

# 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

#### 2025 in Review and 2026 on Deck

Happy New Year one and all! As we turn the page on 2025, it's a great time to reflect on the highlights of our year together – the key word there being “together”. ABC-FLX is a successful organization due to the dedicated work of so many people and so my highlights list is really my thanks to everyone for pitching in. Many volunteer-based organizations can be plagued by burnout but this year lots of ABC-FLX members stepped up and helped share the work, errr..., fun. So, thank you!

Educational programming is the beating heart of the organization and 2025 was a year for the record books thanks to the leadership of SEO Katie Alley and ASEO Scott Williams working with a whole team of folks who helped coordinate and teach. We held three different offerings of the ABC Boater



Safety class with enrollment in one hitting 35, making it our largest class ever. That great turnout was thanks to Charlie Fausold partnering with the Valois Logan Hector Volunteer Fire Company during the first year that Brianna's Law went into full effect. Not only did several of the VLHVFC volunteers take the class, but they also helped boost enrollment by spreading the word throughout the community. The Watkins Glen Yacht Club was also a great partner this year by hosting another ABC Boater Safety Class and our Boat Handling Course.

Our team approach to teaching ABC and Boat Handling allowed Tom Alley and Jim McGinnis to

focus their instructional expertise on higher level topics including *Weather*, *Boat Handling* and an on-the-water seminar on how to deal with a man overboard.

Students of our *Weather* class benefited from Tom's enthusiastic instruction and the use of the Corning Aviation Facility as a classroom with a bonus behind-the-scenes tour. Those who took the plunge, quite literally, into learning about recovering someone from the water benefited from the on-the-water Man Overboard seminar with both Tom and Jim during the Rendezvous Weekend at Sampson State Park.

As you know, we're not only about learning with books and tests. We like to learn by doing and having a lot of fun thanks to our social/educational events too. Maggie Martin outdid herself coordinating several events including the 2025 Change of Watch, and three special events with presentations by Scott Williams, Tom Alley, Shane Alsworth and Jay Wehrung. Jim McGinnis and Don Kloeber hit the ball out of the park with the 2025 boaters' weekend that included an epic mini-golf tournament, a hands-on Man Overboard seminar and an evening of music and dancing.

Of course, the community wouldn't be aware of us without the communications efforts of Tom Alley and Glenda Gephart. We also benefit the wider boater community by maintaining the two life jacket trees and by offering free Vessel Safety Exams performed by Don Kloeber, Charlie Fausold and Ray Margeson. Phil Cherry and Jim

McGinnis brought their experience, enthusiasm and vision to bear as we focused on organizational development that will carry us forward.

We started 2025 with a downswing in our membership but, because we offered some stellar programming and educational opportunities to everyone in the boating community, our membership began to rebound. So, thank you to all our members. Your support is what keeps us going and feeling strong!

As we head into 2026, we're on excellent footing to keep the momentum going. We already have three courses on the calendar starting with *Instructor Development* followed closely by *Marine Navigation* and *Marine Electrical Systems*.

We're also thinking about ways to increase engagement with our existing and potential new members. The first item on our 2026 calendar is the Change of Watch soiree at the Glenora Wine Cellars restaurant, Veraisons. Mark your calendars for January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026, at 3:00 pm and e-mail me with your menu choice at [co@abc-flx.org](mailto:co@abc-flx.org) before January 2<sup>nd</sup>. I hope to see you there! [See all the details on pages 3 and 4. - Ed.]

As you reflect on 2025 and look forward to 2026, ask yourself if you'd like to engage more with ABC-FLX. Would you like to help teach a class, perhaps give a talk or be part of a social event? Do you have a particular set of skills that you'd like to share? Believe me, as a relative newbie to boating and boat ownership,

## The Drum

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it's a great way to make new friends and learn a ton from some of the best around! Finally, if you have thoughts about how to get more out of your membership, please feel free to reach out to me.

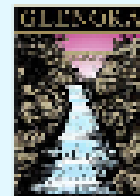
Not only am I thankful for your membership, but I also welcome all input.

Until then, get outside and have fun!

- Kris

[co@abc-flx.org](mailto:co@abc-flx.org)

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ABC-FLX INVITES YOU TO OUR..

# ANNUAL CHANGE OF WATCH

**JANUARY 18, 2026 • 3 PM**

VERAISONS RESTAURANT  
GLENORA WINE CELLARS

ELECTION OF OFFICERS  
GUEST SPEAKER MARINE PATROL  
OFFICER LEE TITUS OF THE SCHUYLER  
COUNTY SHERIFF DEPARTMENT

\$40 PER PERSON  
PAY AHEAD VIA SQUARE  
[HTTPS://SQUARE.LINK/U/  
ZRCPBZIQ](https://square.link/u/ZRCPBZIQ)



**PLEASE RSVP WITH ENTREE AND  
DESSERT SELECTION TO CDR KRIS VIA  
EMAIL AT [CO@ABC-FLX.ORG](mailto:co@abc-flx.org) NO LATER  
THAN JANUARY 3RD**



# GLENORA

Winery • Inn • Restaurant

WINE CELLARS

*Setting the Standard of Excellence Since 1977*

## Veraisons

RESTAURANT

### Plated Dinner Menu — January 18th, 3:00 p.m.

\$40 Per Person, inclusive — Entrée + Dessert

#### Entrée Options

##### **Buttermilk Chicken & Biscuit**

Crispy buttermilk fried chicken • Fluffy biscuit  
Hot honey-cranberry glaze • Herb pan gravy  
Whipped mashed potatoes • Roasted carrots

##### **Braised Beef Pot Roast**

Slow-braised beef • Root vegetables • Rich pan jus  
Whipped mashed potatoes • Thyme-buttered green beans

##### **Sweet Potato Gnocchi (Vegetarian)**

House-made gnocchi • Sautéed sweet potato & vegetables •  
Herb-infused garlic oil sauce  
(Can be made vegan — no cheese)

##### **Broiled Cod with Lemon-Herb Butter**

Broiled Atlantic cod • Lemon-herb butter  
Whipped mashed potatoes • Seasonal vegetables

#### Desserts (Included)

##### **Warm Apple Cider Bread Pudding**

Bourbon butterscotch • Cinnamon cream

##### **White Chocolate Raspberry Cheesecake**

Vanilla bean Chantilly • Cocoa dust



# From the Executive Officer

By Jim McGinnis, SN-CN

SV Brewster

## Sailing from Puerto Rico



In late October, Lynne and I met four friends in San Juan, Puerto Rico for a couple day tour on the island and five days on a

Lagoon 42 Catamaran. We flew into San Juan on the heels of Hurricane Melissa, which ended up blasting Jamaica and Cuba but left Puerto Rico untouched! We rented a car and drove to old Town San Juan for a visit to the old forts and bustling center of the old city.

On the way to the boat, we stopped for a few hours at El Yunque (White Mountain) National Rainforest. It rains nearly every day there and the plant life is straight out of Jurassic Park. Huge ferns that would grow close to the ground most places were stories high. A well-designed high elevation visitor center was lightly manned during the US Gov't shutdown but open to tourists.

We continued to Safe Harbor Marina Del Rey, Fajardo, PR. It's now the largest marina in the Caribbean with more than 2,000 boats. The charter contract was with Samboat, a rental broker for the boat owner. Jose from Sail Caribe (another company) was responsible for the boat check out

and safety briefing. Safe Harbor operates the marina.

Everything was first class – showers, bathrooms, all top end. Staffed golf carts are available all day and evening to transport you from the check-in point to the boat with your gear and food. There is a nice on-site restaurant with very decent prices. We stayed on the boat Thursday night and got familiar with basics on the boat.

On Friday morning, Jose introduced us to *Finegirl*, a 42-foot, 2024 Lagoon Catamaran, very lightly used. She is powered by two big Yanmar diesel engines and by a generator that powers the watermaker and four air-conditioning units! Jose explained that there are no marinas to stay at once we leave Fajardo and the boat is self-sufficient. We ran the anchor and bridle down and back up with the electric windlass. We also tested the dinghy which was a 4-person RIB with a 20HP Honda.

Thankfully Jose piloted the catamaran in the tight squeeze through the marina to the gas dock and topped off fuel and water. We ran the jib out and raised the main sail up at the gas dock using the electric winches. We talked about the weather and Jose advised that we

get all the way to Culebra – 20 miles, 4 hours – on Friday since rain and wind was expected Saturday. We picked a large, protected bay “Honda Ensenada” as our destination. Any Questions?

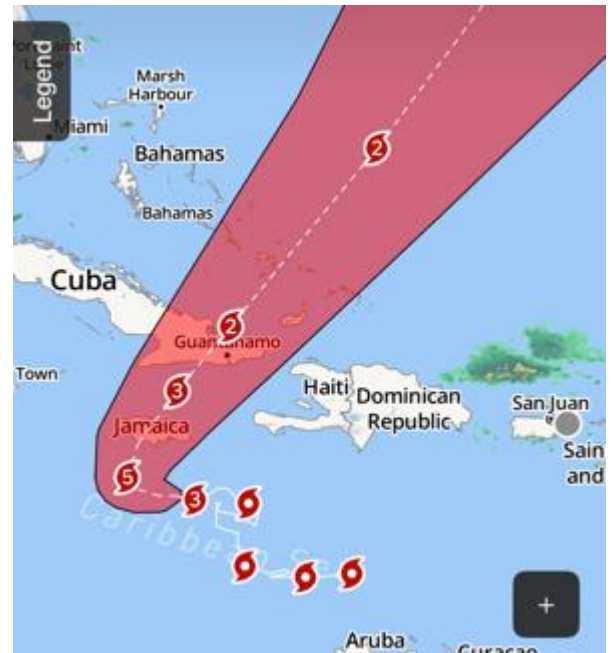


Figure 1: Hurricane Melissa - near miss to Puerto Rico.



Figure 2: *Finegirl* and crew.

We left Jose at the gas dock and cast off the lines. I use Navionics GPS app on my phone for navigation while we learned to operate the Raymarine chart plotter at the helm “on the fly.” The trip to Culebra was 20 miles directly into the wind so we motored at 6 knots to arrive well before dark. Arriving as planned we were near the town of Dewey on Culebra. We dropped anchor in 15 feet of water and set it carefully. We took some bearings, and I set the anchor alarm on my phone to alarm if we drifted significantly at night. Dinner, cards, and lights out.

Saturday was a rainy windy day but enjoyable on the water. We saw a sailboat near us drag it’s anchor and end up near shore in soft mud. A power launch from the local area came quickly to his rescue and pulled him to deeper water near to high tide.

The next day we headed to Playa Tortuga Beach on uninhabited Culebritta which Jose had recommended. This beach is one of the most protected and beautiful island beaches any of us had ever seen. There were turtles swimming near the boat and a couple of stingrays jumped out of the water. We snorkeled on a shallow reef and swam into shore. Sand was light and nearly devoid of shells. Just a fabulous spot.

The next day we sailed downwind to Flamenco Beach on Culebra, which is a popular tourist spot accessible by land and boat from Dewey. There were a few people there and a slight swell with seas making the anchorage a little rolly. We all decided to sail back to Playa Tortuga and enjoy our

favorite spot for a few more hours.

That night we anchored at “Bahia de Almodovar” which a friend had told me about. The anchorage has a few mooring balls (that we decided not to trust) since we saw one floating against the mangrove. This spot is open to the wind for nice air at night but protected by a

reef that stops any waves. Super spot. No other boats in sight. We decided that this area was so nice that we didn’t need to make the trip to Vieques which was another 20 miles.

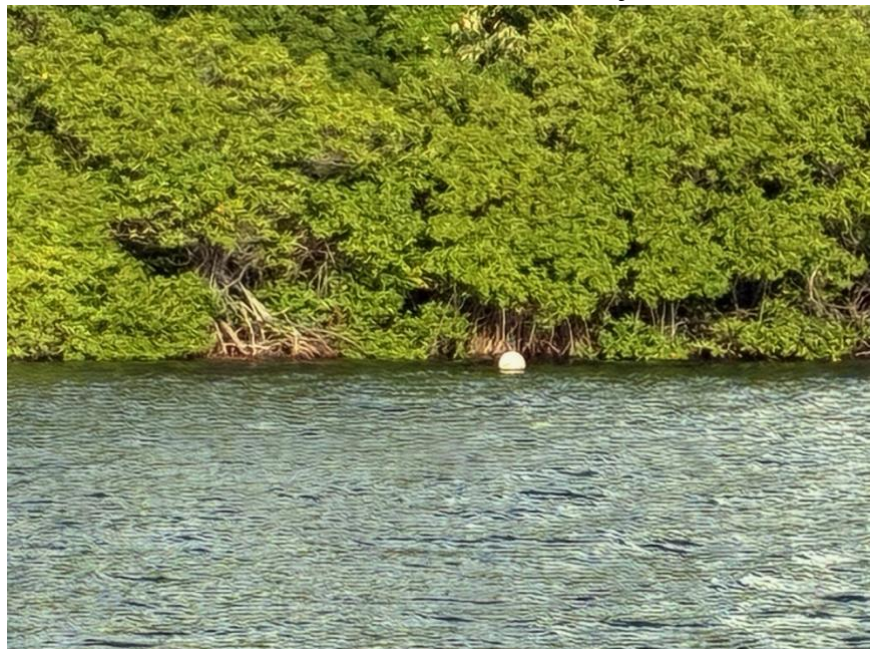
One night in Honda Ensenada, we transported everyone to a restaurant “La Cocina del Navegante” (The Kitchen of the



*Figure 3: An uninvited guest on the dinghy.*

Navigator) on shore with the dinghy. We all ordered the dinner special which has a piece of grouper wrapped around a pile of scallops and shrimp. Oh my, oh my! Mojito’s were the drink special and I don’t recall how many of those we ordered. It got late!

The last day we got up and set the sails back to Fajardo. The wind



*Figure 4: Mooring ball floating near shore. Not a good sign.*





*Figure 5: Sunrise in Marina Del Rey.*

was right on the stern, so we broad reached and made just two jibes to cover the 20 miles. Perfect sailing for the big catamaran. All in all, this trip was

very different from our trips to BVI as the area is not nearly as populated and no cruise ships. We had a blast and could do another trip to Vieques someday.

Fair winds,

- Jim

## From the Administrative Officer

By Maggie Martin

SV Plein Air

### Happy New Year!



We are starting off the year with a bash! Our Annual Change of Watch Dinner will be at

Veraisons Restaurant at the Inn at Glenora Wine Cellars. We will start with a happy half hour social at 1500H (3 pm) on Sunday,

January 18<sup>th</sup>. The chef prepared a nice menu for us to select from. They will divide the dining room in half for us, so we will have a view of our favorite lake in the winter. The invitations (and reminders ) are out – so be sure to **RSVP before January 3<sup>rd</sup>**. You can pay online with Square (thanks, Kris) or send a check.

There is a choice of four entrees, also sent with invitations. E-mail Kris with your selection. Your payment includes dinner and dessert.

A special guest, Schuyler County Marine Patrol Officer Lee Titus, will be speaking at 1600H (4pm). Be sure to arrive on time and get a refreshment so we can give him our attention. He should have a lot to say that will be of interest, and we appreciate the generous offer of his time for our group.

We hope to see you all there – and looking forward to a great 2026!

- Maggie  
[ao@abc-flx.org](mailto:ao@abc-flx.org)



Figure 6: Original painting by Maggie Martin.



# From the Education Director

By Katie Alley, JN

SV Tomfoolery

## Survival Season



As I think I've mentioned before in my writing, I really enjoy indie-folk musician Noah Kahan's

2022 album, *Stick Season*, during this time of year. See the chorus from his song, *Northern Attitude*:

*If I get too close  
And I'm not how you hoped  
Forgive my northern attitude  
Oh, I was raised out in the cold  
If the sun don't rise  
'Til the summertime  
Forgive my northern attitude  
Oh, I was raised on little light*

Kahan reflects on growing up in rural Vermont and how that led him to adopt a mindset of solitude and closed-offness. *Northern Attitude* highlights the difference between "surviving" and "living". Kahan acknowledges his harsh, survivalist mindset and expresses a desire for emotional vulnerability and connection.

I think it's easy for many of us to relate to Kahan's feelings as we "survive" the coldest and shortest days in the Northeast. Perhaps

you feel colder both temperature-wise and mood-wise. I know I feel more energetic in the summer, and I think that is largely due to the amount of sunlight. Plus, we don't get to see our marina neighbors or crew as often. There's a part of my social life missing. A glass of cool Riesling just doesn't hit the same while sitting inside watching snow fall, compared to sitting by the lake on a warm summer day.

Regardless, many things in life are cyclical, including the seasons and even our attitudes. Boating days will come again. Warmth and light will be plentiful again.

In the meantime, I invite you to spend part of your "survival season" in a class with us. You just might find some of the energy and connection you've been missing otherwise.

In January, a new group of future instructors will start Instructor Development with Charlie Fausold. I am looking forward to having some new teachers involved in continuing our education offerings.

Starting in March, we'll be teaching both *Marine Navigation* and *Marine Electrical Systems*. You can still sign up for either of these classes. See the details below.

## Marine Navigation

Dates: Wednesdays, March 11 - May 6, 7-9 PM

Location: Human Services Complex, Montour Falls

Instructors: Charlie Fausold & Ray Margeson

Member Price: \$150

## Marine Electrical Systems

Dates: Thursdays, March 5 - May 7, 7-9 PM

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

Instructors: Jim Morris & John Chesebrough

Member Price: \$100

Come spring, we'll be offering *America's Boating Course* and *Sail*. Due to interest levels and instructor capacity, we'll be offering *Engine Maintenance* in the late summer or fall.

I'm adopting a positive attitude toward 2026. Our club will be offering lots of good things – engaging classes, more fun cruises with FLYC, a Sail-a-bration for Schooner *True Love's* 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. Our next event is our Change of Watch on January 18<sup>th</sup>. I look forward to seeing you all soon!

**Favorite Moments from 2025:**



*Figure 7: Hanging out with Phelps at a Bridge Meeting.*



*Figure 8: Getting my fishing license.*



*Figure 9: Sailing S/V Sea Witch, my Sunfish, in 15+ knots of wind.*



*Figure 10: Learning to use the SailRite sewing machine and making a cover for Sea Witch.*





Figure 11: Getting my partner to go sailing, finally!



Figure 13: Becoming a keel boat owner and WGVM Dock 3 resident.

- Katie

[seo@abc-flx.org](mailto:seo@abc-flx.org)

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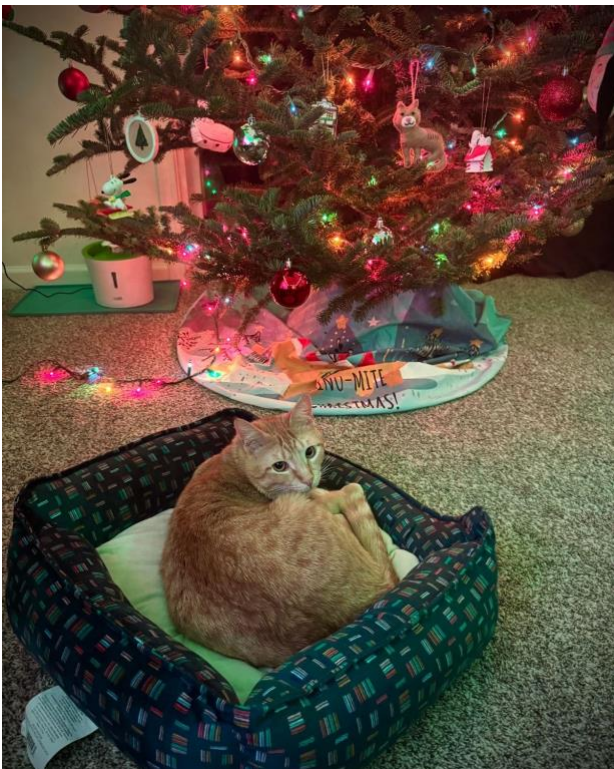


Figure 12: Happy New Year and Hibernation Season from Habanero!



# Secretary's Sidenotes

By Jeff Mack, JN

SV Project

## Reflections on the USPS



When I took my first Boat Handling class a few years ago, I had no real idea what the USPS was all about. The name

“United States Power Squadron” probably didn’t help. I may have pictured something quasi-militaristic, vaguely governmental, and certainly subsidized – surely someone else was paying for all those instructors and administrators. Or maybe I just didn’t think about it at all. As usual, I was focused on my own little world and not especially curious about what went into the classes and events I was showing up for.

As I took more courses, the class sizes got smaller, and—somewhat suspiciously – I kept seeing the same dedicated teachers. It didn’t take long to realize my assumptions were off. While USPS/ABC is a national organization with structure, hierarchy, stamps of approval, and what I assume are magical grading machines, it only functions because of the energy, time, creativity, skills, and sheer goodwill of local groups of volunteers. This wasn’t a big, faceless organization like a corporate bank. It was more like

*Soylent Green*. It’s made of people. It lives and dies by the generosity of folks on the ground – and on the water – and the Bridge is the beating heart of it all.

In 2023, Jim McGinnis asked if I’d be willing to help by taking notes at meetings the following year. The next thing I knew, I was standing at the Change of Watch dinner taking an oath as Secretary. I’m not entirely sure I fulfilled that oath very well, and I’m also not sure I knew I’d be taking one that evening. I didn’t volunteer because the role appealed to me. I’ve never been particularly good at taking notes or committing to things – or to people – let alone fraternal organizations. But I was moved by the dedication and selflessness I saw in the people making things happen, and that felt worth saying yes to.

At first, the note-taking was challenging. Then it got a little easier as I learned the people, the rhythms, and what everyone was talking about. I did it for a second year but never advanced or picked up additional roles. I knew my limits. I’ve known myself long enough to recognize that those opportunities are better suited for others. I was simply honored to have a seat close enough to observe this group in action and admire their abilities, experience, and generosity.

This experience taught me what service looks like – not through my own actions, but through

those around me. I was privileged to serve as scribe and secretary for the past couple of watches, and I’m grateful to those who graciously covered for me when I occasionally snoozed on my duties. This month, I’ll be stepping down from the Bridge. I’m thankful for the chance to serve in the ways I could and for the peek behind the curtain that showed me just how much work, care, and commitment you all bring to this organization. I’ve learned a great deal, made meaningful connections, and gained friendships I truly value. I look forward to seeing you all back out on the water soon – only a few more months to go.

## Slate of Proposed Officers for 2026

### Bridge Positions:

**Commander:** Kris West, S

**Executive Officer:** Lt/C Jim McGinnis, SN-CN

**Educational Officer:** Lt/C Katie Alley, JN

**Assistant Educational Officer:** 1<sup>st</sup>/Lt Scott Williams, JN

**Administrative Officer:** Shane Alsworth, S

**Secretary and Communications Officer:** Lt Glenda Gephart

**Treasurer:** Lt/C Marcia Taylor, AP

**2026 Nominating Committee**

Cdr Kris West, S Chair

Lt/C James McGinnis, SN-CN

P/C Philip Cherry, AP

**2026 Audit Committee**

Lt/C Denis Kingsley, S

**Executive Committee**

P/C Philip Cherry, AP

Member Thomas Taylor, AP

Member Stf/C Thomas Alley,  
SN-ON**Admin Committees****Membership:** Phillip Cherry, AP**Vessel Safety Check Chairman:**

Lt Ray Margeson, AP-IN

- Jeff

[secretary@abc-flx.org](mailto:secretary@abc-flx.org)

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## ABC-FLX News

### Happy Birthday!

Happy birthday to our members!

**January**

Mike Crouse

Lewis Chesebrough

Katie Alley

Shane Alsworth

**February**

Jim West

William Alley

Katie Chesebrough

Dee Stafford

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### We Need Your Help

ABC-FLX is excited to announce an upcoming upgrade to our respective websites! Thanks to a proposal from our webmaster, Tom Alley, we're not only updating our site's software but also reducing operating costs, enhancing capabilities, and making it easier for squadrons and other boating groups to collaborate across our district.

(Details are in an article elsewhere in this newsletter.)

To ensure the success of this project, a new committee is being formed to provide oversight and strategic guidance. The objective is to provide everyone involved with a voice, so we're creating a forum for open discussion and input as we move forward.

**We're looking for volunteers!**

Each participating group will be represented on the committee by two members:

- One technical resource
- One content manager

The committee will initially be chaired by the District Webmaster, Tom Alley.

**Why join?**

- Our new hosting provider allows us to host multiple websites under a single account, which means lower costs for everyone.
- Currently, USPS District 6, ABC Finger Lakes Chapter,

and the Finger Lakes Yacht Club are on board. Each group will have its own unique web presence and full control over its content.

- There's room for more! Other squadrons, yacht clubs, or boating groups are invited to join. This will add little or nothing to the total contract cost, further reducing expenses for all.

**Interested?**

Let Squadron Webmaster Tom Alley know you'd like to participate, and we'll take it from there. We're excited about this journey and hope you'll join us!

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**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>

### Instructor Development & Certification

The course has been designed to demonstrate interactive teaching methods focused on adult learning. Students are required to prepare lesson plans and give three presentations to their peers utilizing a variety of teaching aids and presentation skills. The instructor may assign a topic for these presentations, or you may use material and PowerPoint slides from existing USPS courses, and they may build on one another.

For those who are already certified instructors, don't forget that your certification must be renewed every four years. Fortunately, this is easily done by attending a 2-hour seminar to get you caught up in the latest teaching techniques and recommendations.

**Prerequisites:** None

**When:** Tuesdays, Jan 6<sup>th</sup>-Mar 3<sup>rd</sup>

**Where:** Human Services Complex, Montour Falls

**Instructors:** Charlie Fausold

**Cost:** FREE to members

### 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 11<sup>th</sup> - May 6<sup>th</sup>, 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:** Thursdays, March 5<sup>th</sup> through May 7<sup>th</sup>, 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

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## 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

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## 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](mailto:seo@abc-flx.org)

Or you can go to the national web site ([www.usps.org](http://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](mailto:SEO@abc-flx.org).

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

[www.abc-flx.org](http://www.abc-flx.org)



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# NTSB Findings: Francis Scott Key Bridge Collapse

By Tom Alley

SV Tomfoolery

On November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) released its final report on the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge after it was struck by the container ship *Dali*. The root cause of the accident was a surprisingly simple and seemingly insignificant detail that was overlooked in the ship's wiring. What follows are excerpts from the NTSB report:

## Contact of Containership Dali with Francis Scott Key Bridge and Subsequent Bridge Collapse

### What Happened

On March 26, 2024, about 0129 local time, the 984-foot-long Singapore-flagged cargo vessel (containership) *Dali* was transiting out of Baltimore Harbor in Baltimore, Maryland, when it experienced losses of electrical power, propulsion, and steering and struck Pier 17, the southern pier that supported the central span of the Francis Scott Key Bridge (Key Bridge). A substantial portion of the bridge subsequently collapsed into the river, and portions of the pier, deck, and truss spans collapsed onto the vessel's bow and forwardmost container bays.

A seven-person road maintenance crew and one inspector were on the bridge when the vessel struck it. Six of the highway workers died as a result of the bridge collapse. One highway worker survived the collapse with serious



Figure 14: The containership *Dali* with portions of the collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge across its forward deck on March 28, 2024. (Source: NTSB)

injuries, and the inspector escaped unharmed. One of the 23 persons aboard the *Dali* sustained a minor injury. Damage to the *Dali* exceeded \$18 million. Cargo damages were undetermined.

At the time of this report, replacement costs for the bridge were unavailable. Over 34,000 vehicles, 10% of which are trucks, that formerly traveled over the Key Bridge every day must now take alternate routes around and through the Port of Baltimore, increasing congestion and travel times. The Key Bridge was also the primary route for vehicles carrying hazardous materials. These vehicles, which are prohibited from using the tunnels under the Baltimore waterways, must now make extended detours around the port.

Read the NTSB's recommendation report: [Safeguarding Bridges from Vessel Strikes: Need for](#)

### [Vulnerability Assessment and Risk Reduction Strategies](#)

View on scene photos from [NTSB Flickr](#).

Read NTSB Safety Issues: [Bridge Collapses and Other Infrastructure Failures](#)

### What We Found

We determined that the probable cause of the contact of the containership *Dali* with the Francis Scott Key Bridge was a loss of electrical power (blackout), **due to a loose signal wire connection to a terminal block stemming from the improper installation of wire-label banding**, [Emphasis added. -Ed.] resulting in the vessel's loss of propulsion and steering close to the bridge.

Contributing to the crew's inability to recover propulsion from the loss of electrical power

*was the limited time available due to the Dali's proximity to the bridge.*

*Contributing to the collapse of the Key Bridge and the loss of life was the lack of countermeasures to reduce the bridge's vulnerability to collapse due to impact by ocean-going vessels, which could have been implemented if a vulnerability assessment had been conducted by the Maryland Transportation Authority as recommended by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.*

*Also contributing to the loss of life was the lack of effective and immediate communications to notify the highway workers to evacuate the bridge.*

The remainder of the report goes on with numerous, detailed recommendations to various transportation authorities, governmental organizations, and electronic manufacturers. This last group is of particular interest to

DIY boat owners, since many perform their own electrical wiring aboard their vessel. While the NTSB report is addressing commercial ship builders, their recommendation is equally relevant to the DIY recreational boater. The report states:

*Share the circumstances of the contact of the containership Dali with the Francis Scott Key Bridge and subsequent bridge collapse with the International Association of Classification Societies and urge them to distribute report MIR-25-40 to their members, highlighting:*

- a. *the importance of avoiding placement of wire-label banding such that it impedes the proper insertion of a wire in a terminal block,*

*[...]*

- *Incorporate proper wire-label banding installation methods into your electrical department's standard operating procedures to ensure that wire-label*

*banding installed on a wire does not impede the proper insertion of the wire into a terminal block. (M-25-23)...*

Such a simple thing – improperly labeling a wire – killed six people and impacted millions more for multiple years.

The lesson: Details matter.

With electrical systems and marine electronics playing an increasingly important role in our recreational vessels, we need to make sure we pay attention to the details when installing and servicing these systems.

Fortunately, we teach this sort of stuff in *Marine Electrical Systems* and *Marine Communication Systems*.

- Tom

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You can find the full NTSB report on their web site at:

<https://www.nts.gov/investigations/Pages/DCA24MM031.aspx>



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# Web Site Upgrade Proposal

## ABC-FLX / USPS-D6 / FLYC

By Tom Alley

Webmaster

*The following is an excerpt of the proposal submitted to the ABC-FLX Bridge and Executive Committee for the upgrade of the chapter web site. This proposal was discussed and approved during the December Executive Committee meeting. Sections of the proposal not relevant to ABC-FLX have been edited out for brevity. – Ed.*

### Executive Summary

The online presence of the Finger Lakes Yacht Club (FLYC), America's Boating Club Finger Lakes Chapter (ABC-FLX), and the United States Power Squadrons District 6 (USPS-D6) are in need of updates and upgrades. This proposal suggests a way for the organizations, all focused on boating, to share resources that will reduce the cost of a continued online presence while still maintaining unique, separate identities.

The proposed plan would be to contract with a new hosting service to provide a single server upon which each club can host their own web site. The web sites and domain names would remain distinct, but all would be hosted on the same platform. This allows for cost sharing between groups that results in savings for all three organizations. Email services would also be migrated to the new provider along with domain registration to provide for easier coordination between online services.

### Problem Statement

The private web server being used for FLYC and ABC-FLX is nearing the end of its service life. Software updates are no longer available, and the system is becoming increasingly vulnerable to malicious attacks.

### Current Status & Background

The Finger Lakes Yacht Club (FLYC) and America's Boating Club Finger Lakes Chapter (ABC-FLX) both maintain a web presence on a server owned, managed, and housed by the current webmaster. While this provides a very cost-effective and highly flexible method for maintaining a public web site, it also suffers from occasional reliability issues due to limited support infrastructure. Both clubs contributed funds to help purchase the current server. Annual operating costs are approximately \$35 for each club to maintain their respective domain names and DNS services. Electrical costs and costs associated with maintaining an Internet connection to the server are currently covered by the webmaster.

This server is reaching end-of-life and cannot be updated with current generation software or utilities. A replacement server (a refurbished 2024 model) would cost a little over \$1,600 and would have a projected lifespan of 5 years. The new server would

not address issues with the reliability of electrical service or Internet connectivity to the server location.

ABC-FLX and FLYC domain names are managed by GoDaddy. Email and DNS services are managed by ZoneEdit.

All three web sites (ABC-FLX, FLYC and USPS-D6) are using old, obsolete, and unsupported content management software (Joomla 3.x). Back-end software (PHP and MySQL) are also older versions that are no longer being supported. While the District 6 web site does employ SSL security certificates, these have not been able to be implemented for the FLYC and ABC-FLX web sites. Modern web browsers typically flag sites not supporting these protocols as "suspicious" or "dangerous" and actively discourage connecting to them, limiting the outreach for these clubs.

### Proposed Solution

Transfer the hosting of all three club web sites, email management, domain name registration, DNS, and other online services to a single hosting provider. This will simplify management of services that are currently being handled by multiple vendors. Costs are proposed be split equally between organizations.

A search for viable service providers resulted in the

identification of IONOS Incorporated as a company that appears to be able to reliably meet all the various club needs at a reasonable cost.

IONOS (ionos.com) is a multinational company headquartered in Germany and operating in 70 countries worldwide. They have been in business since 1988 and have over 6 million customers.

Costs can be summarized as follows:

**Web Hosting:** \$144/yr

**Email Hosting:** \$36/yr (3-year term)

**Domain Management:** \$60/yr (\$20/yr per domain),

**Total Cost:** \$240/yr (plus taxes)

This translates to approximately \$80 per club per year, not including state and local taxes.

### Comparison to Current Costs

Both the FLYC and ABC-FLX clubs only pay for domain management (\$23/yr) and DNS services (\$12/yr). However, they have made one-time payments in the form of grants to help purchase the server on which their sites are hosted. Since the current server needs to be replaced, this would represent an additional investment of over \$800 per club to continue. Assuming a 5-year lifespan of the new server, this translates to \$160/yr of equivalent annual expenditures. Therefore, the cost of extending the current arrangement would amortize out to approximately \$195/yr per club.

The hosting service would add capabilities, including support for

HTTPS protocols, which the current web sites for ABC-FLX and FLYC do not support. This will improve security and improve outreach for both the sites and for all the users.

Using the proposed plan would result in an annual savings of a little over \$115/year for each club.

Given the successful history [with the USPS-D6 hosting provider], the option of migrating FLYC and ABC-FLX to their host was explored but found to not be feasible. Storage capacity of the USPS-D6 host is limited and cannot accommodate the additional sites without substantial increases in their service fees.

### Nonmonetary Considerations

All three organizations suffer from “key person syndrome” in which they are reliant on a single person to manage and maintain their web presence. While District 6 is somewhat better off by virtue of having their site hosted at a commercial facility, the FLYC and ABC-FLX are totally dependent on the web hosting services available on a system that cannot be accessed externally. Moving to a hosted facility would be an excellent first step to ensuring that this capability can be maintained in the future.

Based on experience with the USPS-D6 hosting platform, system maintenance for the FLYC and ABC-FLX sites should become considerably easier and faster to perform once in a hosted environment.

## Conversion Plan and Timeline

### Development Phase

Beginning as early as 2026 Q1, a contract will be initiated with IONOS. This period will be used to initialize and configure the hosting platform for the needs of the three clubs. The webmaster's personal web site ([www.Alberg35.org](http://www.Alberg35.org)) will be used for initial configuration and testing. During this time, the webmaster will assume all expenses for the new site in exchange for moving his personal web site to the new environment. This first phase could take up to six months to complete.

### Migration Phase

The web sites for the FLYC and ABC-FLX can be migrated once the new platform is configured. (2026 Q3 or Q4?) Of the two, the FLYC is less complex and has much less data to transfer.

Optimally, web site and domain management would be transferred just prior to their renewal dates with the current registrar (GoDaddy.com). The FLYC domain (flyc.us) is up for renewal in April 2027 and the ABC-FLX domain (abc-flx.org) is due in June 2029. Transferring sooner would result in forfeiting any prepaid domain registration fees paid to GoDaddy. Given that the current web server hosting these sites has a finite lifespan, some cost in this area may be inevitable. Fortunately, it is not a high-dollar amount.

To summarize, a potential timeline for migration could be stated as follows:

- 2026 Q1 – Establish new hosting site with IONOS. Begin development work.
- 2026 Q2 – Transfer Alberg35.org web site and domain registrations. Fine-tune configurations and the transfer process.
- 2026 Q3 – Begin transfer of FLYC web site to IONOS.
- 2026 Q4 – Begin transfer of ABC-FLX site to IONOS.
- 2027 Q1 – Cost sharing of new host begins. (Webmaster assumes cost during 2026)
- 2027 Q1 – Begin transfer of District 6 web site to IONOS. Switch sites in mid-2027.

### Risks and Unknowns

As with most relatively complex projects, there are several unknowns lurking in the technical details of implementing these changes. One example is in how the email services will need to be configured for multiple domains and whether they can be grouped in a single email subscription or if

each club will eventually have to buy their own email service.

IONOS has two sets of hosting plans: One for a generic web server and another for a specific website content management system. Pricing between the two systems is virtually identical, but at this time the author does not have sufficient information to determine which plan would be optimal. Once a business relationship has been established with IONOS, they will provide technical support and guidance to help find an optimal solution.

During the transition/migration period, there is a chance that the current services may need to be terminated before the new services can be started. This may result in an outage of some days or even a week or two. In the author's opinion, this is most likely to occur during the transfer of domain names between registrars and DNS managers. Efforts will be made to avoid or minimize this. The good news is that these types of transfers are

common and should be relatively routine for all parties involved.

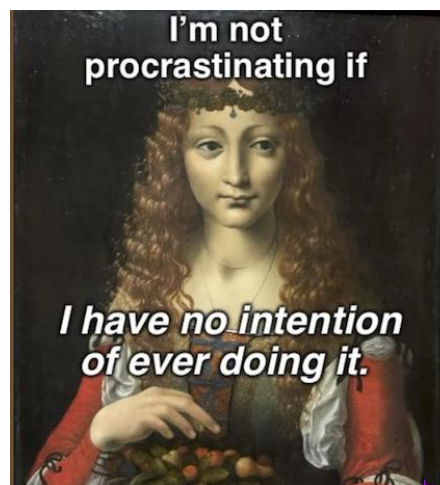
### Contingencies

The webmaster will assume all financial liability with IONOS during the development phase of this project. The clubs will have no risk exposure during this part of the project. If a show-stopping problem is discovered during this phase, each club can simply continue with their current web solution.

IONOS appears to be very flexible in allowing customers to switch between plans. If it is discovered that the plan being used is not working out, a different one can be implemented quickly and with no (or very little) cost to the clubs.

Respectfully submitted,

- Tom,  
Webmaster,  
ABC-FLX, FLYC, USPS-D6  
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# The Last Word

By Tom Alley, SN-ON

SV Tomfoolery

## Fresh Starts



Most of us didn't just flip the calendar to a new page. Rather, we replaced our calendars with a brand new one for

the new year. As such, this could be viewed as a season of new beginnings and fresh starts.

My local yacht club is a good example. Planning is already underway for the 2026 boating season. Schedules are being drafted and events are being planned. It's a very optimistic time and our boats have been put away long enough that we're all anxious to get them launched again.

For me, I've completed my research for this year's projects and commissioning plans and I'm getting ready to start ordering the pieces and parts so that I'll be ready as soon as the weather breaks sufficiently to warrant a visit to my slumbering boat.

The Power Squadron, our local chapter included, lags somewhat in this preparation. This is mostly due to the winter months being the time when we see the "shift changes"

occurring in leadership roles at the various levels. For the Finger Lakes Chapter, our formal passing of the baton will be on January 18<sup>th</sup>. The National Bridge will have their Change of Watch in mid-February, and District 6 will conduct their turnover of responsibilities on April 18<sup>th</sup>.

Despite all these changes, our squadron, our district, and our national organization are all engaged in multi-year projects. The good news is that there is a great deal of carry-over in personnel from one term to another, which helps keep long-term projects on track with minimal mid-course perturbations.

Our squadron shares this advantage. Hence, our ability to adopt planning horizons that extend out five to seven years, allowing us to optimize our activities for the long game. This is important for a squadron with over 60 years of history and a national organization with over a century of continuous operations.

As mentioned in our Secretary's column earlier in this issue, none of this is possible without dedicated volunteers. We're blessed to have a good number of them in our local chapter, but there's always room for more. There is a saying (and a number

of popular songs based on it) that goes, "You get what you give." I can vouch for the fact that this is absolutely true. If you're looking to get more out of the club, I would encourage you to volunteer and get more involved. What you get back will be way more than what you put in.

Not sure what you can do? Don't worry, we need a broad range of skills and talents to cover the wide-ranging activities in which we engage. You can be confident that there will be an area where you can make a difference. And if you're in the mood to learn something new, we can provide training so you can acquire new skills and talents.

Happy New Year! Happy Fresh Start! I hope you'll make a resolution to get more involved in an activity you already enjoy (i.e., the Finger Lakes Chapter of America's Boating Club) and make a small investment of your time. The dividends on that investment will make you wonder why you didn't do it sooner.

- Your Editor, Tom

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*As always, send your thoughts about this newsletter to:*

[editor@abc-flx.org](mailto: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		
	U							
	Skills	Advanced Coastal Nav				X		
		First Aid	Contact American Heart Assoc. or Red Cross					

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

### Table Key

X = Planned

U = Underway

C = Completed



# Calendar of Events

## January 2026

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* January issue publication date
- 06 Instructor Development class begins, *Human Services Complex, Montour Falls, NY* (1900)
- 13 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 16 Deadline for D/6 *The Deep 6* articles. (D/6)
- 18 Finger Lakes Change of Watch, *Glenora Wine Cellars, Dundee, NY* (1500)

## February 2026

- 01 *The Deep 6* winter issue publication date. (D/6)
- 09-15 USPS Annual Meeting, *Myrtle Beach, SC* (National)
- 10 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 20 Deadline for *Drum* articles

## March 2026

- 01 Finger Lakes *Drum* March issue publication date.
- 05 Marine Electrical Systems class begins, *Human Services Complex, Montour Falls, NY* (1900)
- 10 Bridge Meeting (1900)
- 11 Marine Navigation class begins, *Human Services Complex, Montour Falls, NY* (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)
- 7/31-8/2 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

*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>