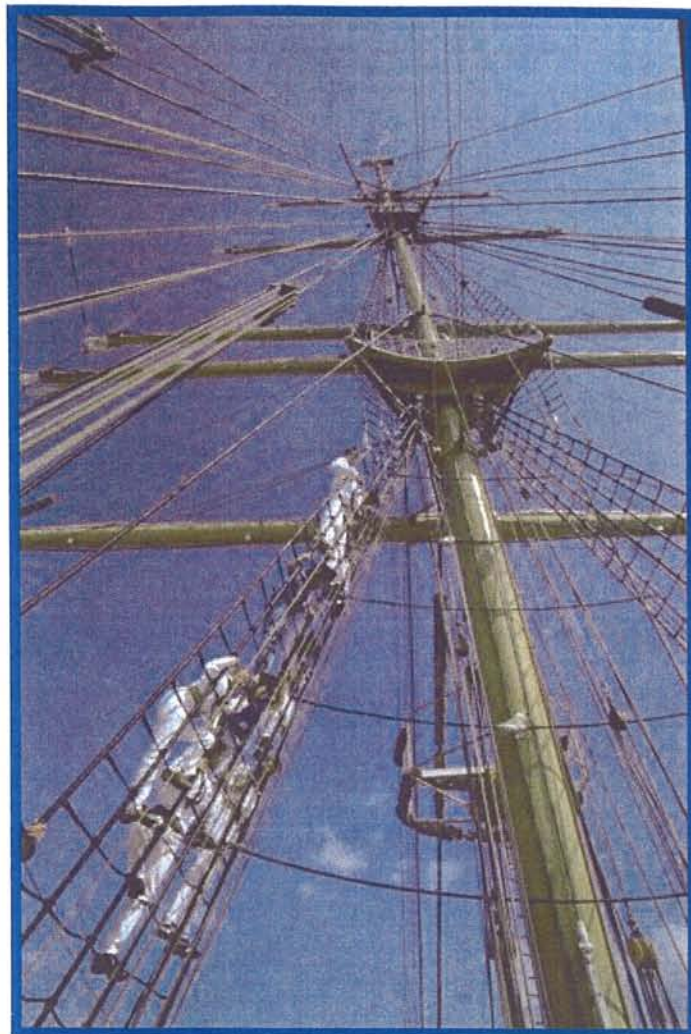


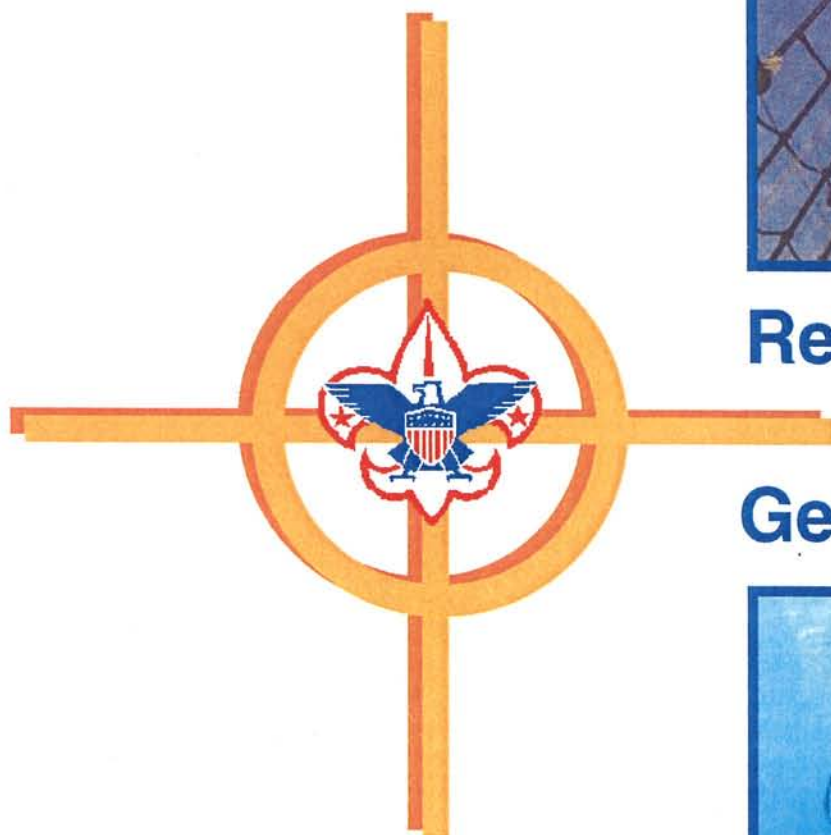
What's new in BSA Aquatics ?



Reach for the top



Get to the bottom



**Aquatics Committees
Support Literature
Skill Training for Adults
BSA Lifeguard Revision**



The center of effort: the Council Aquatics Committee

A sailboat needs wind to function. The \oplus symbol for center of effort indicates where the driving force of the wind is concentrated on a sail. Similarly, Scout programs require the focused efforts of volunteers. A council Aquatics Committee serves as a local center of effort for safe recreational and instructional programs in, on and under the water.

Few organizations offer youth the variety of aquatics activities supported by the BSA. However, many units lack the equipment and skills to successfully conduct the programs we offer. Local aquatics programming is enhanced when a council aquatics committee promotes activities, helps procure and maintain equipment, recruits and retains instructors and provides guidance to unit leaders and council professionals.

The National Health and Safety Committee and the National Program Committee recently recommended that councils form a local Aquatics Committee to provide such focused program support. The permanent structure and continuous commitment of existing Aquatics Committees has proven effective in providing year-round aquatics opportunities for the youth we serve.

A council has flexibility in how to structure an Aquatics Committee – the goal is effectiveness, not bureaucracy. The Aquatics Committee may be a sub-committee of the Camping or Health & Safety Committees or a stand-alone entity. The committee may report to either the Vice President of Program or the Vice President of H&S.

Activities as diverse as white-water rafting, wakeboarding, and scuba require special knowledge simply to judge the quality of programs offered by units, council camps, outfitters, and tour operators. Members of the Aquatics Committee should either be experienced Scouters with a background in aquatics or aquatics specialists interested in the Scouting program.

The committee should include at least one individual currently trained as an *Aquatics Instructor BSA* from a National Camping School. Select committee members should either be members of or liaisons to other council committees that bear joint responsibilities for aquatics, including Training, Advancement, Health & Safety, and Camping.

The goal of the Aquatics Committee is to promote safe, enjoyable programming in, on and under the water at unit, district and council levels to further the aims of Scouting. Key activities include training for both youth and adults, programming, advancement, and safety. A primary role of the committee is attracting, developing, and retaining qualified leadership to support those activities. This includes summer camp staff as well as year-round district and council volunteers and should include succession planning for key roles. Ideally, summer camp aquatics staff should become resources for year-round programs.

At present, a council Aquatics Committee is optional. In the near future, such a committee may be given formal oversight of camp aquatics activities in much the same way that a council COPE Committee has responsibilities for council COPE facilities.

Resource material for forming a local committee will be distributed to Council Executives and is also available in a new publication discussed in this flyer.

A council committee for aquatics is not a new concept. The success of active committees across the country is one reason for promoting the model. Two examples illustrate the type of programs that an active committee can foster.

The Twin Rivers Council headquartered in Albany NY runs an indoor winter swimming program on Monday evenings from September through February. They are approaching their 24th season. Each year they provide approximately 300 Scouts with instruction and testing for Webelos Aquanaut, Second and First Class swimming requirements, and Swimming Merit Badge. Five volunteers offer expert instruction and there is no fee to attend. A local high school provides pool time in exchange for those same instructors providing American Red Cross training to school staff.

The Longhorn Council of Fort Worth TX has conducted a weeklong Aquatics School as a special section of summer camp since 1954. The Scouts develop teaching and presentation skills, time management, leadership, and teamwork while improving their aquatics skills and learning how to safely organize unit swims and float trips. Adults may attend an adjunct course at the same time for training as BSA Lifeguards and BSA Lifeguard Counselors. The course provides a challenging, fun activity for Scouts, strengthens unit capabilities, and provides council summer camps with a pipeline for aquatics staff.

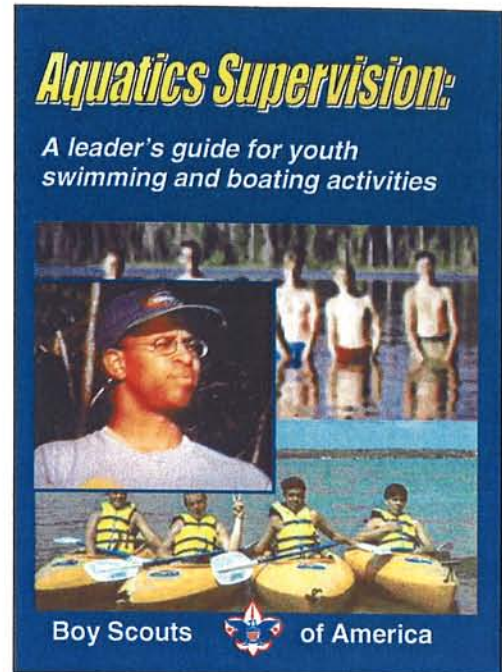


Questions? - find answers in the new resource guide

A new leader's guide to BSA aquatics, available in 2008, will collect program information, safety guidelines, and basic skill descriptions in one handy resource. It will also provide information on the roles and responsibilities of council aquatics committees. Unit leaders can use the book to review program options, including age appropriate guidelines, and to determine if they have the training and resources needed to supervise various swimming and boating activities. The book will be the basic reference for special aquatics awards such as *Snorkeling BSA* and *Boardsailing BSA* that currently lack support material.

Volunteers trained by other agencies, such as the American Red Cross or the American Canoe Association can use the text to become familiar with Scouting programs and protocols and to learn safety procedures appropriate for youth groups.

The publication will also serve as the text for two new adult leader training programs discussed under the next heading.



More than just rules - skill training for adults

A simple introduction to rules and procedures should allow a conscientious leader to assess his/her readiness to conduct a unit aquatics activity. However, those policies suggest or mandate various skills which cannot be learned in a lecture or online. To fill that gap, two new hands-on courses approved by the National Health and Safety Committee and the National Program Committee will provide unit leaders with basic skills. Course material will be in place with the publication of the text referenced above. The courses are designed for adults, but may be completed by older youth.



Training for *BSA Aquatics Supervision: Swimming & Water Rescue* provides BSA leaders with information and skills to prevent, recognize, and respond to swimming emergencies during unit swimming activities. It expands the awareness instruction provided by *Safe Swim Defense* training to include basic water rescue skills. The unit leader completing the training will also feel confident in his or her ability to conduct the standard BSA swim classification tests. Revised *Safe Swim Defense* guidelines will recommend that at least one person with this training is present to assist with supervision whenever a unit swims at a location that does not provide lifeguards. The course will take approximately eight hours and is valid for three years.

Float trips are popular Boy Scout and Venturing activities. *Safety Afloat* training covers guidelines for safe float trips and is required of unit leaders but does not provide the skill training mandated by those guidelines. *BSA Aquatics Supervision: Paddle Craft Safety* expands on *Safety Afloat* training to include the basic skills and knowledge needed for a unit leader to confidently assess his or her ability to supervise float trips using canoes or kayaks. The material also reviews the additional training and experience needed for whitewater, how to gain that expertise, and when it is appropriate to utilize professional whitewater guides. The training will take roughly eight hours and is valid for three years.



A shift in emphasis – BSA Lifeguard revisions

For three quarters of a century, *BSA Lifeguard* and its predecessor, *Scout Lifeguard*, served the needs of both units and summer camps for water safety leadership training. Over that time, more and more programs requiring specialized skills were added and at one point *BSA Lifeguard* requirements included the skills for *Swimming, Lifesaving, Canoeing, Rowing, and First Aid* merit badges. The skills that define the standard of care for summer camp lifeguarding, such as spinal injury management, have also evolved significantly. These changes have made it increasingly difficult to meet all the needs of the unit leader and the summer camp lifeguard in a single training course of reasonable duration.



As a result the emphasis of *BSA Lifeguard* has changed. The primary purpose is no longer to provide units with the skills necessary to conduct safe swimming and boating activities. Training for *Swimming & Water Rescue* and *Paddle Craft Safety* is designed to meet that goal. The revised *BSA Lifeguard* program is now focused on the need to provide BSA operated facilities, such as summer camps, with training that meets the requirements of government agencies for professional lifeguards at regulated swimming venues. The program is open to all registered adults and older youth and is recommended for youth who wish to work on a BSA camp aquatics staff and as the next step beyond the *Aquatics Supervision* programs for unit leaders who wish to expand their water safety skills. The requirements for *BSA Lifeguard* have been approved by the National Health and Safety Committee and the National Program Committee. Support material available in 2008 will include a new "BSA Lifeguard Training and Aquatics Staff Guide".

Those familiar with American Red Cross lifeguard training will notice that the basic skills required for *BSA Lifeguard* are a close match to those of the revised Red Cross program introduced in 2007. That correspondence is deliberate. Red Cross training for professional lifeguards in non-surf situations is widely recognized and Red Cross professionals work closely with BSA professionals and volunteers. On the other hand, the BSA has extensive experience conducting youth swimming activities both in camp and out. *BSA Lifeguard* training includes basic preventative strategies, such as universally applied swimmer classification tests, and other operating procedures that are not included in detail in Red Cross training.

Red Cross lifeguard training is not a pre-requisite for *BSA Lifeguard*; however, the two courses can easily be integrated by an instructor recognized by both agencies. Council aquatics committees are encouraged to take advantage of the national agreement between the Red Cross and BSA that allows BSA instructors with Red Cross training to provide Red Cross courses as authorized providers. Each BSA council has a Red Cross chapter assigned to expedite such training.

Not just for camp AD's – Aquatics Instructor BSA



Aquatics Instructor BSA is the highest level of training for adults in Scouting aquatics. The training is only offered at BSA National Camping Schools and participants must have council approval to attend.

National BSA camp standards require that aquatics directors at BSA camps be at least 21 years of age and have current CPR, first aid and *Aquatics Instructor BSA* training. However, *Aquatics Instructor BSA* training is not limited to those serving as camp aquatics directors. Each council aquatics committee should have one or more members with this training to assist with year-round programs.

The training is available to those 18 or older, so councils are encouraged to also send aquatic staff members who are between 18 and 21 years of age. Such participation improves the quality of the summer camp aquatics staff, provides a progression from assistant director to director that helps councils manage future

staffing needs, and is an incentive for staff members leaving high school to continue while in college. The training is valid for five years; therefore a person obtaining *Aquatics Instructor BSA* training at 18 may later serve as a camp aquatics director without having to renew the training.

August 2007. For more information, contact: Leadership Support Service, SUM 230, 1325 West Walnut Hill Lane, P. O. Box 152079, Irving, Texas 75015-2079, Telephone: 972-580-2448; Fax: 972-580-7894.

Cover photos from www.sea.scout.org and www.bsaseabase.org.