

Progress Report and Overview for an interclub “boat parade of lights” on the Housatonic River

Valley Yacht Club Organizing Committee:
Commodore Jim Manzolli, Vice Commodore Rich Stoll,
Tom Hamilton, Jean Koepfli, Karen Stoll



The Premise

The Housatonic River community has many small independent activities but nothing that focuses on the community as a whole. Since Riverdance in 1993, there has not been an event on the Housatonic River participated in by the boaters and celebrated by the community at large. Many boating communities have a boat parade and the Valley Yacht Club would like to initiate such an event. At the very least the parade would consist of members of VYC. Optimally, participation by members of all organized boating clubs based on the River would make the event bigger and more exciting. For the purposes of expediency and practicality, Valley Yacht Club is moving forward with the initial planning and organization of the inaugural event. Ensuing parades might be organized and run in a similar manner to the Interclub Bluefish Tournament. All moneys collected from sponsors and entrants would be used to offset expenses with remaining funds going to charity.

Proposed Details

The parade will consist of member boats decorated with low voltage lights, in a theme of the entrants choice. Entrants would come from the following Housatonic River Boating Clubs (if these clubs so desire): Housatonic Boat Club, Stratford Boat Owners, Pootatuck Yacht Club, Rivercliff Yacht Club, Valley Yacht Club, Caswell Cove, and Harbor Valley Yacht Club.

The event will be held on Saturday night, September 27th, tentatively starting at 8PM. This date avoids both holidays and the large August and September fishing events while providing the best tidal conditions available during the period, minimizing current influence and optimizing high water. The rain date would be Sunday evening (the 28th).

The event would begin at dusk with all powerboats staging in front of the United Illuminating power plant. All sail boats will stage in front of Harborside Grill and will join the parade there. All boats would proceed down the river to Knapp's Landing where they will turn around and parade back to their home ports. A reviewing stand will be set up at a suitable location south of the bridges. The committees first choice would be the Stratford town fishing pier at the Birdsey boat ramp facility. The judges will be an independent committee, following a predetermined list of scoring criteria.

Trophies will be awarded in the following categories. Sailboats, Power boats 25 feet and over and boats under 25 feet. We would propose/suggest that each club have a celebration at their respective locations after the event to cap off the evening.



Phase I

Phase I is already Complete. This phase consists of developing a written plan for the event. The details above are part of this phase. Also included in Phase I was the selection of the affiliated charity. The committee selected Swim Across the Sound as the charity. This organization serves all the communities involved in the event, working to defeat a disease that has affected virtually everyone involved, and uniquely appropriate to the boating community that shares Long Island Sound. Jean Koepfli has already contacted Swim across the Sound and they have indicated that they would be thrilled to be a part of the event and offered full support to make this event a reality and a success.

Phase II

The organizing committee together with other volunteers from VYC and the other organizing clubs will further finalize the details of the event including: formulation of judging criteria and review stand location, consultation with the local authorities and the Coast Guard, contacting the river edge restaurants and other businesses for sponsorship donations and developing a publicity strategy.

Update 6/10

Phase II is in progress. Proper papers have been filed with the United States Coast Guard (Marine Event Section). Committee Chair will be attending Stratford Waterfront Commission Meeting on 6/11 to determine availability of the Fishing Pier for the judges stand.

A website has been started to disperse information about the event.

A commitment has been received from Mark Lauretti and James Richetelli to attend the event. Stratford Mayor James Miron still uncommitted.

Sponsorship recruiting is ongoing.

Mike Bisciglia from Swim across the sound will be meeting with the committee on 6/11 to discuss publicity, financial arrangements to run the event through SWIM, and any other questions/concerns from both sides.

If you have any questions about the event or would like to participate, Log on to www.valleyyc.org and click on the Riverlights logo or contact Valley Yacht Club Commodore Jim Manzolli at 203-377-6119.

6/10/2008
TRH