

# Frequently Asked Questions

## ***What prompted the Coast Guard to conduct the Atlantic Coast Port Access Route Study?***

There were two primary driving forces that led to the decision to conduct a study encompassing the entire Atlantic Coast. The immediate need was to address navigational safety concerns related to the initiatives to develop wind energy on a large scale along the Atlantic Coast. There was also the Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning initiative to identify areas most suitable for various types or classes of activities in order to reduce conflicts among uses, reduce environmental impacts, facilitate compatible uses, and preserve critical ecosystems.

## ***Who will be conducting the study?***

The Coast Guard's Atlantic Area Command will be conducting the study in coordination with Coast Guard Headquarters and the Coast Guard's district offices situated along the East Coast.

## ***What information will be used during the study?***

The Coast Guard is using Automatic Identification System (AIS) data as its primary means of determining routes and operating areas based on the density and track lines of AIS equipped vessels. However, it is essential for the Coast Guard to also collect data on routes and operating areas that may not be reflected in the AIS data. This information will be in the form of public comments and is the primary means for the Coast Guard to collect information from stakeholders who may not be represented in the AIS data. These users may include commercial fishing vessels, small passenger vessels, sightseeing and eco-tour vessels, recreational and charter fishing vessels, yachts, and sailing vessels.

## ***What is the scope of the study?***

The study area will encompass the entire Atlantic Coast from Maine to Florida. The study will focus on the coastwise shipping routes and near coastal users of the Western Atlantic Ocean between the coastal ports, and the approaches to coastal ports. As part of this study, we will analyze vessel traffic density, fishing vessel information, and agency and stakeholder experience in vessel traffic management, navigation, ship handling, and effects of weather. The study will attempt to identify all current and new users of the Western Atlantic near coastal zone, and help the Coast Guard determine what impact, if any, the siting, construction and operation of proposed alternative energy facilities may have on existing near-coastal users of the Western Atlantic Ocean. The Coast Guard will then evaluate whether a routing system or changes to routing measures are needed to preserve navigational safety.

## ***Who should comment on the study?***

It is important that the Coast Guard receive comments from all types of waterway users and stakeholders within the study area.

## ***Why should I comment on the study?***

It is important that the Coast Guard receive comments from all users and stakeholders so that we can understand how they may be impacted by proposed wind energy areas or other potential development, and whether routing measures may be necessary to mitigate those impacts.

***If I choose to comment on the study, how do I do that?***

To submit your comment online, go to <http://www.regulations.gov> click on the “submit a comment” box, which will then become highlighted in blue. In the “Document Type” drop down menu select “Notice” and insert “USCG–2011–0351” in the “Keyword” box. Click “Search” then click on the balloon shape in the “Actions” column.

If you submit your comments by mail or hand delivery, submit them in an unbound format, no larger than 8 1/2 by 11 inches, suitable for copying and electronic filing. If you submit them by mail and would like to know that they reached the Facility, please enclose a stamped, self-addressed postcard or envelope. We will consider all comments and material received during the comment period.

***Have previous port access route studies been completed and if so, why conduct this study?***

A number of port-specific studies have been conducted for the major ports along the Atlantic Seaboard of the United States. In fact, a PARS is done anytime the Coast Guard proposes changes to routing measures for any port. However, there has never been a PARS conducted for the entire Atlantic coast designed to analyze all vessel traffic proceeding to and from *all* the ports and transiting through the United States. A large scale PARS is the best tool available to evaluate water usage in the near-coastal areas as offshore wind-based energy projects begin to come online.

***What is a “fairway” or “shipping safety fairway?”***

Federal regulations (33 CFR 166) define a fairway as a lane or corridor in which no artificial island or fixed structure, whether temporary or permanent, will be permitted. Temporary underwater obstacles may be permitted under certain conditions described for specific areas in Title 33 CFR 166 Subpart B. Aids to navigation approved by the U.S. Coast Guard may be established in a fairway.

***What is a TSS?***

“TSS” is the acronym for Traffic Separation Scheme. TSSs are designated areas set by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to make entry and exit from ports more efficient. TSSs have been incorporated into the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972 (COLREGS).

***What are the different types of routing measures that may be implemented once the ACPARS is completed?***

- ***Area to be avoided (ATBA)*** means a routing measure comprising an area within defined limits in which either navigation is particularly hazardous or it is exceptionally important to avoid casualties and which should be avoided by all vessels, or certain classes of vessels.
- ***Deep-water route*** means a route within defined limits, which has been accurately surveyed for clearance of sea bottom and submerged obstacles as indicated on nautical charts.

- ***Inshore traffic zone*** means a routing measure comprising a designated area between the landward boundary of a traffic separation scheme and the adjacent coast, to be used in accordance with the provisions of Rule 10(d), as amended, of the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972 (COLREGS).
- ***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 flow may be recommended.