

AMERICA'S BOATING CLUB

For Boaters, By Boaters®




THE DRUM

A Publication of the Finger Lakes Chapter

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Report any errors or omissions to:
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From The Commander

By Kris West, S SV Zephyr

Lean In

Since my first article in *The Drum*, I've used the tag line 'get outside and have fun' and this winter offered some great opportunities to do just that. With plenty of snow and cold weather, I was able to explore some beautifully groomed local cross-country ski trails at Allegany State Park, Phillips Creek State Forest, and Cumming Nature Center. I was even able to venture up to the Tugg Hill for some epic snow adventures.

It's been a few years since I've had both the time and the right weather conditions to hit the trails as much as I did this year and I was a bit rusty starting out. It didn't take long to remember that its important to bend your knees and lean in - especially when you find yourself a little off balance. Lowering your center of gravity and keeping your momentum going forward allows you to take control of the situation, recover your balance and move on down



the trail. In contrast, if you follow your natural tendency to lock your knees and stand up tall, more likely than not, you'll end up throwing yourself more off balance into a backward fall and possibly a bruised tailbone. And of course, by 'you', I mean 'me' because I've done that plenty of times.

So you might ask, "What does this have to do with boating?" While the concept of 'leaning in' may have originated in physical activities like skiing, its been used metaphorically to encourage embracing challenges actively, pursuing goals with assertion and engaging fully with difficult situations rather than retreating. And, that mindset transfers

directly to ABC-FLX and safe boating. To take command of any vessel, whether it's a stand up paddle board, ski boat or 30+ foot sailboat or cabin cruiser means to lean in. And whether you do so confidently with knowledge of inherent risks and backup plans for the inevitable mishaps is completely dependent on prior experience, practice, and, sometimes, guidance from experts. Classes offered through ABC-FLX offer all those elements.

This season, I'm diving into the *Marine Electrical Systems* and *Marine Navigation* classes.

My engine has been increasingly persnickety starting up. While its never actually left me stranded, I'd sure like to get to the bottom of the issue before that happens. I'm pretty sure it has something to do with the electronic start circuit, so I'm hoping a better understanding of marine electronics will help me track down and fix the problem.

The navigation course just sounded like fun. Since I'd like to get out on bigger water someday its a great opportunity to lean in and learn with friends and mentors here in our community.



Figure 1: Winter wonderland skiing, Allegany State Park Art Roscoe Trail.

As we approach launch date for 2026, how do you plan to lean in this season? Is it a DIY upgrade to your boat? Perhaps learning a new skill? Or, maybe you'll lean in by sharing your experience and knowledge with other boaters. If you'd like to lean in with ABC-FLX please reach out and let us know. There are ample opportunities. Regardless, whatever it is, I hope it continues to bring you joy and occasion for personal growth.

Until then, get outside and have fun!

- Kris
co@abc-flx.org

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The Drum

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From the Executive Officer

By Jim McGinnis, SN-CN

SV Brewster

Wanderings



Figure 2: Just outside the reaches of Miami Authorities.

Ahoy all!

Lynne and I visited Stiltsville, FL, this week. Stiltsville is a group of six houses about a mile south of Key Biscayne in Miami built in about six feet of water. We took a National Park tour boat out to Key Biscayne and saw Ricard Nixon's house in a

beautiful area of Biscayne Bay. These Stiltsville houses are the last survivors of many hurricanes to hit the area. They were started in the 1930s, by an enterprising gentleman "Crawfish Eddie Walker" selling bait off a grounded barge.

During Prohibition more buildings appeared and some wild parties took place. 27 houses were built at one time and they stayed in a few families for a couple of generations. When the US National Park took over the area in 1999, the houses were condemned and marked for destruction. A group of families



Figure 3: The A Frame House.



Figure 4: Cape Florida Light.

contacted their congressman and applied for relief. The end result was a public/private trust that now holds the houses and the owners are declared as permanent park caretakers. Nice Day trip from Miami.

Mark your calendars for the Summer Boat Trip July 31st to August 2nd. We are working on a plan to visit Lodi State Park this year and one of the restaurants across the lake. Sapalta or Showboat Hotel. Fair winds,

- Jim

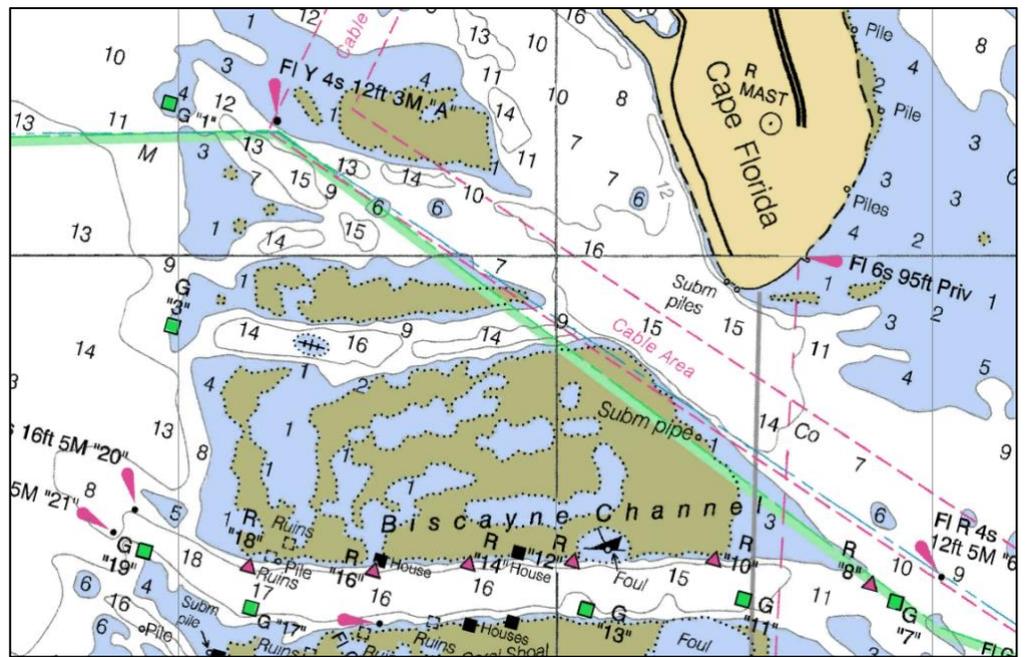


Figure 5: Note the Houses at the edge of the Channel.



Figure 6: Copyright © 2026 by Power Line and respective authors.

From the Administrative Officer

By Shane Alsworth, S

MV The Office

Greetings from the Newbies



I'd like to introduce myself as your newly elected

Administrative Officer. My wife, Jacqueline, and I put the "new" in "newbie" to boating. Neither of us grew up around water, and prior to purchasing a 39-foot cabin cruiser, our most recent boating experience consisted of captaining an inflatable two-person kayak, which we used extensively on Chautauqua Lake in Mayville, NY.

We rented our fair share of pontoon boats over the years, but our first experience piloting a deep hull power boat was on the delivery trip, bringing our cabin cruiser through the water from the seller's home port in Montreal,

Canada to our slip at Samson State Park Marina on Seneca Lake in 2024. We spent half of the 2025 season working on our maintenance-neglected boat and the other half of the season getting our money's worth, traversing back and forth between slips at Sampson and The Village Marina in Watkins Glen. We managed to squeeze two canal trips in, as well, and we have wide eyed ambitions of making it east on the Erie Canal to Lake Champlain this coming season. Ambitious ignorance is bliss!

We feel incredible indebtedness to ABC-FLX, and especially to the gracious, helpful volunteers that make up the club. We wouldn't know where to start nor would we have the courage to give it a try, without this organization. As we have gotten to know the club members, we feel like we have found a family and we look forward to meeting more of you at future club events.

We thoroughly enjoyed the Annual Change of Watch Dinner at Veraisons Restaurant (Glenora Wine Cellars). The event was Maggie Martin's curtain call as Administrative Officer and she did an impressive job putting it all together, while making it look so easy! I'm sure I will be leaning on her regularly as I attempt to handle the reins. I hope she won't go far!

We are in the early stages of putting together an event for April and we plan to announce details in the coming weeks. If you have ideas or suggestions on venues you would like to experience or speakers you would like to hear from, please email me at ao@abc-flx.org or call me at (607) 973-2665. I look forward to hearing from you!

- Shane
ao@abc-flx.org

From the Education Director

By Katie Alley, JN

SV Tomfoolery

Education Report



On January 18th, our club held the 2026 Annual Change of Watch at Glenora Wine Cellars Veraisons

restaurant. I had never been there before. The venue, view, and food were all excellent! It was a great event with Officer Lee Titus of the Schuyler County Sheriff's Department as our speaker. He shared some very interesting and valuable insights on boating safety enforcement and rescue in our area. Our club also had a successful business meeting, presenting the "wins" of 2025 and a positive outlook for 2026. In case you missed it, I would like to share the Education Report:

In 2025, ABC-FLX held six classes: three iterations of *America's Boating Course* (ABC), *Radar* (virtually), *Weather*, and *Boat Handling*. We held ABC at three different locations, covering the north and south ends of the lake, including Waterloo, the Valois / Logan / Hector Fire Department, and Watkins Glen Yacht Club. The class at the Valois / Logan / Hector Fire Department was our largest ABC class *ever*, with 34 total students. 33 passed, and one student was an incomplete. This was a huge success on behalf of

our dedicated volunteers and instructors.

The *Weather* class was a successful collaboration with Corning Incorporated, as we met at the Aviation Hangar. A few employees decided to sit in on the class to learn more about meteorology for flying purposes. Local celebrity Rhonda Lee from WETM also visited and taught one session. All six students scored in the 90s on their final exam.

The *Boat Handling* class tested a new digital exam platform before it was rolled out nationally. I really like the new system, and the class provided valuable feedback.

We held one seminar in 2025: *Man Overboard*. This was a highlight at our Sampson Boater's Weekend in July. I got to play "victim" and go swimming in the warm August water!

I would like to send a special **thank you** to all of our instructors and class aides:

- Charlie Fausold
- Dennis Daniels
- Kris West
- Glenda Gephart
- Scott Williams
- Phil Cherry
- Jim McGinnis
- Tom Alley
- Jeff Mack
- David Dawson-Elli
- Walter and Wendy Vancise

Class Updates

As for an early 2026 update, *Instructor Development* is finishing up with three students. In March, we'll start *Marine Navigation* and *Marine Electrical Systems*. Also on the calendar for this year, we have *Sail*, *Engine Maintenance*, and more ABC offerings in the works.

Other Breaking News: I Am A USCG-Certified Captain!

Well, I still need to submit the paperwork to the Coast Guard, but the hard part is done! As many of you know, Schooner *True Love* crew Brock Sgrecci, Spencer Beaver, and I spent the first two weeks of February in Fort Lauderdale, FL, at Maritime Professional Training (MPT). There, we completed the 100 Ton Master Captain's course, as well as Commercial Towing and Sailing endorsements.

I would love to speak about this experience in detail at one of our upcoming social events this year. This was *certainly not* a vacation – we worked very hard for two weeks! We had class every day from February 2nd to the 13th, from 7 am to 4 pm, with only Sunday off. On the very first day, our instructor, Captain Georgia Hilton, told us to "trust the process", and she was very right with that advice. It was very easy to get overwhelmed with COLREGs (the International and US Inland Rules of the Road) the first few days. But we went over exactly what was on the exams

multiple times and took lots of practice quizzes.



Figure 7: MPT logo on the outside of the building. I love the incorporation of the sextant!

The typical day went like this: We departed the hotel, with mediocre coffees in hand, on the provided shuttle every morning at 6:40 am. MPT has a small campus with two buildings and offers a wide variety of industry certifications and courses (including celestial navigation!). The building we were in reminded me of the (small) business school lecture halls at Alfred University. We had



Figure 8: Studying!!! Including hotel furniture rearrangement.

a total of 15 students in our 100 Ton class.

We started each class with a Rules of the Road quiz. Then, we went into the day's lectures. Captain Georgia was very generous with breaks, understanding that even us adults have short attention spans. Luckily, there was a coffee shop across the street from the school with slightly less mediocre coffee.

MPT had several outdoor picnic tables, so we were able to spend our lunch break outside. In the afternoon, we would continue with lectures, plotting, or review. After class, we would either take the shuttle back to the hotel or walk. We'd break for dinner, usually walking to one of the nearby shopping plazas. We had some good and inexpensive dining near us, as well as a Publix. I must say, I was very disappointed with the poor walkability in Fort Lauderdale. There are only crosswalks every several blocks, and the cars *do not care* if you are walking in them.

I would spend half an hour to an hour working my marketing job remotely. (They were very generous to allow me two weeks off. However, I have very minimal PTO, so I needed to work a bit and bring in at least *some* income.) After that, the boys and I would meet up again in one of our hotel rooms to study and drill flashcards for a few



Figure 9: Two wild manatees!

hours. Go to sleep and repeat! Every hour of the day was filled. On our day off, we played tourist and took a sightseeing boatripe in the New River and Intercoastal Waterway. There, we saw the huge, luxurious mansions, megayachts, and cruise ships docked at Port Everglades. We also studied by identifying aids to navigation and listening to sound signals! Of course, we also went to the beach! The ocean water was in the mid-70s. We went swimming, built sandcastles, collected seashells, and enjoyed the sunshine.

Our course concluded with a total of seven exams. Two exams were very simple 20-question multiple-choice quizzes for the towing and sailing endorsements. The five main modules were Rules of the Road, Chart Plotting, Deck General, Deck Safety, and Navigation General.

If you ask any captain, the Rules of the Road test is the notoriously difficult one, followed by Chart Plotting. You need a score of 90 or higher to pass. The Rules of the Road test consisted of 50 multiple-choice questions. We took that exam first, and once we

passed that, it truly felt like 80% of the exam was done, when in actuality, it was only 20%. There were so many right-of-way rules, lights, and sound signals to memorize. It was an absolute relief to have it done.

The Chart Plotting was 10 multiple-choice questions. None of the marks made on your training chart were graded. For me, after completing Junior Navigation and part of Celestial Navigation through ABC-FLX, the plotting was very basic. The questions consisted of identifying landmarks, reading a tide table, finding compass error, calculating ETA, determining set and drift, and plotting a three-bearing fix somewhat accurately.

I can easily say that every navigation course and ABC navigation exam I have taken was significantly harder than what was on this USCG exam. ABC grades the accuracy of your plots, your math, your labeling, everything! That was not the case here, so the “multiple-guess” felt like a breeze to me. However, some of the other students who had never worked with charts were very overwhelmed. The advantage of ABC classes is that you learn the plotting over the course of months or years, versus in under two weeks.

The other three modules - Deck General, Deck Safety, and Navigation General - were also multiple-choice tests. And again, for me, all of it was very basic knowledge that you pick up as you spend time on boats. Fortunately for us New Yorkers, a lot of this material is covered in *America's Boating Course*. For



Figure 10: Massive cruise ship departing Fort Everglades. Not sure I ever want to drive that thing.

the most part, it was all information I had seen before.

We met some interesting people in our class! First and foremost, we loved our instructor, Captain Georgia. She was very patient, knowledgeable, engaging, and funny. She's one of those people who is not good at staying retired, so that's why she's teaching at MPT. She lived in Baldwinsville, NY, for some time and has family in Dryden. She and her partner hope to visit Watkins Glen this summer and cruise aboard *True Love*. If you'd like to see a bit more about Captain Georgia and peruse some excellent nautical resources she's put together, you can visit her website, captaingeorgia.com.

Our class was primarily men of various ages. Most were Florida residents, working on fishing or charter yachts. The only other woman in the class grew up sailing in Sodus Bay. She moved south after college and has been working on yachts ever since. We also made good friends with a younger guy who works on tugboats in New York Harbor. He

lives outside of Albany and hopes to sail with us this summer, too!

Overall, the trip was very well worth the time and an absolute success. All three of us can see ourselves returning to MPT to upgrade our licenses or earn more endorsements in the future. Truly, it feels like a lot more doors have opened up for me, and that I have a lot of life on the water ahead of me. And for the near future, *True Love* knows she has enough captains to keep sailing for years to come!

I owe a *huge thank you* to the Schooner *True Love* for sponsoring us. We promise to take extra good care of her and her passengers this summer. And of course, I am forever grateful for and indebted to Terry Stewart for believing in me, Brock, and Spencer, and for wholeheartedly supporting us. He says that *True Love* does it all, but I think we all know that isn't completely true. Finally, I must acknowledge and thank all of the instructors who have ever taught me an ABC-FLX course, because you all led

me to be successful in my captain's course!

- Katie
seo@abc-flx.org

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Figure 11: (From L to R: Brock Sgrecci, Spencer Beaver, Terry Stewart, Katie Alley) Newest Captains and the catalyst!

Secretary's Sidenotes

By Glenda Gephart

On Communicating



Welcoming new members.
Engaging members.
Retaining members.

Every organization has these goals. The best path for success is communications.

Our squadron is committed to using the tools available to us to improve our communications with prospective and current members. We want you to be looking forward to the benefits of membership: education, news from the sail and power boating

worlds, camaraderie, and fun! (Education is important; fun is a necessity!)

The Drum is our primary communications tool, and I salute Tom Alley, editor, and all who write. My favorite pieces are the on-the-water stories. Those sea tales take us to the waters of Seneca Lake or oceans far away, carried by adventures and challenges, fueled by joy and fun. (There's that word again!)

The Drum comes to you six times a year. Read it! Enjoy it! And, be sure to share it with boating friends who might want to learn more about America's Boating Club and our squadron.

Did you know we also have a Facebook page? We're going to increase our communications with members and the general public by taking greater advantage of the outreach Facebook gives us.

Other People's Boats!

Squadron announcements. Event photos. Boating news. Maybe a joke now and then.

Take a look at our page on Facebook at "America's Boating Club – Finger Lakes Chapter."

A great aspect of Facebook is that if you follow our page (please!), you can post your own bits of fun from your own boating adventures.

Lastly, as reported in January's issue of *The Drum*, this year we are partnering with other squadrons and boating groups on an ambitious project to upgrade our websites. The greatest beneficiaries of the upgrades will be you, the members!

Keep reading *The Drum* for updates on the upgrades.

- Glenda
secretary@abc-flx.org

ABC-FLX News

Congratulations!



Figure 12: Our newest captains – (L to R) Brock Sgrecci, Spencer Beaver, and Katie Alley - show off their new certificates with a proud Captain Terry Stewart.

A hearty CONGRATULATIONS to:

- Katie Alley
- Spencer Beaver
- Brock Sgrecci

All of whom passed the USCG licensing exam for their Master 100 Ton licenses with additional endorsements for towing and sail.

This is no small feat, so be sure to congratulate them on the results of their diligence and hard work to achieve this milestone.

Also, a **GREAT BIG THANK YOU** to ABC-FLX member Terry

Stewart for making this possible. Not only did he provide unwavering support and encouragement, but he very literally went the “extra mile” (actually, about 1,500 of them) by driving our three young mariners (now captains!) to Florida so they could study and sit for their exams.

Happy Birthday!

Happy birthday to our members!

March

- Terry Stewart
- William Clack
- Helene Fausold
- Wendy Vancise
- Ed Castle
- Jim McGinnis
- Mark Erway

April

- Carolyn Clack
- Walt Vancise
- David Dawson-Elli

Seneca Drum Recognized

In early February our chapter’s newsletter was recognized with the 2025 Distinctive Communicator Award by Diane Dawes, the USPS National Newsletter Evaluator.



A big thank you to everyone who regularly contributes quality material to help make this newsletter noteworthy!

Got News?

If you have news to share that you think would be of use to your fellow boaters, please submit it to your friendly newsletter editor so that it can be included!

Upcoming Classes & Seminars

Where Do I Start?

To work through the progression of Boating Classes and the progression of Boating skills development we have organized the classes and skills on the Long-Term Schedule. If you have any questions or want a class offered sooner, let Katie, our Education Officer, know.

See also: <https://usps.org/sss-where-do-i-start>

Marine Navigation

(Previously known as *Piloting*)

You won't ever get lost or run aground when you know marine navigation, whether for short day trips or long multi-day cruises. Learn the essentials of safe coastal and inland navigation using basic GPS in conjunction with charts and other marine data. The *Marine Navigation* course teaches you how to use the GPS along with traditional dead reckoning techniques for planning and laying out safe routes, as well as ensuring that you are on-course while underway. *Marine Navigation* should be followed by *Advanced Marine Navigation* to complete your study of coastal and inland navigation.

Prerequisites: None

When: Wednesdays, March 11th - May 6th, 7-9 PM.

Where: Human Services Complex, Montour Falls

Instructors: Charlie Fausold & Ray Margeson

Cost: \$150 (includes your very own set of plotting tools to keep forever and ever!)

Marine Electrical Systems

The *Marine Electrical Systems* course is presented in seven chapters that start with an explanation of what electricity is, followed by discussions on boat electrical wiring, DC and AC electrical systems, galvanic and stray current corrosion, lightning protection, and ends with troubleshooting of boat electrical problems.

The course includes detailed instructions on how to use a multimeter, how to solder and crimp electrical wiring circuits, and how to read electrical wiring diagrams. This course can be used as a reference guide for anyone interested in properly maintaining their boat electrical system.

Prerequisites: None

When: Either Wednesdays or Thursdays, from the week of March 5 through May 7, 7-9 PM.

Where: Human Services Complex, Montour Falls, with the possibility of a field trip to a boat.

Instructors: Jim Morris & John Chesebrough

Cost: \$100

Sail

This course lets you learn about basic sailboat designs and nomenclature, rigging, and safety from experienced sailors. Then tackle the physical aspects of all

forces and techniques, sail applications, marlinespike, helmsmanship, and handling of difficult conditions.

This course also features the Finger Lakes Chapter trademark on-the-water, hands-on instruction.

Prerequisites: None

When: May-June 2026

Where:

- Classroom: TBA
- On-the-Water: Watkins Glen Village Marina

Instructor: TBA

Cost: TBA

Engine Maintenance

Another popular elective that, like its electrical cousin, demystifies the mechanical beast living in the bowels of your boat.

Prerequisites: None

When: Summer/Fall 2026 (Q3)

Instructors: TBA

Cost: TBA

How to Register

If you have questions about any of these courses, or better yet, if you wish to sign up, please contact: Finger Lakes Chapter Education Director, Katie Alley:

seo@abc-flx.org

Or you can go to the national web site (www.usps.org) and register under the "Find A Boating Class" tab on the member home page.

Looking for Something?

ABC-FLX would be happy to hear your requests and ideas. Feel free to contact me, Katie Alley, at

SEO@abc-flx.org.

Available subjects for instruction can be found on the chapter web site:

www.abc-flx.org

2026 Change of Watch in Photos



Figure 13: The ABC-FLX Bridge and Executive Committee. L to R – Tom Taylor, Tom Alley, Secretary and Public Relations Officer Glenda Gephart, Treasurer Marcia Taylor, Commander Kris West, Vessel Safety Chair Ray Margeson, Education Officer Katie Alley, Administrative Officer Shane Alsworth, Audit Committee Chair Denis Kingsley, and District 6 Commander Karen Green. Not shown: Executive Officer Jim McGinnis, Assistant Education Officer Scott Williams, and Membership Chair Phil Cherry.



Figure 14: Commander Kris West and Education Officer Katie Alley enjoy some wine before an excellent meal.



Figure 15: Kris West is sworn in as the 2026 Commander by District Commander Karen Green.



Figure 16: Sheriff's Deputy Lee Titus talks about his time in the US Coast Guard and the Schuyler County Marine Patrol Unit.



Figure 19: Walt Vancise, Shane Alsworth, Karen Green, and Jacqueline Alsworth enjoy conversation and the view over Seneca Lake.



Figure 18: Tom Alley, Ken Green and Ray Margeson figure out how to achieve world peace before dinner.



Figure 17: Treasurer Marcia Taylor and Mary Margeson making plans for the upcoming boating season.



Figure 20: Copyright © 2026 by Power Line and respective authors.

Why a Vessel Safety Check Is Worth Your Time

By Ray Margeson

SV Hattie L.

As boating season approaches, there’s no better way to prepare than by scheduling a **free Vessel Safety Check**. Offered by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the U.S. Power Squadrons, these inspections are designed to help you stay safe, legal, and confident on the water.

Why Get a Vessel Safety Check?

- **It’s completely free and voluntary.** No penalties, no citations — just friendly guidance from trained examiners.
- **Ensures your boat meets federal and state safety**

requirements. From life jackets to navigation lights, you’ll know everything is shipshape.

- **Reduces the risk of breakdowns and emergencies.** A quick check today can prevent a dangerous situation later.
- **Earn a VSC decal.** Passing vessels receive a safety sticker recognized by law enforcement, often resulting in fewer on-water stops.
- **Peace of mind for you and your passengers.** When you know your vessel is ready,

you can focus on enjoying the ride.

A Small Step That Makes a Big Difference

Whether you’re a seasoned captain or a new boater, a Vessel Safety Check is one of the simplest ways to protect your crew and your investment. Schedule yours before your next outing and head out with confidence.

- Ray

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For more information contact:

vsc@abc-flx.org



Figure 21: Copyright © 2026 by Power Line and respective authors.

Firsthand Account: A New Year's Day Rescue in the South China Sea

By Katie Alley

SV Champagne Problems



Figure 22: USNS Cesar Chavez. Image via The Maritime Executive. Source: <http://maritime-executive.com/article/u-s-navy-supply-ship-starts-2026-by-rescuing-adrift-filipino-fishermen>

As many of you know, my best friend from grade school, Maggie MacBlane, works as a merchant mariner. She works on large cargo ships that provide US Navy ships with fuel, food, ammunition, and other provisions. A few years ago, she spoke to our group at one of our social events about her job. (You may also know Maggie's dad, Bob, who owns 29 Neat on Franklin Street!)

The ship Maggie currently works aboard, *USNS Cesar Chavez*, rescued three distressed fishermen in the South China Sea on New Year's Day. As the Second Mate and Navigator aboard the ship, Maggie was highly involved in the rescue operations. I found her account of the event very interesting and wanted to share it on her behalf.

On Thursday, January 1st, 2026, Maggie was eating lunch in the cafeteria when she heard the

Third Mate call for the Captain from the bridge on the radio. When the Captain did not respond, the Third Mate called on the ship's intercom, which is serious and indicates an emergency.

Maggie contacted the bridge, and when the Third Mate stated that he saw people in the water, she knew it really was serious. It was time for all hands on deck.

Maggie rushed to the bridge and began calling orders to different teams on the ship.

The rescue boat crew prepared for launch. The engine room was instructed to be "ready to answer all bells", which means to be on standby to change speeds and

ensure that the engines are responding properly.

Extra personnel were called to be lookouts. The crew follows the same standard procedures we do on our boats in the event of a man overboard - have one hand out pointing at the person in the water, keep your eyes locked on the person, and have the other hand on the boat to steady yourself. Ensure that at least one crewmember has eyes on the man overboard at all times. "I learned that on *Tomfoolery* on Seneca Lake first!" Maggie remarked.

The Third Mate on watch had spotted a partially submerged "bangka" with three people standing in it. A bangka is a traditional Filipino outrigger canoe, commonly used for fishing. Maggie said to picture a canoe with sticks of bamboo perpendicular to the bow, midships, and stern, attaching pontoons to the canoe, creating three "hulls". These boats are very small and are made of wood,



Figure 23: Example of a bangka common in the Philippines. Image via Scotty's Action Sports Network. Source: <https://www.divescotty.com/underwater-blog/philippines-banca-boats.php>



Figure 24: View of the men and the partially submerged bangka from the bridge.



Figure 25: The rescue boat approaches the bangka.

bamboo, and other floatation materials like styrofoam. Maggie said that this particular bangka looked more like a debris field with all of the debris connected together. From the bridge, only the people standing in the bangka were visible.

The bangka was swamped and maintaining buoyancy 2-3 feet below the water. The three fishermen were standing in the

boat, waving their arms and swinging their shirts in the air, clearly trying to flag down the ship.

Maggie called the Personal Casualty Team, which is the ship's medical response team, and told them to be ready. The Supply Officer and the Chief Steward were instructed to have clothing,

shoes, blankets, fresh water, and food ready on station.

The bridge maneuvered the 689-foot *Cesar Chavez* within a quarter mile of the bangka before launching the rescue boat, a rigid-hulled inflatable. Aboard the rescue boat were two surface rescue swimmers and a few other people who spoke Tagalog.

The rescue boat threw a life ring to the fishermen, since they could not get close to the bangka due to the debris in the water. They dragged the fishermen aboard and brought them back to the *Cesar Chavez*. The ship's Security Reaction Force had to search the fishermen upon boarding since the ship carries ammo and has strict contraband regulations.

The three fishermen were evaluated by the medical team, fed, and clothed. The men had departed on their bangka five days earlier, on Saturday, December 27th. They had originally planned on being gone for two or three days to fish, hoping to make money for their families before New Year's. (Note that the bangka has no form of shelter.) The first night they were underway, their boat was swamped by swells, and the engine stalled. They survived five days at sea, standing in the water,



Figure 26: The three fishermen in their new USNS *Cesar Chavez* hats.

rationing only 8 liters of water and some crackers. Remarkably, the three men were in great health - just tired, dehydrated, and hungry. They got to partake in the ship's celebratory New Year's dinner of steak and lobster.

Cesar Chavez arrived in Subic Bay, Philippines, the following day. An ambulance, the Philippines Coast Guard, and several families awaited the ship's docking at the pier. Maggie met

with the Coast Guard to transfer custody of the men. Luckily, this formality went quickly.

"I'll never forget one of the men had a little boy running on the pier into his arms," Maggie recalls. "Everybody was crying. It was really beautiful. I've met the luckiest people on earth."

What an incredible job done by the *Cesar Chavez* crew. This story could have had a very different ending, but thanks to the vigilant

watch and efficient actions of the crew, three men made it home to their families. Those drills really do matter!

A special thank you to Maggie for sharing the details that we don't get in news articles. We take great pride in knowing a true mariner like you came from our small waters!

- Katie

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Figure 27: Copyright © 2026 by Power Line and respective authors.

The Last Word

By Tom Alley, SN-ON

SV Tomfoolery

Signs of Spring



The signs, as they say, are all around us. Yes, we had a substantial thaw in the frigid weather we endured

through January and the first half of February, melting much of the accumulated snow on the ground, but that's not what I'm talking about. We are most definitely enjoying more daylight, with the time between sunrise and sunset almost 90 minutes greater than it was around Christmas, but that's not what I'm talking about either. Weather forecasts now talk about liquid precipitation instead of solid, but that's also not what I'm talking about.

What sign, then, is the absolute harbinger of spring? The robins haven't returned yet, so what is it?

Why, it's the arrival of the marina bill containing the slip fee for 2026! At last, we have real hope for warmer weather, good company, and some quality time with our boats! By the time you read this column, we should be about 80 days away from relaunching our beloved vessels.

If you have any sort of project underway, whether related to

boating or not, and especially if it's one that has to be completed before your boat can go into the water, then you can rest assured that the next 80 days will pass by much faster than you want them to.

Signs of Growth

The springtime is associated with growth. It's pleasing to see our small marina community in Watkins Glen growing – both in depth and breadth.

As you read earlier in this newsletter, three of our younger mariners, one of them being our very own SEO, all passed the tests for their USCG Master 100 Ton credentials, otherwise known as a Captain's License. This milestone achievement is a testament to the skill and capability of these individuals.

We grow in breadth, too, and I don't mean the extra "insulation" some of us (e.g., me) have put on while we sat indoors during these non-boating months. Our membership count is up slightly from last year, representing a slow but steady growth since the downturn we saw after Covid. Even more impressive (to me, anyway) is that within our small membership we now have five USCG Captains. Not too shabby!

Signs of Rebirth

The biggest sign of spring, albeit still some weeks off, is probably the transformation of the environment around us. Wildlife emerges from dormant or semi-dormant states and is now visible on a regular basis. Trees begin to bud and then unfurl their new leaves to capture the sun and breath the fresh spring breezes. Monochromatic landscapes burst with bright, fresh colors and vegetation awakens and grows.

Our marinas undergo a similar metamorphosis. Activity increases as sailors return to their vessels and help them shed their cocoon of winter covers. Worn and tired bottom paint gets sanded and covered with bright, fresh-looking colors of new growth-inhibiting (we hope!) paints. Vessels get cleaned and polished to gleam in the longer days and warmer sunshine. Eventually the bright colors of awnings and spinnakers can be seen out on the lake.

Spring is on the way, and this sailor can't wait to be back out on the water!

See you in the boatyard!

- Your Editor, Tom

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As always, send your thoughts about this newsletter to:

editor@abc-flx.org

Long-Term Class Schedule

Seneca Education Department

BOC Level	Title	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	
Inland Navigator	Classes	ABC	X	X	X	X	X	
		Boat Handling		X		X		X
		Engine Maintenance	X		X			
		Marine Electrical Systems	X					
	Seminars	Using A Chart						
		VHF/DSC Radios						
		Using GPS			X			
		Basic Weather and Forecasting		X				
	Skills	Basic Powerboat Handling			X			
		Fire Extinguishers						

BOC Level	Title	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
Coastal Navigator	Classes	Marine Navigation	X				X
		Marine Communication Systems		X			
		Weather				X	
	Seminars	Tides & Currents					X
		Rules of the Road				X	
		Anchoring					
		Mariner's Compass	X		X		
	Skills	Coastal Nav			X		
		Pyrotechnics		X			

Table Key

X = Planned

U = Underway

C = Completed

BOC Level		Title	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
Advanced Coastal Navigator	Classes	Advanced Marine Navigation	X		X		X	
		Cruise Planning				X		
		Radar						
		Emergencies Onboard				X		
	Skills	Advanced Coastal Nav				X		
		First Aid	<i>Contact American Heart Assoc. or Red Cross</i>					

BOC Level		Title	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
Offshore Navigator	C	Offshore Navigation		X			X	
	Sem.	Computer Weather Forecasting	<i>Offered online.</i>					
		Thunderstorms / Severe Weather	<i>Offered online.</i>					
	Skills	Offshore Navigation				X		
CPR/AED		<i>Contact American Heart Assoc. or Red Cross.</i>						
Endorsments		Sail	X		X		X	
		Canadian Regulations						
		PaddleSmart	X		X			
Other		Instructor Development	C		X			
		Instructor Recertification	X			X		
		Operations Training	<i>Offered online.</i>					
		Celestial Navigation			X			X

Table Key

X = Planned

U = Underway

C = Completed

Calendar of Events

March 2026

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* March issue publication date.
- 10 Bridge Meeting (1900)

April 2026

- 14 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 17-19 District 6 Spring Council & Conference,
Binghamton, NY (D/6)
- 17 Deadline for *The Deep 6* articles (D/6)
- 24 Deadline for *Drum* articles

May 2026

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* May issue publication date.
- 01 *The Deep 6* spring issue publication date. (D/6)
- 12 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 16-22 Safe Boating Week (National)

June 2026

- 09 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 19 Deadline for *Drum* articles

July 2026

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* July issue publication date.
- 14 Bridge Meeting (1900).
- 17 Deadline for *The Deep 6* articles. (D/6)
- 31-8/2 ABC-FLX Boater's Weekend. *Details TBA.*

August 2026

- 01 *The Deep 6* summer issue publication date. (D/6)
- 7/31-8/2 ABC-FLX Boater's Weekend. *Details TBA.*
- 11 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 21 Deadline for *Drum* articles

September 2026

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* September issue publication date.
- 08 Bridge Meeting (1900)

- 12 Seneca Lake Barge Race, *Seneca Yacht Club, Geneva, NY.*
- 20-27 Fall Governing Board, *Cary, NC* (National)

October 2026

- 13 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 16 Deadline for *The Deep 6* articles (D/6)
- 23 Deadline for *Drum* articles
- TBA District 6 Fall Council & Conference (D/6)

November 2026

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* November issue publication date.
- 01 *The Deep 6* fall issue publication date. (D/6)
- 10 Bridge Meeting (1900)

December 2026

- 08 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 18 Deadline for *Drum* articles

January 2027

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* January issue publication date
- 12 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 15 Deadline for D/6 *The Deep 6* articles. (D/6)
- TBA Finger Lakes Change of Watch

February 2027

- 01 *The Deep 6* winter issue publication date. (D/6)
- 06-13 USPS Annual Meeting, *Tampa, FL* (National)
- 09 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 19 Deadline for *Drum* articles

Calendars are "living documents." For the latest information on squadron activities, please check our web site or our Facebook page:

<http://www.abc-flx.org>

<http://facebook.com/SenecaPowerSquadron>