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Contact: 5th District Public Affairs
Email: d5de@uscg.mil
Office: (757) 398-6272

News Release

COAST GUARD TO ANALYZE COMMENTS ON PROPOSED ANCHORAGE GROUNDS IN CHESAPEAKE BAY

PORTSMOUTH, Va. — The U.S. Coast Guard plans to analyze comments received in response to the Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) titled "Anchorage Grounds; Lower Chesapeake Bay, Cape Charles, VA, (81 FR 22939)" released on April 19, 2016, to better understand public sentiment and concerns regarding the proposed rulemaking.

The Coast Guard published the ANPRM to raise awareness and solicit feedback, and has since received 34 comments from interested parties including commercial maritime professionals and residents within the Cape Charles area.

The Coast Guard is considering formally establishing anchorage grounds currently in use on the lower Chesapeake Bay, adjacent to the Cape Charles shoreline. The anchorage grounds serve as a safe anchorage point for commercial vessels awaiting transit to berths within the Hampton Roads and Baltimore areas.

Under Title 33 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 109.5, Coast Guard district commanders are delegated the authority to formally establish anchorage grounds. The anticipated users of the proposed anchorage grounds are the commercial vessels and their attending tug, tow or push boats currently anchoring in the vicinity.

The proposed action to permanently establish anchorage grounds in the lower Chesapeake Bay was initiated by the Coast Guard in order to safely manage the increasing vessel traffic in the lower Chesapeake Bay.

Due to the natural bathymetry and the restricted area created in 1953 to support national security, the Chesapeake Bay currently has limited deepwater anchorages designated for commercial and U.S. Navy vessels.

The Coast Guard sought comments and information from stakeholders and the public concerning the proposal from April 19 to Aug. 31, 2016. Additionally, a 45-day extension for this comment period was placed into effect June 27, 2016.

The Coast Guard is committed to publically-informed decision-making when considering a proposed action to create new anchorage grounds. Public meetings were conducted by the Coast Guard to receive both oral and written comments; meetings were held July 19 in Norfolk, July 20 in Melfa, and Aug. 17 in Cape Charles.

During the comment period, the docket received 34 comments from many diverse stakeholders, including governmental representatives, recreational boaters, concerned citizens, land owners, environmental groups and business owners.

The Coast Guard plans to spend the next several months conducting a review and analysis of the comments and supporting materials before determining how to proceed.

“The Coast Guard's primary goal in this case, as in all others, is to protect the environment and facilitate safe navigation as we work together to best balance the increasing demands and competing uses of the waterways in the lower Chesapeake Bay,” said Coast Guard Cmdr. A. B. Caudle, chief of waterways management, Fifth Coast Guard District.

Should the Coast Guard decide to establish a new anchorage on the lower Chesapeake Bay, it will continue to follow the federal

rulemaking process. The next step in that process is to develop the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, initiate an additional comment period, conduct any necessary environmental studies and hold town hall meetings.

The link to the ANPRM for the anchorages can be found by clicking here:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/04/19/2016-09029/anchorage-grounds-lower-chesapeake-bay-cape-charles-va>

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