

# **Event Coordinator's Handbook**

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## **OCOQUAN YACHT CLUB**

Founded 1984

P.O. Box 469, Occoquan, VA 22125

Web site: <http://www.OccoquanYachtClub.org>

Member Club of the Potomac River Yacht Clubs Association,  
Chesapeake Bay Yacht Clubs Association  
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## Thank you for Volunteering. Now What?

It happens to all of us: there's a call for a volunteer and out of the blue, your arm shoots up. Just like that, you have a job on your hands, like coordinating one of the more than two dozen events the Occoquan Yacht Club schedules yearly. Or perhaps your arm has volunteered your services on the OYC Board.

What happens next? Well, first of all, on behalf of the Club, please accept our warmest thanks! Second, you're in luck: with this guide, you can organize a successful cruise, land-based event, or Board-sponsored event, and have fun doing it.

Here is some general guidance for you. There are also specific details and more than a few hard-learned lessons stirred in, all intended as a basic foundation to help Coordinators do their job. Some information serves primarily as a reference for successive OYC Boards, so pay attention, future OYC Board Members! OYC will update this guide periodically with new information, most of which will come from *you*—after your coordination job is done.

## Planning is Everything

One of the major strengths of OYC is the comprehensive schedule of events that its members have annually enjoyed. These events are the result of careful planning and on-site execution, with an emphasis on attention to detail.

There are generally two types of cruises: weekend and long cruises.

**Weekend cruises** have included such destinations as:

Early Bird Cruise	National Harbor
Memorial Day Cruise	Colonial Beach
PRYCA Cobb Island Days	Cobb Island
Fourth of July	National Harbor/Washington Channel
PRYCA loat-In	Coles Point Marina
Labor Day Cruise	Corinthian Yacht Club
End-of-Summer Party	Colonial Beach
Hardy Souls Cruise	National Harbor
Santa Cruise	Occoquan

The **one- and two-weeklong cruises** are big events. These cruises have typically been scheduled in July and August, and are occasionally scheduled to incorporate other weekend trips. The upper, middle, and lower Chesapeake Bay are the areas generally selected for cruising. The Coordinators vary the area of cruising from year to year, and also try to vary the marinas selected to include new destinations in addition to old favorites. The first night's stop is usually on the lower Potomac; the last night's stop should be scheduled so that the next day's cruise does not exceed six hours for the slower boats.

The Vice Commodore is responsible for collecting member input and preparing a cruise schedule. The schedule is developed at a Pre-PlanFest meeting at which veteran cruise participants are solicited for their input, and is finalized at the annual PlanFest, which is generally held in February. As a result of these planning activities, a date and destination is set for the year's cruises; however, in a few cases the date and location of certain cruise

events sponsored by OYC is selected by the Coordinator based on information received as a result of coordinating the cruise.

The Vice Commodore will provide each cruise coordinator with a spreadsheet listing of the members who have signed up to express an interest for each cruise event. Included on this listing will be:

- Member name(s)
- Boat Name
- Boat length
- Boat beam (width)
- Boat draft
- Power requirements (30 or 50 amp)
- Telephone (cell) number(s)
- Email address

## **Pass the Word to All Hands**

The best-planned event will sink upon launching if no one knows it's going to occur. The responsibility for publicizing each event resides with the Event Coordinator. Board members will publicize the OYC schedule of events in their monthly *Daymarker* articles, and *The Daymarker* editor will headline the next four events each month on the back page of the newsletter.

Coordinators should submit articles to *The Daymarker* ideally for two successive months prior to the sign-up deadline. The copy deadline for *The Daymarker* is the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month.

About a month before the cruise, the coordinator should prepare a short announcement of the cruise and submit it for email transmission to the membership as an email "blast".

The Coordinator should also ask Fleet Captains to publicize the event person-to-person at their marinas and on their respective docks.

Why so much publicity? There are several reasons: (a) to communicate with potential cruise participants who did not indicate interest at the Planfest or March general membership meeting; (b) to remind procrastinators; (c) to alert members for whom this might be new information; (d) to give the indecisive time to decide. The point here is, no matter how wonderful the event, you as Coordinator will have to help some folks get off the dime and sign up. Also, it's important to alert your fellow Club members to an upcoming deadline often—as the Club grows and events become more popular, late sign-ups are increasingly likely to be disappointed to find they've been shut out of oversubscribed events.

The Coordinator's article should include information about the cruise, deposit requirements, refund policy, and registration information. Usually, the Cruise Coordinator will prepare an email-formatted registration form. This should include the address to mail a sign-up coupon and deposit check (usually the Coordinator's mailing address). The coupon must include the following information for each boat:

Boat Name  
Crew name(s) and telephone (cell) number(s)  
Number of participants on board  
Boat length  
Boat beam (width)  
Boat draft  
Power requirements (30 or 50 amp)  
Number of nights attending (Arrival & Departure)  
Dinner reservations, if applicable

The article and the emailed sign-up coupon should include a specific deadline for response. To avoid frustration and wasted effort, the Coordinator should set a sign-up deadline with sufficient flexibility, since many responses tend to be received after the deadline.

The information/planning necessary for one week or two week cruises is similar to that for the weekend cruises. The Coordinator should acquire the necessary participant information (boat length, beam, number of participants, power requirements, dinner reservations, etc.).

The Coordinator should send each participant a written itinerary/float plan that provides a list of destinations, including marina telephone numbers, estimated daily cruising distances and planned activities at each stop. Typically, the Coordinator arranges a daily happy hour on the dock or aboard a volunteer's boat at each marina. For a two-night stopover, one night should be planned for grilling out and the other for eating at a local restaurant. Separate or phased dinner reservations should be made when the dinner group is larger than 10 people.

The week before the planned departure, the Coordinator should reconfirm reservations and other arrangements with the marinas on the schedule.

## Reservations and Deposits

The signups at the January Planfest and March Membership meeting only indicate *interest: they do not secure a reservation.*

The coordinator determines the deposit amount required, if any, taking into consideration any marina requirements, and advertises it in *The Daymarker*, with notice that checks are to be made out to the Coordinator, unless otherwise specified. The Coordinator works with the Treasurer to deposit them, and ensures that the marina is paid accordingly. The Coordinator also uses the log of sign-ups received with deposits to determine participation on a first-come, first-served basis, regardless of whether or not an advance deposit is required by the marina.

OYC has this policy to add credibility to marina arrangements and to determine a cutoff point when events are over-subscribed. Many marinas take deposits as assurance that the slips they have set aside for OYC will be used. Deposits may not be refundable after a certain date depending on marina policy; if cancellation is necessary, prospective participants must be advised of this in advance publicity.

## Coordination with the Destination

Most of the cruises will have been programmed at the PlanFest based on popular destinations and/or events, such as Potomac River Yacht Club Association activities. However, some cruises are less structured and will require more creativity on the part of the Cruise Coordinator. This is especially true for the longer cruises, for which a general area and timeframe for the event will be determined at the January Planfest but it is left to the Coordinator to fill in the details. For the longer cruises, destinations extend to the Chesapeake Bay, New Jersey, and North Carolina.

In planning for the destinations for these cruises, the Coordinator must determine the availability of:

- An adequate number of slips, which meet, power, length, and beam requirements of the participating boats.
- Food services, such as restaurants and grills
- Additional amenities (shopping, water sports, swimming pools, tennis court, ground transportation, etc.) obtain information for multiple sites

As a general rule, the cruise stops should be no farther apart than 3-4 hours of cruising time.

The marina selection process will involve early communication with the operators of the site—by telephone, fax, face-to-face, e-mail, etc.

In working with marinas, early contact is essential, both by phone and with follow-up in writing. Once the number of participants is known, the Coordinator should give the destination marina(s) the names of boats, sizes, power requirements, durations of stay, dinner reservations, and slip deposits.

Owners and operators of any destination or event facility may change over time as might physical configurations and availability. Therefore, each site must be arranged through its owner/management annually.

The Coordinator must also complete other arrangements with the marina and cruise participants, including the following:

- Activities—volleyball, picnic, local tours, etc.
- Correspondence/itinerary—send a letter or flier to each participant outlining the cruise arrangements and providing a schedule of events, including plans for getting underway and returning to home port. The letter should specifically let participants know that the Coordinator will assist them in making transit arrangements.
- Schedule of events—prior to or on arrival at the destination marina, each participant should be provided with a schedule of events. The schedule can be very simple (one page, preferably), and should provide all members with a timetable for meals, cocktail/dock parties, and information on available amenities. The schedule of events should include information regarding refueling and pump-out arrangements.
- Dinner plans:

- Restaurant Reservations—if the Coordinator made or will make arrangements for participants to eat at a restaurant, then that information should be included in the schedule of events. A meal choice, if applicable, should be provided.
- Other plans—for two-night cruises, one night should be planned for grilling, and one for eating out, with potluck happy hours both days.

OYC Banner—the Coordinator should get the club banner from the Rear Commodore and carry it to the cruise or event.

## **OYC Calendar of Membership Meetings**

OYC holds Membership meetings the third Saturday in March and October. The Membership Meetings are held at various places due to the fact that OYC does not have a club house. When the actual dates are set, the Board will make the reservations.

### **March General Membership Meeting**

The Board plans the general membership meeting. The Rear Commodore will ensure that soft drinks, beer (if allowed by the facility), plates, utensils and cups are available for the meetings. Members are requested to bring potluck dishes including entrees and desserts. The Rear Commodore and volunteers should have drinks iced down in coolers and setups available at least one hour prior to the event. The Annual Photo Contest also takes place at this meeting. Award certificates or gifts go to the first, second, and third place winners in five categories: General Boating, People, Animal, Landscape and Photo-shop Art. The Rear Commodore should bring a placard for each category. A designated Board member should also ensure prizes or certificates are available. The Board should arrive at the site in sufficient time to arrange the chairs and tables for dining. The Commodore should prepare an agenda for all in attendance. The Secretary should record the minutes.

### **October Election of Officers/General Membership Meeting**

This meeting has evolved into a multi-functional party typically held at the Fairfax Yacht Club. The Board plans this meeting. The Rear Commodore and volunteers should have food, drinks, and setups available at least one hour prior to the event. Tables for the chili should be arranged in an area to which electricity is available. Additional tables for side dishes, condiments, plates, utensils, etc., and desserts will also be needed. The Board should provide decorations (usually available from the shed) and recruit judges for the chili and dessert contests. The Board should purchase prizes and/or prepare award certificates. The Treasurer provides a fiscal report, and the Secretary provides minutes of the previous year's meeting and ballots for the election of the new Board, if necessary. The Commodore should prepare an agenda for all in attendance and announce the slate of Board nominees. The Secretary should record the minutes.

## **OYC Land-based Event Calendar**

For land-based events where the Club provides hamburgers, hot dogs, utensils, plates, condiments, beer, soft drinks, etc., consumption on average per attendee has been as follows:

- 1 hamburger and bun
- 1 hotdog and bun
- 2 soft drinks/bottled water
- 2 beers

Excess soft drinks, beer, and unopened condiments may be stored in the Club's shed. Anything else should be stored elsewhere or discarded.

The Rear Commodore purchases all required food, beverages, and utensils, and also arranges for trashcans, ice, and coolers as necessary. The Treasurer is responsible for providing tickets for "50-50" or other raffles at land-based events. The Board will determine in advance whether the prize will be merchandise or 50% of the collected cash.

Finally, the Rear Commodore should ensure that the OYC banner is displayed at land-based events as well as most cruise events.

### **Planfest**

The annual Planfest is traditionally held in February. In recent years, it has been held at the clubhouse of the Fairfax Yacht Club. The Board plans this event and should provide the OYC banner, PA system, pens, event sign up sheets, clipboards, nametags, and markers, and sign in sheets. The Coordinator typically orders munchies type foods.

The Vice Commodore customarily presents a draft schedule of events for the membership's review and comments at the Planfest. At that meeting, volunteer members sign up to coordinate a variety of cruises and land-based events sponsored by the Club and other organizations.

At the Planfest (and again at the March general membership meeting), Coordinators will collect names of prospective participants on sign-up sheets for their respective events.

### **May Flag Raising Ceremony**

The OYC Board coordinates this event with the Occoquan Harbor Marina, planning for both outdoor and indoor facilities—the latter especially important in the event of inclement weather. The club provides hot dogs, hamburgers, beer, sodas, condiments, and paper products.

The OYC Board and set-up volunteers should arrive at the event site at least one hour prior to the event. The Board should provide a P.A. system, boom box and tape of the "Star Spangled Banner." The Rear Commodore, together with Board volunteers, will set up tent, tables, trashcans, coolers, drinks, etc. (Note: Ice is available at no charge from OHM. In addition, the Board should ensure that a 20" x 30" OYC pennant is available. Dickie Lynn of OHM usually stores the pennant over the winter. OHM has traditionally provided the

American and Virginia flags. We ask members to bring side dishes and desserts. Weather permitting, this event has been held at the picnic area in front of the OHM office, adjacent to the OHM grills. Three club tables should be set up in a U-shape, underneath the club tent. These hold all of the barbecued food, side dishes, dessert, plates, utensils, etc.

The Secretary maintains a list of dignitaries to invite.

### **December OYC Holiday/Change of Watch Party**

The OYC Holiday Party/Change of Watch Ceremony is coordinated by the Vice Commodore. This event has been held at Occoquan restaurants, the Fort Belvoir Officers Club, the Fort Belvoir Community Club, and more recently, the Laurel Hills Country Club in Lorton. The number of participants has varied, but a typical number has been 20-25% of the member families. Because so many possible sites are booked significantly in advance, the Board should select a site early and have the appropriate arrangements, including contract and deposit, completed by June of each year. In addition, a contract for the entertainment, e.g., disc jockey, should be signed as soon as possible, and no later than the end of summer.

Also in advance, Board members will purchase nametags and burgees for the incoming Board. At the Club's expense, the incoming Commodore will purchase a gift for the outgoing Commodore, and the outgoing Commodore will purchase gifts for the outgoing Board. Board members will also ensure that the Bent Prop award and Commodore's Cup are engraved with the recipients' names.

The site vendor will arrange the actual configuration of the dining room. However, Board members should ensure that the room arrangement is suitable for the event. This includes making arrangements for a podium and microphone, and a table for gifts and awards. Board members will arrange for table decorations and favors, and prepare a program outlining the evening's events for the attendees.

### **Events Sponsored by Other Organizations**

The members of Occoquan Yacht Club have been very active in events sponsored or supported by the Potomac River Yacht Clubs Association (PRYCA):

- PRYCA Change of Watch (January)
- Cobb Island Days (June)
- Annual Float-In (July)
- End-of-Summer (September)

Other yacht clubs have also invited OYC members to participate in their events. Naturally, the dates of cruises and land-based events sponsored by other organizations are provided to OYC to be integrated into the OYC Annual Schedule. Accordingly, the OYC Coordinators must advise the membership regarding the date and site of these events. When appropriate, the Coordinator will collect deposits and make reservations—providing boat dimensions, power requirements, and any other requested information.

## **Did We Have a Good Time?**

After basking in the glow of adulation from all participants, the Event Coordinator should prepare a follow-up article for *The Daymarker* reporting on the event. The article provides "closure" to reaffirm to all readers that "we did what we said we would do," gives the cruise or event participants an enjoyable record of the event, and encourages those who did not participate to join in the club's successful outings in the future. In short, the follow-up article is just good PR, inside and outside the club (other clubs get our newsletter).

## **CRUISE COORDINATOR CHECK LIST**

### **Early Coordination:**

Receive and review the list of interested members from the Club's Vice Commodore.

Download and or review the "Event Coordinator's Handbook from the web site at [www.occoquanyachtclub.org](http://www.occoquanyachtclub.org).

Make initial contact with marina or facility. Establish tentative number of slips/general power or special needs. Review slip/power fees and cancellation policies as well as fees to reserve slips. Make sure your name/phone and e-mail is known. Review any special events, food reservation, pool availability and communication (hailing channel, etc.)

### **Two-Three Months Prior to Event:**

Contact Members showing interest on the Planfest sign-up sheet by e-mail or phone to get commitment.

Prepare an article for publication in the "Daymarker" outlining the cruise details to include fees, deposits and data/information needs and send to the Editor. A simple coupon format works well and it can be returned with any fees due for registration. Repeat your article each month prior to the event unless fully booked.

Re-contact marina point of contact and confirm slips, food reservation and/or special events and keep the marina informed. If numbers change keep all informed. Plan a schedule of events with specific time or general schedule, as appropriate.

### **As Event Approches:**

Create a group contact (e-mail addresses) list for the cruise. Send e-mail providing names/boat name & cell phone number of those attending, provide "schedule of Events", remind of cancellation policy, and provide your contact numbers as well as the Marina contact numbers.

Prepare a welcome folder with marina info, copies of final schedule and any other information available. Contact Rear Commodore to obtain a Club Banner to display on the cruise.

Coordinate cruise plans, as appropriate. Identify if new boater/members are doing a "first" cruise and see if they may want assistance with navigation or they may want to cruise with another member. Don't let them forget a power cord or required power splitter, needed lines or a fresh water hose.

Welcome cruise members as they arrive at the marina or facility and assist the captain with the lines. Distribute "welcome packets" and have a great time. Docking can be an experience in itself...many a tale has been told.

**Following The Cruise:**

Prepare article with Pictures, if available, for the Daymarker to let other know what they missed and to share memories with cruise members.

Send appropriate digital photo with caption to the web master for posting to the restricted portion of the Club's web site and to the Club's Historian.

Return Club banner to Rear Commodore.