

THE SCUBA SCOOP

Volume 66 • Issue 1 • Spring 2025



www.saginawunderwaterexplorers.org

2025 Board:

President	Tony Piazza	989-751-0361
Vice President	Vacant	
Secretary	Carol Piazza	989-751-1285
Treasurer	Dave Sommers	989-751-8517
Compressor Chair	Michael Garner	989-284-8282
Member-at-Large	Mike Fabish	989-295-2627
Newsletter Editor	Joel Garner	

In this Issue:

pg. 1 President's Letter

pg. 2 SUE Events

pg. 3 Square One Competition

pg. 4 2025 MATE Competition

pg. 5 Tawas City Dive Team

pg. 6 The Western Reserve

President's Letter

This time of year, one minute you may think that spring is upon us and then Mother Nature changes her mind. Hopefully, we'll start getting some summer-like weather very soon. As summer approaches, let's get busy planning for an active diving season for 2025 starting with our annual VIP night scheduled for May 13th and an open swim for members on May 15th (see more information in this issue of the Scoop).

Some of us have previously booked charters with local dive shops so if you're looking for a date, please check out the various sites found on our website. I, for one, am traveling to Munising in July with Dive and Glide. As for any club dive charters, we will be looking into some weekdays in July and August due to some boats already filling up on any given weekend. This also seems more convenient for many, with weekday hotel rates lower and there being less traffic on the water/shipwrecks.

I have been very active with my underwater robotics team again this year and we are preparing for two competitions. The team includes our club editor, Joel Garner, who along with other Tawas area youth took first place in the regionals last year. Wish us luck! We will be practicing at the pool swim on May 15th for the finals which are scheduled for May 17th (see notice in this issue of the Scoop).

Please note that there is still a vacancy in the club's vice presidency. If you want to help promote the club and our sport of diving, please consider this position. Although not a high paying job, it is very rewarding.

With the days getting longer and the sun shining brighter, I look forward to another great year of fun, friends, family, boating and scuba diving. Please reserve the dates for this year's VIP night, summer picnic and Christmas dinner party and if you have a fun dive or plan a dive charter, please reach out to me so we at SUE can promote it.

Tony Piazza
President

Annual Dinner Celebration

Although the Saginaw Underwater Explorers had to cancel last year's annual Christmas dinner celebration, we were able to gather as a group to ring in the New Year. 23 member and guests had a wonderful party at G's Pizzeria in Saginaw on January 18th. Along with good food and conversation, we welcomed a new member, Dale Hendershot, to our group.

We were also able to have a successful giveaway thanks to the many businesses and members that donated prizes including Underwater Antics, G's Pizzeria, Bill Kirksey and Mark Russell. Again, thank you to all!



ANNUAL VIP NIGHT

CALLING ALL DIVERS: Have your scuba tanks inspected and filled at the Saginaw Underwater Explorers' annual VIP night to be held at the compressor site on *Tuesday night, May 13th, at 6:30 pm.*

Current club members only. You must have your 2025 dues paid in full.

All bottles must have a current hydro and be empty. Air cards will be available for purchase.

SUE Open Swim Night

Thursday, May 15th, 6-8 PM, Standish Sterling Central High School, an open swim night will be held where there will be open water diving, lap swimming, and underwater robotics practice.

2401 Grove Street (NE corner of Grove and Wyatt) Standish 48658



Standish Pool Location



Standish Pool



TAWAS UNDERWATER ROBOTICS TEAM

The Tawas underwater robotics team, which includes SUE member Joel Garner and coach Tony Piazza, has been preparing for another year of competition. Beginning last fall, this group built a new ROV (remote operating vehicle) to complete a series of tasks in an underwater environment.

While training for their second year in the MATE (Maritime Advanced Technology Education) event held in Alpena, they signed up for another competition through Square One. Square One is a Michigan-based STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) program for upland and underwater robotics.

The team, known as TARP Tech (Tawas Aquatics Research and Preservation) competed against 20 groups in five categories on April 22, 2025, in Gaylord. The categories included a presentation video, one-minute presentation to a judge, innovative design, drag race and overall performance. TARP Tech received two first place trophies, one for the video presentation and a second for overall performance. Congratulations to our team!



Tony in the Pool



Joel Garner and Tony Piazza holding the Winning Trophies from Square One Competition



Tarp Tech with the Winning Trophies

USA Regional MATE Competition

Spring is arriving early for a group of young maritime enthusiasts in the Third Coast of a harbor community in the USA. Based in northeast Michigan, six students, ages 12-15, are preparing for their second year of competition through the MATE (Marine Advanced Technology Education) Underwater Robotics Program.

MATE was established in 1997 in California to support educational activities and inspire students to learn and apply STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) as it relates to marine technology and to prepare them for careers in the ocean and freshwater workforce.

Sponsored by Heritage Coast Sailing and Rowing Club, the team is coached by volunteers including NAS member, Tony Piazza. The team is engineering a ROV (remote operating vehicle) to perform various mission tasks in an underwater environment. Heritage Coast Sailing and Rowing also operates a sailing school and boat building opportunities for both students and adults in East Tawas, Michigan.

The mission tasks for the 2025 regional competition include identifying a shipwreck, documenting the impact of climate change and invasive species in the Great Lakes, marine renewable energy and monitoring its environmental impact.

The regionals will be held on May 17, 2025, at NOAA's Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Maritime Heritage Center located on Lake Huron in Alpena, Michigan. There, the teams will present their project to a panel of judges and demonstrate their ROV's capability in a marine training tank under strict time restraints. Alpena is also this year's location for the MATE world competition to be held on June 19-21, 2025.

Look for the summer edition of the NAS quarterly newsletter for a follow-up.



Tarp Tech team at first competition



“Tarp Tech” team at 2024 MATE competition in Alpena, Michigan

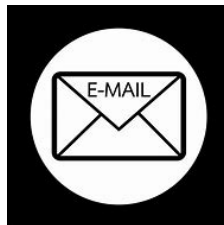


Joel Garner and Tony Piazza at the 2024 MATE competition

Tawas City Fire Department Dive Team

SUE member, Jack Garner, 16, is a volunteer fire cadet for the Tawas City Fire Department (TCFD). TCFD is in its 10th year of its Cadet Firefighter Program. As a cadet, Jack participates in trainings every other week and is dispatched to fire calls – when he is not in school. As a certified diver, he additionally participates in the department's monthly Dive Team trainings. In March, the TCFD Dive Team took part in an ice dive training in Tawas Bay.

Jack, son of SUE members John and Cathie Garner, is seen here in the brown suit to the left. (Photos courtesy of Tawas City Fire Department).



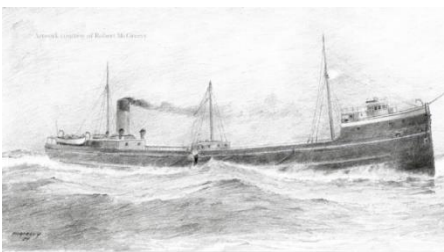
If you enjoyed this issue of the Scuba Scoop, and would like to be included in the quarterly email, contact Carol Piazza at piazza.carol6@gmail.com

The Western Reserve

After 132 years, 300' Western Reserve has finally been discovered 60 miles northwest of Whitefish Point in Lake Superior. The Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society, using Marine Sonic Technology side-scan sonar aboard the non-profit's research vessel, *David Boyd*, made the initial discovery in late summer 2024. Subsequent ROV deployments confirmed the identity of the shipwreck, revealing a ship broken in two, with the bow section resting on top of the stern in approximately 600' of water. Director of Marine Operations, Darryl Ertel, recalls "Knowing how the 300-foot *Western Reserve* was caught in a storm this far from shore made an uneasy feeling in the back of my neck, a squall can come up unexpectedly...anywhere, and anytime."

The *Western Reserve* was a very important ship in her time. She was one of the first all-steel vessels on the Great Lakes, she was built to break cargo shipping records and was deemed one of the safest ships afloat. One newspaper called her "the inland greyhound" for her outright speed on the lakes. *Western Reserve* was owned by millionaire Captain Peter G. Minch, a highly respected shipping magnate. Captain Minch took a large part of his young family aboard his ship (under command of Captain Albert Myer) for a late-summer cruise up through Lake Huron enroute to Two Harbors, MN. The weather was pleasant until they reached Whitefish Bay, when rough weather led the crew to drop anchor to await better conditions. They soon weighed anchor and steamed into Lake Superior, a gale overtook the ship and at around 9:00pm, August 30, 1892, the *Western Reserve* started to break up and sink.

The Minch family and the *Western Reserve* crew safely boarded and launched the vessel's two lifeboats. Almost immediately, one lifeboat overturned and many of the ship's crew disappeared. The remaining lifeboat occupants recovered only two of the crewmen. Within ten minutes the big ship was gone, leaving one lifeboat with Minch family and the remaining crew aboard. They would be in the gale and darkness for the next ten hours. Salvation was near at hand when a steamship passed them in the night. They screamed for a half-hour, but with no flares...they were not seen. At about 7:30am the next morning, they were within one mile of the shoreline west of the Deer Park Life-Saving Station (Lake Superior's southeastern shoreline), when the lifeboat overturned in the breakers. Only one survivor, Wheelsman Harry W. Stewart of Algonac, Michigan, lived to tell the tale.



Source: [Wreck of the Western Reserve, Lost Since 1892. Twenty-Seven Gone, One Survivor - Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society](#)