

Event Coordinator's Handbook

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OCOCOQUAN YACHT CLUB

Founded 1984

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Member Club of the Potomac River Yacht Clubs Association,
Chesapeake Bay Yacht Clubs Association
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Introduction

This document consists of two general areas of information for the Occoquan Yacht Club (OYC). The first area deals with cruises and is designed to be a cruise coordinators handbook. The second general body of information in this document deals with OYC general information and land-based events.

I. Cruise Coordinator Handbook

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. So, what happens next?

Well, first of all, on behalf of the Club, please accept our warmest thanks! The foundation of our Club's success relies on its volunteer's willingness to contribute. That's the key to making a better experience for all of us. Second, you're in luck: with this guide, you can organize successful cruise events and may even have some fun doing it.

This document contains general guidance for you. There are specific details and more than a few hard-learned lessons stirred in, all intended as a basic foundation to help cruise coordinators do their job. OYC will update this guide periodically with new information, most of which will come from *you*...after your coordination job is done.

I.1 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 dedicated volunteers, careful planning and open communication.

There are generally two types of cruises: weekend and long cruises. Responsibility for safety and fun lie within both the coordinator and participating members.

Cruises have included such destinations as:

- Early Bird Cruise National Harbor/Wharf Market Docks
- Memorial Day Cruise Solomon's Island
- PRYCA Cobb Island Days Cobb Island
- Fourth of July Washington Channel/Wharf Market Docks
- PRYCA Float-In Coles Point Marina
- Baseball Cruise The Yards Marina
- Labor Day Cruise Colonial Beach
- Hardy Souls Cruise National Harbor
- Parade of Lights Washington DC/Alexandria
- Tide's Inn Cruise Tide's Inn, Irvington

- Upper or Lower Bay Cruise Chesapeake Bay Locations
- Raft-ups Mattawoman/ Belmont Bay/etc.

Week long cruises are big events. These cruises are typically 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 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 collects member input and coordinates the annual cruise schedule. The Pre-Planfest meeting is where veteran cruise participants prepare a draft which is finalized at the annual Planfest. The Planfest is normally held in conjunction with the March General Membership Meeting. The Planfest is where we complete our solicitation of general membership inputs, finalize the planned cruises, solicit volunteers for cruise coordinators, and begin the signup period for participants. Realize that adjustments to the schedule or even individual cruises can occur during the season, for any number of reasons (we'll discuss that more later).

Following the Planfest, the Vice Commodore finalizes the schedule and the webmaster posts it on the OYC website for members to sign up. If you are a cruise coordinator, you will receive special access to the OYC website where you will see the OYC member status (YES, No, or MAYBE), their boat's name, length, power requirements, etc. Based on the number of boats, the coordinator then calls ahead to ensure the destination has enough availability and attempts to negotiate a group rate. Once the coordinator has finalized the reservations and notified the participants, it is the responsibility each vessel's Captain to arrange payment (or subsequent cancellation), either through the marina directly or booking sites such as Snag-a-Slip or Dockwa. When using Snag-a-Slip or Dockwa the coordinator will need to establish a discount code with the marina for members to enter when making reservations. The captain will need to provide the following information when making a reservation:

- Member name(s)
- Boat Name
- Boat length
- Boat beam (width)
- Boat draft
- Power requirements (30 or 50 amp)
- Cell phone number(s)
- Email address
- Comment (For Snag a Slip or Dockwa members will typically enter a code here)

I.2 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. Fortunately, we make that easy for you. Cruise coordinators are added to a special group by the web master so that when you log in, you will see

a new option appear on the left side of the web site called [Cruise Coordinator Reports](#). When you select this link, you will see three options. The first option you may need is:

- Report of All Email Addresses

This option will allow you to send a news blast to the club telling them in advance, about your cruise. We recommend one news blast and we recommend that you put the names in the Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) field. After the information has been sent to all parties it is a good idea to only use the two other options:

- For the Cruise Coordinator - list of participants, contact information and related boat information.
- For the Cruise Coordinator / Dock Master:

For the Cruise Coordinator - list of participants, contact information and related boat information is a longer report that shows all of the members boat and contact information as well as who has signed up as a yes or a maybe. For the Cruise Coordinator / Dock Master produces the information a dock master would need. Once you have selected your event, you will see an email list so that you can easily send emails to all parties that have expressed an interest in your cruise. Using this email list moving forward will eliminate emails to the rest of the club that have decided not to attend this event.

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 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.).

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 25th 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 send each participant a written itinerary/float plan that provides a list of destinations, including marina website, telephone numbers, estimated daily cruising distances and planned activities at each stop. The coordinator should also gather expected float plans with the expected departure and arrival from each of the boats attending the event.

Typically, the coordinator arranges a happy hour on the dock or aboard a volunteer's boat at each marina.

For a two-night stopover, one night is suggested 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. A sign-up list should be generated for meals prepared on the dock.

The Coordinator's article should include information about the cruise, deposit requirements, refund policy, and registration information. The article and instructions for reservations 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 week before the planned departure, the coordinator should reconfirm reservations and other arrangements with the marinas on the schedule.

I.3 Reservations and Deposits

The signups from the web site resulting from the Planfest and March Membership meeting only indicate *interest: they do not secure a reservation.*

Occasionally, you will find group rates are only available when purchased in full and in advance... especially for event tickets. As the cruise coordinator, you are **not** expected to pay for everyone up front! You certainly may if you wish, but practical experience has shown and most members will expect, that you set a due date to collect their money up front (your preference: cash, check, Venmo, etc.). Set an appropriate time that allows you to meet the vendor's requirements and announce it through your blast emails and *Daymarker*. Then you will have the money in hand and can purchase everyone's tickets at the discount rate without cost to you. Stragglers will inevitably show up. Try to accommodate them if you can, but ultimately, it's their responsibility and not yours.

This is one of the trickiest responsibilities of a cruise coordinator and it's imperative you make sure the participants have all the facts. Marinas may ask for deposits as assurance that the slips they have set aside for OYC will be used. Another common situation is they may ask for Captain's payment by a certain deadline to get the bulk rate (for example, a PROMO Discount Code in Dockwa may only be good for 2 weeks). It is the cruise coordinators responsibility to make sure all participants are aware of what the cancellation policy is as deposits may not be refundable after a certain date depending on marina policy. If cancellation is necessary; the participant is responsible for canceling their own reservation. The participants themselves are responsible for contacting marinas to cancel reservations and are liable for any cost incurred for event tickets, prepaid group dinner reservations or the like. It is OYC's policy the captain of each vessel is responsible for his or her decision to participate in or cancel their reservations for an event.

I.4 Inclement Weather Cancellations

It is the coordinator's responsibility to make safety the number one priority. Prior to the cruise the coordinator should monitor the appropriate weather channels and Coast Guard warnings to ensure the safety of the members on the cruise. It's important that the coordinator make a decision 48 hours prior to the cruise to "go", or "no go", and inform the cruise participants. This will allow time for refunds in most marinas. If the coordinator needs help in making the decision, the Commodore, Vice Commodore or Rear Commodore will be more than happy to advise. It is always better to be safe than sorry.

I.5 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 allow for more creativity by the Cruise Coordinator. This is especially true for the longer cruises, for which a general area and timeframe is set at the Planfest but it is left to the coordinator to fill in the details. Destinations can range from the upper Chesapeake Bay and as far south as North Carolina.

Coordinators should account for:

Weather conditions for travel

An adequate number of slips, which meet, power, length, and beam requirements of the participating boats.

Food services, such as restaurants/dock parties, grills, tables for food on docks, paper plates, plastic silverware, napkins, trash bags, etc.

Additional amenities (shopping, water sports, swimming pools, tennis court, ground transportation, live music, etc.) obtain information for multiple sites.

Destinations vary based upon the speed of the flotilla, generally no more than 3-6 hours of cruising time and consider the speed of the slowest vessel.

The marina selection can be a fun, collaborative process which involves early communication with both the destinations as well as the participants.

Pass the word to all hands exactly as described above. Ensure the destinations know what to expect, and the Captain's know what their responsibilities are for slip payment, ticket purchase, advance costs, cancellation policies, and the like. The only thing different is that you have multiple stops that you (and everyone else) must keep straight.

In addition to the site selection, the party planning can also be a fun, collaborative event. Set up a schedule of events that balances rest and relaxation with a chance to explore new sights, local food, and so on. Solicit volunteers to help you arrange the activities. Some examples include:

- Activities—volleyball, picnic, winery tours, historical sights, etc.
- Typical dinner and brunch arrangements include:

- Restaurant, menu selection (not everyone eats shellfish!), time, transportation
- Cookout: Potluck, picnic area with grills
- Catered: some marinas can host private events, such as a crab fest
- Schedule of events — be sure each participant has a current schedule of events. The **KISS** principle applies, but make sure all members know the timetable for meals, cocktail/dock parties, and information on available amenities. The schedule of events should also include each participant's contact information. You will need that if you need to make any changes to the plan.

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

I.6 After-Action Report

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 gives the cruise or event participants an enjoyable record of the event, and encourages those who did not participate to join in future activities. In short, the follow-up article is just good PR, inside and outside of the club. Post appropriate digital photos to the members only Facebook page where the Webmaster, Historian, and Daymarker Editor can access them.

I.7 A Word About Raft-Ups...

RAFTING UP IS A PRIVILEGE, NOT A RIGHT

There's nothing like floating on the water in Mattawoman Creek or somewhere on the Potomac on a warm, sunny day! This is another enjoyable way to get to know other boaters in our club. There are some simple etiquette and safety procedures which must be followed to ensure everyone feels comfortable and has a good time.

If you'd like to generate interest for, or plan a raft-up, use the OYC Members Only Facebook site to get the word out. Be specific about the location, meet up time, expectations, and ensure appropriate contact information is available. It is important to note that OYC has two Facebook pages, a public Facebook page and a private Facebook page. The public page is visible to anybody. The private OYC Members Only Facebook page is only visible to people who are OYC members in good standing and have been specifically added to that private group. It is not recommended that you include personal information, phone numbers or names of specific attendees on the public Facebook page.

I.7.1 Before you tie up:

1. Hail the captain or coordinator on the radio to make your intentions known and request permission to raft up. You will be given instructions as to which boat you will tie up to as well as how and when to approach the raft-up.

2. You must have 3 (size appropriate) fenders down - at the bow, midship, and stern
3. You must have 3 lines ready - at the bow, midship, and stern
4. A current safety sticker is highly advised. Physical evidence of this inspection gives members of the raft-up a sense of security and safety.
5. Come bearing food, drinks and other supplies such as paper products, trash bags, and floating toys. Raft-ups are social occasions and as with any club event their success relies on member contributions.
6. A good rule of thumb is that there should be 1 anchor deployed for every 2 boats in the raft-up.
7. How many boats is too many boats? The coordinator decides. This can be tricky. Importantly, think about the size of the boats, the weather, location, and experience of the participants.
8. If you plan on staying the night, make sure to indicate that before tying up. Boats overnighing should be in the center of the raft-up.
9. Remember - it's the captain's prerogative to allow a raft up on their boat.

I.7.2 Leaving the raft-up:

Let the coordinator of the raft-up or the captain of the vessel you're tied to know of your intentions to leave. Secure your belongings and remember to gather your personal items from other boats. Make sure you have ample help to untie your boat. Listen for directions from your neighboring captain, untying in a manner that facilitates a natural departure. Gauge the wind/current, and slowly pull away. Remember to stow your fenders!

I.7.3 A few reasons to be asked to leave from (or denied) a raft-up:

1. Unsafe conditions
2. Operating any vessel in an unsafe manner
3. Any action that threatens the safety of raft-up participants
4. Any action that threatens to damage property
5. Too many boats in the raft-up
6. No safety sticker - the captain of the anchor boat's prerogative
7. Comfort zone - this is the overarching reason. Every captain and crew should feel safe and comfortable about tying up with another boat. Captain unanimity is a must for all raft-up related actions.

I.8 CRUISE COORDINATOR CHECKLIST

I.8.1 Early Coordination

- Download and review the list of interested members from the Club's website: www.occoquanyachtclub.com - Cruise Coordinator Reports
- Download and review the "Event Coordinator's Handbook from the website
- 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.)

I.8.2 Two-Three Months Prior to Event

- A group contact (e-mail addresses and phone numbers) list for the cruise is auto generated on the website for users who responded yes or maybe to the event. Login to the website and select Cruise Coordinator Reports.
- Contact Members showing interest on the OYC Website by e-mail or phone to get commitment. Turn the maybes into a yes.
- 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. Remind members to sign up online. 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 as necessary and keep the marina informed. If numbers change keep all informed. Plan a schedule of events with specific time or general schedule, as appropriate.

I.8.3 As Event Approaches

- Periodically review the sign ups on the website to ensure you have the most updated information. (Stragglers are automatically added to the website - you have to review the website to assure your information is current and that the marina has current information)
- Send an e-mail providing names/boat name of those attending, provide a schedule of events, remind everyone of the cancellation policy, and provide your contact numbers as well as the Marina contact numbers.

- Periodically contact the marina(s) to check on individual reservations and payments
- Prepare a welcome email with marina info, final schedule and any other information available
- Contact the 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.
- Provide slip assignments to participants as you receive them. You are not required to move boats around, but if you can be helpful as some people may have location requests, that’s always appreciated.

I.8.4 At Cruise and Upon Return

- Encourage cruise members to post a float plan by email or text. A float plan to friends or family is great, but telling the cruise coordinator when to expect you day/time can be as effective.
- Welcome cruise members as they arrive at the marina or facility and assist the captain with the lines. Provide a welcome cocktail upon arrival. This is a great way to kick off a fun OYC voyage!
- Distribute any necessary items such as tickets, vouchers, brochures etc... and have a great time
- Take pictures - and ask others to do the same
- Prepare an article with pictures for the Daymarker to let others know what they missed (!) and to share memories with cruise members
- Post appropriate digital photos to the members only Facebook page where the Webmaster, Historian, and Daymarker Editor can access them.
- Return the Club banner to the Rear Commodore

II. OYC General Information

II.1 OYC Membership Meetings

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

II.2 March General Membership Meeting and Planfest

This is our biggest meeting of the year and it sets the tone for the upcoming season. In addition to membership voting (e.g. Bylaw changes), it's also the Planfest. The Rear Commodore ensures water, plates, utensils and cups are available and members are requested to bring potluck dishes, including entrees and desserts and their drink of choice. The Board should arrive at the site in sufficient time to arrange the chairs and tables for the meeting. As with any other Board meeting, the Commodore prepares the agenda and the Secretary records the minutes.

II.3 October Election of Officers/General Membership Meeting/Chili Cook-Off/*Photo Contest

This meeting is typically held at the Fairfax Yacht Club or another location of choice. 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 Rear Commodore provides paper products (usually available from the shed), decorations, drinks and recruits judges for the chili contests. The Photo Contest award certificates (or gifts) go to the first, second, and third place winners in five categories: General Boating, People, Pets, Places, and Fanta-Sea. The Rear Commodore and volunteers will bring a placard for each category as well as a display board, chips and buckets for voting (stored in the shed), in addition to the awards. The Rear Commodore purchases prizes and/or prepares award certificates. The Treasurer provides a fiscal report and presents the budget for the coming year, and the Secretary provides minutes of the previous year's meeting and ballots for the election of the new board. The Commodore prepares an agenda for all in attendance and announces the slate of Board nominees. The Secretary writes the slate, tabulates the votes and records the minutes.

*NOTE: The Photo Contest is popular with the club and in the past has been held during the General Membership Meeting in March. In order to diversify, the Photo Contest can be held at any time but might be best at the end of boating season rather than at the beginning. The Rear Commodore can decide between having it at the Fall Land Event in September or at the October General Membership Meeting.

II.4 The Shed...

OYC has a shed in the Holly Acres storage lot. The Rear Commodore holds the keys to the lot and the gate. The shed contains a myriad of items including trash cans, barbeque tools, paper products, awnings,

decorations, and our club corn hole boards with bean bags. Items should be kept in plastic bins to prevent exposure to the elements as well as the critters who visit and tend to inhabit the space. Please keep the shed neat and orderly.

II.5 Nuts and Bolts...

Land events are the domain of the Rear Commodore. This is a large job - one that requires planning, patience and imagination. The Rear Commodore secures the venue, purchases all required food, beverages, decorations, and utensils, and arranges for trash cans, ice, and coolers as necessary. As stated above, many of these items are stored in the shed at Holly Acres.

Planning for membership participation can be challenging. No one wants to waste food or be caught short on supplies however, this process can be somewhat elusive. Land event participation is included in membership dues. Every member who attends should expect to be fed. Sending a news blast, Evite, Punchbowl, Paperless Post or other online invitation to the group may help in planning. Better to have too much than too little, but be aware that many members will not R.S.V.P., so it can be a challenge.

Note: Land-based events are themed at the Rear Commodore's behest. In the past we've had luaus, boater's backyard barbecues, Mexican fiestas... You plan it, the membership will come!

Finally, the Rear Commodore should ensure that the OYC banner is displayed at land-based events and readily available for cruise coordinators.

II.6 Spring Flag Raising Ceremony

The Flag Raising represents the beginning of our boating season, is typically held the last weekend of April or the first weekend of May. The OYC Board coordinates this event with the chosen marina, planning for both outdoor and indoor facilities. The latter is especially important in the event of inclement weather. The club provides hot dogs, hamburgers, beer, sodas, condiments, and paper products (or - if the Rear Commodore wishes, another type of themed meal is appropriate). It is always advisable to include BYOB if something other than the aforementioned beverages is desired. The OYC Board and set-up volunteers should arrive at the event site at least one hour prior to the event. The Rear Commodore should provide a P.A. system, music source and recording (or singer) of the "Star Spangled Banner." The Rear Commodore, together with Board volunteers, will set up tent, tables, trashcans, coolers, drinks, etc. In addition, the Commodore should ensure that a 20" x 30" OYC pennant is available. We ask members to bring side dishes and desserts. Three club tables should be set up in a "U" shape, underneath the club tent. These hold all of the food, side dishes, dessert, plates, utensils, etc. The Secretary maintains a list of dignitaries to invite. The invitations should go out well in advance of the event.

II.7 November Change of Watch Party

The 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, the Laurel Hills Country Club in Lorton and more recently a Board member's home. 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 Vice Commodore should select a site early and ensure 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, the incoming Commodore will purchase name tags 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. The outgoing Commodore will also ensure that the Bent Prop, Golden Snorkel awards and Commodore's Cup are engraved with the recipients' names.

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

II.8 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)
- Dog Days of Summer (August)
- End-of-Summer (September)

Other yacht clubs have also invited OYC members to participate in their events. Typically, the dates of these cruises and land-based events are provided to OYC and integrated into the OYC Event Schedule. As with any other event, the coordinator will collect deposits and make reservations—providing boat dimensions, power requirements, and any other requested information.