

NACO's REMARKS
Winds of Change
NACON 2005

The “Winds of change” is this year’s conference theme, and I feel it is an appropriate theme for the Auxiliary’s at present; for the events of the past few years have caused and will continue to cause changes in our world view, in our operating environment, in our requirements and qualifications for membership, and many of our day-to-day activities. *However, I hasten to add that many things will not change; most importantly our continuing commitment to the core values of the Coast Guard and Coast Guard Auxiliary and our commitment to Recreational Boating Safety.* Furthermore, what will not change over the next few years is our conscious efforts to balance our missions of Recreational Boating Safety and Coast Guard Support with Maritime Homeland Security.

I’m reminded of a quotation, **“We cannot change the wind, but we can adjust the sails.”** In the past year we, both the elected and staff officers, have been working closely together to adjust the sails, chart a wise course for the future and embark on our voyage together. I wanted to take this opportunity to summarize briefly some of the things that we have done and some things that still needs to be done.

The Past Year

First, throughout the past year we worked hard to understand our changing environment, to identify the major drivers for change, to develop realistic plans and programs and to communicate our shared vision to the membership.

As with any useful plan, the Auxiliary business plans are evolutionary and to be successful, must not become “shelf-ware.” Rather, it has to be dynamic and continually changing, so as to meet the current and ever evolving challenges facing the Coast Guard Auxiliary’s transformation.

I would like to thank the District Commodores for having shown proactive leadership in developing their district’s business plan. It is through these Strategic Plans, that we attempt to create better performance through customer and productivity oriented behavior; to provide a better-quality of leadership and more effective management. Likewise, it is an approach to articulate the connection between new behaviors and organizational success, as well as to ensure leadership development and succession.

Secondly, the Coast Guard realignment into Sectors has caused us to make parallel realignments, in some cases to shift Divisions among Districts for greater effectiveness. I would especially like to thank the District Commodores, the Directors of Auxiliary and other dedicated Auxiliarists for working proactively to accomplish this realignment. And for those district’s who are still coming on line, I ask you to seek out best practices from those districts that have completed their realignments. I am confident that there are valuable lessons that can be learned and shared.

Thirdly, we are continuing the momentum of Operation Patriot Readiness and related activities. Operation Patriot Readiness shows positive gains in adding Marine Domain Awareness to public education classes, vessel safety checks and marine dealer visits. America's Waterway Watch is a strikingly successful campaign and the Auxiliary's participation in assisting the Coast Guard's Marine Transportation Security Act activities, continues to expand. Likewise, AUXPAL is being implemented throughout the Coast Guard, identifying and providing Auxiliary members to work on specific tasks for the Coast Guard, freeing up active duty personnel for operational missions.

It is no surprise that the PSI procedures have slowed our progress in recruiting new members. But there have also been positive developments; citizenship confirmation is now easier and quicker. We have also identified a more expeditious path for the future. This is to qualify members initially in a two-step procedure; first as operational support personnel and later (for those interested and qualified) in the direct operational category. The two-step process will enable new members to be enrolled more quickly and to make better decisions on whether to become direct operational. Unfortunately, the time delays in processing many of these packages are beyond our control. However, while I believe they are getting better, I ask the Directors of Auxiliary and the District Commodores, to continue their review and follow up of those delayed packages, especially for operational support.

Additional Highlights:

Now, I would like to briefly touch upon some additional highlights of various accomplishments this year. Hopefully it will give an appreciation of the hard work put forth by the national staff.

- Our International Affairs Directorate has worked hard to execute and continue the Caribbean Initiative in conjunction with SOUTHCOM, Coast Guard Head Quarters, and the 7th CG District. The purposes of the Caribbean Initiative are to strengthen existing volunteer organizations, to foster the establishment of new volunteer organizations, and to enhance volunteer support for the government organizations in the Caribbean Region.
- We introduced the *On Course* Newsletter, which is a monthly direct communications medium between the National Commodore and the membership addressing major issues brought forth by the District Commodores.
- We launched the National Commodore's web site, which communicates the National Leadership's vision and policy for the present and future of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. The site also serves as a repository for policy documents, issues of On Course Newsletter and other important and useful information.
- We have significantly improved our external communications. We expanded Coast Guard Auxiliary coverage of events giving the Auxiliary a broader exposure and favorable press. No longer is the Coast Guard Auxiliary the best-kept secret. In fact, we have set a precedent of at least one story on the Auxiliary in the public media – somewhere – every day.

- We updated the New Member Course, which is currently available at the Auxiliary National Supply Center.
- We launched an on-line Public Affairs Training course to augment the existing C-School.
- We completed and distributed a new OPS Policy Guide.
- We created Surface and Air Standardization Teams to address operational and qualifications issues, to develop best practices, and where applicable, to standardize procedures across all districts.
- We updated the State Liaison Officer Handbook. NASBLA now includes the book as part of the training and orientation package for new Boating Law Administrators. The handbook helps ensure that state, Auxiliary and Coast Guard personnel have common performance expectations for the State Liaison Officer position.
- We completed an agreement with McGraw Hill Publishers to supply our PE textbooks. This will lessen the burden on members for creating new material and further enhance the quality of our books.
- We completed a successful transition of our one-day public education course from the well-worn Boating Safety Course to the much more advanced *America's Boating Course*. As today's customer demand shorter courses, *America's Boating Course* enables us to meet customer demand with a high quality product.

Now, these are just a few of our accomplishments and as you can see, we have been very busy, and I am extremely proud of all of the efforts put forth by the staffs at all levels of the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

In addition to the accomplishments just outlined, I'd like to share with our key tasks for the remainder of this watch, and some of the upcoming initiatives to address member concerns.

- Perhaps first and foremost, we need to sustain our momentum. We need to continue to focus on serving our membership. In simple terms, this means that we must communicate our priorities effectively, train members in our program areas, provide competitive materials to those who teach public education classes, empower our members to find attractive service opportunities and, work to simplify their day-to-day lives.
- Although our new communication initiatives are welcome and necessary, we cannot rest on our laurels, continuous improvement is necessary. It's not easy! Our membership is geographically diverse and has limited face-to-face contact. Not all of our members come to every meeting (even those who are very active in the programs), memos from one staff level to another don't always get distributed, and there are limited opportunities for feedback to ensure that the message was received and understood.
- We need to increase the accuracy and timeliness of our AUXDATA system and simplify greatly our forms for reporting mission hours. Members should not have to read eight page forms to report their missions. I'm happy to report that we

have a new “EZ form” in beta test and will be even happier when any bugs are identified and fixed and it is in daily use.

- We need to recognize that balance is critical to our success. Specifically we need to maintain a healthy balance of our efforts in recreational boating safety and operations activities. Many of the new mission opportunities are in operations. But, we need to remember that recreational boating safety is not only an important mission in itself, but also the major source of funding at all levels of the Auxiliary and, historically, the major source of new members. Both the Coast Guard and the Auxiliary continue to have major responsibilities in the Recreational Boating Safety area and we need to ensure that these are not neglected as we undertake new missions.
- We need to provide a stronger focus in providing eLearning to the unit level to get the vast amount of training needed to the member in the quickest way possible, on line.
- We will create a Recreational Boating Safety Specialist Designation.
- We will be introducing our National Recruiting and Retention Plan.
- And lastly, the District Commodores and National Staff have sent me their recommendations on readily implemented ways to increase the Auxiliary quality of life for our members. The staff is investigating ways to expeditiously implement as many suggestions as possible.

Overall, I am pleased with our progress over the past year. Bravo Zulu to all of you for your efforts. But we must remember that “success is but a journey, not a destination.” We still have many challenges to face before our collective watch is over.

We have set our direction, charted our course and adjusted our sails. As we continue our journey, let each us continue to listen, to learn, and to lead.

Thank you.