Blue Flag USA

Potential Pilot Virtual Meeting
9 September 2020
Hosted by ASBPA
INTRODUCTIONS

Derek Brockbank, ASBPA Executive Director

Lourdes Diaz Colon, OPAS President

Annie Mercer, ASBPA Fellow
AGENDA

Who is ASBPA
What is Blue Flag
What Benefits Does Blue Flag Offer
Anticipated Procedure and Operations
How the Pilot Works
What Makes a Beach Blue Flag
Next Steps
Questions
WHO IS ASBPA?

ASBPA is dedicated to preserving, protecting and enhancing our coasts by merging science and public policy.

WHAT WE DO?

- Science & Technology
- Government Affairs
- Education & Outreach

ASBPA is a 94 year old organization working on various coastal issues. Our primary focuses are translating technical information into user friendly products; Advocating for policy and resources in Coastal Areas; and Educating ourselves and our members on the newest industry, research, and project best practices.

The Blue Flag program offers a balance between the environment and recreation in its goal of sustainability which partners well with the mission of ASBPA. We are excited to take our strengths and mission objectives as an organization and put forth a program that furthers economic stability, ecological protection, and recreational use on a national scale to members and non-members alike.
I’m going to go through a quick review of the program, highlighting the mission and goals of the blue flag international program and commenting again on the structure.
Blue flag is an international eco certification for marinas, tour boats and beaches. With this year’s blue flag season for the northern hemisphere starting in May, the program is operating in 46 countries and has over 4,600 sites. In the first phase of implementation we will be focusing on marine water beaches and then freshwater beaches so the information presented today will focus on the beaches.

The blue flag mission focuses on environmental education, safety for beach goers, environmental management, reducing the human impact on the local and international level, and the sustainable development of tourism. Beaches must comply with 33 criteria to qualify for certification which support these goals.
The blue flag program is divided into three levels. At the top you have the international parent organization FEE who organizes and supports 5 different environmental programs globally. They provide the program framework such as criteria, operations help, international audits, and support through administrative staff, best practices, and a network of international operators; and certification through the international jury.

The second level is the national jury which will be formed later this year. It is represented by national level representation from partner agencies, non-profits, and industry representatives. The National Wildlife Foundation is the Associate or Full member representing the US to FEE and currently run the Leaf and Eco-schools programs. National Jury responsibilities will be laid out in full later. They provide oversight for the administration of the program and guidance on how criteria should be met.

ASBPA as the national operator represents the administrative arm and communication between all levels. As we move through the pilot we will be coordinating meetings, answering questions, and helping you navigate criteria. If you need clarification, have a suggestion, or want to suggest specific meeting agendas please feel free to reach out and work with us as we create the program together.
Finally, there are you, our beaches and local community stakeholders. As the target for the certification and the responsible party in maintaining criteria you are an active part of the program. Many of you are already going above and beyond and have lots of information and ideas which would benefit other communities in the US and abroad. We are excited to be working with you on highlighting these accomplishments through blue flag.
What does Blue Flag Bring to a Community?

A Case Study
QUESTIONS?
COMMENTS?
LET US KNOW!
As we move through the pilot program we will be implementing and assessing various operations. From application materials and submission to website function and design. This is as much a pilot for us as it is for you. We welcome feedback and suggestions to facilitate our procedures. We have tried to anticipate needs from all levels of the program and will present how we foresee the program running as of today. This is an overview of the entire program in a normal operating year. We will break down the pilot phase next, but will start with what will typically be expected first.
Application preparation will begin in the fall preceding the year of certification. So for certification in 2022, the preliminary assessment will begin in fall of 2021. During this phase new applicants will be able to approach ASBPA to determine how closely they meet criteria and what would need to be done to reach qualification. This time period is focused on new applicants, returning applicants who may need a dispensation written due to prior flag removal, or new staff who may need extra help navigating the program.

The preliminary assessment will look at all criteria but will not require final documentation or proof of meeting criteria.

There will be three results:
A major non-compliance with criteria which we feel would not be able to be met before applications are due

A minor non-compliance which could be rectified before applications are submitted

And meeting or exceeding criteria which would allow you to move on to the application phase
Applications will be due to ASBPA in the Winter for final review and preparation to be submitted to the national jury. Based on international documentation these are the materials we expect to be collecting. At this time we have not determined how we will be collecting this information. Some aspects, such as the water sampling calendar and water quality percentile have standardized forms but proof of recycling may be documented several ways. We are working through this and will keep you updated on decisions.

It is important to note here that as the national operator we will review your application and package it for the national jury highlighting any missing information, best practices, dispensations etc. but we will not be making any decisions on whether or not to promote your application to the international jury.
At the time these final materials are submitted to the national operator in the winter, the applicant will be charged but not before. You will not be charged for pre-assessment or any subsequent support only at the time you officially submit your application.

As of right now we are basing the price on linear footage of the beach to be certified. This allows maximum flexibility for applicants who we anticipate will be applying from different levels of government or for different sizes of beaches due to beach use and environmental profiles.

We plan to offer a discount by jurisdiction which we are defining as the physical applicant for certification. If several beaches in one county would like to become certified and the county becomes the applicant for 7 sites they would receive a 15% discount.

Finally, we will work with you to put in orders for your physical flag(s) with the international provider but this cost will be covered by the beach based on what quantity and size of materials.

### SUBMISSION AND FEE

**APPLICATION FEE**

Payment will be processed when the final application packet is submitted to the National Jury.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pricing Based on Linear Footage</th>
<th>Jurisdictions may receive a discount for submission of multiple beaches.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>500–2000’</td>
<td>$3500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000’–1 mile</td>
<td>$4500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 1 mile</td>
<td>$5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3–5 sites</td>
<td>10% discount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more sites</td>
<td>15% discount</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Finally, we will work with you to put in orders for your physical flag(s) with the international provider but this cost will be covered by the beach based on what quantity and size of materials.
The National Jury will receive the full application and elevate it to the international jury, give the application a dispensation, or deny the application for not meeting criteria. Therefore, they assume the responsibility of examining compliance both through application review and oversight over the national operator’s control visits. As applications will be due in the winter, we expect the national jury to meet sometime in December or January.

The International Jury meets in April. Applications will be forwarded in January/February to the international organization. There may be some back and forth between the NO and International staff but in general submissions to the international jury are final. The international jury will determine if a beach should be awarded and then notify the national operator who will contact the applicants.
Decisions will come down in April which will allow for time for physical flags to ship and communities to decide how they would like to promote certification. Publicity of certification may not occur until May 1 when the International organization announces all northern hemisphere certified beaches. Many communities organize annual flag raising ceremonies or other educational events to promote the beach and the program. Now the official blue flag beach season has started. Flags will have the year of the award stitched on them to show up to date certification.
During your season, control visits will be done at each certified site. These visits will be both announced or unannounced and completed by both national operator staff and international auditors.

There are 4 types of resulting reports. Full compliance, minor non-compliance, multiple non-compliance, and major non-compliance. All report results will be communicated to the site.

Sites accept responsibility for meeting all criteria for the duration of their season by applying. They must comply with requests for information from national and international inspectors, and withdraw their flag if found to be in non-compliance.
Now it's important to note when you can physically fly your flag.

As of May 1 you can fly your flag all season long. This should be the current flag distributed for the year awarded.
If you are found to have a non-compliance which results in a 10 day window to correct, you may still fly your flag during this period of time. This would include not having correct signage or not having the correct number of educational events.
If you have a major non-compliance with a criteria that holds consequences for the health and safety of the beach and community – then the flag must be withdrawn for the remainder of the season. And information posted on the information board as to why the flag has been removed. For example, a major pollution event which causes non-compliance with water quality criteria.
Dispensations are determined at the national jury level. The national operator staff will assist you in filling out any additional forms or summaries of information requested by the national jury to promote your application to the international jury. Dispensations are filed when the beach does not completely meet all of the Blue Flag Criteria. For instance, maybe there is not space on the BF information board about local eco-systems, environmental elements, or historical sites because they don’t apply to your beach site or you have a specific educational center for expanding upon these topics more in depth? A dispensation could be written for that criteria.
Applications will be submitted and reviewed annually. We hope to automate this process to allow previous applicants to simply update parts of the application which change such as the evaluation of the 5 educational programs.

Again, applicants who will be reapplying will only have to update this information and not go through the preliminary assessment unless they feel it beneficial. If you decide to skip a certification cycle, however, you will be asked to go through preliminary assessment just to make sure no changes come as a surprise. Renewal will begin in the fall and applications will be due in the winter for submission to the national jury.
QUESTIONS?
COMMENTS?
LET US KNOW!
HOW THE PILOT WORKS

Timeline, Gap Analysis, National Workshop, Approval, and Working Relationship
2020 Planning and Feasibility Timeline

1. Draft Funding Plan for Board
2. Approve Partners for Interest
3. Draft Operations Plan for Board
4. Draft Business Plan for Board
5. Feasibility Study Finalized & Submitted to FE
6. Internal Review
7. Work on Feasibility Study
8. Approve Partners for Workshop Involvement
9. Approve Partners for National Jury Selection
10. Criteria Working Groups
11. Pilot Beach Webinar
12. National Workshop

- Raise $275k dedicated funding for FY 2021
- Work on Feasibility study
2021 Planning and Feasibility Timeline

1. Raise $100k dedicated funding for FY 2022
2. National Jury Established and announced
3. Draft Marketing Plan
4. US Criteria guidelines Set
5. Pilots work to meet Criteria
6. Actualize & Adjust Operations Plan
7. ~5 pilots announced
8. ASHPA Pilots apply for the Assessment Process
9. Internal Review
10. Internal Review
11. Board Review
12. Board Review

Actualize & Adjust Business Plan
Gap Analysis

AN ASSESSMENT OF CRITERIA COMPLIANCE

An assessment of what needs to be accomplished by the beach prior to applying.

Will be due in December.

More details will be covered later in the meeting.
National Workshop

HELD IN EARLY DECEMBER-ONLINE:

- Day 1: Announcing Blue Flag in the US (~2hrs)
- Day 2: Reviewing Operations and Criteria (4-5 hrs)
- Day 3: Working with Pilot Beaches (~2-3 hrs)
National Jury

FINALIZED WINTER 2021

COMPOSED OF:

- EPA
- National Tourism Assc. (e.g. Brand USA)
- Assc. of Local Authorities (e.g. Coastal States Org.)
- National Sailing Assc. or other Marina Experts
- National Lifesaving Assc.
- Environmental Education Experts
- NWF
- Other NGOs
- Other Experts
PILOT PHASE APPROVAL

INTERNATIONAL JURY MEETS IN APRIL
Formal Approval for Blue Flag and pilots to begin.

PILOTS
a) Secure funding for application, new materials (e.g. signs, flag)
b) Begin taking actions to receive Blue Flag

ASBPA
Begin national branding of Blue Flag
WORKING WITH US ON CRITERIA

- Understanding any new US-specific criteria and modifications to international criteria*
- Begin making any management changes to adhere to Blue Flag criteria
- Install new facilities/equipment (e.g. signs, bathrooms, accessibility)

Everything should be ready by Fall 2021
Official Applications will open in the
Fall of 2021
Due December 2021
Blue Flag Raised Spring 2022
QUESTIONS?
COMMENTS?
LET US KNOW!
WHAT MAKES A BEACH BLUE FLAG?

The Criteria
safety and services (Oct 23 @ 2pm E/11am P)

water quality (Oct 29 @ 2pm E/11am P)

environmental education and information (Nov 3 @ 2pm E/11am P)

environmental management (Nov 17 @ 2pm E/11am P)
CRITERIA
DISCUSSION
Now I will be outlining the next steps as they apply specifically for pilot sites.
As a pilot you are required to fill out a gap analysis. Participation in other ways like our criteria working groups will benefit you responding and ultimately the program.

The GAP analysis will be a document where you go through each criteria in detail and present the current status of your site and then describe how you will meet the criteria over the next year. It will be based off the international criteria and a form will be sent to you at the end of the meeting along with today’s slides. Your gap analysis will be due to us Tuesday December 1 and forwarded to the international staff in January for the April international jury meeting. Once your gap analysis has been submitted, we recommend beginning to work on your plan immediately. Though approval will not be confirmed until April, it may be too late to implement all plans for meeting criteria.

We are here to support you through the whole process.

I am available to schedule time to work with you on your application, answer questions, or forward questions onto the international staff to answer. I would go ahead and look at your calendars and think about having at least one call with staff to discuss any concerns before your final submission. We are learning and getting new information constantly and you can now visit the asbpa website and find BF in the USA under the get involved tab. Here we will be posting public resources and private resources just for pilots and partners.
accessing a private post for pilots your passcode will be 2021Pilot.
Support

SUPPORT

We are available to answer any questions you may have.

Plan to schedule at least one call with staff to review your progress before submission.

Check out the ASBPA website for updates on Blue Flag and resources. Your Passcode is 2021Pilot.
QUESTIONS? COMMENTS? LET US KNOW!

Annie Mercer
annie.mercer@asbpa.org
910-368-7847

Derek Brockbank
derek.brockbank@asbpa.org
202-827-4246

Thank you for joining,