

Division 8 Report

May 2021

May has seen a return to Surface Operations for Division 8. Lake County Flotilla 88 ran three boat patrols and two PWC patrols, using all currently certified OPFACS, crew, coxswains and PWC operators as well as two boat crew candidate trainees. We have also seen an increase in VSC activities.

Mendocino County Flotilla completed two lamp room cleaning cycles at Point Cabrillo Lighthouse. They continue to keep the fuel farm at the Point Arena Helipad Semper Paratus. I visited the facility recently, arriving just as a Coast Guard aircrew was taking off. It is a crucial operation 87 is performing there, maximizing the range of our helicopter fleet, and we're very proud of their service. They are working with a new member, Maria Elena Simpson, and we welcome her aboard!

Crescent City Flotilla 8-11 has gained two new members, and we are very excited to welcome aboard Nathan Peterson and Joseph Seymour! A Zoom meeting was held between the Flotilla, DCO, OTO, DIRAUX, SHB OIA and STA HB OIC concerning the status of the 29' response boat.

Thirty Niners 8-39 Monthly Flotilla meeting was virtual and held on Wednesday, June 2, 2021 at 1900 hours and training was held at 1800 hrs. Phase III requirements and changes and National Safe Boating Week (NSBW) May 22-28, 2021 were discussed. The need for Crew and Coxswain and other training was discussed. QE event in Stockton on June 25th was discussed. Upcoming Moonlight kayaking patrols were discussed. OPS activity included Memorial Weekend patrols on Saturday and Sunday on Whiskeytown Lake for regatta support. Eagle One and REDJET were the facilities with 6 crew/coxswains on Saturday and 4 crew/coxswains on Sunday. No incidents. Lake Shasta, Trinity, and Lake Oroville may soon be inaccessible due to low water. Whiskeytown may soon be the only lake in the region with adequate water level for launching.

National Safe Boating Week (NSBW) activities reported by COMO Rich Thomas and Kevin Kealey—NSBW Co-Chairs for Flotilla 88, included Vessel Safety Checks, Program Visits, placement of National Safe Boating Council and Coast Guard Auxiliary posters, and high visibility surface patrols.

The capstone for NSBW events was the brainchild of Kevin Kealey, VFC 88, who was intent on developing a socially distanced NSBW activity with schoolchildren engagement. This event is highlighted below along with a published newspaper article by Dorothy "Bunny" DeLope, FSO-PA 88, describing the event in detail, which was presented to two different classes.

By Dorothy DeLope, USCG Auxiliary

LAKE COUNTY, Calif. — Flotilla Vice Commander Kevin Kealey of the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, Flotilla 88 of Lake County, decided to repeat history from more than 100 years ago in observance of National Safe Boating Week.

Kealey had read about Mary Downen, a pioneer woman who in 1903 built a cabin on Mount Konocti that is still standing. Downen lived alone, so each day at 2 PM, using a mirror, she would signal down to her daughter in Lakeport that she was OK and her daughter would signal back.

To prepare for this project, Kealey distributed a cord to which was attached a daylight signal mirror and whistle to the teacher and a class at Clearlake Creativity School and Pomo Elementary School. The students learned about Mary Downen, and Kealey gave a presentation on the use of the mirror using the reflection of the sun and the whistles to attract attention.

On May 25, Kealey with his son, Nash, a member of the Navy Seabees Reserve to assist him, helper Nikki and Flotilla Public Affairs Officer Dorothy De Lope, drove up Mount Konocti to set up the equipment needed adjacent to the fire watch tower located there. They had with them a huge mirror and all necessary equipment to perform a Zoom presentation to the schools at scheduled times. A demonstration was performed by holding up the huge mirror and reflecting it on the hillside toward the location of the first school. The students used their small signal mirrors to sight in on the reflection of the huge mirror.

The project was being recorded via Zoom and the youngsters could be seen and heard laughing, jumping up and down screaming, “I can see it” upon seeing the huge mirror’s reflection on the hillside. The project was then repeated for the next school at their scheduled time. Following the reflection demonstrations, the students returned to their classroom to watch Kealey via Zoom as he walked around the mountain, describing and naming the several peaks. He included a bit of the history of each peak and Mount Konocti as well as Clear Lake and Lake Thurston.

The object of this mirror project was to teach youngsters safety by wearing the signal mirror and whistle when walking or hiking in unfamiliar countryside and to use that equipment should they become lost. It’s also important for them to attach the signal and whistle to their life jackets in case of a boating emergency that causes them to end up in the water.

Flotilla 88 has fitted and distributed free life jackets to youngsters up to 12 years old, but due to COVID-19 restrictions the flotilla was unable to do this in 2020 and this year as well. The Flotilla urges everyone to practice safe boating habits and to always wear life jackets.

