

Fall 2023

# *The Trawler*



# Fripp Island Sea Rescue

Mary T. Jacobs, Communications Officer



*We are excited to wish FISR a happy 40th birthday this month. One way to appreciate what FISR does today is to learn a bit about what happened on a cold winter day forty years ago that inspired the founders to put together an organization that could quickly respond to boaters in distress in the waters surrounding Fripp Island.*

The afternoon of New Year's Eve of 1982, two men gathered their seven-year-old daughters and launched a small boat from the south end of Fripp Island's Tarpon Boulevard into Skull Inlet to go on an adventure, but quickly got more father-daughter adventure than they bargained for. The outgoing tidal current carried the craft seaward, out of the inlet and eventually grounding on a sandbar. Serious wave action swamped the boat, leaving the four standing on the sandbar in cold water. As soon as the tide changed, the water rose, and their situation became dire. Fortunately, a young man on the beach noticed their plight and contacted Fripp resident Paul Field, known to be an experienced boater, and who knew our waters well. While Paul ran down to the marina to ready his boat, the young man launched his own boat and set out to attempt a rescue. A nearby shrimper saw the incident unfold and offered to help. The young man was able to reach the sandbar despite the rough surf conditions, collected the boaters (now soaked and shivering) and transferred them to the shrimp boat. All four were clearly showing symptoms of hypothermia, and time was of the essence to get them under medical care. The shrimper maneuvered with his precious cargo aboard into Trenchards Inlet and rendezvoused with Paul Field, who had been underway in his boat since being notified by the

young man. Paul transferred the two dads and their daughters to his boat and rushed them back to the Fripp Island Marina, where EMTs were waiting to take them under their care.

This and several other boating incidents prompted Paul and another Fripp resident, David Fleming, to recruit additional volunteers and form the Fripp Island Volunteer Rescue organization in September 1983, incorporating as a not-for-profit 501(c)3. Some of the early volunteers included Robert Newman, John Adams, Barry Oden and Ginia Schaufelberger. The group soon began using the DBA "Fripp Island Sea Rescue" to better reflect the group's mission statement.

In those early years, volunteers pressed their own boats into service for rescue missions while the group accumulated sufficient funds for purchasing a fleet. In the early 2000s, FISR was finally able to buy two boats dedicated to the organization's mission: a 2002 22-foot Boston Whaler Dauntless (R-1) powered by a 200hp Yamaha outboard, and a 2004 17-foot Boston Whaler Montauk (R-2) with a 90hp Yamaha outboard. However, insurance for these boats was cost-prohibitive, so the Beaufort County Sheriff agreed to take ownership of the fleet and include the equipment under the county's insurance policies. In recent years, FISR became financially able to regain ownership of the fleet and pay the insurance premiums, and while the Boston Whalers are entering their 3rd decade, they are still in service.

*How is FISR funded today?* Initially, we depended on proceeds from bingo and cake walks, as well as private donations. In 2004, FISR teamed up with Beaufort Water Search and Rescue (BWSAR) to hold a St. Paddy's Golf Tournament on Ocean Creek golf course, splitting the net proceeds. The event was so successful that the two rescue organizations agreed to keep it going, and next March they will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the fundraiser. St. Paddy's Golf Tournament, with its concurrent Online Auction, remains the only fund-raising event that FISR conducts each year. We still accept and greatly appreciate donations year-round from Fripp residents and the boaters we assist or rescue.



*Where does FISR operate?* Our assigned area of responsibility covers 60 square nautical miles of water, a huge triangle that includes Fripp and our neighboring barrier islands (Harbor, Hunting, Pritchards, Capers and St. Phillips), and up to 3 nautical miles offshore (if conditions permit).

*Whom exactly do we help, and how many people per year?* We handle a wide variety of cases, but the most typical ones are:

- Boaters run aground on a sandbar, oyster rake or pluff mud.
- Disabled boats that can't be restarted due to fuel or electrical issues.
- Kayakers and paddleboarders who can't get back due to wind, current or waves.
- Swimmers who have gone missing at the beach.

In 2022 we went out on 42 missions, of which 30 were SAR cases (search and rescue), and 12 were community service calls and support for other agencies. FISR helped 72 people, including 24 children (under 18). In addition, we saved 4 lives, including 3 children. While we are a rescue agency and not a towing service, we did tow or carry aboard 11 vessels.

*Exactly who are these Sea Rescue volunteers?* We're your neighbors - Fripp residents who have chosen to give back to their community, utilizing their boating, management and lifesaving skills to help boaters and swimmers in need. We take weeklong shifts to assure that we have a Boat Duty Captain and a Base Duty Officer on duty 24x365, and yes that includes nights and holidays, no matter the weather. All crew receive extensive training before they're cleared to go on missions, all maintain current certifications in CPR/AED/First Aid and Stop-the-Bleed, and as a bonus we have three Captains on the roster licensed by the US Coast Guard.



## Frisp Island Sea Rescue

For more information about Frisp Island Sea Rescue, or if you'd like to volunteer or donate, please visit our website at [fisearescue.org](http://fisearescue.org) and look us up on Facebook. If you have or see an emergency on the water, call 9-1-1 and Beaufort County will dispatch us. For any other issues, or if you have a question, call the FISR Base Duty Officer at (843) 575-2443. We are always on duty - every hour of the day, every day of the year.



Nancy Wingenbach, Member of FISR

For forty years, Frisp Island Sea Rescue (FISR) has been on watch for anyone who needed help in the waters around Fripp. Often we see kayakers drifting out on the currents, swimmers stranded on sandbars, boats without power, boats stuck in the sand as the tide flows out to sea, paddleboarders unable to fight the tidal current, and multiple other water emergencies and non-emergencies. We all need to shout out in celebration for these forty years of volunteering to assist fellow islanders and guests when they are in trouble on the water. HAPPY BIRTHDAY, FRIPP ISLAND SEA RESCUE!



Brooke Pearson, FISR member and Secretary Happy 40th, FISR! It is an honor to be a member of this great organization, especially since I am not a boater. I joined with former Skipper Angie Diemont back in 2017, both of us recruited by then Skipper Dick Work to be base duty radio operators. That is what I do to this day, in addition to being the Secretary. What a vital role Sea Rescue has played over four decades and what a terrific group of dedicated men and women who have given their time and effort to help those in trouble in our waters. Happy birthday!

Stay connected with FISR at: [www.FISeaRescue.org](https://www.FISeaRescue.org) [@FripplandSeaRescue](https://www.facebook.com/FripplandSeaRescue)

