

**VTS USERS MANUAL  
EDITION 4  
APRIL 2006**



ST. MARYS RIVER  
DETOUR REEF TO WHITEFISH BAY



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## INTRODUCTION

This manual is intended to provide the user with information necessary to participate in the St. Mary's River Vessel Traffic Service (VTS). It contains the regulations, which are published in Title 33, Code of Federal Regulations (33 CFR). It also contains supplementary text which is not part of the Regulations, but which is intended to be explanatory in nature. The Coast Guard will keep the manual current with any changes issued to the Regulations. Changes of a temporary nature will be issued by a Broadcast Notice to Mariner and will be incorporated in the User's Manual.

The St. Mary's River Vessel Traffic Service is a vessel movement reporting system established under the authority of the Ports and Waterways Safety Act. The goal of the system is to facilitate marine traffic and give any additional information, which may affect vessel traffic safety within the VTS Area. The Vessel Traffic Center (VTC) is located in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. It utilizes a VHF-FM communication network continuously manned by Coast Guard personnel. The Center processes information received from participating vessels and then disseminates the information to other participating vessels operating in the VTS area.

**THE MARINER IS CAUTIONED: INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE VESSEL TRAFFIC CENTER IS TO A LARGE EXTENT BASED UPON REPORTS OF PARTICIPATING VESSELS AND CAN BE NO MORE ACCURATE THAN THE INFORMATION RECEIVED. THE COAST GUARD MAY NOT BE AWARE OF ALL HAZARDOUS CIRCUMSTANCES WITHIN THE VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICE AREA. UNREPORTED HAZARDS MAY CONFRONT THE MARINER AT ANYTIME. ANY CONFLICTING CIRCUMSTANCES OR HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS SHOULD BE REPORTED TO THE VESSEL TRAFFIC CENTER IMMEDIATELY.**

**The efficient operation of the St. Mary's River Vessel Traffic Service and safe navigation in the service area depend upon mariners observing these operating procedures day and night, in all weather. The Coast Guard welcomes any suggestions that may improve this manual or the St. Mary's River Vessel Traffic Service.**

## **SECTION - I - GENERAL**

### **PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY.**

The purpose of the **Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) St. Mary's River** is to provide the mariner with information related to the safe navigation of the VTS area. The VTS is designed to enhance navigation, vessel safety, marine environmental protection, and promote safe vessel movement by reducing the potential for collisions, ramming, groundings, loss of lives and property associated with these incidents within the VTS area. Under certain circumstances, the VTS may issue directions to control the movement of a vessel in order to minimize the risk of collision or damage to the environment.

The owner, operator, master, or person directing the movement of a vessel remains at all times responsible for the manner in which the vessel is operated and maneuvered, and is responsible for the safe navigation of the vessel under all circumstances. Nothing set forth by the VTS is intended to relieve the vessel, owner, operator or person directing the movement of the vessel from the consequences of any neglect to comply with any applicable law and/or regulation.

The provisions of this manual and 33 CFR shall apply to each VTS user, and may apply to any vessel while underway or at anchor in the navigable waters of the VTS St. Marys River area.

## **PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY (cont)**

**VTS Measures (33 CFR 161.11).** A VTS may issue measures or directions to enhance navigation and vessel safety and to protect the marine environment, such as, but not limited to:

- o Designate temporary reporting points and procedures
- o Imposing vessel operating requirements
- o Establishing vessel traffic routing schemes.

## **DEFINITIONS.**

**Vessel Traffic Service (VTS)** means a service implemented by the United States Coast Guard designed to improve the safety and efficiency of vessel traffic and to protect the environment. The VTS has the capability to interact with marine traffic and respond to traffic situations developing in the VTS area. **VTS** in the user's manual means VTS St. Marys River.

**Vessel Movement Reporting System (VMRS)** means a system used to Manage and track vessels movement within a VTS area. This is accomplished using information provided by the mariner to be disseminated by the VTS.

**Vessel Traffic Service Area (VTSA)** means the geographic area of service for the VTS covering the navigable waters of the United States in the St. Marys River between 45-57 N. (**De Tour Reef Light**) in the south, to 46-38.7 N. (**Ile Parisienne Light**) in the north, except the waters of the St. Marys Falls Canal, and those navigable waters east of a line from 46-04.16 N. and 46-01.57 N (**La Pointe to Sims Point within Potagannissing Bay**).

## **DEFINITIONS (cont)**

**Vessel Movement Reporting System (VMRS) User** means a vessel, or owner, operator, charter, master or person directing the movement of a vessel that is required to participate in a **VMRS** within a VTS area. VMRS participation in VTS St. Marys River is required for:

- o Every power-driven vessel of 40 meters (approximately 131 ft.)\* or more in length, while navigating;
- o Every towing vessel of 8 meters (approximately 26 ft.) or more in length, while navigating; or
- o Every vessel certified to carry 50 or more passengers for hire, when engaged in trade.

**Note:** The Captain of the Port Sault Ste Marie has determined that the unique navigational requirements of the St. Marys River warrants all vessels subject to the Vessel Bridge-to-Bridge-Radiotelephone Act to participate as VMRS Users. COTP Sault Ste Marie directs all vessels 65 feet (20 meters) or greater to report to “Soo Traffic” in accordance with 33 CFR Part 161.18.

**VTS User** means a vessel, owner, operator, charterer, master, or person directing the movements of a vessel that is:

- o Subject to the Vessel Bridge -to- Bridge Radiotelephone Act\*\*; or
- o A VMRS User.

**“SOO Traffic”** means the shore-based facility that operates the St. Marys River VTS located in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan.

**One-Way Traffic** means an area where meeting, turn-a-rounds, and over taking are prohibited.

## **DEFINITIONS (cont)**

**Two-Way Traffic** means that traffic flow is permitted in opposing directions, but a vessel may not meet, cross, nor overtake any other vessel in such a manner that it would be abreast of more than one other vessel within the defined limits of a waterway.

**Open Season:** Also known as the Open Navigation Season. The Open Season is the period from when the Locks open (250001R March) to when the locks close (152359R January). The Coast Guard and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are required to maintain navigation channels during this period.

**Closed Season:** Also known as the Closed Navigation Season. The Closed Season is the period from when the Locks close (152359R January) to when the locks open (250001R March). During the closed season, the Coast Guard and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are not required to maintain navigable channels. However, in order for some river communities to make it through the winter, infrequent icebreaker escorts of vessels carrying home heating oil are conducted.

**OP TACONITE:** Operation Taconite is the largest Domestic icebreaking operation in the United States. OP Taconite begins when ice forms and icebreaking becomes necessary to facilitate commerce. The operation ends when icebreaking is no longer required, or expected to be required. OP Taconite occurs in three phases. The first phase begins when ice becomes a hindrance to navigation and extends until the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers closes the locks at Sault Ste. Marie, 152359R January. The second phase begins with the Sault locks closure and ends on or about March 10 each year, which precedes the Sault Locks reopening (250001R March) by about two weeks. The third phase begins on or about March 10th and extends to the end of the ice season. With the commencement of OP Taconite, several additional requirements are imposed: speed limits, special reports, one way traffic areas, and some channels and waterways may be closed.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE VTS

VTS St. Marys River consists of the navigable waters of the St. Marys River and lower Whitefish Bay between 45-56.54 N. (**De Tour Reef Light**) in the south, and 46-38.42 N. (**Ile Parisienne Light**) in the north, except the waters of the St. Marys Falls Canal, and to the east line from La Pointe to Sims Point within Potagannissing Bay and Tenby Bay (formally known as Worsley Bay on older navigational charts).

The VTS has control over two VHF high-level antennas located in Sault Ste. Marie and Goetzville, Michigan as well as a low-level antenna located at the VTC.

The VTS continuously monitors VHF Channels 6, 8, 12, 13, and 14 with the Sector monitoring Channel 16. A radio watch on VHF Channel 16 is not required for vessels participating in VTS St. Mary's River.

To aid in monitoring traffic and river conditions, the VTS employs four closed circuit television cameras. One is located in the Middle Neebish Channel at Johnson's Point. Two additional cameras are in West Neebish Channel, one above the Rock Cut and one on Neebish Island atop the Lower Leading Light. The fourth camera is at Mission Point. Additionally, the VTS receives a live feed from the Army Corps of Engineers that features their four cameras positioned around the Soo Locks facility.

The VTS employs two Automated Information System (AIS) base stations to facilitate real time surveillance of the VTSA. In addition to the AIS data exchange, the base stations enable the VTS to send and receive text messages.

Additional closed circuit television camera sites and expanded AIS coverage are being researched. Future locations and installation dates have yet to be announced.

## **AUTHORITY TO DEVIATE FROM THESE RULES**

Commander, Ninth Coast Guard District and the Commander, Coast Guard Sector Sault Ste Marie have the authority to grant deviations from these rules. Deviations will only be authorized if the appropriate official determines that the deviation will incorporate the same measure of safety as the original rule.

Requests to deviate from these rules for an extended period of time, or if anticipated before the start of a transit, must be submitted in writing to the Ninth Coast Guard District Commander. An application for deviation must state the need and fully explain the proposed alternative to the measure.

**Address: Commander (dp)  
Ninth Coast Guard District  
1240 E. Ninth St.  
Cleveland, OH 44199-2060**

Requests for deviation due to circumstances that develop after a transit has begun may be made verbally to the Commander, Coast Guard Sector Sault Ste Marie. Contact can be made through Soo Traffic on VHF Ch. 12 or by telephone at (906) 635-3232. The Sector Commander may authorize a deviation if it is determined that, based on vessel handling characteristics, traffic density, radar contacts, environmental conditions and other relevant information, such as a deviation provides a level of safety equivalent to that provided by the required measure or is a maneuver considered necessary for safe navigation under the circumstances.

**Deviations are normally granted for a single transit or a short period of time.**

In an **emergency**, a person directing the movement of a vessel shall deviate from any provision to the extent necessary to avoid endangering persons, property, or the environment. Any deviation from these rules or VTS direction should be reported to "SOO Traffic" as soon as practicable.

## **SECTION - II - COMMUNICATIONS**

### **RADIOTELEPHONE LISTENING WATCH**

VTS and VMRS Users as described in the definition section of this Manual are required to maintain a radiotelephone listening watch on VHF Ch. 12 (156.6 Mhz) while underway in the VTS. [Special Marine Information Broadcasts are made on Ch. 22A (151.1Mhz)] In addition, any vessel transiting through the SOO Locks must be able to reach the Lock Master / WUE-21 who monitors VHF Ch. 14 (156.7Mhz).

Note: The Vessel Bridge to Bridge Radiotelephone Act requires vessels 20 meters (65 feet) or greater in length, to have on board a VHF-FM radio capable of transmitting and receiving in the 156-158 Mhz marine band. They must also be capable of communicating in the English language and to monitor the frequencies designated for any VTS area in which they operate their vessel.

### **VESSEL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

Power-driven vessels 40m (approximately 131ft) and above shall:

- o Monitor VHF Ch. 12 and 13
- o Report to the VTS at reporting points

Power-driven vessels 20m (65ft) and above:

- o Monitor VHF Ch. 12 and 13
- o Report to the VTS at reporting points

Towing vessels 8m (approximately 26ft) and above:

- o Monitor VHF Ch. 12 and 13
- o Report to the VTS at reporting points

## **VESSEL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS (cont)**

Vessels certified to carry 50 or more passengers for hire:

- o Monitor VHF Ch. 12 and 13
- o Report to the VTS at reporting points

Vessels 100 Gross Tons carrying one or more passengers for hire:

- o Monitor VHF Ch. 12 and 13

Dredges and floating plants:

- o Monitor VHF Ch. 12 and 13

## **VESSEL REPORTS**

Reports made to “SOO Traffic” must be made in the English language and made from the navigation bridge of the vessel or control room of a dredge/tug.

**Initial reports (Sailing plans)** are made to “SOO Traffic” at least one hour prior to entering the VTS area, or 15 minutes prior to getting underway from mooring or anchoring within the VTS area:

Initial reports will include the following:

- o Vessel Name
- o Position
- o Destination
- o Cargo/Type of Tow
- o Draft.

**Position Reports** are made at designated reporting points or when directed by the VTS.

## **VESSEL REPORTS (cont)**

**Final Reports** are made when a vessel departs the VTS Area , De Tour Reef Light, Gros Cap Reef Light, or when anchored or moored within the service area.

Masters of vessels will report to “SOO Traffic” any impairment to navigation, such as, but not limited to: a fire, defective propulsion machinery, steering or navigation equipment (including AIS and radar), any towing vessel unable to control it’s tow or can only control with difficulty, grounding, striking of an obstruction or aid to navigation whether in or out of the channel. Masters shall report when **visibility** is less than 1 mile and any **hazardous conditions** not reported in Notice to Mariners or Broadcast Notice to Mariners.

If a vessel has **radio failure**, the master shall attempt to notify “SOO Traffic” by any means available. In such instances, vessels equipped with cellular phones may use these to make all reports.

After conferring with representatives from the Lake Carriers Association, the Western Great Lakes Pilots Association, and an assortment of other waterway users, the VTS and the “Soo Area” Office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reduced the number of voice position reports for vessels equipped with operational AIS.

This modified voice reporting plan for vessels sailing with operational AIS in the St Marys River went into effect March 25<sup>th</sup> 2006.

Those vessels not required to carry AIS, but obliged to participate in the Vessel Movement Reporting System, will continue to report their positions by radio as required by 33 CFR Part 161. Any AIS equipped vessel whose operational system fails must report the condition to the VTS and, at a minimum, resume full voice position reporting.

## **DOWN BOUND REPORTING POINTS (NO AIS)**

- o Ile Parisienne
- o Round Island Light "26"
- o Point Louise
- o Clear of Locks / East end of Locks
- o Mission Point
- o Six Mile Point
- o Nine Mile Point
- o West Neebish Channel Light "29"
- o Munuscong Lake Junction Buoy (Mud Lake)
- o De Tour Reef Light

**For vessels equipped with operational AIS, VTS St Marys River requires voice position reports at:**

- o Whitefish Point (Precall)
- o Gros Cap Reef Light
- o Clearing the Soo Locks
- o Nine Mile Point
- o Mud Lake Junction Buoy
- o Detour Reef Light (Final Report)

## **UPBOUND REPORTING POINTS (NO AIS)**

- o De Tour Reef Light
- o Munuscong Lake Junction Buoy (Mud Lake)
- o Nine Mile Point
- o Six Mile Point
- o Mission Point
- o Clear of Locks / West end of Locks
- o Point Louise
- o Round Island Light "26"
- o Gros Cap Reef Light

**For vessels equipped with operational AIS, VTS St Marys River requires voice position reports at:**

- o 1 hour before Detour (Precall)
- o Detour Reef Light
- o Mud Lake Junction Buoy
- o Nine Mile Point
- o Clearing the Soo Locks
- o Gros Cap Reef Light (Final Report)

To further reduce non-essential voice communications, the VTS and USACE have partnered to increase their “off air” exchange of vessel movement information. This expanded interaction, coupled with the USACE’s AIS display capabilities, eliminates the need for vessels equipped with operational AIS to call the lockmaster as often as previously required. Therefore vessels equipped with operational AIS need only call the USACE Lockmaster at:

**Downbound**

Isle Parisienne Light  
Big Point

**Upbound**

Mission Point

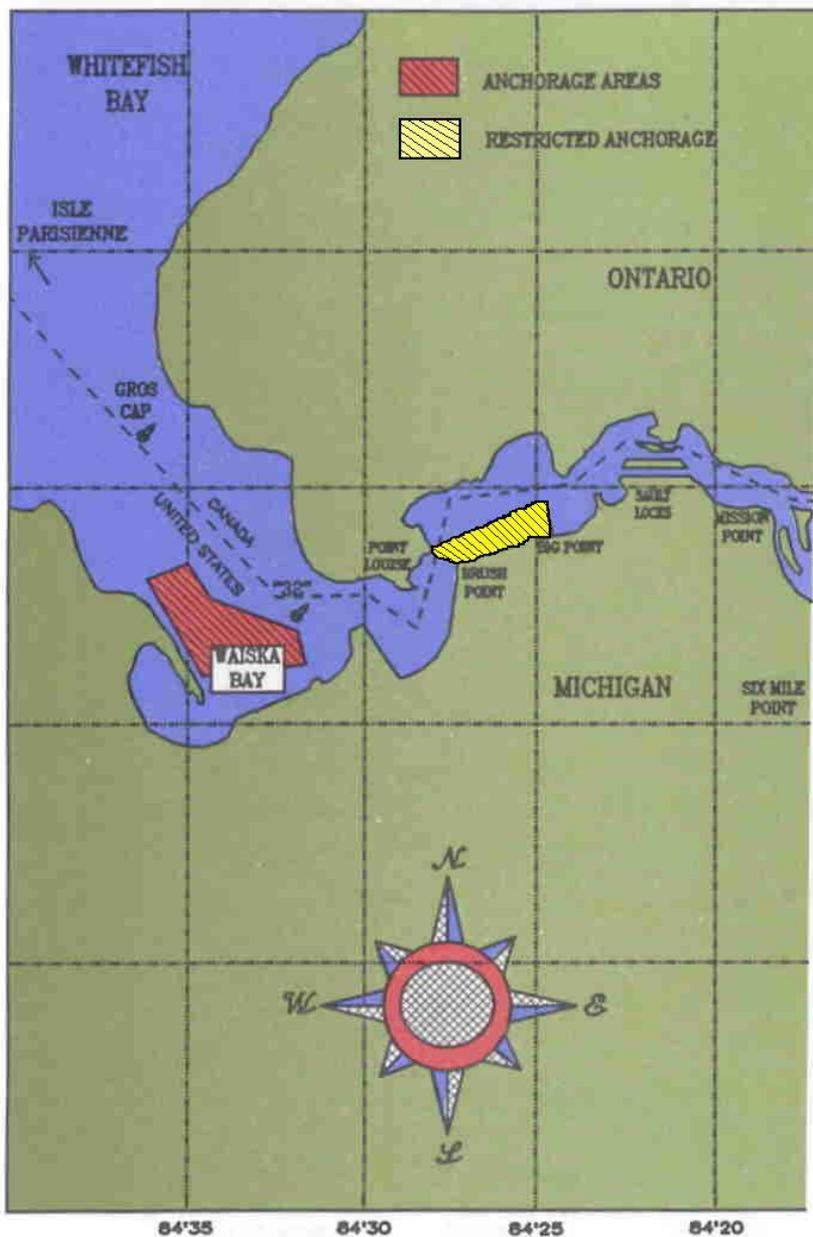
## **SECTION - III – TRAFFIC RULES**

**Anchoring.** Vessels should not anchor so as to swing out into the channel or across charted steering courses. During emergency anchorages in a dredged channel, vessels shall anchor as near to the edge of the channel as possible. Vessels shall get underway as soon as emergency ceases, unless otherwise directed. Soo Traffic must be advised of any emergency anchoring as soon as practicable.

Vessels in the VTS area anchored for reason of temporary closure or impediment to navigation normally get underway and depart in the order in which they arrived, **unless otherwise directed by “SOO Traffic”**. “SOO Traffic” may advance any vessel in the order of departure to expedite the movement of mails, passengers, cargo of a perishable nature, or facilitate passage through any channel by reason of special circumstance. Vessel size and lock assignments will be taken into consideration by the VTS when advancing a vessel in the procession order.

**Unauthorized Anchoring.** No vessel shall anchor at any time in the area southward of the Point Aux Pins Range between Brush Point and the waterworks intake crib off of Big Point or within 400 yards of the intake crib in any direction.

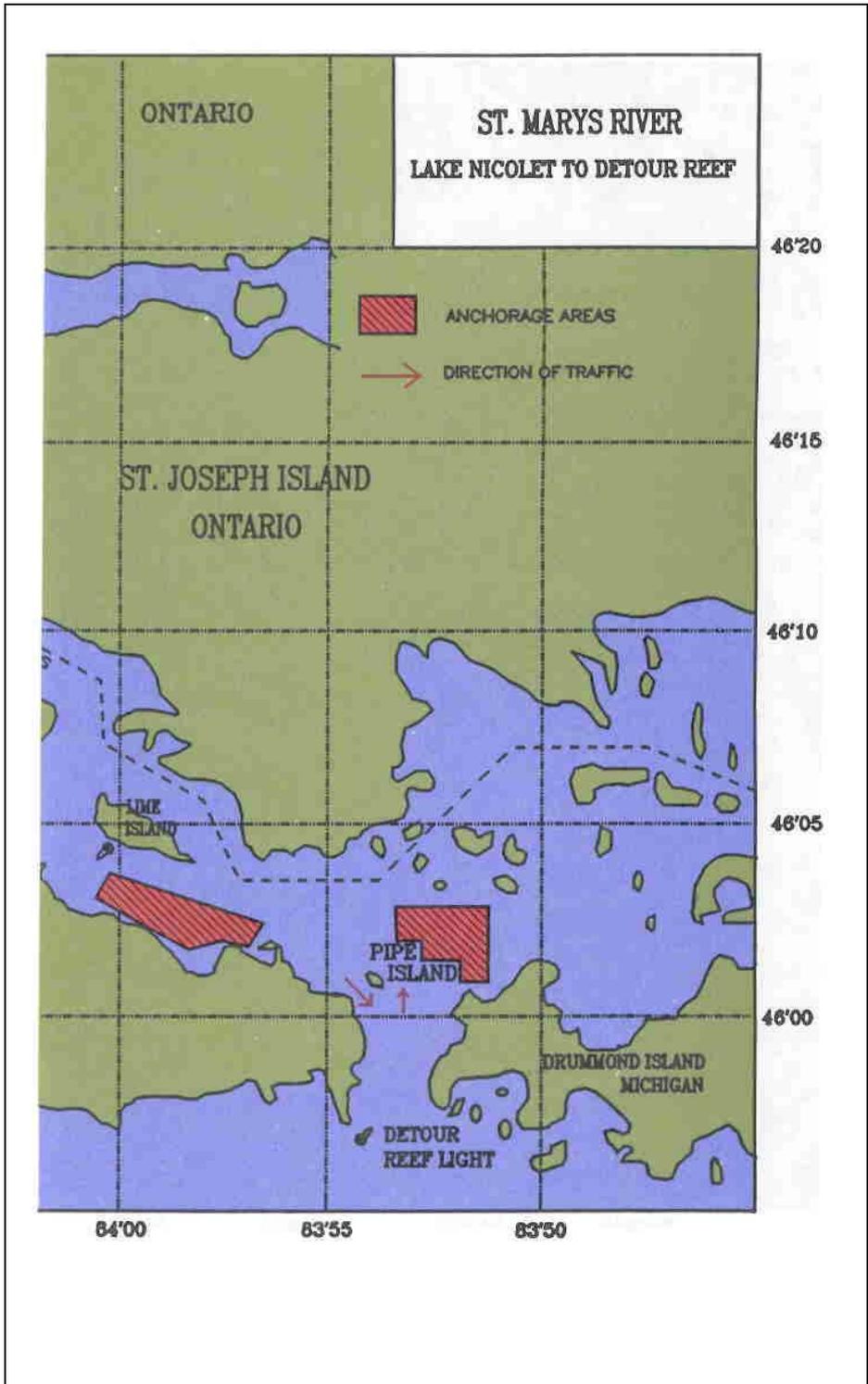
- o Anchored vessels within the VTS area shall notify “SOO Traffic” with the time of anchorage and position in reference to a geographical object.
- o Vessels shall notify “SOO Traffic” one hour or as timely as possible prior to getting underway from anchorage.
- o See pictures inserts of this manual to see designated anchorages for the St. Mary’s River.



**ST. MARYS RIVER  
WHITEFISH BAY TO NEEBISH ISLAND**







## SECTION - III – TRAFFIC RULES (cont)

### Speed Limits

All vessels shall adhere to the following established speed limits:

<b>MAXIMUM SPEED LIMIT BETWEEN DESIG POINTS</b>	<b>MPH</b>	<b>KTS</b>
DeTour Reef Lt - Sweets Pt Lt	14	12.2
Round Is Lt - Pt Aux Frenes Lt 21	14	12.2
Mud Lake LB "8" – Everen’s Pt	12	10.4
Everen’s Pt - Reed Pt	9.0	7.8
Reed Pt - Lake Nicolet LB"62"	10	8.7
Lake Nicolet LB “62” - Lake Nicolet Lt “80”	12	10.4
Lake Nicolet LB “80” - Winter Pt (West Neebish D/B)	10	8.7
Lake Nicolet LB “80” - Six Mile Rear Range Lt	10	8.7
Six Mile Pt Range Rear Lt – Lower Limit of St Marys River Falls Canal (U/B)	8.0	7.0
Lower Limit of St Marys River Falls Canal (D/B)	10	8.7
Upper Limit of St Marys River Falls Canal – Point Aux Pins Main Lt	12	10.4

A vessel must not navigate any dredged channel at a speed of less than 5 statute miles per hour (4.3 knots).

During Op Taconite (ice season) the speed limit is reduced by 2 MPH for up bound and down bound traffic from Nine Mile Point to Munuscong Lake Junction Buoy (LLNR 13030) to help keep adjacent ice fields intact.

## MISCELLANEOUS WATERWAY INFO

**Towing Vessels** navigating the waters of the St. Marys River VTS area shall:

- o Maintain positive control of tows south of Gros Cap Reef Light.
- o Not impede the passage of any other vessel.
- o Not tow a vessel of 200 feet or less in length with a tow line longer than 250 feet and,
- o Not tow a vessel of 200 feet or over in length with at towline longer than the length of the vessel plus 50 feet.

**River or Channel Closures** are made at the discretion of VTS St Marys River as visibility or hazards dictate. Closures are made after giving due consideration to vessel and environmental safety and the needs of all VTS users. VTS St Marys River will close the river or channels of the St Mary's River when visibility is **less than a ¼ mile or sustained winds of 35 mph or greater.**

### **Local Terminology**

Lake Nicolet is known as "**Hay Lake**"

Munuscong Lake is known as "**Mud Lake**"

West Neebish Channel is known as "**Rock Cut**"

Waiska Bay is known as "**Whiskey Bay**"

Potagannissing Bay is known as "**Pot Bay**"

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ's)**

### **What information must I give when reporting an AtoN Discrepancy?**

When reporting an AtoN discrepancy to “SOO Traffic”, you should provide the aid’s name and its light list number along with a description of the discrepancy.

### **How do I obtain the water levels for the river?**

Water levels (SW Pier, US Slip, Little Rapids Cut, Rock Cut) may be obtained by either contacting the Lock Master (WUE-21) on channel 14 or Soo Traffic on channel 12. Water levels are also available from NOAA via their web site at [www.glakesonline.nos.noaa.gov/monitor](http://www.glakesonline.nos.noaa.gov/monitor) or by calling (301) 713-9596 for voice access to all great lakes stations. The Water levels are also broadcasted on AIS.

### **What information must I give when reporting a grounding of a vessel?**

The master should make notifications to “SOO Traffic” once the grounding has occurred. Vessel should carry onboard a Great Lakes Regional Waterways Management Form, Grounding Information Worksheet. The following information should be provided within the first 15 minutes of the incident:

- o Location of the incident (Lat/Long or geographic pos'n )
- o Known damage to the vessel
- o Is the vessel taking on water
- o Immediate danger to the crew/injuries
- o Any spill of cargo/fuel (pollution)
- o The rest of the grounding information worksheet and a Report of Mishap (CG-2692) should be filled out, as soon as the master knows conditions on the vessel. If the vessel does not have this form “SOO Traffic” may provide one via fax machine.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (cont)**

**Is there a way for “SOO Traffic” to detect fog or give reports for the upper river?** There are currently no VTS cameras anywhere above the Sault Locks so the only reports come from participating vessels.

**What vessel information should I provide to “SOO Traffic” if it is the vessels first time transiting the river?**

- o Proper spelling of the vessels name
- o Flag
- o Lloyds/IMO number (Should be 7 digits)
- o Call Sign
- o Documented Length
- o Documented width/beam
- o Documented Gross and Net tonnage
- o Horse Power of the vessel
- o Does the vessel have a bow/stern thruster and stern anchor
- o Vessels Shipping Company name and where it’s located (City and Country)

**What if I think there is suspicious activity or a terrorist threat?**

Immediately contact Sector Sault at 906-635-3230 or the National Response Center at 1-800-424-8802.

## SECTION – IV – WINTER NAVIGATION

**Operation Taconite.** By executive order, the Coast Guard is responsible for conducting ice breaking operations in the critical (connecting) waterways of the United States. For Operation Taconite's area of responsibility, critical waterways are defined as Whitefish Bay, the St Marys River and the Straits of Mackinac.

VTS St Marys River, under the direction of the Commander Sector Sault Ste Marie (also know as the Incident Commander), manages the day to day activities associated with Operation Taconite. These duties include the coordination of ice breaking resources, traffic management, liaison between other ice breaking operations, and industry representatives.

As a matter of policy, U.S. Coast Guard icebreakers will not perform icebreaking escorts at night. Should the situation dictate, a night escort will be considered on a case-by-case basis and only when the Commanding Officer of the icebreaker considers the risks justified.

Because of the narrow channel and restricted turns in the St Marys River, specifically in the Munuscong and Middle Neebish Channels, the Incident Commander (COTP Sault Ste Marie) directs all **tank vessels** to be escorted by a Coast Guard ice breaker between Nine Mile Point and the Munuscong Lake Junction Buoy. These escorts will never be conducted at night. The severity of the ice in other Operation Taconite areas of responsibility will dictate the need for mandatory escorts in other waterways (i.e. Straits of Mackinac, Whitefish Bay).

**Commercial Ice Breaking:** The U.S. Coast Guard provides ice breaking assistance in other than critical U.S. waters where commercial ice breaking resources are either unavailable or incapable of handling the difficult ice conditions. In other than critical waterways, when situations are not deemed hazardous (in the Taconite AOR this includes Duluth/Superior, Marquette, Munising and Traverse Bay), and particularly in small harbors and alongside private wharves, commercial assistance can contribute to the goal of maximizing mobility.

## **WINTER NAVIGATION (cont)**

The Coast Guard will not normally interfere with private enterprises that desire to break ice provided the Incident Commander determines the commercial icebreaker is available and adequate. If commercial icebreaking is determined to be unavailable or inadequate, the Incident Commander may provide Coast Guard icebreaking assistance to the requesting vessel as resource availability permits. The Incident Commander is delegated the authority to determine the availability and adequacy of commercial icebreaking assistance in the Operation Taconite area of responsibility.

**Special Reports.** During Op Taconite each day by 1000 (Romeo), fleet operators shall provide the VTS with a report as to the whereabouts of their vessels. The report shall contain their vessel's ETA's to the following points:

Detour Reef Light (Up Bound St Marys River)  
Whitefish Point (Down Bound St Marys River)  
Round Island (West Bound Straits of Mackinac)  
Lansing Shoal (East Bound Straits of Mackinac)

In addition, the fleet operator is to insure that an updated report is provided should a vessel's ETA change by more than six (6) hours.

**Aids to Navigation.** Floating lighted and unlighted buoys are changed out in the fall and spring in accordance with the Light List. Winter markers are less susceptible to ice damage and can be replaced at a much lower cost than the lighted summer buoys. Mariners are reminded buoys may be off station due to shifting ice.

**Channel Closures.** During the open season (25 Mar – 15 Jan) the St. Marys River is open to two-way traffic with the following exceptions; West Neebish Channel (buoy "53" to buoy "1", Rock Cut) is one-way down bound, Middle Neebish Channel (buoy "2" to buoy "76") is one-way up bound, Pipe Island course (Sweets Point to Watson Reefs Light) is one-way down-bound, and Pipe Island Passage to the east of Pipe Island Shoal and north of Pipe Island Twins (from Watson Reefs Light to Sweets Point) is one-way up bound.

## **WINTER NAVIGATION (cont)**

During the closed season (16-Jan – 24 Mar), several waterways may be closed. VTS St Marys River or the Captain of the Port closes or opens these channels as ice conditions require after giving due consideration to the protection of the marine environment, waterway improvements, aids to navigation, the need for cross channel traffic (e.g., ferries), the availability of icebreakers, and the safety of the island residents who in the course of their daily business must use naturally formed ice bridges for transportation to and from the mainland.

Under normal seasonal conditions, a waterway is closed once each winter then reopened in the spring when the ice abates. When a channel is to be closed, Sector Sault Ste Marie will issue a notification 72 hours prior to its closure. Sector Sault Ste Marie will make this notification via Broadcast Notice to Mariner and local media (press release).

## **WINTER CLOSURES**

**West Neebish Channel.** When West Neebish Channel is closed, Middle Neebish Channel becomes alternating one-way traffic under the control of the VTS. In some cases Middle Neebish Channel, courses 5 through 10, are used as a two-way route with the up bound vessels using the Easterly 197 feet of the channel (vessels with a draft of 20 feet or more must get permission from Soo Traffic before proceeding), and the down bound vessels using the Westerly 295 feet. In these situations, vessels 350 feet or greater must not meet in the following waterways:

- o Johnson Point - Buoy “Q18” to Buoy “22”
- o Mirre Point - Buoy “Q26” to Buoy “28”
- o Stribling Point - Light “39” to Buoy “43”

**Pipe Island Course.** The up bound channel to the east and north of Pipe Island is closed to facilitate icebreaking operations in the lower river.

## **WINTER NAVIGATION (cont)**

**Regulated Navigation Areas.** The COTP Sault Ste. Marie, will also close the Great Lakes regulated navigation areas (South Channel, Grays Reef, and Moran Bay) as ice conditions dictate. Under normal seasonal conditions, only one closing each winter and one opening each spring are anticipated. Prior to the closing or opening of the regulated navigation areas or any waterway, Sector Sault Ste Marie will give interested parties, including both shipping interests and island residents, not less than 72 hours notice of the action. No vessel may navigate in a regulated navigation area which has been closed by the COTP. Under emergency conditions, the COTP may authorize specific vessels to navigate in a closed regulated navigation area.

**Speed Limits.** During Op Taconite the speed limit is reduced by 2 MPH for up bound and down bound traffic from Nine Mile Point to Munuscong Lake Junction Buoy (LLNR 13030).

When tracks are clearly established, it is highly beneficial to leave adjacent ice fields intact. This is especially true in the vicinity of ferries and in the Neebish Island Channels, but is generally true throughout the river.

## **SECTION - V - 33 CFR REGULATIONS**

### **PART 26 – VESSEL BRIDGE-TO-BRIDGE RADIOTELEPHONE REGULATIONS**

#### **26.01 Purpose.**

(a) The purpose of this part is to implement the provisions of the Vessel Bridge-to-Bridge Radiotelephone Act. This part:

- (1) Requires the use of the vessel bridge-to-bridge radiotelephone;
  - (2) Provides the Coast Guard's interpretation of the meaning of important terms in the Act;
  - (3) Prescribes the procedures for applying for an exemption from the Act and the regulations issued under the Act and a listing of exemptions.
- (b) Nothing in this part relieves any person from the obligation of complying with the rules of the road and the applicable pilot rules.

#### **Sec. 26.02 Definitions.**

For the purpose of this part and interpreting the Act:

**Act** means the "Vessel Bridge-to-Bridge Radiotelephone Act", 33 U.S.C. sections 1201-1208;

**Length** is measured from end to end over the deck excluding sheer;

**Power-driven vessel** means any vessel propelled by machinery; and

**Secretary** means the Secretary of the Department in which the Coast Guard is operating;

**Towing vessel** means any commercial vessel engaged in towing another vessel astern, alongside, or by pushing ahead.

**Vessel Traffic Services (VTS)** means a service implemented under Part 161 of this chapter by the United States Coast Guard designed to improve the safety and efficiency of vessel traffic and to protect the environment. The VTS has the capability to interact with marine traffic and respond to traffic situations developing in the VTS area.

**Vessel Traffic Service Area** or VTS Area means the geographical area encompassing a specific VTS area of service as described in Part 161 of this chapter. This area of service may be subdivided into sectors for the purpose of allocating responsibility to individual Vessel Traffic Centers or to identify different operating requirements.

Note: Although regulatory jurisdiction is limited to the navigable waters of the United States, certain vessels will be encouraged or may be required, as a condition of port entry, to report beyond this area to facilitate traffic management within the VTS area.

**Sec. 26.03 Radiotelephone required.**

(a) Unless an exemption is granted under Sec. 26.09 and except as provided in paragraph (a)(4) of this section, this part applies to:

(1) Every power-driven vessel of 20 meters or over in length while navigating;

(2) Every vessel of 100 gross tons and upward carrying one or more passengers for hire while navigating;

(3) Every towing vessel of 26 feet or over in length while navigating; and

(4) Every dredge and floating plant engaged in or near a channel or fairway in operations likely to restrict or affect navigation of other vessels except for an unmanned or intermittently manned floating plant under the control of a dredge.

### **Sec. 26.03 Radiotelephone required (cont)**

(b) Every vessel, dredge, or floating plant described in paragraph (a) of this section must have a radiotelephone on board capable of operation from its navigational bridge, or in the case of a dredge, from its main control station, and capable of transmitting and receiving on the frequency or frequencies within the 156-162 Mega-Hertz band using the classes of emissions designated by the Federal Communications Commission for the exchange of navigational information.

(c) The radiotelephone required by paragraph (b) of this section must be carried on board the described vessels, dredges, and floating plants upon the navigable waters of the United States.

(d) The radiotelephone required by paragraph (b) of this section must be capable of transmitting and receiving on VHF FM channel 22A (157.1 MHz).

(e) Not applicable to the Great Lakes

(f) In addition to the radiotelephone required by paragraph (b) of this section, each vessel described in paragraph (a) of this section while transiting any waters within a Vessel Traffic Service Area, must have on board a radiotelephone capable of transmitting and receiving on the VTS designated frequency in Table 161.12(c) (VTS and VMRS Centers, Call Signs/MMSI, Designated Frequencies, and Monitoring Areas).

Note: A single VHF-FM radio capable of scanning or sequential monitoring (often referred to as "dual watch" capability) will not meet the requirements for two radios.

#### **Sec. 26.04 Use of the designated frequency.**

(a) No person may use the frequency designated by the Federal Communications Commission under section 8 of the Act, 33 U.S.C. 1207(a), to transmit any information other than information necessary for the safe navigation of vessels or necessary tests.

(b) Each person who is required to maintain a listening watch under section 5 of the Act shall, when necessary, transmit and confirm, on the designated frequency, the intentions of his vessel and any other information necessary for the safe navigation of vessels.

(c) Nothing in these regulations may be construed as prohibiting the use of the designated frequency to communicate with shore stations to obtain or furnish information necessary for the safe navigation of vessels.

(d) On the navigable waters of the United States, channel 13 (156.65 MHz) is the designated frequency required to be monitored in accordance with Sec. 26.05(a) except that in the area prescribed in Sec. 26.03(e), channel 67 (156.375 MHz) is the designated frequency.

(e) On those navigable waters of the United States within a VTS area, the designated VTS frequency is an additional designated frequency required to be monitored in accordance with Sec. 26.05.

#### **Sec. 26.05 Use of radiotelephone.**

Section 5 of the Act states that the radiotelephone required by this Act is for the exclusive use of the master or person in charge of the vessel, or the person designated by the master or person in charge to pilot or direct the movement of the vessel, who shall maintain a listening watch on the designated frequency. Nothing herein shall be interpreted as precluding the use of portable radiotelephone equipment to satisfy the requirements of this act.

**Sec. 26.06 Maintenance of radiotelephone; failure of radiotelephone.**

Section 6 of the Act states:

(a) Whenever radiotelephone capability is required by this Act, a vessel's radiotelephone equipment shall be maintained in effective operating condition. If the radiotelephone equipment carried aboard a vessel ceases to operate, the master shall exercise due diligence to restore it or cause it to be restored to effective operating condition at the earliest practicable time. The failure of a vessel's radiotelephone equipment shall not, in itself, constitute a violation of this Act, nor shall it obligate the master of any vessel to moor or anchor his vessel; however, the loss of radiotelephone capability shall be given consideration in the navigation of the vessel.

**Sec. 26.09 List of exemptions.**

(a) All vessels navigating on those waters governed by the navigation rules for Great Lakes and their connecting and tributary waters (33 U.S.C. 241 et seq.) are exempt from the requirements of the Vessel Bridge-to-Bridge Radiotelephone Act and this part until May 6, 1975.

(b) Each vessel navigating on the Great Lakes as defined in the Inland Navigational Rules Act of 1980 (33 U.S.C. 2001 et seq.) and to which the Vessel Bridge-to-Bridge Radiotelephone Act (33 U.S.C. 1201-1208) applies is exempt from the requirements in 33 U.S.C. 1203, 1204, and 1205 and the regulations under Sec. Sec. 26.03, 26.04, 26.05, 26.06, and 26.07. Each of these vessels and each person to whom 33 U.S.C. 1208(a) applies must comply with Articles VII, X, XI, XII, XIII, XV, and XVI and Technical Regulations 1-9 of "The Agreement Between the United States of America and Canada for Promotion of Safety on the Great Lakes by Means of Radio, 1973."

## **TITLE 33--NAVIGATION AND NAVIGABLE WATERS**

### **PART 160 PORTS AND WATERWAYS SAFETY GENERAL**

#### **Sec. 160.3 Definitions.**

For the purposes of this subchapter:

**Bulk** means material in any quantity that is shipped, stored, or handled without the benefit of package, label, mark or count and carried in integral or fixed independent tanks.

**Captain of the Port** means the Coast Guard officer designated by the Commandant to command a Captain of the Port Zone as described in part 3 of this chapter.

**Commandant** means the Commandant of the United States Coast Guard.

**Commanding Officer, Vessel Traffic Services** means the Coast Guard officer designated by the Commandant to command a Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) as described in part 161 of this chapter.

**Deviation** means any departure from any rule in this subchapter.

**District Commander** means the Coast Guard officer designated by the Commandant to command a Coast Guard District as described in part 3 of this chapter.

**ETA** means estimated time of arrival.

**Length of Tow** means, when towing with a hawser, the length in feet from the stern of the towing vessel to the stern of the last vessel in tow. When pushing ahead or towing alongside, length of tow means the tandem length in feet of the vessels in tow excluding the length of the towing vessel.

**Person** means an individual, firm, corporation, association, partnership, or governmental entity.

### **Sec. 160.3 Definitions (cont)**

**State** means each of the several States of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the United States Virgin Islands, the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, and any other commonwealth, territory, or possession of the United States.

**Tanker** means a self-propelled tank vessel constructed or adapted primarily to carry oil or hazardous materials in bulk in the cargo spaces.

**Tank Vessel** means a vessel that is constructed or adapted to carry, or that carries, oil or hazardous material in bulk as cargo or cargo residue.

**Vessel** means every description of watercraft or other artificial contrivance used, or capable of being used, as a means of transportation on water.

**Vessel Traffic Services (VTS)** means a service implemented under Part 161 of this chapter by the United States Coast Guard designed to improve the safety and efficiency of vessel traffic and to protect the environment. The VTS has the capability to interact with marine traffic and respond to traffic situations developing in the VTS area.

**Vessel Traffic Service Area or VTS Area** means the geographical area encompassing a specific VTS area of service as described in Part 161 of this chapter. This area of service may be subdivided into sectors for the purpose of allocating responsibility to individual Vessel Traffic Centers or to identify different operating requirements.

**Note:** Although regulatory jurisdiction is limited to the navigable waters of the United States, certain vessels will be encouraged or may be required, as a condition of port entry, to report beyond this area to facilitate traffic management within the VTS area.

**VTS Special Area** means a waterway within a VTS area in which special operating requirements apply.

## **Sec. 160.5 Delegations.**

(a) District Commanders and Captains of the Ports are delegated the authority to establish safety zones.

(b) Under the provisions of Sec. Sec. 6.04-1 and 6.04-6 of this chapter, District Commanders and Captains of the Ports have been delegated authority to establish security zones.

(c) Under the provisions of Sec. 1.05-1 of this chapter, District Commanders have been delegated authority to establish regulated navigation areas.

(d) Subject to the supervision of the cognizant Captain of the Port and District Commander, Commanding Officers, Vessel Traffic Services are delegated authority under 33 CFR 1.01-30 to discharge the duties of the Captain of the Port that involve directing the operation, movement, and anchorage of vessels within a Vessel Traffic Service area including management of vessel traffic within anchorages, regulated navigation areas and safety zones, and to enforce Vessel Traffic Service and ports and waterways safety regulations. This authority may be exercised by Vessel Traffic Center personnel. The Vessel Traffic Center may, within the Vessel Traffic Service area, provide information, make recommendations, or, to a vessel required under Part 161 of this chapter to participate in a Vessel Traffic Service, issue an order, including an order to operate or anchor as directed; require the vessel to comply with orders issued; specify times of entry, movement or departure; restrict operations as necessary for safe operation under the circumstances; or take other action necessary for control of the vessel and the safety of the port or of the marine environment.

## **Sec. 160.101 Purpose.**

This subpart describes the authority exercised by District Commanders and Captains of the Ports to insure the safety of vessels and waterfront facilities, and the protection of the navigable waters and the resources therein. The controls described in this subpart are directed to specific situations and hazards.

**Sec. 160.111 Special orders applying to vessel operations.**

Each District Commander or Captain of the Port may order a vessel to operate or anchor in the manner directed when:

- (a) The District Commander or Captain of the Port has reasonable cause to believe that the vessel is not in compliance with any regulation, law or treaty;
- (b) The District Commander or Captain of the Port determines that the vessel does not satisfy the conditions for vessel operation and cargo transfers specified in Sec. 160.113; or
- (c) The District Commander or Captain of the Port has determined that such order is justified in the interest of safety by reason of weather, visibility, sea conditions, temporary port congestion, other temporary hazardous circumstances, or the condition of the vessel.

**Subpart C Notification of Arrival, Hazardous Conditions, and Certain Dangerous Cargos**

**Sec. 160.215 Notice of hazardous conditions.**

Whenever there is a hazardous condition either aboard a vessel or caused by a vessel or its operation, the owner, agent, master, operator, or person in charge shall immediately notify the nearest Coast Guard Marine Safety Office or Group Office. (Compliance with this section does not relieve responsibility for the written report required by 46 CFR 4.05-10.)

**Authority:** 33 U.S.C. 1223, 1231; 46 U.S.C. Chapter 701; Department of Homeland Security Delegation No. 0170.1. Subpart D is also issued under the authority of 33 U.S.C. 125 and 46 U.S.C. 3715.

# **TITLE 33--NAVIGATION AND NAVIGABLE WATERS**

## **CHAPTER I--COAST GUARD, DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

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## **Sec. 161.1 Purpose and Intent.**

### **General Rules**

(a) The purpose of this part is to promulgate regulations implementing and enforcing certain sections of the Ports and Waterways Safety Act (PWSA) setting up a national system of Vessel Traffic Services that will enhance navigation, vessel safety, and marine environmental protection, and promote safe vessel movement by reducing the potential for collisions, rammings, and groundings, and the loss of lives and property associated with these incidents within VTS areas established hereunder.

(b) Vessel Traffic Services provide the mariner with information related to the safe navigation of a waterway. This information, coupled with the mariner's compliance with the provisions set forth in this part, enhances the safe routing of vessels through congested waterways or waterways of particular hazard. Under certain circumstances, a VTS may issue directions to control the movement of vessels in order to minimize the risk of collision between vessels, or damage to property or the environment.

(c) The owner, operator, charterer, master, or person directing the movement of a vessel remains at all times responsible for the manner in which the vessel is operated and maneuvered, and is responsible for the safe navigation of the vessel under all circumstances. Compliance with these rules or with a direction of the VTS is at all times contingent upon the exigencies of safe navigation.

(d) Nothing in this part is intended to relieve any vessel, owner, operator, charterer, master, or person directing the movement of a vessel from the consequences of any neglect to comply with this part or any other applicable law or regulation (e.g., the International Regulations for Prevention of Collisions at Sea, 1972 (72 COLREGS) or the Inland Navigation Rules) or of the neglect of any precaution which may be required by the ordinary practice of seamen, or by the special circumstances of the case.

**Sec. 161.2 Definitions.** For the purposes of this part:

**Cooperative Vessel Traffic Services (CVTS)** means the system of vessel traffic management established and jointly operated by the United States and Canada within adjoining waters. In addition, CVTS facilitates traffic movement and anchorages, avoids jurisdictional disputes, and renders assistance in emergencies in adjoining United States and Canadian waters.

**Hazardous Vessel Operating Condition** means any condition related to a vessel's ability to safely navigate or maneuver, and includes, but is not limited to:

(1) The absence or malfunction of vessel operating equipment, such as propulsion machinery, steering gear, radar system, gyrocompass, depth sounding device, automatic radar plotting aid (ARPA), radiotelephone, Automatic Identification System equipment, navigational lighting, sound signaling devices or similar equipment.

(2) Any condition on board the vessel likely to impair navigation, such as lack of current nautical charts and publications, personnel shortage, or similar condition.

(3) Vessel characteristics that affect or restrict maneuverability, such as cargo arrangement, trim, loaded condition, under keel clearance, speed, or similar characteristics.

**Navigable waters** means all navigable waters of the United States including the territorial sea of the United States, extending to 12 nautical miles from United States baselines, as described in Presidential Proclamation No. 5928 of December 27, 1988.

**Precautionary Area** means a routing measure comprising an area within defined limits where vessels must navigate with particular caution and within which the direction of traffic may be recommended.

**Towing Vessel** means any commercial vessel engaged in towing another vessel astern, alongside, or by pushing ahead.

## **Sec. 161.2 Definitions (cont)**

**Vessel Movement Reporting System (VMRS)** means a mandatory reporting system used to monitor and track vessel movements. This is accomplished by a vessel providing information under established procedures as set forth in this part in the areas defined in Table 161.12(c) (VTS and VMRS Centers, Call Signs/MMSI, Designated Frequencies, and Monitoring Areas).

**Vessel Movement Reporting System (VMRS) User** means a vessel, or an owner, operator, charterer, Master, or person directing the movement of a vessel that is required to participate in a VMRS.

**Vessel Traffic Center (VTC)** means the shore-based facility that operates the vessel traffic service for the Vessel Traffic Service area or sector within such an area.

**Vessel Traffic Services (VTS)** means a service implemented by the United States Coast Guard designed to improve the safety and efficiency of vessel traffic and to protect the environment. The VTS has the capability to interact with marine traffic and respond to traffic situations developing in the VTS area.

**Vessel Traffic Service Area or VTS Area** means the geographical area encompassing a specific VTS area of service. This area of service may be subdivided into sectors for the purpose of allocating responsibility to individual Vessel Traffic Centers or to identify different operating requirements.

Note: Although regulatory jurisdiction is limited to the navigable waters of the United States, certain vessels will be encouraged or may be required, as a condition of port entry, to report beyond this area to facilitate traffic management within the VTS area.

**VTS Special Area** means a waterway within a VTS area in which special operating requirements apply.

### **Sec. 161.2 Definitions. (cont)**

**VTS User** means a vessel, or an owner, operator, charterer, master, or person directing the movement of a vessel, that is:

- (a) Subject to the Vessel Bridge-to-Bridge Radiotelephone Act; or
- (b) Required to participate in a VMRS within a VTS area (VMRS User).

**VTS User's Manual** means the manual established and distributed by the VTS to provide the mariner with a description of the services offered and rules in force for that VTS. Additionally, the manual may include chartlets showing the area and sector boundaries, general navigational information about the area, and procedures, radio frequencies, reporting provisions and other information which may assist the mariner while in the VTS area.

### **Sec. 161.3 Applicability.**

The provisions of this subpart shall apply to each VTS User and may also apply to any vessel while underway or at anchor on the navigable waters of the United States within a VTS area, to the extent the VTS considers necessary.

### **Sec. 161.4 Requirement to carry the rules.**

Each VTS User shall carry on board and maintain for ready reference a copy of these rules.

Note: These rules are contained in the applicable U.S. Coast Pilot, the VTS User's Manual which may be obtained by contacting the appropriate VTS, and periodically published in the Local Notice to Mariners. The VTS User's Manual and the World VTS Guide, an International Maritime Organization (IMO) recognized publication, contain additional information which may assist the prudent mariner while in the appropriate VTS area.

**Sec. 161.5 Deviations from the rules.**

(a) Requests to deviate from any provision in this part, either for an extended period of time or if anticipated before the start of a transit, must be submitted in writing to the appropriate District Commander. Upon receipt of the written request, the District Commander may authorize a deviation if it is determined that such a deviation provides a level of safety equivalent to that provided by the required measure or is a maneuver considered necessary for safe navigation under the circumstances. An application for an authorized deviation must state the need and fully describe the proposed alternative to the required measure.

(b) Requests to deviate from any provision in this part due to circumstances that develop during a transit or immediately preceding a transit may be made verbally to the appropriate VTS Director. Requests to deviate shall be made as far in advance as practicable. Upon receipt of the request, the VTS Director may authorize a deviation if it is determined that, based on vessel handling characteristics, traffic density, radar contacts, environmental conditions and other relevant information, such a deviation provides a level of safety equivalent to that provided by the required measure or is a maneuver considered necessary for safe navigation under the circumstances.

### **Sec. 161.10 Services.**

To enhance navigation and vessel safety, and to protect the marine environment, a VTS may issue advisories, or respond to vessel requests for information, on reported conditions within the VTS area, such as:

- (a) Hazardous conditions or circumstances;
- (b) Vessel congestion;
- (c) Traffic density;
- (d) Environmental conditions;
- (e) Aids to navigation status;
- (f) Anticipated vessel encounters;
- (g) Another vessel's name, type, position, hazardous vessel operating conditions, if applicable, and intended navigation movements, as reported;
- (h) Temporary measures in effect;
- (i) A description of local harbor operations and conditions, such as ferry routes, dredging, and so forth;
- (j) Anchorage availability; or
- (k) Other information or special circumstances.

### **Sec. 161.11 VTS measures.**

(a) A VTS may issue measures or directions to enhance navigation and vessel safety and to protect the marine environment, such as, but not limited to:

- (1) Designating temporary reporting points and procedures;
- (2) Imposing vessel operating requirements; or
- (3) Establishing vessel traffic routing schemes.

(b) During conditions of vessel congestion, restricted visibility, adverse weather, or other hazardous circumstances, a VTS may control, supervise, or otherwise manage traffic, by specifying times of entry, movement, or departure to, from, or within a VTS area.

**Sec. 161.12 Vessel operating requirements.**

(a) Subject to the exigencies of safe navigation, a VTS User shall comply with all measures established or directions issued by a VTS.

(b) If, in a specific circumstance, a VTS User is unable to safely comply with a measure or direction issued by the VTS, the VTS User may deviate only to the extent necessary to avoid endangering persons, property or the environment. The deviation shall be reported to the VTS as soon as is practicable.

(c) When not exchanging voice communications, a VTS User must maintain a listening watch as required by Sec. 26.04(e) of this chapter on the VTS frequency designated in Table 161.12(c) (VTS and VMRS Centers, Call Signs/MMSI, Designated Frequencies, and Monitoring Areas). In addition, the VTS User must respond promptly when hailed and communicate in the English language.

Note to Sec. 161.12(c): As stated in 47 CFR 80.148(b), a very high frequency watch on Channel 16 (156.800 MHz) is not required on vessels subject to the Vessel Bridge-to-Bridge Radiotelephone Act and participating in a Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) system when the watch is maintained on both the vessel bridge-to-bridge frequency and a designated VTS frequency.

VTS St. Marys River  
MMSI = 003669953  
Call Sign = Soo Traffic  
VHF FM Ch. 12 (156.600 MHz)

VTSA = The waters of the St. Marys River between 45-57 N (DeTour Reef Light) and 46-38.7 N (Ile Parisienne Light), except the St. Marys Falls Canal and those navigable waters east of a line from 46-04.16 N. and 46-01.57 N. (La Pointe to Sims Point in Potagannissing Bay and Worsley Bay).

## **Sec. 161.12 Vessel operating requirements. (cont)**

Notes:

1. Maritime Mobile Service Identifier (MMSI) is a unique nine-digit number assigned that identifies ship stations, ship earth stations, coast stations, coast earth stations, and group calls for use by a digital selective calling (DSC) radio, an INMARSAT ship earth station or AIS. AIS requirements are set forth in Sec. 161.21 and 164.46 of this subchapter. The requirements set forth in Sec. Sec. 161.21 and 164.46 of this subchapter apply in those areas denoted with a MMSI number.

2. In the event of a communication failure, difficulties or other safety factors, the Center may direct or permit a user to monitor and report on any other designated monitoring frequency or the bridge-to-bridge navigational frequency, 156.650 MHz (Ch 13) or 156.375 MHz (Ch. 67), to the extent that doing so provides a level of safety beyond that provided by other means. The bridge-to-bridge navigational frequency, 156.650 MHz (Ch. 13), is used in certain monitoring areas where the level of reporting does not warrant a designated frequency.

3. All geographic coordinates are expressed in North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83).

4. Some monitoring areas extend beyond navigable waters. Although not required, users are strongly encouraged to maintain a listening watch on the designated monitoring frequency in these areas. Otherwise, they are required to maintain watch as stated in 47 CFR 80.148.

5. Until rules regarding VTS Lower Mississippi River and VTS Port Arthur are published, vessels are exempted of all VTS and VMRS requirements set forth in 33 CFR part 161, except those set forth in Sec. Sec. 161.21 and 164.46 of this subchapter.

6. A Cooperative Vessel Traffic Service was established by the United States and Canada within adjoining waters. The appropriate Center administers the rules issued by both nations; however, enforces only its own set of rules within its jurisdiction. Note, the bridge-to-bridge navigational frequency, 156.650 MHz (Ch. 13), is not so designated in Canadian waters, therefore users are encouraged and permitted to make passing arrangements on the designated monitoring frequencies.

**Sec. 161.12 Vessel operating requirements. (cont)**

(d) As soon as is practicable, a VTS User shall notify the VTS of any of the following:

- (1) A marine casualty as defined in 46 CFR 4.05-1;
- (2) Involvement in the ramming of a fixed or floating object;
- (3) A pollution incident as defined in Sec. 151.15 of this chapter;
- (4) A defect or discrepancy in an aid to navigation;
- (5) A hazardous condition as defined in Sec. 160.203 of this chapter;
- (6) Improper operation of vessel equipment required by Part 164 of this chapter;
- (7) A situation involving hazardous materials for which a report is req by 49 CFR 176.48; and
- (8) A hazardous vessel operating condition as defined in Sec. 161.2.

**Sec. 161.13 VTS Special Area operating requirements.**

The following operating requirements apply within a VTS Special Area:

(a) A VTS User shall, if towing astern, do so with as short a hawser as safety and good seamanship permits.

(b) A VMRS User shall:

- (1) Not enter or get underway in the area without prior approval of the VTS;
- (2) Not enter a VTS Special Area if a hazardous vessel operating condition or circumstance exists;
- (3) Not meet, cross, or overtake any other VMRS User in the area without prior approval of the VTS; and

(4) Before meeting, crossing, or overtaking any other VMRS User in the area, communicate on the designated vessel bridge-to-bridge radiotelephone frequency, intended navigation movements, and any other information necessary in order to make safe passing arrangements. This requirement does not relieve a vessel of any duty prescribed by the International Regulations for Prevention of Collisions at Sea, 1972 (72 COLREGS) or the Inland Navigation Rules.

### **Sec. 161.15 Purpose and intent.**

(a) A Vessel Movement Reporting System (VMRS) is a system used to monitor and track vessel movements VTS or VMRS area. This is accomplished by requiring that vessels provide information under established procedures as set forth in this part, or as directed by the Center.

(b) To avoid imposing an undue reporting burden or unduly congesting radiotelephone frequencies, reports shall be limited to information which is essential to achieve the objectives of the VMRS. These reports are consolidated into three reports (sailing plan, position, and final).

### **Sec. 161.16 Applicability.**

Unless otherwise stated, the provisions of this subpart apply to the following vessels and VMRS Users:

(a) Every power-driven vessel of 40 meters (approximately 131 feet) or more in length, while navigating;

(b) Every towing vessel of 8 meters (approximately 26 feet) or more in length, while navigating; or

(c) Every vessel certificated to carry 50 or more passengers for hire, when engaged in trade.

### **Sec. 161.17 Definitions.**

As used in this subpart:

**Center** means a Vessel Traffic Center or Vessel Movement Center.

**Published** means available in a widely-distributed and publicly available medium (e.g., VTS User's Manual, ferry schedule, Notice to Mariners).

### **Sec. 161.18 Reporting requirements.**

(a) A Center may: (1) Direct a vessel to provide any of the information set forth in Table 161.18(a) (IMO Standard Ship Reporting System);

**Table 161.18(a)--The IMO Standard Ship Reporting System**

A	ALPHA	Ship Name, call sign or ship station identity, and flag.
B	BRAVO	Dates and time of a 6 digit group giving event day of month (first two digits), hours and minutes (last four digits). If other than UTC state time zone used
C	CHARLIE	Position a 4 digit group giving latitude in degrees and minutes suffixed with N (north) or S (south) and a 5 digit group giving longitude in degrees suffixed with E (east) or W (west); or.
D	DELTA	Position True bearing (first 3 digits) and distance (state distance) in nautical miles from a clearly identified landmark (state landmark).
E	ECHO	True course a 3 digit group.
F	FOXTROT	Speed in knots a 3 digit group and tenths of knots.
G	GOLF	Port of Departure Name of last port of call.
H	HOTEL	Date, time and Entry time expressed point of entry as in (B) and Into system, the entry position expressed as in (C) or (D).
I	INDIA	Destination and Name of port and date expected time of time group expressed arrival as in (B).
J	JULIET	Pilot State whether a deep sea or local pilot is on board.
K	KILO	Date, time and Exit time expressed as point of exit in (B) and exit from system. position expressed as in (C) or (D).
L	LIMA	Route information Intended track.
M	MIKE	Radio State in full names of comms stations/frequencies guarded.
N	NOVEMBER	Time of next Date time group report expressed as in (B).

**Table 161.18(a)--The IMO Standard Ship Reporting System (cont)**

O	OSCAR	Maximum present 4 digit group giving static draught meters and in meters centimeters
P	PAPA	Cargo on board Cargo and brief details of any dangerous cargoes as well as harmful substances and gases that could endanger persons or the environment.
Q	QUEBEC	Defects, damage, Brief detail of deficiencies or defects, damage, Limitations deficiencies or other limitations.
R	ROMEO	Description of Brief details of type pollution or of pollution (oil, dangerous goods chemicals, etc) or lost dangerous goods lost overboard; position expressed as in (C)
S	SIERRA	Weather Brief details of conditions weather and sea conditions prevailing.
T	TANGO	Ship's Details of name and representative particulars of ship's and/or Owner representative and/or owner for provision of information.
U	UNIFORM	Ship size and Details of length, type breadth, tonnage, and type, etc., As required.
V	VICTOR	Medical personnel Doctor, physician's assistant, nurse, no medic.
W	WHISKEY	Total number of State number of persons on board.
X	XRAY	Miscellaneous....Any other information as appropriate. description of a planned operation, which may include: its duration; effective area; any restrictions to navigation; notification procedures for approaching vessels; in addition, for a towing operation: configuration, length of the tow, available horsepower, etc.; for a dredge or floating plant: configuration of pipeline, mooring configuration, number of assist vessels, etc.].

(2) Establish other means of reporting for those vessels unable to report on the designated frequency; or

(3) Require reports from a vessel in sufficient time to allow advance vessel traffic planning.

## **Sec. 161.18 Reporting requirements (cont)**

(b) All reports required by this part shall be made as soon as is practicable on the frequency designated in Table 161.12(c) (VTS and VMRS Centers, Call Signs/MMSI, Designated Frequencies, and Monitoring Areas).

(c) When not exchanging communications, a VMRS User must maintain a listening watch as described in Sec. 26.04(e) of this chapter on the frequency designated in Table 161.12(c) (VTS and VMRS Centers, Call Signs/MMSI, Designated Frequencies, and Monitoring Areas). In addition, the VMRS User must respond promptly when hailed and communicate in the English language.

Note: As stated in 47 CFR 80.148(b), a VHF watch on Channel 16 (156.800 MHz) is not required on vessels subject to the Vessel Bridge-to-Bridge Radiotelephone Act and participating in a Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) system when the watch is maintained on both the vessel bridge-to-bridge frequency and a designated VTS frequency.

(d) A vessel must report:

- (1) Any significant deviation from its Sailing Plan, as defined in Sec. 161.19, or from previously reported information; or
- (2) Any intention to deviate from a VTS issued measure or vessel traffic routing system.

(e) When reports required by this part include time information, such information shall be given using the local time zone in effect and the 24-hour military clock system.

PART 161\_VESSEL TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT--Table of Contents

## **Sec. 161.19 Sailing Plan (SP).**

Unless otherwise stated, at least 15 minutes before navigating a VTS area, a vessel must report the:

- (a) Vessel name and type;
- (b) Position;
- (c) Destination and ETA;
- (d) Intended route;
- (e) Time and point of entry; and
- (f) Dangerous cargo on board or in its tow, as defined in Sec.

160.203 of this chapter, and other required information as set out in Sec. 160.211 and Sec. 160.213 of this chapter, if applicable.

**Sec. 161.20 Position Report (PR).**

A vessel must report its name and position:

- (a) Upon point of entry into a VMRS area;
- (b) At designated reporting points as set forth in subpart C; or
- (c) When directed by the Center.

**161 .21 Sailing Plan Deviation Report (DR)**

A vessel must report:

- (a) When its ETA to a destination varies significantly from a previously reported ETA;
- (b) Any intention to deviate from a VTS issued measure or vessel traffic routing system; or
- (c) Any significant deviation from previously reported information.

**Sec. 161.21(a) Automated reporting.**

(a) Unless otherwise directed, vessels equipped with an Automatic Identification System (AIS) are required to make continuous, all stations, AIS broadcasts, in lieu of voice Position Reports, to those Centers denoted in Table 161.12(c) of this part.

(b) Should an AIS become non-operational, while or prior to navigating a VMRS area, it should be restored to operating condition as soon as possible, and, until restored a vessel must:

- (1) Notify the Center;
- (2) Make voice radio Position Reports at designated reporting points as required by Sec.161.20(b) of this part; and
- (3) Make any other reports as directed by the Center.

**Sec. 161.22 Final Report (FR).**

A vessel must report its name and position:

- (a) On arrival at its destination; or
- (b) When leaving a VTS area.

**Sec. 161.45 Vessel Traffic Service St. Marys River.**

- (a) The VTS area consists of the navigable waters of the St. Marys River and lower Whitefish Bay from 45 57 N. (De Tour Reef Light) to the south, to 46 38.7 N. (Ile Parisienne Light) to the north, except the waters of the St. Marys Falls Canal, and to the east along a line from La Pointe to Sims Point, within Potagannissing Bay and Worsley Bay.
- (b) Reporting Points.

**Table 161.45(b)--VTS St. Marys River Reporting Points**

Geographic Name	Geographic Description	Latitude/ Longitude	Notes
1 Ile Parisienne	Ile Parisienne Lt	46 37.3N 84 45.9 W	D/B only
2 Gros Cap Reef	Gros Cap Reef LT	46 30.6 N 84 37.1 W	U/B only
3 LT 26	Round Island Lt 26	46 26.9 N 84 31.7 W	
4 Pointe Louise	Pt Louise Lt	46 27.8 N 84 28.2 W	
5 West End Of Locks	West Center Pier head Lt	46 30.2 N 84 22.2 W	U/B only
6 East End Of Locks	East Center Pier head Lt	46 30.1 N 84 20.3W	D/B only
7 Mission Point	Lt 99	46 29.2 N 84 18.1 W	
8 Six Mile Point	Six Mile Pt	46 26.1 N 84 15.4 W	
9 Nine Mile Point	Lt 80	46 23.5 N 84 14.1 N	
10 Rock Cut	West Neebish Lt 29	46 16.9 N 84 12.5 W	D/B only
11 Munuscong Lake Junction	Lighted JCT Buoy	46 10.8 N 84 05.6 W	
12 De Tour Reef	De Tour Reef Lt	46 56.9 N 83 53.7 W	

## TITLE 33--NAVIGATION AND NAVIGABLE WATERS

### PART 162--INLAND WATERWAYS NAVIGATION REGULATIONS--Table of Contents

#### Sec. 162.117 St. Marys River, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan.

(a) The area. The waters of the St. Marys River and lower Whitefish Bay from 45 57 N. (De Tour Reef Light) to the south, to 46 38.7 N. (Ile Parisienne Light) to the north, except the waters of the St. Marys Falls Canal, and to the east along a line from La Pointe to Sims Point, within Potagannissing Bay and Worsley Bay.

(b) Definitions. As used in this section:

**Two-way route** means a directional route within defined limits inside which two-way traffic is established, and which is intended to improve safety in waters where navigation is difficult.

**Two-way traffic** means that traffic flow is permitted in opposing directions, but a vessel may not meet, cross, nor overtake any other vessel in such a manner that it would be abreast of more than one other vessel within the defined limits of a waterway.

(c) Anchoring Rules.

(1) A vessel must not anchor:

(i) within the waters between Brush Point and the waterworks intake crib off Big Point southward of the Point Aux Pins range; or

(ii) within 0.2 nautical miles of the intake crib off Big Point.

(2) In an emergency, vessels may anchor in a dredged channel.

Vessels shall anchor as near to the edge of the channel as possible and shall get underway as soon as the emergency ceases, unless otherwise directed. Vessel Traffic Services St. Marys River must be advised of any emergency anchoring as soon as is practicable.

## **Sec. 162.117 St. Marys River, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan (cont)**

(3) Vessels collected in any part of the VTS Area by reason of temporary closure of a channel or an impediment to navigation shall get underway and depart in the order in which they arrived, unless otherwise directed by Vessel Traffic Service St. Marys River. Vessel Traffic Service St. Marys River may advance any vessel in the order of departure to expedite the movement of mails, passengers, cargo of a perishable nature, to facilitate passage of vessels through any channel by reason of special circumstance, or to facilitate passage through the St. Marys Falls Canal.

### **(d) Traffic Rules.**

(1) A vessel must proceed only in the established direction of traffic flow in the following waters: West Neebish Channel from Buoy ``53" to Buoy ``1"--downbound traffic only; Pipe Island Course from Sweets Point to Watson Reefs Light--downbound traffic only. Middle Neebish Channel from Buoy ``2" to Buoy ``76"--upbound traffic only; and Pipe Island Passage to the east of Pipe Island Shoal and north of Pipe Island Twins from Watson Reefs Light to Sweets Point--upbound traffic only.

(2) A vessel 350 feet or more in length must not overtake or approach within .2 nautical miles of another vessel proceeding in the same direction in the following waterways:

(i) West Neebish Channel between Nine Mile Point and Munuscong Lake Junction Lighted Bell Buoy;

(ii) Middle Neebish Channel between Munuscong Lake Junction Lighted Bell Buoy and Nine Mile Point; and

(iii) Little Rapids Cut from Six Mile Point to Buoy ``102".

**Sec. 162.117 St. Marys River, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan (cont)**

(3) When two-way traffic is authorized in Middle Neebish Channel, a vessel 350 feet or more in length must not meet, cross, or overtake another vessel at:

- (i) Johnson Point from Buoy ``18" to Buoy ``22";
- (ii) Mirre Point from Buoy ``26" to Buoy ``28"; or
- (iii) Stribling Point from Buoy ``39" to Buoy ``43".

(4) Paragraph (d) (2) of this section does not apply to a vessel navigating through an ice field.

(e) **Winter Navigation.** During the winter navigation season, the following waterways are normally closed:

- (1) West Neebish Channel, from Buoy ``53" to Buoy ``1";
- (2) Pipe Island Passage to the east of Pipe Island Shoal; and
- (3) North of Pipe Island Twins, from Watson Reef Light to Sweets Point.

(f) Alternate Winter Navigation Routes.

(1) When West Neebish Channel is closed, Middle Neebish Channel (from Buoy ``2" to Buoy ``76") will be open either as a two-way route or an alternating one way traffic lane.

(i) When Middle Neebish Channel is a two-way route:

(A) An upbound vessel must use the easterly 197 feet of the channel. However, a vessel of draft 20 feet or more must not proceed prior to Vessel Traffic Center approval; and

(B) A downbound vessel must use the westerly 295 feet of the channel.

(ii) When Middle Neebish Channel is an alternating one-way traffic lane. A vessel must use the westerly 295 feet of the channel in the established direction of traffic flow.

(2) When Pipe Island Passage is closed; Pipe Island Course is a two-way route.



**Sec. 162.117 St. Marys River, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan.**

Note: A vessel must not navigate any dredged channel at a speed of less than 5 statute miles per hour (4.3 knots).

(2) Temporary speed limit regulations may be established by Commanding Officer Vessel Traffic Service St. Marys River. Notice of the temporary speed limits and their effective dates and termination are published in the Federal Register and Local Notice to Mariners. These temporary speed limits, if imposed, will normally be placed in effect and terminated during the winter navigation season.

(h) **Towing Requirement.** A towing vessel must:

- (1) Maintain positive control of its tow south of Gros Cap Reef Light;
- (2) Not impede the passage of any other vessel;
- (3) Not tow a vessel of 200 feet or less in length with a tow line longer than 250 feet; and
- (4) Not tow a vessel of 200 feet or more in length with a tow line longer than the length of the towed vessel plus 50 feet.

# **TITLE 33--NAVIGATION AND NAVIGABLE WATERS**

## **CHAPTER I--COAST GUARD, DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

### **PART 164 NAVIGATION SAFETY REGULATIONS**

#### **Sec. 164.46 Automatic Identification System (AIS).**

(a) The following vessels must have a properly installed, operational, type approved AIS as of the date specified:

(1) Self-propelled vessels of 65 feet or more in length, other than passenger and fishing vessels, in commercial service and on an international voyage, not later than December 31, 2004.

(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (a)(1) of this section, the following, self-propelled vessels, that are on an international voyage must also comply with SOLAS, as amended, Chapter V, regulation 19.2.1.6, 19.2.4, and 19.2.3.5 or 19.2.5.1 as appropriate (Incorporated by reference, see Sec. 164.03):

(i) Passenger vessels, of 150 gross tonnage or more, not later than July 1, 2003;

(ii) Tankers, regardless of tonnage, not later than the first safety survey for safety equipment on or after July 1, 2003;

(iii) Vessels, other than passenger vessels or tankers, of 50,000 gross tonnage or more, not later than July 1, 2004; and

(iv) Vessels, other than passenger vessels or tankers, of 300 gross tonnage or more but less than 50,000 gross tonnage, not later than the first safety survey for safety equipment on or after July 1, 2004, but no later than December 31, 2004.

(3) Notwithstanding paragraphs (a)(1) and (a)(2) of this section, the following vessels, when navigating an area denoted in table 161.12(c) of Sec. 161.12 of this chapter, not later than December 31, 2004:

## Sec. 164.46 Automatic Identification System (AIS) (cont)

- (i) Self-propelled vessels of 65 feet or more in length, other than fishing vessels and passenger vessels certificated to carry less than 151 passengers-for-hire, in commercial service;
- (ii) Towing vessels of 26 feet or more in length and more than 600 horsepower, in commercial service;
- (iii) Passenger vessels certificated to carry more than 150 passengers-for-hire.

Note to Sec. 164.46(a): ``**Properly installed**'' refers to an installation using the guidelines set forth in IMO SN/Circ.227 (incorporated by reference, see Sec. 164.03). Not all AIS units are able to broadcast position, course, and speed without the input of an external positioning device (e.g. dGPS); the use of other external devices (e.g. transmitting heading device, gyro, rate of turn indicator) is highly recommended, however, not required except as stated in Sec. 164.46(a)(2). ``**Type approved**'' refers to an approval by an IMO recognized Administration as to comply with IMO Resolution MSC.74(69), ITU-R Recommendation M.1371-1, and IEC 61993-2 (Incorporated by reference, see Sec. 164.03). ``**Length**'' refers to ``registered length'' as defined in 46 CFR part 69. ``**Gross tonnage**'' refers to tonnage as defined under the International Convention on Tonnage Measurement of Ships, 1969.

(b) The requirements for Vessel Bridge-to-Bridge radiotelephones in Sec. Sec. 26.04(a) and (c), 26.05, 26.06 and 26.07 of this chapter also apply to AIS. The term ``**effective operating condition**'' used in Sec. 26.06 of this chapter includes accurate input and upkeep of AIS data fields.

(c) The use of a portable AIS is permissible only to the extent that electromagnetic interference does not affect the proper function of existing navigation and communication equipment on board and such that only one AIS unit may be in operation at any one time.

(d) The AIS Pilot Plug, on each vessel over 1,600 gross tons on an international voyage, must be available for pilot use, easily accessible from the primary conning position of the vessel, and near a 120 Volt, AC power, 3-prong receptacle.

## **TITLE 33--NAVIGATION AND NAVIGABLE WATERS**

### **CHAPTER I--COAST GUARD, DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

#### **PART 165 REGULATED NAVIGATION AREAS AND LIMITED ACCESS AREAS**

##### **Subpart F Specific Regulated Navigation Areas and Limited Access Areas**

###### **Sec. 165.901 Great Lakes Regulated Navigation Areas.**

(a) **Lake Huron.** The following are regulated navigation areas:

(1) The waters of Lake Huron known as **South Channel** between Bois Blanc Island and Cheboygan, Michigan; bounded by a line north from Cheyboygan Crib Light (LL-11800) at 45-39-48N, 84-27-36 W; to Bois Blanc Island at 45-43-42 N, 84-27-36 W; and a line north from the mainland at 45-43-00 N, 84-35-30 W; to the western tangent of Bois Blanc Island at 45-48-42 N, 84-35-30 W.

(2) The waters of Lake Huron between Mackinac Island and St. Ignace, Michigan, bounded by a line east from position 45-52-12 N, 84-43-00 W; to Mackinac Island at 45-52-12 N, 84-39-00 W; and a line east from the mainland at 45-53-12 N, 84-43-30 W; to the northern tangent of Mackinac Island at 45-53-12 N, 84-38-48 W.

(b) **Lake Michigan.** The following is a regulated navigation area--The waters of Lake Michigan known as **Gray's Reef Passage** bounded by a line from Gray's Reef Light (LL-17775 at 45-46-00 N, 85-09-12 W; to White Shoals Light (LL-17750) at 45-50-30 N, 85-08-06 W; to a point at 45-49-12 N, 85-04-48 W; then to a point at 45-45-42 N, 85-08-42 W; then to the point of beginning.

## **Sec. 165.901 Great Lakes Regulated Navigation Areas (cont)**

(c) **Regulations.** The COTP Sault Ste. Marie will close and open these regulated navigation areas as ice conditions dictate. Under normal seasonal conditions, only one closing each winter and one opening each spring are anticipated. Prior to the closing or opening of the regulated navigation areas, the COTP will give interested parties, including both shipping interests and island residents, not less than 72 hours notice of the action. No vessel may navigate in a regulated navigation area which has been closed by the COTP. Under emergency conditions, the COTP may authorize specific vessels to navigate in a closed regulated navigation area.

## **VTS CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Address:** Commander,  
U.S. Coast Guard Sector  
337 Water St.  
Sault Ste Marie, MI 49783  
Attn: VTS St. Marys River

**Phone Numbers:** Soo Traffic (906) 635-3232  
  
VTS Supervisor (906) 635-3299  
  
Sector Operations (906) 635-3230  
  
Sector / VTS Fax (906) 635-3238

**Web Site:** [www.uscg.mil/d9/sault/gru/vts/index.htm](http://www.uscg.mil/d9/sault/gru/vts/index.htm)

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