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MARITIME SAFETY & SECURITY BULLETIN 44-11

December 15, 2011

Atlantic Coast Port Access Route Study (ACPARS)

On May 11, 2011 the Coast Guard announced to the public that it was conducting a Port Access Route Study of the entire Eastern Seaboard. A subsequent Notice of Study for the ACPARS was published on 09 December, 2011 to gather additional comments: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-12-09/html/2011-31594.htm>. The study is necessary to determine if new routing measures or changes to existing routing measures are necessary to balance the multiple uses of the waterway, while ensuring the safety of navigation. A critical part of conducting the study is gathering input from all potential stakeholders to determine existing and projected uses of the waterways, as well as the effects to routing measures, may have on these users.

As a waterway user and stakeholder in this area, your participation in this study is important and will ensure that all concerns are fully understood and considered should the Coast Guard undertake any action to change existing vessel traffic routing measures. You are requested to review the Federal register notices and provide detailed feedback as appropriate. Comments are due by January 31, 2012. You may also visit the following Coast Guard website for more information: <http://www.uscg.mil/lantarea/acpars/>. The website provides additional information and links to information you may find useful in determining the potential impacts of proposed wind energy areas and the types of routing measures that may be considered.

In the Coast Guard's original Federal Register notice of May 11, 2011 (76 FR 27288), we sought your comments on five specific questions (items 1 through 5 below). In our most recent Federal Register notice of December 9, 2011 (76 FR 76928), we seek your comments on 11 additional questions (items 6 through 16 below):

1. In what area or areas do you normally operate? Where are your transit routes? What criteria are used in determining your transit routes? What navigational hazards do vessels operating in your normal operation area(s) face? Please describe.
2. Are there strains on the current vessel routing measures, such as the recommended vessel routes through Block Island Sound and into Narragansett Bay and Buzzards Bay, and the traffic separation schemes leading to each Bay and around Cape Cod? Are these routes "right sized" or should they be wider? Or narrower? Longer or shorter? Etc. Is traffic density increasing or decreasing in these routes? Please describe.
3. Are modifications to the routes described above needed to address hazards and improve traffic efficiency? If so, please describe.
4. What costs and benefits are associated with the measures listed as potential study recommendations? What measures do you think are most cost-effective?
5. What impacts, both positive and negative, would changes to existing routing measures or new routing measures have on the area(s) where you normally operate?

6. How are your ocean-going vessel coastwise routes affected by seasonal or episodic weather variations?
7. How are your near-coastal tug and barge routes affected by seasonal or episodic weather variations?
8. Is there a regularly scheduled recreational event that uses the near coastal waters in your area? Recreational events would include offshore fishing tournaments, offshore power boat races, offshore sailing regattas, etc.
9. Do you regularly transit the near coastal area on recreational/private yachts? If yes, how far offshore is your typical route? Does your route change seasonally or according to weather conditions?
10. Should coastwise routes be established along the Atlantic Seaboard similar to the "M-95" marine highway corridor designated by the Maritime Administration as part of "America's Marine Highway Program"? For more information on this program, see *America's Marine Highway Program—Report to Congress—April 2011* (http://www.marad.dot.gov/documents/MARAD_AMH_Report_to_Congress.pdf). If yes, where should they be located?
11. What are the pros and cons to the Coast Guard designating coastwise fairways or traffic separation schemes (TSSs)?
12. Could the creation of designated coastwise routes adversely impact watch-standing or other operational requirements? If so, please explain.
13. If coastwise fairways were created, should separate fairways be created for different vessel types such as tug and barge vs. deep draft vessels?
14. Should there be separate lanes for vessels travelling in opposing directions?
15. Should participation in any coastwise traffic scheme be voluntary or mandatory for all or certain classes of vessels?
16. Given the potentially long transit times, varying sea state and weather conditions; what is an appropriate width for fairways to prevent degradation to navigational safety? Are there particular areas where the width could be smaller or should be larger?

Submitting Comments: When submitting comments, please include the docket number for this rulemaking (USCG-2011-0351), indicate the specific section of this document to which each comment applies, and provide a reason for each suggestion or recommendation.

You may submit your comments and material **online**, by **fax**, by **mail** or **hand delivery**, but please use only one of these means to avoid duplication.

To submit your comment online:

1. Go to <http://www.regulations.gov>,
2. Click on the "submit a comment" box, which will then become highlighted in blue.
3. In the "Document Type" drop down menu select "Notice" and insert "USCG-2011-0351" in the "Keyword" box.
4. Click "Search" then click on the balloon shape in the "Actions" column.

To submit comments by fax: Fax comments to 202-493-2251. Be sure to include the docket number for this rulemaking (USCG-2011-0351).

To submit comments by mail: Mail comments to the address below in an unbound format, no larger than 8½ by 11 inches, suitable for copying and electronic filing. If you would like to know that they reached the Facility, please enclose a stamped, self-addressed postcard or envelope.

Docket Management Facility (M-30)
U.S. Department of Transportation
West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590-0001

To hand deliver comments: Deliver comments to the address below, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. They should be submitted in an unbound format, no larger than 8½ by 11 inches, suitable for copying and electronic filing. The telephone number is 202-366-9329.

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Any questions concerning the Atlantic Coast Port Access Route Study can be directed to George Detweiler, Coast Guard Office of Navigation Systems at telephone 202-372-1566, and email George.H.Detweiler@uscg.mil or ACPARS@uscg.mil. Additionally, you can contact Sector Baltimore Waterways Management Division at 410-576-2519.



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