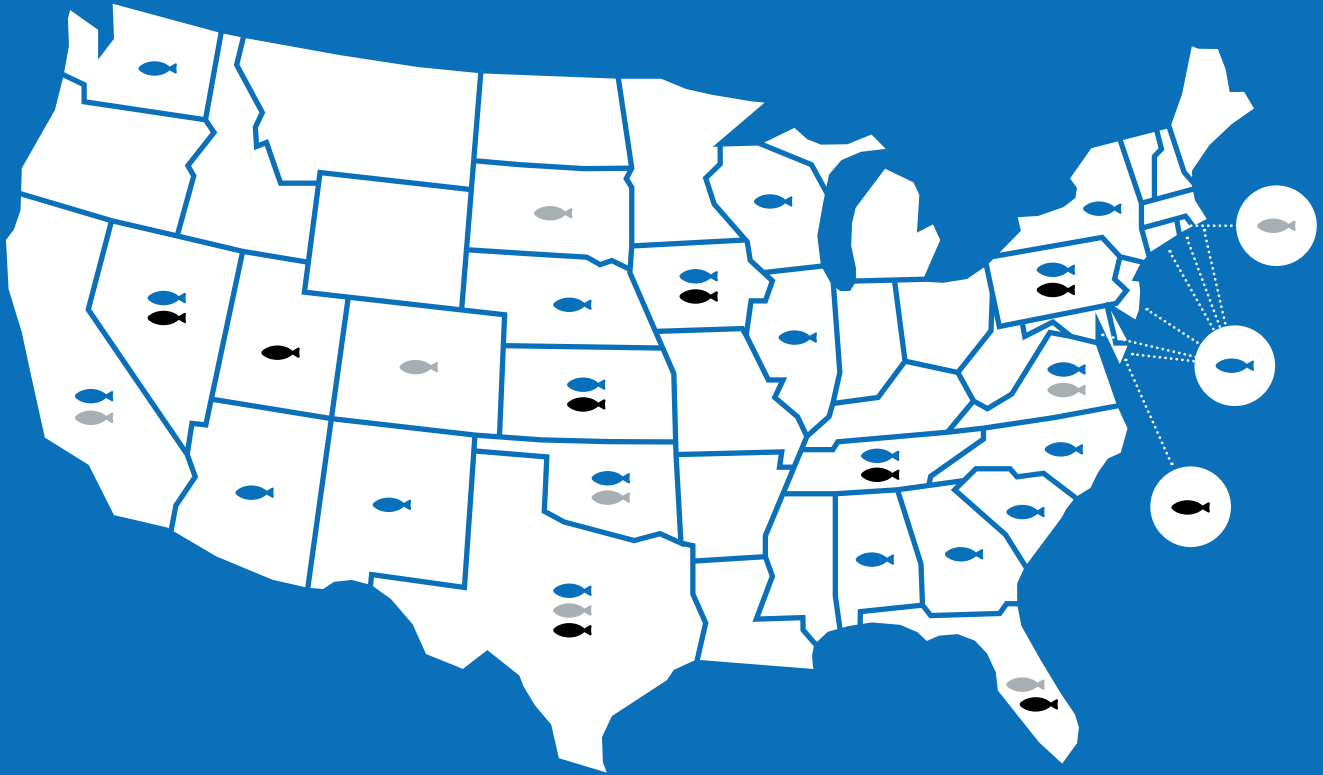
**\$439,000**

**in grants total**

*(RBFF and state agency  
funds and in-kind support)*

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# State Partnership Programs



**🐟 States with Mobile First Catch Centers**

- |                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Alabama         | New Mexico     |
| Arizona         | Nevada         |
| California      | New York       |
| Connecticut     | Oklahoma       |
| Washington D.C. | Pennsylvania   |
| Georgia         | Rhode Island   |
| Iowa            | South Carolina |
| Illinois        | Tennessee      |
| Kansas          | Texas          |
| Massachusetts   | Virginia       |
| Maryland        | Washington     |
| North Carolina  | Wisconsin      |
| Nebraska        |                |
| New Jersey      |                |

**🐟 George H.W. Bush Vamos A Pescar™ Education Fund Grants**

- California – 5 programs
- Colorado
- Florida – 5 programs
- Oklahoma
- Rhode Island
- South Dakota
- Texas
- Virginia

**🐟 State R3 Program Grants**

- |          |                    |
|----------|--------------------|
| Florida  | Pennsylvania       |
| Iowa     | Tennessee          |
| Kansas   | Texas - 2 programs |
| Maryland | Utah               |
| Nevada   |                    |

### **Toolkits for Reaching Hispanic Audiences**

The nation's Hispanic community is responding to RBFF's targeted consumer outreach: 4.7 million Hispanics went fishing last year, a 42 percent increase since 2010. More good news, half of Hispanic participants in the 2022 Special Report on Fishing said they would like to fish even more.

In FY23, RBFF provided free, fun and effective resources to state, industry and federal stakeholders to help get more Hispanic women and families into fishing and boating.

### **Midwest Partnership**

In partnership with the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA) R3 Committee, RBFF is developing a collection of photo assets that represent the diverse people, places and fishing and boating opportunities in the Midwest region.

### **Resources for Reaching Women and Multicultural Audiences**

America's waters are wide and waiting for millions of newcomers to enjoy. Stakeholders welcome them aboard, reaching out with RBFF's digital library of fishing and boating images and messages highlighting women's and multicultural participation.





## RESEARCH

As RBFF partners with state agencies, industry and federal agencies, research studies provide insight-filled guidance for R3 outreach.

*Benefits and Barriers to Women Who Fish - Underneath the Wave of Women Fishing*  
This year's groundbreaking, comprehensive study, conducted by RBFF and Ipsos, revealed an array of motivating factors and challenges affecting women's participation in fishing and boating. The study's wealth of findings, already informing RBFF's

upcoming consumer advertising, will help stakeholders connect with this all-important demographic.

### *Special Report on Fishing*

This year's report helped state and federal agencies develop new initiatives, and industry build their brands thanks to current, targeted data on demographic-specific participation. As with all RBFF research, the Special Report is available for free downloading on [rbff.org](http://rbff.org).

# What's Underneath the Wave of Women Fishing



Women represent an important emerging audience for the fishing industry. To grow this demographic, the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF), in partnership with global market research firm Ipsos, conducted research among active, lapsed, and non-angler women to understand active female anglers' mindset and drivers, and what challenges exist to increasing participation.

## HAPPY AND CONFIDENT

### Mindset of active female anglers:

1. Satisfied with life (80%)
2. Ability to persevere (82%)
3. Have self-worth (87%)



## GRIT

- **1 out of 4** active female anglers say fishing makes them feel like they can do anything they set their minds to.
- Active female anglers are significantly more likely to **manage challenges** and **rebound from setbacks**.

## Webinars

Buoyed by the success of previous years' webinars in growing R3 capacity of state agencies, RBFF welcomed state and federal agencies to join the year's four easy-to-access programs.

*Wave of Women Fishing* drew on RBFF's *Underneath the Wave of Female Fishing* study, covering why women start, continue and stop fishing; how fishing contributes to their mental wellness and quality of life; and how industry partners can increase women's fishing and boating participation.

*Reaching the Community through Urban Fishing Programs* featured USFWS's learnings from its Anchorage urban fishing program, and provided state agencies with ways to partner with the USFWS to connect with their own urban anglers.

*Tips and Case Studies for Working with Social Media Influencers* shared the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' and the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department's successes and pointers for maximizing social media influencer impact.

*What Is GA4 and How to Prepare for It* gave state agencies and industry tips for the use of next-gen Google Analytics to improve marketing and make better use of website data.

### *Wave of Women Fishing Webinar*

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**150** Participants

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**101** Views  
YouTube recording

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### **R3 Training**

In FY23, RBFF cohosted a successful half-day R3 training session with the Council to Advance Hunting & the Shooting Sports (CAHSS) for state agency R3 practitioners at their National R3 Symposium.



## FOCUS: STATE AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS

RBFF and state agencies' joint initiatives for attracting millions to fishing and boating — and keeping enthusiasm afloat — continued their success, and began serving as a model for future collaborations with industry partners and federal agencies.

Fostered by RBFF, states' growing expertise in angler R3 is producing results that benefit all.

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**60%** of states  
Full-time Angler R3  
Coordinator

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**80%** of states  
Full-time  
Marketing Staff

---

**38%** of states  
R3 Plan in Launch /  
Implementation Phase

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### State Marketing Workshop

This year's event, themed *Fostering Lifelong Participation Together*, took place in Houston, Texas, and featured presentations on diversity, R3 planning and partnerships, marketing trends, and the latest boating and fishing participation figures. Between presentations, smaller workshop groups discussed innovative ways to apply lessons learned in their states.

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**162** Registrants

---

**47** States

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**27** Sponsors

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### Workshop Postcard Exercise

As part of the workshop's presentation on insights gained from the year's "Benefits & Barriers for Women Who Fish" research, attendees received a postcard and were asked to write down what they would do to help women see themselves fishing and boating. Months after the workshop, attendees were mailed their postcards — a reminder of their own commitment to make women feel more welcome on the water.

Among the commitments: "Leading by example and creating/connecting females with local groups they can participate with," and exposing the research findings "to boat retailers and dealerships to make women feel part of the boating community in showrooms ... and on the dock." Also, several intend to use imagery that "shows women in the sport," and easiest of all ... "take my girlfriends," "my daughter," "my daughter's friends" fishing!



Let's get more women hooked on fishing.

Join us in going all-in on

**50%**

I'll help women see themselves in the sport by...

You took a pledge to increase female angler representation.

Have you made any waves?



Find your best self on the water.  
**#WomenMakingWaves**



TAKEMEFISHING.org



### **Boat Registration Reactivation Program**

In partnership with RBFF, states lured lapsed boat registrants back to boating through convincing direct mail, emails, and even targeted Facebook ads. The program netted participating states an average \$138,000 each.

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**14**

participating states

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**57,363**

re-registered boats

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**28,220**

net increase in registrations

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**\$2.2M**

gross program registration fees

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### **Online Fishing License & Boat Registrations**

The fastest route between “I think I want to go fishing” and actually purchasing a license or boat registration is a state-specific link on the website page being read. Links on TakeMeFishing.org, VamosAPescar.org, and the Places to Fish & Boat Map make referrals easy and immediate, and contributed to potentially millions of dollars in state fishing license revenue.

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**2.17M**

referrals to state license sites

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**206.5K**

referrals to state boating  
registration sites

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## FOCUS: INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

Manufacturers. Retailers. Industry associations. Together, the many sectors of the fishing and boating industry are recognizing the power of RBFF R3 partnerships to grow their markets and haul in sales.

### “Fishing ... Share the Fun” ASA Campaign

RBFF teamed with the American Sportfishing Association (ASA) to produce an unprecedented, industry-wide collaboration to turn fishing newcomers into lifetime enthusiasts. The campaign included a free online toolkit stocked especially for novice anglers, including a where-to-fish map and guidance on what to buy, what to bring, and how to get a fishing license. Participating industry partners also received weekly email tips on how to keep new anglers fishing, or get them back on the water if they’ve left, as well as special hashtags to help build momentum and a strong community of folks who love fishing.

### Retailer partnerships

*From store to shore.* West Marine and RBFF teamed up to bring female Wave Maker influencers to West Marine stores across the country to provide localized fishing tips and tricks, which were live-streamed and recorded for those who couldn’t attend. Wave Makers made it easy for all the women in the crowd to see themselves in fishing and boating, while they learned fishing tips to apply afterwards. What’s more, videos from each event became content for TakeMeFishing.org and live postings on social media. They were further amplified by the Wave Makers and West Marine — reaching way more customers and potential customers than any retailer could on its own.

### Retailer partnerships: *from store to shore*

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**166**

pre-event media placements

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**11,000**

social media engagements

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**18,802**

livestream participants

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**240,805,687**

total partnership reach

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### **“Get on Board” Toolkit for Industry**

RBFF updated its free, online toolkit for reaching new anglers and boaters, especially those who are younger and more diverse. Customizable digital banners, social media posts, press releases, infographic, and a PSA video show these newcomers you truly get them — and make them feel part of your fishing and boating community.

### **Embeddable Website Content**

RBFF continued to provide state, industry and federal stakeholders with free plugins they can feature on their own websites. Embeddable how-to videos, continually updated Places to Boat & Fish Map, powered by Fishbrain, and the Fishing License & Boat Registration Website Plugin make stakeholders the hero as they host online information that their fishing and boating customers value.

### **Industry Event Participation**

RBFF showed itself to be a strong, visible partner to industry by sponsoring events at the forefront of industry activity.

- American Fly Fishing Trade Association Industry Summit
- Association of Marina Industries Conference & Expo
- American Sportfishing Association Sportfishing Summit
- Bay Bridge Boat Show
- Boating Industry’s Elevate Summit
- Discover Boating Miami International Boat Show
- International Boat Builders Exhibition (IBEX)
- International Convention of Allied Sportfishing Trades (ICAST)
- Marine Retailers Association of the Americas Dealer Week
- TRCP Annual Capital Conservation Awards Dinner



## Leadership Recognition

- **Marine Marketers of America (MMA)** appointed **Stephanie Vatalaro**, RBFF Senior Vice President of Marketing & Communications, as a new board member.
- **Boating Industry** named **Bruna Carincotte**, RBFF Director of Public Relations & Communications, to its Women Making Waves list of women leaders making significant contributions to the success and growth of the marine industry.
- **Aquatic Resources Education Association (AREA)** presented RBFF with an Exceptional Support recognition award for partnership, resources and support.
- **Joanne Martonik**, Senior State Marketing Manager at RBFF was named to **Boating Industry's** 40 Under 40. The list recognizes “young professionals blazing trails of success” across the recreational boating industry.



## FOCUS: FEDERAL PARTNERSHIPS

Beyond the many activities that already team federal agencies and other RBFF stakeholder segments, RBFF dedicated time and talent to further developing federal agency R3 partnerships.

RBFF's upcoming efforts will focus on developing and expanding partnerships to support fishing and boating on federal properties to recruit, retain and reactivate anglers and boaters. Ultimately, RBFF will be identifying and developing R3 training opportunities for federal agencies, as well as R3 support and resources.

RBFF will develop and expand partnerships with federal agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Dept of the Interior Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

***“The strategic alignment of all the key stakeholders (fishing, boating, state and federal agencies) has never been higher.”***

*W. Jeff Pontius, President, Zebco 1989-2018, Chairman RBFF 2019-2023*

***“RBFF has assisted the NPS in advancing our goal of providing access and engagement to underrepresented audiences across the National Park System through our recreational fishing partnership.”***

*Clay Hanna, Program Manager, National Park Service*











Continued Waves of  
**Conservation Advances**

## CONSERVATION ADVANCES

Everything that RBFF and its partners accomplish together benefits conservation.

Revenues from fishing license sales and boat registrations, as well as from excise taxes on fishing gear and boat fuel sales, directly support aquatic resources conservation projects nationwide. Because of this revenue stream, the more people who fish and boat, the greater the financial support for conservation. RBFF and its stakeholders help generate millions of dollars each year for conservation projects by giving their all to attracting millions of Americans to fishing and boating.

RBFF's key role in conservation, though, goes well beyond funding. Every RBFF photo, email, video, website page, and social media post serves as a model of safe, conservation-wise practices. Every fishing and boating instructional step teaches newcomers how and why to become ethical anglers and boaters. Women and young people are especially receptive — both prime targets of RBFF consumer outreach.

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### **Anglers are catching on!**

RBFF messaging is getting through. Anglers and boaters are increasingly aware of the connection between licensing dollars and conservation, and they personally support conservation and healthy waterways.

#### **4 in 5 anglers**

Are aware funds generated from licenses go to conservation (*up from 2019*)

#### **4 in 5 anglers**

Know licensing fees benefit wildlife conservation  
*Recall up from "2 in 3" in 2019*

#### **90% of anglers**

Like that their licensing fees go towards conservation

#### **92% of anglers**

Agree they want to help protect and preserve waterways

#### **91% of anglers**

Care about healthy fish populations and public access to fishing opportunities

#### **57% of Active Social Families**

More likely to fish after learning licenses fees fund conservation

### **RBFF is driving conservation awareness**

**6M** TakeMeFishing.org & VamosAPescar.org Conservation page views

**327K** Boating/fishing safety page views, *up almost 10%\**

### Partner with a Payer

Partner with a Payer is the point of intersection between federal agencies, industry organizations, state agencies and RBFF, as together they channel revenues from fishing and boating participation to America's wide range of aquatic conservation projects. Projects made possible through participation-based revenues ...

- Ensure clean water, healthy fish, and public access to fishing sites
- Restore fisheries
- Increase boating access
- Renovate and maintain boating facilities

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Program, and the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies are Partner with a Payer's lead agencies. In FY23, RBFF helped distribute the Partner with a Payer video to the fishing and boating industry.

### Outreach to Women Anglers

As the gateway to family recreation decisions, women are positioned to steer their entire families — the next generation of anglers and boaters — towards practices that respect and protect the environment for years to come. RBFF efforts to recruit women to fishing and boating took major leaps forward in FY23, and are set to grow dramatically.

### Adopt a Lake

RBFF takes waterways conservation personally. Each year, the staff participate in quarterly Lake Cook clean-ups, preparing this Alexandria, Virginia, lake for outdoor fun.

***“Boating and fishing are an important economic driver to our economy. Fishing and boating license sales are reinvested back into vital wildlife management projects that protect the waters and make consumers’ experiences unforgettable.”***

*Lucas Bisset, Executive Director  
American Fly Fishing Trade  
Association*







Continued Waves of  
**Success Ahead**

## SUCCESS AHEAD

Guided by the three-year Strategic Plan adopted this year, RBFF heads out with informed, inspired outreach to women and multicultural communities and with its stakeholders partnering as never before.

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**The Strategic Plan, taking a new approach to applying combined resources.** RBFF will be focusing its consumer marketing efforts on recruitment of fishing and boating participants. Its national consumer marketing campaign will take the lead in growing participation through strategically targeted, powerful advertising, PR, social media, digital content and website content. At the same time, RBFF's industry, state and federal stakeholders will combine their strengths to focus on retaining and reactivating participants. Innovative initiatives that bring together multiple stakeholder segments, augmented by research, grants, training, toolkits, events and more, will work to resolve the leaky bucket that undercuts participation gains.

**Women making even larger waves.** RBFF outreach to women, as the gateway to family participation and the key to big increases in overall participation, will be a major emphasis across all campaigns. Following the powerful insights of the FY23 Benefits and Barriers to Women Who Fish research study, RBFF launched in May 2023 an exciting consumer campaign that draws on the study's wealth of findings. Stakeholders will also incorporate research recommendations into their consumer retention and reactivation events, programs, products and grant funding.

**Welcoming *all* of America to boating and fishing.** RBFF will build upon its current outreach to youth and women in Hispanic and urban communities. Upcoming marketing campaigns will address special social and cultural concerns that currently stand in the way of full participation, while in-person programs such as the Mobile First Catch Centers will continue to put insights into action.

**Helping stakeholder partners succeed together.** RBFF will bring to more stakeholder groups the kinds of programs and solutions that have helped state agencies vastly advance their R3 capabilities. Ahead, marketing workshops, webinars, training and consumer programs will be expanded and adapted for industry and federal partners.

## CONTINUE THE JOURNEY WITH US!

***"RBFF has been the catalyst that has engaged both consumers and industry to achieve the highest participation result since the early '90s."***

*Frank Peterson, Jr.  
RBFF Past President & CEO*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RBFF's Board of Directors is made up of individuals who have been appointed by industry, federal and state agency organizations. This group enables RBFF to keep the best interests of every facet of the fishing and boating community in mind as it carries out its mission.

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**Craig Bonds (Chairman)**

*Texas Parks and Wildlife*

**Ellen Bradley**

*NMMA*

**Diane Bristol (Secretary)**

*Simms Fishing Products*

**Colleen Callahan**

*Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources*

**Louis Chemi**

*Freedom Boat Club*

**Rese Cloyd**

*DC Dept. of Energy and Environment*

**Heather Dugan**

*Colorado Department of Parks & Wildlife*

**Kathy Fennel**

*Major League Fishing*

**Barb Gigar**

*Iowa Department of Natural Resources*

**Ken Hammond**

*The Hammond Group*

**Glenn Hughes**

*American Sportfishing Association*

**Dirk Hyde (Treasurer)**

*Brunswick Corporation*

**Carly Hysell**

*Garmin International*

**Joe Lewis (Vice Chairman)**

*Mount Dora Boating Center*

**Brad Loveless**

*Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks*

**Jeff Marble**

*Marble LLC*

**Wade Middleton**

*CarecoTV*

**Rob Ohno**

*Annika Foundation*

**Jeff Pontius**

**Ron Regan**

*Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies*

**Bryan Seti**

*Yamaha Motor Corporation*

**Jon Schlosser**

*Pure Fishing*

**Phil Smoker**

*Smoker Craft, Inc.*

**Eric Sutton**

*Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission*

**Shelley Tubaugh**

*Grady-White Boats*

**Kendra Wecker**

*Ohio Department of Natural Resources*

**Bobby Wilson**

*Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency*

**Jenifer Wisniewski**

*Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency*

**Bob Ziehmer**

*Bass Pro Shops*

## SPORT FISH RESTORATION

Through the Sport Fish Restoration program, tax dollars from the purchase of rods, reels, lures, flies, motorboat fuel and accessories go toward conducting research, reintroducing sport fish species, restoring habitats, offering aquatic education, and constructing boat ramps and fishing piers. By incorporating the Sport Fish Restoration logo — a shared symbol of cooperative conservation — in communication materials, RBFF partners and stakeholders can help educate the public about how boaters and anglers contribute to funding conservation in this country.



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## MISSION & VISION

### Mission

RBFF's mission is to implement an informed, consensus-based national outreach strategy that will increase participation in recreational angling and boating and thereby increase public awareness and appreciation of the need to protect, conserve and restore this nation's aquatic natural resources.

### Vision

RBFF is committed to spreading the joy of fishing and boating to all ages, genders and cultures; we envision one nation united in our passion for fishing and boating. A nation committed to the pursuit of leisure activity on the water. A nation that embraces our fishing and boating heritage, and conserves, restores and protects the resources that sustain it. We believe the water is open to everyone.











Fiscal Year 2023

# Financial Review



**FISCAL YEAR 2023  
FINANCIAL REVIEW**

Please find RBFF's Financial Statements for Fiscal Year 2023 by scanning the QR code.







