

NAVIGATION SYSTEMS 2020 PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

January, 2020

IT'S TIME TO PLAN

While Navigation System field work does not get underway until May or June depending on your location in New England, there are many special events that have to be completed before you can get underway. Here are a few to think about:

- ✓ Recruiting new Aid Verifiers.
- ✓ Training new Aid Verifiers.
- ✓ Developing a PATON and Bridge Plan for your AOR.
- ✓ Getting commitments from your AVs for your plan.

As you will see, there is a lot of things to do in our off season.

PROGRAMS USUALLY FAIL WITHOUT GOOD PLANNING

Before getting started on an annual plan, you will need to fully understand the various schedules and potential problems that you will have to resolve in order to have a successful season. Problems can't be resolved until all of their potential issues and numbers are understood about an AOR. Often, there are many different solutions for a problem. Our job is to pick the best solution that fits the overall program needs and mold it into a plan for the coming year.

In our Auxiliary world, we interact as volunteers who use their personal resources to support our programs. Also, we have to remember that volunteers have day jobs and family commitments. When you add in some bad weather, wind and low tides issues, the realities often pose unique road blocks for staffing and operating our Navigation System activities. One NS Staff Officer recently described the process as like herding cats. It's so easy for items to fall into cracks and be missed.

In order to manage the details and problems for our 2020 NS Plan, a master listing using an Excel spreadsheet as our primary tool is being created. This document identifies the required reporting for accomplishing our 2020 PATON and Bridge number goals, along with any specific on-scene activity and rechecking needs. It will also be used it to track our 2020 performance during the underway season – May through October. The culmination of this process will be a detailed 2020 PATON and Bridge Plan for each Patrol Area in First Northern.

There are specific activities that we must complete within a Patrol Area this year.

Our first priority is to complete the scheduled PATON verifications and Bridge surveys. These PATON assignments are identified in the Harbormaster System and on the Patrol Area Plans. The Bridges are available in the Bridge Database that is located on the NS Web site. 100% of the bridges are scheduled for survey annually.

Second, it is important to follow up on the Special Rechecks or Notes. These items are identified on the PATON Plan worksheets. They reflect PATONs with previously reported discrepancies that may or may not be corrected. Follow up tasks may be assigned to either the **CG ANT Staff**, to the **District USCG Prevention Dept.**, to the **AUX NS Staff Officer** or to the **AV** who is assigned the responsibility for the Patrol Area. The Patrol Area 2020 Plan spreadsheets will be the communication, tracking and monthly reporting tool for our 2020 activity.

Thirdly, there may be PATONs identified that still have no photos on their Harbormaster record. The FSO-NS and SO-NS are assigned the responsibility to manage these problems. Note that Auxiliarists, who are not AV Qualified, may be used to photograph the PATONs or Bridges. Missing photos are identified on the AUX Harbormaster LOGON Screen and on the PATON Plan spreadsheets. Also, communicate your photo problem to your FSO-OPS or SO-OPS. Operation personnel have been very helpful in many Divisions.

POTENTIAL PLANNING SOLUTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

There are many ways to skin this cat. **Never give up when your first solution fails.** Here are some alternatives:

1. **Communicate your problems** up the chain until someone listens to you. ***The buck stops with the DSO-NS at 617-997-7423.*** Don't be afraid to leave a message. Other people may have already solved your problem. If you are new to the Auxiliary, never be afraid to ask questions. As the DSO-NS, I have been part of the Navigation Systems program since 1974. FSO-AN was the first NS Staff job that I held in the Auxiliary. If I can't answer your question, I probably know someone in the Coast Guard who will.
2. **In AORs that have a large Harbormaster presence, the HMRAP (Harbormaster Ride Along Program) program may be a solution.** In this program, the AV rides along with the Harbormaster to verify the aids. This program works well where a Harbormaster owns a lot of PATONs in an area. A major benefit is that local problems with PATONs can be mutually resolved while on scene.
3. **If you are short AVs,** we can to bring AVs into your Patrol Area from a nearby Division. You would have to provide a Flotilla facility and crew as support. We can also bring NS Teams with their facilities. Providing overnight mooring facilities for this assistance is often a requirement for this service. **Also, there is still time to recruit and train AVs this Spring.**
4. **One major problem is failure to complete scheduled assignments.** If the Auxiliary doesn't do their assigned jobs, the local CG ANT has to complete it for them. Let your NS Staff know early, if this becomes an issue, so the Coast Guard will have time to resolve these issues for you.
5. **Our underway season is very short.** Without a plan, you will end up in late September looking for facilities that will be tied up and unavailable handling annual requalification patrols. Plan to get your scheduled assignments completed in June, July and August.

6. **Upgrading your crew training should be an ongoing activity.** Switch AV assignments around so that your crew doesn't lose interest but gets direct experience handling the elements of the whole PATON and Bridge program. Encourage your crew to advance their qualifications. Help crewmembers advance to coxswain qualification and break off to form a new NS Team for your area. That's how our NS Program will grow and succeed.

AV TRAINING CAPABILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Currently, we have a lot of Navigation Systems AV training opportunities on the Navigation Systems web site. They range from procedures, Coast Guard background information, Federal Regulations for PATONs and Bridges and recorded PATON and Bridge training sessions. **New AV Candidates can start their AV training in the time that it takes to logon to the NS Web Site.** Work with your FSO-NS or SO-NS to get started. While performing this AV study, you may e-mail or phone the DSO-NS with any questions. Leave a message with your name, phone number and/or your Internet address.

We are also planning a few live training sessions for our current AVs as a "skills refresher" opportunity. These sessions will be scheduled during May which is close to the start of our underway season. Our Navigation System program has such a long layoff from November to May each year, it is easy for our AVs to forget how some of the reporting is handled on the computer. Our sessions will be designed to resolve these problems.

As we review the existing training materials, we will be sending out copies for download so you will be able get up to speed for the 2020 season a little bit at a time and have the latest information before the start of the 2020 season.

Best regards to all our wonderful Aid Verifiers and PATON program supporters.

Frank Larkin, DSO-NS First District, Northern Region.

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