

THE AUXILIARIST

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF THE U.S. COAST GUARD AUXILIARY



National Safe Boating Week

One Week.
One Mission.
Countless Communities.



THE AUXILIARIST

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF THE U.S. COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

Editor-In-Chief

Hector R. Corrales

Senior Editor

COMO K.C. Murphy

Managing Editor

Mitchell D. Schlitt

Layout Editors

Stefan Peterson

Lisa Repetto

Content Editors

Kimberly K. Holland

Kristen Iglesias

Karen L. Miller

Christopher M. Orlando

R. Michael Stringer

Tiffany G. Townsend

National Director

of Public Affairs

Hector R. Corrales

National Deputy Director

of Public Affairs Support

Byron Voutsinas

National Deputy Director

of Public Affairs Communications

Jamal D. Lee

National Division Chief

of Communications

Matthew Thompson

National Division Chief

of Creative Services

Stefan Peterson

National Branch Chief of

Communications Support

Caitlin Engle

SECOND QUARTER, 2026

Contributing Authors

Stephen Ellerin

William Garvey

COMO Joseph Giannattasio

COMO Mary Kirkwood, NACO

COMO John Krogmann, DNACO

Karen Miller

James Munger

Cliff Neve

Gary Peterson

Christina Pillsbury

Matt Smith

R. Michael Stringer

COMO Sonny Thatch II, DNACO

Contributing Photographers

Sandra Dalton

William Garvey

COMO Joseph Giannattasio

Senior Airman Luke Hirsch

Christine Howe

Peter Leavesley

PO3 Jonathan Lindbery

COMO K.C. Murphy

Walter Runcck

Matt Smith

Tiffany Townsend

Andrea White

ON THE COVER

National Safe Boating Week unites Auxiliarists nationwide in promoting safer boating through education, engagement, and service.

From boating safety booths to hands-on demonstrations and lessons to vessel safety checks and on-water engagement while on patrols, Auxiliarists make a meaningful impact on water sports to add to everyone's enjoyment and fun.

Photo credits: U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Southeast District, Tiffany Townsend, and K.C. Murphy.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

4 Auxiliary Readiness Assessment: A Historic Milestone



11 Cybersecurity: Trust Nothing, Verify Everything



6 Memorial Day and The United States Coast Guard

12 More Than "Just" a Week: Bringing Boating Safety to the Community



COVER STORY

20 Making of a Proper Paddler

16 Eyes in the Sky: Auxiliary Aircrew Locate Five Stranded Mariners After 17 Days on Remote Bahamian Cay



27 Spotlight on the Auxiliary University Program

30 "Operation PFD": Preventing Floating Disasters



28 Whistle in the Wind: When Safety Saves a Life



The Blue Angels and the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary 34



37 National Coast Guard Auxiliary Commodore's memorial unveiled at USCG Training Center Cape May

32 2025 Statistics



40-41 ATLANTIC WEST & ATLANTIC EAST DNACO Reports

Adventure READY

Adventure is better when everyone's ready.

One paddle.
Two life jackets.
Four paws.

safeboatingcampaign.com



Produced under a grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.





Auxiliary Readiness Assessment: A Historic Milestone

At a Coast Guard Senior Leadership meeting in early February, leaders discussed the need for a continued qualitative assessment of unit readiness.

The Commandant introduced six open-ended questions for unit commanders aimed at identifying the key drivers of mission readiness, including staffing vacancies, the number of qualified personnel available to fill required positions, material condition, efforts to close readiness gaps, and support needed from Coast Guard headquarters. A few weeks later, when Vice Commandant ADM Allan announced that the survey would go to all active-duty unit commanders in early March, the Commandant asked when the Auxiliary would conduct its own readiness survey, underscoring that our readiness was just as important as that of the active-duty force and the Reserve. It was our turn.

On the member application and in AuxData II, members indicate the days and times they are available to serve. Most provide that information, but does it accurately reflect their willingness and availability? Is it up to date? In an emergency, could

Flotilla 5-10, Pacific City, Oregon. Photo by Kim Johns, United States Coast Guard Auxiliary.

we use it to quickly call members into service – and if so, in what roles?

Commodore Michael Bozarth, DNACO for PAC Area and Operations, was chosen to lead the readiness effort. He brought together a highly capable team consisting of Jenn Austin, COMO Amanda Constant, COMO Rick Saunders, Anthony Marzano, and Larry Fletcher. Since no similar effort had been undertaken before, the team built the process from the ground up. Commodore Bozarth began by drafting a White Paper that established key terms and concepts for Auxiliary readiness. That foundation led to the development of the first-ever AUX Readiness Assessment.

The survey was sent to more than 2,700 members active in operations, including surface crews and coxswains, air crews, pilots and observers, and telecommunications personnel. It also included members serving in high-demand specialties such as chaplain support, health services, culinary services, emergency management, and prevention. Each member received a unique L2 link to the survey. Response was exceptional, with 69% participating overall. Among respondents, 825 said they were willing

Readiness means being able to provide qualified, skilled members to support active-duty missions—more extensively and in new ways.

to serve if called, and 85% of those willing respondents rated themselves as “ready.”

The survey was also sent to more than 1,300 asset owners, including owners of boats, planes, and vehicles. Of those who responded, 90% said they were willing to serve, and 88% said they were ready.

Ready for what? When Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard (MCPOCG) Phillip Waldron was asked that question, he answered, “To answer the call” – to be physically and mentally prepared to respond.

For the Auxiliary, readiness means being able to provide qualified, skilled members to support active-duty missions – more extensively and in new ways. For the first time in our organization’s history, we have a qualitative measure of what we can offer the Coast Guard and the nation. It is unprecedented, historic, and timely.

Each year, the Auxiliary has taken on a larger role in supporting the Coast Guard’s critical missions. Our skills, expertise, and life experience make us valuable to small boat units, air stations, legal offices, medical clinics, boating safety events, and more. Our support during natural disasters has grown significantly in recent years, particularly as more members contribute to Geospatial Damage Assessments. As the Coast Guard continues its efforts to interdict illegal drugs and migrants, it needs more support in other mission areas. And as the service remains engaged in global issues, the Auxiliary will likely be called on to backfill and provide support at the local level.

We presented the AUX Readiness Assessment results to the Coast Guard Senior Leadership team in early May, and the Commandant was enthusiastic about both the findings and their future potential. We will continue working with the RAPTOR (Rapid Response & Prototyping) team at Coast Guard headquarters to integrate our results into the broader Coast Guard readiness assessment.

The next phase of the AUX Readiness Assessment will focus on Recreational Boating Safety. Phase 3 will then capture the civilian professional skills our members bring beyond their Auxiliary qualifications – additional expertise the active-duty force may need now or in the future.

Each of us brings unique talents, skills, and life experiences to the Auxiliary. Many of those gifts remain unseen, yet they hold tremendous potential to strengthen the Coast Guard’s mission. Imagine what more we can contribute when we fully recognize, capture, and share those capabilities with the active-duty force. Readiness is more than being prepared for emergencies – it is a commitment to stand ready whenever and wherever our service, skills, and dedication are needed.

Take a fresh look at your experience and consider new ways you can support the Coast Guard. You have much to offer.

Thank you to all the members who completed the survey and to the District Commodores who validated the information. Your commitment and dedication made the assessment a success and helped produce a timely, meaningful final product.

I want to offer a heartfelt Bravo Zulu to Commodore Bozarth and the AUX Readiness Tiger Team for their exceptional, groundbreaking work in bringing the Auxiliary’s capabilities to the attention of the Coast Guard Senior Leadership team.



Mary Kirkwood

COMO Mary Kirkwood
National Commodore,
Coast Guard Auxiliary

Memorial Day and The United States Coast Guard

By **James Munger**, District Captain North, Great Lakes Central District, Sector Northern Great Lakes

On Memorial Day 2026, members of the Roscommon Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla were honored to participate in the local Memorial Day Parade. Other flotillas across the country had the privilege of participating in similar events. Memorial Day is dedicated to honoring and mourning all military personnel who died while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States.

While we were waiting in the lineup for the parade, a gentleman who served our country during the Vietnam War approached us. He wanted to talk – not just to pass the time, but because something about seeing us in uniform moved him to share a piece of

history he felt too few people know. He recounted how the United States Coast Guard had served alongside him and his fellow veterans in that conflict, and how rarely that service gets acknowledged. It was a reminder of why we show up to these events. We

Dogs and their beach patrol handlers leap into action from a surfboat during a landing exercise along the coast of South Carolina, circa 1943.

Source: U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office



are not just participants in a parade; we are standard-bearers for a branch of the military that has often been overlooked, and we carry that responsibility with pride.

Unfortunately, when people talk about those who have served or are serving in the "military," those discussions often exclude

members of the Coast Guard. Most people think of the Coast Guard as a search and rescue service and as part of the "war on drugs." The true history of the Coast Guard tells a very different story – one of a service that has participated in nearly every major conflict from 1790 through today.

A HISTORY OF COMBAT SERVICE

America's "First" Navy

The U.S. Revenue Cutter Service, established by Alexander Hamilton in 1790, was the direct ancestor of today's United States Coast Guard. After the Revolutionary War, the Continental Navy was disbanded, and the Revenue Cutter Service was the nation's only armed maritime service until the U.S. Navy was officially created in 1794.

War of 1812 and Early Conflicts

In the War of 1812, revenue cutters played a vital role in defending American shipping, capturing French pirates, and engaging British forces. From those earliest days, the men and women of the Coast Guard (and its antecedents) have answered the call to serve wherever the nation needed them.



World War I

During World War I, Coast Guard cutters and over 9,000 personnel were transferred to the Navy. They performed vital transatlantic convoy escorts and anti-submarine patrols in European waters. The Coast Guard suffered significant casualties throughout the war, including the loss of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter (USCGC) Tampa.

On the night of September 26, 1918, while transiting toward Milford Haven, Wales, to refuel, the Tampa was struck by a single torpedo fired by the German submarine UB-91. It sank in less than three minutes with all hands: 111 Coast Guardsmen, four U.S. Navy personnel, and 16 passengers consisting of 11 British Royal Navy personnel and five British civilians; 131 souls in total. It remains the single largest loss of American naval life during the war. For over a century, the wreck's location was unknown. Earlier this year, in 2026, a British technical diving team – the Gasperados – finally located the Tampa approximately 50 miles off the coast of Newquay, Cornwall, lying more than 300 feet deep in the Atlantic Ocean, bringing long-overdue closure to the families and the service. Over the course of the war, the Coast Guard lost five ships and approximately 200 men.



World War II

In World War II, the ranks of the Coast Guard grew from 25,000 to over 250,000. They manned landing ships and craft in critical invasions, including Normandy, North Africa, Iwo Jima, and Guadalcanal. Coast Guardsmen manned landing craft during the D-Day invasion, patrolled for enemy submarines in the Atlantic, and pioneered the Long Range Aid to Navigation (LORAN) network – the predecessor to today’s satellite-based Global Positioning System (GPS) – to guide Allied fleets. Cutters and patrol boats escorted trans-Atlantic and Arctic convoys, achieving impressive U-boat kill rates; the 327-foot Treasury-class cutters were particularly successful. The Coast Guard conducted vital Arctic surveillance and made the first U.S. military capture of the war in September 1941, seizing a German radio station in Greenland. Guardsmen also patrolled U.S. coastlines on horseback, aided by civilian volunteers known as the Corsair Fleet, to defend against Axis spies and saboteurs.

This war also saw the creation of the SPARs, the Coast Guard Women’s Reserve. Established by an act of Congress signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on November 23, 1942, the SPARs were created to fill critical shore-based jobs, freeing male personnel for sea duty. The program’s director, Lt. Commander Dorothy C. Stratton, coined the name from the Coast Guard motto “Semper Paratus – Always Ready.” Over 10,000 women served in dozens of vital technical, logistical, and clerical roles.

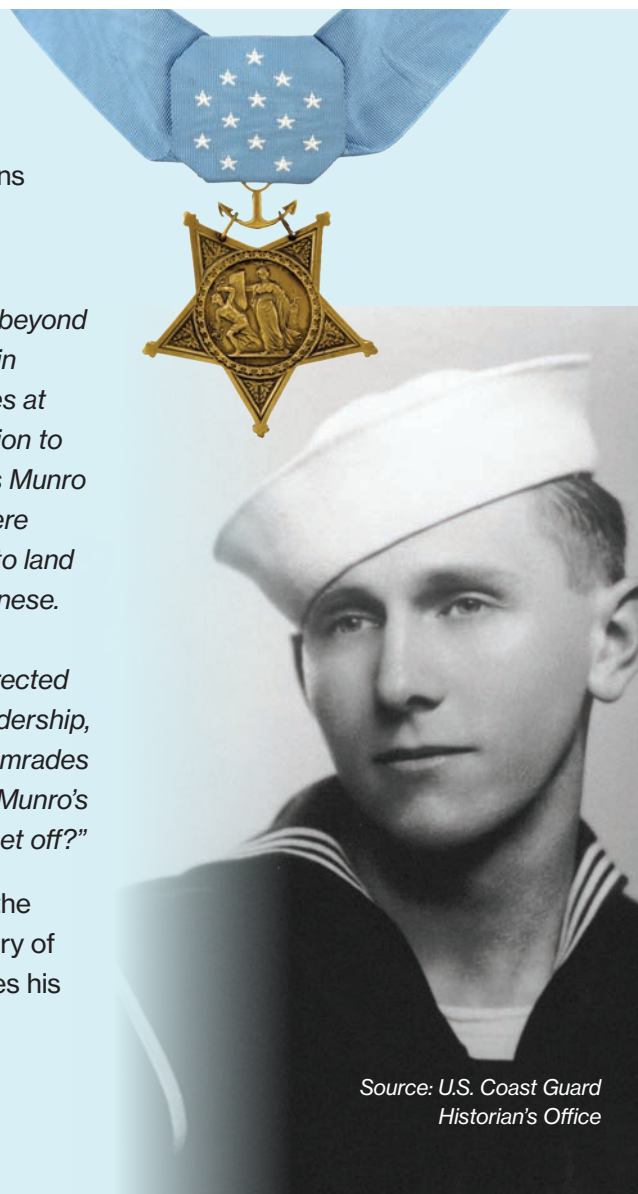
The service’s first — and only — Medal of Honor

Signalman First Class Douglas Munro earned the Congressional Medal of Honor – the Nation’s highest military decoration – for his heroic actions evacuating Marines under fire at Guadalcanal.

The citation reads:

“For extraordinary heroism and conspicuous gallantry in action above and beyond the call of duty as Officer-in-Charge of a group of Higgins boats, engaged in the evacuation of a Battalion of Marines trapped by enemy Japanese forces at Point Cruz, Guadalcanal, on September 27, 1942. After signifying his intention to advance into the bay to rescue the trapped Marines, Signalman First Class Munro boldly led five of his craft toward the shore. As the heavily loaded boats were under extremely heavy enemy fire from the beach, he signaled the others to land and placed his own boat as a shield between the beachhead and the Japanese. By thus diverting the enemy fire upon himself, he successfully covered the withdrawal of the Marines. He kept his boat in this perilous position and directed the rescue operations until he was fatally wounded. By his outstanding leadership, expert planning, and dauntless devotion to duty, he and his courageous comrades undoubtedly saved the lives of many who otherwise would have perished. Munro’s final spoken words to his comrades before passing away were, “Did they get off?”

Munro remains the only member of the U.S. Coast Guard ever to receive the Medal of Honor. The book *Guardian of Guadalcanal: The World War II Story of Douglas A. Munro, United States Coast Guard*, by Gary Williams, chronicles his life, upbringing, and heroic sacrifice.



Source: U.S. Coast Guard
Historian’s Office



Korean War

During the Korean War, approximately 8,500 Coast Guard personnel supported United Nations operations through a wide range of maritime and homeland security missions. Coast Guard cutters conducted shallow-water interdiction patrols, naval gunfire support, and search-and-rescue operations, while also maintaining vital ocean weather stations that provided meteorological data and communications support for military and civilian traffic across the Pacific. The service operated key LORAN navigation stations, the predecessor to today’s satellite-based Global Positioning System (GPS) – including one on the Korean peninsula – that guided UN ships and aircraft. It strengthened security at U.S. ports by inspecting vessels, supervising the loading of explosives, and screening merchant mariners and dockworkers against possible sabotage. Coast Guard aviation detachments on Pacific islands also maintained around-the-clock search-and-rescue coverage in support of the war effort.

In 1972, following the modernization of military policy, women were fully integrated into the active-duty Coast Guard, with the first post-WWII class of SPAR officer candidates graduating that same year, marking a permanent shift toward full gender integration across all roles, ranks, and units within the modern Coast Guard.



Vietnam War

During the Vietnam War, the Coast Guard played vital combat and support roles. From 1965 to 1973, over 8,000 Coast Guardsmen were deployed to Southeast Asia, operating 82-foot patrol boats, high-endurance cutters, and aircraft to interdict enemy supplies, conduct search-and-rescue operations, and maintain navigation aids. Tasked with securing South Vietnam’s 1,200-mile coastline, Coast Guard cutters interdicted enemy sampans and trawlers to stop the maritime infiltration of arms and supplies.

Twenty-six 82-foot Point-class cutters were deployed as part of Coast Guard Squadron One, while five high-endurance cutters served in Squadron Three, supporting U.S. Navy and South Vietnamese naval forces. Coast Guard helicopter pilots flew combat search-and-rescue missions with the U.S. Air Force, braving heavy enemy fire to rescue downed pilots. They established and manned LORAN stations in Vietnam and Thailand, providing critical electronic positioning for Allied ships and aircraft. Specialized port security teams oversaw the loading of explosives in Vietnamese harbors. Coast Guard buoy tenders maintained channels and repaired shore aids, ensuring safe passage for Allied supply and combat ships. Over the course of their service, seven Coast Guardsmen were killed in action, and 59 were wounded.



Operation Desert Storm

During Operation Desert Storm, the Coast Guard deployed approximately 1,600 personnel, including Port Security Units and aircraft, to support U.S. Navy and coalition forces – marking the first time Coast Guard women served in direct combat roles. Reservists were activated to secure crucial overseas ports in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Tactical “Raider” boats provided armed escorts and waterside security, and four-person boarding teams deployed with maritime interception forces to enforce United Nations sanctions. Coast Guard HU-25 Falcon jets were deployed to the Persian Gulf to map and track oil spills, an unprecedented environmental protection mission in a combat zone.



Operation Iraqi Freedom

During Operation Iraqi Freedom, approximately 4,000 Coast Guard personnel provided maritime security, force protection, port security, and aids-to-navigation in the Arabian Gulf, the service's largest overseas deployment since the Vietnam War. Coast Guard Port Security Units secured vital Iraqi oil and gas platforms, allowing Navy SEALs and Marines to push forward into other combat operations. The USCGC Walnut, a seagoing buoy tender, cleared and re-marked the 41-mile navigable channel leading from Iraq's port of Umm Qasr to the sea, enabling safe transit for humanitarian aid and Coalition vessels.

Today

Today, Coast Guard personnel and vessels continue to operate in the Middle East. Based primarily in the Kingdom of Bahrain, a squadron of 154-foot Sentinel-Class Fast Response Cutters supports U.S. Naval Forces Central Command by performing maritime interdiction, port security, and vessel boardings to counter regional threats, enforce sanctions, and deter Iranian aggression in the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Gulf of Oman.

THE SERVICE BEHIND THE SERVICE

The Coast Guard used to be the smallest of the military services (the Space Force now bears that distinction), but carries a legacy of service, at home and abroad, that stands with any branch of the Armed Forces. Every member takes the same solemn oath to protect and defend the U.S. Constitution.

I am honored to be a member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. The Auxiliary performs nearly every function of the Coast Guard except for direct law enforcement and military roles (auxiliarists have been "deployed" as interpreters, culinary assistants, cuttermen, chaplains, etc.). We are often called a "force multiplier" because we work side by side with active-duty and reserve forces, extending their reach and mission.

That day in the parade lineup, when a Vietnam veteran sought us out specifically to share his story

and his gratitude, that was a reminder of what this work means. He saw our uniforms and knew we would understand. He was right. Every time we put on the uniform, march in a parade, conduct a safety inspection, or assist a boater in distress, we carry forward a tradition that dates back to 1790. We do it not for recognition, but because the mission demands it.

As a member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary, I am proud to serve every day alongside the dedicated men and women of the Coast Guard – active duty, reserve, and the auxiliary. We all hold to our core values of:

Honor. Respect. Devotion to Duty.

Always Ready – Semper Paratus. 

Cybersecurity and Social Engineering: Trust Nothing, Verify Everything

By **Cliff Neve**, DIR-Y

U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Cybersecurity Directorate

When most people think about cyberattacks, they imagine sophisticated hackers breaking into computer systems. Most cyber incidents today begin much more simply: with an email, text message, or phone call designed to trick someone into taking an action.

They are not hacking into your systems. They are harvesting your credentials and logging in as you.

Recently, the Coast Guard Auxiliary experienced multiple phishing and impersonation attempts targeting Auxiliarists. In one example, attackers impersonated the National Commodore and the Chief Director of Auxiliary and sent emails containing so-called "secure message" attachments. Those attachments directed users to fake login pages designed to harvest usernames and passwords.

In another incident, multiple Auxiliarists received emails from someone posing as their District Commodore requesting the purchase of gift cards for a supposed charitable effort. At least one Auxiliarist purchased the gift cards but fortunately realized it was a scam before providing the gift card codes to the attacker.

These attacks were not technically sophisticated. They succeeded because they exploited trust, urgency, and the natural desire of Auxiliarists to help others.

Social engineering attacks almost always rely on three things:

- **Trust** – the message appears to come from someone you know
- **Urgency** – the attacker pressures you to act quickly
- **Authority** – the message appears to come from leadership or a trusted organization

The most important cybersecurity lesson is simple: If YOU receive an email, text message, or phone call requesting sensitive information (even if it appears to come from an authoritative source): do not provide it.



Instead, independently verify the request using trusted contact information that YOU initiate yourself. Do not use phone numbers, email addresses, or links provided in the suspicious message.

Every Auxiliarist plays a role in cybersecurity defense. A few simple practices can dramatically reduce risk:

- Be skeptical of unexpected or urgent messages, particularly those appearing to come from senior leaders
- Use strong, unique passwords for every account
- Enable multi-factor authentication (MFA) wherever possible
- Never click suspicious links or attachments
- Keep your devices and software updated
- Slow down and verify before taking action If you receive a suspicious Auxiliary-related email, consider checking the Coast Guard Auxiliary Cybersecurity Facebook page at www.facebook.com/cgauxcyber to see if the phishing attempt has already been reported to the community. Auxiliarists with Facebook accounts should also consider joining the USCG Auxiliary Cybersecurity Facebook page to stay informed about current phishing campaigns, cybersecurity awareness information, and emerging threats impacting the Auxiliary community. Whether or not it has already been posted, suspicious phishing emails should be forwarded to phishing@cgauxnet.us for analysis and awareness.

Cybersecurity awareness is operational readiness. By protecting our personal devices, accounts, and information, we help protect the Coast Guard Auxiliary, our shipmates, and the missions we support. 

Stay vigilant. Trust nothing. Verify everything.

Semper Paratus – Always Ready.

COVER STORY

More Than “Just” a Week: Bringing Boating Safety to the Community

By **Karen Miller**, AUXPA1, contributing editor, *The Auxiliarist*

When most members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary think about National Safe Boating Week (NSBW), they picture educating the boating public about life jackets, vessel safety checks, and boating safety displays. While those elements are certainly part of the annual observance, the week is really about something much larger: meeting people where they are and starting conversations that can save lives. The Clearwater Flotilla demonstrated this by significantly expanding its outreach beyond these “traditional” activities.

These traditional missions have been at the heart of NSBW since its creation in 1958. Established by the United States Coast Guard and now coordinated nationally through the National Safe Boating Council, the campaign serves as the traditional kickoff to the summer boating season. For nearly seven decades, it has encouraged boaters to wear life jackets, take boating education courses, obtain vessel safety checks, and practice responsible seamanship. This year, NSBW took place the week of May 16-22, 2026.

For the Coast Guard Auxiliary, NSBW provides a unique opportunity to amplify those messages through community engagement. This year, the Clearwater Flotilla (11-1) embraced that challenge by taking boating safety far beyond the waterfront.



Betsy Scott provides boaters with a list of important links to help them stay safe on the water.

Photo credit: Lisa Repetto.

flotilla strengthened both its community impact and its operational readiness.

The flotilla also focused on the next generation of boaters. At Discovery Academy, a science and technology (STEM) oriented K-8 charter school, flotilla members staffed an informational exhibit and distributed youth life jackets donated by the local fire department to local families. The event generated meaningful conversations with parents about life jacket fit, proper wear, and the importance of developing safe boating habits early in life.

Public outreach extended beyond face-to-face events. During an interview on WTAN radio between Ellen Patrick and Karen Miller, listeners throughout the Tampa Bay area learned about NSBW, the services provided by the Coast Guard Auxiliary, and simple steps every boater can take to make their time on the water safer.

The flotilla's outreach efforts were further amplified through social media. Every event conducted during NSBW was documented and shared on the flotilla's Facebook page, allowing boating safety messages, photographs, and event highlights to reach audiences well beyond



Discovery Academy event: members interact with families visiting the boating information table. Photo credit: Lisa Repetto.

those who attended in person. Members also participated in “Wear Your Life Jacket at Work Day,” with approximately a dozen flotilla members submitting photographs of themselves wearing life jackets in their workplaces. The campaign provided a fun and visible way to promote one of the week's most important safety messages while encouraging member participation. By combining traditional outreach with digital engagement, the flotilla extended NSBW's visibility throughout the community and showcased the many ways Auxiliarists serve the public.

Members also participated in the City of Belleair Beach's Hurricane Preparedness and Boating Safety Expo. The event provided an ideal venue to discuss two topics that are particularly relevant along Florida's Gulf Coast: safe boating practices and preparing vessels for hurricane season.

One of the most rewarding opportunities came through an invitation to speak at the “Big C,” a monthly gathering



Karen Miller speaking at the “Big C” event. Photo credit: Lisa Repetto.

whose name stands for the “Big Council,” which is the acronym for the official name of the group of Pinellas County, Florida, beach mayors’ Barrier Islands Governmental Council. This forum brings together mayors, commissioners, civic leaders, and residents from eleven Gulf beach communities to discuss issues affecting the region. The presentation provided an opportunity not only to share boating safety information but also to explain the many ways the Coast Guard Auxiliary supports the boating public through public education, vessel examinations, safety patrols, and community outreach.

While NSBW’s primary purpose is public education, it also offers our members something equally valuable: an opportunity to work together.

While NSBW’s primary purpose is public education, it also offers our members something equally valuable: an opportunity to work together. Throughout the week, flotilla members staffed events, delivered presentations, conducted safety checks, and represented the Auxiliary as a team. Members who might ordinarily see one another only at monthly meetings spent time working side by side toward a common goal. The result was stronger camaraderie, greater mentorship opportunities, and a renewed appreciation for the value of volunteer service.

Taken individually, each of these activities reached a different audience. Together, they demonstrated an important truth about boating safety: effective outreach cannot be confined to marinas and boat ramps alone. Today’s boating safety message must reach families, community leaders, local governments, schools, media outlets, and residents who may not even own a boat but influence those who do.

National Safe Boating Week may last only seven days on the calendar, but its purpose extends far beyond a single week. Every proclamation signed, every Program

Members of Clearwater Flotilla pictured with Mayor Bruce Rector and the Clearwater City Council following the NSBW proclamation ceremony. Betsy Scott, Flotilla Commander, is holding the proclamation.

Photo credit: Nicole Sprague.



Karen Miller, Betsy Scott, and Daniel Williamson aboard a vessel owned by Clearwater Yacht Club members after completing a vessel examination. Photo credit: Lisa Repetto.

Visit completed, every vessel examined, every life jacket distributed, and every conversation held represents another opportunity to promote a culture of safety on our waterways.

For the Clearwater Flotilla, that was the true measure of success this year – not simply the number of events conducted, but the number of people reached, partnerships strengthened, members developed, and relationships built. Through outreach, education, and service, NSBW once again demonstrated how the Coast Guard Auxiliary fulfills its mission while strengthening the bonds that make our organization successful. //



Members at our boating information booth: Ken Suarez, Nicole Hall, Scott Hoyt, Christian Daigle, Betsy Scott, Lisa Repetto, Nick Sippl, and Karen Miller.

Photo credit: Lisa Repetto.



Photo by Kevin Wilcox.

EYES IN THE SKY:

Auxiliary Aircrew Locate Five Stranded Mariners After 17 Days on Remote Bahamian Cay

By **Karen Miller**, AUXPA1, contributing editor, *The Auxiliarist*

Five men spent seventeen days on a sand spit in the Caribbean, waving at a sky that finally waved back!

On June 29, 2025, what began as a routine U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary aviation patrol (AUXAIR) over some of the most remote waters in the Caribbean ended with the discovery and eventual rescue of five survivors who had been stranded on a deserted island for more than two weeks. Anguilla Cay is not a place most people could find on a map. It sits in a stretch of ocean where desperate people take desperate chances, and where the difference between life and death is often whether someone is looking.

Flying United States Coast Guard Auxiliary Facility “8213” (a privately owned, 1967 Piper PA-30 “Comanche,” twin-engine, piston-powered aircraft, outfitted to U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) specifications), in support of “Operation Vigilant Sentry,” a combined auxiliary/active-duty aircrew departed Page Field

in Fort Myers, Florida, for a long-range maritime patrol covering nearly 940 nautical miles. The mission would take them across the Dry Tortugas, the Florida Straits, and the isolated islands and banks of the Bahamas... areas where vigilance from the air often provides the first indication that someone is in distress.

The crew consisted of: Aircraft Commander Marc Miller (United States Coast Guard Auxiliary), Aircraft Commander LCDR Scott Kellerman (USCG), Observer Trainee Buddy Altman, and Air Crew member Kevin Wilcox (both United States Coast Guard Auxiliary). Together, they represented thousands of hours of aviation and operational experience, supporting the Coast Guard’s maritime border security mission.

After refueling at Florida Keys Marathon International Airport, Marathon Key, Fla., the crew continued southeast toward Cay Sal Bank, a vast, largely uninhabited area of shallow water and small islands situated between Florida, Cuba, and the Bahamas. The region’s remoteness makes it both strategically important and unforgiving for anyone in trouble.

At approximately 1444 local time (EDT), while flying near Anguilla Cay on the southeastern edge of Cay Sal Bank, the crew noticed something unusual: an orange parachute deployed on the island’s shoreline ... deployed not for a jump... but as a shelter! A signal... A prayer... An unmistakable sign that someone on the island was trying to be seen!

From the air, the parachute appeared out of place. As the aircraft drew closer, the crew observed five men on the beach vigorously waving their arms in an apparent attempt to attract attention.

The discovery immediately transformed the patrol into a search-and-rescue response.

Using binoculars and high-powered camera equipment, the crew documented the scene and confirmed the presence of five stranded individuals. Command Pilot Miller immediately organized the crew’s response, assigning responsibilities while maintaining oversight of the developing situation.

While both pilots worked together to maintain the aircraft’s altitude through a series of challenging turns, Wilcox coordinated communications and imagery collection. Altman, participating in his first

operational flight, provided a critical second set of eyes, helping verify observations and maintain visual contact with the survivors. At the same time, information was relayed to Coast Guard command centers.

Operating at patrol altitude in an area where traditional radio coverage can be challenging, Miller directed the use of a portable satellite communications device to establish communications with USCG Sector Key West and USCG Air Station Clearwater. Working from the cockpit while Kellerman assisted in maintaining stable flight conditions, Miller ensured imagery and coordinates were transmitted promptly. Wilcox coordinated the flow of information, including high-zoom photography and situation reports, enabling Coast Guard operational commanders to assess the situation and dispatch responding assets quickly.

The crew remained on scene as long as fuel considerations permitted, providing continuous updates and ensuring accurate location information was available for responding units.

The operation highlighted the unique value of AUXAIR assets

Upon landing at Key West International Airport, the flight crew was advised that the survivors had been picked up by the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter (USCGC) Charles David Jr., a Sentinel-class cutter, which then transferred them to the Bahamian authorities.

Authorities later determined that the survivors were Cuban nationals whose vessel had sunk. They had managed to swim ashore and survive on the isolated cay for 17 days before being spotted by the Auxiliary flight crew.

The operation highlighted the unique value of AUXAIR assets. Equipped with trained volunteer crews (occasionally augmented with active-duty personnel), modern communications tools, and extensive maritime experience, Auxiliary aircraft routinely patrol vast areas that would otherwise be difficult to monitor. In this case, a crew conducting a scheduled patrol provided the critical link that ultimately led to the rescue of five individuals whose chances of being discovered were diminishing with each passing day.

The AUXAIR program exists precisely for moments like this... extending the Coast Guard's reach into remote corridors, combining the professionalism of active-duty crews with the dedication of volunteer aviators who log thousands of hours across our southern approaches. Facility 8213 and its crew covered 939 nautical miles that Sunday. In the last hour of their patrol, it turned out every mile had been worth it.

The professionalism displayed during the mission was later recognized through the award of the Coast Guard

Auxiliary Medal of Operational Merit to Auxiliarists Miller, Wilcox, and Altman.

Miller's citation highlighted his decisive leadership, coordination of the crew's response, confirmation of the survivors' presence, and successful establishment of satellite communications, which enabled the rapid relay of imagery and coordinates to Coast Guard command centers.

Wilcox's citation recognized his communications expertise, technical adaptability, and vigilance in coordinating airborne communications and in providing information that directly contributed to the survivors' rescue.

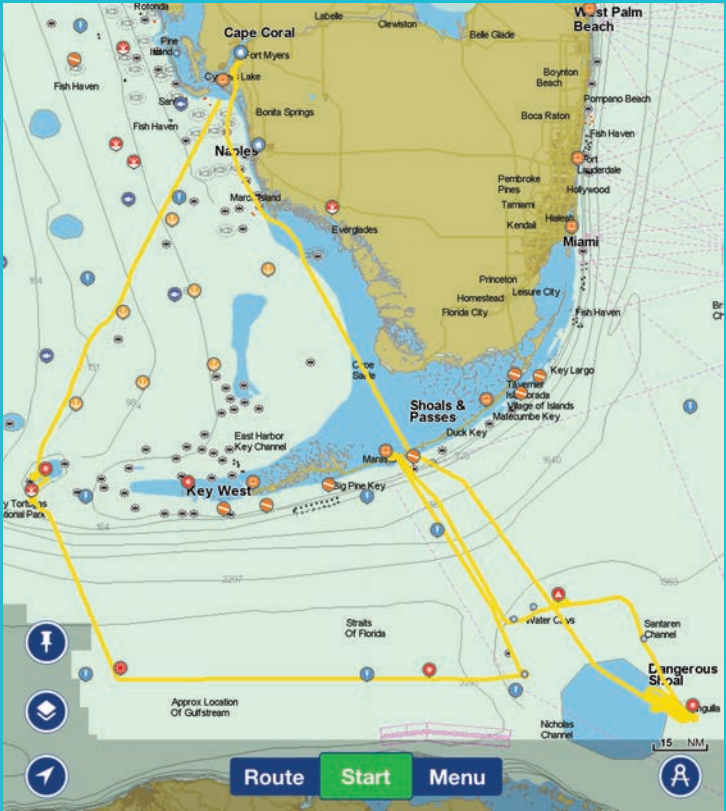
Altman's award recognized his contributions as an observer trainee whose attention to detail and support in tracking and verifying the survivors helped the crew maintain situational awareness throughout the response.

Yet the success belonged to the entire crew. Their disciplined search techniques, attention to detail, and commitment to mission execution exemplified the Coast Guard Auxiliary's role as a force multiplier for the Coast Guard.

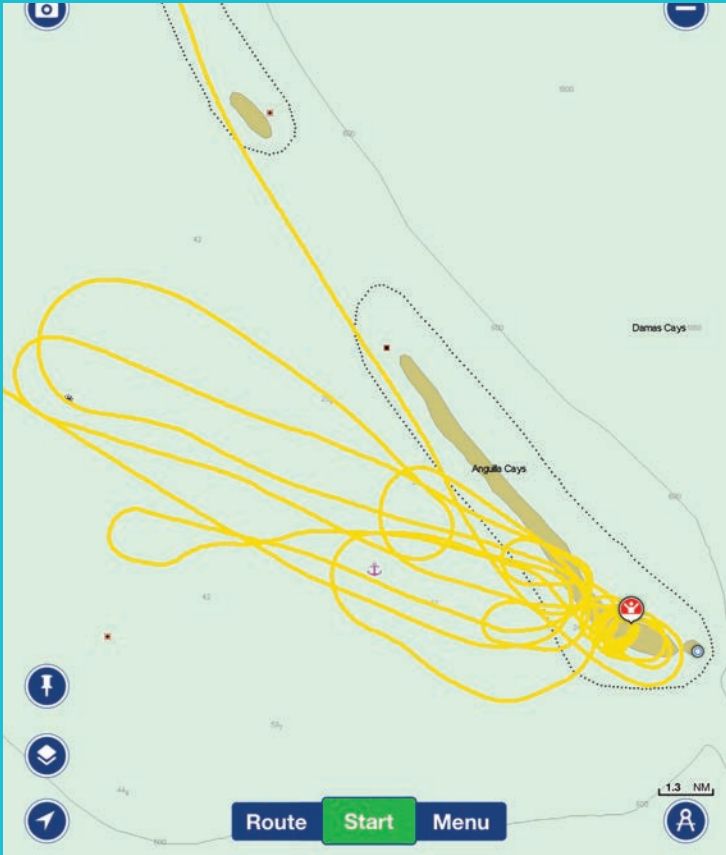
What initially appeared to be a small orange object on a remote stretch of shoreline proved to be a lifesaving clue. Thanks to a vigilant Auxiliary aircrew, five stranded men were found and rescued.

As "Operation Vigilant Sentry" continues across the maritime approaches to the United States, this mission serves as a powerful reminder that every patrol matters. On any given day, a routine flight may become the difference between life and death for someone beyond the horizon.

On June 29, someone was. 



Track Line from Flight. Image provided by Kevin Wilcox.



Track Line from SAR. Image provided by Kevin Wilcox.

AUXAIR facility involved in the response. Photo by Kevin Wilcox.



Making of a Proper Paddler

By **William Garvey**, AUXPA3, *The Auxiliarist* Contributing Author



*Instructor Bev Cosslett and author.
Photo by Andrea White*

I have been paddling, albeit infrequently, since Boy Scout summer camp days, and sadly, that was many decades ago.

Even though I never lost my interest in the sport, I was wary of registering for the Spring Coast Guard Auxiliary Paddlecraft (AUXPAD) Training event (SAT2026). This was scheduled in partnership with the American Canoe Association (ACA) and was held May 4-9, 2026, at James Island County Park in Charleston, SC. The course is an immersive, 4-day training event designed to build skills, leadership, and public education efforts for paddler safety.

There was a voice in my head telling me, this involves four long, hot days of hard physical effort... Am I really up for this? Fortunately, when our Track A/B team, the Screamin' Eagles, first gathered, I looked around and felt relieved. While most members were generations younger, several had hair as white as mine.

As it turns out, we were a diverse assemblage that included a college professor, an attorney, a United States Coast Guard Chief Warrant Officer, an editor, and more. Most were members of the American Canoe Association (ACA) and the Coast Guard Auxiliary, the organizations co-sponsoring this, the third annual gathering. A truly national event, our Track (there were five Tracks in all) ranged from beginners to those becoming advanced instructors. They hailed from

Miami to the St. Lawrence Seaway, from Boston to California, and their experience varied from white-water vets to novices, including me.

Our eight half-day sessions were led by Bev Cosslett, an ACA Board member, Michelle Stoddard, a member of the Auxiliary's National Staff, and assisted by the park's Luke Chachula. All three were highly experienced instructors and good communicators who demonstrated prowess in paddling, teaching, observation, and evaluation, and, thankfully, boundless patience.

Our "classroom" was a spectacular place to gain or improve outdoor skills: a 643-acre, Spanish moss-draped green wonderland of shaded trails, open fields, campgrounds and cottages, spray playground, climbing walls, marshes and fishing dock, wildlife galore, and

a wide-open, 16-acre, "paddlecraft-friendly" lake complete with side creeks to explore. In other words, a flat-water paddling paradise.

The park had previously hosted SAT2025. Those who attended were so pleased with the facility's venues and structures, equipment, screened-porch cabins, and the assistance they received from staff that the organizers happily reserved the place again for SAT2026 and SAT2027.

This year's paddle week activities opened with a waterside welcome for the 48 trainees and 15 instructors attending. The hosts were Roland McDevitt, Auxiliary National Staff Division Chief, Paddlecraft Safety, and Scott Szczepaniak, Coast Guard Recreational Boating Program Specialist for the Southeast District.

After introducing some "VIPs," McDevitt and Szczepaniak brought the ultimate purpose



*"Screamin' Eagles" give a paddle salute.
Photo by Peter Leavesley*



SAT2026 instructors and trainees hearing the week's agenda. Photo by Andrea White



Instructor Bev Cosslett and author. Photo by Andrea White

of the coming week's activity into focus. They noted that the growing popularity of paddlesports comes with a terrible cost – some 200 people die annually, the most fatalities of any recreational boating segment. They noted the causes of these preventable tragedies include alcoholic impairment, lack of a life jacket, and lack of knowledge of common threats, etc.

They explained the mission of SAT2026 participants was to improve their skills as paddlers, become exemplars and communicators to help others appreciate and learn the correct way to pursue the sport. They added, "You might save 50 or 100 people in the next five years," closing with, "Thank you for being lifesavers." After introductions, there was a barbecue, with cold beer and good cheer.

However, the "water work" would start 12 hours later.

Every paddle day began the same way: Lift each kayak (whose weight varied by make and dimensions) off a trailer and carry it to a launch area next to a tree-lined creek. The park supplied the watercraft, paddles, and life jackets for those

who arrived without them. Cosslett, the lead instructor, and Stoddard would outline what we'd be doing in the session and invite any questions or concerns. Stoddard emphasized that we would not be following a rigid curriculum but rather working to achieve our personal paddling goals and competencies.

After helping each other launch, we set out in single file to the lake. Our first session was a familiarization float, facilitated by tossing a ball to one another as an introduction. It was fun to learn about each classmate's occupation, hometown, and paddling background.

That afternoon was a "paddlecraft baptism" – intentionally capsizing and exiting one's kayak while upside down and fully submerged. I'd been concerned about how I might react in this signature "wet exit" test, but I need not have worried. When my moment came, I leaned heavily to starboard, and suddenly I was fully immersed, a bit shocked by the cold water, slightly disoriented, but seconds later, I was upright, head above water, my eyes blinking in the bright sunlight. My reaction had been automatic and correct. Unlike what followed next....

In this exercise, the focus for any paddler is to reenter the kayak as quickly as possible. Cosslett had demonstrated the technique of launching your torso onto the aft deck, grabbing onto the far coaming (the primary purpose of which is to deflect water away from the opening and provide a secure lip-edge for paddlers to attach a spray skirt, which keeps the interior dry), lifting a leg into the cockpit, and then rolling one's body on board. Some fellow trainees aced that procedure ... but not all, including yours truly.

Initially, I tried launching up onto the stern. Wrong! Then I targeted the section aft of the cockpit, but in every attempt, my life jacket's "fat front" proved too much of a barrier. Soon growing tired and cold, I was directed ashore to warm up and relax. But my bright orange "rash guard" provided little protection from the chilly afternoon breeze, and soon my hands trembled, and my teeth chattered.

Day 1 was done, but was I done as well? As I was thinking to myself that maybe a person born when Truman held office was too long past their prime for such an effort, a sympathetic "Screamin' Eagle" stepped

forward and handed me a spare neoprene dive shirt for the remaining sessions. Shivers be gone! And after that, things just kept getting better.

In the following days, we learned:

- To maneuver one's kayak and self to stabilize an empty one, helping ease an in-water paddler's re-entry;
- Different paddle strokes to move a kayak laterally to a dock or vessel;
- Nautical chart markings for marshes, average low tide, sunken cables, and more;
- Paddle signals for Stop, Come to Me, and Go There;
- The combined air and water temperatures must exceed 100 degrees F to launch safely;
- The signs of someone suffering from hypothermia and how to respond;
- Details of a float plan to be left with a loved one;
- How to safely secure and tow a kayak;
- To conduct low-brace, sweep, draw, and power strokes and why;
- Move forward, turn, and stop quickly;
- Working through a GAR (general assessment of risk) for a team and trip you're preparing to lead;
- Why ABC – anything but cotton;
- The person whose safety is most important on every outing: You!

And it's our "Low Country in-the-wild neighbors" that predictably drew the rapt attention of SAT2026's "out-of-townners". They were surprised to see mullet leaping near, over, and occasionally onto kayaks with a resounding "thump." Or watching, mesmerized, as eagles, egrets, wood storks, osprey, herons, and hawks wheeled overhead. Throughout, large turtles maintained close watch from shoreline grasses, and sharing that role were the park's true



Instructor explains the use of a belt-mounted PFD. Photo by Christine L. Howe

celebrities, its alligators, who kept a good distance from all those splashing paddles and hard-hulled craft.

While the many communal "capsizings" and recoveries conducted throughout the week were simulations, there was one memorable exception. While the Screamin' Eagles were transiting a narrow creek thick with overhanging branches, a muffled voice and splash sounded at the rear of the group, followed immediately by a shouted, "Man overboard!"

Turning to look, the rush of activity confirmed that this was the real thing: an overturned kayak, its former occupant in the water, with others moving in to help. Because the channel was shallow and the shore mere feet away, the responders' consensus was that the paddler should get onshore and climb back into his righted craft. Though we'd not trained for that specific example, a save is a save regardless. Turned out the capsize occurred when the paddler leaned sideways – too far, obviously – to avoid getting snagged in a low branch. And so, three more lessons learned: keep clear of obstacles, don't lean excessively, and use common sense!

SAT2026 brought together total strangers committed to that same special interest, who traveled hundreds, even thousands, of miles and sacrificed personal days to get tired, wet, and often frustrated in pursuit of new on-water skills and knowledge. I was delighted to make their acquaintance, and in doing so, learned that the Coast Guard underwrote the cost of the Chief Warrant Officer's college degree; the lawyer had once served as an air traffic controller in Greenland; that Michelle, an accountant, has among her ancestors the Marquis de Lafayette and Mary Todd Lincoln; and that Cosslett had been a software engineer living 15 minutes from where I resided.

Tired and smiling, this Grandpa had done it, hushing the inner voice of self-doubt. That quiet became golden when Cosslett later suggested I should consider joining her local paddling club.

Along with the other SAT2026 future lifesavers, I found this year's event both challenging and richly rewarding. So, it will be fun to see how SAT2027, set for April 27-May 1, 2027, tops it! 



Your District's Story Deserves To Be Told!

We're Looking for Your Best Coverage!

As Coast Guard Auxiliary members across the country commemorate America's 250th Birthday (Semiquincentennial) and honor the legacy of September 11, *The Auxiliarist* wants to showcase these important events in our Third Quarter Edition.

Did your District host or participate in:

- America 250 / Semiquincentennial celebrations?
- 9/11 25th anniversary remembrance ceremonies?
- Community events highlighting the Auxiliary's service?

If so, we want your:

- High-quality photos
- Brief event summaries
- Human-interest stories
- Member highlights

Help Tell the Auxiliary Story

Your District's activities inspire members nationwide and preserve the history of our service. Don't let these moments go undocumented!

Submit your stories and photos to:

Mitch Schlitt, AUXPA3
Managing Editor, The Auxiliarist
National Public Affairs Directorate
publication@cgauxnet.us



U-M students find unique path to public service through Coast Guard Auxiliary program

By **Christina Pillsbury**, *The University Record*

When Sam Blum was searching online for ways to get involved with the U.S. Coast Guard as a University of Michigan student, he noticed something missing.

There were Auxiliary University Program chapters at schools across the country – including smaller institutions – but none at U-M, which sits on the doorstep of the Great Lakes.

“It seemed like a missed opportunity,” said Blum, a senior in mechanical engineering. “We’re right here on the Great Lakes, and there’s a lot of Coast Guard presence here.”

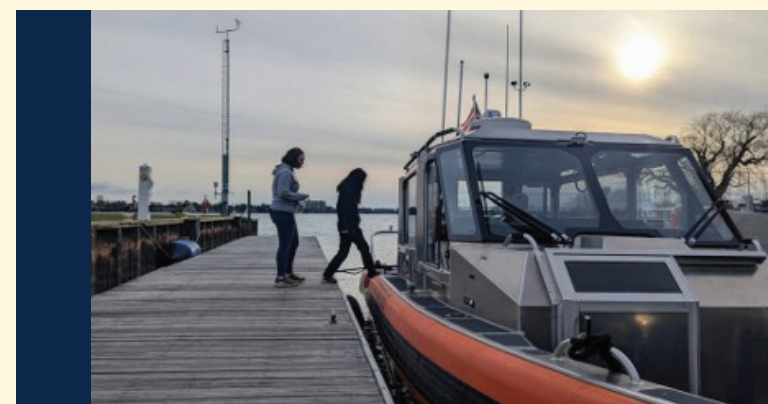
So Blum started making calls and connected with Christian Sandvig, a professor in the School of Information, LSA and Penny W. Stamps School of Art & Design who had independently been pursuing the same idea.

Together, they launched U-M's Coast Guard Auxiliary University Program – one of only about a dozen such programs in the country, and the only one on the Great Lakes. The unit is preparing to be formally chartered as an official detachment this spring.

The Coast Guard Auxiliary is the uniformed, civilian volunteer arm of the U.S. Coast Guard, conducting activities such as search and rescue, maritime pollution response, environmental education, and disaster response. The auxiliary assists with nearly every Coast Guard



Starting at far left, Evelyn Putney, Ensign Jacob Bolles, John McCalmont, Patrick Hullman and Kimberly Zwolshen tour the bridge of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Sequoia while docked in Port Huron, Michigan. The cutter is responsible for aids to navigation, marine environmental protection, search and rescue, and other missions. (Photo by Christian Sandvig)



Evelyn Putney and Kimberly Zwolshen board a response boat at U.S. Coast Guard Station Belle Isle in Detroit. Members work with several nearby Coast Guard facilities. (Photo by Christian Sandvig)

mission except law enforcement and direct military operations.

The Auxiliary University Program brings that volunteer opportunity to college campuses with one key difference from ROTC: There is no service obligation and no commitment to join the Coast Guard after graduation.

“The nice thing about the auxiliary is that because it is volunteer, there’s no commitment,” said Lt. Michael Jenkins, chief of emergency management and force readiness for Coast Guard Sector Detroit and the unit’s active-duty liaison. “If they actually do just enjoy the volunteer work, they can stay with the auxiliary for as long as they want.”

Students drawn to the program fall roughly into two camps: those interested in environmental protection, and those who – as Sandvig puts it simply – like boats. Sandvig, who joined the auxiliary in 2022, describes his own motivation with equal simplicity.

“I needed an outlet that allows me to spend a certain amount of my time talking and thinking about boats,” said Sandvig, the H. Marshall McLuhan Collegiate Professor of Digital Media.



Natalia Pearson-Saenz, standing at left, watches an ice rescue tutorial in Detroit. During winter months, search and rescue on the Great Lakes shifts to what are called “hard water” operations. (Photo by Christian Sandvig)

John McCalmont, a junior in naval architecture and marine engineering who serves as the unit’s vice president, arrived through a departmental email and stayed because the program combined service with his existing passions.

“I’ve been around the water my whole life,” McCalmont said. “So for me, it was a very natural thing to say, if I want to give back, this is a way to do it that connects really deeply with a lot of my other passions.”



Coast Guard personnel explain radio procedures to Micah Borrero, Sam Blum, and John McCalmont, at right, in the communications center at Coast Guard Station Belle Isle in Detroit. (Photo by Christian Sandvig)



The Auxiliary University Program: The Auxiliary’s Bridge to the Future!

By **Stephen Ellerin**, AUXPA3, DVC-AUP

The Auxiliary University Program (AUP) provides a bridge to the future for both the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the active-duty Coast Guard. For the Auxiliary, the program helps attract a younger demographic than it has traditionally reached. For the active-duty service, AUP develops officer candidates who are already well-versed in Coast Guard culture, standard operating procedures, organizational structure, and foundational qualifications.

AUP was founded to offer college-age men and women a focused but reduced-commitment alternative to traditional Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) programs offered by other military services (i.e., no required military service upon graduation).

The AUP curriculum “steps” its members through prescribed basic and advanced Auxiliary competencies such as: Auxiliary regulations and policy; Incident Command System (ICS) qualifications; and courtesy protocols. This is followed by challenging them to become certified in qualifications such as radio watchstander and public affairs specialists.

In addition, AUP students can take courses such as: Auxiliary Weather (AUXWEA), Auxiliary Seamanship (AUXSEA), and Introduction to Marine Safety and Environmental Protection (IMSEP). Program leaders also encourage all students to pursue the Operational Auxiliarist (AUXOP) status, often referred to as the “PhD of the Auxiliary.”

For young men and women preparing for officer’s commission or other maritime careers, the AUP provides an opportunity to acquire leadership skills and Auxiliary competencies as they explore career opportunities.

The “catalyst” that transforms college students into maritime leaders is the program’s robust internship

opportunities. As AUP students reach “senior status,” they can participate in Coast Guard active-duty operations through summer internships. Whether shadowing a deck officer on a cutter; collaborating with marine inspectors at a busy port; assisting in marine pollution investigations; or participating in remote operations with specialized teams, these internships provide genuine hands-on experience.

For the active-duty personnel tasked with training them, these students arrive with a distinct advantage: The AUP intern is an immediate asset to the hosting station. For the students, these intense, real-world deployments solidify their classroom learning, assess their adaptability, and cement their commitment to the Coast Guard’s missions.

The AUP program currently supports just under 300 students at approximately 20 schools, including six

The program recently celebrated a milestone, graduating a record number of AUP alums as direct commission officers.

senior military colleges; five of the six state maritime academies; the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy; and general education universities around the country (full list at www.cgauxedu.us/units).

Students attending schools that do not have enough members to support a stand-alone unit can participate via the “Remote Collaborative Unit” (Ed. note: See “Meet Amber Porter,” 1st Qtr. *The Auxiliarist*).“

Whistle in the Wind: When Safety Saves a Life

By **R. Michael Stringer**, AUXPA3,
contributing editor, *The Auxiliarist*

The weekend of February 4-5, 2023, began like many sailing events in the Upper Keys, Florida, with bright sails, eager young sailors, and the steady presence of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary working quietly from the sidelines.

Members of the Upper Keys Flotilla (070-13-08) were stationed at the Key Largo Sailing Club during the Buccaneer Blast regatta at Rowell's Waterfront Park. Their task was straightforward: conduct vessel safety checks and provide telecommunications support for the event. Auxiliarists moved among the small boats preparing for competition, inspecting flotation bladders, bailers (in this case, a smaller container that can be filled and then emptied), and life jackets, small details that often mean the difference between inconvenience and an emergency on the water. They also handed out whistles to young sailors who did not have them. For many of the youngsters, it was just another piece of gear.

By the afternoon, one whistle would prove to be far more than that. As the sailing regatta continued, the weather began to change. The steady breeze stiffened, pushing past 15 knots and building toward

25. By afternoon the wind was howling across the water, gusting to nearly 40 knots, far beyond the capabilities of the Optimist Class sailing dinghy. Intense whitecaps streaked the bay, and the once docile sailing conditions turned dangerous and unpredictable.

Small sailboats heeled excessively under the force of the wind. Lines snapped taut as waves crashed against the tiny hulls. Then it happened... one young sailor's boat suddenly capsized! In the violent roll of the vessel, the boy became entangled in the lines as the boat flipped over on top of him. Trapped beneath the hull, he struggled desperately to free himself. He cried out for help, but the wind swallowed his voice.

Boats passed nearby, their crews focused on the difficult conditions. No one heard him. Then the boy remembered something small, something simple... the whistle! The day before, during a routine safety check, Auxiliarists handed him one. Now, unable to right his craft as he was trained, and running out of options, he raised the whistle to his lips and blew...

The sharp blast cut through the wind. Once... Nothing! Twice... This time, someone heard. A nearby boat turned toward the sound, raced over, and pulled

alongside the overturned craft. Hands reached down into the water, freeing the frightened and trapped sailor before the situation could turn far worse.

The next day, as the Auxiliary team continued their safety checks, a man with his son standing beside him, approached Auxiliarist John Gilbert. "Sir," he said quietly, "you saved my son's life."

He pointed toward the Auxiliary exhibit. "You gave him a whistle yesterday." Then he explained what had happened: the capsize, the tangled lines, the cries lost in the wind.

"It was the whistle," he said. "That's what got someone's attention." Looking at the Auxiliarist, he repeated the words that carried the weight of the moment: "You saved my son's life. We will always be indebted to you."

For the volunteers of the Coast Guard Auxiliary, vessel safety checks can feel routine: examining equipment, offering advice, and handing out small pieces of safety gear. But on an unexpectedly blustery afternoon in the Upper Keys, a simple whistle turned a desperate moment into a rescue. Sometimes the smallest pieces of safety equipment make the biggest difference. And sometimes, they can even save a life! 🇺🇸



On a bright sunny day, young sailors take to the water during the Buccaneer Blast Regatta at Rowell's Waterfront Park in the Upper Keys. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.



During the Buccaneer Blast regatta at Rowell's Waterfront Park, members of Flotilla 13-8, Upper Keys, Florida, were stationed at the Key Largo Sailing Club, performing vessel safety checks. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.



By afternoon, winds had increased significantly, with gusts approaching 40 knots. Whitecaps dotted the bay as the morning's light sailing conditions gave way to more challenging seas. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.



Photo illustration using ChatGPT depicting capsized Optimist Class sailing dinghy.

“Operation PFD”: Preventing Floating Disasters

How one flotilla is expanding outreach, strengthening safety culture, and promoting the Coast Guard Auxiliary’s RBS message

By **Matt Smith**, Flotilla Staff Officer-Program Visitation, and **Gary Peterson**, Flotilla Vice Commander, San Diego Flotilla 14

Auxiliarists understand the risks that come with time on the water, especially when boaters choose not to wear life jackets. The greater challenge is ensuring that life-saving messages reach the right people, in the right places, at the right time – and inspire them to act. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary programs such as Program Visitor



Matt Smith, San Diego Flotilla FSO-PV, staffing the exhibit at a West Marine location in San Diego. Photo Credit: U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.

(PV), Public Education (PE), and Vessel Examiner (VE) help expand boating safety outreach. Still, an important question remains: how can we broaden our impact while maintaining a visible, approachable presence in the communities we serve?

How do we tailor safety messaging to individual experiences – whether someone is boating, paddleboarding, operating a personal watercraft, or fishing from a pier? How can we promote Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) while introducing the Auxiliary to younger audiences who remain under-represented in our ranks? One promising answer is a simple, highly scalable concept: “Operation PFD.”

Operation PFD: short for Preventing Floating Disasters – is straightforward, practical, cost-effective, and easy to replicate.

Bringing Safety Directly to the Public

Operation PFD originated with San Diego Flotilla 14 and builds on the PV model by taking safety outreach directly to the boating and angling public. The name, coined by the flotilla’s Staff Officer-Program Visitor (FSO-PV), references a previously used U.S. Coast Guard shorthand terminology for life jackets (personal flotation devices or PFD) while underscoring the initiative’s broader focus on prevention, visibility, and public engagement.

The model is simple: partner with local businesses and venue managers, set up an informational exhibit, and engage visitors in brief, personalized conversations about water safety – with strong emphasis on wearing life jackets.



Operation Prevent Floating Disaster exhibit at West Marine San Diego. Photo Credit: Matt Smith.

In San Diego, members have already conducted three successful outreach events at West Marine locations. As the nation’s largest boating and fishing retailer, with more than 200 stores nationwide, West Marine provides direct access to a highly engaged audience of boaters, anglers, and paddle sports enthusiasts. The setting also provides useful visual aids, allowing auxiliarists to reference in-store safety equipment during conversations with the public.

Store leadership has been supportive of the effort. Another advantage is that conversations about

preparedness often lead customers to think more intentionally about safety equipment. While the Auxiliary does not endorse specific brands or products, reinforcing the importance of safety gear can encourage better-informed decisions and safer boating practices.

Bridging the Generational Gap

One challenge in promoting life jacket use is that attitudes toward safety equipment can vary by age group and activity. Younger boaters and paddle sports participants – many of whom prioritize comfort, convenience, and appearance – may be less inclined to wear traditional life jackets if they perceive them as bulky or restrictive.



Matt Smith interacting with a member of the boating community, explaining the differences between life jackets. Photo Credit: U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Operation PFD tackles that barrier through targeted education and awareness. Many younger individuals, and even some experienced dock workers, are unfamiliar with newer options such as inflatable life jackets, including vest or waist-pack variations, as well as the three types of inflation: manual, automatic, and hydrostatic (which must be submerged to inflate). Traditional life jackets remain essential and should continue to be emphasized; however, introducing comfortable, less intrusive alternatives may increase the likelihood that more people will choose to wear an approved one. The statistics tell a compelling story: approximately 75% of boating fatalities result from drowning, and 87% of those victims were not wearing life jackets. Education can help steer human behavior toward safer practices (Note: Inflatable life jackets cannot be worn by anyone under the age of 16 and/or during any high-impact water sport).

A Professional, Low-Cost Presence

Creating a professional, welcoming outreach exhibit does not require significant resources. A simple “Three P” standard – Professional, Proper, and Presentable – can be achieved for less than \$100. A typical setup includes:

- Auxiliary-branded tablecloth
- Display stands for brochures
- U.S. and Coast Guard flags
- Weighted sign holders
- Laminated QR code signage for Public Education classes, Vessel Safety Check (VSC) scheduling, and Auxiliary membership information
- Clearly posted non-endorsement disclaimers

Even a modest setup can create a professional, welcoming presence that encourages meaningful interaction, builds trust, and reinforces the Auxiliary’s reputation as a trusted boating safety resource.

Measurable Early Impact

Across three West Marine events at two locations, the San Diego Flotilla engaged approximately 150 boaters in meaningful and productive conversations. Those interactions generated multiple expressions of interest in Public Education classes and prompted at least six individuals to consider Auxiliary membership. Even at this early stage, the results underscore the value of proactive, face-to-face outreach.

Looking Ahead

Operation PFD demonstrated that a relatively small investment of time, creativity, and coordination can yield outsized results in both outreach and public safety impact. Meeting recreational boaters where they already gather allows Auxiliarists to promote life-saving behaviors, strengthen community relationships, and introduce a new generation to Auxiliary service – all through a simple, scalable outreach model.

Flotillas nationwide should consider adapting Operation PFD to fit their own communities. By expanding outreach in visible, engaging, and practical ways, we can reduce preventable deaths, injuries, and accidents while advancing the Coast Guard Auxiliary’s Recreational Boating Safety mission. Sometimes the most effective safety message is delivered not from behind a desk, but through a conversation – making our waterways safer for everyone! 

2025 STATISTICS

U.S. COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

188

NUMBER OF LIVES SAVED

\$6,327,538

VALUE OF PROPERTY SAVED
VIA SEARCH AND RESCUE

653

MARINERS ASSISTED



212

SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR)
ASSISTS



SURFACE AND
AIR SUPPORT

845

SURFACE FACILITIES (BOATS)

101

AIR FACILITIES (AIRCRAFT)

118,704

BOAT PATROL HOURS

14,667

AIR PATROL
HOURS



446

OPERATIONAL RADIO FACILITIES

COAST GUARD
SUPPORT HOURS

47,084

ADMIN SUPPORT

13,658

CLERGY ASSIST

44,294

CULINARY SUPPORT

12,207

HEALTHCARE SUPPORT

104,752

OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

11,906

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT HOURS



HUMAN RESOURCES

19,230

TOTAL MEMBERS*



1,457

NEW AUXILIARISTS (2025)

16,215

RECRUITING HOURS

30,163

MEMBER TRAINING HOURS

111,907

PUBLIC AFFAIRS HOURS

PUBLIC EDUCATION

794

CLASSES COMPLETED

36,907

PUBLIC EDUCATION HOURS

12,470

CLASS ENROLLEES



12,214

CLASS GRADUATES

5,637

CLASS GRADUATES
(UNDER AGE 17)

35,685

MARINE SAFETY HOURS

3,430

INTERPRETER HOURS

31,932

PADDLECRAFT
SAFETY CHECKS
CONDUCTED

71,261

RBS PROGRAM
VISITS

51,164

VESSEL SAFETY
CHECKS
CONDUCTED



*Membership on 12/31/2025 was calculated based on current membership minus new members 2025 and 2026 plus members who were retired, or disenrolled in 2025 and 2026

The Blue Angels and the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

By R. Michael Stringer, AUXPA3, *The Auxiliarist* Contributing Editor



Editor's Note: After careful consideration, Joint Base Charleston decided to transition the 2026 Charleston Airshow to a one-day, off-base event due to operational and security demands. The Airshow, however, was subsequently canceled due to inclement weather and severe winds.

With the venue change driven by ongoing security concerns at Joint Base Charleston, responsibility for securing the marine spectator areas shifted to the U.S. Coast Guard. In just three short weeks, Coast Guard personnel had to coordinate the complex logistics and operational requirements needed to manage the airshow over Charleston Harbor safely.

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary support for the operation began when Coast Guard Sector Charleston Auxiliary Liaison Officer, LTJG Kyle Hector, reached out for assistance. Coordination efforts were managed through Auxiliarist William Hayes, Auxiliary Sector Coordinator-Charleston, and Auxiliarist John Swink, Division 12 Commander, thereby establishing a clear chain of leadership and organized flow of communication. Auxiliarist Chris Lie, Division

Vice Commander, played a major role as well, coordinating boats and assigning missions to support the event.

Planned extensive road closures during the airshow would create significant transportation challenges for organizers and participants alike. Effective delegation was critical to success. Due to the importance of this event, and simply because it could actually be a fun assignment, there were more volunteers than available "facilities" (designated Auxiliary vessels equipped to Coast Guard standards). Auxiliarist Lie delegated management of crew assignments, which improved efficiency. This assignment allowed leadership to focus on proper mission execution, including operational responsibilities, such as working with each facility owner and the assigned coxswain (vessel commander).

Demonstrating strong regional coordination and cooperation among the participating flotillas and divisions, the operation drew on both local and non-local Auxiliary resources from as far away as Division 2 in Atlanta, with one facility traveling 80 miles by water to take part.

Charleston Air Force Base was to serve as the operating base for the Blue Angels (the U.S. Navy's precision flying team) and as the staging area for aircraft takeoffs and landings throughout the event. Meanwhile, nearly 19 miles away, across the harbor, the show's command center for ground operations was established aboard the historic WWII aircraft carrier, the USS Yorktown (CV-10), located at the Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum.

Complicating matters further, the primary bridge connecting the air base area with



A Coast Guard Station Charleston, Aids to Navigation Team, deploys inflatable buoys to mark the four corners of the exclusion zone prior to the first rehearsal. USAF photo by Senior Airman Luke Hirsch.



Blue Angels pilots, crew members, and essential personnel depart the USS Yorktown to board the Auxiliary facility, Hydrotherapy, for the first leg of their return trip to Joint Base Charleston. USAF photo by Senior Airman Luke Hirsch.



Auxiliary facility Cœur de Corsaire (Heart of the Corsair) patrolled the waters outside the exclusion zone. From left, Auxiliarists Arnie Cribb, Luc Georget (Coxswain/Helmsman), Gene Miller, and William Ungar. USAF photo by Senior Airman Luke Hirsch.



Members of the Blue Angels team ride aboard the Auxiliary facility Hydrotherapy enroute to the ground operations command center aboard the USS Yorktown. From left, Auxiliarist Dave Bongiovanni (Helmsman); Major Josh Horman, USMC; Lieutenant Ronny Hafeza, USN; Captain Olivia Bair, USMC; and Commander Lilly Montana, USN. USAF photo by Senior Airman Luke Hirsch.

Patriots Point was scheduled to close during the event, creating a major transportation bottleneck. Organizers needed a dependable alternative for moving pilots, crew members, and essential personnel between the two locations while maintaining the demanding airshow schedule.

Helicopter transportation was considered impractical because of the large crowds that would gather aboard the aircraft carrier and along the surrounding waterfront, where safety concerns and operational limitations would have made rotary-wing operations difficult.

Water transportation quickly emerged as the most practical solution. Moving personnel by boat would allow organizers to bypass the severe traffic congestion and bridge closures while maintaining reliable access between the venues. The Auxiliary would play a vital operational role in keeping the event running smoothly by transporting the Blue Angels pilots, crew members, and dignitaries from the marina to the USS Yorktown aboard an Auxiliary facility.

As part of the preparation, the Coast Guard established an exclusion zone in Charleston Harbor approximately two miles long and a half mile wide between Charleston and Mount

Pleasant. A Coast Guard Aids to Navigation Team Charleston “small boat” deployed four inflatable buoys to mark the corners of the exclusion zone. At the same time, the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Ibis from Coast Guard Station Tybee Island, Georgia, planned to anchor at the center of the designated rectangle as the target vessel.

Of the seven Auxiliary surface facilities assigned to the operation, four were to be positioned at the corners of the exclusion zone, while two more were to patrol outside the restricted area. The remaining vessel, Hydrotherapy, was dedicated to transporting personnel and equipment to and from various sites around the harbor. Rehearsals by the Blue Angels and all the support units were conducted on Thursday and Friday between intermittent rain showers, but, as noted above, the Saturday show was ultimately canceled due to high winds and inclement weather.

This Auxiliary operational support mission, conducted under challenging conditions, short-notice tasking, and high visibility to both the public and partner agencies, demonstrated the professionalism, adaptability, and operational readiness of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. 



The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary boat crew (center) ferried the Blue Angels aviators to the USS Yorktown, where the pilots greeted the public aboard the historic aircraft carrier, before transporting them back to shore to conduct the pilots’ post-flight debriefs. From left, Captain Olivia Bair, USMC; Major Josh Horman, USMC; Commander Lilly Montana, USN; Auxiliarists Kolin Brown (Citadel Cadet), Nathan Hamilton (Citadel Cadet), Tom Niles, Jim Rice, Walter Runck, and Dave Bongiovanni; Lieutenant Ronny Hafeza, USN; and Captain Isaac Becker, USMC. USAF photo by Senior Airman Luke Hirsch.



National Coast Guard Auxiliary Commodores memorial unveiled at USCG Training Center Cape May



At the northern end of the city of Cape May, New Jersey, is the United States Coast Guard Training Center, Cape May (TRACEN). This base is the primary training center for all recruits entering the United States Coast Guard. Visitors entering the base travel along Munro Avenue, named in honor of Douglas A. Munro, a World War II hero, and the only Coast Guardsman to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor (Ed. note: see page 8 for citation.)

Recently, the Auxiliary National Association of Commodores (NAC) installed a new memorial along this entrance road.

By **COMO Joseph Giannattasio**

This living monument recognizes and honors deceased Commodores of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, whose names are inscribed in stone, and who dedicated their lives to leadership and public service. This is the first national memorial within the Coast Guard Auxiliary specifically created to commemorate past Commodores who have “crossed the bar,” a nautical phrase traditionally used to signify a mariner’s passing. The memorial can accommodate additional names of deceased Commodores, as needed.

The memorial is a granite cenotaph (a monumental structure that honors a person or group whose remains are buried elsewhere or have been lost). Rather than occupying a secluded area, the cenotaph stands prominently on the base where all visitors can view it. The inscription on the stone reads: “Dedicated to our deceased Commodores, men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary who have crossed the bar.” The message is simple yet meaningful, honoring the service, leadership, professionalism, and dedication of Auxiliary Commodores who have passed away since 2005.

The newly installed NAC Monument stones (left) and the Auxiliary Memorial (right) at TRACEN Cape May.



TRACEN hosted a formal dedication ceremony for the NAC memorial on May 13, 2026. Captain Amanda Lee, Commanding Officer of TRACEN; Captain Brent Schmadeke, Chief of the Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety; Coast Guard Auxiliary National Commodore Mary Kirkwood; and Auxiliarists, active-duty personnel, family members, and friends from across the country attended the event.

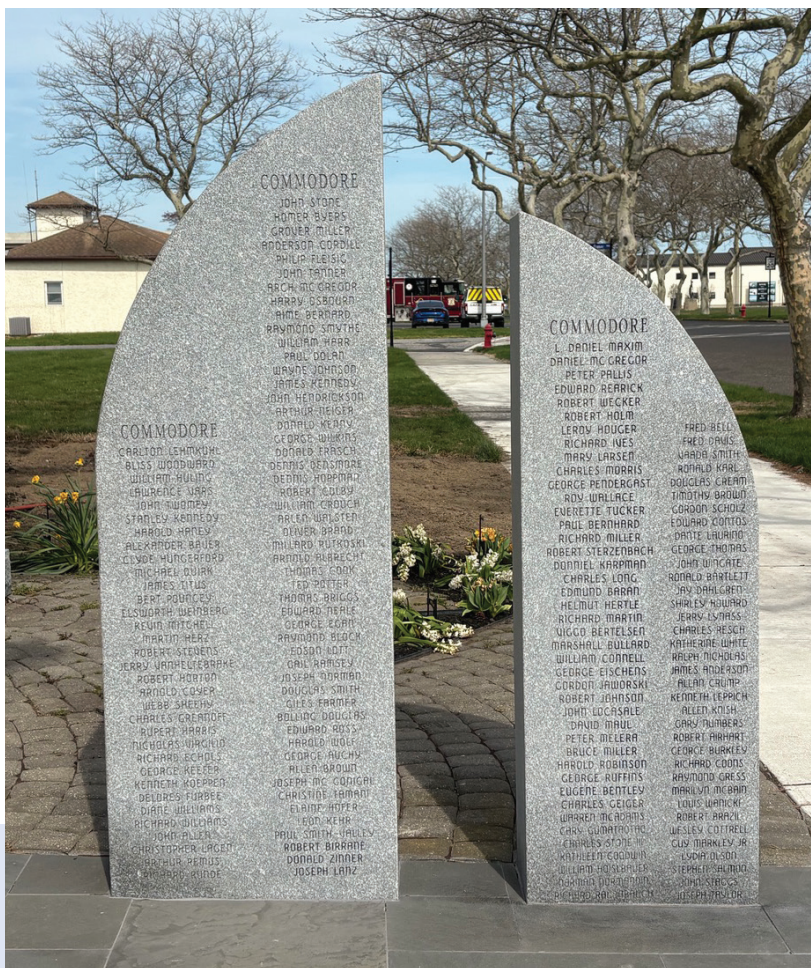
During the ceremony, Captain Lee expressed her appreciation to those in attendance with a brief but heartfelt message: “When I look at this monument, I see it as a tribute to those men and women who dedicated themselves to growing and strengthening the Auxiliary to make it what it is today. Without their vision, sacrifice, and perseverance, the Auxiliary would not exist in the form that it does, and [TRACEN] Cape May could not operate in the way that it does. We could not be breaking records for recruit throughput, and we could not be providing the care that they deserve. To the former commodores, those living and those whose names are enshrined on the memorial, thank you for all you have done for our service.”

Adjacent to the NAC memorial is another monument dedicated to the Coast Guard Auxiliary as a whole. This memorial recognizes the many volunteers who support Coast Guard operations and missions each day. Vice Admiral Sally Brice-O’Hara dedicated it in 2002.

The memorial now stands as a lasting tribute to the men and women who helped lead and strengthen the Coast Guard Auxiliary through years of service and commitment. If you ever visit TRACEN, stop by this impressive memorial. Stop and reflect on its meaning and significance, and how it honors those who have led us in our missions. 



PHOTOS: left to right by row
National Commodore Mary Kirkwood of the Coast Guard Auxiliary.
Attendees from across the nation gather before the National Association of Commodores memorial.
Captain Amanda Lee, Commanding Officer of Training Center Cape May.
Captain Brent Schmadeke, Chief of the Office of Auxiliary and Boating Safety (CG-BSX).
Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony for the NAC Monument.
The back of the NAC Monument stones with the inscribed names of Commodores who have passed.
Photos by COMO Joseph Giannattasio.



Serving Together: Supporting Our Mission from the Great Lakes to the Gulf

By **COMO Sonny Thatch II**,
DNACO-Mission Support and Atlantic Area West

Summer is officially here, and for many of us in the Atlantic West, that means the workload has shifted into high gear. In the Great Lakes and our northern inland rivers, we are seeing the predictable surge of boaters and swimmers hitting the water. At the same time, our members along the Gulf Coast are continuing the steady, year-round operational pace they maintain every day. Whether you are ramping up for a busy season or staying the course on a year-round watch, your dedication to the Coast Guard Auxiliary is what keeps the boating public safe.

As your Deputy National Commodore for Atlantic West and Mission Support, I've had the chance to see how our different regions handle these demands. In the South, our crews are operational 365 days a year, providing a constant presence on the water. In the North, our units are currently working overtime to meet the summer rush. Both of these environments require different types of preparation, but they share the same goal of saving lives through education, vessel exams, and active patrols. You are the face of the Auxiliary, and the work you're doing right now is vital.

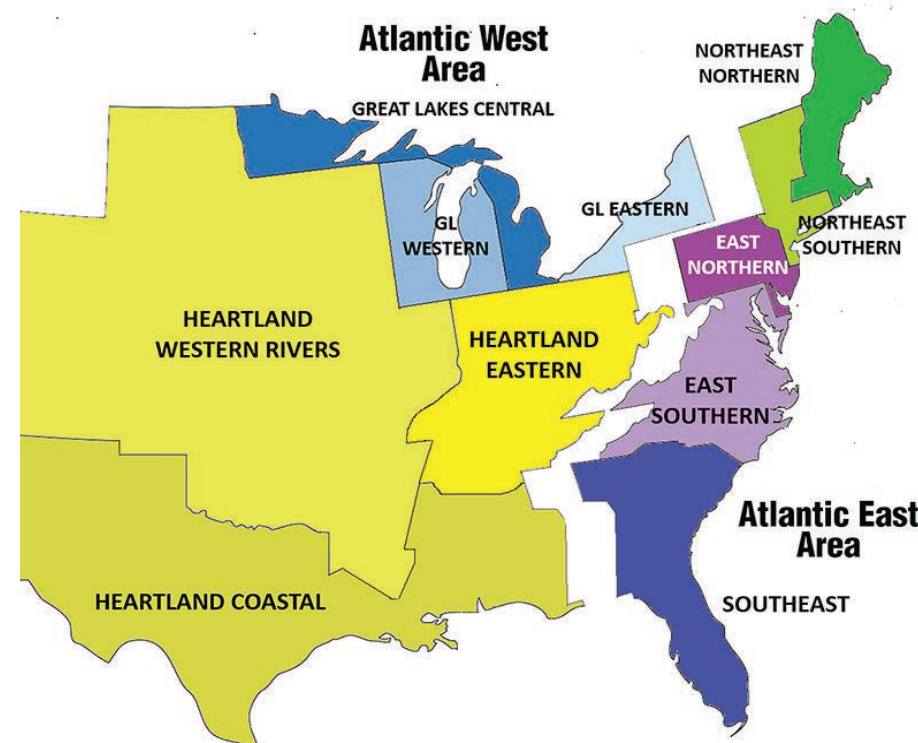
However, we all know that operational success does not happen in a vacuum. It requires a strong foundation, which is where Mission Support comes in. Behind every patrol or public education class, there are teams working on logistics, training, and technology. This summer, while crews are out serving the public, our support teams are working hard to improve tools, simplify communication, and make sure every Auxiliarist has what they need to serve safely and effectively. Readiness takes all of us. I believe that

leadership in Mission Support means respecting your time as a volunteer. If we can make our systems more efficient, you are able to focus more on the mission and less on the paperwork.

As we meet the demands of this season, we should also keep looking ahead. The maritime environment is changing, and the Auxiliary must keep growing with it. That means building an organization that is adaptable and continues to find ways to strengthen our partnership with the active-duty Coast Guard. Leadership is not about one person standing at the helm. It is about giving every member the support and confidence to help lead. I am honored to serve alongside you and to see firsthand the dedication, skill, and care you bring to this work. What I see across Atlantic West and throughout the Auxiliary gives me great confidence in our future.

Thank you for your service, your skill, and your dedication. Let us continue to keep our crews safe, stay focused on our mission, and move forward together with strength and purpose. 

Semper Paratus.



Atlantic-East Winter-Spring Summary May 15, 2026

By **COMO John Krogmann**,
DNACO-Recreational Boating Safety
and Atlantic Area East

All the ATLANTIC EAST Districts reported continued strong support, public outreach, training, and boating safety activities throughout the winter and early spring despite ongoing challenges caused by the DHS funding lapse and government shutdown.

Across the East Coast region, Auxiliarists remained highly engaged in mission support activities including vessel examinations, public education, marina outreach, radio watchstanding, galley support, and Coast Guard Station augmentation. Preparations for National Safe Boating Week (NSBW), have been a major focus, with numerous boating safety events, vessel safety checks, public affairs booths, school presentations, and community outreach activities scheduled throughout the districts.

Operational accomplishments included:

- Strong Vessel Examination and Program Visitor activity across the AOR
- Continued support to Coast Guard Stations, Sectors, and operational units
- Successful Sector Training events with high member participation
- Growth in Boat Crew, Coxswain, AUXAIR, Marine Safety, and Telecommunications training
- Expansion of Auxiliary University Programs (AUPs) and recruitment initiatives
- Continued modernization efforts through technology integration, focused AI development and training
- Culinary Assistance support provided to multiple Coast Guard units

Districts also reported successful public education efforts including Boat America courses, Sea Scouts, JROTC programs, youth water safety outreach, paddlecraft safety education, and marina engagement activities. Partnerships with schools, marinas, parks departments, boating organizations, and local communities continue to strengthen public visibility and recruitment opportunities.

Overall, the Districts remain operationally active, mission-focused, and well-positioned for the upcoming boating season. Continued emphasis on member retention, qualification development, leadership succession, training completion, modernization efforts, and operational readiness will be essential to maintaining long-term success and mission effectiveness throughout 2026.

Recently I had the honor of attending the dedication of the United States Auxiliary's Commodores Memorial Monument at USCG TRACEN, Cape May, New Jersey, which recognizes deceased Commodores. Many thanks to the members of our National Association of Commodores for their hard work over the past fifteen years to make this a reality. While standing outside the Monument, I was overcome by the strong sense of patriotism as I witnessed the arrival of new recruits as they set off on their new life in the Coast Guard. In her remarks, the Base Commander expressed her gratitude to the Auxiliary for the daily assistance that the local flotillas provide. This assistance spans across various tasks including medical assistance for new recruits, instruction on proper uniform protocol, and basic knot tying. These Auxiliarists also transport proud parents to the recruit boot camp graduation ceremonies eight weeks later.

We have been extremely active despite experiencing a government shutdown and other obstacles, including a lack of DHS funding, impacting our activities. Boating season is now underway and our activity level will further increase. New and exciting things are on the horizon in ATLANTIC EAST. 

Helping 1 in 7 members of our
Coast Guard community each year



That's the Power of CGMA



For more than 100 years, Coast Guard Mutual Assistance (CGMA) has provided aid to members of the U.S. Coast Guard community. Whether it's disaster relief, rental assistance, uniform replacement or education support, we unite as one to serve many. Since we're 100% funded by donations, your support is critical to helping our members in need.

WE RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF THE COAST GUARD COMMUNITY IN THREE KEY AREAS



DISASTER AND EMERGENCY RELIEF

Rapid assistance for evacuation and urgent aid for repairs brings safety, stability and hope



EDUCATION ASSISTANCE

Education grants and loans to foster academic pursuits and goals



DAY-TO-DAY SUPPORT

Grants and loans to support PCS moves, special needs and adoption, unexpected car or home repairs and more



**DONATE
TODAY!**

"We had 43 inches of water [in my house] ... I cannot thank CGMA ... enough for their support. I've never felt more taken care of in my life."

LT JOE RIZZARDI, CGC RESOLUTE



ALCOAST

R 041859Z JUN 26 MID120041295704U
FM COMDT COGARD WASHINGTON DC
TO ALCOAST BT UNCLAS ALCOAST 162/26 SSIC 5760

SUBJ: CG MUTUAL ASSISTANCE (CGMA) 2026 ANNUAL CAMPAIGN – AUGUST LAUNCH!

1. Coast Guard Mutual Assistance (CGMA) 2026 Annual Campaign will kick off on Coast Guard Day this year – August 4th! Although the Annual Campaign is typically held in April, the adjustment allows commands additional preparation time to support the campaign.
2. To ensure maximum participation and visibility, Commands must identify and register a designated CGMA Annual Campaign Coordinator NLT 22 June 2026. To register, follow these instructions:
 - a. Visit this link: <https://portal.mycgma.org/s/>
 - b. Log in to the CGMA Portal
 - c. Under "My Account," select "Campaign Coordinator Sign-up"
 - d. To ensure a successful campaign, registered coordinators can access CGMA-approved training and promotional materials within the CG Portal Online at:
<https://uscg.sharepoint-mil.us/sites/USCG-CoastGuardMutualAssistance>
3. Title 10 U.S. Code designates CGMA as the official military welfare society for the U.S. Coast Guard.
 - a. CGMA provides grants and interest-free loans across more than 40 individual programs to support our entire Coast Guard community, including Active Duty, Civilian Employees, Reservists, Auxiliary, Retirees, and eligible dependents.
 - b. As the Coast Guard's Official Relief Society, Commanding Officers, Officers-in-Charge, and supervisors are permitted to designate Annual Campaign Coordinators, authorize CGMA awareness events, and permit limited use of official time to distribute Annual Campaign materials in accordance with applicable policy.
4. Commands shall dedicate 30 minutes in August for a CGMA Campaign All Hands to educate personnel on CGMA programs, impact, and ways to support the mission.
5. CGMA is funded entirely through voluntary donations. The Annual Campaign is critical to sustaining CGMA's ability to provide grants, interest-free loans, and emergency assistance across the Coast Guard community.
6. If you already donate to CGMA, thank you. If you don't yet donate, Active Duty Members, Civilian Employees, and Retirees can support CGMA through allotment or payroll deduction. All donations are voluntary; however, members are strongly encouraged to consider starting or increasing their allotment. CGMA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, EIN 31-1801931. Gifts are tax-deductible as allowed by law. There are two ways to give:
 - a. Allotments or payroll deductions may be established at:
<https://mycgma.org/give-help/allotment-payroll-deduction/>
 - b. Members may complete a pledge form provided by their unit Campaign Coordinator during the Annual Campaign.
7. Contributing to CGMA is one way we uphold the commitment to "Helping Our Own." Every dollar donated ensures CGMA can respond quickly when members face uncertainty. For information about CGMA visit: www.mycgma.org
8. For CGMA Annual Campaign questions contact Erica Chapman, Fundraising Manager: campaign@mycgma.org
9. CAPT Lawrence Gaillard, Acting Assistant Commandant for Workforce Management (CG-WM), sends.
10. Internet release is authorized.



A Coast Guard Auxiliary vessel examiner inspects a life jacket during a vessel safety check.

Recreational boaters count on us before they ever leave the dock. Become a Vessel Examiner and help keep our waterways safe by providing free safety checks, education, and peace of mind. Your training can make a real difference – join the team!



Credit: Petty Officer 3rd Class Jonathan Lindberg