

## Brief History of Fripp Island Sea Rescue

The primary function of Fripp Island Sea Rescue is to provide marine search and rescue services to the Fripp Island, South Carolina ("Fripp Island") area by responding to requests for assistance by or on behalf of people in or about the waters surrounding Fripp Island including, but not limited to emergencies which involves or may involve a life-threatening situation and to furnish, upon request, assistance to the United States Coast Guard, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Beaufort County Sheriff's Department or any other public agency in conducting search and rescue missions in the area of Fripp Island.

Fripp Island Sea Rescue was incorporated by the State of South Carolina September 30, 1983 as Fripp Island Volunteer Rescue (FIVR) by Paul J. Field and David G. Fleming.<sup>1</sup>

The original "Managers, Trustees, Directors or other officers were listed as John Adams, Training Officer; Paul Field, Skipper; David Fleming, First Mate; Robert Newman, Second Mate; Barry Oden, Treasurer; and Ginia Schaufelberger, Secretary."<sup>2</sup>

FIVR filed its Application for Amendment of Eleemosynary Charter on April 3, 1984 with the Secretary of State of South Carolina<sup>3</sup>. It then received an opinion of exemption from South Carolina income tax,<sup>4</sup> a certificate of exemption from South Carolina taxes as a nonprofit corporation on April 13, 1984.<sup>5</sup> and a certificate of exemption from the IRS with respect to federal taxes in May, 1984.<sup>6</sup> The exemption from South Carolina Taxes was confirmed by letter from the South Carolina Tax Commission Office in 1992 and by IRS letter dated February 16, 1996.

The tax exempt status is renewed annually by an e-filing with the IRS and then with the state in May when FISR receives a new electronic code.

It received its FEIN number February 29, 1984. 57-0767425.<sup>7</sup>

Founder and long time skipper of the organization, Paul Field, recounted that Fripp Island Volunteer Rescue was formed after a marine emergency in late December, 1982. Two men accompanied by their 7-year old daughters launched a small boat from the end of Tarpon Blvd. on Fripp Island and went out Skull Inlet toward the ocean. The boat ran aground and swamped in the surf off Fripp Island's beach. With the tide rising all four persons were left standing on a sandbar off shore. Fortunately, a young man on the beach saw their plight and alerted Paul and others. A shrimp boat off Pritchard's Island also became aware of the emergency and moved in as close as possible to the sandbar. The young man took a small boat from the Fripp beach and reached the stranded boaters, transferring them to the shrimp boat. Because the rescued people were hypothermic and in need of medical attention, Paul Field went in his boat to meet the shrimper in Trenchard's Inlet and transferred the men and their daughters to his boat. He then took them back to the Fripp Island Marina where they met an EMT for medical care.

Seeing the need for a local organization that could respond to such emergencies, Paul and the other Fripp Island residents created Fripp Island Volunteer Rescue with Paul Field as skipper.

The organization assumed the name Fripp Island Sea Rescue (FISR) as the result of receiving a call for a land based situation.

Originally FISR members responded to distress calls using their own boats. Eventually, FISR acquired two boats dedicated to the organization's mission: One, a 2002 22' Dauntless by Boston Whaler with a 200hp 2-cycle Yamaha engine (Rescue boat 1, "R-1") and the other, a 2004 17' Montauk by Boston Whaler with a 90hp 4-cycle Yamaha 2016 engine (Rescue boat 2, "R-2").

Because FISR has no insurance, title to both boats originally obtained by FISR was transferred to and accepted by the Beaufort County Sheriff's Department.

In the early years, the organization had little or no money with which to operate. Something like only one in ten folks that are rescued respond with donations. In 1991 the Sea Rescue members started weekly bingo sessions at the Fripp Island Community Center and a cake walk during the Fourth of July celebration on Fripp Island. In 2004, FISR teamed up with a similar, but unrelated, organization, Beaufort Water Search and Rescue (BWSAR), to hold a "St. Patty's Day" golf tournament as a joint fundraiser for the two organizations. The bingo machine was donated to the Fripp Island Community Center,<sup>8</sup> and the cake walk to the Fripp Island Women's Club. The 14<sup>th</sup> annual St. Patty's day golf tournament was held on March 18, 2017.

FISR was managed by its primary founder, Paul Field through most of its history. Paul occupied all of the corporate officer positions. Officers of the corporation also constitute its board of directors.

Paul decided to retire at the end of 2011. The members reorganized FISR by re-defining the officer positions and amended the organization's bylaws. The officer positions are Skipper, First Mate, Secretary/Treasurer, Communications, Maintenance, Quartermaster, Revenue, and Scheduling.

Officers, who continue to constitute the board of directors, were duly elected for one year terms in 2012. Because the experience of managing the operations of FISR was new to its officers and members, in 2013, each of the original officers agreed to serve a second term.

The transition went remarkably smoothly.

In 2013, the bylaws were again amended to provide that officers would serve for two year terms. Elections for officers were then held in 2014 and 2016.

Members receive training in the use of all of FISR equipment, including the boats, GPS, VHF radio, and the Beaufort County emergency beeper and radio. They also attend a CPR and a first aid class conducted by one of the Fripp Island Fire Station EMS personnel.

FISR is dispatched to boaters in distress within its operating area by Beaufort County's 9-1-1 system. It may also be called out by the U.S. Coast Guard, the Fripp Island Marina or Fripp Island Security. Once or twice a month FISR operates with Coast Guard helicopter crews who perform basket drops to the FISR boat and as a standby resource for personnel drops from the helicopter into the water.

FISR has been recognized over the years for its efforts with numerous letters of appreciation from the US Coast Guard and other organizations.

As early as March 16, 1983 the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resource Department was recommending to the Federal Communications Commission that the organization be granted a limited Coast License for use of V.H.F. for their operations.<sup>9</sup> The Coast Guard concurred.<sup>10</sup>

On a date unknown, FISR received a Resolution of Appreciation from the Beaufort County Council for Paul Field's and Garland Evers' participation in the rescue of Wallace Malphrus and Joe Lyons from the burning shrimp boat, "Miss Shirley" off Fripp Island.<sup>11</sup>

In 1991, FISR received a certificate of appreciation from the South Carolina House of Representatives for its "outstanding efforts during the rescue of brothers Charles and Andres Henshaw of Smyrna, Georgia who were involved in a sailing mishap caused by a heavy thunderstorm on August 8, 1991 near Fripp Island; commending them for their swift action and their proficiency that resulted in the safe recovery of these young men."<sup>12</sup>

In 2003 it received a Certificate of Merit from the US Coast Guard for its efforts in assisting in 113 search and rescue operations rescuing 140 people and saving over \$403,000 in property in cases from 2000 to 2003<sup>13</sup>.

In July, 2012 eight people, including 5 children ages 3,6,9, 11 and 13 vacationing on Harbor Island piled onto floating rafts from the beach. The wind and tide swept them out to the mouth of St. Helena Sound and 2 miles off the coast. One of the adults was able to swim back to Harbor Island and alert authorities. The Lady's Island, and Fripp Island Fire Departments, Fripp Island Sea Rescue and the US Coast Guard responded and all eight were brought back to shore. The event resulted in two articles in the Beaufort Gazette Island Packet.<sup>14</sup> Copies of the articles are attached.

In the fall of 2016, Beaufort County Sheriff's office had the motor replaced on R-2. FISR then replaced the steering and in March 2017 had the boat repainted.

Compiled 4/18/2017

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1. Certificate of Incorporation. (original documents kept by Fripp Island Sea Rescue Secretary, Paul Burchfield.)
  2. *Id.*
  3. Application for Amendment of Eleemosynary Charter .
  4. Opinion of South Carolina Tax Commission , Income and Estate Division dated December, 9, 1983
  5. Certificate of Exemption.
  6. IRS notice dated March 4, 1986 modifying its letter of May 4, 1984.
  7. IRS form.
  8. Note of receipt from the Fripp Island Community Center dated June 30, 2004.
  9. Letter from Capt. J.E. McTeer, Jr. S.C. Wildlife & Marine Resources to FCC dated March 16, 1983.
  10. Memo from Officer in Charge, US Coast Guard Station Tybee to Paul Field date 21 March 1983.
  11. Resolution of Appreciation from the Beaufort County Council.

12. Certificate of Appreciation from the South Carolina House of Representatives dated September 13, 1991.
13. 2003 Certificate of Merit
14. Beaufort Gazette Island Packet: Donohue, "8 rescued from rafts in St. Helena Sound after drifting 2 miles offshore," July 10, 2012. Lauderdale, "Fripp Island volunteers put new wrinkle in saving lives at sea," July 19, 2012.