

FLEET OPERATIONS

The traditional Sea Scout ship uses the program, advancement procedures, ceremonies, traditions, uniforms, and insignia found in the *Sea Scout Manual*. This guidebook is designed to help council staff and volunteers improve and expand the traditional program.

Sea Scout ships that specialize in maritime careers, recreational boating, scuba diving, or other aquatic activities are organized and serviced in the same manner as other Venturing crews. The *Sea Scout Manual* will support their program.

The terminology used in Sea Scouting differs somewhat from that used in the rest of Scouting. The top elected youth leader of a Sea Scout ship is called a boatswain (pronounced bosun), which is equivalent to the president of a Venturing crew.

Other equivalent terms:

Venturing	Sea Scouting
crew	ship
advisor	skipper
associate advisor	mate
president	boatswain
vice president	boatswain's mate
secretary	yeoman
treasurer	purser

Traditional Sea Scouting is a unique and time-tested program that provides exciting and worthwhile activities of interest to young men and women. Many councils find that their units with the longest tenure are Sea Scout ships. Since the leaders of these ships are involved in a common program, Sam Houston Area Council (SHAC) sponsors a monthly fleet meeting (roundtable), several different annual activities, and training.

COUNCIL SEA SCOUTING COMMITTEE

SHAC has organized a council Sea Scouting committee to provide training, service, and program help to the ships. This committee is a subcommittee of the council Venturing committee. Its chair, called the "commodore," is recruited by the council Venturing chair in consultation with the members of the fleet.

The council Sea Scouting committee has a support role and assists with the planning of activities, leader meetings, and training as needed. The organization and service of ships is provided by the district. A council staff member coordinates their efforts.

SHAC adds additional subcommittees for boats and gear, program, safety, training, finance, and publicity. We use the term commodore for chair and vice commodore for members of the various subcommittees. The fleet officer job descriptions are included in this section of this web site.

YOUTH REPRESENTATION

The boatswain of the ship that wins the annual Spring Rendezvous is normally selected as the fleet boatswain for the following year. This person represents the interests of youth at fleet meetings and with fleet officers. If for some reason, such as going off to college, that individual is unable to serve, the commodore selects another Sea Scout to serve.

AREA/REGION STRUCTURE

At this time, there is no Area structure for Sea Scouting. Southern Region has a commodore, and a web site at <http://sregion.seascout.org>. It sponsors some events, and organizes such events as Koch Cup elimination regattas.

NATIONAL SEA SCOUTING COMMITTEE

The National Sea Scouting Committee is responsible for the literature, training, insignia, advancement, policies, and activities related to Sea Scouting. The national Venturing chair appoints the chair. He or she appoints committee members with the approval of the individual's council and region.

SEA SCOUT ACTIVITIES

SHAC plans several council-wide activities during the year. Leadership for these activities comes from the various ships, supported by a council staff member. The fleet determines the number and type of such activities. These events usually include regattas, rendezvous, dances, a trash bash, a catamaran sailing event, Sea Scout Academy, and an adult sail. Sea Scout ships may enter local yacht or sailing club races. The Southern Region conducts Sea Scout regattas, which can be a program highlight.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

The following Sea Scout activities are conducted in SHAC and in councils across the United States.

Rendezvous. The folklore of the sea defines the rendezvous as a "gathering of ships." A Sea Scout rendezvous is an informal daylong or weekend event held at a military base, college campus, BSA local council camp, or similar facility. Its program can include instruction, recreation, and inter-ship competition in swimming, canoeing, boating, sailing, fitness, sports, and seamanship, along with fun and social events.

Regatta. The terms "regatta" and "rendezvous" are probably interchangeable in Sea Scouting. However, a regatta usually is held on a waterfront where ship can moor their vessels. The regatta program may include competition among ships such as uniform inspection, drill, pulling races, and team competition in Sea Scout skills. A regatta may be held at Navy or Coast Guard base, aquatic park, yacht club or similar facility. Several regattas are held on a regional or area basis.

Bridge of Honor and Ball. Many councils hold an annual bridge of honor and ball for Sea Scout ships. The bridge of honor might recognize those Sea Scouts earning Quartermaster rank during the year, along with other achievements by Sea Scout ships, and adult leaders. The bridge of honor often uses the traditional landship format described in the *Sea Scout Manual*. The bridge of honor can include a meal and be followed by a semi-formal ball. Sea Scouts may bring dates who are not in the program (young women usually do not want to wear their uniforms to the dance).

Sailing Races or Competitions. If a number of small sailboats of the same design or class can be located, a daylong program of races or related events can be organized. Yacht clubs, sailing

organizations, schools, Scout camps, and related organizations may have sailboats of similar design that can be used by Sea Scouts for a race or other event. For instance, SHAC owns six Sunfish. See the *Sea Scout Manual* for suggestions.

Conferences. Some councils conduct all-day or weekend conferences for Sea Scouting youth and adult leaders. Such a conference could be held at a military base, college campus, conference center, or motel. The program might include leadership training, personal skill workshops, activity planning, idea sharing, recreation, and social events. Ours is called Sea Scout Academy.

Other Activities. Many councils have unique Sea Scout service projects, sail-offs, team sports tournaments, bowling events, skiing trips, campouts, and other events that are of interest to Sea Scouts or leaders.

Council Events. Most traditional Sea Scout ships have strong ties to Scouting and gladly participate in SHAC's Scout Fair, annual recognition banquet, and other council events. Sea Scouts can lend a colorful nautical presence to council events. Many ships take advantage of these events to recruit older Boy Scouts into Sea Scouting.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

For a successful council-wide Sea Scout activity:

1. **Recruit the right chair:** Get a dynamic leader who will secure the necessary resources, recruit a committee as needed, and give direction to committee's efforts.
2. **Plan ahead.** Ships must know the date, time, location, and cost of an event well in advance.
3. **Involve ship leaders.** Skippers and boatswain should be involved in selecting and planning the program. If a ship's leaders are involved, their ship will attend.
4. **Choose the right time and place.** Secure a location that has adequate facilities with a reasonable cost—one that is appealing to Sea Scouts. Check high school and community calendars, avoid conflicts.
5. **Watch the cost.** Prepare a budget. Get written confirmation of food, housing, and facility cost. Avoid surprises. Keep the cost within reach of Sea Scouts. Look for donations of equipment, meals, printing, publicity, etc.

SEA SCOUTING PROGRAM ASSISTANCE

While the Sam Houston Area Council may be able to assist, it is not the purpose of the Council to secure boats, uniforms, or equipment for ships. The program of a Sea Scout ship is based on matching the interests of the ship members with the skills, equipment, and resources of the chartered organization. Securing boats, uniforms, and equipment for use by a Sea Scout ship is the responsibility of the ship committee and charter organization.

Because of the special nature of Sea Scouting, however, SHAC has become involved in matters of vessel ownership. The following information is included for professional staff and volunteer leaders in the interest of making this manual a complete reference for SHAC operations.

Boats

SHAC owns several large and many small vessels, both sail and power, and several motors. Most of these boats may be used by Sea Scouts, and are in fact placed in the custody of specific ships for care, scheduling and maintenance. The Boats and Gear committee of the fleet manage these boats. Details are in that committee's section.

Many Sea Scout leaders believe that owning small sail or powerboats is essential to a successful program. A number of Sea Scout ships plan exciting program by chartering boats as needed, using boats owned by members of their chartered organization, or taking orientation rides on U.S. Navy or Coast Guard boats.

Occasionally, privately owned boats may be donated to a Sea Scout ship. Ownership of the boats remains with the chartered organization or a nonprofit corporation formed by the ship leaders. If the donor requires that ownership remain with the SHAC, then key fleet volunteer leaders and the professional staff determine whether to accept the donation. The council is not obligated to accept donated boats as the boats might not be appropriate for the program, or repair and insurance costs might be prohibitive. *For this reason, boats more than 50 feet in length are not recommended.*

Larger craft used in-the Sea Scouting program must be certified by the U.S. Coast Guard. The responsibility for necessary repairs and equipment to meet this certification, along with maintenance, moorage, and insurance costs, belongs to the ship committee and chartered organization. The cost of operating larger boats must be balanced against the number of youth served. Most experienced Sea Scout leaders recommend that small sailboats be used for Sea Scouting, with larger boats chartered as needed.

Infrequently, surplus boats are available from the U.S. military or Coast Guard. Once it is determined that such a boat is available from a nearby surplus outlet, and that the BSA is eligible to receive the boat, the council, if it chooses, may request the boat through the BSA region. Many surplus military boats do not meet U.S. Coast Guard certification standards for carrying passengers. Ship leaders may find that expensive renovation and equipment are necessary if the boat is to be used for Sea Scouts. This determination should be made before the boat is secured. The ship committee and chartered organization must be prepared to cover the cost of maintaining and operating such boats. Again, boats 50 feet or longer are not recommended.

Ownership of surplus boats remains with the Boy Scouts of America though its local council may assign such boats to Sea Scout ships on a long-term, but temporary, basis. A written agreement between the council and chartered organization should be developed relating to maintenance, licensing, and responsibility for such boats.

Equipment

The Sea Scout ship probably will need to secure a variety of ropes, navigational instruments, charts, flags, landship equipment, etc. Much of the equipment can be donated, secured through surplus outlets, borrowed, or purchased as necessary. The ship committee and chartered organization are responsible for securing, maintaining, and storing such equipment.

Uniforms and Advancement

Sea Scout ships following the traditional program should select some form of nautical uniform. Each Sea Scout ship may select a uniform appropriate to its program. Traditionally, Sea Scouts have worn Navy-type uniforms, either blue or white. These uniforms are obtained from Ships Store (a volunteer run Sea Scout store), surplus stores, Navy uniform outlets, salvage stores, or individual donations. Such uniforms must be converted to Sea Scout use as described

in the *Sea Scout Manual*. U.S. government regulations forbid the wearing of official Navy or Coast Guard emblems, buttons, or insignia. The BSA Supply Division has a variety of emblems and insignia to convert Navy uniforms. BSA policy requires that Sea Scouts and leaders wearing military-style uniforms must be clearly identified as Sea Scouts and cannot be mistaken for military personnel. Full details on Sea Scout uniforms and insignia are found in the *Sea Scout Manual*. Most ships follow the traditional advancement program found in the *Sea Scout Manual*. The ship's program follows the customs and traditions of the sea and encourages members to earn the ranks of Apprentice, Ordinary, Able, and Quartermaster (as prestigious as the Scouting rank of Eagle Scout). Sea Scouting advancement includes uniforms, safety, customs, swimming, boating, marlinspike seamanship, piloting, signaling, drill, cruising, galley, sailing, boats, tackle, first aid, navigation, boat maintenance, engines, sea history, lifesaving, equipment, weather, radio, customs, and ideals.

Some Sea Scout ships prefer to plan their program around some specialty such as sailing, careers, scuba diving, or an aquatic sport. They might not use Sea Scout uniforms and advancement, but might offer a flexible program to those young adults having a specific career or hobby interest.

SEA SCOUTING MARKETING PLAN

This outline is designed to guide local Boy Scouts of America council staff and volunteers in expanding Sea Scouting.

Step 1: Determine Youth's Interests

Many young adults ages 14 through 20 are interested in sailing, motorboating, maritime careers, scuba diving, and related hobbies and careers. The council's career interest survey has career categories such as Maritime, Oceanography, Navy, Coast Guard, etc., and recreational interests such as sailing, boating, and diving. Many of the young adults who respond favorably to these categories will be interested in the Sea Scouting program.

In addition to the survey, or in those locations where a survey is not available, young adults can be recruited to Sea Scouting by school notices, after school meetings, announcements through churches or community organizations, newspaper and radio publicity, Scouting show booths, contacts with old Boy Scouts, and similar methods. In some cases, an existing youth group in a school, church, or sailing club can be organized as a Sea Scout ship.

Step 2: Select a Chartered Organization

Any organization can charter a Sea Scout ship. As with any Scouting unit, the organization must provide capable adult leaders and program support and must secure a meeting location. Obviously these adult leaders should be able and willing to use the Sea Scouting program. Those with careers or hobbies related to seamanship are the most likely prospects. Besides churches, civic clubs, fraternal groups, labor unions, schools, and community organizations, the following might be considered:

- Maritime businesses and industries
- U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary
- U.S. Coast Guard facilities and organizations
- U.S. Power Squadron
- U.S. Navy facilities and organizations

- Yacht clubs
- Sailing clubs
- Marinas, boat yards, boat builders
- Propeller clubs
- Maritime schools
- College or university boating organizations
- Maritime museums
- Scuba diving schools, businesses, and organizations
- Maritime labor unions
- Navy ROTC units
- Government maritime organizations (harbor police. etc.)
- Marine research institutes
- Boating safety organizations and agencies

Most Sea Scout ships are chartered to churches, civic clubs, fraternal organizations, yacht clubs, and the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.

The Boat/US Foundation operates a toll-free 800 number to provide information on local U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliaries and U.S. Power Squadrons. Call 800-336-BOAT.

Step 3: Organize Ships

The BSA publications have detailed information on the following organizational procedures. The recommended steps are described in the Welcome to Sea Scouting pages.

Step 4: Provide Service to Ships

As new ships are organized and chartered, the council recruits volunteers to provide ongoing service to these ships. This person helps the skipper with recruiting, training, program ideas, rechartering, and problem solving. He or she is normally a member of a district commissioner staff.

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