

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Background

Since 1998, the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF) has devoted its attention, resources and hard work to increasing participation in recreational boating and fishing and promoting aquatic resource conservation throughout America. Attracting newcomers – especially young people – is a cornerstone of the RBFF mission. And the *Passport to Fishing & Boating Program* has proven to be a successful, engaging youth education campaign.

The *Passport to Fishing & Boating Program* provides skills, techniques and information novices need to begin boating and fishing in their communities. Each of the six hands-on stations focuses on a key participation aspect and includes strong conservation messages. Straightforward, effective, inexpensive and FUN, the *Passport Program* is designed to be:

- Administered by expert or lay volunteers
- Adjustable to highlight geography, activities and species unique to a particular area
- Appealing to varying age and interest groups
- Appropriate for mixed skill and education levels
- Adaptable to diverse settings, whether landlocked or at the water's edge
- Accessible throughout the year

Noted educators and leaders in aquatic, marine and boating education comprised the original working group who developed the program and then tested it at events. With each pilot test, the working group evaluated, refined and revised materials and sharpened focus. The end result is six stations, with activities that implement proven, research-based best practices in science, education and skill building.



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Fish Habitat & Handling Station

Section one has participants build a watershed to help them understand how to promote healthy places to fish and boat.

Section two teaches the parts of a fish and how to handle and release them safely.

Fishing Knots & Rigging Station

Participants learn how to assemble a basic rigging – including how to tie a Clinch knot – that is environmentally friendly and how to identify baits, lures and flies that attract fish.

Casting Station

Following safety instruction, participants get their hands on rods with push-button spincast reels for practical learning and practice casting at targets. Casting from a boat is also covered.

Smart Boating, Safe Boating Station

A virtual boat ride teaches participants the importance of wearing life jackets and how to select them properly; then it explores Reach, Throw, Row and Go rescue techniques.

Ready, Set, Boat Station

In this boating basics station, a special game of charades introduces participants to a variety of boating activities, while segment two teaches about essential equipment and how to load a boat.

Local Information Station

Since boating and fishing regulations vary widely, this station gives you the opportunity to customize content to rules, fish identification, places to fish and boat, and opportunities unique to your state.

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Preparation

Volunteers

The *Passport to Fishing & Boating Program* needs the following adult volunteers for a safe, spectacular event:

Event Host: The Event Host is responsible for organizing the event, recruiting volunteers, attracting participants, accumulating materials and managing event day. Delegating these responsibilities to a team is a sound approach but one person should maintain a lead position throughout.

Presenters: Presenters lead the station's activities and teach the content. At least one presenter is required for each of the six stations; two presenters are strongly recommended for the Fishing Knots & Rigging Station and the Ready, Set, Boat Station.

Presenters can be recruited from a variety of backgrounds and resources. While expertise is always a positive contribution, the Program is designed for lay Presenters, too. Following are characteristics to consider when selecting Presenters:

- Familiarity in communicating with children
- Suitability as a role model
- Respect for safety protocols
- Availability to meet and prepare in advance
- Experience in station's subject matter
- Commitment to acquiring knowledge to fill any gaps

Group Guides: Group Guides escort participants as they move from one station to the next. They do not have to know the content; parents of participants are a good resource. Ideally, you will have six Group Guides. This way the Guide can oversee his or her group from sign-in through each of the six stations. Guides can also keep track of participants' take-home bags.

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The Event Host should carefully read the Program Overview and all six station guides.

Presenters should carefully read the Program Overview and the guide for the station they're teaching.

Events Hosts and Presenters should complete Evaluation Forms.

Participants

The recommended maximum group size for each station is 10. There are six stations altogether; therefore, you should plan on a maximum of 60 total participants for your event. Participants should be divided into six groups of equal number – they will engage in each of the six stations with their group. The stations may be completed in any order.

Reading levels and activities are designed for fourth grade, or about age 10. Elementary schools, childcare centers, scout troops, youth athletic leagues and other community organizations are avenues through which you can reach this audience. Encouraging parents to attend with their children can help ensure knowledge and enthusiasm circulate throughout the entire family and provide additional adult assistance on event day.

Pre-Registration

To ensure you have adequate supplies, it's extremely helpful to know how many participants will attend your event. Pre-registration is an excellent way to get a head-count in advance so you can predict and limit the total number of participants. (The recommended maximum is 60 total participants – 10 for each station group.) Whether in person, by phone or by mail, pre-registration also gives you the opportunity to communicate important information, such as reminders to bring hats and sunglasses and to wear sunscreen.

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Location

Your *Passport to Boating & Fishing* event may be held indoors, outdoors or a combination of the two. Tarps for seating are recommended for outdoor set-ups. The event should begin at a Registration area, where participants sign in and are separated into their groups.

Each of the six stations requires its own area. For the most part, stations need to be large enough to accommodate your group size (up to 10 participants plus one or two Presenters) with a bit of room to move about and space for demonstration / instruction.

Two stations are exceptions. The Casting Station requires five casting areas with 30 feet between casting point and target and at least a fishing rod's length between the five participants who are casting. The Ready, Set, Boat Station requires space for participants to move quickly around the Boat Mat and for displaying numerous pieces of boating equipment.

If space and time permit, you may want to add a Gems & Treasures area with tables where local businesses and hobbyists can demonstrate their equipment or special skills. This area can engage and entertain early arrivers, participants who have completed the Program and attendees who are not registered participants.

Event Hosts will find that composing a bird's-eye-view diagram will help 1) confirm there is adequate room for each station, 2) assure a smooth flow of participants from one station to the next, and 3) define needs and make adjustments.

Materials

Each station guide includes a detailed content outline, presentation tips and materials list. Each station requires materials you supply. Carefully reading the Program Overview and station guides is essential to making sure you have everything needed for a successful event.

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The online *Passport to Boating & Fishing Kit* includes the following:

- Program Overview Packet, 6 Station Guide Packets, & Glossary
- Content and templates for Passports and Evaluation Forms
- 4 fish image cards (7.25" x 4.75")
- 1 Healthy Habitat poster
- 1 Fish Handling poster
- 1 Knot & Rig poster
- 1 Fishing Equipment poster
- 1 Boat Mat (4' x 10')
- 1 Drink & Boat poster (8.5" x 11")
- 20 Boating Equipment Cards (7.25" x 4.75")
(Use as substitutes when actual equipment is unavailable.)
- 12 Boating Activity Cards (7.25" x 4.75")
- 12 Fish Cutouts
(Please note that there is a large and small trout cutout.)

For Fish Habitat & Handling Station, you will need to obtain:

- 2 rubber fish – bluegill and trout
- 2 plastic bait fish

Where to purchase materials:

- **Mark Stephens, of Project F.I.S.H.**
at Michigan State University. Mark may
be reached via phone 517-432-2700, email
steph143@msu.edu or visit www.projectfish.org
- Visit your local retailer.

For Fishing Knots & Rigging Station, you will need to obtain:

- 1 large hook

Where to purchase materials:

- Visit your local retailer.

For Casting Station, you will need to obtain:

- 12 casting plugs (Add additional casting plugs for larger groups.)



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Where to purchase materials:

- **Mark Stephens, of Project F.I.S.H.**
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- Visit your local retailer.

Event Day

Timing

Several factors will influence how long your *Passport to Boating & Fishing* event lasts – number of participants, their age range, implementing additional / customized content, number of adult assistants, etc. As a general guideline, you should allow 15 minutes for introductions and separating participants into groups, 15 – 20 minutes to cover each station and move to the next and 15 minutes for conclusion and completing Passports. **Your total time to present the basic Program will be in the range of two to three hours.**

Practice runs will help Presenters tailor their presentation to the timeframe. It's also a good idea – especially for the first few events – to keep a stopwatch running at each station. The Group Guide or one of the Presenters (for stations that have two Presenters) can signal the five, 10 and 15 minute marks.

Take-Home Packages

Each participant will receive a take-home package that includes the basic rigging they assemble in the Fishing Knots & Rigging Station, the Information Sheets they receive in the Local Information Station, the Passport they earn upon completion of all six stations and anything else you want to include.

As participants sign in, write their names on the envelopes or bags you're using for the packages. Then give the personalized packages to the Group Guide who will escort them from station to station. This way, participants' hands are free and distractions are limited.



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Passport

The event's grand prize is the Passport. Its special stamp certifies the bearer has completed the *Passport to Fishing & Boating Program* – and opened doors to new skills and knowledge for safe, fun recreation on the water.

The Passport is available online. The Passport's back page contains space for partners' and local retailers' logos.



There is also a page for participants to display a photograph. Options range from action shots taken as participants engage in the stations to posed shots taken at sign-in or conclusion.

You may want to make the Passport part of your event early on. You can write participants' names on the front page and use the Passport as a nametag and display it with a plastic badge holder, pin it to participants' clothing or suspend it by string around the neck. In this case, participants would receive their Passports when they sign in at the beginning of your event.

Program Evaluation

Your feedback is RBFF's greatest tool in refining and strengthening the *Passport to Fishing & Boating Program*. The new ways you adapt it to your circumstances, your ideas, your opinions, your experiences – all are valued insights.

Also housed online is a Program Evaluation Form. Please print out copies for the Event Host and Presenters for each station. The form takes just minutes to complete; the difference it will make is far-reaching and long-lasting.



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Now that you have held your Passport Program event, you and your volunteers may have experiences that will be valuable for **program improvement**. Please talk with those involved and share anything that you think would be helpful. Once the event is completed, your mind usually runs to what you will do next time. Please give us the benefit of your experiences and help our program grow. **Thank you!**

1. Name _____

2. Phone _____

3. Agency/Organization _____

4. Address _____

5. City _____

6. State _____ 7. Zip _____

8. Email _____

9. Number of volunteers for your program _____

10. Number of adult participants (18 yrs+) _____

11. Number of children participants (under 18) _____

12. Date of event (MM/DD/YY) _____

13. Location of the event (Check all that apply.)

state/local park fishing accessible body of water

federal land boating accessible body of water

fish hatchery freshwater body of water marina

parking lot saltwater/brackish body of water pier

other, please explain _____

14. Did your event follow the Passport Program without changes?

Yes, essentially. We made some adjustments.

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15. If you adjusted your Passport event because of site, time constraints, age of participants, number of volunteers, etc., how did you adjust it? (Examples: "We added 5 minutes to each station." or "Since we had our program indoors, we used pitch casting.")

Adjustments or changes in:

Timing: _____

Number of stations: _____

Number of volunteers: _____

Families as participants: _____

Number in each participant group: _____

Age of child participants: _____

Activities at the stations: _____

16. If you were to do this program again, do you have suggestions about the materials, the script, or anything else that would make it easier or better?

Fish Habitat & Handling : _____

Ready, Set, Boat : _____

Boat Smart, Boat Safe: _____

Fishing Knots & Rigging: _____



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Please fax or mail this form to:

RBFF – Passport Evaluation
601 N. Fairfax St.
Suite 440,
Alexandria, VA 22314
Fax: 703-519-9565

Please let us hear from you. Your input makes a real difference! Thank you.



Casting : _____

Local Information: _____

17. Were there tips or other bits of information that you or your volunteers didn't have, but that would have been helpful? Please suggest any tips to help future Passport presenters.

18. Will you recommend the Passport Program to others?

- ___ Yes, definitely.
- ___ Perhaps, if _____
- ___ No, because _____

19. Will you use the Passport Program in the future?

- ___ Yes, definitely.
- ___ Perhaps, if _____
- ___ No, because _____