



“Always Ready”

Division 26 — Western North Carolina District Fifth Southern Region

Lakes Badin, Hickory, Norman, and Wylie

October 2024

Enhancing Boating Safety on Lake Norman

Blythe Landing Radio Installed

Submitted by Steve Riggan, FSO-FN 054-26-04



After much planning and hard work, CG Auxiliary Blythe Landing Radio Station is finally a reality. On 24 August 2024, a USCG Auxiliary Fixed Land Marine Radio Station was installed at Blythe Landing on Lake Norman, North Carolina, a culmination of three-plus years of effort by members of Division 26 and numerous other entities. The purpose of the station is to enhance boating safety on Lake Norman by providing VHF marine radio coverage for CG Auxiliary patrols, and for communicating with local law enforcement marine units and the boating public.

How did we get here?

It all started three years ago with an idea and initial discussions generated by James Barton of Flotilla 054-26-04 to place a USCG Auxiliary VHF Marine Radio Station on the south end of Lake Norman in order to fill gaps in coverage. After numerous discussions with multiple agencies, including Cornelius Police Department (CPD) and Mecklenburg County North Carolina Parks and Recreation, a potential solution was floated to place a CG Auxiliary fixed land radio station in an unused former concession building at Blythe Landing Park, a busy boat ramp at the south end of Lake Norman on Ramsey Creek. As discussions progressed, a decision was made to convert the building into a lake safety center not only housing the CG Auxiliary radio station, but also classroom space, conference room space, and facilities for members of law enforcement units to interact with the public. CPD and USCG Auxiliary Division 26 signed agreements in early-to-mid 2024 with Mecklenburg County Parks to provide services related to boater education, special events promoting safe boating, radio communications (specific to the sanctioned CG Auxiliary agreement), and a regular presence on-site. To date, several Boat America Boating Safety Classes and numerous Vessel Safety Check (VSC) events have been conducted. A children’s Summer Camp sponsored by CPD has been held and many one-on-one boater discussions by members of the CPD, law enforcement agents, and Auxiliarists have occurred.



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USCG Auxiliary Blythe Landing Radio

CG Auxiliary Blythe Landing Radio Station – so what is it and how did we build it?



The VHF fixed land radio station is located inside the building at what was formerly a concession service window, with views of the lake. The window can be opened to a vestibule that allows Auxiliarists on duty to speak directly to the boating public.

The installed equipment includes two ICOM M330 25-watt radios, power supplies, computers, and a planned power backup system. Two Shakespeare 4018-M 9db 19-foot-tall whip antennas with LM400 coax leading to the radios have been installed.

The antennas are mounted at the top of a heavy-duty wood utility pole installed on site, 61 feet above ground, with an aluminum mast and crossbar to hold the antennas bolted to the pole. Total estimated height above ground of antenna tips is 84 ft. with an estimated height above lake level at 92-94 ft. Operations tests reached another CG Auxiliary Fixed Land station 12.5 miles away in Sherrills Ford, North Carolina which is in direct line of sight. Transmissions from both stations were loud and clear with minor static from both stations, a better-than-expected result.

The utility pole was procured and installed by Lackey Enterprises Inc, owned by Darrel and Misty Lackey. Darrell assisted with assembling the mast, digging the hole for the pole with his equipment, lifting the pole into the hole with the help of CG Auxiliary crew, and setting the pole. Steve Riggan and Darrell Lackey then went 80 ft. in the air in Darrell's bucket truck to secure the coax and ground wire to the pole. Numerous CG Auxiliary members from Division 26 provided labor, assembly, and radio setup, and various "other duties as assigned," including photography. This was a true team effort!

What is next?

The CG Auxiliary Radio Facility Inspection approval is in process, and the station will officially go on the air as soon as approval is received. Members of Division 26 flotillas have committed to support activities at Blythe Landing, including operating the radio station for CG Auxiliary patrols and special events. The goal is to provide watch standing on weekends and holidays in order to monitor radio traffic from the public and to issue safety advisories.

A team made this possible.

The leaders of the project and members of Division 26 owe a huge debt of gratitude to everyone who worked over several years to bring USCG Auxiliary Blythe Landing Radio to reality. Organizations and individuals outside of the USCG Auxiliary also made this possible – without them the refurbished building and radio project would not have happened. These include but are not limited to: Greg Clemmer, Director of Operations for Mecklenburg County



The bosses: Darrell Lackey and Steve Riggan.

Photo by K. Riggan

Parks; George Brinzey, CPD Lake Patrol Officer; Darryl and Misty Lackey of Lackey Enterprises, Inc.; Duke Energy Foundation; the Lake Norman Marine Commission; and numerous private donors that provided funding for furniture and other basics needed at the new lake safety center. The community relationships built throughout the project will be lasting, bringing a cooperative focus to boating safety on Lake Norman.



The Crew: T. Marciano, S. Newcombe, D. Webb, S. Wigginton, G. Eifried, S. Riggan, B. Laimak, H. James. Photo by K. Riggan

Installing the Antenna for Blythe Landing Radio



A Fond Farewell to our Shipmate Hanna Nicole DeLuca

Tribute written by Beverly Butlin, Flotilla 26-02



Members of Lake Wylie Flotilla were called to say farewell, fair winds and following seas on 6 August 2024 to dedicated member, Hanna DeLuca, who endured cystic fibrosis, succumbing after a bout of pneumonia and sepsis. Attending her funeral were Rick Croasdale and Beverly Butlin of the Flotilla. Hanna previously served in the Auxiliary in the Michigan City Flotilla in Indiana beginning in 2015. She was certified as an instructor and served as FSO-SR and FSO-MA. Hanna disenrolled before moving to North Carolina. On July 2, 2024, following a strenuous documentation process, she was able to join the Lake Wylie Flotilla.

On 4 May 2024, after dating for approximately two years, Hanna married another dedicated Auxiliary member, Adam DeLuca, also a member of Flotilla 26-02. Adam credits his relationship with Hanna as his reason for joining the Auxiliary. He stated, "The Coast Guard has interested me since I was young, but life took me on a different path. I first learned of the Auxiliary last year when Hanna told me she was a member back in Indiana. I was immediately interested and sent in an interest form right away. Hanna inspires me with her drive and desire to work and serve as much as she possibly can, even with all the difficulties she faces on a daily basis. Being a member of the Auxiliary allows me to see and learn how the USCG operates while serving my community. I'm excited to learn even more as I continue to serve."



During and after the long application process, even when hospitalized, Hanna reached out. She kept in touch



while planning the classes she was going to work on and asked how she could still serve and help the Auxiliary, even after being admitted to hospice care. A truly dedicated member, Hanna was an inspiration for all of us and showed a great deal of devotion to duty. On 5 August, Mark Briggs, FC, presented a special Flotilla "Devotion to Duty" Award and Challenge Coin to Hanna, as she lay in hospice care. Adam accepted the award on her behalf. Also attending were her parents, her brother, and auxiliarists Ziad Nazif, Division 26 Commander, and Beverly Butlin, VFC, 26-02.

Hanna's husband, Adam, is also to be commended for his exemplary devotion to duty during this difficult time. Adam DeLuca earned the AUXOP member status in late May 2024. He also served at scheduled Vessel Safety Checks and performed Program Visitations, earning his PV certification. Hanna encouraged him, even as her health declined.

We will miss Hanna's dedication, resilience, perseverance, and her heart for service. May she be remembered by us all as an example of Honor, Respect, and most of all, Devotion to Duty.

Paddle Craft Competition Belmont, North Carolina

Information and photos submitted by Mark Briggs, FC, 26-02

On 24 August 2024, members of Flotilla 26-02 attended a Paddle Craft Festival that was held on Lake Wiley, South Carolina. The festival celebrated novice and advanced paddlers on paddle boards, kayaks and canoes. The distance of competitive races ranged from 1-mile to 14-miles. Spectators had a grand time cheering the paddlers along.



Auxiliarists spent the day conducting vessel safety checks on multiple paddle crafts. They also maintained a Public Affairs booth that provided many sources of information concerning boating safety. It was a great opportunity to engage the approximately 200 people who participated in the day's activities.



Kayaking for Kids on Lake Wylie

Submitted by Beverly Butlin, Flotilla 26-02

On Saturday, 21 September 2024, Division 26 members banded together to provide on-the-water and dockside support for a Paddle Party. Kayakers and paddle boarders were invited to take to the water and cruise approximately three miles on Lake Wylie in South Carolina. There was no age limit and life jackets were required. The occasion was not a race, but a photo scavenger hunt was held for fun and prizes.



Division 26 boat crew members got underway at 0700. Flotilla 03 member Darrin Sanchez and Flotilla 02 member Rick Croasdale were on boat patrol and Flotilla 01 member Jim Loftin performed patrol on a PWC. Charlotte fireboat, TowBoat US, and Charlotte/Mecklenburg law enforcement were also on hand to secure the route. Flotilla 03 member David Webb performed radio guard on the Auxiliary communications radio on shore.



Flotilla 02 members Mark Briggs and Adam DeLuca staffed a Public Affairs table and conducted 16 vessel safety checks for a mix of paddle craft and power boats. The event was a complete success, and the organizers presented a thank you card to Mark Briggs, FC, 26-02, for Division 26 support both on the water and on shore.



David Ray Earns RBS Award

Submitted by Beverly Butlin, Flotilla 26-02



Bravo Zulu to David Ray, Division 26 Vice Commander. On 12 August 2024, Beverly Butlin, VFC 26-02, presented David with the Recreational Boating Safety Award (RBS). The award requires a Sustained Service Award of over 2,250 hours, and 240 points earned over two years. Points are earned for hours of service in public education and public affairs, and numbers of vessel safety checks, and RBS visits. David worked hard to earn the RBS insignia and can wear it proudly.



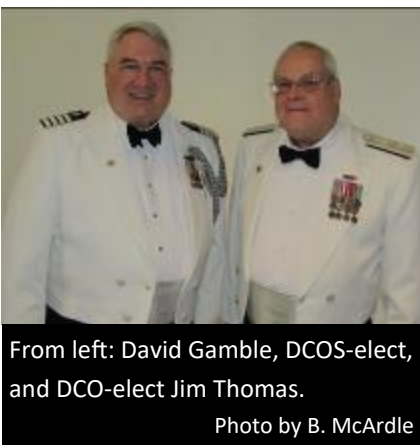
Beverly Butlin congratulates David Ray. Photo by M. Valdes

District 5th Southern Region D-Train

Submitted by Scott Wigginton, Flotilla 26-04

Fall D-Train kicked off on 5 September 2024 at the Marriott Hotel in Short Pump, Virginia. Classes offered were the Auxiliary Leadership and Management School (AUXLAMs) which started on Thursday and the EM0105 Public Affairs course which began on Friday.

Friday was a full day. In the morning, participants joined Sector Officers in Leadership Forums where the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of District 5 Southern Region were analyzed. District Staff Officers also spent time completing a SWOT analysis in their areas of responsibility.



From left: David Gamble, DCOS-elect, and DCO-elect Jim Thomas.

Photo by B. McArdle

The highlight of the District Board Meeting held on Friday afternoon was elections. Jim Thomas, the current District Chief of Staff was elected Commodore for 2025. David Gamble was elected District Chief of Staff for 2025. Kim Curry was elected to District Captain of Sector North Carolina.

Saturday began with an "All Hands" meeting to hear remarks from Commander Otani, District Director of the Auxiliary (DIRAUX). At the District Board Meeting held on Saturday, Jim Thomas, DCOS, presented a program on the Culture of Safety Initiative of the Coast Guard and Auxiliary.



Commander Otani.

Photo by B. McArdle

Admiral Jay Vann, Commander of the Fifth District, was the keynote speaker at the Saturday evening banquet. Commander Otani, also spoke. After the speeches, District Commodore elect, Jim Thomas and David Gamble, District Chief of Staff elect, were frocked with their new shoulder boards.

Sunday morning, several Coast Guard Sector Commanders spoke, followed by Commander Otani. Commodore Krogmann, Deputy National Commodore Atlantic East elect, offered the closing remarks of the fall D-train.

Flotilla 26-04 Sponsors CPR Class

Following a Flotilla Meeting on 14 September, 2024, at the Fire Department on Highway 16 in Denver, North Carolina, Lincoln County Emergency Services provided a free Hands-only Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) class. The class was given by training coordinator Michelle Paget and offered to all members of Division 26.

The presentation was excellent and plenty of time was provided for practice. The Hands-only procedure is performed according to the following rubric.

- C**heck for a response and normal breathing
- C**all 911 quickly and get an AED
- C**ompress in the center of the chest; push hard and fast
- C**onnect the AED and follow the voice prompts

Michelle described what to do if you determine someone is unresponsive. First call 911, and get the automatic external defibrillator (AED). Then, if the person has no pulse, start compressions. Do not stop compressions to check a pulse. If possible, switch out with another person every two minutes. When the AED is turned on, it gives instructions. It is good to store scissors, a razor, shaving supplies, towels and gloves with the AED because the pads need to go on bare skin. Sometimes a shave is necessary. If the person does not respond to the AED, continue CPR while waiting the two minutes it takes for the AED to recycle and allow you to use it again.



If reading all this makes you nervous, take a CPR course. It is not difficult and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation is not required. Compressions are the most beneficial means of CPR. You could save the life of someone you love.

The members of Division 26 who attended are Jim Loftin and Dan O'Brien, 26-01; Betty Laimak 26-03; James Barton, John Dibbins, Gary Eifried, Sharon Eifried, Tony Marciano, and Sydney Newcombe, 26-04.

Michelle pointed out that it is essential to always know the address where you are needing help. The response to a 911 call in Lincoln County takes approximately 2 to 3 minutes for the police, 4 to 5 minutes for the fire department, and 7 to 8 minutes for the emergency response system (EMS) to arrive. Be assured that the first responders on a fire truck are CPR certified, and will start to care for the victim while awaiting EMS. Michele also demonstrated the ways EMS helps victims with compromised airways, possibly from a drug overdose.



Qualifying Exams on Lake Wylie



On 16 August, 2024, QEs took place on Lake Wylie, North Carolina. Members participating were D. Wascher, K. McHugh, 26-01; R. Croasdale, 26-02; D. Sanchez, 26-03; G. Eifried, 26-04. Thank you to members of Flotilla 26-02 for hosting members from multiple flotillas in Division 26.

Photos provided by D. Sanchez and G. Eifried



Training at Badin Lake



On 31 August 2024, on-the-water training took place on Badin Lake, North Carolina. Members participating were K. Curry, T. Earnhardt, M. Mize, T. Nall, M. Parks, M. Pettigrew, 26-07; J. Dibbins, G. Eifried, 26-04. Flotilla 26-07 worked hard over the past two years to qualify new coxswains and two new facilities in order to conduct patrols on the lake. Congratulations to the team!

Photos provided by T. Earnhardt



Supporting AuxAir Potential

Rock Hill-York County Airport, South Carolina



5 October 2024: Auxiliaries (from left) S. Cecil, 26-03, and T. Edwards, B. Butlin and M. Briggs 26-02. Photo by R. Cecil



On 5 October 2024, members of Flotilla 26-02 and 26-03 gathered at Rock Hill Airport to support the potential of establishing an AuxAir program. This is in direct response to members of Division 26 expressing an interest in growing the AuxAir segment of Auxiliary operations.

Auxiliarist Scott Cecil, 26-03, was happy to display his drones which attracted the attention of many, especially the younger attendees and those interested in AuxAir flight operations. The entire team gave out brochures on every aspect of the Auxiliary and stickers and activity books to children. Rick Croasdale, 26-02, being a retired commercial pilot and veteran, took the opportunity to speak with veterans and pilots who visited the booth as well as discuss recruitment and boat operations. Mark Briggs, Tom Edwards, and Beverly Butlin passed out paddle craft decals, reflective paddle decals, boating safety class information and recruitment information.

Many pilots and pilots-in-training expressed an interest in hearing more about the AuxAir program. In response to this interest, on 15 October, Ziad Nazif Commander of Division 26 provided an AuxAir presentation that was attended by pilots, aircraft owners, student pilots, and instructors. Auxiliaries Mark Briggs and Bev Butlin also attended the presentation.



Scott Cecil, 26-03, providing information about his drones. Photo by B. Butlin



15 October, 2024: M. Briggs, FC, 26-02 (on left) and Ziad Nazif, Division 26 Commander. Photo by B. Butlin



Keeping up With the Latest News

- **Congratulations to Division 054-26 For Outstanding Performance.** Thirty-two vessel examiners in Division 26 completed a total of 884 vessel safety checks for 2024! This includes inspections for boats, paddle craft and facilities. In Sector North Carolina, Lake Wylie Flotilla 26-02 took the lead with 384 VSCs. Bravo Zulu to all vessel examiners and a huge thank you to Mark Briggs, SO-VE, for his outstanding leadership.
- **Division 26 Change of Watch (COW).** The new date is **01 February 2025**. You do not want to miss this year's COW which promises to be fantastic! Place: the Shore Club at 15083 Molokai Drive in Tega Cay, South Carolina. Time: 1100 to 1430. RSVP for new date to Beverly Butlin at bbutlin.uscgaux@gmail.com.
- **Opportunities to Serve at Blythe Landing.** Sign up to teach boating safety. Perform radio guard on the Blythe Landing Radio. Perform vessel safety checks. Share recreational boating safety materials with the boating public. The goal is to have a USCG Auxiliary presence at Blythe as often as possible, especially on weekends. Check with your flotilla commanders and staff officers to sign up.
- **New Suicide Prevention Training Requirement.** Training related to suicide prevention is covered in a newly published Suicide Prevention course (100643). This course is an AUXCT requirement for all Auxiliarists and is available on the USCG Auxiliary Online Classroom. The initial deadline for completion is 31 December 2025, and must be repeated every five years. See ALAUX 027/24 for details.
- **Congratulations.** COMO Mary Kirkwood was elected to the position of CGAUX National Commodore (NACO) and Patrick Feighery to VNCO. In addition, COMO John Krogmann, outgoing leader of District 054, was elected to the position of Deputy National Commodore-Atlantic Area East, Recreational Boating Safety (DNACO-RBS).
- **Having Trouble With AUXDATA II?** Contact Mark Briggs, FC, 26-02, mbriggs.uscgaux@gmail.com, to find out when he is offering the next tutorial on ZOOM. The class covers correctly entering information into AUXDATA.
- **Coastie, the Safety Tug Boat, Is Coming to Town.** In case you have not met, Coastie is an animated cartoon character robot used to teach Boating and Water Safety to children. Read all about Coastie here: <https://www.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=A-DEPT&category=coastie>. If you are interested in taking Coastie on the road or learning how to operate Coastie, contact Scott Wigginton at scottw@scottwigginton.com.



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Feedback, articles, pictures are most welcome and should be sent to: Sharon Eifried, Editor, seifried@towson.edu.

