

CALCASIEU RIVER WATERWAY VESSEL TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES



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CALCASIEU RIVER WATERWAY HARBOR SAFETY COMMITTEE

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LETTER OF PROMULGATION

CALCASIEU RIVER WATERWAY VESSEL TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

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The Managing Board of the Calcasieu River Waterway Harbor Safety Committee approved and adopted the "Vessel Traffic Management Guidelines" during its meeting of 14 December 2004.

In keeping with its charter, the Calcasieu River Waterway Harbor Safety Committee (hereinafter referred to as the CRWHSC) has undertaken to collect, document and publish existing practices and provide a mechanism for modifying them as the interests of stakeholders may require. The Guidelines published herein represent the initial effort and it is expected that they will be modified from time to time as the needs of the Waterway stakeholders require.

Voluntary observance of the Guidelines by all concerned will contribute to safe and efficient vessel movement. Attention is invited to the provision contained in Section III hereof:

Nothing in these Guidelines relieves mariners from complying with applicable laws and regulations. These Guidelines are not intended to replace, modify or supercede local, state or federal laws or regulations. In the case of conflicts between them and such laws and regulations, the conflicting portions of the VTM Guidelines shall be deemed null and void.

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CALCASIEU RIVER WATERWAY HARBOR SAFETY COMMITTEE VESSEL TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

SECTION I INTRODUCTION

Most waterway communities have local vessel traffic management (VTM) guidelines, which promote safe and efficient vessel movement within their areas of interest. Such guidelines have normally been developed over a substantial period based upon the accumulated experiences of the waterway community. In general, the guidelines deal with things beyond the scope of laws or regulations. They serve, however, to provide structure and predictability to vessel movements, thus facilitating planning, both operational and budgetary, and enhancing safety by reducing unexpected occurrences. In a number of cases individual guidelines represent compromises reconciling the conflicting needs of different waterway users and, as compromises, may fall short of the ideal for an individual stakeholder in order to serve the community as a whole. Voluntary compliance with such guidelines makes a significant contribution to both safety and efficiency, and the interests of all stakeholders are best served when such local guidelines are widely known and understood and when affected stakeholders have been party to their development.

Such a body of guidelines exists for the Calcasieu River Waterway and has been partially published in several places, most notably in Volume 5 of the United States Coast Pilot and the Vessel Traffic Information Service (VTIS) web site. Some guidelines, however, may impact the entire waterway but have existed only as agreements between the parties most directly affected by them. In keeping with its charter, the Calcasieu River Waterway Harbor Safety Committee (hereinafter referred to as the CRWHSC) has undertaken to collect, document and publish existing practices and provide a mechanism for modifying them as the interests of stakeholders may require.

The CRWHSC is a voluntary association of waterway stakeholders that provides, among other things, a forum within which issues of safety; security, efficiency, mobility and environmental protection may be addressed and resolved. Membership in the CRWHSC is open to all persons with an interest in the safety, security, efficiency, mobility and environmental protection of the Calcasieu River Waterway and its approaches and environs. Under its charter the CRWHSC is responsible for planning and recommending implementation of voluntary guidance for the safe, secure and efficient navigation and operation of deep-draft vessels, shoal-draft vessels and other watercraft within the Calcasieu River Waterway and the approaches thereto between Calcasieu Channel Lighted Whistle Buoy “CC” and the Head of Navigation, and within the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway between Miles 235 and 245.

The VTM Guidelines published herein represent a compendium of existing practices affecting vessel scheduling in the Calcasieu River Waterway in order to promote the safe, efficient and environmentally sound movement of vessels. The initial version of this manual is a codification of existing practices and promulgates no changes or revisions thereto. Where appropriate, “placeholders” have been inserted to indicate topics or subject matter where the development by the CRWHSC Navigation Subcommittee of additional guidance may be desirable. Supplemental information is included, where appropriate, for ease of reference.

The scope of these guidelines is generally limited to practices affecting the scheduling of and conditions for coordinating vessel movements, supporting services, and facilitating timely communications between all concerned. Subsequent modifications will be incorporated as required through the process set forth in Section II hereto.

SECTION II PROCESS

These VTM are a “living” document and will be modified as necessary to address changing waterway conditions. This section publishes the mechanism by which guidelines are developed, modified, approved and published. Enforcement of compliance with the guidelines is also discussed.

2.1. Monitoring.

The Navigation Subcommittee of the CRWHSC has formal responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of the guidelines published herein, for periodically reviewing them for appropriateness, and recommending to the CRWHSC Managing Board those changes, which appear necessary. Two reporting processes have been developed to provide structure to the subcommittee’s monitoring functions.

2.1.1. Non-Conformance Report.

Cases of deviations from published agreed guidelines will be posted on the VTIS website as they occur. The format of such reports is available on the VTIS website. In general, non-conformance reports provide the identity of the vessel(s) involved, the time and place at which the deviation occurred and a brief description of the non-conformance. Individual stakeholders are encouraged to initiate reports whenever incidents of non-conformance and/or “near-misses” are observed. Reports may be filed electronically via the VTIS website, in writing to the CRWHSC, or presented in person at meetings of the CRWHSC. The importance of such reports cannot be overemphasized since they constitute a primary tool by which the maritime community brings to the attention of the CRWHSC their observations of non-conformance with the published agreed guidelines and with other vessel traffic management grievances and concerns.

2.1.2. Vessel Delay Report.

The Lake Charles Pilots will, at the end of each month, prepare a compilation of all delays in vessel movement experienced during that month. The report will be issued monthly via email to members of the Navigation Subcommittee and other channel users who request the reports.

The Navigation Subcommittee will review the Non-Conformance and Vessel Delay Reports at each subcommittee meeting as a regular agenda item. These reviews shall take place no less frequently than quarterly.

In addition to the monitoring structure set forth above, members of the waterway stakeholder community are encouraged to bring to the attention of the CRWHSC their concerns about vessel traffic management issues.

2.2. Modification of Guidelines.

The Navigation Subcommittee will, as the result of their periodic assessments of vessel traffic management and such input as is made by the stakeholder community, make recommendations to the CRWHSC Managing Board for changes to the VTM Guidelines. The recommendations forwarded to the Board will include, as a minimum, the reasons the change(s) are proposed and propose specific wording for the new or revised guidelines.

Although the CRWHSC Charter provides specific requirements regarding voting on issues by the Managing Board and CRWHSC subcommittees, the following guidelines apply to the Navigation Subcommittee when making recommendations for establishing new or revising existing VTM Guidelines:

2.2.1. A representative of each member organization will be eligible to vote. Each member organization will have one vote. A list of the member organizations represented on the subcommittee is maintained by and available from the Subcommittee Chairman.

2.2.2. Approval of proposals for new or revisions to existing VTM Guidelines require a favorable vote of least two-thirds of the attending member organizations to constitute approval by the subcommittee. Fractions of votes will be rounded up.

2.2.3. At least nine (9) member organizations must be represented to constitute a valid vote.

2.2.4. Proposals for new or revisions to existing VTM Guidelines must be available to member organizations for review and comment at least fifteen days prior to voting.

2.2.5. Recommendations for new or revisions to existing VTM Guidelines approved by the subcommittee will be forwarded to the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the CRWHSC Managing Board for consideration at least 30 days prior to the next scheduled meeting of the CRWHSC Managing Board.

2.3. The Approval Process.

VTM Guidelines and modifications thereto shall be approved by the Managing Board, governed by the quorum and voting rules established by the Charter.

With respect to motions, these will approved or rejected by the Board, with a quorum of the Board present, upon a majority vote of the Board members, or their alternates, present and voting. A minority report may be prepared and included as an attachment to the motion if the dissenting Board members so desire.

2.4. Compliance.

Although the CRWHSC cannot enforce these guidelines under state, federal, or local law, they represent an institutionalization of sound marine operating practices, as Standards of Care that responsible vessel operators should follow voluntarily. The Committee depends on its members, local, state, and federal agencies, and the maritime community as a whole to monitor compliance with the VTM Guidelines, and to report deviations from the guidelines to the CRWHSC. Should the CRWHSC finds significant deviations, it will evaluate them and may recommend more stringent compliance, and, if appropriate, recommend incorporation of selected guidelines into state and/or federal regulations.

SECTION III SPECIFIC GUIDANCE

This Section provides specific guidance for the movement of vessels within the Calcasieu River Waterway. Their voluntary observance by all concerned contributes to safe and efficient vessel movement.

Nothing in these Guidelines relieves mariners from complying with applicable laws and regulations. These Guidelines are not intended to replace, modify or supercede local, state or federal laws or regulations. In the case of conflicts between them and such laws and regulations, the conflicting portions of the Guidelines shall be deemed null and void.

3.1. Scheduling Vessel Movements

Proper scheduling of vessel movements is critical to both safety and efficiency. Scheduling of movement in the Calcasieu River Waterway is complicated by two factors peculiar to the area. The width of project channels preclude meeting or overtaking, necessitating periods of one-way traffic. In addition, the Safety Zone requirements imposed by the U.S. Coast Guard during LNG carrier transits may limit the movement of other vessels during those periods. Careful scheduling and coordination of movements are needed to minimize delays and is also critical to coordinating support activities.

Vessel transit projections/priorities may be governed by tide and current, and are dependent upon available underkeel clearance. Otherwise, every attempt is made to offer pilotage to best optimize channel use toward minimizing demurrage. The Lake Charles Pilots consult and cooperate with the Lake Charles Harbor and Terminal District to assist in the best operation of the navigable waterway system under the District's jurisdiction.

3.1.1. Required Notifications

3.1.1.1. Movement Notification

For the purposes of determining vessel/channel movement priorities notification should be made to the VTIS a minimum of four hours prior to the intended movement. Timely notification is important because the VTIS assigns a “slot” in the movement schedule based upon time of receipt of such notifications. **Movement notifications are separate from Pilots’ and Tug Services notice requirements.**

3.1.1.2. Pilotage and Tug Services Notification

Vessels requesting the services of a Lake Charles Pilot and/or tugs are required to provide advanced notice:

For Inbound movement – A minimum notice of 4 hours prior to arrival at a designated pilot station.

For Outbound movement – A minimum notice of 2 hours prior to departure.

For shifting within the waterway – A minimum notice of 2 hours prior to movement.

Notifications may be made by telephone at 337.477.5959, email at dispatch@lakecharlespilots.com or on VHF-FM channel 66A, as appropriate.

Vessels contacting "VTIS Lake Charles" via VHF-FM shall give their name, length, beam, deepest fresh-water draft, maximum air draft, destination, and ETA at the appropriate pilot boarding area.

3.1.2. Scheduling Guidelines

3.1.2.1. Vessels are moved on a first come, first served basis until conflicts develop at which time decisions shall be made to move traffic in a manner that creates the least delays.

3.1.2.2. When conflicts are foreseen, vessels with *confirmed VTIS orders* shall be moved considering the most logical and efficient use of pilots and/or tugs.

3.1.2.3. When it is necessary to assign priorities to vessels, those vessels already underway and requiring tugboats will have priority over vessels berthed or anchored that require tugs to get underway.

3.1.2.4. The practice of convoying similar ships *may* be utilized *whenever feasible* in order to accomplish the Guiding Principle¹.

3.1.2.5. Non-piloted ocean-going vessels shall receive equal priority as long as they provide proper notice to the Vessel Traffic Information System.

3.1.2.6. A tide-restricted² vessel that misses its first boarding window due to traffic shall have priority when the next window opens, and shall not be delayed by more than three

¹ - The "Guiding Principle" is that the ultimate goal of these Guidelines is to move vessels in such a manner that safely creates the least delays and optimizes channel utilization.

² - The definition of "tide-restricted" vessels is under development.

hours after the opening of the window, even if it delays a vessel whose orders precedes the opening of the boarding window.

3.1.2.7. If two vessels place orders to move in opposite directions at the same time and one of the vessels is tide restricted, then the tide restricted vessel will have priority if the two vessels cannot meet in the channel.

3.1.2.8. When traffic resumes following a suspension of pilotage services due to weather, outbound traffic will be moved first, even if it does not strictly follow the rotation.

3.1.3. Convoying

Similar vessels ordered to start inbound at about the same time may be convoyed with the vessel bound for the berth furthest up-river proceeding first, if all navigational factors, such as size, draft and expected speed, are essentially equal.

When several vessels are ordered to start outbound at essentially the same time, the vessels may be convoyed with the vessel that is either deepest draft or expected to be slowest, at the rear of the convoy.

3.1.4. Floating Plants and Equipment.

Movements of drilling rigs, submersibles, and other floating heavy equipment must be reviewed and approved at least 24 hours in advance of the move by the U.S. Coast Guard Captain of the Port, the Lake Charles Pilots, Inc., and the Port of Lake Charles Harbormaster.

Such units shall not be moored or anchored within the area to which these procedures apply without prior approval of the entities identified above.

3.2. Movement Information.

The VTIS collects and disseminates information concerning the movement and/or location (in-port and anchored) of vessels within the Calcasieu River Waterway. Information is collected from a variety of sources including, but not limited to:

- Vessel agents and owners
- Tug companies and tugs underway
- Vessels underway inside and outside the VTIS operating area
- Pilots underway
- U.S. Coast Guard

The information collected is combined into a useable form on the VTIS website, with the information available on a restricted basis under the heading “Vessel Traffic Info”. The “Vessel Traffic Info” section of the web site also provides “Other Notices”, which may include precautionary information concerning the waterway such as upcoming Pilot boarding windows, dredging locations, aids to navigation repairs underway, USCG safety zones, and other existing or planned obstructions or hazards that waterway users must be cognizant of for safe operations.

For security reasons, VTIS “Vessel Traffic Info” access is restricted to those individuals and/or companies with a valid reason for access to the movement data. Access to movement data may be granted upon receipt, review and approval of an application for access, the application form for which is available on the VTIS website.

3.3. Pilotage.

State pilotage is compulsory for all foreign vessels and U.S. vessels under register in foreign trade. Vessels that must use the buoyed channel due to draft constraints must embark and disembark the pilot in an area where there is sufficient water depth, including outside of the buoyed channel to ensure the safety of the vessel in case of emergency, in order to provide a safe lee for pilot boarding and must have the pilot on board prior to entering the buoyed channel.

3.3.1. Pilot Boarding Locations.

Multiple pilot boarding stations exist, as specified in the U.S. Coast Pilot, Volume 5, due to the varying depths of water adjacent to the buoyed channel.

3.4. Vessel Traffic Information Service (VTIS).

The Vessel Traffic Information Service (VTIS), under the general oversight of the CRWHSC, is designed to enhance navigational safety, security and efficiency by scheduling the movement of vessels and providing stakeholders with information regarding the movements and intentions of vessels within the VTIS area. VTIS scheduling and information is not intended in any way to supersede or alter applicable Navigation Rules.

3.5. Communications.

3.5.1. Communications Resources.

General information about VHF-FM communications channel usage and shore-based VHF-FM facilities within the Calcasieu River Waterway are summarized in Table 3-1.

RESOURCE	OPERATING HOURS	VHF CHANNEL	
		GUARD	WORKING
Vessels Underway Subject to Bridge-to-Bridge Radiotelephone Act (33 CFR 26)	24/7	13, 16	
U.S. Coast Guard (USCG Group Galveston)	24/7	16, 22A	22A
Port of Lake Charles	24/7	16	10
Lake Charles Pilots Office (VTIS)	24/7	16, 66, 66A	66A
Lake Charles Pilots (Underway)	24/7	13, 66A	66A
Harbor Docking and Towing	24/7	13, 16	66A
Seabulk Towing Services	24/7	13, 16	66A
Cameron Ferry	24/7	13, 16	13

Note: "24/7" = 24 hours per day, seven days per week

TABLE 3-1
Calcasieu River Waterway VHF Communications Resources

Vessels entering the VTIS area will be advised by VTIS Lake Charles of other traffic navigating within the area. All vessels are requested to advise VTIS Lake Charles at least four hours before entering the system inbound, outbound, or maneuvering between points within the VTIS, and again approximately one hour prior to entering the system.