

# Why Coast Guard Auxiliary is good for the lake

*(Article provided by Jerry Nealy, Chairman, WHOA Fairfield)*

## **For the Lake Wateree Community:**

The primary charter for the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary is to promote safety on and around the water. The Auxiliary focuses on public education, member education and training, water safety patrols, emergency response, vessel safety inspections, marine environmental protection, and to support the Coast Guard in all of its missions except military and law enforcement actions.

For the Lake Wateree Community this means that with an Auxiliary detachment on the lake all members of the Community will have access to Public Education courses offered locally and free vessel safety inspections on the lake. Together these can help you in becoming a safer boater as well as having a lowering effect on your boat insurance and you in knowing that your vessel meets required and recommended safety requirements for boating on Lake Wateree as well as coastal waters.

There will be regular safety patrols on the lake to assist in helping boaters having problems and needing assistance including tows as well as looking for any situations that could be hazardous for boaters such as floating debris. In addition the Auxiliary program will provide a volunteer organization that is professionally trained through the USCG developed seamanship courses for the purpose of conducting regular safety patrols on the lake. These patrols also look for pollution and water hazards. Most Auxiliary members also maintain a radio watch on Channel 16 when at home and on the lake.

The Auxiliary will be able to expand the level of boating safety educational input to area events where the boating public will be present. Up front, that might not seem to be much of an issue, BUT consider that if we can provide the tools to reach those persons who do not have the proper understanding of the importance of wearing a PFD, properly equipping his/her boat, understanding the rules of the road, etc., then this feature can be looked at as priceless in saving some additional lives and serious injury to our boaters. The Auxiliary will commit to participation in area safety shows, doing talks at civic clubs, furnishing boating safety literature through the Program Visitor service, filling literature requests from those groups/individuals who need it, conducting a local BS&S course and cooperating with the local media sources in getting boating safety information out to the public.

The benefit here, in a nutshell, is the reduction of fatalities, accidents and injury through the Auxiliary Public Affairs and Public Education programs that we can provide at Lake Wateree. The dollar value of this program that will be free to the public, except for the BS&S class, will annually go into the hundreds of dollars that the USCG and the Auxiliary will expend on these efforts in the Lake Wateree community.

## **For the Individuals who become members:**

For the individuals who become members of the Auxiliary there are a number of personal benefits and activities that one can have if one is interested in learning more about boating skills, participating in local safety patrols, helping their neighbors with boat safety inspections that both educate the boater and prevent unsafe boating equipment. In addition, those that would like to work directly with the Coast Guard in coastal areas are given ample opportunity to do so. The member will be encouraged to complete advanced USCG training courses free of charge on such topics as Radio Communications, Weather, Search & Rescue, Navigation, Seamanship and Patrol Tactics. These courses are the basis of establishing a professionally trained volunteer agency that the homeowners can rely upon for on-water safety patrols and search and rescue operations. Normally there is no other existing organization that can respond with trained search and rescue crews and with as many boats that are already in the water and equipped for conducting such operations (New Orleans is a recent example where many Auxiliary volunteers from around the country helped).

## **For the United States**

The United States Coast Guard and the Coast Guard Auxiliary are a part of the Department of Homeland

Security. As such, the Coast Guard is called upon to do an extensive amount of maritime security operations and is calling on Auxiliary volunteers to help in the non-military and non-law enforcement activities of the Coast Guard. This often calls for work in the Port of

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Charleston as well as other support opportunities. In addition to the more traditional support functions in assisting in radio watches, Aids to Navigation activities, regatta

and special water activity support such as the Olympics and the meeting of the Eight Heads of State last year in Georgia, there have been new assignments open to the Auxiliary. These new qualification opportunities include: Port State Control Boarding Team Assistant, Assistant Contingency Preparedness Specialist, Assistant License and Document Examiner, Assistant License and Document Evaluator, Port State Control Dispatcher, and Uninspected Towing Vessel Examiner.

In addition the existing Assistant Facilities Inspector Qualification has been extended to include Maritime Security Inspection Job Tasks. These are just examples of the types of activities that Auxiliary volunteers have the opportunity to do if they have the time and are interested. There are also the extensive national training schools open to the Auxiliary members to expand their skills. For those individuals

that love to be around the water and want to volunteer some of their time in assisting with Homeland Security in a very real way, being a part of the Coast Guard Auxiliary provides an opportunity to do so.

### **A Lake Wateree Detachment**

We are seeking to establish a detachment of the Lake Murray U. S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla on Lake Wateree. We are seeking at least eight individuals (or four couples or combination thereof) to form the detachment here. It will meet and train on Lake Wateree and hold public education classes likely in Camden unless there is enough to hold them on both sides of the lake. For anyone interested in the Auxiliary or in having a free safety inspection of their boat or attending a Boating Safety course please call either 475-7609 (Camden side) or 337-4012 (Lugoff side) for more information.