

## **The Origin of the Maritime Archaeological Survey Team, Inc.**

With the signing of the Abandoned Shipwreck Act and the subsequent shipwreck title transfers to affected states, in this particular case Ohio, the process toward the creation of the Maritime Archaeological Survey Team, Inc. (MAST) commenced. Though it would take many years to evolve, the following outlines the process.

### **Submerged Lands Advisory Council**

In response to the Federal government title transfers, the Legislature of the State of Ohio passed what is commonly called "The Ohio Shipwreck Law" or Ohio Revised Code 1506.36 in 1992. As part of the law, a governor appointed committee named the Submerged Lands Advisory Council (SLAC) was established. Their function was to serve as advisors to the Directors of the Ohio Historical Society (OHS) and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) in matters regarding Ohio's shipwrecks. Those serving on the council represented various lake user groups, including but not limited to, fishing and dive charters/businesses, salvors, historians, researchers, sport divers and fishermen, lawyers, teachers and designated representatives the ODNR and OHS. The SLAC Final Report (Herdendorf, 2004) serves as the basis for information on the history of SLAC.

During its existence (1994-2004) SLAC served as a foremost advocate for shipwreck education and protection in the State and was instrumental in the following:

1) Developed State salvage procedures and forms and authored a user-friendly version of the "Ohio Shipwreck Law".

In order to for the Law to be effective, it was held that the diving populace needed to be informed of the law and how it would effect them. The Council assisted in the creation of salvage regulations and forms and a user-friendly version of the Law. The brochure called "Divers, Shipwrecks, and Ohio Law" was distributed to dive shops, charters, instructors and clubs throughout the state in hopes of reaching a large portion Ohio's diving population.

2) Produced Shipwreck Preservation poster

A shipwreck preservation poster entitled "Leave the Past for the Future" was designed and dispersed to the same interest groups as was the "Divers, Shipwrecks, and Ohio Law" brochure. The concept behind the poster was to promote, in a visual format, the importance of Ohio's shipwrecks and why it is important to preserve them for everyone to enjoy.

3) Reviewed and advised on salvage requests.

During its tenure, SLAC was presented with several requests for salvage to review, comment on and provide guidance to the Ohio Historical Society and Ohio Department of Natural Resources thereby providing the State with a valuable "sounding board" resource.

4) Created workshops to educate divers in underwater archaeology.

Since the Law is self governing, by this we mean there is not active policing of the shipwrecks by the State, SLAC contended that only through educating the diver, helping change the collecting mindset of the dive community at the time and giving them avenues to gain a larger appreciation of Ohio's underwater cultural heritage would the Law be effective. Therefore the Council established an underwater archaeology workshop series that was sponsored by Bowling Green State University, The Great Lakes Historical Society, Michigan University, Ohio Council of Skin and Scuba Divers, Inc., Ohio Department of Natural Resources (Coastal Management Program), Ohio Historical Society (Historic Preservation Office), The Ohio State University, Save Ontario Shipwrecks (Ohio Chapter), and Wright State University. The workshops focused on such topics as ship construction, archival research, shipwreck deterioration processes, report writing, survey techniques, and practical exercises on land and in the water. Participants were then eligible to work on a shipwreck survey. These semi annual workshops were very popular, with class sizes ranging from approximately 25-65 people.

5) Worked toward the placement of shipwreck mooring buoys.

Early on it was recognized that mooring buoy anchorage for popular shipwrecks would protect the wreck by providing boaters something besides the vessel to anchor into and would be an asset to the diver by giving them a secure anchorage. In light of this, in 1994, SLAC selected ships that were to be buoyed, and then researched buoy styles and mooring techniques. By 1995 money had been secured to purchase mooring equipment and buoys and after obtaining ODNR approval they were placed. However the United States Coast Guard (USCG) later requested that they be removed since they needed to be authorized through them as private aids to navigation prior to placement. After several years of additional communication by SLAC, the USCG and ODNR it was realized that buoy placement by the State could not occur because in order for buoys to be placed by ODNR, the State would have to sign a hold harmless clause in the Coast Guard paperwork. Since the Ohio constitution forbids this, and the USCG required it, the buoy initiative was at a standstill.

6) Worked toward the establishment of underwater preserves.

In 1994 the Village of Kelleys Island approached the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to create an underwater preserve for shipwrecks surrounding the Island. Over the next several years, SLAC assisted ODNR with studies, plans and public meetings. However in 2002, under concern that restrictions would be imposed by the State, the Village rescinded their support and efforts towards the preserve ceased.

### **Emergence of the Maritime Archaeological Survey Team, Inc. (MAST)**

In 1996-1997 talk had begun through the underwater archaeology student population about creating a name that would embody the concept surrounding their activities, thus giving the group a formal identity. The Maritime Archaeological

Survey Team (MAST) was proposed and casually adopted by the ranks. The Submerged Advisory Council supported a formal formation of MAST in 1999 and letters were sent out to the students informing them of the development. At the same time, the Lake Erie Shipwreck Research Center of the Great Lakes Historical Society (now the Peachman Lake Erie Shipwreck Research Center of the Great Lakes Historical Society [PLESRC]) offered to serve as MAST's home base and to coordinate workshops and the subsequent wreck surveys that SLAC had operated in the past. This proposal was also endorsed by SLAC and it is from this point that the partnership between PLESRC and MAST commenced.

MAST was finally formed in March 2000 and is now a board operated 501(c)3 non profit organization that is composed of several hundred members from Ohio, surrounding states, and Canada. Their mission is "dedicated to the documentation, scientific study and education pertaining to underwater archaeological resources" (MAST, 2006). In particular, their focus has been toward buoy placement, assisting with underwater archaeology workshops and shipwreck surveys.

The first venture undertaken by MAST was to pick up where the SLAC buoy initiative ended. Through grants obtained from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Office of Coastal Management and the Ohio Lake Erie Commission, mooring buoys and blocks were placed on the shipwrecks Morning Star, Sand Merchant, The Craftsman, Admiral, Dundee and Queen of the West. In conjunction with mooring placement educational materials were created and disseminated through out the diving and boating community. The mooring buoy program has since received wide support from several resource communities including the individual sport diver and those involved in dive tourism, fishing, maritime history, preservation and archaeology. Due to this support, additional moorings are being planned and will hopefully be installed in the near future.

PLESRC, with funding by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Office of Coastal Management and with MAST assistance, has conducted several underwater archaeology workshops. As a result more wrecks have been surveyed and subsequent reports created. In addition, with support from Ohio Sea Grant, underwater dive slates have been developed. These slates serve as site maps for the diver (and non diver) and provide information about the vessel, its history and location.

The success of PLESRC/MAST undertakings has been recognized by several organizations. In 2003, the underwater dive slates won the Blue Ribbon Award for best partnership publication within the National Sea Grant College program for 2002. During 2005, PLESRC, MAST and ODNR/OCM were co-winners of the Public Education and Awareness Award from the Ohio Historical Society Office of Historic Preservation for promoting information on Ohio's submerged cultural resources (underwater archaeology workshops). And PLESRC and MAST won the Gold Award for "Archaeology, Ohio's Shipwrecks and the Craftsman" from the Ohio Museum

Association. And most recently MAST won the 2006 Ohio Lake Erie Award from the Ohio Lake Erie Commission for outstanding contributions to enhance Lake Erie.  
Conclusion

The Submerged Lands Advisory Council was sunsetted by the State of Ohio in 2004 and a portion of its duties were merged with in the larger Coastal Resources Advisory Council. While SLAC is no longer in existence, the ideals and goals of educating the public and protecting shipwrecks are still alive, well and thriving through the joint endeavors of MAST and PLESRC.

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