

Waypoints

DIVISION 15, 8TH WESTERN RIVERS REGION
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Fort Smith Flotilla Members Assist in SAR

On May 26th Jodie Haralson, Vice Commander of the Fort Smith flotilla, was testing his marine radio at 2000 hours and heard a call being repeated by Sector Lower Mississippi River indicating that they had received a message that a vessel was sinking somewhere between mile 265 and 367 on the Arkansas River.

Haralson thought that he might be able to relay information to Sector Lower from the Auxiliary station in Fort Smith, which was in the middle of the range in which the vessel was supposedly located, and contacted Flotilla Commander Ken Pevehouse, who met him at the station. On arrival Haralson called 911 to make them aware of the situation and they informed him that the Fort Smith Fire Department had launched a 12' inflatable boat in response and that it was currently searching for the vessel.

Sector Lower authorized Haralson and Pevehouse to stand by with Haralson's pontoon boat at the Fort Smith Park in case the Fire Department needed assistance due to treacherously high river flows of 190,000 cfs, which they did until the Fire Department boat returned to the boat ramp at around midnight without having found the vessel.

CPR/First Aid Training

On August 10th the Central Arkansas Flotilla hosted an online CPR/First Aid refresher and tourniquet training class. Taught by nurse and member of the Central Arkansas Flotilla, Ellen Sullivan, the class was open to all in Division 15 and was attended by about 25 people.

40th Anniversary of the Central Arkansas Flotilla

Blake Sasse

The Central Arkansas Flotilla was established on July 7, 1980 but the members were unable to celebrate this important anniversary in person this summer due to the COVID-19 restrictions on Auxiliary activities.

At the time the flotilla was established there was a flotilla 15-1 in North Little Rock and a Flotilla 15-4 in Little Rock. According to information that I had received from Bob Donaldson some time ago, there was an Auxiliary station in North Little Rock on the riverbank about 100 yards upstream of the I-30 bridge. This first station may have been donated by Auxiliarists, but it is possible, but not certain that it was later moved to the I-430 boat ramp site. However, not long after the formation of 15-8 a 12x16' mobile home, acquired from what is now the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management, was placed at the I-430 boat ramp 1982. The dedication of that trailer as an Auxiliary station on May 22, 1982 was a major event with numerous Coast Guard and Auxiliary leaders in attendance, along with the USCG Cutter Dogwood.

The flotilla kept this station at the I-430 boat ramp, despite it being flooded three times, until a fire destroyed it on August 8, 2005. After this disaster the flotilla met at the American Legion headquarters building and the American Red Cross in Little Rock until the unit obtained a double-wide mobile home that had been purchased by the federal government after Hurricane Katrina and had been kept in storage at the Hope Airport. This building was installed at the site of the old station in July, 2007 and

remained there until it was moved to the current site in the RV park owned by the city of North Little Rock between the I-30 and Clinton bridge in August, 2012.

For many years the station had a disabled 3" naval gun that had been given to the flotilla when a Naval Reserve center in Little Rock was moved to North Little Rock in the late 1980s with the understanding that it might someday go to a naval museum. Army engineers poured a concrete pad for the gun and moved it to the station site at the I-430 boat ramp. The flotilla donated this gun to the Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum in North Little Rock in 2007.



Coast Guard Auxiliary Station at the I-430 boat ramp site in Little Rock shortly before it was moved to the RV park in North Little Rock in August 2012.

Photo by Bob Donaldson.

In February 2007 the flotilla's name was changed from Maumelle Rivers Flotilla to the Central Arkansas Flotilla.

The Flotilla has won a raft of awards over the years, including the Commodore's Honor Flotilla Award in 1985, 1991, 1994 and the Commodore's Award in 2016 and 2017. A team from the flotilla won the District's Search and Rescue Competition and represented the Auxiliary at the International Search and Rescue Competition in Nova Scotia, Canada in 2005 where they won the award for SAR Planning. Individual members have probably won hundreds of awards over the years, but one of the more prominent was in 2013 when Greg

Deen was named the 8th Western Region Auxiliarist of the Year. Another was when Terry McKee, Sr. earned the 8th Western Region Lifetime Achievement Award in 2004.

One of the memorable missions that the flotilla participated in were the rescue of missing boaters by Richard Lawrence and Michael Cole in 1992. After completing an exhausting schedule of weekend safety patrols, they responded to a rescue call from the Pulaski County Sheriff's Department asking for assistance in locating three missing men. Beginning their rescue effort well after nightfall they scoured the search area near Toad Suck for several hours without success. Just after the night time search was suspended, and after trailering their vessel, a last-minute call revealed that the overdue boaters had launched in a different direction than first reported. In addition, they were told that one of the missing boaters was on medication and may be in danger of going into diabetic shock. They redeployed their boat to the new search area 30 miles downstream to near Wrightsville. They successfully located the three boaters on an isolated river island. Working feverishly over the next three hours, they braved hazardous currents, darkness, and unmarked river shallows to successfully recover all personnel safely and without injury. For these actions they earned the Coast Guard Award of Operational Merit.

In 2009 a barge being pushed by the towboat Concordia was grounded on the river and the flotilla was asked to check out the site, which Bill Van Cleve and Frank Wilson did. Then they were asked to transport two active-duty Coast Guardsmen to the scene and they did so after Jerry Geddes replaced Frank Wilson as crew. The USCGC Muskingum was proceeding upriver to the scene but lost power and had to anchor in the river and the Auxiliary crew was informed that a major storm was approaching from the west. They quickly left the accident scene and delivered the Coast Guardsmen back to their vehicle before proceeding to where they had launched the boat. The storm hit with winds estimated up to 50 mph while Van Cleve and Geddes were trailering the boat, which was only done with great difficulty, soaking both

members. The storm also blew the Muskingum onto the rocks and they later had to be pulled to a safer location by the Concordia.

Other noteworthy missions were providing boats to enforce a safety zone during the demolition of the bridge over the Ouachita River at Calion in 1993, assisting in maintaining the safety zone on the Arkansas River before and during the dedication of the Clinton Library and escorting the USS Razorback into Little Rock in 2004, searching for three days for a small plane that crashed into the Arkansas River near the airport in January, 2005, the Off Shore Power Boat Race on Greer's Ferry Lake in 2007, and innumerable safety zone patrols for fireworks shows on the Arkansas River.

In the past the flotilla regularly monitored radio traffic on the river in the central Arkansas area using large fixed antennas placed at the station sites. Harlyn Tucker was recognized for his commitment to the communications program with a plaque in the current station's radio room, which was named in honor of John Donar, another strong participant in this activity.

Requests for direct support of the Coast Guard from the Auxiliary have increased over the years. One of the more traditional missions was what used to be known as the Career Counselor and then the Academy Introduction Mission, in which Ilda Calvert and Michael Strobel participated for many years. Members such as John Donar and Richard Lawrence often taught Team Coordination Training at active duty units. Following the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil drilling rig in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, Bob Donaldson, Frank Wilson, and Blake Sasse deployed to various Coast Guard command centers. Donaldson worked in public affairs while Wilson and Sasse served in documentation units. Michael Strobel, Bill Van Cleve, and Blake Sasse served as members of the Sector Lower Mississippi Disaster Assistance Response Team for several years and Sasse deployed with that team for a short period after flooding in Memphis in 2011. Sasse also served as an in-port watchstander on the USCGC Kanawha in Memphis and for several years would relieve on of the active-duty

Coast Guardsmen from a 24-hour watch about once a month from 2007-2010. Bob Evans, a current member of the flotilla, has served as a cook at dozens of Coast Guard units, including large cutters at sea.

Public education has been a critical component of the flotilla's activities over the years and many members have been recognized for their efforts in this mission. John Donar (2007), Greg Deen (2013), and Pauline McKee earned the Arkansas Boating Education Instructor of the Year Award from the Arkansas Wildlife Federation.

In August 2009 the flotilla voted to approve forming a detachment in Monroe, Louisiana. The volunteers in that area were primarily focused on the Auxiliary aviation program. Unfortunately, despite several years of effort, including multiple trips to Monroe by flotilla members, the detachment never quite recruited enough people to start a flotilla. While they are no longer trying to form a unit, several members are still active but are now associated with the Memphis flotilla.

Many flotilla members have gone on to elected office at higher levels in the Auxiliary. Among recent Division 15 Commanders (formerly Division Captains) from 15-8 are John Stidham, Richard Lawrence, Mel Otts, Bob Donaldson, John Donar, and Phil Hunkins. Richard Lawrence and John Donar served as Rear Commodore (now District Captain), and Richard Lawrence was elected to serve as the 8th Western Rivers Region District Commodore.

The flotilla also has had several members serve as District Staff Officers including Frank Wilson (Navigation Systems), Michael Strobel (State Liaison Officer), Richard Lawrence (Incident Management, Legal/Parliamentarian, Communications), John Donar (Chief Qualification Examiner, Communications, Public Education), Bob Donaldson (Public Affairs). Assistant District Staff Officers have included Misty Jezierski (Marine Safety), Christine Cooke (Marine Safety), Lauren Heil (Communications), Phil Hunkins (Information Services), Pauline McKee (Materials, Public Education), Terry

McKee, Jr. (Materials), and Robert Traylor (Publications).

At the national level Richard Lawrence served as the Chief Counsel for the Coast Guard Auxiliary, Bob Donaldson was Branch Chief for Public Affairs, and Stu Soffer was the National Marketing Groups special events manager.

Commanders Corner

Kevin Rardin, DCDR

I've been back in the Public Defender's Office at Juvenile Court since May, after a couple of months of working from home. However, nothing is as it was before the pandemic. The pace of work has slowed considerably, and all court proceedings are online, using the Zoom platform. I haven't talked to a client in-person for months. I go into the office in the morning, get a cup of coffee, go into my individual office, and come out at the end of the day. I understand the need for the isolation, but it has taken a toll on me, and perhaps it has on you. This situation is far from over. I urge you to be consider your own emotional wellbeing, and the wellbeing of your family, friends, and fellow Auxiliarists.



Find things to do. Learn new things. This is what I've tried to do, and it has helped. I talked last month with the boys and girls of the US Naval Sea Cadet Corps at the Naval Base in Millington about being a JAG officer in the Army and about serving with the Auxiliary. I've been studying Spanish for months now, and I've been writing a memoir of my time with the Army in Afghanistan. I've had the physical and the shots for the Food Services program, and I'm about to take on the Food Service Hygiene class. I've continued to push the idea of a formal program of Auxiliary volunteer support at Sector Lower Mississippi, and Commodore DeLaughter recently met with CAPT Rhodes, SLMR commander, to discuss the concept.

Incident Response Activity Coding

Doris Ayers, SO-CM

An Operations Code in AUXDATA has been created titled HURRICANE LAURA 2020. This will allow members who perform activity in support of Hurricane Laura response operations, including TCOs, to include the code on their activity logs.

Please ensure that all activity logs that support Hurricane Laura preparation or response activities have this operation code listed. Such codes will often be used during major events so whenever tasked in such situations please check to see if one will be needed when reporting your activities.

Operations

Michael Strobel, SO-OP

The COVID-19 restrictions have kept our boat crews off the water this summer. However, all currently qualified individuals have completed the online Team Coordination Training course.

Recent Awards

Shelly L. Ayers, Designation as USCG Auxiliary Telecommunications Operator

Jack B. Thorp, Sixth Sustained Service Award

Rick Barnes, Sustained Service Award

David T. Brannon, Fifth Sustained Service Award

Michael D. Armour, Designation as Vessel Examiner

Thomas Haynes, 10-year Membership Service Certificate

Frank Wilson, 15-year Membership Service Certificate

Sidney Hill, 10-year Membership Service Certificate

Division Facebook Page

For those members that use Facebook, please consider “liking” the Division’s Facebook page and sharing articles from it with your friends. It can be found at https://www.facebook.com/US-Coast-Guard-Auxiliary-Division-15-8th-Western-Rivers-110539307146029/?modal=admin_todo_tour

Division Schedule 2020

October 3: To be conducted electronically. Details will be forwarded to Flotilla Commanders.

2020 Officers and Staff

DCCR	Kevin Rardin
VCDR	Ricki Barnes
IPDCR	Dan Turner
SO-CS	Blake Sasse
SO-CM	Doris Ayers
SO-DV	Doris Ayers
SO-FN	Clara Meyer
SO-FS	Bob Evans
SO-HR	Patricia Lewis
SO-IS	Phil Hunkins
SO-MA	Joe Zehler
SO-MS	Patricia Lewis
SO-NS	Frank Wilson
SO-OP	Michael Strobel
SA-PA	Shelly Ayers
SO-PB	Blake Sasse
SO-VE	William Woodell

Waypoints is the official quarterly newsletter of Division 15, 8th Western Rivers Region of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.

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