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Watercraft and Vessel Safety

THE NEWSLETTER FROM THE U.S. COAST GUARD AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT OF BOATING

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FROM THE CHIEF

John Potts, DC-B

These are great days to be involved in boating! I'm writing this from the cockpit of my Bayfield 25' sloop in early June. I'm on the 2nd day of a 680-mile roundtrip solo sail from Annapolis, MD, toward the upper reaches of the Hudson River, NY. Although much of my boating skills were learned as a career USCG petty officer and commissioned officer, today, anyone can take boating seamanship courses and become a proficient mariner in a relatively short time.

I recall how I qualified as a young boatswain's mate to be coxswain of a 40' utility boat (the forerunner of the 41' UTB) some 50 years ago. After several weeks of underway time with a boatswain's mate mentor, the chief boatswain's mate told me to take the 40' UTB over to the fuel pier 100 yards from the base, refuel and return to base. He then said the boat was mine! No book work, no tasks to sign off, no testing – that was it! Today's Coast Guard, though, leaves little to chance when it qualifies active duty or Auxiliary coxswains. These are great days in boating!

I retired from active duty in the early 1980's, before GPS. While I don't really need GPS to navigate my sloop, I sure love my GPS chart plotter! It is amazing! Aren't these great days to be in boating?!

Back when I was an active duty CG radioman, the most sophisticated SAR tool we had was a primitive Audio Direction Finder (ADF) which, if we were lucky, might get us one line of position to a distressed vessel. Today, the roll-out of the sophisticated Rescue 21 command, control, and communications suite is well underway across the country. And then we have the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) and EPIRBs! These are great days to be in boating!

As Auxiliarists today, we benefit from some fantastic partners who enhance our boating

experience. Through the ShopAuxiliary.com "Members Only" link, you can click on **BoatU.S.** (as I have done) to access boat owners' insurance, unlimited towing, *Seaworthy* magazine, hurricane information, and numerous other helpful resources. *Soundings* magazine, filled with articles rich in seamanship and safety knowledge, is another great partner. *Soundings* also has a "Members Only" link on ShopAuxiliary.com with benefits specifically reserved for Auxiliarists and their PE students. Other entities, such as the **National Safe Boating Council**, **West Marine**, **Boater's World**, the **US Army Corps of Engineers**, and others, have partnered with the Auxiliary to promote RBS. Yes! These are great days to be boating!

Today we have a terrific state liaison program in place. Each state has an Auxiliary liaison officer to work with each state's Boating Law Administrator (BLA). Never has there been so much cooperation between government agencies working toward common goals – **To Make These GREAT Days in Boating!**

I could go on and on about this topic, but I will close by saying that I am proud to be the new Chief of the Boating Department...together, we will continue to make these great days in boating! Thank you for making it all happen!

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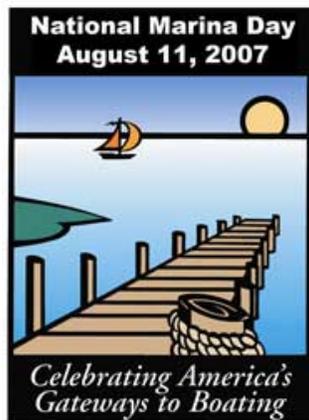
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SIXTH ANNUAL NATIONAL MARINA DAY

John Potts, DC-B

Marinas across the country are gearing up for the sixth annual National Marina Day, to be held August 11, 2007. The Association of Marina Industries organizes this public affairs event to spotlight the important role that marinas play in the recreational boating community.

National Marina Day is a great opportunity for Auxiliary flotillas to engage in outreach of their own. RBS Program Visitors are encouraged to contact their local marinas in advance of National Marina Day to organize Auxiliary participation. Giving free Vessel Safety Checks, advertising upcoming Public Education programs, reminding boaters about America's Waterway Watch, recruiting new members, or setting up displays featuring PFD wear and other elements of safe recreational boating are all ways that local flotillas can capitalize on the opportunities presented by National Marina Day.



Many marinas nationwide have already received "resource kits" including suggestions for partnering with the Coast Guard and Auxiliary during this annual event. Contact your local marina today to find out how you can help make National Marina Day 2007 a success!

USCG AUXILIARY PRESENCE on the WESTERN RIVERS

David Delich, DVC-BL

"Piloting on the Mississippi River was not work to me; it was play – delightful play, vigorous play, adventurous play – and I loved it..."
Samuel L. Clemens ("Mark Twain"), in Eruption.

The power of the Mississippi and other major rivers in our nation's early days, and the hushed respect paid to the men who mastered those critical waterways in the course of their commerce and transportation cannot be overstated. It is perhaps hard for us to grasp today the awe with which the mighty Mississippi was regarded just a century or two ago. The raging waters of the Mississippi,

which routinely flooded vast swaths of the rich farmland along its banks, now can seem so carefully controlled; the steady routine of tugs and barges plying its waters belying the 500 million tons of cargo transported on the Mississippi River annually.

The path of the Mississippi drove American westward expansion: all of the major cities on the early "western frontier" were on the Mississippi or one of its tributaries. St. Louis, Memphis, Vicksburg – mention these cities' names and you call to mind majestic steamboats, bales of cotton, and legendary exploits on the rivers.

Mention legendary steamboats like the *Delta Queen*, the *Mississippi Queen*, or the *Natchez*, and conjure up visions of men in white linen suits with ladies in hoopskirts at their sides, sipping mint juleps as they stroll the expansive decks of those marvelous machines. Overseeing it all was the pilot, the master of the river. The 19th century steamboat pilot earned good wages for a very demanding job; it could take years to learn all the ports, wood-lots, and bends of the Mississippi's thousands of miles in order to receive a steamboat pilot's license. In exchange, these skilled ship-handlers earned the equivalent of what today would be a six-figure salary. (Today's river pilots earn roughly the same, \$100K-300K annually.)

Blockades and battles shut down commerce on the Western Rivers during the Civil War, but after 1865, steamboats returned to the rivers in increasing numbers, continuing the commerce that flourished before the war. Still, these were treacherous waters: the average life of a steamboat was only 18 months before groundings, collisions, fires, or other casualties took their toll.

The establishment, in 1879, of the Mississippi River Commission brought the Army Corps of Engineers together with civilian engineers and a representative from the US Coast and Geodetic Survey (later National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA) in an attempt to tame the path of the Mississippi, easing transportation and preventing flood damage.



The Council's responsibilities greatly increased in the wake of the disastrous Great Mississippi Flood of 1927, which flooded 27,000 square miles, caused over \$400 million in damages, and killed nearly 250 people. In response, the Army Corps

greatly expanded the Mississippi's levee system and built several series of locks and dams to gain control over river flows.



"Relief Fleet: The Personnel of the Mississippi River Flood Relief Service, US Coast Guard, 1927."

The tremendous amount of waterborne commerce centered on the Western Rivers has made safe navigation on those waterways an American priority for decades. Once only navigable during daylight hours by highly skilled pilots, improvements in navigational and safety systems have drastically improved the rivers' commercial value.

In 1874, Congress authorized the US Lighthouse Service (a parent service of the Coast Guard) to establish "such beacon-lights, day-beacons, and buoys as may be necessary for the use of vessels navigating" the Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio Rivers. The first generation of aids to navigation (ATON) on the Western Rivers consisted of post lights, lanterns hung from posts to help illuminate the water. By 1917, the Mississippi and its tributaries were marked by nearly 2,000 lights and 900 beacons and buoys covering over 4,000 miles.



USCGC WILLOW (WAGL 253), a side-wheel river tender, was commissioned in 1927. Based in Memphis, the WILLOW tended aids to navigation from New Orleans to St. Louis for the Lighthouse Service and later, for the Coast Guard. Photo by Esther F. Cohn.

Improvements in steamboat safety were also critical to increasing commerce on the Western Rivers. The Steamboat Inspection Service (another precursor of the US Coast Guard), formed

in 1937, took action in response to the tragic boiler explosion onboard the steamboat *Sultana* in 1865 near Memphis, Tennessee, in which approximately 1,700 passengers lost their lives. The Steamboat Inspection Service's inspectors and regulations sought to prevent such tragedies through increased supervision and legislation, just as the Coast Guard's Prevention community does today.

As the Mississippi and its tributaries became safer, commercial traffic increased, and so too did the Coast Guard's role on the Western Rivers. Historically, the Coast Guard had "regulated" river traffic only through its aids to navigation and its vessel inspections. Even today, Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) systems are still on the drawing board and in the testing stages for the Western Rivers.

Wartime traffic across the country led the Coast Guard to establish Captains of the Port (COTPs) in major ports along US coasts and rivers. As the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation was folded into the Coast Guard in 1942, the Coast Guard took on broad responsibility for port security, and vessel traffic, movement, and safe navigation. On the Western Rivers, Coast Guard COTPs have historically worked hand-in-hand with the Army Corps to regulate river traffic, especially during droughts or floods when dredging and levees increased in importance.

As environmental concerns took center stage in America in the late 20th century, so too did the Coast Guard's role in Marine Environmental Protection. Partly as an outgrowth of the Coast Guard's Revenue Cutter history and partly as an effect of the Coast Guard's regulatory background, the Coast Guard expanded from basic fisheries enforcement to preventing and cleaning up oil and hazardous materials spills. The Western Rivers, which carry millions of tons annually of chemicals, petroleum products, and other hazardous materials, are today regulated by ten Coast Guard Marine Safety Units and Detachments working under three Sectors.

The Auxiliary is an integral part of the Coast Guard's Eighth District presence on the Western Rivers. On any weekend, Auxiliary Patrol vessels will be found patrolling the major rivers, promoting boating safety and keeping a watchful eye for ATON discrepancies or environmental problems. Using their own vessels, equipped with a long checklist of safety equipment and regularly inspected, the Auxiliary is the "after-hours Coast

Guard” on the Western Rivers, augmenting active duty forces with over 1300 volunteer Auxiliarists. The coordination is seamless, as each Auxiliary Facility maintains contact with a Coast Guard Station throughout the Auxiliary Facility’s scheduled patrols. These unpaid Coast Guard Auxiliary volunteers help recreational boaters in need and promote safe boating behavior by simply providing “officer presence”.

The 10,300 miles of navigable waterways encompassed by the Mississippi, Missouri, and their tributaries have been integral to our nation’s economy and history for well over two hundred years. The Western Rivers are a conduit for business, trade, and transportation; a habitat for over hundreds of species of unique flora and fauna; a vital source of irrigation for America’s farmlands; and a recreational playground for riverboat gamblers, weekend fishermen, and pleasure boaters.



The US Coast Guard Auxiliary is a vital presence on the Western Rivers, providing over 14,000 patrol hours in 2005 to augment our 8th District brothers and sisters in blue for the safety and security of our rivers.

CONGRATULATIONS! NEW BOATING DEPT. APPOINTMENTS

John Potts, DC-B

During May 2007, four existing Boating Department staff members received “fleet-up” appointments to fill vacancies created by the resignation of Capt. Robert Melvin, USCG (ret) as Department Chief and Anthony Lorenc as States Division Chief. Both men served in the Boating Department for many years and will be sorely missed!

John Potts, LCDR, USCG (ret) was appointed as Department Chief. Dr. Atul Uchil, PhD, was appointed as Deputy Department Chief. Pauline Longnecker was appointed as States Division Chief. David Delich was appointed as Liaison Division Chief.

To see pictures and read biographies of these new appointees (as well as those of other Boating Dept. staff), go to <http://www.auxbdept.org/staff>.

HURRICANE ADVICE from BOAT US

David Delich, DVC-BL

Recently, 150 marina operators gathered in Orlando, FL, to share their experiences at the first-ever Marina Hurricane Preparation Symposium.



2004: Heavy damage from Hurricane Ivan to a Florida marina.
Photo by PA3 Andrew Kendrick.

BoatU.S. organized the Symposium to focus on actions the industry can take before storms hit, to reduce damage to boats, docks, and waterfront facilities. Speakers shared real-life experiences; many of their “lessons learned” are applicable to boat owners everywhere. Consider these points:

- Don’t count on the marina to “storm-proof” your boat unless you’ve made prior arrangements.
- Put your boat’s “Foul Weather Plan” in writing.
- Whether you keep your boat on a trailer or in a slip, figure out where your boat will best survive a storm, what supplies you’ll need, and who will be preparing your boat for heavy weather.
- Begin tracking storms as soon as they are identified.
- If possible, get your boat out of the water and onto high ground.
- Tie down your boat and remove anything that acts like a sail in heavy winds.
- If the boat will be secured at a dock, add extra dock lines and chafe protection.

Go to BoatUS.com/hurricanes for more hurricane advice or to download a copy of *“The Boater’s Guide to Preparing Boats and Marinas for Hurricanes.”*

A Whale of a Tale:

Auxiliarists Help Rescue "Delta" & "Dawn"

Ed Sweeney, DC-A; Bill Kinsey, RCO I1NR; & COMO Gail Ramsey, DSO-OP I1NR

In May, the Coast Guard Auxiliary's District Eleven (Northern Region) was requested to participate in a search and rescue effort somewhat different from "standard operations": monitoring and herding two wayward humpback whales back to sea. The whales, dubbed "Delta" and "Dawn" by California Lt. Governor John Garamendi, had swum up the Sacramento Deep Water Ship Channel, and had decided to stay there, approximately 80 nautical miles upstream from the Golden Gate Bridge.

D11NR Auxiliarists joined a multi-agency effort, teaming up with the active duty Coast Guard, NOAA, the California Department of Fish and Game, the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, and other interested private agencies (such as the Marine Mammal Center) to protect the whales. Dozens of boats collectively attempted to "herd" the whales back to the Pacific Ocean for the health and safety of them and the public.

Auxiliary support for this mission came in many forms, including surface assets to help educate boaters about enforcement of the moving 500-yard "safety zone" placed around the whales, and to provide media platforms so that the world could be kept updated on Delta's and Dawn's whereabouts. (*con't next page*)



May 22, 2007: Rich Pedroncelli of the Associated Press takes media pool photos from the bow of a U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary vessel. USCG Photo by Eric J. Hebert

Timeline:

Sunday, May 12, 2007:

Rear Commodore Bill Kinsey, D11NR, is underway on a Mother's Day outing with his family on the Sacramento River, when they spot what appears to be a small whale. The whale is visible on the fishfinder for a few seconds and the surface of the water is disturbed. Commodore Kinsey reports the sighting to Coast Guard Station Rio Vista.

Tuesday, May 15, 2007:

The Coast Guard is advised that three to four whales, one at least sixty feet long, are stuck upriver in the Sacramento Deep Water Ship Channel. Sector San Francisco contacts the Auxiliary Patrol Area Coordinators for the San Francisco Bay and for the Delta, asking for at least 20-40 boats to assist in this multi-agency operation.

Thursday, May 17, 2007:

The Auxiliary is on the water, enforcing the whale safety zone, and undertaking PA and a variety of other missions in support of the whale effort. Incident Command System (ICS) is brought into play, the media is going wild, NOAA, California Fish and Game, the Mammal Research Center, the California Office of Emergency Services and other agencies are all part of the action. (*con't next page*)

Timeline:

The demands of this “all-hands” rescue operation necessitated a wide range of Auxiliary support. Bill Kinsey, RCO-OMS, along with COMO Gail Ramsey, DSO-OP 11NR, worked with ENS Jon Tschudy, Sector San Francisco AUXLO, to coordinate the boats needed from the Auxiliary. Linda Vetter, San Francisco Auxiliary Bay Area Patrol Coordinator, organized Auxiliary Facilities in San Francisco Bay in case the meandering whales returned downstream.

Division 3 Auxiliarists (whose AOR includes the Port of Sacramento) provided boats, crews and coxswains for the whale effort. They were assisted by Auxiliarists from Divisions 1, 4, 5, 8, 10, and 12 – some of whom came from over 100 miles away – in all-day on-water operations: from early morning whale sightings to dawn-to-dusk patrols where Auxiliarists tracked the whales’ whereabouts and advised the public about the moving 500-yard safety zone around the whales.



The wandering whales can be seen through the windshield of an Auxiliary Facility.
Photo by Ed Kief, SO-PB 3 11NR.

In addition to serving as coxswains and boat crew, several members volunteered in the ICS Unified Command to fill positions not normally held by Auxiliarists. Jerry Bynum, ADSO-MS 11NR, served as Safety Officer; Eric Hebert, USCGAUX Photo Corps, not only lent his photography talents to the active duty Sector and District Public Affairs efforts, also served as Liaison Officer in the Joint Information Center (JIC); Bob Davison, ADSO-OP, and Marla Moura, FSO-MS 35, worked in the Operations Section, coordinating surface and air assets; Randy Harrington, ADSO-MS, assisted with advance work at STA Vallejo; Bob and Sharon Nichols (from Flotilla 35 11NR) assisted the active duty personnel at STA Rio Vista with a variety of duties, including greeting the public at the main gate; and Ed Sweeney, DC-A, worked as a media liaison and one of the JIC spokespersons.

“The Auxiliary has been an invaluable asset in this operation,” said ENS Brian Trapp, who was working in the Operations section of the Unified Command. (*con’t next page*)

Thursday, May 17, 2007 (con’t):

USCGC PIKE (WPB 87365) is dispatched to use hydrophone technology to lure the whales downriver, out of their present location. It has now been confirmed that there are only two whales, a mother (50 feet long) and her calf (16 feet long). The hydrophone is unsuccessful in moving the whales.

Fri-Sat, May 18 & 19, 2007:

Whales staying put. Informed participants are teaching others the best techniques to use when banging on pipes to drive whales in the direction we want them to go. Scientists are doing tests on the whales, including breath tests, DNA samples and checks of their general health status.

Sunday, May 20, 2007

The whales head down river. The whales seem to like to swim against the tide, slow down, and then when the tide changes, stay put or swim back upstream. Distance for the whales to swim to the Golden Gate Bridge is decreasing.

Monday, May 21, 2007

The Auxiliary is put on alert for duty at Station Rio Vista and Station Vallejo. The whales are moving fast, and it is important to maintain the “Safety Zone” to protect both boaters and the whales. Whales stop at the Rio Vista Bridge. They wander upstream a few miles and then back down again, but refuse to cross under the bridge.

Tuesday, May 22, 2007:

PIKE is still the lead vessel. Auxiliary Vessels are carrying members of the scientific community and continuing to maintain the Safety Zone. Every radio and TV channel reports “blow by blow” coverage of Delta and Dawn. (*con’t*)

"[The Auxiliary has] done everything we asked of them and more."



USCGC PIKE (WPB 87365) led USCG Auxiliary vessels such as this one in "herding" the whales back to sea. Photo by Steve Allan, Flotilla 3-10, 11NR

Over 85 members of the USCG Auxiliary offered their talents and services for the Tale of the Whale. "It appears that Delta and Dawn are out in the Pacific where they belong, and thus our whale ops have seemingly come to an end," said Bill Kinsey, RCO-OMS. "All's whale that ends whale."



Ed Sweeney, DC-A, 11NR, answers questions from the press regarding the whale operations. Photo by Nancy Turtle, Flotilla 88, 11NR

Timeline:

Tuesday, May 22, 2007: (con't)

The Ryer Island cable ferry is stopped numerous times for passage of the whales, upstream and downstream.

Weds – Sat, May 23-26, 2007:

The whales wander up the river, then back down to the Rio Vista Bridge. They still won't pass below the bridge.

Sunday, May 27, 2007:

Memorial Day weekend. Boating traffic is slow and Auxiliary boats are breaking down from long, continuous hours on the water. It is decided to give the "whale ops" a rest, but Delta and Dawn surprise us all, swimming under the Rio Vista Bridge to head downstream. At sunset, they are seen at the junction of the San Joaquin and Sacramento Rivers.

Monday, May 28, 2007:

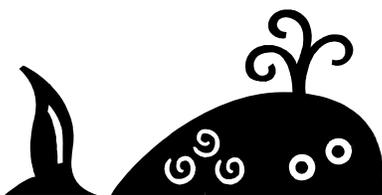
The whales are spotted on the upstream side of the Benicia Bridge, still swimming out to sea.

Tuesday, May 29, 2007:

In the early morning, the whales are spotted near Port Costa. We note with irony that as the whales travel downstream, they swim past the Point Molate area close to the Brother's Light House. Point Molate was the site of the largest and last whaling station on the West Coast; perhaps this old whaling station was why they moved so quickly Tuesday afternoon. Delta and Dawn make many miles; by sunset, they are off Tiburon's Paradise Cay in the San Francisco Bay.

Wednesday, May 30, 2007:

Searchers and the media sound sad as they cannot find the whales; a fisherman reports sighting a mother and calf heading North in the Pacific Ocean.



Fishy Facts:

- A ship's propeller apparently injured both whales
- Banging pipes to move whales is called "oikami"

NEW LINK: "THE RESCUE CHANNEL"

David Delich, DVC-BL

Our RBS partner organization, *Soundings Magazine*, created a web link entitled THE RESCUE CHANNEL. It features videos of recent rescues as seen from USCG Search and Rescue (SAR) units. This is a "must see"! The link is http://ms.soundingspub.com/Rescue_Channel/Index.asp



NOTES FROM THE 2007 BLA WORKSHOP

Bill Griswold, BC-BLN

The 2007 Boating Law Administrators' (BLA) Workshop for Districts 7, 8, & 9 was held in Charleston, SC, on February 6 & 7. CAPT Susan Englebert, D7 Prevention Division Chief, was the lead speaker. Following are brief summaries from the state reports (a full report is available online at www.auxbdept.org):

Alabama: High school drivers' education now includes boating safety.

Arkansas: Using interactive jet-ski simulator to educate riders. Riders wear PFDs and pull kill switch to make quick decisions in interactive "Rules of the Road" situations.

Florida: Developing mandatory boater education law. Target population is smaller boats operated by males over the age of 35.

Georgia: Trying to reduce BUI blood alcohol level to .08 from .10.

Illinois: Revised Boating Accident Report (BAR) to be portable, so one officer can start it, and another investigator can continue or complete the report.

Iowa: Mandatory boater education for teens age 12-17. Advertising Auxiliary & USPS courses on their state boating website.

Kansas: Targeting boat thefts by assigning Hull Identification Numbers (HINs) to homemade boats.

Kentucky: Bengals football player was arrested for BUI – part of his sentence included appearing in an advertisement for safe boating.

Louisiana: Still recovering 3000 abandoned boats from Katrina. Coast Guard grant money helped purchase 50 patrol boats in past 3 years.

Michigan: Handling public relations fallout from recent CG decision to hold live fire exercises on Great Lakes. Nighttime accidents have increased.

Minnesota: Targeting boating safety with radio public service announcement campaigns.

Missouri: Conducting "saturation" BUI boardings on Lake of the Ozarks, where an estimated 1 in 6 boat operators are over the legal state limit of .10.

Nebraska: Working to recall highly dangerous "WEGO" kite tubes.

New Mexico: Kids' PFD wear became mandatory in 2005; mandatory boater education in 2006.

North Dakota: Zero boating fatalities in past year, but extremely low water in state lakes.

Ohio: Putting state-local-federal interoperable radios in Coast Guard command centers.

Oklahoma: Standardizing procedures with Indian Nations, who are also registering boats in the state. Developed 60-hour course for airboat operation.

South Carolina: Partnering with other agencies to combat BUI, using high-profile BUI "Batmobile".

Tennessee: Using electronic BARs; can send attachments such as pictures electronically to CG.

Texas: Multi-agency Operation Wrangler utilizes Customs & Border Patrol, local sheriffs, and fish & game officers to stop Mexican fishermen from crossing the Rio Grande to illegally catch fish.

Wisconsin: Trying to mandate registering non-motorized boats, to align with neighboring states.

Wyoming: Energy boom in the state has brought in many new boaters & unregistered boats.



Distribution: All FC's, DCO's, VCO's with email addresses in AUXDATA, plus NEXCOM, G-PCB-2, and G-PCX-1 via direct email from DC-B. Upon receipt, FC's are asked to copy and provide copies to Flotilla members.