



FLOT Lines

Flotilla 74, Brandon

District 7

USCG Auxiliary

Issue 2 2025





FLOT Lines

Newsletter Flotilla 74, Brandon
Matthew Stephen, Flotilla Commander
Christopher Hunt, Flotilla Vice Commander
Meeting: Second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m.
3006 South Kings Ave., Brandon, Florida

Flotilla Staff Officers

Tanner Piliego
Information Systems

Vishrut Amin
Communication Services
RBS Program Visits

Earl Abbott
Finance

Christopher Hunt
Communications

Toshiya Arciaga
Member Training

August Miller
Navigation Systems
Materials

Brett Skaggs
Secretary of Records
Human Resources

Dottie Riley
Publications (Editor)
Public Affairs

Matt Stephen
Vessel Examinations



*Background photo: Earl Abbott, Tanner Piliego and Matthew Stephens conducting Vessel Examinations at Williams Park. USCG Auxiliary photo by
Tanner Piliego*



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We're on the web!



www.cgaux74.org



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Flotilla74/>

A dolphin surfaces near a channel marker in Tampa Bay. USCG Auxiliary photo by George Papabels



From the Helm



Matthew Stephen
Flotilla Commander

This year has been quite busy. We have hosted several events thus far. February started with the annual Gasparilla boat parade, in which we had several auxiliary vessels out on the water as well as two radio guards in the basin. A couple of days later, we followed up with

and the Brandon 4th of July parade. We need your participation to make these events successful.

We recently added some new member qualifications. We have a new Telecommunications Operator and a new Recreational Boating Safety - Partner Visitor. Additionally, we have members completing their Vessel Examiner personal qualification standards, giving us seven vessel examiners, and another member completing the Partner Visitation personal qualification standard, providing us with three program visitors. Some members will work on the Instructor and Marine Safety personal qualification standard.

If this sounds interesting and you would like to get more involved, please reach out!

Semper Paratus!

Matt Stephen

the Blackthorn Memorial, where Rear Admiral Schoefield attended and said a few words.

After that, we had S-Train at Airstation Clearwater on February 15 and the Tampa Bay Boat Show on February 28 at the Florida Fairgrounds. The Sun 'n Fun Air Show in Lakeland started activities in April. Some upcoming events we are planning are National Safe Boat Week

Matt Stephen is involved in Hillsborough County Emergency Management in his 'day job.' Receiving this challenge coin was for him, a pleasant surprise. Photos by Matt Stephen



From the Helm

Auxiliarists: Be a Voice for Boating Safety During National Safe Boating Week 2025

National Safe Boating Week (NSBW) is right around the corner—May 17–23, 2025—and it is an excellent opportunity for Coast Guard Auxiliary members to make a meaningful impact in their communities. As ambassadors of recreational boating safety, your participation in NSBW events is vital to raising awareness and saving lives.

This year's campaign highlights life jacket wear, vessel preparedness, and responsible boating behaviors. Whether it's setting up a public information booth, offering free vessel safety checks, or giving a boating safety presentation at a local marina or school, every interaction helps build a culture of safety on the water.

Your training, experience, and commitment make the Auxiliary an essential part of the Coast Guard's outreach mission. Let's show our communities what the Auxiliary is all about—service,

safety, and stewardship.

Sign up for our flotilla's NSBW events, collaborate with fellow members, and help us turn awareness into action. Together, we can chart a safer course for all boaters this season. Semper Paratus! Ω



Christopher Hunt
Flotilla Vice Commander

Christopher Hunt



Articles of Interest



Flotilla 74 Members Attend Sector St. Petersburg Second Annual Sector Training.

By Dorothy Riley



From right: Flotilla 74 members Brett Skagg, Toshiya Arciaga, and William Sage listen attentively to a presentation at S_Train conducted Feb. 15, at Air Station Clearwater. USCG Auxiliary photo by Dorothy Riley

Sector St. Petersburg held its second annual Sector Training (S-TRAIN) on February 15 at Air Station Clearwater. Over 120 Auxiliary members from the Sector St. Petersburg divisions participated. Flotilla 74, Brandon members attending included William Sage, Toshiya Arciaga, Brett Skaggs, and Dottie Riley

S-TRAIN had several objectives, including introducing members to various ways the Auxiliary can support the Coast Guard. Due to the current workforce shortage within the Coast Guard, numerous roles and skills have opened up for Auxiliary members. These areas include

Emergency Management, Aids to Navigation verification, Telecommunications, Culinary Assistance, and commercial vessel activities. Workshops such as Operations and Boat Crew certification, Telecommunications, Team Coordination Training, and Auxiliary Leadership were designed to enhance members' skills and broaden their knowledge.

Daniel Helou, former District Captain-West, played a significant role in planning the event. CAPT Michael Kahle, commander of Sector St. Petersburg, Air Station Clearwa-

(Continued on page 7)



Articles of Interest



COMO Martin Goodwin, District 7, takes a 'selfie' showing the many members from Auxiliary divisions under Sector St. Petersburg who attended the Sector St. Petersburg second annual training session held Feb. 15, at Air Station Clearwater. USCG Auxiliary photo by COMO Martin Goodwin



Above: Karen Miller presents proper uniform wear by wearing her uniform haphazardly. USCG Auxiliary photo by Lisa Repetto

(Continued from page 6)

ter staff, and COMO Martin Goodwin, District 7 Commander, were present. Anthony Hooper facilitated the Team Coordination Training Refresher certification. Instructors and presenters came from throughout District 7.

The day included more than just class-

rooms and workshops. The Air Station galley provided lunch, and members had the opportunity to shop at the Coast Guard Exchange. They also attended a career fair and toured the hangars. Overall, it was an informative day, and we encourage you to attend S-TRAIN next year. Ω



Right: Attendees pass through the food line in the galley. Far right: Anthony Hooper presents Team Coordination Training. USCG Auxiliary photographs by Dorothy Riley



Division 7 Crew Training: Flotilla 74, Brandon Members Participate in the Classroom and On-the-Water.

By Dorothy Riley. Photos submitted by Matthew Stephen.



Flotilla 74, Brandon members Matt Stephen and Christopher Hunt are attending the current Division 7 crew training cycle. Members must complete the training to become qualified as Auxiliary boat crew. The training program consists of classroom instruction and on-the-water practice.

Classroom training includes but is not limited to, knot tying, first aid, radio communication, learning about the risks of heat and cold water immersion, and broader textbook instruction in crew training.

On-the-water training covers docking, being an effective lookout, line handling, and towing revolutions, to name just a few. Boat crew is one of the lengthiest and most challenging qualifications to earn.



Top left: Charles Lambeth guides Matthew Stephen in how to properly wear a survival suit.

Left: Dean Bell and Dean Hoskin demonstrate administering first aid to a member posing as a victim. *(Did he survive?)*

Above: Boat crew mentors and instructors talk to boat crew students about various types of first-aid kits. USCG Auxiliary photos by Matthew Stephen



More Boat Crew Training Pictures.

(Ready to sign up for the next boat crew training cycle?)



Top: Charles Lambeth assists boat crew trainees fitting the cold water immersion suits.

Mid-page: Boat crew trainees must demonstrate the ability to survive immersion with and without life jackets and immersion suits. Matthew Stephen is “rescuing” Raul Lopez.

Below: Mentors, qualified crew members and trainees prepare to board for on-the-water training. USCG Auxiliary photographs by Matthew Stephen



Countdown to

NATIONAL SAFE BOATING WEEK

May 17-23, 2025



- LIKE and SHARE Flotilla 74 Facebook and Instagram posts relating to Vessel Safety Checks, lifejackets, and National Safe Boating Week. (Hashtag: *#safe-boating*, *#lifejacketssavelives*)
- May 16: Wear Your Lifejacket to Work. Take a photo and post it to social media. (Hashtag: *#wearyourlifejacketatworkday*; tag *@boatingcampaign*)
- Distribute flyers and brochures promoting National Safe Boating Week, Vessel Safety Checks, and lifejacket wear.
- Participate in the May 17 Vessel Safety Check blitz at Salty Sol (Gandy) boat ramp. If you cannot conduct Vessel Examinations, come for the camaraderie and help staff a Public Affairs booth.

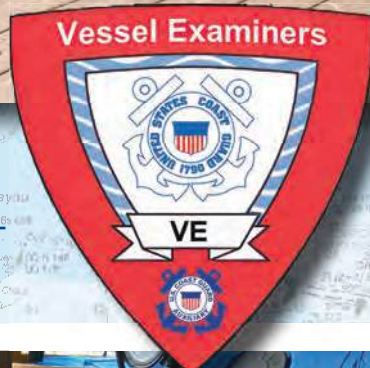
THIS IS A CALL FOR ALL HANDS TO PARTICIPATE!



Flotilla 74, Brandon member Matthew Stephen continues to rack up Vessel Safety Checks.

We encourage our members to earn a Vessel Examiner qualification and become involved!

In addition to serving as the Flotilla Commander, Matthew Stephen serves as Flotilla Staff Officer- Vessel Examinations.



By mid-April, Stephen accomplished nearly 300 Vessel Safety Checks. With National Safe Boating Week (NSBW) fast approaching, we encourage members to earn a Vessel Examination qualification and take part in NSBW activities. USCG Auxiliary photos by Matthew Stephen



Articles of Interest

Flotilla Staff Officer Reports



August Miller
Navigation Systems

No activity for Navigation Systems.

Materials

Ordered and received vessel inspection forms and decals.



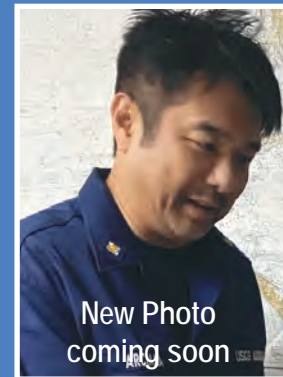
Earl Abbott
Finance

Still waiting on the records from the former Finance Officer, and need to set a date ASAP to add him to flotilla Bank account.



Tanner Piliego
Information Systems

Entering member hours, pulling reports, and working on the backlog of hours submitted by members for past months.



Toshiya Arciaga
Member Training

1. I would like to encourage you to consider enrolling in the Marine Safety Administrative and Management (MSAM) course, which is available through the Auxiliary's online classroom.



Vishrut Amin
Communication Services
Program Visits

The flotilla's Program Visitors will assist in distributing flyers and posters about the Vessel Safety Blitz and boating safety in general as part of NSBW.

This course will equip Auxiliarists with the knowledge and skills to support the Coast Guard's Marine Safety and Environmental Protection missions. It provides a comprehensive overview of marine safety regulations, policies, and procedures, preparing Auxiliarists for roles in Marine Safety staff positions or participation in Marine Safety missions.

You can access the course at your own pace and on your own schedule, making it easy to fit into your other Auxiliary or personal commitments.

Hope you will consider enrolling. (<https://search.usa.gov/search?affiliate=cgaux&query=MSAM>)_W

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out.

2. Boat crew training is ongoing with personal qualification standard missions scheduled over the coming weeks.



Articles of Interest

Flotilla Staff Officer Reports



Dorothy Riley
Public Affairs

With National Safe Boating Week (NSBW) creeping up on us, Public Affairs activities have increased. I have contacted the Hillsborough Board of County Commissioners and requested a NSBW proclamation. We have planned a Vessel

Safety Blitz in conjunction with Flotilla 79, Tampa at Salty Sol Boat Ramp on May 17.

Flotilla 79 is as short on qualified members as our flotilla. For that reason, I am assisting Flotilla 79 with their NSBW activities. I contacted the office of Mayor Betty Castor and requested a NSBW proclamation for Flotilla 79. Members of both flotillas will advertise the blitz by hanging posters.

Other NSBW activities include writing and submitting news releases about NSBW and boating safety, and posting daily on the flotillas' (and Division 7) social media pages.

Publications

This issue is our second for the year. I have solicited articles and photographs from the staff officers and members. ALL MEMBERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO SUBMIT ARTICLES AND PHOTOGRAPHS.



Brett Skaggs
Human Resources

We have two new member candidates.

Get Involved in the Life Jacket Observation Study

The Auxiliary Life Jacket Observation Study (AUX-LWO) Program is an ongoing collaboration with JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. Since 2014, AUXLWO has measured the life jacket wear rate of recreational boaters in 30 states across the United States. This information is used to educate the boating public, elected officials and community stakeholders. The program's goal is to reduce death and serious injury on the water with data-based practices.

Study methodology

In each state, AUXLWO observers record boating behavior at four bodies of water (sites) over summer weekends. Data is collected at the same location at each site, each year. Working in teams of two, with one observer and one recorder, AUXLWO observers record up to 300 boats or for at least four hours. Wear rate data is then combined with annual U.S. Coast Guard accident data and reported to the U.S. Congress.

Results and takeaways

Data collected over the 21 total years of the life jacket study shows that wear rates have remained relatively consistent: less than 5% of recreational boaters are wearing life jackets. However, while observation and statistics tell a story, they are not the same as taking effective action. AUXLWO also identifies how this can be applied through the Auxiliary's recreational boating safety mission and the data be used as a baseline to measure change.

Learn more at: <https://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=V-DEPT&category=life-jacket-observation>



Articles of Interest

Meeting News

Top photos:

Anthony Hooper, Division Commander, visited Flotilla 74, Brandon, Feb. 11, 2025. Hooper administered the member oath to Toshiya Arciaga and updated members on recent and 'coming soon' changes.



Bottom photos:

Charles Lambeth, Division Vice Commander, attended the March 11 meeting of the flotilla and administered the member oath to Vy Ngoc-phuong Pham. Lambeth also presented Earl Abbott (not in uniform) with the vessel examiner qualification certificate and ribbon. (All USCG Auxiliary photos by flotilla members.)



Several members volunteered to serve on the National Safe Boating Week and the Independence Day parade committee and were encouraged to stand a watch at the Sun 'n Fun Air Show in Lakeland.

Plans for the Independence Day parade are underway and we strongly encourage all members to participate in this event.



Articles of Interest



The Sun-N-Fun Aerospace Expo and Fly-in ran from April 1 to 6, 2025, in Lakeland and from April 3 to April 14, 2025, at Lakeland Linder Airport, Lakeland, Florida. The Sun-N-Fun air show is the country's second-largest, attracting 150,000 to 200,000 visitors annually.

In 2025, United States Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 77, Polk County, Florida, represented the USCG at Sun-N-Fun. This year, assets for display from the United States Coast Guard included a 27-foot patrol boat, aircraft from USCG Air Stations Clearwater and Miami, a USCG Auxiliary Radio Communications Trailer, and USCG Recruiters and Auxiliary Recruiters.

Parking and admission were free to watchstanders who parked in designated areas. Military Volunteers supplied meals and water for watchstanders who greeted guests and explained the USCG and USCG Auxiliary mission at the units on display. The watches were on April 3-6, with two scheduled daily.

The Navy's Blue Angels were featured in the Air Show in the afternoon on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

Gilbert F. Thomas, Flotilla Commander Flotilla 77, Polk County, was the officer in charge of the Sun-N-Fun Fly-in and Expo, and as in previous years, coordinated the Auxiliary's participation and watchstander calendar. Brett Skaggs, a member of Flotilla 74, Brandon, served as a watchstander and took photos of the aerial displays. The photo within the frame is one of the photos that he took that day. Ω



Profile photo of Brett Skaggs was taken at S-Train by Dorothy Riley. Full image is on page 6 of this issue.



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USCGA-P

FLOT is a military acronym meaning “forward line of own troops.” FLOT line or “forward edge of battle area” (FEBA) are technical terms used by all branches of the U.S. armed services to designate the forward most friendly maritime or land forces on the battlefield at a given point in time during an armed conflict.

We are not a military force engaged in armed conflict. We are, however, the front-line of the struggle to save the lives of recreational boaters, and we face this great endeavor armed with Vessel Safety Checks, Public Education classes and all the other Recreational Boating Safety programs in our arsenal. Our newsletter banner serves as a reminder of this mission.

FLOT Lines is a publication of Flotilla 74, Brandon, District 7 United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, located at 3006 S. Kings Ave., Brandon. The Auxiliary an organization of dues-paying unpaid, civilian volunteers whose mission is to assist the U.S. Coast Guard in promoting boating safety. Articles may be reprinted with the express consent of the author or photographer with proper credit given to same. For permissions or for more information, please contact the editor, Dorothy Riley, SO-PB, Email address: dottieriley@gmail.com

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Be sure to attend flotilla meetings
When: 2nd Tuesday, 7 p.m.
Where: Flotilla 74, Brandon
3006 S. KINGS AVE, Brandon, FL
Why: Membership is more rewarding
when you participate-
and bring a friend!