

DISTRICT 13 OPERATIONAL PLAN

2025 - 2026



KLAAS NIJHUIS, DCO
US Coast Guard Auxiliary

Mission Statement

District 13 of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary is committed to safeguarding the public using the unique waterways of Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana by **engaging** with all of Team Coast Guard and our local communities, **empowering** our members with unparalleled training and resources, and **electrifying** the spirit of service through innovation and collaboration. Together, we uphold the highest standards of safety, stewardship, and resilience to protect and serve our region's maritime environment and its people.

Vision Statement

To be the leading force in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana that **engages** communities, **empowers** volunteers to achieve excellence, and **electrifies** our membership in the maritime domain with innovative solutions and steadfast commitment. We envision a future where our waterways are safer, our partnerships stronger, and our impact enduring, ensuring the resilience and prosperity of our region for generations to come.

Culture Statement

At District 13, US Coast Guard Auxiliary, we cultivate a culture rooted in **engagement, empowerment, and electrifying innovation**. Through deep connections with others in our communities, we actively listen, collaborate, and build trust to safeguard the waterways of Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana.

We empower our volunteers with exceptional training, cutting-edge resources, and opportunities to grow as leaders, ensuring each member is equipped to make a meaningful impact. Our electrifying spirit of service ignites passion, fuels resilience, and drives creative solutions to the challenges we face.

Together, we uphold the values of integrity, stewardship, and excellence, creating a vibrant and dynamic organization committed to protecting our maritime environment and serving the people who depend on it.

PREFACE

Don't expect your father's Operational Plan as you read the following pages. Such a plan might have been adequate a decade ago, but things have changed - drastically - and so must we change. The same for our approach. You won't find the usual lists of specific goals by program area. Instead, know that our District Captains and District Chiefs will be talking with you all in the early months of 2025 and you'll tell them what you think you can promise to deliver. We'll capture that via an Executive Committee Meeting and this plan will then get updated based on your input.

INTRODUCTION

A light switch as the cover of a Coast Guard Auxiliary District Operational Plan? What's with that? I'll answer that question later.

Let's get real here. As I'm writing this plan, I am learning about the numerous disenrollments being processed in our District at the end of this year. Yes, some of them are related to changes in life events for our members, another group falls in the "I've done my time category", these are generally our more senior members and finally there's a group that we are not sure about because, when we reach out to them we don't hear anything back; nothing at all, not even when we send them the disenrollment paperwork for nonpayment. This is just one dimension describing the state of the District; it's one piece of the picture.

We have come out of COVID with reduced forces, a reduced sense of connection and certainly a reduced level of productivity in our mission areas. We have been using the COVID excuse to explain why that is for well beyond those unfortunate few years, but we haven't really done much more than that. Seems some of us believe we're still in it, and thus accept the excuse.

Tell me, does it make sense for us to set out productivity goals for the coming two years when we don't even have a clue as to what our members are wanting to do, are able to do or are given the opportunity to do? So DSOs (District Staff Officers), don't just scan this document for the production numbers expected from your mission area, instead read it in its entirety for an understanding of the way to develop the processes and the culture to allow us to be effective at our jobs.

For the 2025 - 2026 Plan we are going to address the underlying problems first. Then we're going to put a plan in place to provide our members with the resources for them to do our work. Besides the skills and the equipment they will need, we will work on building

the opportunities and enumerate the rewards associated with carrying out our mission areas. Only after we've had the opportunity to rebuild the sense of team, learn to do teamwork, gain the skills to effectively carry out missions and build the partnerships with our constituents for opportunities to serve, then and only then can we start to think about production goals.

Back to why I chose a picture of a light switch to cover this plan. Right now, I fear we have a membership that is largely disengaged, ill-prepared in enough places around our AOR, and seemingly disconnected with and irrelevant to the tasks Team Coast Guard is called upon to deliver. How do we turn that around? My answer as described in this plan is: Engage, Empower, Electrify. There is one subtle aspect to this photo of the light switch: note that it's turned on. There are plenty of photos of light switches in the off position, just as there are plenty of members currently turned off. Finding one showing "on" was quite the task, as I imagine it will be quite the task to turn our membership on again. Or maybe not, if we go about it the right way.

In the last few years, I personally felt that attempts to undertake specific nationally requested efforts, the turning on of the switch was quickly followed by it being flicked off again. Some of this may have been COVID, but some of it also felt like a certain worry that we need to do everything possible to prevent the possibility of sparks flying. Clearly, for us to be relevant, we need to turn on the light switch, the energy must flow, but we also need to be certain that no one gets electrocuted. This plan addresses that as well.

So let's get into it ...

WHERE TO START?

Our senior incoming leadership had a chance to review the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses and Threats) Analysis of where we are today. We landed on developing the following necessary **strengths**:

- Development of a vision of a cohesive team-oriented organization
- Chain of leadership that is approachable, visible, accessible, engaged and supportive
- Uniform level of guidance and support from the active duty throughout the District
- Ability of leaders to delegate
- Leadership open to new ideas and change
- Well-equipped and trained (current in qualifications and informed about the latest methods) membership
- Autonomy to do my work
- Minimizing time-wasters (e.g. succinct messaging; focused meetings as necessary)
- Creating excitement to try something new by showing to our entire membership what units are doing
- Quality mentoring
- Developing, maintaining and verifying adherence to high standards
- Awards programs to recognize contributions
- Ensuring communications up and down the chain that is clear, useful and constructive
- Effective use of technology for communicating, conducting meetings, recruiting and training
- A current and up-to-date web presence
- Relevant, purposeful and empowering training
- Succession planning

And capturing **opportunities** that:

- Create and expand cooperation/involvement with active duty by better use of AUC's (Auxiliary Unit Coordinators)
- Increase service to active duty by asking them where we can plug in
- Respond to active duty demand
- Extend the capabilities of incident management
- Create hands-on, right now experiences
- Develop cooperative partnerships to increase recruiting and training
- Recruiting from untapped demographics

- o Meet RBS (Recreational Boating Safety) demand
- o Utilize and bring back in our under-utilized members
- o Develop excited and enthused leaders

We will need **tools** that:

- o Increase public awareness of services
- o Increase use of media sources and video to enhance recruitment and at-home training
- o Serve as Membership engagement activity guidelines
- o Continue leadership training geared for succession planning
- o Increase face-to-face involvement and person-to-person contact

If you want to see the full SWOT analysis that guided this, please ask.

We recognize that going after these opportunities and building out these strengths will result in increased workload for certain District Staff Officers (DSOs) and their reporting staffs and we will strive to respond by building out robust talent to support those areas. We already expect that Public Affairs, Publications, Training, Human Resources, and Communication Systems will be most impacted and we have considered ways to restructure our staffing to meet the demands.

All this to:

ENGAGE

A perusal of my second favorite dictionary gives some of the following definitions for this word: To bind, mesh, interlock, to come together, involve, engross, to induce to participate, to begin or carry on an enterprise or activity, to do or take part in something.



Engagement is our first step in building up our resources for the coming two years. Without it, we just stay where we are, and that is with something like half of our members disengaged. A disengaged gear may turn, but it won't be doing any work! Let's bring those gears together early in 2025. We need those gears meshing again and the levers we'll use to slip them into position include:

- 1) A WIDE OFFERING OF INTERESTING ACTIVITIES to engross and get our members to come together to remind us of our mission and the ways we can be effective. I have charged our AUCs and ASCs (Auxiliary Unit Coordinators and Auxiliary Sector Coordinators) to identify and set up ways to meet and experience the range of activities Team Coast Guard is involved with in our District. For those areas without an active duty presence, I have asked the District Captains to identify opportunities to engage with our other partners. The Goal is to have 20 activities scheduled on the calendar between 1 January and 30 April and to have on average 15 of our members partake of each of those activities. Without overlap that could mean 300 of our members would have the chance to engage, with the hope that a good percentage of those are members we haven't seen in a while. We will record attendance and take exit evaluations to see if this strategy is working. We will use a strong e-mail and phone campaign to make our members aware of these opportunities and we will take photographs and send them out to our members to show the ones who didn't show up what they missed and those that did come, remind them of the positive experience they had.

See Appendix A for ideas.

- 2) FELLOWSHIP associated with these events. Come early for coffee or stay late for a picnic or a galley or restaurant meal. At these fellowship components, encourage conversations about how we can build on the experience we just shared. Encourage active duty to join in on those conversations. The goal is to have at least three quarters of the events followed by a fellowship component with the measure of success being

three quarters of those who came to the activity participating in the associated fellowship.

- 3) Weekly, bi-monthly or monthly FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE CALLS or “Coffee Meetings”. We have gotten pretty comfortable with electronic conferencing such as by Teams or Zoom. One Division has just started doing this and one particularly successful Flotilla has been doing them for years. They don’t need to be limited to a particular unit’s membership but can be open to all from around the District. Deliberate invites to members from outside of the particular unit’s Area of Responsibility (AOR) starts the growth of these as members from other areas might be inspired to set up a similar regular check in. The goal is to grow this by having at least two in each of the District’s distinct areas by June of 2025 with a regular participation rate of at least six members.

- 4) District Bridge conduct TOWN HALL MEETINGS at each Division in the first four months of 2025. The purpose of these meetings is to share the ideas of this Plan and to have our members get to know the Bridge and, for the various layers of leadership to hear the wishes and ideas of our members. Again, an intensive e-mail and phone campaign is envisioned to bring together the members.

- 5) BUILDING A SPIRIT OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN UNITS. Our units all have individual strengths and limitations, but also unique opportunities that would excite members in other units. Let’s share.

- 6) MAKING OUR MEETINGS INTERESTING. At our first DTRAIN we will provide strategies for changing the format of meetings in an effort to invite participation, encourage interaction and have fun component being central. Information sharing should precede the meeting in written form. Calendar of upcoming events and opportunities should be front and center. Our success will be measured by an increase in attendance and members reaching out to others to come and participate.

- 7) PHOTOS, PHOTOS, PHOTOS of everything we do, shared by e-mail blasts with short captions. We'll need a central point to collect and disseminate. And yes, we will need our District Public Affairs staff to offer positive guidance to have those comply with nationally established requirements.

- 8) Using our ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES TO ATTRACT NEW MEMBERS. Planning our activities to allow interested others to observe and get a feel for what we do while they thoroughly enjoy themselves. This should be a component of all our undertakings.

Although there will be a strong focus on engagement in the first four months of 2025, that work will continue throughout the two years.

EMPOWER

Yes, you guessed it, a peek in the dictionary first where we find: empower defined as to enable or to make possible. What it isn't is to inhibit, prevent or forbid. No more "this is why we can't do

it", but instead, "let's figure out how can we do it!" But it is more than that too. It is giving our members the tools to be effective while operating within the policies and guidance from BSX (Chief Director of the Auxiliary) directives and the AUXMAN (Auxiliary Manual). It starts with:



- 1) CONVERSATIONS about what we want to do and how we plan on doing it. These start at our Town Halls but should also be a component of each meeting. We'll also come together on a regular basis to check in.

- 2) GUIDANCE from immediately accessible authorities such as our ADLOs (Assistant District Legal Officers). We will have several teleconferences throughout the year where we have our legal staff give talks and take questions from our membership. The intent is to put a face to a name and to remove barriers to conversations.
- 3) TRAININGS to meet the objectives. These should be incorporated in all unit meetings, be available on the District Website, be planned for DTRAINS and Area Regional Training Events and even in the field as we set out to execute undertakings in our mission areas. Measures of success will include multiple points. We will set our goal to have a Regional Training in each Area each year along with multi-track training curriculum at each of our DTRAINS. The program for these trainings should be so attractive that members will choose to come even if not under orders. In order to encourage this, costs should not be a barrier and neither should distance to travel. Settings, when appropriate, should allow for and encourage participation by family members and friends as well. We should have special activities that will encourage spouses to come along and offer them interesting things to do and see while their significant others are gaining useful skills.
- 4) USING OUR PDCA (Past Division Commanders Association) to its fullest to tap into the rich history and experiences of our more seasoned members. Measures of success include four teleconference trainings per year available to our members on troop ICS relevant to Leadership, Communications, Mission Areas, and Member Engagement. Additionally, they will be called upon to help define and staff the various training tracks at Area and District Trainings.
- 5) INFORMED ELECTED LEADERS to give guidance to their membership and to seek guidance from above when there are questions. We will have two “Exploring Leadership Roles” sessions per year to allow our newer members to engage with experienced and effective leaders to learn the ropes.

6) FOCUSED TRAININGS e.g. Boat Crew and Coxswain Academies and TCO classes.

All this to make sure our members have the information they need to explore, plan and execute effectively in our mission areas. This empowers our members with the basic resources we need to do our jobs. This work starts on January 1, 2025, but kicks into high gear after our four-month focus on engagement. We want to grow in every possible way, not just in our numbers (through recruitment), but in participation, resources and activities as well. The table in Appendix B describes our Baseline from 2024 in terms of numbers of members, mission hours and what our leadership thinks we need to focus on along with some initial ideas about how to approach growth in these areas. The particular focus on specific mission areas will change as we talk with our membership and determine interest and opportunities.

And finally:

ELECTRIFY

Which way do electrons flow in a circuit? From Negative to Positive, right? That's the objective here as well. From a deficit of opportunities and activities to a rich palette of choices for our members to engage in is the objective. This will start with a strategic planning retreat of our senior leadership engaging in conversation and activities with senior leadership from active duty at sector and stations as well as key partner agencies.



Early in 2025 we will get on a Sea Scout Ship for a four-day, three night trip with stops at the various bases in Sector Puget Sound. The purpose is to get first-hand familiarity with the AOR (Area of Responsibility) and the players in it. The engagement will include rotating through the various responsibilities of conducting a cruise with each having a turn at deck, helm, machinery, galley, etc. This is the beginning of developing our leadership to function as a team, trusting one another and assisting one another where necessary.

Active duty will witness what we are capable of, our familiarity with the conditions and peculiarities of traversing the Sound while maintaining our bearings along the way.

We will repeat the experience in 2026 in a different setting using a different platform. And the same for 2027. This acknowledges that our three major areas within the District are unique from one another, not only in the challenges they present but also the culture.

The purpose of these retreats is to explore opportunities for our members while assessing where we find ourselves currently. We will not just envision the possibilities but will see, touch and execute firsthand. These will be models for doing similar activities with mid-level and the broader membership in the District. Our District Captains will be expected to set up and carry out retreats in each of our areas where all our members can come together to explore and grow.

The initial retreat on a Sea Scout ship is intentional. This youth partnership is fertile ground for finding talent for the next generation of Team Coast Guard. We need to feel comfortable developing and depending on partnerships such as this to leverage our contributions.

Whereas the Empowering phase is intended to develop the human and physical assets necessary for carrying out our work, the Electrify phase is all about making it happen - efficiently and effectively and offering our members significant reward and satisfaction. Activities range from getting out in front of the public to integrating with active duty and satisfying the needs of our membership.

The Baseline and starting point is matching what we did in 2023 - 2024 as described in Appendix B. But the status quo will not do, we will have to strive to meet the actual needs of our constituents and the situations they are facing in the current environment. For this we will regularly look at our situational analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It is not enough to quantify where we are today, but to look to the future and select the best path forward.

We need to acknowledge our weaknesses and determine ways to shore them up. For example, if we need more facilities then we need to show our members how to set them up with great detail. A workshop on making your pleasure craft a facility at a DTRAIN or Regional Training Event would be how that gets accomplished. Having available at those events those things necessary for equipping a facility will further enhance getting to the finish line. A supply of skiff hooks, ensigns, patrol banners and other necessary equipment along with checklists and other tools for our members to take away gets us there in short order.

Likewise we cannot let an opportunity slip by without trying to figure how we can capitalize on it. It means having our members be alert to changes in our operating environment; to become proactive in meeting the challenges. For example, this could include having the year's list of all regattas and other on the water events for a particular AOR available to address with active duty to position assets and get orders in place in a timely fashion. I am challenging our ASCs to cause to have these lists compiled.

For all that we agree to take on, we need to first consider the intent of that initiative, its impact on our members and our resources (both in terms strain and gain), and finally the results.

This plan will undoubtedly evolve as you react to it, and not only is that expected, but that will make it yours, just not mine.

I, as your Commodore, Mark as your Chief of Staff, and our District Chiefs and Aides stand ready to answer your questions, hear your concerns, listen to your suggestions and act upon all that you need in order for us together to be the most Engaged, Empowered and Electrified District in the Nation, being a model force multiplier completely integrated in Team Coast Guard.

THE SPECIFICS

What follows is a list of expected undertakings in the coming two years

ENGAGE

Dec 2024 - Jan 2025	Changes of Watch with Bridge and Active Duty participation
Jan - Mar 2025	Town Hall Meetings for all Divisions where we talk about the plan and collect thoughts from our membership
Jan - Apr 2025	20 Interesting Activities including fellowship opportunities coupled with those activities
Feb 2025	Start of regular e-mail blasts showing what our members have been doing
Mar 2025	At least one periodic regular video conference established for fellowship in each Area of the District
May 2025 - Dec 2026	Continue with Engagement Activities around the District, with fewer during on the water time, but ramped up late Fall
Dec 2025 - Jan 2026	Changes of Watch

EMPOWER

Monthly	Member Training segment at all Unit meetings
Jan 2025	Boat Crew and TCO Academies
Jan 2025	PDCA engagement in training planning
Feb 20 – 22, 2025	Spring DTRAIN with multiple learning tracks in Tukwila
Feb 2025 and 3 times / yr	Leadership Exploration calls
Mar 2025 and 2026	Annual Workshops
Mar 2025, yearly	Southern Area Regional Training (SART)
Apr 2025, yearly	Great Northern Area Regional Learning Extravaganza (GNARLE)
4 times / year	Membership forums with DLO and ADLOs
Jun 2025, yearly	Eastern Area Training
Min 2x/yr	Respective Roundtables for HR, MT and IS Officers
Sep 2025	Fall DTRAIN with multiple learning tracks in Astoria
Feb 2026	Spring DTRAIN Portland
Sep 2026	Fall DTRAIN Eastern WA/Idaho

ELECTRIFY

Starting Jan 2025, yearly	Public Education Offerings
Starting Jan 2025, yearly	Boat Shows and other Public Affairs Opportunities
Feb 2025	Strategic Planning Retreat for Senior and Active Duty Leadership
Starting Apr 2025, yearly	On the water activities
May 2025, yearly	Emergency Response Tabletops
Jun - Aug 2025, yearly	Joint partnership events

APPENDIX A

Examples of Ideas for Trainings, Talks and Events

Future of Base Seattle and AUXBUILD Program

Moodle for Luddites

Tsunami modeling

Selecting and setting up an HF radio for Net

From Pleasure Craft to Facility

Critical and Courageous Conversations

Thinking about Who, What, Where, When, Why and How for our undertakings

PA Event Planning Tools

Time for a Speakers Bureau?

National Staff Opportunities

Base Seattle CG Museum Visit

Astoria Maritime Museum Visit

Bridge Simulator Visit

A Visit to the Locks

Threats to Marine Mammals

Dealing with Derelict Vessels

Lighthouses along our Coasts

Graveyard of the Pacific

Crossing Bars Safely

UPV and Commercial Vessel Inspections

Conversation with Pilots and other Professional Mariners

Analyses of Marine Casualties

A Day on a Buoy Tender

These are just meant as possible examples. Before we can agree to implement any, we need to ask our membership which topics they would like to see covered.

APPENDIX B

Key

Constituents:

CG Coast Guard Active Duty and Reserves
 M Our Members
 P Partners
 RB Recreational Boaters

Status:

Numbers of members involved
 Number completed
 Hours contributed by members

Note:

More granular details are available for those interested in how a particular unit compares to another, however information reported is limited.

CONSTITUENTS	PROGRAM	2024 Activity (Hrs, #s)	STATUS	THOUGHTS How, Why, Where, etc.
CG	Academy Admissions	55 hrs	Grow	Pipeline to recruiting for active duty
CG, RB	Aids Verifier	181 hrs	Grow	And increase percentage verified
CG	Air Program		On hold	Maybe drones?
CG	ASC/AUC		Continue	Expand relationships with active duty for engagement
CG	AUXBUILD	1 member	Grow	Base Seattle Modernization
RB	AUXPAD		Establish	New area for recruiting. Underserved RBS audience
CG, P, RB	Boat Crew	1,694 hrs	Expand	Core area of marine safety
CG	Chaplains	1,607 hrs	Continue	Important to support active duty (A/D)
CG, P	Color Guard		Expand	To all three areas
M	Communications		Expand	To meet Pacific Area (PACAREA) Plan
M	Computer Systems		Continue	

CG, M	Culinary	1,812 hrs	Expand	To meet A/D needs
CG	Cyber		Develop	As we can integrate
M	Development		Expand	We need broader skills and experiences
CG, M, P	Emergency Management	39 hrs	Reinforce	
M	Finance		Continue	
CG	Health Professions		Develop	
M	Human Resources		Continue	Become more responsive
Cg	ICS Positions		Develop	FEMA/ICS Training
M	Information Systems		Develop	AUX-10 Training
M, RB	Instructors	2,202 hrs	Expand	To meet area demands
CG	Interpreter Corps	1,390 hrs	Expand	A/D Support
M	Leadership and Mgmt		Empower	With modeling, skills training and check-ins
M	Legal		Continue	Build out ADLO positions
CG	Marine Environment Education		Expand	Area we can support A/D
CG	Marine Safety	1.155 hrs	Develop	Area of interest to our members
CG	Barge Inspector, Commerical Fishing Inspector, Facility Inspector, PFD Observer, Life Raft Inspector, Towing Vessel Inspector, UPV		Build Out	Supplement active duty to unburden them to be able to focus on high level and emerging needs
M	Member Training	9,186 hrs	Reorg	By area of focus

M, P	Musician		Develop	Would be great fun
CG	Pollution Investigation / Response		Develop	Investigations. Supplement active duty to enable to be focused on response and clean up
RB	Program Visits	4,433 hrs	Continue	Crucial partnerships to get the word out on RBS activities
M	Public Affairs	5,080 hrs	Develop	For recruiting and retention
M	Publications		Develop	For recruiting and retention
CG	Personal Watercraft		Develop	To assist in events
M	Risk Management / TCT		Continue	Necessary for Qualifications
M	Speakers Bureau	46 hrs	Develop	See Public Affairs
P	State Liaisons	2 hrs	Support	Crucial Partnerships
CG	Tele-Communication Operator (TCO)		Expand	See COMMS, support patrols
RB	Vessel Exams	3,998 hrs	Expand	Lots of vessels still don't have
CG	Watchstanding	2,198 hrs	Expand	Unburden active duty