



ALERT 11

Volume LXIII Issue 2 • Summer 2026



SUMMER ON THE WATER

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Bellingham Bay, Wash. — A Flotilla 11 boat crew keeps watch during a summer safety patrol. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.

Commander's Comments



Ahoy Shipmates,

Our flotilla has taken on many tasks so far this summer. Our members continue to bring professionalism to their roles, to public service, and to preparing for the activities ahead.

The world stage of the FIFA games came to our region — to Vancouver, BC and Seattle, WA. Because Bellingham sits between the two, our city was designated an official fan zone. Sector tasked us with covering the fan zones held near Bellingham's waterways to promote safe boating and provide a presence on the water. Our Boat Crew stepped up, providing a boat and crew for several events so the public could enjoy a safe environment. Though no one needed us, we were prepared to help.

As Benjamin Franklin said, "An ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure." That certainly holds true in helping recreational boaters carry the proper safety equipment to enjoy the beautiful waters we call home. Our Vessel Examiners have been hard at work since before opening day of the season; so far this year we have logged 92 vessel safety checks. Two of our newest members, Kat and Bret, earned their Vessel Examiner qualification and are actively helping boaters be safer.

Now that we have passed the summer solstice and the days are growing shorter, our Aid Verifiers will be out checking their PATONs and bridges. It is not glamorous work, but boaters rely on those dayboards and PATONs — especially when arriving at an unfamiliar marina. Keeping them in good working order and accurately charted is of the utmost importance.

If you notice something that does not look right, snap a photo and ask a question. We can walk you through the steps to check for discrepancies. Each reported discrepancy is published in the Local Notice to Mariners, where it is seen by the entire boating community.

Two of our members attended the Blaine Fishermen's Memorial as part of our Visitor Program, where they had the honor of representing not only our flotilla but the

active-duty Coast Guard as well. The memorial is a poignant reminder of the seriousness of our waters and of the need for both Auxiliarists and active-duty Coast Guard.

This year we have a new member working through the last qualifications needed for Boat Crew. In August we will work with the Coast Guard for the final exam, which will bring us to five Boat Crew members and one coxswain — we are starting to grow in this area. If you would like to learn more, please reach out to Manny, Pam, or me. A sure-fire way to qualify is to complete all the tasks that can be done on land during the winter and spring, then use the summer to finish the tasks that must be done on the water. By next August, you could be qualified too.

On the social front, we are saying goodbye to two long-time volunteers, Steve and Hoyt, who have served for 24 and 25 years, respectively. We are grateful for the time they gave, on and off the water, to make our flotilla better and to help those in need. Please reach out to them — I know they would appreciate hearing how they shaped your time in the Auxiliary. Steve began his Auxiliary journey in Florida and ended it in Bellingham; he has held every staff position, most recently HR, and his achievements include the Transportation 9-11 Ribbon and the Auxiliary Sustained Service Award. Hoyt has held every staff officer role at the flotilla level as well as many at the district level, and earned the Auxiliary VE/MDV Award fifteen times.

Looking toward the last part of the year, we begin our dues collection on August 1st. This is the perfect time to ask an important question: do you want to become more involved this year? We would love to have you join us for meetings and courses, or become qualified in a new area. Our elections will be held in November — please think about an office you might hold or another way you would like to contribute.

As we wrap up our on-the-water patrols, begin our aids-to-navigation patrols, and continue our program visits, let us do so with the professionalism our community has come to expect of us.

Semper Paratus.

Leslie Parks, Flotilla Commander

August

- 1 Dues collection begins (email to members)
- 4 Coast Guard Day picnic
- 6 F11 staff meeting
- 27 Division 1 meeting (Zoom)

September

- 3 F11 staff meeting
- 11–13 NW District DTRAIN, Clackamas
- 17 F11 meeting
- 26–27 SeaFeast, Bellingham
- 30 Dues deadline

October

- 1 F11 staff meeting
- 15 F11 meeting (PPE check before)
- 22 Division 1 meeting (Zoom)

November

- 5 F11 staff meeting
- 19 F11 meeting — Elections

26 Coast Guard Station Thanksgiving

December

- 3 F11 planning meeting
- Division 1 Change of Watch (in-person)

Please note that some dates are tentative. Please double check closer to the time of the event to confirm

ACRONYMS

B'ham	Bellingham
CoC	Change of command event
CoW	Change of watch
DTRAIN	Districtwide training event
FL11	Flotilla 11
?	Placeholder when the exact date is not yet known
PPE	Personal protective equipment
QE	Qualification exam
RSSO	Rescue and survival systems officer
TBD	To be determined
VSC	Vessel safety check

Member Training

Since our Spring edition, our members have completed the following training:

- ✱ Fingerprint Technician — Pam & Leslie
- ✱ Communications Workshop — Nico
- ✱ Kat (Mary) Scanlon — 7 Core, 7 BQS2, Introduction to Risk Management, ICS-210 / Initial Incident Commander, Vessel Examiner Course, Good Mate, and Blood-Borne Pathogens

Congratulations to Kat (Mary) Scanlon on becoming Basically Qualified, then qualifying as a Vessel Examiner and conducting her first Vessel Safety Check on her own.

On 25 April, five of our Boat Crew completed their annual in-water PPE swim (see photos, this issue).



Bellingham, Wash. — A Flotilla 11 member is recognized during a flotilla meeting. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.

Navigation Systems

Beyond the three PATON verifications noted in the Spring edition, another Flotilla Aid Verifier completed a dozen PATON assignments in north Whatcom County — one of which was found discrepant. Another member reported a discrepant PATON (Class II) that was not

appearing as listed in the Coast Guard Light List — not part of our regular assignments. We also forwarded a photo of a discrepant ATON on behalf of another Auxiliary unit (Point White Light, Rich Passage).



Point Roberts, Wash. — Discrepant Pt Roberts Live #2, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.



Rich Passage, Wash. — A discrepant aid to navigation, Point White Light, reported by Flotilla 11 Aid Verifiers. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.

Rescue at Sucia Island

All eleven survive a Kenmore Air floatplane crash in the San Juans — with Station Bellingham and Air Station Port Angeles in the thick of it

On the evening of Thursday, July 23, a Kenmore Air de Havilland DHC-3 Otter (Flight 140, bound from Seattle's Lake Union to Roche Harbor) crashed in Shallow Bay at Sucia Island Marine State Park — squarely within our flotilla's home waters. Ten passengers and the pilot were aboard. Every one of them survived.

The response was fast and coordinated. Sector Puget Sound directed the case, and help converged from every direction: the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Navy, the Canadian Coast Guard, county fire and rescue, the San Juan County Sheriff's Marine Unit, and civilian good Samaritans who happened to be boating nearby.

Coast Guard Station Bellingham's 45-foot Response Boat-Medium crew carried three survivors back to the station, where Bellingham Fire Department EMS was waiting; the San Juan Island fireboat brought a fourth. An MH-65 Dolphin helicopter from Air Station Port Angeles hoisted an injured passenger from the Sheriff's boat and flew them to PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center in Bellingham, and Airlift Northwest flew a sixth patient there as well. A U.S. Navy MH-60S Seahawk from Naval

Air Station Whidbey Island delivered backboards, stood by for further medevacs, and helped deconflict the crowded airspace. The Coast Guard Cutter Blue Shark (WPB-87360) and the Sheriff's Marine Unit secured the scene.

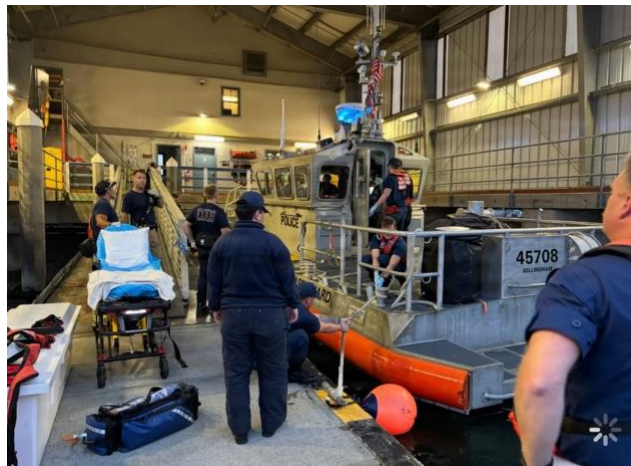
Before any first responders arrived, good Samaritans and off-duty medical professionals in nearby boats pulled people from the water, helped triage the injured, and gave rescuers stable platforms to work from — a reminder that on our waters, the boater next to you is often the first link in the rescue chain.

"I want to extend my deepest gratitude for the extraordinary interagency cooperation and response during the seaplane crash near Sucia Island," said Cmdr. Beau C. Belanger, commanding officer at Air Station Port Angeles. "Thanks to the rapid coordination between our federal, local, and state agencies, alongside several critical good Samaritans, we successfully rescued and transported patients for medical evaluation and treatment."

The aircraft was removed the following day by salvage contractors. The FAA and NTSB are investigating; the pilot had reportedly altered course to avoid a thunderstorm before the crash.



Port Angeles, Wash. — An MH-65 Dolphin aircrew from Air Station Port Angeles stands for a photo after the Sucia Island search-and-rescue case, July 23, 2026. U.S. Coast Guard photo.



Bellingham, Wash. — Coast Guard Station Bellingham and Bellingham Fire Department crews transfer a survivor to emergency medical services, July 23, 2026. U.S. Coast Guard photo.

Sources: U.S. Coast Guard news release, July 24, 2026; KOMO News; CNN.

Changes of Command

Summer brought leadership changes to two units we work closely with.

Station Bellingham

On May 21, Flotilla 11 members attended the change of command at Coast Guard Station Bellingham as the unit marked the transition to its new leadership. Flotilla Chaplain Lyle Schrag offered the blessing, and our

members were on hand to represent the Auxiliary alongside active-duty crews and partners from across the border.



Bellingham, Wash. — The change of command at Coast Guard Station Bellingham, May 21, 2026. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.



Bellingham, Wash. — A Flotilla 11 member attends the Station Bellingham change of command. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.



Bellingham, Wash. — Flotilla 11 members represent the Auxiliary at the ceremony. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.

USCGC Sea Lion

On July 9, the crew of USCGC Sea Lion (WPB-87352), homeported here in Bellingham, held its own change of command. Members of Flotilla 11 attended to welcome

the cutter's incoming commanding officer and to thank the departing skipper for years of close partnership across our shared area of responsibility.



Bellingham, Wash. — A Flotilla 11 member at the USCGC Sea Lion change of command, July 9, 2026. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.



Bellingham, Wash. — Auxiliarists visit with the cutter's crew. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.



Bellingham, Wash. — Flotilla 11 members welcome the cutter's new commanding officer. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.



Bellingham, Wash. — The Bellingham-homeported cutters, including USCGC Sea Lion, at sunset. U.S. Coast Guard photo.

Summer on Patrol

Our Boat Crew logged a busy season, keeping a safety presence across Bellingham Bay and the San Juans and supporting two marquee community events. Crews also

Ski to Sea

Over the Memorial Day weekend, the flotilla again supported the Ski to Sea race, standing by as a safety and

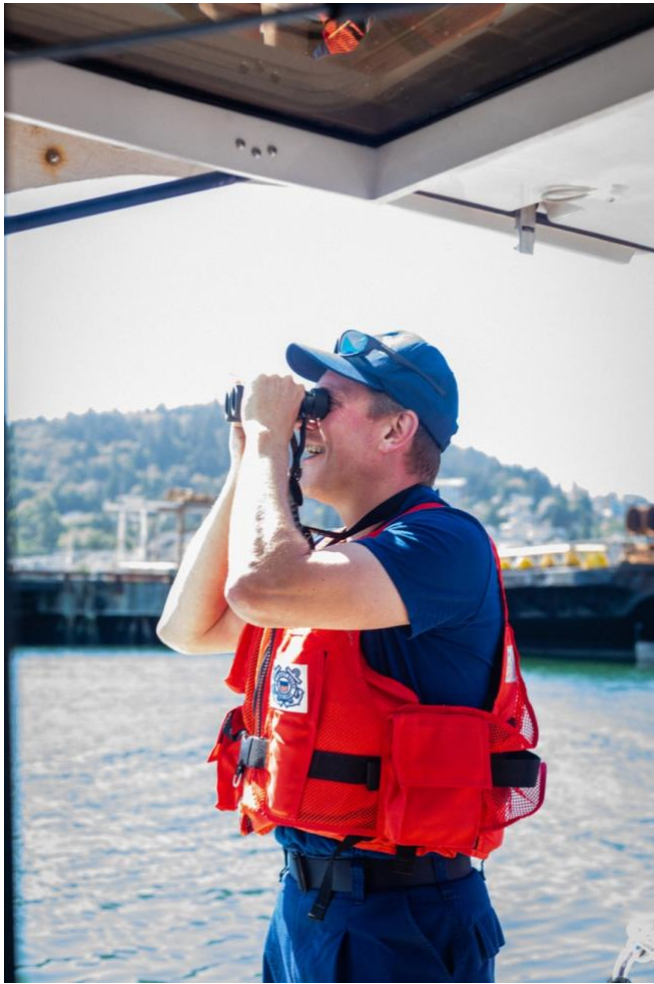
FIFA World Cup Fan Zone

used time on the water to drill man-overboard recovery with a training dummy.

rescue presence on the water near the Bellingham Bay finish.

With the FIFA World Cup drawing crowds to Vancouver and Seattle, Bellingham — sitting between the two — was designated an official fan zone. Sector tasked Flotilla 11 with covering the fan zones along the city's

waterways. Our Boat Crew provided a boat and crew for several events to promote safe boating and keep a presence on the water. Happily, no one needed assistance — but the crew was ready.



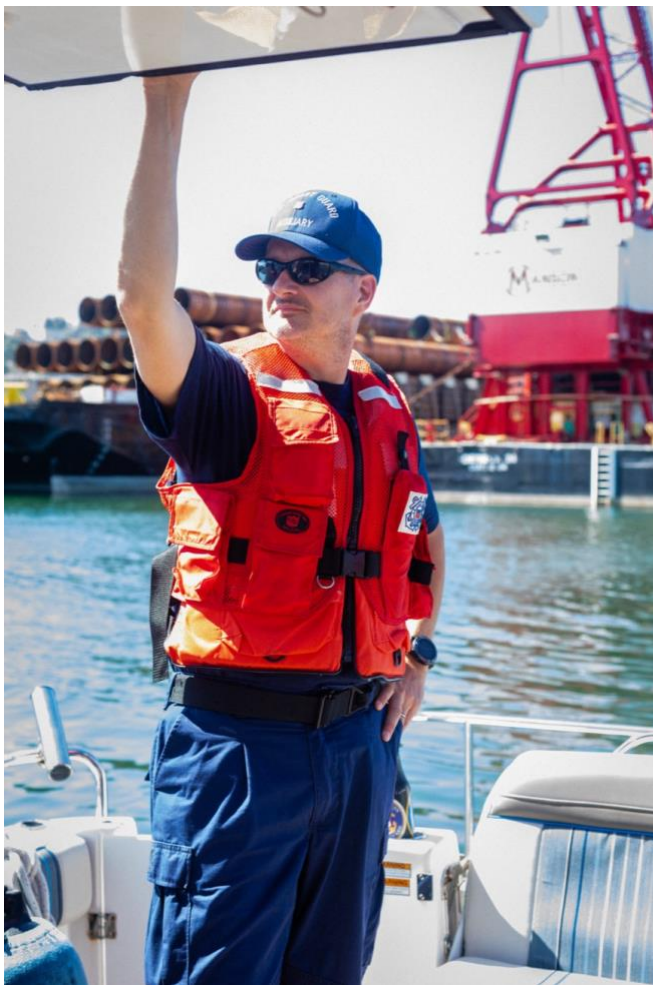
Bellingham Bay, Wash. — A crew member scans the water during a summer patrol. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.



Bellingham Bay, Wash. — A crew member at the helm during a summer patrol. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.



Bellingham Bay, Wash. — Standing watch during a summer patrol. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.



Bellingham, Wash. — A crew member signals from the deck along the waterfront. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.



Bellingham Bay, Wash. — Boat Crew practice a man-overboard recovery with a training dummy during on-water training. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.



Bellingham Bay, Wash. — Maneuvering alongside during the recovery drill. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.



Bellingham Bay, Wash. — Readyng recovery gear on deck. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.

Into the Water: The PPE Swim

Personal protective equipment only helps if it works when you need it — and if you know how it behaves in the water. This spring, five of our Boat Crew completed the annual in-water PPE swim, entering the water in full

gear to test their equipment and practice self-rescue. It is cold, humbling, and genuinely useful: the time to learn how your dry suit, PFD, and signaling gear perform is before an emergency, not during one.



Bellingham, Wash. — Five Boat Crew complete the annual in-water PPE swim. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.



Bellingham, Wash. — Members afloat in dry suits during the PPE swim. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.

Fair Winds: Steve Bell and Hoyt Hatfield

This summer the flotilla said thank you and farewell to two long-serving shipmates who together gave nearly half a century to the Auxiliary.

Steve Bell served 24 years, beginning his Auxiliary journey in Florida and finishing it in Bellingham. He held every flotilla staff position over the years, most recently FSO-HR, and his recognitions include the Transportation 9-11 Ribbon and the Auxiliary Sustained Service Award.

Hoyt Hatfield served 25 years, holding every staff officer role at the flotilla level as well as many at the district level, and earning the Auxiliary VE/MDV Award fifteen times.

On July 16, members gathered for a casual BBQ to celebrate their service, swap favorite memories, and give them the sendoff they earned. Fair winds and following seas, gentlemen — and thank you.

Personal Minimums: An Idea Worth Borrowing from Aviation

Make the go/no-go call clear-headed and in advance — not on the dock with the engine running

Every Coast Guard and Auxiliary boat crew already operates inside a solid risk-management framework. Before a mission we run the numbers — Team Coordination Training, the GAR 2.0 “green-amber-red” risk assessment, and a crew brief. These tools work. But, to the best of my knowledge, there is one idea from the aviation world that boating has never quite adopted, and it may be worth a conversation: personal minimums.

In aviation, a personal minimum is a limit a pilot sets for themselves — stricter than the legal or regulatory minimum — and writes down ahead of time. A pilot might decide, on a calm afternoon at the kitchen table, that they will not fly if the ceiling is below 2,000 feet, if visibility is under five miles, or if the crosswind exceeds twelve knots, even when the rules would technically allow it. The specific numbers are not the point. The point is that the decision is made in advance, in a clear-headed state — not in the moment, when weather, fatigue, and the pressure to ‘get there’ are all pushing the wrong way.

Pilots have a name for what personal minimums guard against: ‘get-there-itis,’ the very human tendency to press on because someone is waiting, because you have

come this far, because turning back feels like failure. On the water we know the same pull. A case is pending, someone may be in trouble, the crew is eager, and the coxswain and crew are asked to weigh sea state, wind, visibility, water temperature, daylight, and crew fatigue all at once, with the clock running.

So here is a modest proposal for our flotilla. What if, well before the season, each of us — and each boat crew — sat down and wrote an objective abort checklist? Not a replacement for GAR or for the coxswain's judgment, but a personal backstop agreed to in advance: seas above a set height, sustained winds above a set speed, visibility below a set distance, water-temperature and exposure limits, or a hard daylight cutoff. When a real limit is crossed, the decision has already been made, calmly and ahead of time, and no one has to make it under pressure with a swimmer in the water and a crew watching.

The Coast Guard's culture already leans this way. ‘We have to go out, we don't have to come back’ is a line about duty — but the modern service pairs it with disciplined risk management precisely so that crews do come back. Personal minimums are simply one more way to put the hard thinking where it belongs: before you cast off. It is a conversation worth having at a meeting this fall.

The Coast Guard Steps Forward in the Western Pacific

As the Navy is stretched thin, the nation's smallest sea service takes on a bigger role in contested waters

In one of its most significant repositioning moves in years, the Coast Guard this summer ended a two-decade

presence in the Persian Gulf and shifted its entire expeditionary cutter squadron to the Western Pacific. The six Sentinel-class fast response cutters that had operated out of Bahrain since 2002 are now working from Singapore and Subic Bay in the Philippines, with a

mission focused on protecting the homeland and its maritime approaches, including Guam and the Pacific Islands.

Sentinel-Class Fast Response Cutter

Design: Damen Stan Patrol 4708; built by Bollinger Shipyards, La.

Length: 154 ft (47 m)

Beam: 25 ft (7.6 m)

Displacement: ~353 tons, full load

Speed: 28+ knots

Range: 2,500 nautical miles

Endurance: 5 days

Crew: 22–24

Armament: One 25 mm Mk 38 autocannon; four .50-cal machine guns

Small boat: One over-the-horizon stern-launched cutter boat

Namesakes: Each named for an enlisted Coast Guard hero
More than 60 delivered fleet-wide; six now forward-based in the Western Pacific.

Sources: U.S. Coast Guard; Bollinger Shipyards; naval-technology.com.

The move reflects a broader national shift. As the Navy's larger warships are stretched across multiple theaters, the Coast Guard is increasingly filling a maritime-presence and partner-building role in the region. Its unusual combination of military capability and law-
Sources: Stars and Stripes and Task & Purpose, July 2026; USNI News; gCaptain.

The Coast Guard in the News

A New Commandant

Adm. Kevin E. Lunday was sworn in as the 28th Commandant of the Coast Guard in January 2026, with Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem officiating. A nearly 40-year veteran with command experience across

Force Design 2028

The service is moving quickly to invest a roughly \$25 billion modernization windfall through its 'Force Design 2028' initiative, aimed at decades of deferred investment, aging cutters, and workforce shortages. Funds are flowing toward additional fast response and

Nine Saved in the Bering Sea

In January, a helicopter aircrew from Air Station Cold Bay rescued all nine crew of the crab boat Arctic Sea after it lost power and grounded near St. George Island. Battling

Sources: Military.com; DHS; USNI News; The Maritime Executive, January 2026.

2026 Dues Are Due

enforcement authority makes it well suited to the 'gray zone' — the space below open conflict where competing claims are pressed around the South China Sea. Commandant Adm. Kevin Lunday has framed the shift as strengthening the service's ability to support combatant commanders and national-security goals in contested waters.

Analysts describe the deployment in measured terms — a meaningful signal and a real, if modest, contribution set against China's far larger fleets, with the near-term emphasis on training and interoperability with partner nations rather than direct enforcement. The push builds on a mission the Coast Guard has quietly grown for years: countering illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, honoring bilateral 'shiprider' law-enforcement agreements with Pacific Island nations, and conducting capacity-building patrols across Oceania. Many island partners see the service as a partner of choice precisely because of its small footprint and unique authorities.

For a service already managing aging ships and workforce shortages — challenges its 'Force Design 2028' modernization aims to address — the Western Pacific mission underscores how central the Coast Guard has become to U.S. strategy in the Indo-Pacific.

the Indo-Pacific, the Persian Gulf, and cyberspace, Lunday had served as acting commandant since January 2025.

offshore patrol cutters, Arctic and Polar Security Cutters, new HC-130J surveillance aircraft, and infrastructure — organized around four pillars: people, organization, technology, and acquisition.

roughly 50-knot winds and 10-foot seas, the aircrew hoisted the crew to safety before they had to abandon ship — everyone reached St. Paul with no injuries.

Flotilla 11 kicked off 2026 dues collection on August 1.
You can pay quickly and securely online via PayPal at the

link below. Questions about dues? Contact Manny Eusebio, FSO-FN.

<https://www.paypal.com/ncp/payment/4T9E6BJDZ5EG2>

Flotilla Staff Officers

The following members are your Flotilla Staff Officers. Please contact them if you have any questions or ideas, or wish to get involved in a particular type of activity.

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Parting Shot



Bellingham Bay, Wash. — The national ensign flies from a Flotilla 11 patrol boat. U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary photo.