



# FLOT Lines

Flotilla 74, Brandon

Southeast District

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 Services

**Vishrut Amin**  
Communication Services

**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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[www.cgaux74.org](http://www.cgaux74.org)



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

*We're on the web!*

Cover: Jack Smith pulls packets out of the water during a C-27J Sentinel practice drop on Aug. 21, in Tampa Bay. USCG Auxiliary photo by Matthew Stephen.

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





# From the Helm



**Matthew Stephen**  
Flotilla Commander

This month has started well. Tosh Arciaga completed his Vessel Examiner personal qualification standard (PQS), and Brent Price completed his Recreational Boating Safety-Partner Visitation Qualification. Vishrut Amin is now the Division Staff Officer-Communication Systems and will duplicate the excellent job he has been doing on the flotilla level.

Operations have been steady over the past few months. We have had numerous two-boat training sessions with Station Sand Key to help qualify some of their people. We also had a successful C-27J Spartan drop mission.

Keep in mind that there are plenty of opportunities to get and stay involved, but that requires effort on your end. Please reach out to member training for these opportunities, and also remember to log your hours

Operations have been consistent over the past few months, highlighted by several two-boat training sessions with Station Sand Key, which have been instrumental in qualifying some of their personnel. We also had a successful C27-J Sentinal drop mission during this period.

Numerous opportunities exist to engage and stay active, but YOU must take the initiative. Please reach out to Tosh Arciaga, Flotilla Staff Officer-Member Training, to explore these options and remember to log your hours.

*Matthew Stephen,*  
Flotilla Commander

**Matthew Stephen and Tosh Arciaga conducted Vessel Safety Checks at Freedom Boat Club on Harbor Island in Tampa on August 5. Tosh completed his five supervised Vessel Examinations to earn the Vessel Safety Check qualification. Freedom Boat Club of Tampa has over 30 locations, providing unlimited access to different waterways and cities within the region. The club rents boats to users, offering a reasonable alternative to boat ownership. USCG Auxiliary photo by Matthew Stephen**



# From the Helm

## Semper Paratus: Preparing for Hurricane Season in Florida

As the calendar flipped to June, Floridians knew it was not just summer; it was the beginning of hurricane season. While the beauty of Florida's coast brings sunshine and ocean breezes, it also comes with the risk of powerful storms. Preparation isn't just a safety net; it's a lifeline. Acting before a storm can mean the difference between chaos and calm when the winds start to howl.

Every hurricane season brings the potential for disruption—power outages, flooding, road closures, and supply shortages. But preparation doesn't have to be daunting. Think of it as building resilience: when you're ready, you're not just protecting your home but giving yourself peace of mind.

### Steps Toward Hurricane Readiness

1. **Make a Plan:** Know your evacuation zone and route. Have a communication plan for your family, especially if you're separated when a storm hits.
2. **Stock an Emergency Kit:** Include essentials like water (one gallon per person per day for at least three days), non-perishable food, medications, flashlights, extra batteries, hygiene items, and essential documents in waterproof bags.
3. **Prepare Your Home:** Clean gutters, reinforce windows, trim trees, and secure loose outdoor items. Consider investing in storm shutters or impact-resistant windows.
4. **Stay Informed:** Download weather apps, follow local emergency management on social media, and sign up for alerts. Don't wait until the last minute—knowledge is power.
5. **Fuel Up and Charge Up:** Fill your gas tank early and charge all devices. Gas and power often become scarce right before a storm hits.

### Tips and Tricks for a Smarter Prep

- Freeze water in plastic bags to create DIY ice packs and keep your fridge cool longer during an outage.
- Snap photos of your home and belongings for insurance purposes.
- Keep a "go bag" ready for quick evacuations, including cash (in small bills), extra phone chargers, and comfort items for kids or pets.
- **Be prepared to respond to Everbridge.** As a US Coast Guard Auxiliarist, you are a member of the Coast Guard family and are responsible for letting us know if you are safe. If you plan to evacuate before the storm, please inform your Flotilla Chain of Leadership in advance.

### Helpful Resources

**Ready.gov – Hurricane Preparedness Toolkit** This official U.S. government site offers a comprehensive digital toolkit with checklists, evacuation planning guides, and downloadable graphics.

Florida weather may be unpredictable, but your hurricane plan doesn't have to be. With some preparation now, you'll be ready to face any storm confidently. Let's weather this season the smart way—together.

Stay safe, stay ready.

*Christopher Hunt*

Flotilla Vice Commander



**Christopher Hunt**  
Flotilla Vice Commander





# Staff Officer Reports

## Vishrut Amin- Communication Services

When surfing the web, be sure to visit our flotilla's webpage at <https://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=070-07>. Vishrut is continually adding new content. Members no longer need to search for common tasks- like how to complete daily activity reports. The links are on our webpage. Vishrut wrote a preface to encourage Flotilla 74, Brandon members to record your hours:

Entering your time in the Auxiliary Data System (AUX-DATA) II is important. It involves recording the hours you've contributed as a volunteer.

### Importance of Timesheet Entry:

**1. Recognition of Service:** Helps organizations acknowledge and appreciate your contributions accurately.

**2. Grant and Funding Reports:** Many nonprofits must report volunteer hours to secure funding or meet grant requirements.

**3. Impact Measurement:** Shows the value of volunteer efforts and helps measure the impact on the community.

**4. Personal Records:** These are useful for tracking one's own experience, building resumes, or qualifying for volunteer awards.

**5. Organizational Planning:** Helps teams schedule and allocate volunteers more effectively based on availability and commitment.

In short, accurately entering your volunteer hours supports transparency,

recognition, and the overall success of the organization you're helping.

Click the link to our website page, where you can learn in detail how to input your time in AUXDATA and see a list of mission codes to use according to your activity. If you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch with your Flotilla Staff Officer-Member Training or Information Systems.

<https://wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=070-07-04&category=info-on-entering-hours>

Ω

U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
**United States Coast Guard Auxiliary**

AUXHOME JOIN US NOW! LEADERSHIP AUX MEMBERS DIRECTORATES UNITS AUX ASSOC.

COAST GUARD

Tuesday, August 26, 2025

**ENTERING YOUR HOURS IN AUX DATA II**

U.S.C.G. AUXILIARY \* SOUTHEAST DISTRICT \* DIVISION 7 \* FLOTILLA 74

**On this page you will learn about entering your time in Auxdata II.**

Entering your time in Auxdata II is an important aspect. It involves recording the hours you've contributed to an organization or cause.

**Importance of Timesheet Entry:**

- 1. Recognition of Service: Helps organizations acknowledge and appreciate your contributions accurately.
- 2. Grant and Funding Reports: Many nonprofits need to report volunteer hours to secure funding or meet grant requirements.
- 3. Impact Measurement: Shows the value of volunteer efforts and helps measure the impact on the community.
- 4. Personal Records: Useful for tracking your own experience, building resumes, or qualifying for volunteer awards.
- 5. Organizational Planning: Helps teams schedule and allocate volunteers more effectively based on availability and commitment.

In short, accurately entering your volunteer hours supports transparency, recognition, and the overall success of the organization you're helping.

**Click the Button below to see how you can input your time in Auxdata II.**

**HOW TO ENTER YOUR HOURS**

Click Below to see the list of Mission Codes explained you would be required to enter

**LIST OF MISSION CODES**

Flotilla 74 Brandon

Division 7

District 7

About Flotilla 7-4

Location

Calendar

Press Release

Recognition

D-TRAIN

Follow Us

Join Us

Contact Us

Send Us A Message

Boaters Resources

Adnl. Resources For Boaters

Free Vessel Examination

Program Visits



## TannerPilego-Information Services

In keeping with the column by Our Communication Services Staff Office, Tanner reminds all members to complete activity reports

## Tosh Arciaga- Member Training

### Recreational Boating Safety Boating Safety Education

#### Florida Boating Advisory Council, June 19-20, 2025 Meeting Highlights

The Florida Boating Advisory Council was created by the Florida Legislature in 1994 with 18 members appointed by the Governor of Florida representing various aspects of the boating community in Florida, including the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, the United States Power Squadron, and the inland navigation districts. The purpose of the council is to make recommendations to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the Department of Economic Opportunity regarding issues affecting the boating community.

Prepared by: Anda Ray, Coast Guard Auxiliary Southeast District Staff Officer - State Liaison Officer, State Liaison Officer for Florida and USCG Auxiliary Member of the Florida Boating Advisory Council.

#### TOPIC HIGHLIGHTS MORE INFORMATION

##### Florida National Pilot for "GOLD" Enhanced Boating Safety ID Card

- The National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) and the State of Florida (Florida Fish and Wildlife – FWC) and the State of Alaska are the national pilots for "Enhanced Recreational Boating Certificate" called the "Boating Safety GOLD ID Card".
- This Florida GOLD Card is intended to provide an incentive to boaters to increase their boating safety education by adding a practical on-the-water training component. The knowledge-based Florida Boater Safety ID cards are transitioning to an electronic-only version (currently 60% are electronic), the Florida GOLD Card will be a physically

issued card.

- Both cards will allow an anchor icon to be placed on the holder's drivers license by the Florida DMV with proof of certificate/cards provided at time of request.
- To obtain this card, the user must submit proof of the Florida Boating Safety Education Card (received through a knowledge-based course and test and complete a 77- point on-the-water assessment by an organization offering a NASBLA verified on-the-water course.
- At this time, Florida is reviewing requests from members of the public that are requesting retroactive GOLD card status, having already obtained their Florida Boater Safety ID Card and taken a NASBLA verified on- the-water training for "Powerboating Skills".

The American National Standards are the criteria for NASBLA on-the- water courses for "Powerboating Skills" link: (Review Standards (Step 1) | National On-Water Standards).

NASBLA verified on-the-water course providers:

The Auxiliary is authorized to provide classroom and online instruction of the "knowledge-based" portion of the Boater Safety Education in in the US and is recognized by Florida (along with 14 other organizations as approved providers (Boating Safety Courses | FWC). However, at this time there are no plans for the Auxiliarists, acting in an official capacity, to be authorized to offer "on-the-water" training to the public. Ω



Example of Florida's new "GOLD" Card





# Staff Officer Reports



With interest in paddlesports on the rise, Paddle boards and kayakers can be found in apartment complexes, condos, and anywhere with water access like Harbor Island. Matthew Stephen has a knack for finding them. USCG Auxiliary photo by Matthew Stephen.

## Earl Abbott-Finance

The flotilla has recovered their financial records and Earl Abbott and Tanner Piliego have “balanced the books.” While at present, we are “in the black,” we must begin to increase our funds to remain solvent. Finance reports are given at the flotilla meetings.

## Dorothy Riley-Public Affairs

No recent events to report. Vishnu continues to post to the flotilla’s Facebook page. Matthew Stephen is officially named as a photographer on the Air Station Clearwater/ Sector St. Petersburg Public Affairs team.

## Dorothy Riley-Publications

Please attend as many activities as your time allows. We are best when we work together. Take photographs of members engaged in any activity. The

best photos are not posed or group shots. The best and most interesting photos are the candid shots of members working even if their faces are not completely visible. Remember to take as many photos as possible and forward them to me for publication. Include the name of the person/s photographed and the activity.

## Recreational Boating Safety- Partner Visitation Program

Congratulations to new member, Brent Price who recently earned the Partner visitation Qualification.

## Matthew Stephen- Vessel Examinations

Between jobs and other commitments, Matthew completes as many Vessel Examinations as he can, and makes himself available to train and supervise any member interested in earning the qualification. Tosh Arciaga most recently earned the Vessel Examiner qualification. Ω





# Meeting News

With both Matthew Stephen, Flotilla Commander, and Chris Hunt, Flotilla Vice Commander unable to attend the August 12 flotilla meeting, Dorothy Riley, Immediate Past Flotilla Commander, conducted the meeting. (Riley was unable to wear her uniform due to injuries.) To her right is Brett Skaggs, Secretary of Records. In front seated at the same table are Earl Abbott and Tanner Pilego. Brett's daughter (front) attended the meeting as a guest. USCG Auxiliary photo by Conrad Palermo



Tosh Arciaga presents Brett Skaggs a certificate acknowledging his qualification as a Vessel Examiner. USCG Auxiliary photo submitted by Brett Skaggs





# Articles of Interest

## Operations

Matthew Stephen served as crew along with Jack Lee and Dean Hoskin, coxswain, both members of Flotilla 72, St. Petersburg. Two Coast Guard members were also aboard for the C-27J Sentinel drop mission on August 21, 2025.

The crew completed three drops: a can with a red parachute, two bag drops (five bags each), and two message drops. The exciting thing about collecting the items dropped during target practice is the low flyovers.

When a Coast Guard plane practices dropping rescue gear, the package is timed to detach from its parachute and splash down just a few feet above the water. The timing is based on the aircraft's altitude and air speed, ensuring the payload hits the water instead of the deck of a target vessel. This practice simulates dropping equipment, such as rescue equipment, to people in the water.





# Articles of Interest



Page 10,top: Jack Lee photographs the C-27J Sentinel as it approaches the Auxiliary vessel

Page 10, bottom: Wearing Auxiliary life jackets, the two Coast Guard members aboard the Auxiliary vessel pull in one of the bags dropped in the water.



Page 11, top: Dean Hoskin, coxswain, looks over his shoulder. The boat stern is full of bags dropped by the Sentinel.

One more bag to pull out of the water by the two members of the Coast Guard. USCG photographs by Matthew Stephen.





# MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

## Restoring Florida's Coral Reefs

By Dorothy Riley

For decades, the world's coral reefs have been devastated by coral bleaching, disease, and bioerosion caused by climate change, ocean acidification, destructive fishing practices such as blast fishing, pollution, and coastal development. Natural events like storms, hurricanes, and disease worsened by warming waters have

led to widespread mortality of some species.

Coral reefs surrounding Florida's coast are extremely susceptible to the rapid decline caused by these factors. Over the last 40 years, coral reefs in the Florida Keys have suffered dramatic declines. Nearly 90 percent of the live corals that once dominated the reefs have

been lost.

Florida hosts a suite of ambitious coral restoration initiatives spanning state agencies, universities, federal partners, and nonprofit organizations. These efforts combine traditional outplanting\* with cutting-edge science to rebuild reef structure, enhance genetic diversity, and boost resilience against warming oceans.

The first of these efforts is the **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) mission, "Iconic Reefs."**

NOAA and partners have developed an unprecedented, decades-long approach to restoring seven iconic coral reef sites in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. In response to the decline in coral reef health, the Florida Keys region has become a world leader in restoration. Although local efforts have succeeded on small scales, restoration has not been able to keep up with the rate of decline.

Iconic Reefs targets seven sites in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, aiming to boost live coral cover from 2 to 25 percent. Strategies include selective breed-

*(Continued on page 13)*



**Coral "farmers" tend to small, found corals anchored to an underwater structure. Corals grown in nurseries like this one can be replanted on damaged reefs or studied by researchers trying to understand what makes corals more resilient to environmental stressors. Photo courtesy NOAA**





# Articles of Interest

(Continued from page 12)

ing of heat-tolerant corals, cross-breeding with resilient stock from Honduras, pairing recruits with beneficial algae and probiotics, bioprinting protective scaffolds, and conditioning corals to withstand higher temperatures.

Early assessments revealed that fewer than 22 percent of outplanted staghorn corals and less than five percent of elkhorn corals survived the 2023 bleaching—prompting a pivot toward heat-resilience strategies and greater genetic diversity in nursery stock.

## FAU Harbor Branch: Southeast Florida Phase 5



**Sarah Rodgers works in the FAU Harbor Branch Ancient DNA Lab. Photo courtesy FSU/Palm Beach Post**

Florida Atlantic University's (FAU) Harbor Branch refined restoration methods through disease monitoring, genetics, stress testing, and experimental outplanting. The key results from their efforts include that stony coral tissue loss disease remains low due to host shifts. The university has found four cryptic genetic lineages in *Steph-*

*anocoenia intersepta*, stressing the importance of gene matching for restoration. Outplanting at St. Lucie Reef achieved 89 percent survival after one year, and larger colonies show greater survival than smaller fragments.



**The Elizabeth Moore International Center for Coral Reef Research and Restoration (IC2R3) facility in Summerland Key focuses on restoring Florida's Coral reefs. Pictured here is Mote Senior Biologist Sarah Rodgers, tending to great star coral in a nursery. Photo courtesy Mote Marine.**

## Mote Marine Laboratory & Coral Restoration Foundation

In collaboration with NOAA, these partners breed and outplant resilient coral species, expand gene banks, and

preserve genetic diversity. Massive brain and boulder corals proved exceptionally hardy during bleaching events.

Florida's Coral Reef Restoration and Recovery Initiative (FCR3) Managed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, FCR3 funds facilities, training,

site-specific plans, and expanded outplanting. By mid-2026, it seeks to restore 25 percent of Florida's reef habitat.

### Looking Ahead

Florida's coral restoration advances rapidly via improved genetic matching, experimental techniques like bioprinting, better disease surveillance, and robust partnerships. Continuous monitoring will determine the most effective approaches for ecosystem recovery.

**\*Outplanting** is transplanting nursery-grown plants into their permanent outdoor locations. It's a crucial step in various restoration and reforestation projects, including coral reef restoration





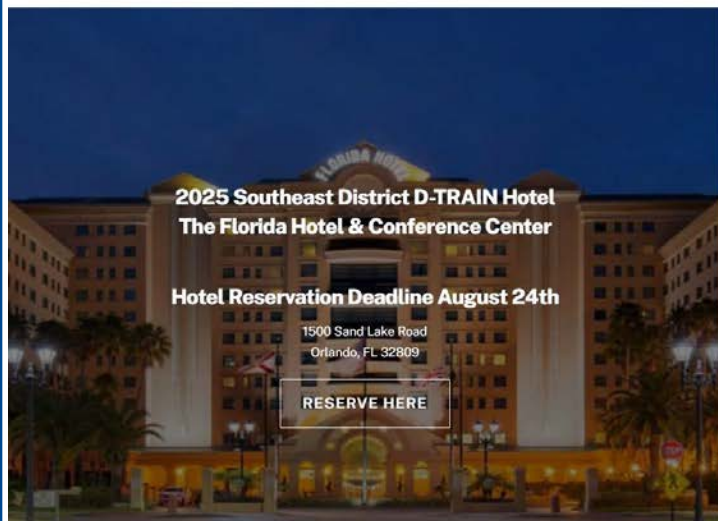
# D-TRAIN '25

USCG auxiliary  
southeast district

<https://cgauxsoutheast.org/wp/>

## U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Southeast District D-TRAIN 2025

Sept 16th-21st 2025 at The Florida Hotel & Conference Center

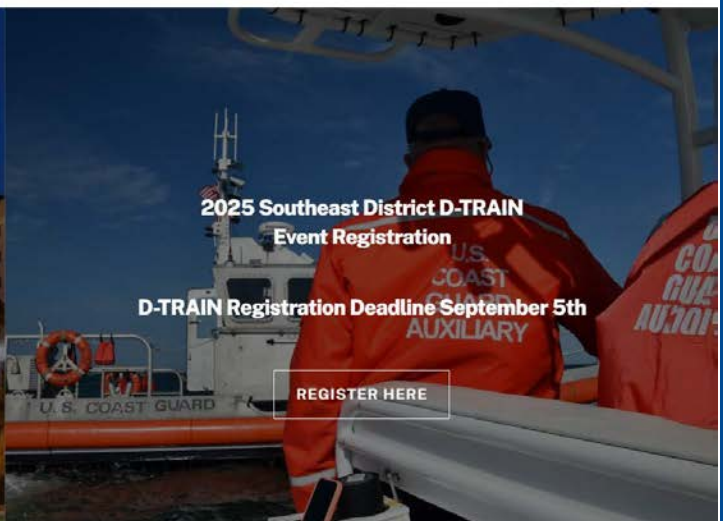


2025 Southeast District D-TRAIN Hotel  
The Florida Hotel & Conference Center

Hotel Reservation Deadline August 24th

1500 Sand Lake Road  
Orlando, FL 32809

[RESERVE HERE](https://tinyurl.com/2vfrfjpa)



2025 Southeast District D-TRAIN  
Event Registration

D-TRAIN Registration Deadline September 5th

[REGISTER HERE](https://tinyurl.com/d5jjpwv9)

To book a hotel room at our special rate, go to:

<https://tinyurl.com/2vfrfjpa>

To register and read the schedule, go to:

<https://tinyurl.com/d5jjpwv9>

This year's conference will be different from previous ones. Many classes and workshops are being offered for the first time, reflecting new directions in the Auxiliary alongside our traditional missions. The fun night may prove to be even more enjoyable! Don't miss this opportunity!







Donations are down,  
requests are up

# THE POWER OF US IS RISING TO THE CHALLENGE



When Coast Guard members need help, Coast Guard Mutual Assistance (CGMA) is always there. We're 100% funded by donations, and allotments are at an all-time low — even as requests for support keep rising.

**Your allotment is more vital than ever.**

  CGMUTUALASSIST  MYCGMA | MYCGMA.ORG

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a member by contacting  
the number below.**

**(813) 644-2894**

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, Southeast District 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](mailto: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!***