

**Association for Rescue at Sea (AFRAS)
Caribbean Search and Rescue Lifesaving Award
Bahamas Air Sea Rescue Association (BASRA)**

For recognition of heroic efforts on November 7th, 2011 when, along the Abaco coastline, with seas crashing over the island's barrier reefs, BASRA efforts and individual displays of exceptional bravery and superior seamanship resulted in a rescue attempt of six crewmembers from the F/V HIDE OUT. On the early morning hours of that fateful day, HIDE OUT attempted to negotiate Man-O-War passage despite torrential seas that continued to hammer the coastline, encountering breaking surf conditions with 12-15 foot waves toppling over their stricken craft. Before the crew could issue a distress call, all six persons were thrown into the water as the fishing vessel quickly sank. Miraculously, a crewmember was able to make a mobile phone call while clinging to a raft. Within minutes of the BASRA operations center receiving the distress alert, Clay Wilhoite and his son Andrew were dispatched from nearby Hope Town in BASRA's 26 foot rigid hull inflatable boat (RHIB). On scene, the BASRA team maneuvered among dangerous coral heads and breaking seas to rescue four of HIDE OUT's six crewmembers. A U.S. Coast Guard helicopter was launched to help with the rescue efforts and arrived just as BASRA recovered a fifth fisherman, now deceased. The Coast Guard pilot remarked: "...BASRA's rescue boat Captain Clay Wilhoite's selfless actions are the reason four people are alive today. The rescue efforts were compounded by dangerous seas breaking over the reef, threatening the BASRA vessel with its own peril as it continued the unsuccessful search of the final crewmember." Though experiencing extensive damage to their rescue boat from breaking waves, BASRA continued an exhaustive effort to locate the sixth missing crewmember who was never found. The actions and coordination of BASRA's boat crew and operations center are heartily commended by AFRAS and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the maritime community to render aid to those in distress.

**Steve M. Sawyer, President
Association for Rescue at Sea**