



**SOLANO COUNTY GRAND JURY  
2016-2017**

**THE SHERIFF'S MARINE PATROL  
PROTECTING OUR WATERWAYS**

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## **I. SUMMARY**

The Solano County Sheriff's Marine Patrol Program provides public safety services and resources to recreational boaters and commercial vessels from the Carquinez Strait to the Sacramento County line. The Sheriff's deputies assigned to the Marine Patrol serve to keep the waterways safe through education, law enforcement, vessel accident investigation and search and rescue operations. The 2016-2017 Solano County Grand Jury chose to inquire into the operations of the Solano County Sheriff's Marine Patrol Program and found a valuable public service.

## **II. INTRODUCTION**

The California Harbors and Navigation Code sections 663 and 663.5 specify that county sheriffs have the responsibility for law enforcement on the waterways within their jurisdictions. The Marine Patrol is one of the Special Team units of the Solano County Sheriff's Office. The Marine Patrol Program is managed by the Public Safety Commander (a sheriff's sergeant) and is staffed by four deputies. The deputies are responsible for patrolling over 150 miles of waterways which include rivers, sloughs, channels, and bays. Solano County shares these waterways with Contra Costa, Sonoma, Napa, Yolo, and Sacramento counties.

Solano County is known as the "gateway" or nearest point of entry for waterway traffic from San Pablo Bay and San Francisco Bay to the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta area. The Delta is a valuable commercial, ecological, and recreational resource for each of the six adjacent counties and is part of one of the largest networks of inland waterways on the west coast. The Solano County Sheriff's Marine Patrol provides public safety and public education. They provide and receive support from the United States Coast Guard and the United States Department of Homeland Security. The Solano County Sheriff's Marine Patrol has mutual aid agreements with the neighboring counties to respond to incidents. Marine Patrol staff meets once each month with representatives from the adjacent counties to coordinate overlapping coverage.

### III. METHODOLOGY

Interviewed:

- Marine Patrol Deputies assigned to the Marine Patrol Program

Toured:

- Marine Patrol Vessels (five vessels)

Reviewed:

- California State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways Funding and Documents:
  - Grants and Loans – <http://www.dbw.ca.gov/Funding/>
  - Abandoned Watercraft Abatement Fund
  - Boating Safety and Enforcement Equipment Grant Program
  - Carquinez Strait Boat Safety and Enforcement Financial Aid Program
  - Marine Law Enforcement Training Program – <http://www.dbw.ca.gov/LawEnforce/lawEnfTrain.aspx>
  - Vessel Safety Checks – [www.BoatResponsibly.com](http://www.BoatResponsibly.com)
  - California Coastal Commission - Boat Clean and Green in California packet
- Solano County Class Specification Sergeant-Sheriff Job Announcement Requirement document (#515030)
- Solano County Sheriff's Office 2014 Annual Report (p. 8)
- Solano County Sheriff's Office - Marine Law Enforcement Annual Report-803 for Fiscal Year 2015/16
- Solano County website- [www.SolanoCounty.com](http://www.SolanoCounty.com)
- Solano County Website- [www.SolanoCountySheriffOffice.com](http://www.SolanoCountySheriffOffice.com)
- Solano County Dive Rescue Team history and operational program outreach
- Solano County 2016 Annual Report [http://www.co.solano.ca.us/depts/county\\_admin/annual\\_reports/default.asp](http://www.co.solano.ca.us/depts/county_admin/annual_reports/default.asp)
- Subject matter articles from the Fairfield Daily Republic, Vacaville Reporter and Vallejo Times-Herald

#### **IV. STATEMENT OF FACTS**

### **Sheriff's Office Special Team Staff**

The Solano County Sheriff's Office has thirteen Special Teams identified on the Solano County website. Three of the Special Teams work in conjunction to ensure the safety of the waterways in our area. The three teams are the Marine Patrol Program, the Search and Rescue Team, and the Dive Team. While the teams are identified the information on their operations is minimal.

### **Solano County Marine Patrol Program**

The Solano County Marine Patrol Program operates ten hours per day, seven days a week, year-round. The Marine Patrol Program is managed by the Public Safety Commander and is staffed by four deputies. Deputies are also on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to provide safety and law enforcement. The Marine Patrol deputies work closely with public marinas and launching areas to ensure boaters comply with boating regulations and safety rules.

The deputies provide educational resources to local boaters as well as life vests as needed. Citations issued for speeding, failure to follow boating regulations and registration violations are forwarded to the Solano County Courts.

Other non-emergency services include vessel safety inspections, general assistance to boaters, conducting safety inspections at docks and after-hours assistance to the public on marine-related matters. The Solano County Marine Patrol is a multi-functional public safety team that aims to form a partnership with the communities it serves to proactively educate the public and create a safe recreational environment.

Deputies are fully trained through the California Parks & Recreation Department, the State Division of Boating/Waterways and the California Harbors and Navigation Code. The Marine Patrol staff is trained and prepared for emergency response including first aid as well as coastal security. The Marine Patrol is also responsible for the removal of abandoned vessels. These vessels can present safety hazards and can leak toxic materials into the water. The Marine Patrol staff indicated state registration numbers are often removed from abandoned or stranded vessels making it difficult to identify owners to charge them for the removal of the property.

### **Search and Rescue Teams**

The Search and Rescue (SAR) teams are comprised of a supervising deputy and volunteers under the direction of the Solano County Office of Emergency Services Mutual Aid agreements. The SAR management and search teams are available 24 hours per day/365 days a year, rain or shine, and respond to approximately two calls per month.

## **Dive Team**

The Dive Team is staffed by volunteers who are supervised by a full-time deputy with specialty training in diving and marine operations. The Dive Team aids the Marine Patrol and Search and Rescue Teams when underwater operations are required.

## **Marine Patrol Program Watercraft**

The county Sheriff's Marine Patrol Program maintains four vessels and four two-person personal watercraft (two Honda's and two Sea-Doos). The vessels and equipment were purchased with state grant monies and are required to be returned to the State of California when they are replaced. The county is responsible for the maintenance at a cost of approximately \$25,000 each year.

The two Sea-Doos cost approximately \$80,000 including additional upgrades providing them with the newest search and rescue capabilities. Some of these upgrades include: emergency lighting, sirens and amplifiers, radios, and LED spotlights. (A photo of the Sea-Doos is included in the Appendix).

The four other vessels that are used for marine law enforcement are:

- 1.) A full aluminum hull patrol boat powered by a diesel engine
- 2.) A ridged inflatable hull (aluminum and rubber tube) boat powered by a single outboard engine
- 3.) A Munson high-speed landing craft which is maintained by the Office of Emergency Services
- 4.) A SAFE Boat, the newest vessel in the Marine Patrol fleet, was identified as a 250 Defender SAFE Boat

The newest SAFE vessel is a regional asset and may be called upon for mutual aid to assist other counties. It can seat up to four people and transport up to 16 people in a rescue or emergency evacuation. The need for this type of vessel is to provide further security for bridges, oil refineries and deep-water channel areas that are considered soft-targets in drawing terrorist activity. The vessel has two 200-horsepower outboard engines and the latest in radar and FLIR (Forward Looking Infra-red) technology. The vessels are equipped with capabilities for communication among inter-agency radio frequencies.

The 250 Defender vessel was acquired in September 2013 through a Federal Port Security Grant. Funding for vessels acquired by the Solano County Marine Patrol Program requires promotional boating and water safety presentations. The California Department of Boating and Waterways has the distinction of collaborating with the California State Department of Parks and Recreation. The Solano County Marine Patrol Program makes presentations at local schools and provides displays at large events such as boat shows, the Solano County Fair, and Home and Garden Expos. The deputies may take a vessel to presentations, upon request. (A photo of the 250 Defender is in the Appendix).

Fiscal information provided to the 2016-2017 Solano County Grand Jury indicated the total expenditures on boating safety and enforcement programs for the immediate preceding fiscal year (2015-2016) were \$1,255,845.22. This figure was reported by the Solano County Sheriff's Office in the Marine Law Enforcement Annual Report – 803 submitted to the California State Division of Boating and Waterways. The categorical breakdown of expenditures covered County Boat Taxes, California Boating Grant, and other Solano County funds and program funds provided to the Marine Patrol Program.

A major portion of the funding received in the Fiscal Year 2015-2016 was spent on salaries for the four deputies and one sergeant assigned to the Solano County Sheriff's Marine Patrol Program. They provide education, conduct law enforcement patrols, search and rescue of missing and injured boaters and assistance of stranded boaters.

The availability of equipment and funding is listed in the Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) Program report for the Solano County Marine Patrol Program during 2015-2016. The report documents the Marine Patrol Program participated in 7,316 hours of activity including 1,575 hours for On-the-Water Missions.

## **V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Finding 1-** The Solano County website provides the public with brief explanations of the Sheriff's Office Marine Patrol Program.

**Recommendation 1-** The Sheriff's Office staff update the Solano County website to include more comprehensive public information concerning the Marine Patrol Program.

### **COMMENTS:**

The Sheriff's Office provides law enforcement, public boating and waterways safety, and education through the Marine Patrol Program.

The Marine Patrol Program is dependent upon federal and state grants for the acquisition of vessels necessary for efficient operations. The Sheriff's Office staff continues to submit proposals for available grants for vessels and/or vessel maintenance.

The Marine Patrol Program deserves to be recognized for the contributions to public safety and education that it provides to the citizens of Solano County

### **REQUIRED RESPONSES:**

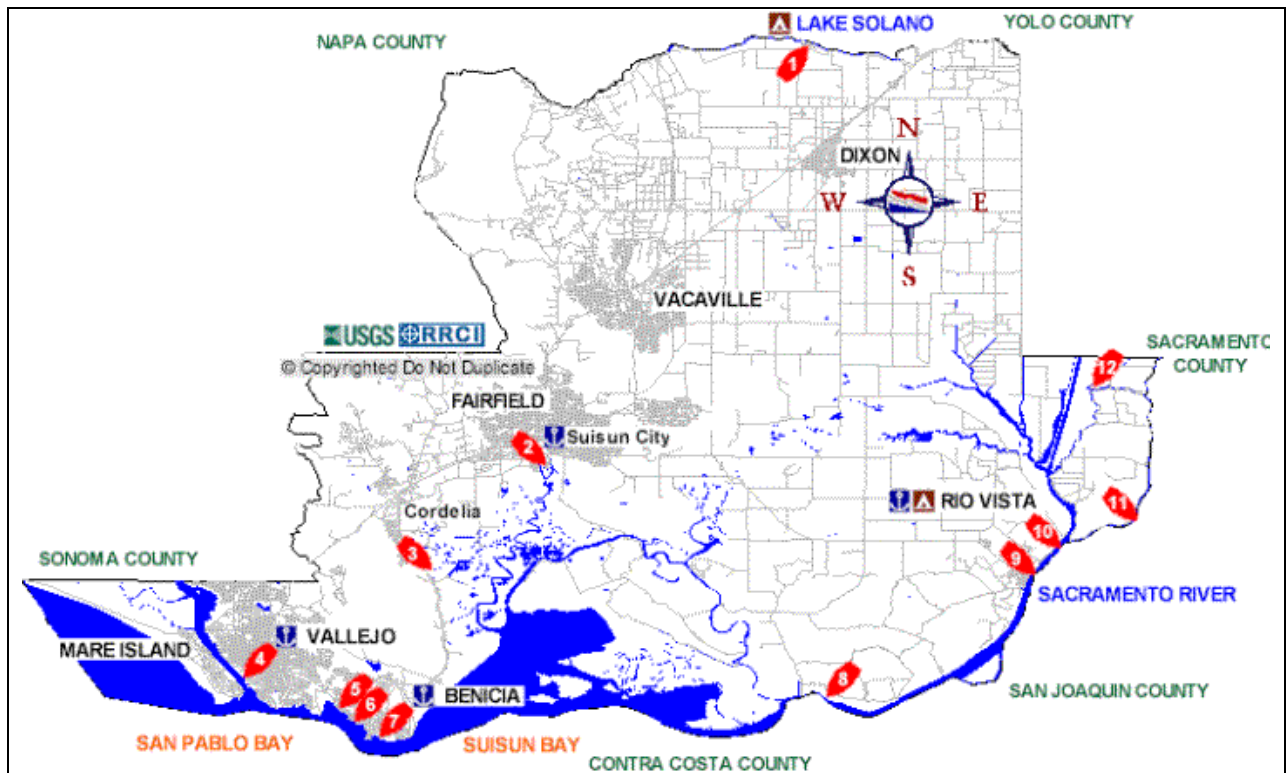
Solano County Sheriff (All Findings)

**COURTESY COPIES:**

Clerk, Solano County Board of Supervisors

**APPENDIX:**

United States Geological Survey map of Solano County waterways and adjacent counties as provided by Google Images at [http://www.boatharborslocator.com/images\\_2/c-ca-bh-solano.gif](http://www.boatharborslocator.com/images_2/c-ca-bh-solano.gif)



1. Lake Solano	2. Suisun City Marina
3. Cordelia	4. Vallejo Municipal Marina
5. Glen Cove Marina	6. Benicia Marina
9. Delta Marina	10. Hidden Harbor
11. Snug Harbor	12. Arrowhead Harbor



Defender 250 SAFE BOAT





SEA-DOO'S