

Over the past two years the "First year Free" memberships have masked what is actually happening with our membership. Of the 41,000 members we have listed about 14,000 of these are CPS Associates. The majority of Associates are in their first free year. The number of Regular Members is decreasing. When we look at the demographics of the Regular Membership it is apparent that a lot of our Regular members are reaching the age of no longer being active boaters. (23% under 50, 70% over 50 the difference we do not have info on) We have three times as many members over 70 as we do under 40. The younger people tend to be in the CPS Associates. Although WBAS has not been operating long enough to chart trends there does not appear to be anything on the horizon to indicate these demographics are going to improve.

In the last submission you sent me the member stated that the key to CPS's survival was putting more people through the Boating Course. We are currently not putting enough people through the Boating Course to replace the members who are leaving us. Over the last 10 to 12 years our Boating course sales have been steadily declining. This has been consistent right across North America. There is nothing to indicate this trend is going to change. It is only a matter of time before an on-line Boating Course will be available. Whether it is with CPS or someone else is anyone's guess. Once people can get the information they are looking for on-line our classes will diminish even further. All levels of the organization are having trouble balancing their budgets as course sales decline. One option for replacing those funds is through increased membership. Without sufficient funds this organization will have to make drastic changes to the way it operates. For the organization to survive we are going to have to change from an elitist training organization to an inclusive membership driven organization that offers training.

We exclude the majority of boaters in this country from being members by insisting that they have to learn what we feel is important for the type of boating we do. The people who are water skiers, PWCers, car topper fishermen ,etc. do not need to know how to plot a course and fix onto a paper chart to be safe boaters. The key to being a safe boater is knowing your capabilities. Boat Pro graduates can be safe boaters as long as they are aware of what their capabilities are.

Most of the resistance to change is based on a couple of issues. As I explained earlier the Insurance discounts are not in jeopardy as they are based on the courses successfully completed including Boat Pro. The main issue is that people feel that we are destroying the credibility of the flag by allowing people who have not taken the Boating course to fly the flag. I do a lot of boating and the reality is that I don't see very many CPS flags on the water. I see lots of Yacht Club burgees but very few CPS flags. I do not fly my flag because I think I am a safer boater than people who do not have a CPS flag. I fly my flag to show that I am a member and supporter of CPS. I do not see anything wrong with people showing their support for CPS by flying the flag on a ski boat, PWC or car topper. If we want to be seen as a credible organization in recreational boating we have to have our flag on all types of boats.

I have heard and seen lots of comments that the CPS Associates are not interested in us so why bother with them. It is no wonder these people are not interested in us as we have shown no interest in them except to take their money. We have made no effort to offer anything of interest to them. Our attitude is that if you are not interested in the same type of boating we are then you are not welcome in our organization. Between 11 to 13 % of the CPS Associates have renewed their membership. In actual numbers this is equivalent to the number of Boating course grads who have renewed. These people have expressed an interest by paying for their membership. Some of these people have also expressed a willingness to take on Bridge positions. At one of PMD's northern Squadrons 20% of the members attending their Change of Watch were CPS Associates. I do not believe the people who are CPS Associates are any different from the rest of us. If they feel welcome and find things of interest in our organization some will get involved just as we have. The first step in making these people welcome is to make them equal. I know I would certainly have no interest in joining an organization that did not treat me equal to the other members.

I hope this will be of some help to you. I know that the general membership think that Governing Board members are always out of touch with reality but the truth is that to continue on with the status quo would be simply burying our head in the sand. USPS put off making changes until they were forced to and now are in serious financial trouble with a membership base only a fraction of what they once had. We are trying to plan for the future based on the information we have to work with. Having one class of membership will not instantly solve all our problems but it will give us more options going into the future.