

# Consolidated Port Approaches and International Entry and Departure Transit Areas Port Access Route Studies (PARS)

John M. Stone

Office of Navigation Systems (CG-NAV)

United States Coast Guard

August 31, 2022



## **Table of Contents**

Executive Summary .....	3
Port Access Route Studies .....	5
Atlantic Coast Port Access Route Study.....	5
Port Approaches and International Entry and Departure Transit Areas Port Access Route Studies (PARS) Integral to Efficiency of Possible Atlantic Coast Fairways.....	5
Port Access Route Study: Northern New York Bight .....	6
Port Access Route Study: Seacoast of New Jersey Including Offshore Approaches to the Delaware Bay, Delaware .....	9
Port Access Route Study: Approaches to the Chesapeake Bay, Virginia.....	14
Port Access Route Study: Seacoast of North Carolina Including Approaches to the Cape Fear River and Beaufort Inlet, North Carolina .....	17
Non-Supplemental PARS Area Review .....	19
Conclusions.....	21

## **Executive Summary**

On April 5, 2017, the Coast Guard announced the completion of the Atlantic Coast Port Access Route Study (ACPARS). Recognizing the ACPARS only analyzed coastal, longshore, and predominantly north/south vessel transit routes along the Atlantic Coast, the Coast Guard announced new studies focused on port approaches and international entry and departure areas along the Atlantic Coast supplemental to the ACPARS, on March 15, 2019. While these Supplemental PARS were ongoing, the Coast Guard published an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) on June 19, 2020, subsequent to the ACPARS.

This report consolidates the recommendations of the four Supplemental PARS and provides to the First and Fifth Coast Guard Districts approved recommendations and alternatives. These approved recommendations and alternatives provide for a system of shipping safety fairways and routing measures along the Atlantic Coast and should be included in any subsequent rulemaking proposal.

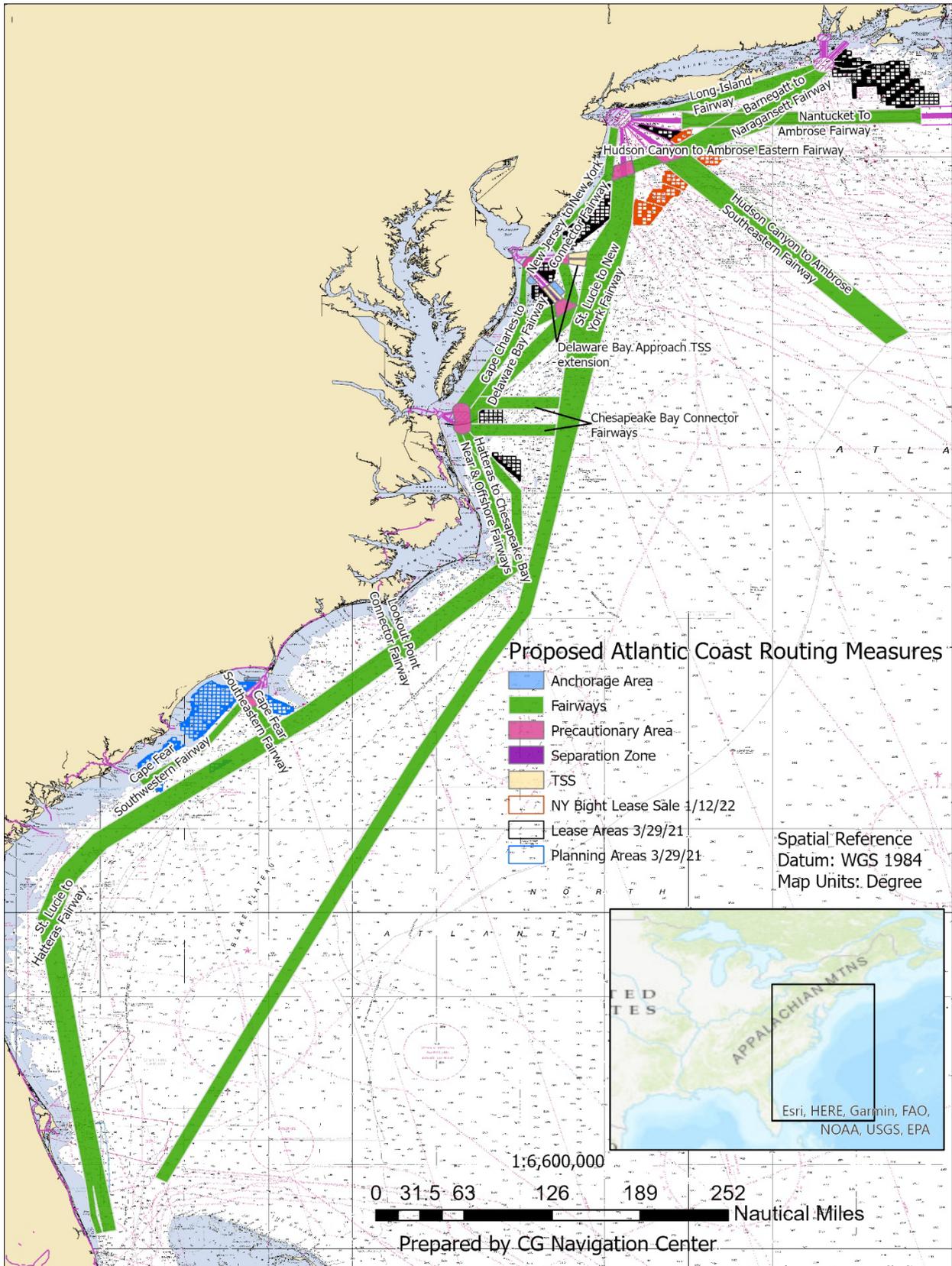


Figure 1: CG-NAV approved Consolidated Supplemental PARS Actions

## **Port Access Route Studies**

### ***Atlantic Coast Port Access Route Study***

On April 5, 2017, the Coast Guard announced the completion of the Atlantic Coast Port Access Route Study in the **Federal Register** (82 FR 16510), which is available for viewing and download from the Coast Guard Navigation Center's website at <https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/port-access-route-studies>.

The ACPARS identified navigation safety corridors along the Atlantic Coast based on the predominant two-way vessel traffic and customary routes identified with AIS data for offshore deep draft and coastal seagoing tug/tow vessels. The study further recommended developing these corridors into official shipping safety fairways or other appropriate vessel routing measures.

Based on the recommendations provided in the ACPARS, the Coast Guard published an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) in the **Federal Register** (85 FR 37034) on June 19, 2020. This ANPRM, which is available for viewing and download from the **Federal Register** docket USCG-2019-0279 at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov), sought comments regarding the possible establishment of fairways along the Atlantic Coast of the United States identified in the ACPARS.

### ***Port Approaches and International Entry and Departure Transit Areas Port Access Route Studies (PARS) Integral to Efficiency of Possible Atlantic Coast Fairways***

The Coast Guard announced its intention to study port approaches and international entry and departure areas to supplement the ACPARS on March 15, 2019, in the **Federal Register** (84 FR 9541). These Supplemental PARS considered safe access routes from ports along the

Atlantic Coast to the navigation safety corridors identified in the ACPARS. The ports that the Coast Guard considered in these studies were economically important, support military operations, or deemed strategically critical to national defense.

The First and the Fifth Coast Guard Districts collectively completed four Supplemental PARS. The results of these studies combined with the Office of Navigation System's approved actions are detailed below:

***Port Access Route Study: Northern New York Bight***

On January 3, 2022, the First Coast Guard District announced the completion of the Northern New York Bight PARS (NNYBPARS) in the **Federal Register** (87 FR 107), which is available for viewing and download from the **Federal Register** docket at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) or the Coast Guard Navigation Center's website at <https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/port-access-route-study-reports>. The First Coast Guard District analyzed all available sources of data relevant to this process, including existing and potential traffic patterns, existing regulations, public comments made in response to the draft NNYBPARS, and other factors. These factors went into considering whether the Coast Guard should revise existing regulations to improve navigation safety in the NNYBPARS due to vessel traffic density, vessel traffic patterns, weather conditions, or navigation challenges in the study area. The results from this study led to the following recommendations:

- Establish modified versions of the fairways proposed in the ANPRM.
- Establish a New Jersey to New York Connector fairway.
- Establish a Hudson Canyon to Ambrose Southeastern fairway, a Hudson Canyon to Ambrose Eastern fairway, and a single Nantucket to Ambrose fairway.

- Establish an Ambrose Anchorage and adjust the Long Island fairway to mitigate location conflict between the anchorage and fairway.

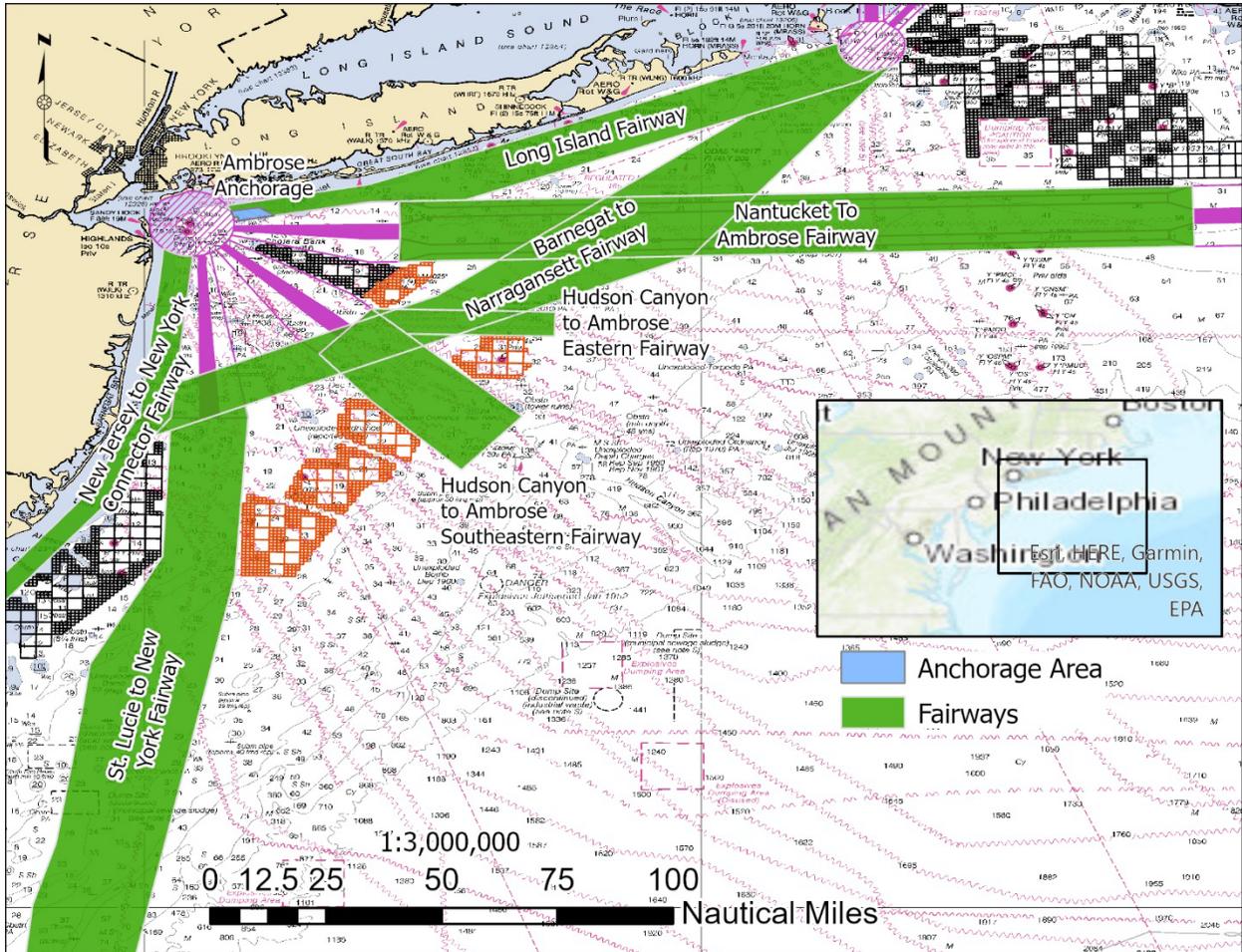


Figure 2: Northern New York Bight PARS Recommended Actions

The Coast Guard Office of Navigation Systems (CG-NAV) considered these recommendations and concurs, with the following exceptions:

- Reduce the width of the single Nantucket to Ambrose fairway as recommended in the NNYBPARS to the northern border of the current Nantucket to Ambrose Fairway and the southern border of the Ambrose to Nantucket Fairways as defined in 33 CFR 166.500.

This will ensure there is sufficient room for safe navigation and the resulting fairways do not conflict with BOEM lease area OCS-A 0522.

- The recommended Hudson Canyon to Ambrose Southeastern Fairway should be extended out to the end of the EEZ (200 NM) to ensure that safe access remains if expansion of offshore energy development continues to the east.
- Designate two precautionary areas where the recommended Barnegat to Narragansett Fairway intersects with the Southern and Southeastern approaches to New York. The traffic analysis suggests a considerable amount of vessel traffic will continue to cross perpendicular to each other at the intersection of the fairway and the traffic lanes.

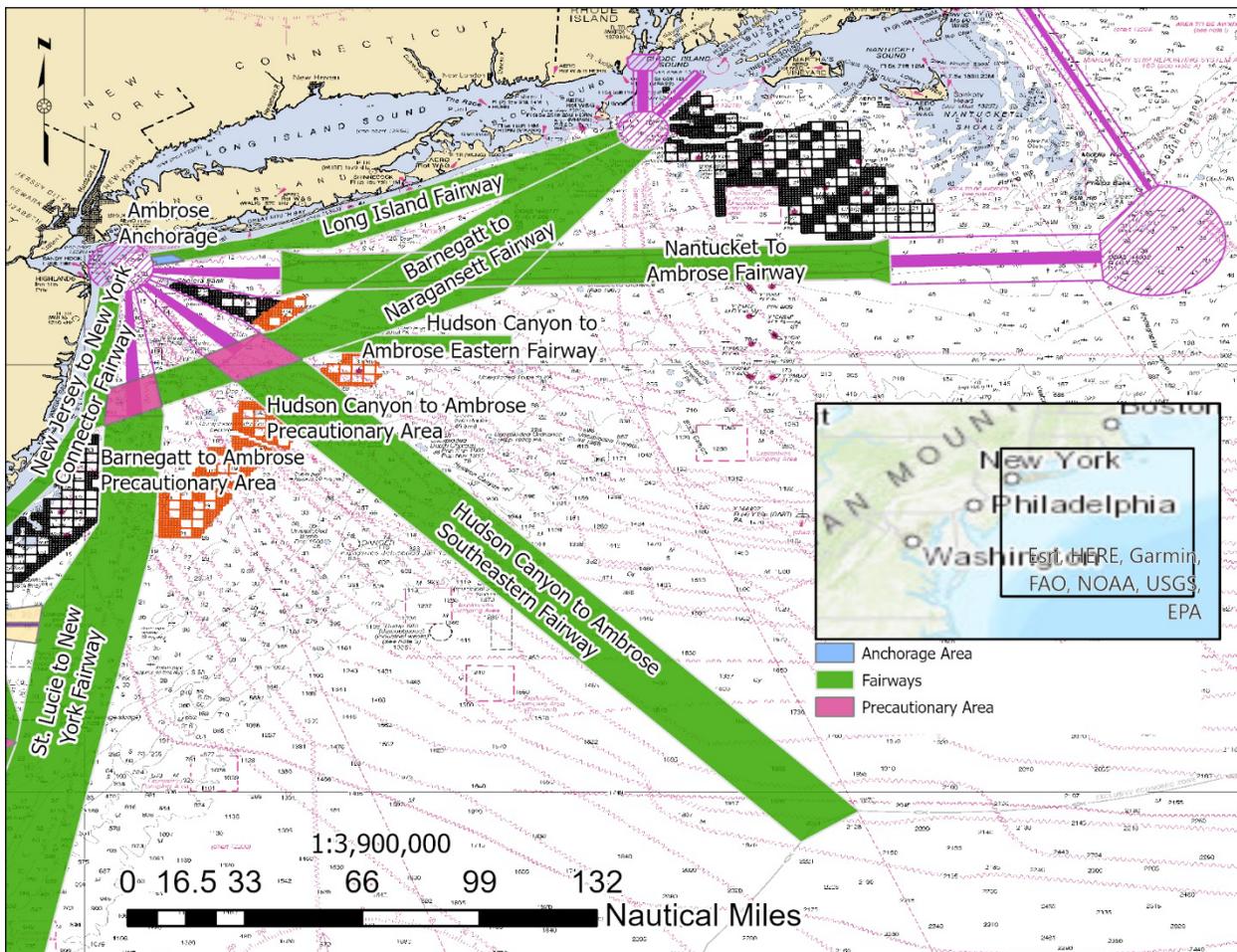


Figure 3: CG-NAV Approved Northern New York Bight PARS Actions

The *Barnegat to Ambrose* and *Hudson Canyon to Ambrose* Precautionary areas will signify to mariners that they are transiting through an area, “where ships must navigate with particular caution.”

***Port Access Route Study: Seacoast of New Jersey Including Offshore Approaches to the Delaware Bay, Delaware***

On March 24, 2022, the Fifth Coast Guard District announced the completion of the Seacoast of New Jersey including offshore approaches to the Delaware Bay, Delaware PARS in the **Federal Register** (87 FR 16759). The Fifth Coast Guard District analyzed all available sources of data relevant to this process, including existing and potential traffic patterns, existing regulations, public comments made in response to the draft PARS, and other factors. These factors went into considering whether the Coast Guard should revise existing regulations to improve navigation safety off the coast of New Jersey and in the approaches to Delaware Bay due to vessel traffic density, vessel traffic patterns, weather conditions, or navigation challenges in the study area. The results from this study led to the following recommendations:

- Establish modified versions of the fairways proposed in the ANPRM.
- Extend the Off Delaware Bay: Eastern and Southeastern approaches to the Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) past the currently leased wind farms in the region, in lieu of establishing the Off Delaware Bay Eastern Approach Cutoff Fairway and Off Delaware Bay Southeastern Approach Cutoff Fairway as proposed in the ANPRM.
- Establish additional precautionary areas where a wide variety of vessel traffic converges east of the proposed Offshore Renewable Energy Installations (OREIs).
- Establish a new two-way route along the Delaware seacoast for safe transits into and across the mouth of the Delaware Bay by coastwise vessels.

- Separate the Cape Charles to Montauk Fairway into two distinct fairways and rename them to clarify endpoints. Rename the southern portion Cape Charles to Delaware Bay and the northern portion Barnegat to Narragansett, to clarify the divergence of the route as it transits the mouth of the Delaware Bay and across the New York Bight.
- Establish the New Jersey to New York Connector Fairway along the New Jersey coast and up into New York–New Jersey Harbor.
- Establish an offshore fairway anchorage in the area to the east of the Off Delaware Bay: Southeastern approach to meet the needs for safe anchorage areas around OREIs.

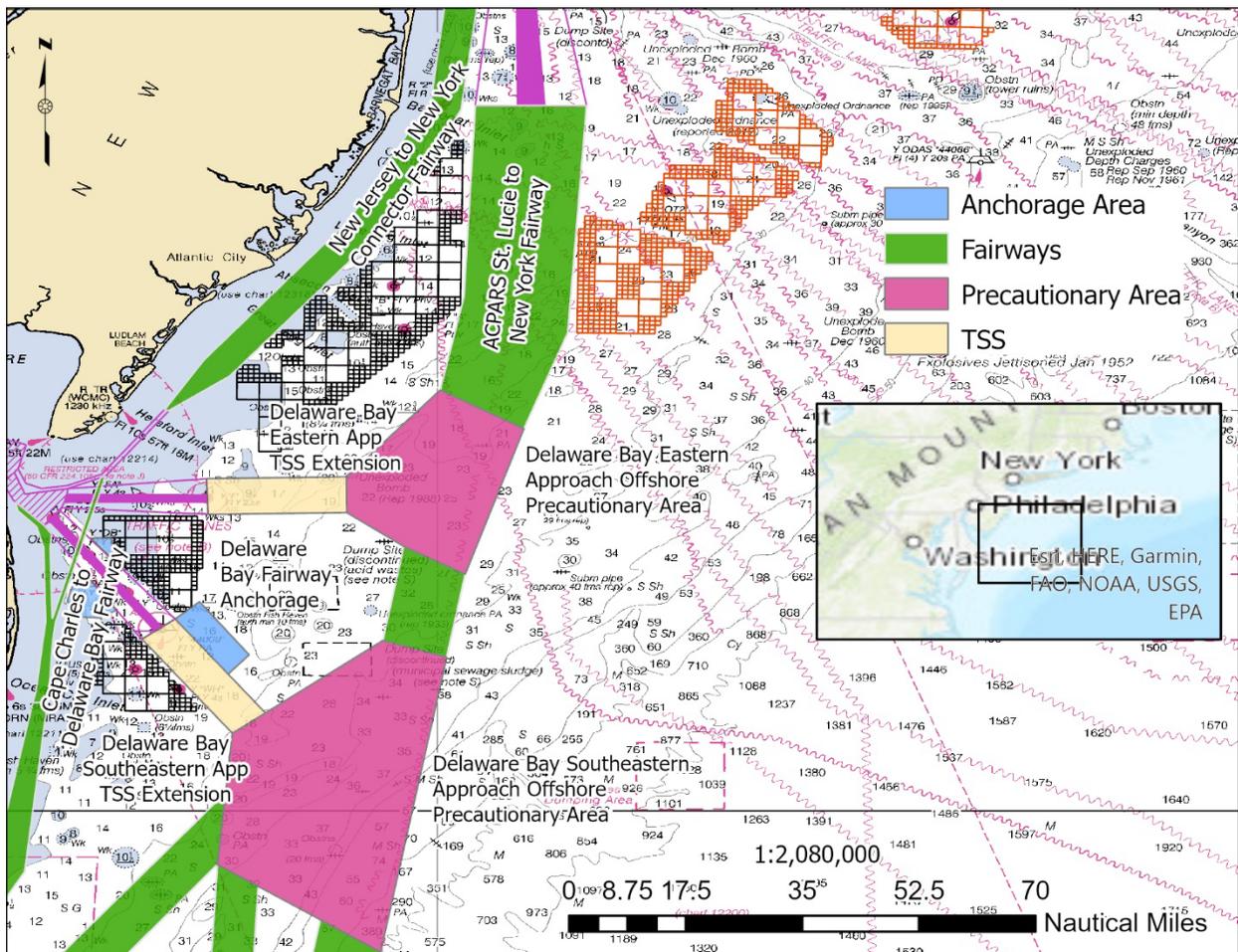


Figure 4: Seacoast of New Jersey PARS Recommended Actions

- Ensure coordination of fairways and TSSs crossing District boundaries, and widen fairways to 9 NM, where practicable.

CG-NAV considered these recommendations and concurs, with the following exceptions:

- The recommended reorientation of the St. Lucie to New York: Delaware Bay Connector Fairway, combined with the location of the St. Lucie to New York Fairway, and the recommended offshore Precautionary Area adjacent to the offshore terminus of the Southeastern approach leaves very little open sea space between the connector fairway and the proposed St. Lucie to New York Fairway. The Connector Fairway should instead be combined with the St. Lucie to New York Fairway and widened in the general vicinity of the approaches to Delaware Bay. This will allow for the additional sea space needed for vessels maneuvering in the area and provide for a more natural approach to the Southeastern approach, as supported by customary traffic patterns. This would also provide a larger contiguous area for further offshore wind development opportunities.
- Public comments received from mariners operating in the Delaware area were adamant for the need of a route that allows for safe, unobstructed transit offshore and around the OREI development projects that connects back to the proposed New Jersey to New York Connector Fairway, as provided by the Cape Charles to Montauk Fairway in the ANPRM. Designating the Offshore Delaware Bay to New Jersey Connector Fairway will meet this need.
- CG-NAV concurs with the recommendation for offshore precautionary areas where a wide variety of vessel traffic converges east of the OREI development projects. To account for the proposed combining of the St. Lucie to New York: Delaware Bay Connector Fairway with the St. Lucie to New York Fairway and the proposed Offshore

Delaware Bay to New Jersey Connector Fairway, the proposed size and location of the precautionary areas at the convergence point of these fairways with the Eastern and Southeastern approaches should be adjusted to best meet the recommendations of the Fifth Coast Guard District and highlight areas that require particular caution when navigating.

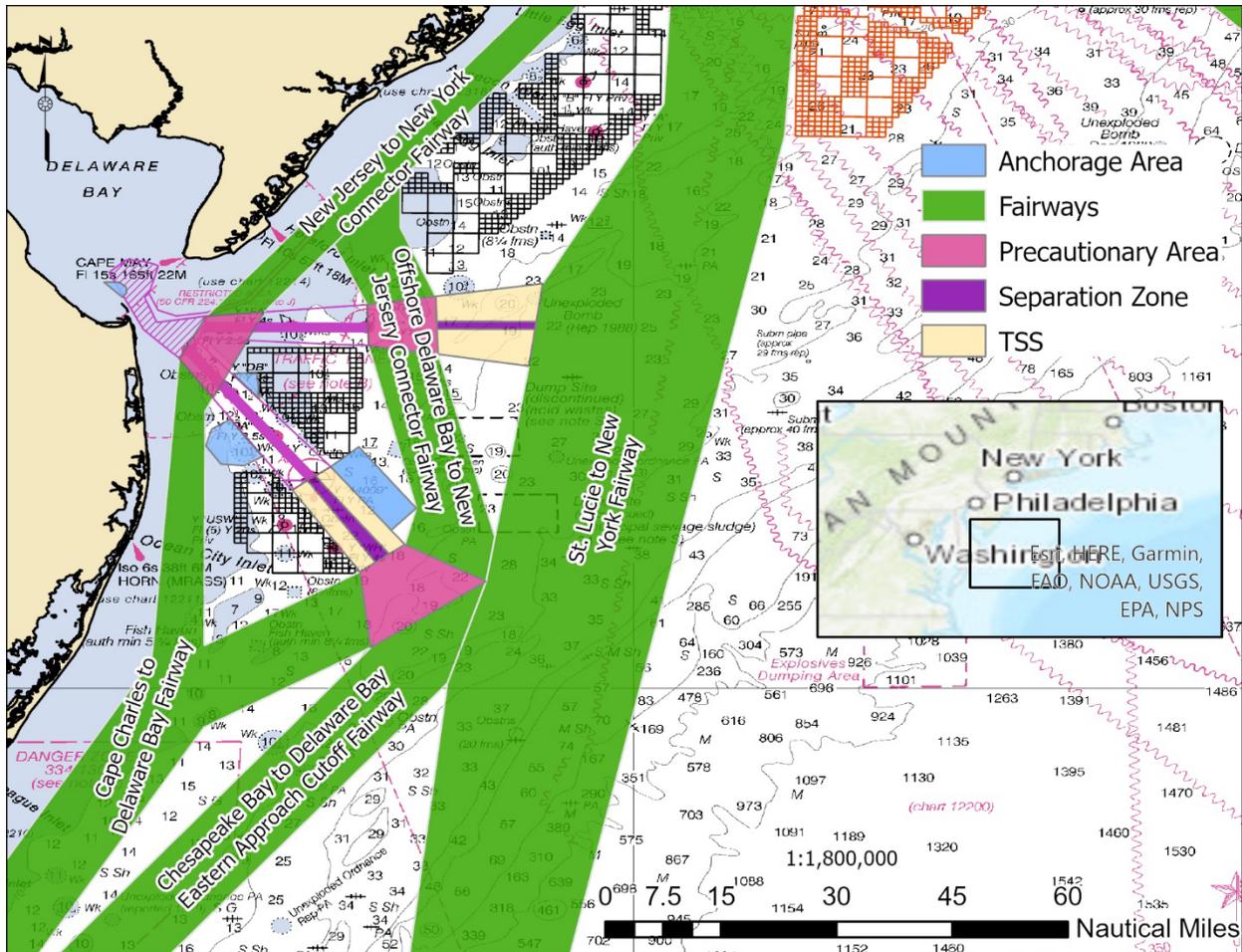


Figure 5: CG-NAV Approved fairways for Seacoast of New Jersey PARS

- CG-NAV does not concur with establishing a new two-way route as recommended in the PARS. To account for the recommended orientation of the Cape Charles to Delaware Bay Fairway, the expansion of fairways to 9 NM where practicable, and the dense traffic at the entrance to Delaware Bay, CG-NAV has determined an expansion of the current

precautionary area better suits the navigation requirements. This expansion would encompass the convergence of the proposed Cape Charles to Delaware Bay Fairway and the New Jersey to New York Connector Fairway with the established TSS. Expanding the precautionary area would appropriately caution the mariners transiting in the area while maximizing the freedom of navigation for opposing vessel traffic.

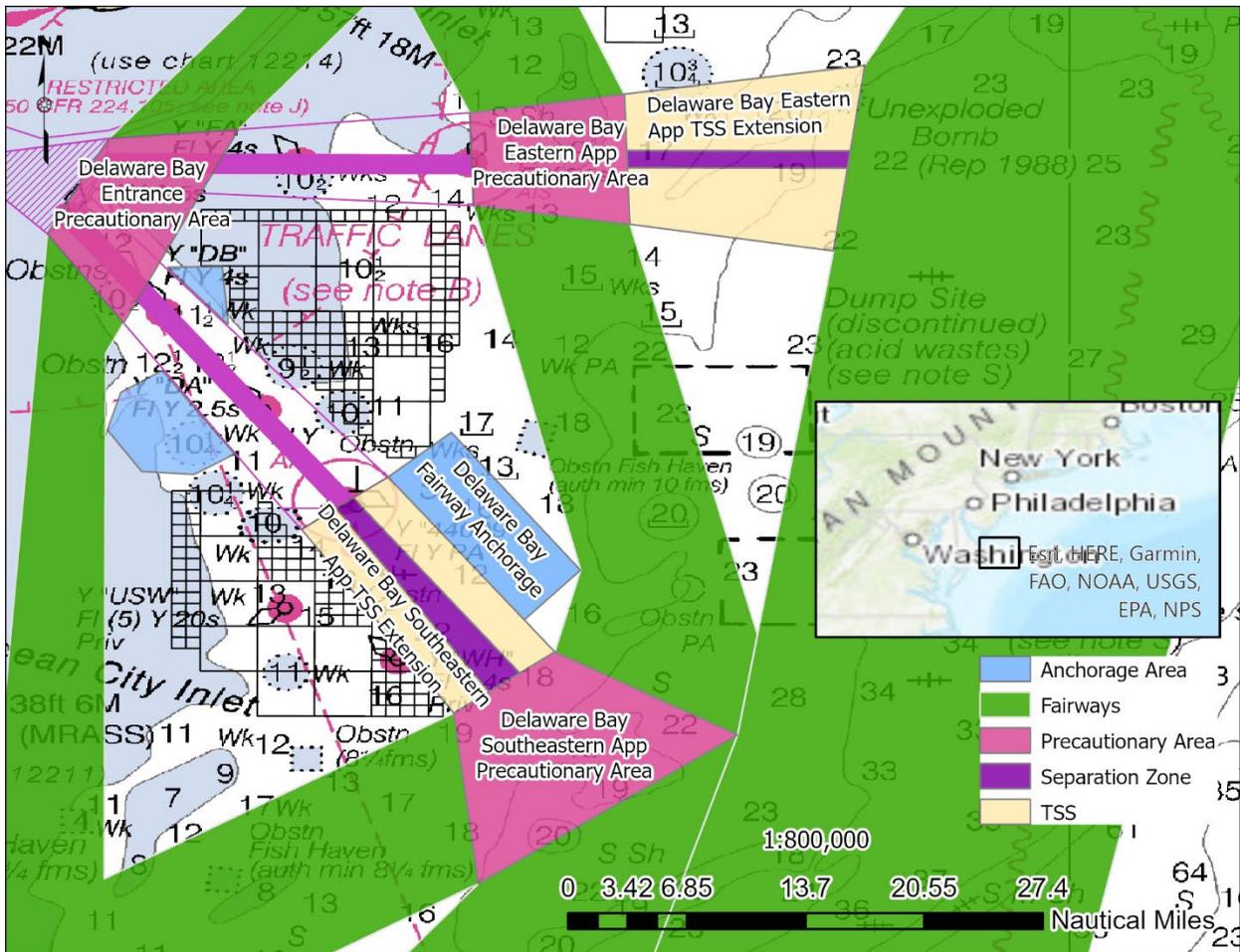


Figure 6: CG-NAV Approved Precautionary Areas, Fairway Anchorage, and TSS extensions.

- CG-NAV recommends extending the recommended New Jersey to New York Connector Fairway south to connect with the proposed precautionary area expansion at the entrance to Delaware Bay. This expansion would absorb a portion of the established two-way

route to the north of the approaches to Delaware Bay. Designating the water surrounding the two-way route would ensure future offshore development would not constrict current traffic flow and customary routes in the region.

***Port Access Route Study: Approaches to the Chesapeake Bay, Virginia***

On October 22, 2021, the Fifth Coast Guard District announced the completion of the approaches to the Chesapeake Bay and Virginia PARS in the **Federal Register** (86 FR 58684). The Fifth Coast Guard District analyzed all available sources of data relevant to this process, including existing and potential traffic patterns, existing regulations, public comments made in response to the draft, approaches to the Chesapeake Bay and Virginia PARS, and other factors. These factors went into considering whether the Coast Guard should revise existing regulations to improve navigation safety off the coast of Virginia and in the approaches to Chesapeake Bay due to vessel traffic density, vessel traffic patterns, weather conditions, or navigation challenges in the study area. The results from this study led to the following recommendations:

- The International Maritime Organization (IMO) adoption and expansion of a precautionary area connecting the termini of the eastern and southern approach to the TSS in the approaches to Chesapeake Bay.
- Modifications to fairways, as proposed in the ANPRM, to include:
  - Re-orienting the Chesapeake Bay to Delaware Bay Eastern approach Cutoff fairway to increase available maneuvering space for crossing vessels in the approaches to Delaware Bay, and to allow space for an offshore anchorage in the approach to the Delaware Bay.
  - Re-orienting the Cape Charles to Montauk Point Fairway to route closer to the Delmarva Peninsula.

- Adding northern and southern connector fairways from the St. Lucie to New York Fairway and the Chesapeake Bay TSS, around the Commercial Virginia Offshore Wind project area, to facilitate safe transit of commercial vessels around future offshore energy installations.

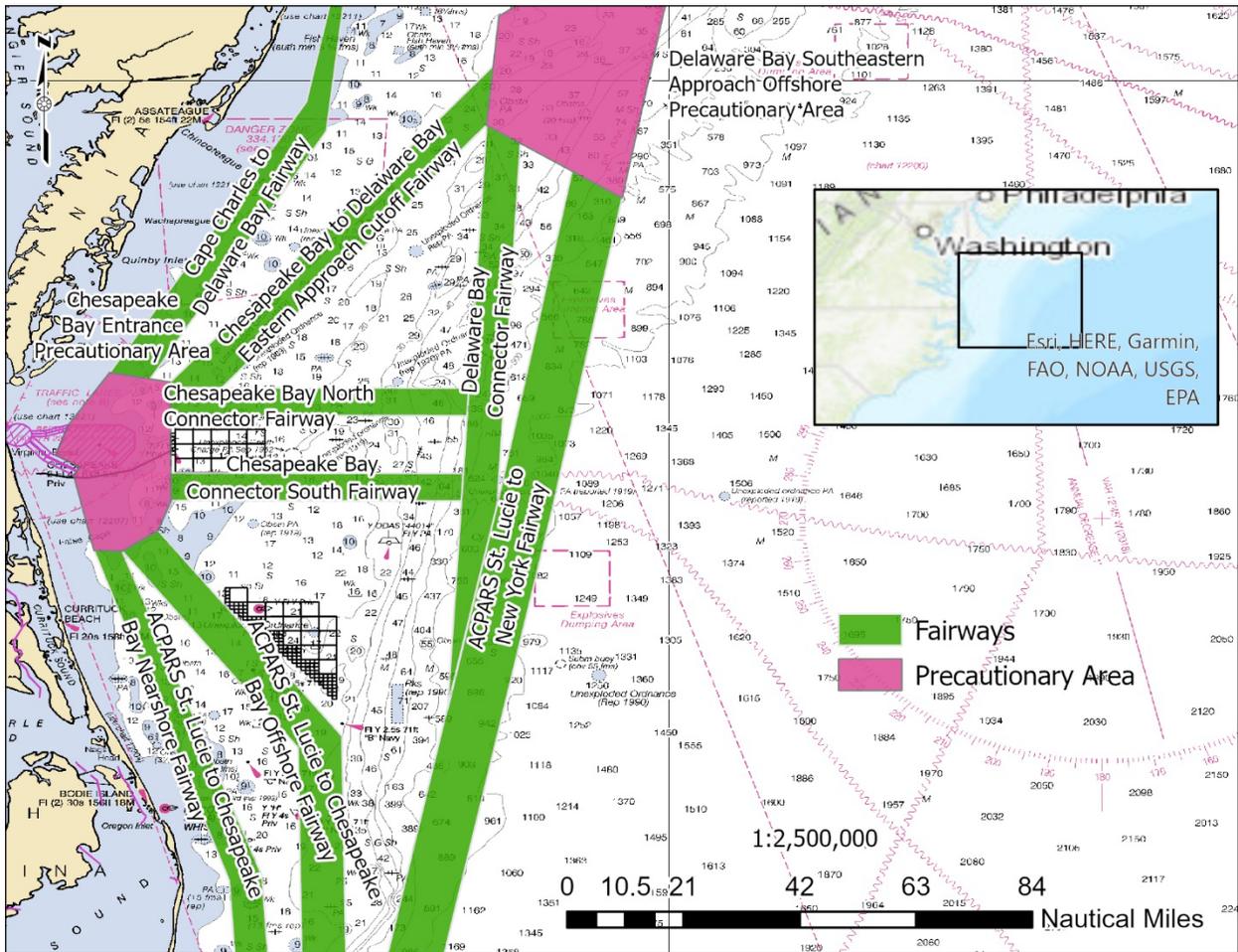


Figure 7: Approaches to Chesapeake Bay PARS Recommended Actions

CG-NAV considered these recommendations and concurs, with the following exceptions:

- All recommended fairways should be widened to 9 NM or the maximum sea space available based on comments received from the American Waterways Operators (AWO) and the tug and tow community.

- The Cape Charles to Montauk Point Fairway should be divided into three distinct sections, as identified in the New Jersey PARS and the Northern New York Bight PARS. The southernmost section should be renamed the Cape Charles to Delaware Bay Fairway.
- The Delaware Bay Connector Fairway should reorient to the east and be combined into the St. Lucie to New York Fairway to better support the vessel traffic flow in and out of the Delaware Bay Southeastern approach.

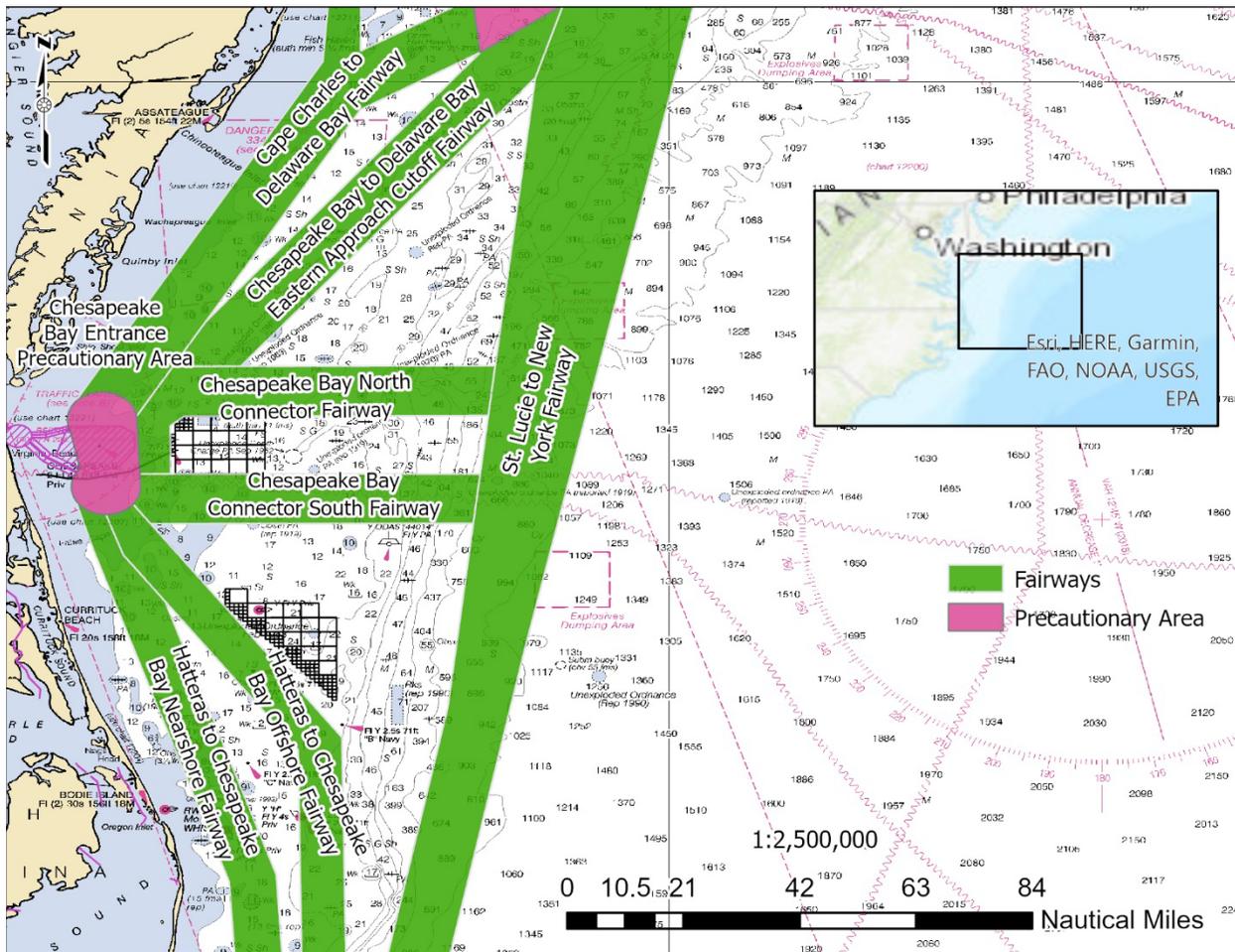


Figure 8: CG-NAV Approaches to Chesapeake Bay, VA PARS approved action actions

***Port Access Route Study: Seacoast of North Carolina Including Approaches to the Cape Fear River and Beaufort Inlet, North Carolina***

On May 16, 2022, the Fifth Coast Guard District announced the completion of the Seacoast of North Carolina Including Approaches to the Cape Fear River and Beaufort Inlet, North Carolina PARS in the **Federal Register** (87 FR 29756). The Fifth Coast Guard District analyzed all available sources of data relevant to this process. These sources of data include existing and potential traffic patterns, existing regulations, public comments made in response to the draft, Seacoast of North Carolina Including Approaches to the Cape Fear River and Beaufort Inlet, North Carolina PARS, and other factors. These factors went into considering whether the Coast Guard should revise existing regulations to improve navigation safety off the coast of North Carolina and the approaches to the Cape Fear River and Beaufort Inlet, due to vessel traffic density, vessel traffic patterns, weather conditions, or navigation challenges in the study area. The results from this study led to the following recommendations:

- Establish modified versions of the fairways proposed in the ANPRM.
- Establish a precautionary area at the offshore terminus of the TSS in the approaches to the Cape Fear River. Establish the Beaufort Inlet Connector, Cape Fear Southeastern Connector, and Cape Fear Southwestern Connector fairways.

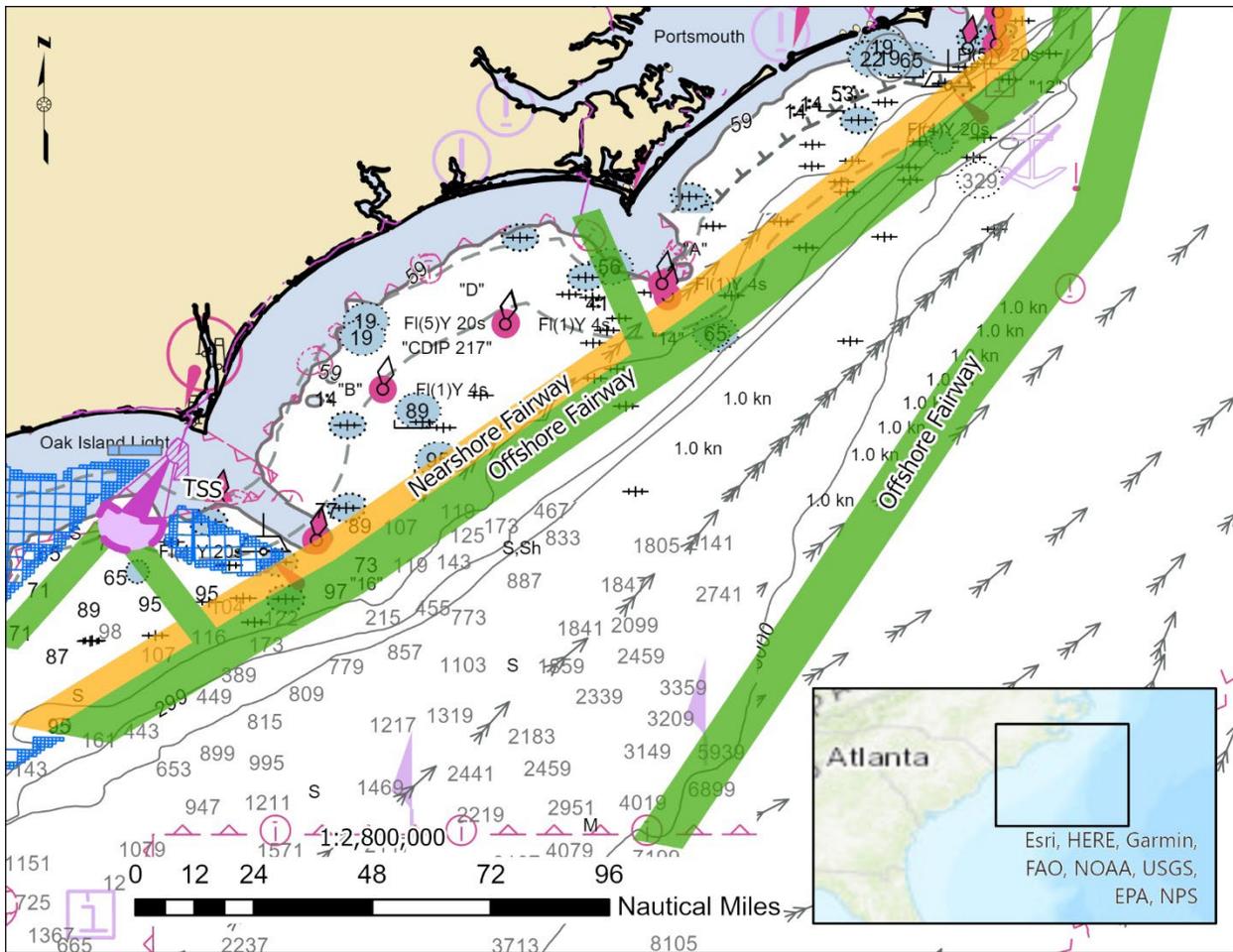


Figure 9: Seacoast of North Carolina PARS Recommended Actions

The CG-NAV considered these recommendations and concurs, with the following exceptions:

- After consultation with the Seventh Coast Guard District, the Coast Guard proposes extending the recommended Cape Fear Southwestern Approach Connector Fairway past the Cape Romain Call Area to the approaches of Charleston, SC. This extension would ensure vessels transiting along this nearshore route have unobstructed, safe passage to the Cape Fear River as future offshore renewable energy development continues.

- Combine the portions of the St. Lucie to Chesapeake Bay Nearshore and Offshore fairways from St. Lucie, FL to Cape Hatteras, NC into a single St. Lucie to Hatteras Fairway.

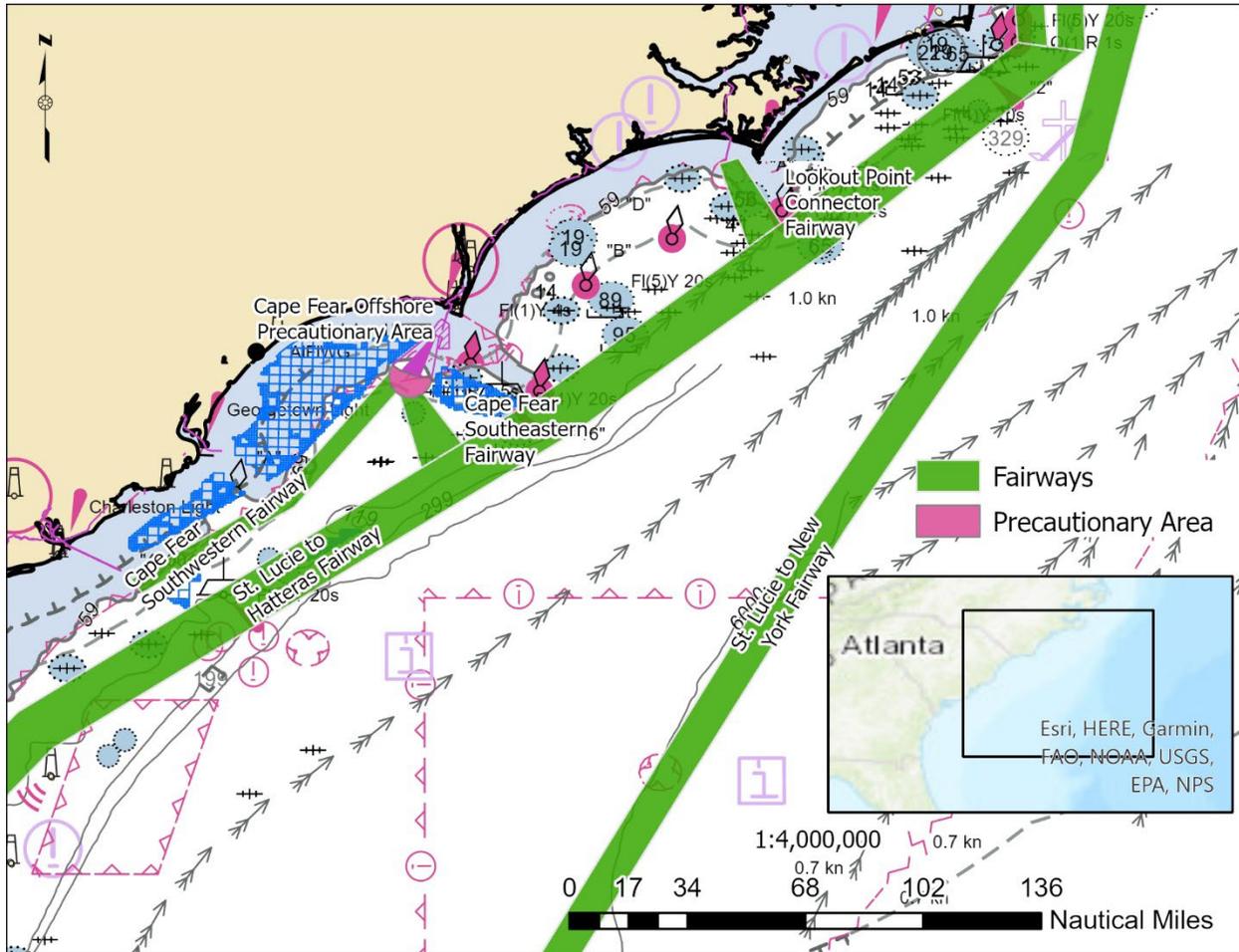


Figure 10: CG-NAV Seacoast of North Carolina PARS approved Actions

### Non-Supplemental PARS Area Review

The ANPRM sought comments on possible fairways from St. Lucie, FL to Nantucket, MA. The Supplemental PARS study areas did not review port access south of the Seacoast of North Carolina PARS study area. The recommended fairways from St. Lucie, FL to Seacoast of

North Carolina PARS study area, as published in the ANPRM, should carry forward toward any subsequent proposed rulemaking. In order to align with the alternatives in response to the Seacoast of North Carolina PARS, the portions of the St. Lucie to Chesapeake Bay Nearshore and Offshore fairways from St. Lucie, FL to Cape Hatteras, NC should be combined into a single St. Lucie to Hatteras Fairway.

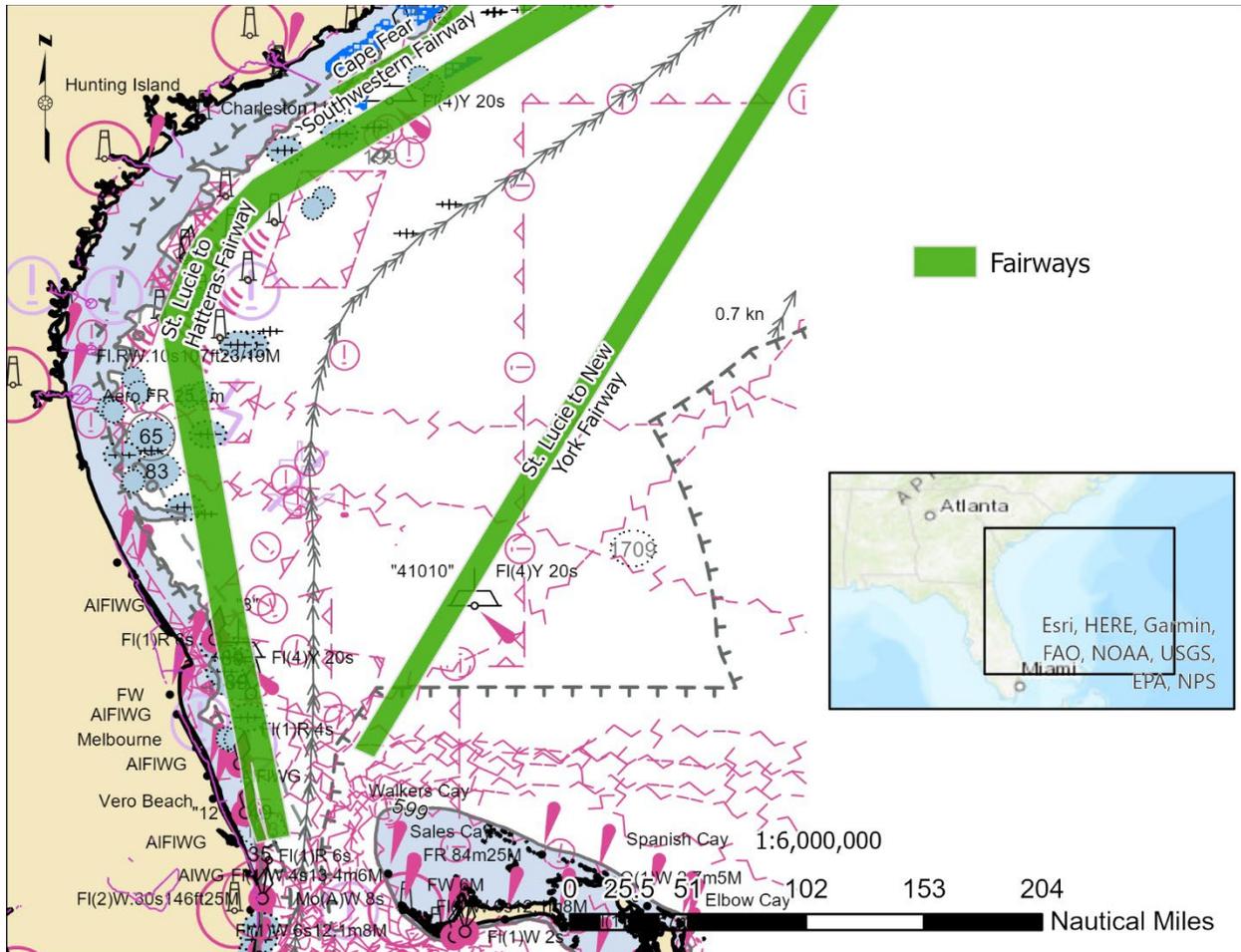


Figure 11: CG-NAV approved Actions Charleston, SC to St. Lucie, FL

## Conclusions

This report is a consolidation of the recommendations from the First, Fifth, and Seventh Coast Guard Districts, and provides approved recommendations and alternatives. These approved recommendations and alternatives provide for a system of shipping safety fairways and routing measures along the Atlantic Coast and should be included in a subsequent rulemaking proposal.

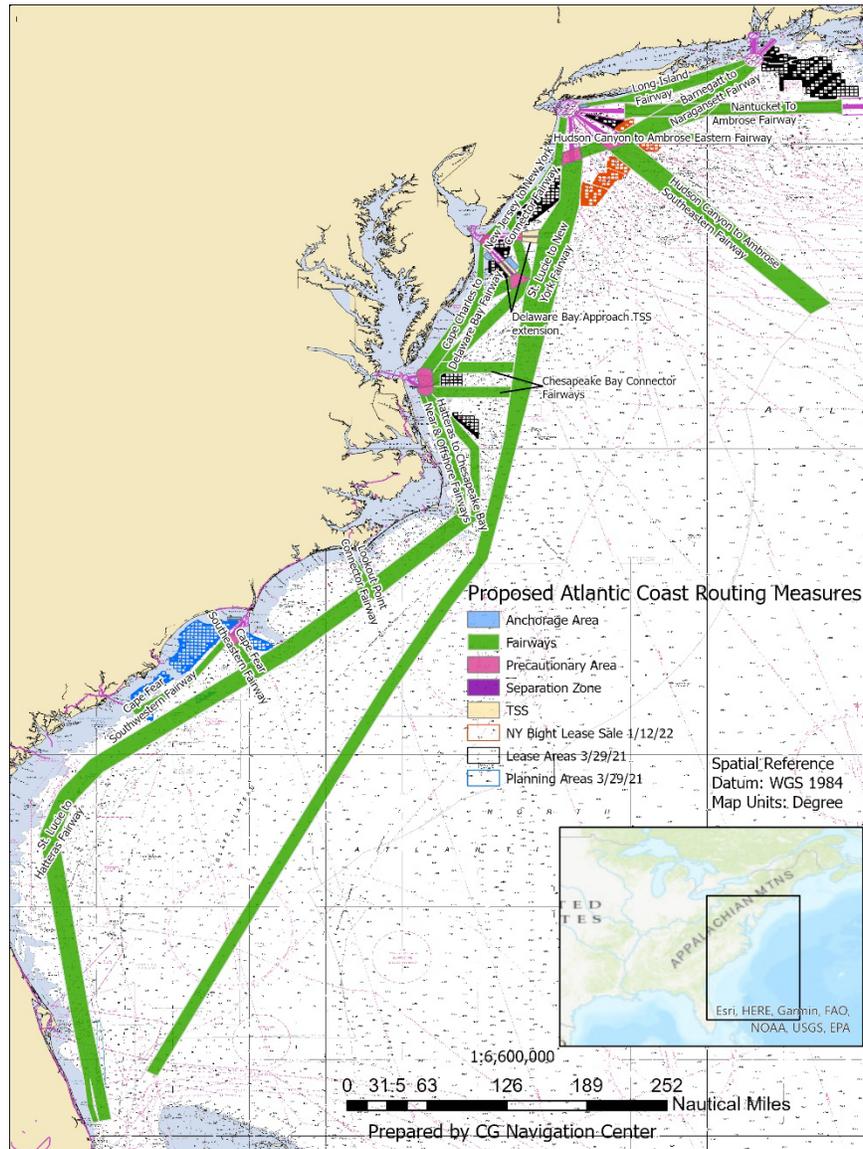


Figure 12: CG-NAV approved Consolidated Supplemental PARS Actions