

## **Chapter 3 - Predicted Log Contests**

### **Creating a Predicted Log Contest**

This Chapter addresses how one organization sponsored and conducted a predicted log contest. The occasion is a regular weekend cruise of Long Bay Power Squadron, a unit of District 26 of United States Power Squadrons. The waters are the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway (AICW) below the point where the Waccamaw River flows into the AICW at Enterprise Landing (Mile Marker 375). Distances on the AICW are typically measured in statute rather than nautical miles. Mile markers on the AICW are all in statute miles. However, in all occasions here we use *nautical miles* and *knots*.

The text in this Chapter moves from the development of the contest through announcement of the Contest in the squadron newsletter through the announcement of the contest winner. Chapter 4, which follows, will detail how predicted calculations and predictions can be done. A portion Chapter 4 will describe how at least one of the contestants developed predictions.

### **Sponsoring Organizations**

Any organization whose members have an interest in boating can sponsor predicted log contests. The North American Cruiser Association (NACA) (on the Web at [www.predictedlog.org](http://www.predictedlog.org)) is an umbrella organization that exists for the primary purpose of furthering predicted log contests. NACA is composed of 12 regional organizations that oversee and sanction contests within their respective areas, which range from St. Petersburg, Florida to the Puget Sound and Vancouver Island, British Columbia and from Boston to San Diego. Other organizations, such as USPS and its constituent districts and squadrons, may sponsor predicted log contests as well. These USPS contests are often staged as the highlight of a rendezvous or cruise or the culmination of a boating course.

As one would expect, these predicted log contests reflect the kinds of boats and boating most popular in local waters. The rules often restrict the kinds and sizes of boats allowed to compete. Although the rules differ somewhat from one area to the next, the basic premise remains. That is, to know your boat and how it performs under specific conditions. The more formal clubs create rules intended to permit fair contests among their members and the kinds of boats they operate.

### **Contest Committee**

Any organization intending to sponsor a predicted log contest needs a contest committee. Members of this committee select where the contest will be run, when it will be run, and the rules for running and scoring the contest. Obviously the committee does not act alone. The cooperation of potential contestants is vital. The committee will publish the contest conditions, and make them available to the contestants. In most contests the course conditions are distributed prior to the contest date. The committee will also perform the scoring tasks and publish the results.

### **No Fair "Practicing"**

It should be noted that contestants are on their honor not to run the contest course for at least 30 days prior to the contest. That does not mean contestants are unfamiliar with the waters. This means it is unfair to "practice" running the course prior to the contest itself.

### **Adjusting Start/Finish Times**

In order to avoid possible traffic jams at the finish line when a large number of contestants are involved, staggered start or finish times may be established according to speed (i.e., under 8 kn, 8 to 10 kn, over 10 kn) or boat size. An allowance of 10 to 20 minutes between finish times of each group is usual. The committee will also have responsibility for obtaining and training observers, for receiving the contest predicted logs, for adjudicating any rules infractions, and for determining the winners at the conclusion. An understandable reason for selecting a finishing time goal is to schedule a follow-on event such as a picnic lunch. Having a group of boats approaching the finish line at a certain time lends some excitement to the event.

## **Observers**

Each contestant in a predicted log contest covers his course independently in his own vessel with his own crew. In order to permit fairness in judging and ensure that the predicted course is covered and that all rules are observed, the contest committee usually places an observer aboard each vessel as its representative during the contest.

Only trained and impartial observers should be used in the contests. Observers should be independent of the contestants, although in practice, guests of the contestants are often assigned to other boats to serve as exchange observers. In any event, observers must be able to read timing devices accurately and have a general knowledge of predicted log contests and associated forms and calculations. The contest committee will usually have a training session for all observers. The training session can be held on the day of the contest or the previous evening. This will include a review of any special contest rules, the course to be followed, equipment, and limitations placed on contestants. A "Time Reading" drill should be held. If at all possible, each observer should do this using the timepiece to be used in the contest. Incidentally, the choice of an observer is generally allowed by a contestant based on the physical size of the observer. An observer who is quite large and heavy should not be assigned to a very small boat.

## **Trophies and Awards**

Ask an experienced predicted logger why he or she enters these contests and the answer usually comes back as "a matter of pride". Contestants go to a great deal of trouble to develop speed curves and gain detailed knowledge of their boats. Wining is often a matter of being a few seconds either fast or slow. Yes, most participants enjoy receiving accolades and trophies, but that's only part of the story. Most experienced predicted loggers are anxious to encourage newcomers to the sport. Contests often have separate novice awards. Novices may be those who have participated for less than one year, who have participated in fewer than four contests, or who have never participated in predicted log contest. They may be given an additional handicap allowance of a few percentage points of error and included in the overall rankings. This may be varied according to committee judgments. Strange as it may sound, novices frequently take home their share of the overall awards.

## **Course Descriptions**

The committee prepares and makes available to each contestant a description of the course to be followed for the contest. This description names the bodies of water to be traversed and the charts to be used. The description includes:

1. The starting point.
2. Control points (usually one to ten).
3. A finish point.
4. Descriptions of the specific route to be followed.
5. Contest conditions to be observed between control points.
6. The committee's estimate of the course length as accurately as possible.
7. Finish times, maximum distances, and any safety or other limitations.

Finish times are usually arranged such that the slower boats finish earliest or starting times such that the fastest start later. This minimizes the number of overtaking situations during the contest and improves the safety of all contestants. Starting points and finish points are often different, but are usually located at points sufficiently close to moorage to avoid extended runs by the contestants before or after the contest. When boats are expected to travel near land points or pass through restricted channels along the course, slow speeds may be required over the appropriate parts of the course.

## **Predicted Log Contest - Long Bay Power Squadron NOAA Chart 11534 - North Carolina - South Carolina**

This is an example of a PLC run by Long Bay Power Squadron over the waters of The Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway (AICW) and the Waccamaw River. The PLC is run during the summer months when the weather is usually hot and subject to thunderstorms. This portion of the AICW is well-charted and provides a good variety of boating and cruising challenges. Rivers in this area are usually narrow, but quite deep with varying currents depending on recent rainfall.

The mileage figures used here are in *nautical miles* although the mileage in the AICW is shown in statute miles with occasional fixed "mile markers" posted. This PLC totals 19.5 nm as measured on the chart and includes the waters from just south of mile marker 385 up to marker 375 and back to the entrance to the marina at Wachesaw Landing. Thus, boats will travel both *with* and *against* the currents. Part of the northbound course includes Prince Creek. Prince Creek is a narrow, but deep (17 - 31 ft) natural stretch of water frequented by sportsmen fishing from mostly john boats and bass boats. Thus a "no-wake" speed is recommended for the 2.4-mile leg from checkpoints #1 to #2. The Committee starting time is 1000 EDT with the actual time of each boat's start being recorded by the assigned observer. The intent here is to have the PLC ended around 1200 EDT. All of the anticipated entrants have boats of the same general size so no adjusted start/finish times are needed. Each contesting skipper will decide which speeds to run. The intent here is to finish close to noon.

Scoring is done using the software developed by P/C Stanley Klein, SN, Middletown PS, D/1. The scoring includes the APBA Handicap system.

The Long Bay PLC was discussed at squadron meetings and described in the monthly squadron newsletter *Fore'n'Aft* in the issue mailed some 45 days before the event. The waters involved are all well known to the contestants, but conditions on the day of the event are always difficult to predict. That is what makes this PLC attractive to experienced boaters. Here is the Committee description:

**Long Bay Power Squadron - Predicted Log Contest**  
**Saturday 15 July 2006, NOAA Chart 11534 (current edition)**  
**Committee Distance: 19.5 nm, Start time: 1000 EDT**  
**APBA Handicap will be used.**  
**Start:** FI G 4s "65"  
**CP#1:** FI G 4s "53" (Through Prince Creek)  
**CP#2:** FI G 4s "43"  
**CP#3:** G "1" (South of Enterprise Landing)  
**CP#4:** FI R 4sec "40"  
**CP#5:** FI G 4s "53"  
**CP#6:** G "61"  
**CP#7 (End):** FI G "57"

The trickiest portion of the course is through Prince Creek because it is narrow and frequented by so many people involved in personal fishing. This means that the recommended speed will be a slow "no-wake" speed. The distance through Prince Creek is about 2.4 nautical miles. At "no-wake" this usually requires almost half an hour and involves dodging fishing boats. The rest of the course is fairly simple, but can involve commercial traffic and thunderstorms. The waters are all deep, ranging from 14 feet to as much as 36 feet, but the channels meander so straight line distances are very short. This makes predictions particularly difficult.