

## Useful Apps on and around our waterways



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Our last boating article provided information on navigation apps for boaters available for cell phones and tablets. In this, our second article on apps useful on and around the water, we discuss more social apps for boaters.

Have you ever cruised into a marina for fuel or provisions and wondered who owns that beautiful boat moored next to you from Annapolis or Hilton Head with fancy stern lettering and a clever name? Have you wondered where the owners have taken her and what route they took to get there? It may surprise you to know that there are apps out there that provide answers to these questions. We boaters by and large are a pretty friendly lot. We're united against common elements such as weather, fuel costs, and repairs--and we value helpful hints for cleaning and maintaining our cherished vessels. We love to swap stories and tall tales—some of which, in the words of Winston Churchill, “have the additional advantage of actually being true.” Today, social media can enhance and enable friendships formed around our shared passion for boating.

Here is a list of apps from which you may choose what might work best for you:

Nebo, available for free on Apple and Android devices, is really a boat tracking and log keeping app, but, if you enable streamlined sharing via social media, it facilitates community interaction within the boating community—and especially among your friends and fellow boaters. It tracks your boat by name and where you've been and makes for a nice ice breaker when you meet someone on the docks. When you're on the water, it allows friends to keep in touch with fellow boaters and share your adventures direct to your Nebo profile and social media—along with your location--with anyone via SMS, email, WhatsApp, Facebook messenger, etc. It also conveniently includes a start-up check list (so you don't forget the ice) and allows you to store all your boating records in one place.

Another popular ship tracking application albeit without social media interface is MarineTraffic—available in the Apple and Android app stores. This app displays near real-time positions of up to 170,000 ships and yachts worldwide which report their positions via land-based AIS receivers. For those who are not familiar with AIS, the Automatic Identification System is a shipboard broadcast system that acts like a transponder operating in the VHF maritime band or via satellite (S-AIS). It updates around every two seconds and identifies vessels with AIS transceivers by name, speed and vector. This system allows users to radio fellow boaters by name or, in case of emergency, directly using the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS). Virtually all

tracking apps use AIS for their core data, but with a simpler interface to accommodate a wide range of boating and technical skills. The most basic “Starter Plan” including vessel and port details, augmented reality that allows for nearby vessel identification, basic weather, and route planning, costs \$9.99 per year. Additional subscriptions including advanced weather maps, nautical charts and density maps are available for additional fees.

The Active Captain app by Garmin is now more of a navigational interface between your Garmin device and your smart phone, but in keeping with the original Active Captain community as spear-headed by founders Jeff and Karen Siegel, it is useful for incorporating crowd sourced information on marinas, hazards, bridge openings and other boating tips. Cruisers Net and their updated application The Salty Southeast Cruisers Net (SSECN) includes real time updated conditions, local notices to mariners and Coast Guard Nav Alerts, marina info and fuel prices all in one place. Covering the waters from the Virginia Line to the Bahamas, this app and the Cruisers Net website ([www.cruisersnet.net](http://www.cruisersnet.net)) offer a wealth of info and commentary useful to boaters and cruisers up and down the Southeastern Coast including all of Eastern North Carolina.

Although less widely used than the above applications, one social media platform designed specifically for the boating community is Scuttlebutt. Putting all the information a boater needs in the palm of one’s hand, Scuttlebutt eliminates the need for multiple, independent and sometimes redundant mobile tools, while incorporating the crowd sharing capabilities of many popular social media platforms. This app allows boaters to find new friends and connect with other likeminded fishing, power and sail boaters. After creating an account and answering a few questions about the user’s boating habits, the app allows users to share boating adventures, local knowledge, stories, pictures and videos, as well as comment on others in their feed. The app also has a map function, with wind and precipitation overlays and can tap into live weather information including wave heights, wind gusts, humidity and water temperature. This app can come in handy for groups, clubs, organizations or individuals wishing to share information about special events such as trips, raft-ups, regattas, races and other water activities.

However you stay in touch with your friends while enjoying our local waters, remember to use these and other applications to augment and not replace good old fashioned attention to your nearby surroundings while taking care to ensure the safety of your passengers and your vessel.

This article is given the courtesy of your local America’s Boating Club of the Pamlico. Keep us in mind for your boating education and skill building that includes advanced courses as well as 4 hour seminars. To learn more about our boating courses, email our Education Officer at [psps@gmail.com](mailto:psps@gmail.com). We invite you to reference our website at <https://pamlicosailandpowersquadron.org> to learn more and to keep up on the education opportunities offered.