

# Newspaper Article 14: Patrolling Lake Thurmond

Lake Thurmond (Clark's Lake) is a large lake, some 45 miles long, with a coastline the same size as California's. The Lake is sparsely populated along the shore line, and has relatively few recreational boats on it. This means that if you are a boater and develop a problem on the water your chances of getting assistance is not very high.

To alleviate this problem, there are several authorities that have patrol boats on the lake. The two agencies most prominent are the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) of both South Carolina and Georgia. In addition some patrol work is done by the various Sheriffs, Emergency Management Services and the Army Corps of Engineers. All of these agencies have other responsibilities and, very often, low fuel budgets.

In any event there is a need for more safety patrols on the lake. That's where the Coast Guard comes in. Along the nations coastline and on much of the inland waterways, the active duty Coast Guard does a great deal of patrol work, but there is just too much coast line to be covered, and then you add in all of the lakes like ours.. Thus the Coast Guard has commissioned its Auxiliary to do a large percentage of this patrol work.

On Lake Thurmond, there is no active duty Coast Guard, so the Auxiliary does it all.

A maritime patrol is designed to do several things all at once, multitasking if you will. Just being out there adds some safety to boaters on the lake. Auxiliary vessels can and do tow disabled boats to a nearby dock or launch site. The crews are also trained to address a multitude of boating and boater emergencies, which include health problems.

In addition a patrol may 'counsel' errant boaters that are disobeying a law or safe boating practices. The patrol crew has no law enforcement authority – it's a matter of 'gentle persuasion'.

Security of our lake's environment is a part of every patrol. Suspicious behavior around our bridges, dams, launch ramps and marinas is reported – through channels – to the Department of Homeland Security.

Of major importance is the inspection, as to condition and location, of all the aids to navigation (ATONs) on the lake. There are over 150 channel and mid-channel buoys on Lake Thurmond. They keep boaters in safe waters and parts of this ATON system are checked on every patrol. Off station, damaged and missing buoys are reported to the Army Corps of Engineers for their attention.

Keeping in mind that the Coast Guard's purpose is to reduce maritime risk on Lake Thurmond, this is a story of one recent patrol.

Our Saturday patrol starts at 10 AM from the Savannah Lakes Resort gas dock. The mission commander is Coxswain Carl Dearmin using his personnel boat, the Misty Cove. The crew consists of Coxswain (acting as crew), Crew Trainees . This patrol will concentrate on crew training.

All patrols must operate under orders from the Coast Guard. Our orders come from Coast Guard Station Charleston. We contact them by cell phone to activate orders, report to them once every hour and secure the patrol at day's end.

Being under orders accomplishes several things. First the vessel "Misty Cove" becomes a Coast Guard Facility, thus allowing the Coast Guard to reimburse the boat owner fuel costs and all crew meals. Secondly, the crew is considered Coast Guard and they are covered with government liability protection.

After activating our orders, the crew completes a lengthy checklist which reviews the location and condition of all necessary equipment. After checklist completion, the crew goes through a risk/reward exercise to determine if the mission should really be a go. This mission was a go but with the caution that it might have to be aborted mid-afternoon due to thunderstorms.

After cast off the mission proceeded to a small cove where several anchoring evolutions were practiced. Then off on a 6 mile, slow cruise downriver,

During the cruise the crew practiced standing lookout watch, using the marine radio, standing helm watch (that's operating the boat) practicing man-overboard procedures and participating in knot-tying exercises.

Everything on this patrol was 'operations normal' as we encountered no problems on the water. That is not often the case. Two weeks ago we towed a boat that, after an all-night anchoring, awoke up with a dead battery. Last week we had a 'friendly counseling' with a group of fishermen who had tied off to a mid-channel marker buoy. Not only is that against the law but it prohibited other boaters from seeing the buoy. The fisherman were unaware and appreciated the 'council'

Thus the patrol ended at 3 PM, we did get wet but prudently missed the thunderstorms.

If a boater is in distress, our vessels can be contacted on channel 16 on a marine radio. Or, if you see us around, we are clearly marked as Coast Guard, just stand up and slowly raise and lower your arms – a universal call for help.

The CSRA Auxiliary Flotilla currently has three boats designated as Coast Guard Facility boats with several Crew members and Coxswains. This allows patrols most weekends and for special events. However, this being a large lake, to properly patrol it we will need at least 10 qualified boats, 10 Coxswains and 15 crew members.

If you are at least 17 years old and a US citizen with an interest in participating in this kind of program, whether you own a boat or not, we would like to talk with you. Broadening our ranks will allow us to adhere to the Coast Guard's call of 'Semper Paratus' – always ready!