

Hudson River Pilots Association Supports Safe Anchorages

The Hudson River Pilots' Association is the group of state and federally licensed mariners responsible for serving the pilotage needs of vessels on the Hudson River. The recent issue of the proposed Hudson River anchorages has become quite controversial.

In reading through the comments regarding the proposed Hudson River anchorage areas, it is clear that there is a public misconception about the purpose, importance and history of these anchorage areas.

Commerce on the Hudson River consists

of both import and export cargoes carried by ocean-going ships and tug & barge units. This form of transportation, marine transportation, is the most efficient and environmentally sound method of moving cargo. The vessels that transit the Hudson River in the course of a year keep countless trucks off of our roads and countless railcars from passing through the Hudson Valley. The products carried by these vessels benefit the people of the Hudson Valley and the entire northeast region and our exports are shipped around the world. Safely keeping this flow

of goods moving through upstate New York is vital to our local and national economy as shipping is the lifeblood of our nation.

The nature of marine transportation requires vessels to occasionally anchor for various reasons. Due to heavy weather, restricted visibility, heavy ice, berth congestion, mechanical issues, crew fatigue, or tidal constraints vessels need a safe place to await favorable conditions. If due to weather, there is restricted visibility we do not want these vessels transiting the river, passing under our bridges or meeting other vessels in the narrow channels of the river. In less

than favorable conditions, having a vessel securely anchored in a federally designated anchorage is in everybody's interests, the alternative is to have the vessel adrift which is clearly unacceptable. The mariners operating these vessels are the first line of environmental defense and are responsible for making decisions that are vital in preventing marine incidents that can affect Hudson Valley residents and the environment in a very real way. Having safe and ample anchorage areas throughout the Hudson River allows these mariners to operate in a safe manner in giving them the option to put the vessel to anchor if it is deemed necessary.

There are certain stretches of the river that are too narrow to allow safe anchoring of commercial vessels. The Hudson Highlands and most of the river north of Kingston are good examples. There must be anchorage areas available before a vessel commits to transiting these areas in less than favorable conditions. Some of the proposed anchorages, such as Tompkins Cove, Marlboro, Montrose, Roseton and Milton are used in safe-haven type situations where a vessel must unexpectedly stop. Other anchorages, such as those in the vicinity of Kingston, Newburgh and Yonkers are spread along the length of the river for vessels to await tide or for berth availability. Additionally, these anchorages fill the role of safe-haven type of anchorage. The Kingston area anchorages are the northernmost anchorages. These anchorages allow vessels to await berth availability in Albany and await daylight in certain cases. In periods of heavy ice, the Kingston anchorages serve as staging areas for northbound vessels awaiting for the Coast Guard icebreaker to begin operations from the Rhinecliff town dock or the Kingston Point oil dock. The anchorage at Newburgh is near the oil terminals. Vessels will sometimes anchor in this area awaiting an open berth at one of the Newburgh oil docks.

The areas proposed as designated

anchorage areas were identified by experienced mariners and have been in continuous use for generations but were never officially designated as federal anchorages. Although it should have been done years ago, it is only recently that it has become necessary to codify these areas as designated anchorages.

In late 2015, in response to shoreside complaints about anchored barges, the Coast Guard issued a Marine Safety Information Bulletin reminding mariners that according to the Code of Federal Regulations, vessels are not to anchor

for decades officially designated as federal anchorages and identified as such on the nautical chart is long overdue.

One consistent concern in the public comments is that each of these anchorages is going to be continuously occupied by barges. Most of these anchorages are very rarely used. Those anchorages that are more commonly used, such as those near Kingston are used by vessels enroute to a berth and are only anchored temporarily. These vessels exist in order to move cargo, not to remain in place. Another concern is that these anchorages will attract more vessels to the Hudson River in order to use the anchorages. Again, these anchorages have been in use for decades in order to enhance the safety of the navigation on the Hudson River, they are not new. Many of the comments suggest that these anchorages will somehow contribute to pollution in the Hudson River.

The opposite is true, the purpose of anchorages has always been for navigational safety and to give mariners the option of stopping if necessary. Other commenters are concerned that vessels anchored on the river will detract from their view of the Hudson River. Those living along the river must coexist with the users of the river, whether pleasure craft or commercial vessels.

The continued use these Hudson River anchorages contributes to the overall health and safety of the fragile Hudson River ecosystem. The promotion of safe commerce and safe waterways benefits all of us. The Hudson River Pilots' Association strongly recommends that these anchorages be designated as federal anchorages as a matter of navigational and environmental safety.

Sincerely,
Captain Ian Corcoran
President,
Hudson River Pilots Association

Go to the USCG comments page to comment electronically on the proposed anchorages:
www.regulations.gov/document?D=USCG-2016-0132-0001



outside of designated anchorage areas in the Hudson River except in cases of great emergency. The problem is that in the 109 nautical miles from Yonkers to Albany there is only one designated anchorage area, Hyde Park. This anchorage, limited in size, is commonly used by ocean going ships awaiting a berth, daylight and/or favorable tide. In order to accommodate the volume of tug & barge traffic on the Hudson River and to provide the coverage needed for safe-haven type anchorages along the length of the river, more designated anchorages are required. Having the areas that have been customarily used as anchor ages by commercial vessels

