

Fair Winds and Following Seas: Squadron Updates and Celebrations

This has been an eventful and meaningful stretch for our Squadron, filled with milestones, recognition, and a bittersweet farewell to one of our own.

A Fond Farewell to Past Commander Craig Loomis

We begin with both gratitude and a touch of sadness as we recognize the departure of Past Commander Craig Loomis, who is relocating to Florida. Craig has been a steady hand and a driving force within our squadron, contributing countless hours to leadership, mentorship, and the advancement of safe boating in our community.

His tenure as Commander—and continued involvement thereafter—helped shape the strong, engaged squadron we enjoy today. Whether leading from the front or quietly supporting behind the scenes, Craig exemplified the spirit of service that defines our organization.

While we will certainly miss his presence here in Hilton Head Island, we know he will remain active within the Power Squadrons community. We wish Craig fair winds, following seas, and great success in this next chapter.

National Meeting Highlights from Myrtle Beach

Several of our members recently attended the national meeting held in Myrtle Beach, where representatives from across the country gathered to discuss the future of the United States Power Squadrons.

While the meeting highlighted many positive initiatives—particularly around boating safety education, modernization, and member engagement—it also addressed some significant challenges facing the organization.

Most notably, there is a clear recognition at the national level that membership continues to decline, a trend that has had direct financial implications. The organization reported operating at a deficit over the past year, prompting discussions on how best to stabilize its financial position.

During the business meeting, a motion was introduced to increase the national portion of member dues. After discussion, the measure ultimately passed. However, it is important to note that the Hilton Head Squadron delegation, along with others from District 26, voted against the increase.

Our position is grounded in the belief that raising dues may create additional barriers to membership retention and recruitment, particularly at a time when growth is already a challenge. In follow-up, the Squadron Executive Committee is preparing a letter to the National Commander to respectfully express these concerns and to advocate for alternative approaches.

Despite these broader organizational challenges, our local focus remains clear. The Hilton Head Squadron is committed to delivering meaningful, high-value experiences for our members. We believe that when members feel engaged, supported, and enriched by their participation, the value of membership speaks for itself.

District 26 Recognition at Lake Murray

At last week's District 26 meeting on Lake Murray, our Squadron was honored with an impressive array of awards recognizing both individual achievement and overall squadron excellence:

- **Robert A. Peters Boating Activities Award (2nd Place, Division 1)**
Recognizing outstanding participation in District, Squadron, and inter-squadron on-the-water activities, and fostering both boating skills and camaraderie.
- **Total Vessel Safety Checks (VSCs) – 1st Place (202 VSCs)**
A testament to our strong commitment to boating safety and public service in the community.
- **Prince Henry the Navigator Award (Squadron)**
Awarded for the offering and high participation rate in our advanced navigation classes, highlighting the strength of our educational program.
- **Distinctive Communicator Award – ABCHH.ORG**
Awarded to the Squadron in recognition of excellence in digital communication and outreach.
- **The Order of Mariners**
Awarded to **Klaus F. Loehr, AP**, in recognition of outstanding service to District 26 and the national organization, and for continued achievement in seamanship and navigation.
- **Certificate of Educational Achievement**
Presented to **Joseph C. Jacobs, SN**, for completing all coursework required to earn the distinguished rank of Senior Navigator.
- **Certificates of Educational Proficiency**
Awarded to **Jim Iannacchino, Joseph Jacobs**, and **Jeanne Kangas** for completing Advanced Piloting or higher along with three elective courses.

These recognitions reflect the dedication, professionalism, and enthusiasm of our members. They also reinforce the strength of our squadron's dual mission: education and on-the-water engagement.

Squadron Activities

As we move further into the boating season, our squadron continues to deliver a robust schedule of educational and on-the-water experiences designed to build skills, confidence, and camaraderie.

On the education front, we have successfully conducted two America's Boating Course (ABC) classes—providing participants with the foundational knowledge required to obtain state boater safety certification. These courses remain a critical entry point for new boaters and a valuable refresher for seasoned mariners.

In addition, we have offered our Boat Handling seminar series, a comprehensive six-part program focused on the practical skills needed to operate safely and confidently in our local waters. The series includes:

- Mastering the Rules of the Road
- Docking
- Boating with Confidence
- Anchoring
- Emergencies On Board
- Knots and Lines

Together, these seminars emphasize real-world application and are designed to make every participant a more capable and prepared boater.

Our marine navigation courses, covering both coastal and offshore navigation, have also been well attended—demonstrating the continued interest among members in advancing their knowledge and technical proficiency.

On the water, our cruise season is officially underway with the kickoff of our Adventure Cruises. These outings continue to be a highlight of the squadron calendar, combining exploration, seamanship, and fellowship in a way that truly defines the spirit of our organization.

Be sure to read Bob Newbert's always entertaining and detailed account of our most recent adventure cruise. If you haven't yet participated in one of these events, chances are it will quickly find its way onto your boating bucket list.

Upcoming Dinner Event: You Can't Miss It!

There is still time to sign up for our upcoming dinner, scheduled for April 11 at Spring Lake Pavilion.

The evening will feature the entertaining Captain Jim Clark, owner of Stray Cat Charters, who has been guiding anglers since 2002. Captain Jim has been featured in several magazines for his fishing expertise and has also appeared on outdoor television, including a program on the Fox Network.

This is a BYOB event, with great food and a relaxed, social atmosphere—and best of all, the cost won't break the bank.

We hope to see you there for what promises to be an enjoyable and entertaining evening.

As always, our strength lies in our members—their willingness to learn, to lead, and to support one another. From honoring those who have made a lasting impact, to celebrating achievements and looking ahead to a busy season, it's clear that our squadron is on a strong and steady course.

Here's to a safe, enjoyable, and rewarding time on the water for all.