

UNITED STATES
COAST GUARD

Docket Number USCG-2023-0063

Port Access Route Study:
Approaches to Galveston Bay and
Sabine Pass, Texas, and
Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana
TX/LAPARS

March 2026

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Acronyms

AIS	Automated Identification System
ATON	Aids to Navigation
BOEM	United States Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
C.F.R.	Code of Federal Regulations
GOA	Gulf of America
MISLE	Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement
MTS	Marine Transportation System
NEPA	National Environmental Protection Act
NVIC	Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular
OCS	Outer Continental Shelf
PARS	Port Access Route Study
PATON	Private Aids to Navigation
PIANC	World Association for Waterborne Transport Infrastructure
RFI	Request for Interest
SAR	Search and Rescue
TSS	Traffic Separation Scheme
TX/LAPARS	Approaches to Galveston Bay and Sabine Pass, Texas, and Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana Port Access Route Study
U.S.C.	United States Code
VMS	Vessel Monitoring System
WAMS	Waterway Analysis Management System

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On March 1, 2023, the United States Coast Guard Heartland District issued a 48-day notice of study published in the *Federal Register*. The announcement of this study would focus on a Port Access Route Study [PARS] for the approaches to Galveston Bay and Sabine Pass, Texas, and Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana [TX/LAPARS], and seek public comment on the current navigation practices within this area. The TX/LAPARS would also consider whether existing or additional routing measures are necessary to improve navigation safety due to a variety of factors such as planned or potential mineral/non-mineral energy offshore development, current port capabilities, and planned improvements, increased vessel traffic, changing vessel traffic patterns, weather, or navigational difficulty (88 FR 12966 February 28, 2023).

On March 28, 2023, a correction to the original notice of study was published by the United States Coast Guard Heartland District, due to an incorrect telephone number for the agency contact listed. The correction would extend the original 48-day notice of study an additional 30 days to end May 17, 2023 (88 FR 18326 March 27, 2023).

The recommendations and results of this PARS are based on gathered and analyzed data, comments received to the docket, public outreach, and consultation with other government agencies in accordance with the methodology outlined within the *Marine Planning to Operate and Maintain the Marine Transportation System [MTS] and Implement National Policy* (U.S. Coast Guard 2019). The notices, supporting documents, and all comments received are available to the public docket USCG-2023-0063 (88 FR 12966 February 28, 2023).

The study considered multiple data sources, including a detailed Automated Identification System [AIS] and Vessel Monitoring System [VMS] traffic analysis (Enclosure 1), commercial fishing statistics, public comments, and partner agency submission. The United States Coast Guard Heartland District concluded that these factors may result in larger vessel classes, increased traffic densities, and displacement of traditional transit routes. The United States Coast Guard Heartland District thoroughly examined established safety fairways and compared them to recommendations through several working groups. The United States Coast Guard Heartland District determined that safety fairways within the study area are adequate; however, they cannot be widened as recommended due to established infrastructure within the Gulf of America [GOA].

As ports expand in the next decade, the United States Coast Guard Heartland District further concluded that implementing several new anchorages would be critical to providing vessels a safety zone as they await clearance into port. The TX/LAPARS resulted in the following recommendations:

A. Proposed Actions

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District proposes the establishment of two anchorage's off of Sabine Pass, TX as well as the establishment of a new anchorage off of Calcasieu Pass, LA as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

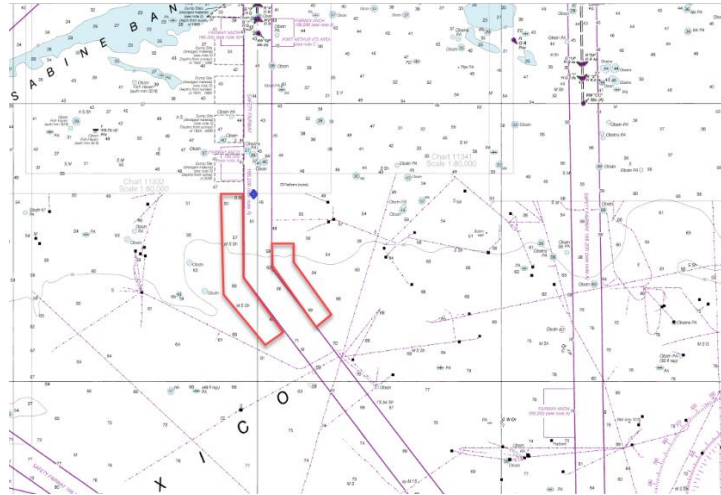


Figure 1 – TX/LAPARS Sabine Pass Proposed Anchorages

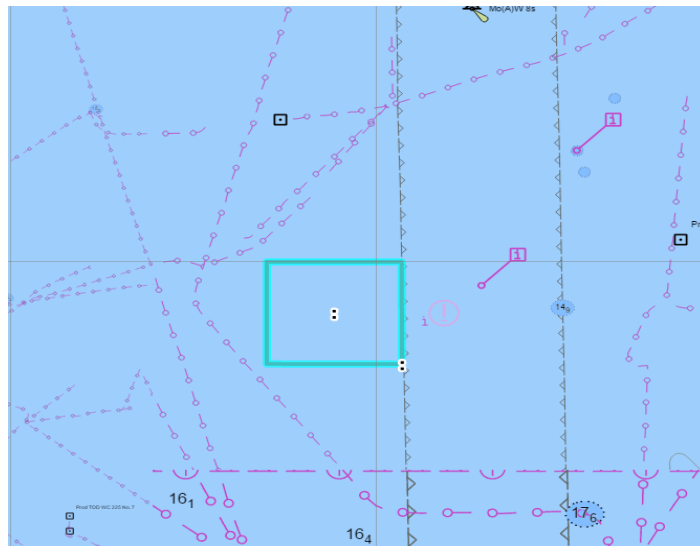


Figure 2 – TX/LAPARS Calcasieu Pass Proposed Anchorage

1. Sabine Bank Approach (East) Anchorage

A 1.3-mile wide and seven-mile-long anchorage located on the east side and adjacent to the current Sabine Pass Safety Fairway, 17 miles southeast of the Sabine Pass,

Texas sea buoy and 38 miles offshore (Figure 1) is proposed to accommodate vessels of varying drafts and sizes up to the future channel design draft of 48 feet. The proposal of the new anchorage would benefit vessel owners and operators who transit this area because it would facilitate the movement of vessels, promote safe anchoring, and alleviate congestion in the waterway (USCG-2018-0388-0001).

2. Sabine Bank Approach (West) Anchorage

A 1.7-mile wide 14-mile-long anchorage located on the west side and adjacent to the current Sabine Pass Safety Fairway, 13 miles southwest of the Sabine Pass, Texas sea buoy and 35 miles offshore (Figure 1) is proposed to accommodate vessels of varying drafts and sizes up to the future channel design draft of 48 feet. The proposal of the new anchorage would benefit vessel owners and operators who transit this area because it would facilitate the movement of vessels, promote safe anchoring, and alleviate congestion in the waterway (USCG-2018-0388-0001).

3. Calcasieu Pass Offshore East Anchorage

A 2.9 mile wide and two-mile-long anchorage located on the west side and adjacent to the current Calcasieu Pass Safety Fairway, five miles southwest of the Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana sea buoy and 40 miles offshore (Figure 2), is proposed to accommodate vessels of varying drafts. The proposal of the new anchorage would benefit vessel owners and operators who transit this area because it would facilitate the movement of vessels, promote safe anchoring, and alleviate congestion in the waterway.

4. Non-Mineral Energy Areas

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District continues its commitment to supporting State and Federal Agencies in their energy initiatives. The United States Coast Guard Heartland District concurs with the concerns and recommendations outlined in the comments to the United States Bureau of Ocean Energy Management [BOEM] Request for Interest [RFI] in commercial leasing for non-mineral energy development on the GOA Outer Continental Shelf [OCS] (U.S. Department of Interior 2021). The United States Coast Guard Heartland District also concurs with the concerns and recommendations outlined in the comments to the State of Louisiana Department of Natural Resources Letter of Intent (State of Louisiana n.d.).

a. Layouts and Cabling

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District recommends that the BOEM and state governments define consistent layouts and cable routes for any future non-mineral energy areas in the GOA. Regardless of the area's size and the equipment type, each energy area should be organized in straight rows and columns, creating a grid pattern consisting of two orientation lines. Standard equipment 1-nautical mile spacing and layout will help facilitate navigation safety, consistent and continuous marking and lighting, search and rescue [SAR], and other uses, such as commercial fishing (U.S. Coast Guard 2023). When multiple non-mineral energy projects share a border, standard equipment spacing and layout throughout all adjoining non-mineral energy projects is

paramount and should be required. This will have the cumulative effect of presenting one non-mineral energy project with consistent straight-line routes for the mariner through the entire area.

b. Mooring Systems & Ancillary Equipment

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District insists that all mooring systems and ancillary equipment do not impede the safe navigation of vessel traffic in an energy area and should be contained inside any approved lease area as a requirement under the terms and conditions of a specific lease.

c. Siting

Consistent with the *Marine Planning to Operate and Maintain the Marine Transportation System and Implement National Policy*, energy areas should avoid conflict with vessels using a traffic separation scheme [TSS] or safety fairway. Regardless of location, it is essential to analyze cumulative impacts on navigation for each project and identify appropriate mitigations as part of a developer's Navigation Safety Risk Assessment. In alignment with the *CGNAV Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures [TTP] Marine Planning 2025-01*, site selection will not impede the separation distance with which the water area facilities cannot be directly affected by the collapse of a piece of offshore equipment nor the affected wake behind the equipment.

The United States Coast Guard will provide evaluations of the potential impacts a project may have on the Marine Transportation System, the safety of navigation, other traditional waterway uses, and the Coast Guard's ability to conduct its statutory missions.

d. Marine Vessel Radar

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District recommends that mariners consider the mitigation methods described within the *Wind Turbine Generator Impacts to Marine Vessel Radar*, such as implementing supplemental watch standers, greater utilization of non-radar navigation tools, and leveraging additional onboard technologies such as AIS or adopting solid-state Marine Vessel Radar equipment that are better capable of filtering out unwanted radar returns (National Academies 2022). In addition, updated training to enhance a radar operator's proficiency in distinguishing targets and reducing clutter could be beneficial.

While outside the scope of this PARS, the United States Coast Guard Heartland District concurs with the National Academies' assessment that a need exists to collect more data and develop physics-based models for developing strategies to mitigate the potential adverse effects of wind turbine generators on marine vessel radar.

Ultimately, the mariner will be forced to implement appropriate safety measures when navigating within or adjacent to any future offshore non-mineral energy project developed within the study area.

B. Continued Actions

The United States Coast Guard will continue serve as a National Environmental Policy Act [NEPA] of 1969 cooperating agency to the BOEM's environmental review of each proposed project (Hughes n.d.). In that role, the United States Coast Guard will evaluate the navigational safety risks of each proposal on a case-by-case basis.

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District actively monitors all waterways subject to its jurisdiction to help ensure navigation safety. As such, the United States Coast Guard Heartland District will continue to monitor the study area incorporating the approaches to Galveston Bay and Sabine Pass, Texas, and Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana, for changing conditions and consider appropriate actions to promote waterway and user safety.

NOTE: The United States renamed the Gulf of Mexico and the United States Coast Guard Eighth District to the Gulf of America and the United States Coast Guard Heartland District, respectively. When referring to the Gulf of Mexico or Gulf of America, this study is discussing the same body of water. When referring to the United States Coast Guard Eighth District or United States Coast Guard Heartland District, this study is discussing the same unit.

II. PURPOSE

Several ports within the Port Access Route Study [PARS] area are considered economically significant and critical to the nation's military and national defense operations and serve as international entry and departure transit areas integral to the safe, efficient, and unimpeded flow of commerce to/from major international shipping lanes.

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District conducted the PARS to examine the approaches to Galveston Bay and Sabine Pass, Texas, Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana [TX/LAPARS], and the study area's international and domestic transit routes. The purpose of this study evaluates the efficiency of current vessel routing measures to determine the need and applicability for modifications or the establishment of new routing measures. In addition to determining the need for adjusting or establishing new Traffic Separation Schemes [TSSs] and shipping safety fairways, other measures, including two-way routes, recommended routes, deep-water routes, precautionary areas, and non-navigable waterways, were also considered.

While recognizing the paramount navigation right within designated areas, the PARS seeks to reconcile the need for safe access routes with other reasonable waterway uses such as anchorages, construction, mineral/non-mineral energy facilities, marine sanctuary operations, commercial and recreational activities, and other uses.

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District, while collaborating with waterways management team members from the United States Coast Guard Sector Houston-Galveston, United States Coast Guard Headquarters Assistant Commandant for Prevention, United States Coast Guard Office of Navigation Systems, and the United States Coast Guard Navigation Center, analyzed whether it should revise existing regulations to improve navigation safety within the study area due to factors such as:

- Increased vessel traffic.
- Changing vessel traffic patterns.
- Planned or potential offshore development.
- Current port capabilities and planned improvements.
- Weather conditions
- Navigational difficulty.

III. Background

A. Statutory Authority and Direction

The Ports and Waterways Safety Act (46 United States Code [U.S.C.] § 70003) authorizes the United States Coast Guard to designate necessary safety fairways and Traffic Separation Schemes [TSSs] to promote safe access routes for vessels proceeding to and from United States ports. The designation of safety fairways and TSSs recognizes the paramount right of navigation over all other uses in the applicable areas, subject to certain preexisting rights granted through leases or permits.

According to 46 U.S.C. § 70003, the United States Coast Guard must conduct a study of port access routes before determining the need for establishing or adjusting current fairways or TSSs. These evaluations are called Port Access Route Studies [PARS], i.e., a study of potential traffic density and the need for safe vessel access routes. Through the study process, the United States Coast Guard must announce the study through a *Federal Register* notice, coordinate with federal and state agencies (as appropriate), and consider the views of maritime community representatives, environmental groups, and other interested stakeholders. To the extent practicable, this coordination's primary purpose is to reconcile the need for safe access routes with other reasonable waterway uses such as anchorages, construction, operation of mineral/non-mineral energy facilities, maritime sanctuary operations, commercial and recreational activities, and other uses.

In addition to aiding in establishing new or adjusting existing fairways or TSSs, the PARS may recommend establishing or amending other vessel routing measures. Examples of other routing measures include two-way routes, recommended tracks, deep-water routes (for the primary benefit of ships whose ability to maneuver is constrained by their draft), precautionary areas (where ships must navigate with particular caution), and areas to be avoided (for reasons of exceptional damage or compassionate ecological, environmental factors). Charted vessel routing measures in the study area.

Following 46 U.S.C. § 70003, the United States Coast Guard Heartland District published a notice of study on March 1, 2023, in the *Federal Register* under Docket No. USCG-2023-0063 announcing the commencement of a PARS to evaluate the adequacy of existing vessel routing measures and determine whether additional vessel routing measures are necessary for approaches to Galveston Bay and Sabine Pass, Texas, and Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana, and international and domestic transit areas in the United States Coast Guard Heartland District area of responsibility (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration 2023, 12966).

A correction to the original notice of study was published by the United States Coast Guard Heartland District on March 28, 2023, due to an incorrect telephone number for the agency contact listed. The correction would extend the original 48-day notice of study an additional 30 days to end May 17, 2023 (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration 2023, 18326).

B. Previous Analyses

1. Port Access Route Studies

Since the late 1970s, several PARS have been conducted within the area of the TX/LAPARS. The first of these studies was published in the *Federal Register* on April 16, 1979, and announced that the United States Coast Guard would conduct a PARS to evaluate vessel traffic density and the need for safe access routes for vessels operating in the approaches of the ports and the traditional routes between ports within the continental United States including Alaska. Specifically, the study included the entire Gulf of America [GOA] (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration 1979, 22543).

In 1980, the study was modified to include additional areas studied (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration 1980, 7026). In 1981, the study concluded that no significant changes were recommended to the existing shipping safety fairway scheme in the GOA. However, several modifications were proposed for the area, including establishing new anchorage areas at Sabine Bank and Calcasieu Pass/ Lake Charles, safety fairways at Southwest Pass, and Mermentau/ Lower Mud Lake. Also, new precautionary areas and a Traffic Separation Scheme [TSS] were proposed for the Houston/Galveston entrance (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration 1981, 49989).

As a direct result of the recommendations from the 1980 study, the United States Coast Guard and the United States Army Corp of Engineers adopted the establishment of safety fairways within the Galveston Bay approaches in 1982 (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration 1982, 20580). A TSS would also be established by final rule in 1983 for the Galveston Bay Approach (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration 1983, 36453).

In 1984, the United States Coast Guard published a second announcement that they would conduct a PARS to evaluate vessel traffic density and the need for safe access

routes in selected areas of the GOA. Specifically, the study examined two regions, including 31 miles off Galveston, Texas, and an area in the Louisiana Offshore Oil Port due to concerns of shoaling in the vicinity of Heald Bank and at the request of Conoco, Inc. for exploratory offshore drilling (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration 1984, 10127). In 1985, the United States Coast Guard published a notice of report availability which recommended establishing a new safety fairway for deep-draft vessels to navigate around the Heald Bank Shoal safely and no changes to the existing Louisiana Offshore Oil Port safety fairway (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration 1985, 9682).

In 1989, the United States Coast Guard published a notice of proposed rulemaking to redesign the TSS within the approaches of Galveston, Texas (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration 1989, 14827). On July 5, 1989, a final ruling on re-designing the TSS was published in the *Federal Register* (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration 1989, 28061).

2. Waterways Analysis Management System [WAMS]

The United States Coast Guard periodically conducts a WAMS study to assess the adequacy of the current Federal Aids to Navigation [ATON] system within the waterways of the United States and determine the need for any modifications. The United States Coast Guard Heartland District examined all past WAMS reviews of waterways within the study area to determine if there had been any requests for or references to a need for additional traffic routing measures. Since 1988, four WAMS reviews have been completed to assess the effectiveness of the Federal ATON system within the study area, none of which included requests for or references to a need for additional vessel traffic routing measures.

C. Administrative Procedure

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District conducted the TX/LAPARS per 46 U.S.C. § 70003, employing methodology from applicable United States Coast Guard policies, including the framework outlined in Appendix D of the *Marine Planning to Operate and Maintain the Marine Transportation System and Implement National Policy* (Coast Guard 2019).

Suppose the PARS recommends changes to current vessel routing measures. In that case, the United States Coast Guard Office of Navigation will validate the recommendations and initiate the Federal rulemaking process and the International Maritime Organization's ships routing measures process. The objectives of the PARS are to:

- Determine potential traffic density;
- Determine if existing vessel routing measures are adequate;
- Determine if existing vessel routing measures require modification;

- Determine the type of modifications;
- Define and justify the need for new vessel routing measures;
- Determine the type of new vessel routing measures; and
- Determine if the usage of the vessel routing measures must be mandatory for specific classes of vessels.

D. Study Area

The study area, as depicted in Figure 3, includes regions of the GOA, an approximate 13,100 square nautical mile area bounded by a line connecting the following geographic positions:

- Beginning where the coast intersects Longitude 95° 25'00" W
- 28° 16'00" N, 095° 25'00" W
- 28° 00'00" N, 094° 36'00" W
- 28° 00'00" N, 092° 37'00" W
- North along Longitude 092° 37'00" W to the Coast

All geographic points are based on the North American Datum of 1983. The study area includes the approaches to Galveston Bay and Sabine Pass, Texas, and Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana.



Figure 3 – TX/LAPARS Study Area

E. Outreach Process

In conducting this PARS, the United States Coast Guard Heartland District communicated and coordinated with appropriate federal and state agencies, non-government organizations, and other public stakeholders. Per 46 U.S.C. § 70003, consultation letters were sent to the following state and federal partners:

- Office of the Governor, State of Texas
- Office of the Governor, States of Louisiana
- Gulf Coast Navigation Manager, National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration Office of Coast Survey
- Galveston District Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- New Orleans District Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Office of Renewable Energy Programs, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
- Texas Parks and Wildlife
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Texas Railroad Commission
- Texas General Land Office
- Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
- Louisiana Department of Natural Resources

1. Notice of Study; request for comments (USCG-2023-0063)

The TX/LAPARS commencement was officially announced on March 1, 2023, with the publication of the “Notice of Study; request for comments” in the *Federal Register* (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration 2023, 12966). A copy of this Notice is included in Enclosure 2. A correction to the original notice of study was published by the United States Coast Guard Heartland District on March 28, 2023, due to an incorrect telephone number for the agency contact listed. The correction would extend the original 48-day notice of study an additional 30 days to end May 17, 2023 (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration 2023, 18326). A copy of this *Federal Register* Notice is included in Enclosure 3.

2. Public Comment Opportunities

- a) March 1, 2023, *Federal Register* Notice (see Enclosure 2) provided for a 48-day comment period, during which time zero comments were received to the public docket.

- b) March 23, 2023, *Federal Register* Notice (see Enclosure 3) extended the original 48-day notice of study to an additional 30-day comment period, during which seven comments were received to the public docket.

F. Definition of Terms

Definitions for specific terms used in this PARS can be found in Appendix B.

IV. The Study

A. Existing Regulations and Pilotage

The items discussed in this section are not all-inclusive but provide a list of primary regulations and routing measures most applicable to the study area.

1. Policies that apply to the TX/LAPARS study area include:

- 33 Code of Federal Regulations [C.F.R.] § 1.01 - General Coast Guard Captain of the Port Authority
- 33 U.S.C. § 403 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regulations regarding obstructions and hazards to navigation under The Rivers and Harbors Appropriation Act of 1899
- 33 C.F.R. Subchapter C – United States Aids to Navigation System
- 33 C.F.R. Subchapters D and E - The Navigation Rules, International and Inland (“Rules of the Road”)
- 33 C.F.R. Subchapter F - Vessel Operating Regulations
- 33 C.F.R. § 3.40-28 - Sector Houston-Galveston Marine Inspection Zone and Captain of the Port Zone; Marine Safety Unit Port Arthur
- 33 C.F.R. § 110 - Anchorage Regulations and Designated Areas
- 50 C.F.R. § 622.74 - Area Closures to Protect Gulf of Mexico Corals
- 50 C.F.R. Subchapter C - Shrimp Fishery in the Gulf of Mexico
- 50 C.F.R. § 223.102 - Enumeration of Threatened Marine and Anadromous Species
- 50 C.F.R. § 224.101 - Enumeration of Endangered Marine and Anadromous species
- 33 C.F.R. Subchapter C - Lightering Zones and Operational Requirements for the Gulf of Mexico
- 33 C.F.R. § 100.801 - Special Local Regulations: Sector Houston-Galveston Annual and Recurring Marine Events
- 33 C.F.R. § 161.35 - Vessel Traffic Service and Vessel Movement Reporting System Areas and Reporting Points: Houston/Galveston
- 33 C.F.R. § 161.70 - Vessel Traffic Service and Vessel Movement Reporting System Areas and Reporting Points: Port Arthur

2. Traffic Separation Schemes

As described in 33 C.F.R. § 167.350, the Galveston Bay Traffic Separation Scheme [TSS] consists of two parts: A precautionary area and a southwest approach. Each was established in 1983 and redesignated in 1987 and 1989.

3. Pilotage

- a) Pilotage is compulsory for United States and foreign-flagged vessels under register in the foreign trade as follows:
 - Texas – All Ports
 - Louisiana – All Ports
- b) Pilotage is optional for coastwise vessels that have a pilot adequately licensed by the federal government on board for the waters in which the vessel travels. Details regarding service providers and pilot arrangements can be found in the United States Coast Pilot Vol 5.

B. Existing and Future Waterway Uses

The TX/LAPARS study area encompasses a remarkably complex and dynamic marine environment home to thousands of coastal and aquatic species and used year-round for recreational and commercial purposes. The maritime economies of Texas and Louisiana have seen significant growth within recent years, with each state adding an average of 2.7 million jobs and reaching a combined marine economic gross domestic product of \$438.7 billion (Bureau of Economic Analysis n.d.). Employment within the study area generally fall into the following subsectors:

- Surface Transportation Sector – Trucking firms and railroads move cargoes between marine terminals and inland origins.
- Maritime Logistics and Shipping Sector – Includes ship pilots, harbor tugs, offshore supply boats, storage/warehousing of cargo, along with facility/terminal operations, longshoremen, and security.
- Ship and Boat Building, Maintenance, and Repair Sector – Activities related to building commercial and recreational vessels and maintaining and repairing existing vessels.
- Maritime Support Sector – A maritime-related professional and technical services, such as facility/terminal/infrastructure design, construction, and maintenance; channel dredging; ship agencies; legal and financial services; ship supplies/chandlers; bunkering and fueling operations from barge or dock; crew launches to anchorages and offshore rigs; maritime salvage; marine environmental and firefighting response.
- Federal Maritime Activities Sector - all activities related to the Department of Homeland Securities, Customs and Border Protection,

United States Coast Guard, Army Corps of Engineers, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

- Waterborne Passenger Activity Sector - all cruise ship business activity (parking, ship stores, security, law enforcement), harbor cruises, and ferry operations
- Commercial Fishing and Seafood Processing Sector - commercial shrimp and oyster operations activities.
- Marina and Recreational Boating and Fishing Sector - activities related to marinas, the vessels moored and stored at these marinas, and transient recreational boating activities.
- Maritime Education and Training Sector - maritime-related undergraduate/graduate education, research, and training conducted by Texas A&M University at Galveston, the Texas Maritime Academy, Texas A&M Center for Marine Training and Safety, and other training centers.

Continued environmental changes and maritime economy expansion can influence regional vessel traffic routes and densities.

The following resources and considerations were evaluated to determine current and future vessel traffic trends and identify potential impacts to navigation and efficient port access:

1. Vessel Traffic Data

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District coordinated with the United States Coast Guard Navigation Center for Automatic Identification System [AIS] and Vessel Monitoring System [VMS] data products. The United States Coast Guard Heartland District concurs with the United States Coast Guard Navigation Center's complete traffic analysis, found in Enclosure 1.

Acknowledging that not all vessels are required to transmit their location using AIS per 33 C.F.R. § 164.121 or VMS per 50 C.F.R. § 648.10, the United States Coast Guard Heartland District ensured vessel traffic data was considered alongside other sources of information including public comments, industry reports, and consultations with partner agencies. While AIS data may not capture all vessels transiting within the study area, it represents commonly trafficked routes to access domestic ports.

The United States Coast Guard Navigation Center provided AIS data for the TX/LAPARS study area from 2021 through 2023. Table 1 provides a summary extract from Enclosure 1 showing the unique vessel counts by type that transited the study area in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Vessel Type	2021	2022	2023	Average
Cargo	1,709	1,906	1,739	1,785
Fishing	547	448	442	479
High-Speed Craft/Ferry	6	7	8	7
Unknown	288	296	110	231
Military/LE/SAR	37	34	40	37
Other	60	67	127	85
Passenger	107	98	113	106
Pleasure Craft/Sailing	366	306	375	349
Tanker	2459	2,583	2,599	2,547
Tug/Tow	343	333	573	416
WIG	18	12	15	15
Totals	5,940	6,090	6,141	6,057

Table 1 – Unique Vessel AIS Tracks

While these counts provide a broad overview of the amount and type of vessels in the study area, track counts were also considered to determine the traffic volume. Table 2 provides an extract from Enclosure 1 showing each year's track counts per vessel type.

Vessel Type	2021	2022	2023	Average
Cargo	10,877	13,784	20,715	15,125
Fishing	12,918	9,596	12,097	11,537
High-Speed Craft/Ferry	126	396	694	405
Unknown	3,713	4,494	2199	3,469
Military/LE/SAR	321	398	601	440
Other	4,127	4,988	2,857	3,991
Passenger	4,846	5,725	9,890	6,820
Pleasure Craft/Sailing	1,643	1,683	2,350	1,892
Tanker	19,537	25,726	38,598	27,954
Tug/Tow	6,268	6,803	10,669	7,913
WIG	205	262	481	316
Totals	64,581	73,855	99,062	79,166

Table 2 – All Vessels AIS Tracks

Pleasure craft/sailing traffic is most concentrated in near coast patterns, within 5-10 Nautical Miles of the shore, transiting in the vicinity of the region's more densely populated areas, coastal communities, and various seasonal/vacation destinations.

Passenger vessels, including cruise ship traffic, frequently traffic to and from the Port of Galveston, Texas.

Cargo and tanker traffic primarily call on the region’s principal deep-draft commercial ports, including Freeport, Galveston, Texas City, Houston, Sabine, Beaumont, and Orange, Texas, and Calcasieu Pass and Lake Charles, Louisiana. A significant amount of regional tanker traffic transits between these ports, carrying petroleum products (e.g., transportation fuels, fuel oils for heating and electricity generation, asphalt and road oil, and feedstocks for making chemicals, plastics, and synthetic materials) that are critical for the national and global economy. Seven ports within the study area ranked within the top 50 domestic ports for total cargo tonnage handled, according to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (n.d.). Table 3 shows the waterborne cargo tonnage handled by these ports for 2021, 2022, and 2023, as provided by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Waterborne Commerce Statistics Center (n.d.). The ports of Houston, Galveston, and Texas City are included in Galveston Bay, TX. The ports of Sabine, Beaumont, Orange, and Port Arthur, TX are included in Sabine Pass, TX.

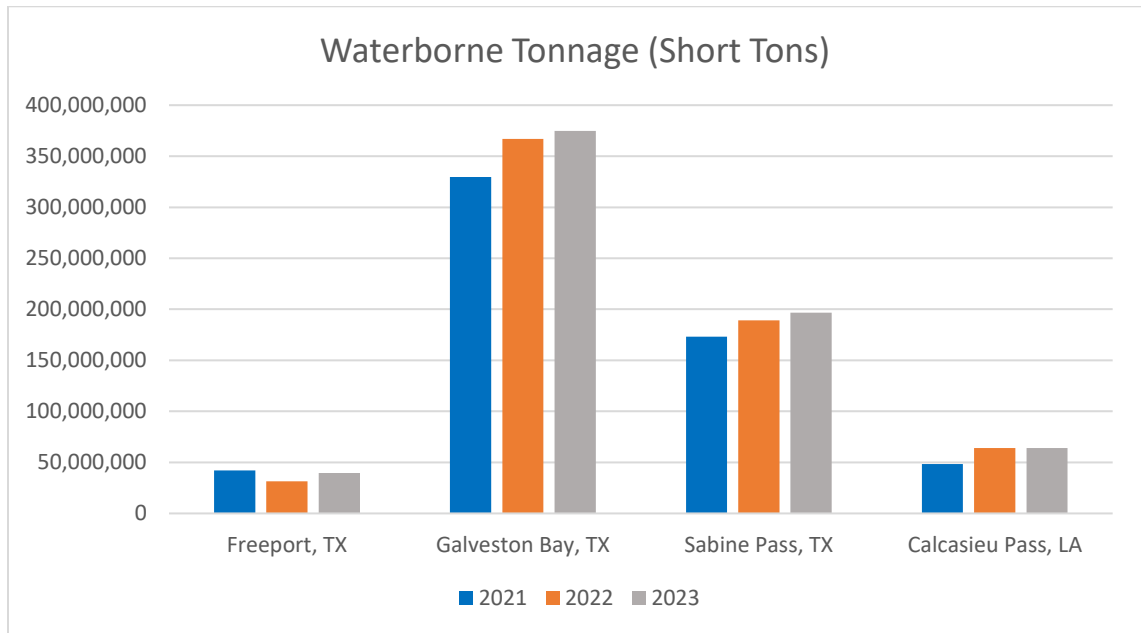


Table 3 – Commercial Cargo Waterborne Tonnage

Dense tug/tow vessel traffic transit to and from Freeport, Galveston Bay, and Sabine Pass, Texas, and Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana ports. Depending on the port of call, tug and tow transit routes can be complicated by the region’s coastal geography and vast unmarked and abandoned oil/gas wells, preventing these vessels from hugging the coast as closely as they might in other areas. While fishing vessels accounted for only 7.9% of the average annual unique vessel count, they represented approximately 14.5% of the yearly average vessel tracks. Table 4 provides an additional representation of the total annual AIS vessel tracks transiting the study area divided by type.

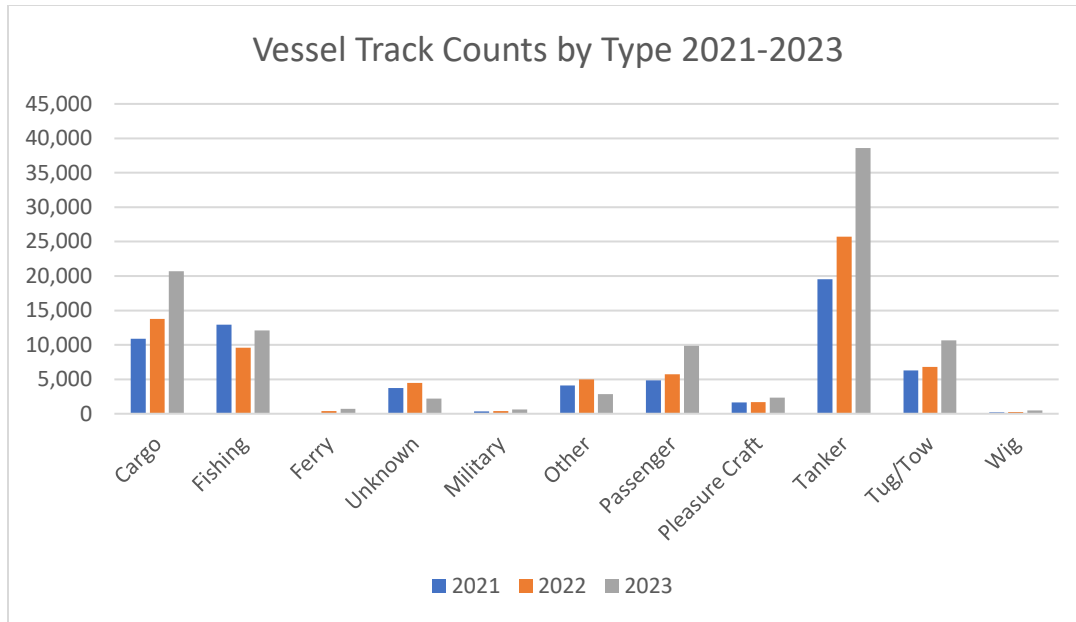


Table 4 – AIS Vessel Track Counts by Type

2. Commercial Fishing Activity

Fisheries in the GOA, along the Texas and Louisiana coast, are critical to the region's economic security and social well-being. The National Oceanic Atmosphere Administration's 2017 Ecosystem Status Report Gulf of Mexico (now Gulf of America) identifies several communities within the study area that are highly engaged in and reliant on the commercial fishing industry.

Preliminary 2022 data for Texas reflects a total price paid for commercial fish landings, also referred to as *ex-vessel value*, accumulated to more than \$169 million, 72% of that being from shrimp (National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration n.d.). In 2022, marine fishing contributed \$416 million to the Louisiana Economy (National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration n.d.).

VMS transit data for the TX/LAPARS study area was obtained from 2021 through 2023. Table 5 shows the approximate number of annual transits per year and the number of permitted (unique) vessels. The activity and patterns indicated by VMS data can shift based on changes in fishery management and other environmental factors.

Year	Transits (Thousands)	Unique VMS Vessels
2021	12,918	547
2022	9,596	448
2023	12,097	442

Table 5 – VMS Transits and Unique Vessels

There is one habitat management area is located within the study area, including the Stetson Bank Fishery Management Zone (National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration n.d.). New regulatory petitions aimed at preserving the habitats and protecting the Rice Whale species of the GOA have been denied by the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration. If the petition were approved, it would limit the speed of vessels to ten knots (Fisheries 2023). According to the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Division:

“This decision allows us to continue to conduct much-needed research to inform any future regulatory decisions and to prioritize developing a recovery plan for the species, consistent with Section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act. Fundamental conservation tasks, including finalizing the critical habitat designation, drafting a species recovery plan, and conducting a quantitative vessel risk assessment, are all needed before we consider vessel regulations. These research and conservation actions are critical for recovering Rice’s whales in a manner that is effective, informed by the best available science, and balances the needs of the species and our stakeholders.”

The denial of this one petition could still lead to future changes in vessel patterns and interactions if other petitions for the Rice Whale species or other evidence of harm to the species is indicated. Ocean warming has, and will likely continue to cause, shifts in species distributions (National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration n.d.). Shifts in species distributions could change transit routes used by fishing fleets when proceeding to and from regional ports.

Analysis of AIS and VMS density maps and summaries (Enclosure 1) indicate that the heaviest fishing vessel traffic largely transits from several primary port areas, including Galveston and Sabine Pass, Texas. Analyzing the traffic densities produced utilizing a mixture of VMS and AIS data, as shown in Figure 4, reveals similar traffic patterns and trends. However, considering shifts in environmental conditions and various other factors that influence the region’s fisheries, past activity may not indicate future trends and can make predicting future transit routes difficult.

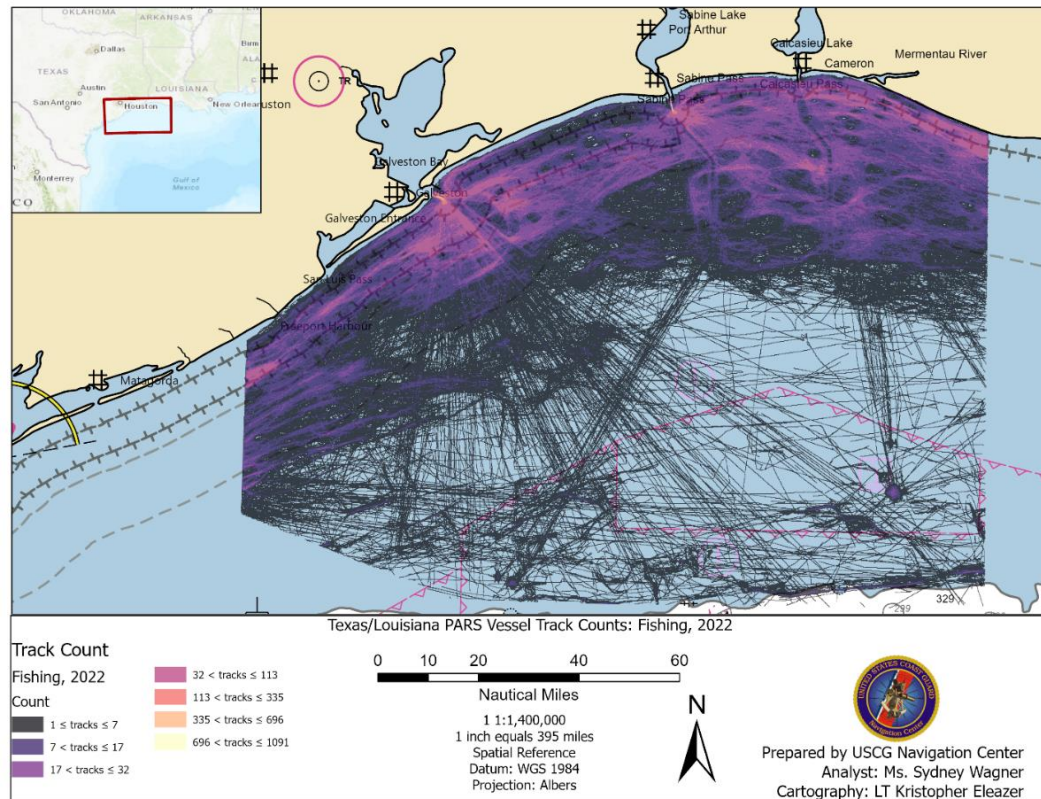


Figure 4 – 2022 VMS Fishing Vessel Traffic Density

Vessels departing the ports of Galveston and Sabine Pass, Texas, in the eastern coastal region of Texas, typically transit on southwestern routes before diverting to various fishing grounds. However, as annual fishery closures occur, vessels will travel east to fish in other state waters.

The GOA has traditionally been known for its shrimp. Some of the biggest ports for the shrimp industry lie along the Gulf Coast, including ports within the study area. Shrimping in State and federal waters occurs throughout the year; however, closures occur within these areas for a maximum of 60 days. Reopening's are based on biological sampling by the state Parks and Wildlife Departments and assessment of maximum tidal durations.

Although vessels may engage in fishing operations throughout the study area, it is assumed that the highest activity levels occur outside of the study area where GOA Infrastructure is established, such as near the ports of Corpus Christi and Brownsville, Texas.

While most federal fisheries have either VMS or Vessel Trip Report requirements, this is not true for most of the region's shrimp harvesters. Due to the lack of spatial data for characterizing the shrimp fleet transit patterns, the United States Coast Guard Heartland District actively sought additional data from partnering agencies to assist in characterizing heavily trafficked areas.

3. Aquaculture

Offshore aquaculture rears aquatic organisms in controlled environments (e.g., cages or net pens) in federally managed ocean areas. Federally managed areas of the GOA begin where state jurisdiction ends and extend 200 miles offshore to the outer limit of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone.

The cultivation and harvesting of aquatic organisms, including many shellfish species, has continued to grow at the state level. 2019 Texas House Bill 1300 granted the Parks and Wildlife Commission authority to develop an off-bottom oyster mariculture program using enclosed cages (State of Texas n.d.). Louisiana aquaculture farms have continued growing in the commercial crawfish industry, with more than 1,300 crawfish farmers supplying 100 to 120 million pounds annually. Louisiana's crawfish industry contributes more than \$300 million annually to the state's economy (State of Louisiana n.d.). With some exceptions, most of these activities occur in nearshore areas, including rivers, sounds, and estuaries, and do not currently conflict with regional port access.

In May 2020, Executive Order 13921 was implanted to remove barriers to aquaculture permitting in federal waters. In addition to streamlining the permitting process, the executive order directs the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, in consultation with other federal offices, regional Fishery Management Councils, and state and tribal governments, to identify areas that show high potential for commercial aquaculture known as Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration 2020, 28471-77).

The Aquaculture Opportunity Area process seeks to utilize science-based tools to help encourage the growth of aquaculture while minimizing interactions with other users, such as shipping, fishing, and the military. In May of 2023, the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration Fisheries division published the *Gulf of Mexico Aquaculture Opportunity Area Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement Public Scoping Summary*, identifying areas within the GOA region that could be potential candidates for Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (Strelcheck n.d.). None of the areas identified in the initial assessment of Aquaculture Opportunity Areas fall within the area of this PARS. However, they may be evaluated in the future. Increased interest in siting aquaculture within federal waters may lead to proposed projects that could displace vessel traffic, increase interactions, and impact port access.

As interest in siting aquaculture within federal waters continues, it will become increasingly crucial for permitting authorities and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration when acting as the lead agency for the NEPA process, to coordinate with the United States Coast Guard, Fishery Management Councils, and State and Tribal governments to reduce waterway use conflicts and promote safe navigation.

4. Offshore Non-Mineral Energy Development

As of the report date, no active offshore non-mineral energy projects are within the study area.

On June 11, 2021, the United States Bureau of Ocean Energy Management [BOEM] initiated commercial planning and leasing by publishing a Request for Interest [RFI] to identify suitable locations for offshore non-mineral energy development in the GOA (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management n.d.).

The BOEM used information gained through public comment, industry nominations on the RFI, and spatial analysis in coordination with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Center for Coastal and Ocean Science to reduce the RFI area into a draft "Call Area" shown in Figure 5.

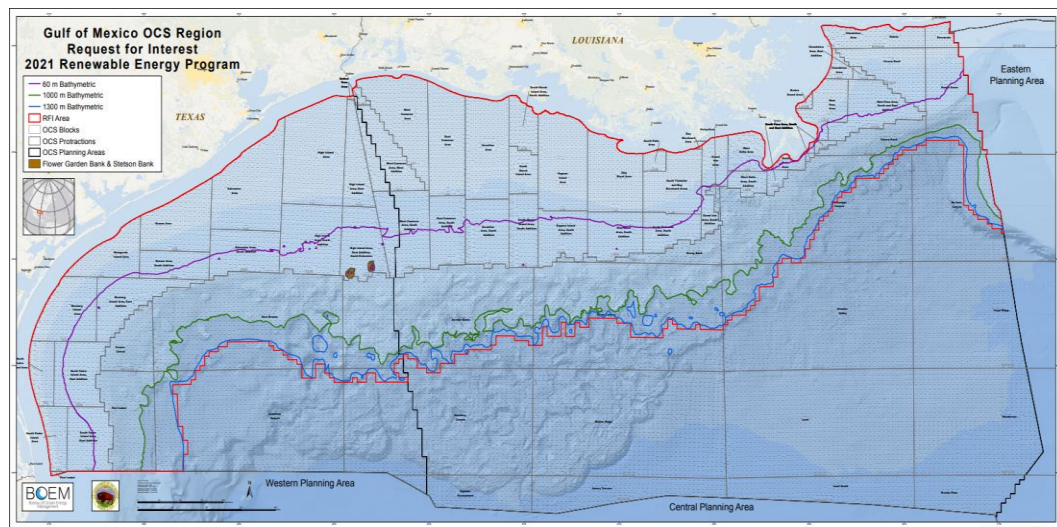


Figure 5 – Gulf of America OCS Area

On November 1, 2021, BOEM published a Call for Information and Nominations to assess commercial interest and invite public comment on possible commercial non-mineral energy leasing consisting of almost 30 million acres just west of the Mississippi River to the Texas/Mexico Border (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management n.d.).

On January 11, 2022, BOEM announced that it prepared a draft environmental assessment considering potential offshore non-mineral energy leasing in federal waters of the GOA. The draft environmental assessment considered the possible ecological consequences of site characterization activities and site assessment activities associated with the possibility of issuing non-mineral energy leases in the Western and Central GOA (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management n.d.).

On July 20, 2022, the United States Department of Interior announced it sought public comments on two draft non-mineral energy areas in the GOA. The first draft non-mineral energy area was located approximately 24 nautical miles off the coast of

Galveston, Texas, covering 546,645 acres. The second draft non-mineral energy area was located approximately 56 nautical miles off the coast of Lake Charles, Louisiana, covering a total of 188,023 acres, with the potential to power 799,000 homes (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management n.d.).

On February 24, 2023, BOEM issued a Proposed Sale Notice in the *Federal Register* for a 60-day public comment period (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration 2023, 11939). The Proposed Sale Notice included a 102,480-acre area offshore Lake Charles, Louisiana, and two regions offshore Galveston, Texas, one comprising 102,480 acres and the other 96,786 acres (U.S. Department of Interior 2023).

On March 23, 2023, BOEM held an offshore non-mineral energy auction seminar for prospective bidders, which was open to the public. The seminar described the auction format, explained the auction rules, and demonstrated the auction process through meaningful examples (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management n.d.).

On May 30, 2023, BOEM announced the final environmental assessment. The completed ecological analysis found no significant impacts (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management n.d.).

On July 21, 2023, a Final Sales Notice was published in the *Federal Register* outlining information on the areas available for commercial non-mineral energy leasing on the Outer Continental Shelf [OCS] in the GOA (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration 2023, 47173). The BOEM offered three leases for sale using a multiple-factor bidding auction format: Lease OCS–G 37334, Lease OCS–G37335, and Lease OCS–G37336 (Lease Areas) (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management 2023a).

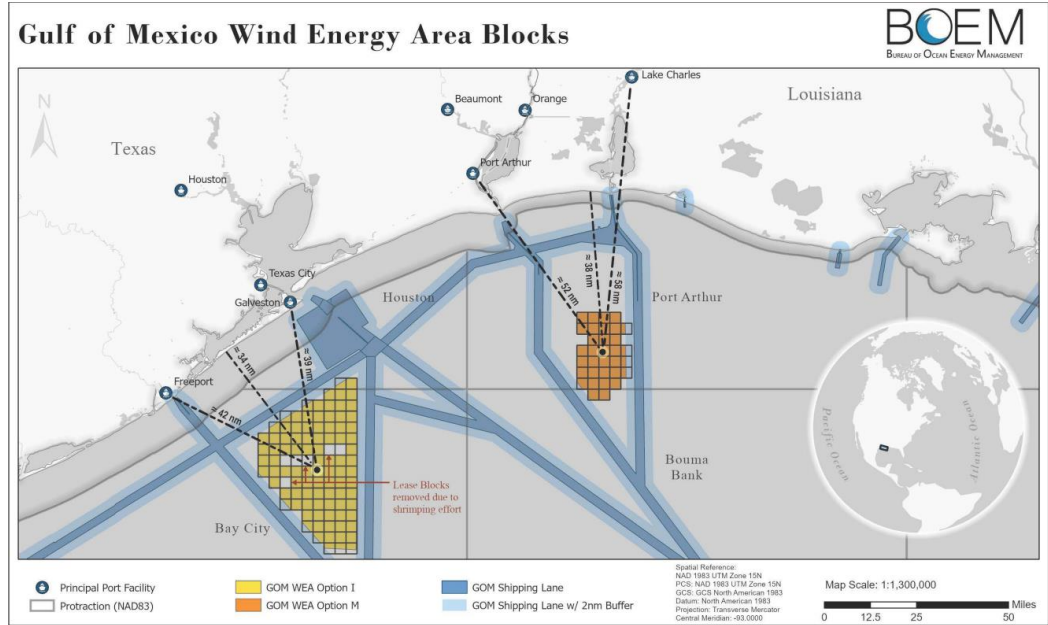


Figure 6 – Gulf of America Non-Mineral Energy Area Blocks

On August 29, 2023, BOEM held the first-ever offshore non-mineral energy auction for the GOA region, resulting in one lease area receiving a high bid of \$5.6 million. RWE Offshore US Gulf, LLC was awarded the Lake Charles Lease Area (U.S. Department of Interior 2023a).

On October 27, 2023, BOEM announced it had finalized four non-mineral energy areas in the GOA, as shown in Figure 6. The first area (Option J) is located approximately 47.2 miles off the coast of Texas and totals 495,567 acres. The second area (Option K) is approximately 61.5 miles off the coast of Texas and totals 119,635 acres. The third area (Option L) is approximately 52.9 miles off the coast of Texas and totals 91,157 acres. The fourth area (Option N) is approximately 82 miles off the coast of Louisiana and totals 56,978 acres.

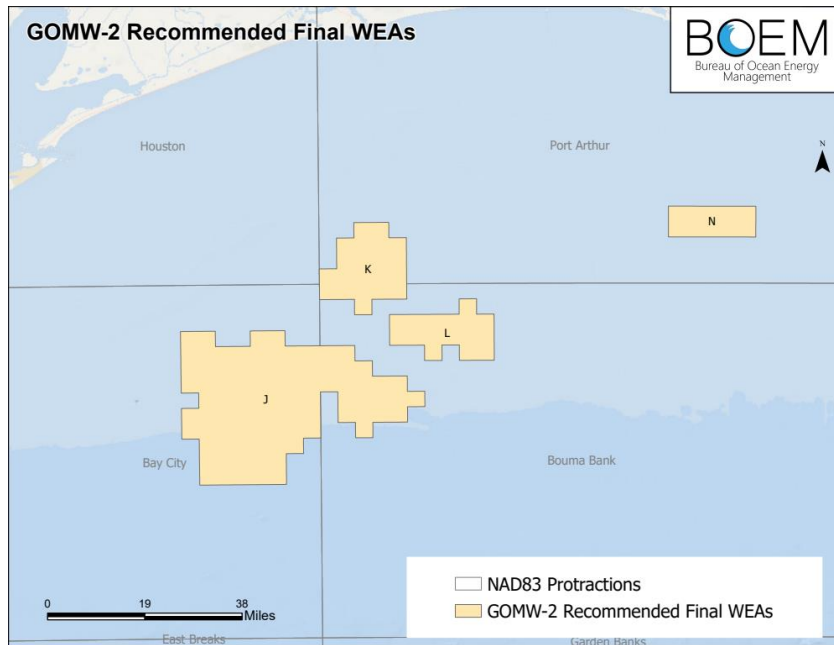


Figure 7 – Recommended Final Non-Mineral Energy Area

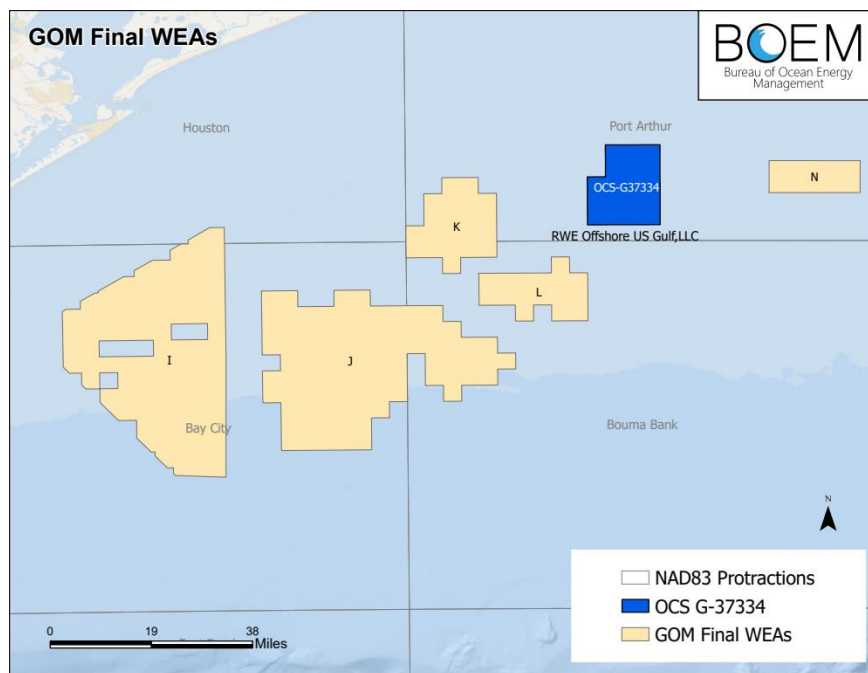


Figure 8 – Final Non-Mineral Energy Area

Offshore non-mineral energy projects within the study area may impact traditional navigation routes. The nature and degree of influence will depend on several factors, including the size and location of each area, the orientation of each non-mineral energy equipment layout, the size of the individual pieces of equipment, and the chosen mooring configuration. As the BOEM GOA division is presently in the early planning and analysis

stages, it is difficult to predict what specific impacts a non-mineral energy project would have on area vessel traffic. As non-mineral energy projects are being developed, vessel traffic in those areas will likely be displaced or funneled, leading to changes in traffic density, mixing of vessel types, and more complex vessel interactions. Increases in traffic transiting to and from the regional facilities can be expected during non-mineral energy equipment construction and cable installation phases, along with long-term increases in vessel activity related to maintenance and support activities.

5. Port Development

Several development projects aimed at facilitating more significant levels of maritime commerce have been recently completed or are projected to continue in various ports throughout the study area. This section includes a summary of many of these projects, including those for Houston, Galveston, Texas City, Freeport, Sabine, Port Arthur, and Lake Charles, a primary destination for regional tanker and cargo traffic. The following projects highlight an overall regional trend: ports are expanding to handle more significant volumes of traffic, bigger ships, and larger cargo loads.

a) Texas

- In February 2020, the United States Army Corps of Engineers announced \$43.9 million in funding for an expansive selective dredging and widening project to the Port of Freeport's turning basin and select channel areas (Port of Freeport n.d.)
- In July 2023, the Port of Freeport completed a \$146 million terminal expansion, including the expansion of 1,600 ft berths and deepening to 51 ft for post-Panamax vessels (Mahoney 2023)
- In February 2023, the Port of Galveston was awarded \$42.3 million in funding for a significant cargo infrastructure project to renovate existing berths and expand for larger cruise ships.
- The Port of Houston, which has more deep draft vessel visits than any other port in the country and is the largest Petro-chemical port in the country, began an expansive deepening and widening project that will expand the channel from 530 feet to 700 feet as well as deepening segments to 46.5 feet (Port of Houston 2019)
- The Port of Houston is investing \$750M in capital improvements over the next five years (2023 – 2027) at Bayport Container Terminal. Investments include constructing additional wharves and ordering equipment for Ship to Shore container cranes to support demand. The terminal features electronic data interchange capabilities and a computerized inventory control system that tracks the status and location of individual containers (Port of Houston 2022)
- The Port of Houston is investing \$650M in capital improvements at Barbour's Cut Terminal over the next five years (2023 – 2027). The terminal features 300 acres of container yard space, six berths, 29 entry truck gates, and more than 8,000 feet of working track connecting to off-

site warehouses. These improvements include investing in additional container yard space, concrete rehabilitation, and more ship-to-shore cranes to add to the terminal fleet (Port of Houston 2022)

- Numerous chemical facilities that line the Houston Ship Channel are making significant investments to increase the exportation of chemical products and storage facilities.
- 2016 Cheniere's Sabine Pass facility completed its first liquefaction-capable facility. In 2022, the facility became the first facility in the world to accommodate three liquid natural gas tankers simultaneously (U.S. Department of Energy 2015)
- In 2019, the United States Army Corps of Engineers announced a \$1.4 billion project to expand and deepen the Sabine-Neches Waterway. The project is estimated to bring \$5.9 billion in business activity and \$2.8 billion in gross product (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 2020).

b) Louisiana

- In 2020, the United States Army Corps of Engineers announced a \$46 million project to the country's 11th largest deep draft port (Associated Press 2020)
- In 2023, the Port of Lake Charles received more than \$82 million as a Federal Emergency Management Agency grant that is being utilized to build two ship unloaders, a rail-mounted mobile harbor crane, and what port officials are calling the largest construction project in its history - transit sheds for cargo at the port's City Docks (Moreau 2023).

Many of these projects are located within the area of study. Several projects, including dredging, surveys, and other repairs, are expected for the Houston Ship Channel and Sabine Pass. Due to this influx of funding, additional projects can be scheduled in other port areas within five years.

C. Weather Conditions

Weather conditions are a significant consideration for regional mariners when determining the most efficient and safest transit route. The GOA is known for its rapidly changing weather conditions, especially in the spring and winter. The United States Coast Guard Heartland District examined weather information from several sources, including data collected from buoys owned and maintained by the National Data Buoy Center. Typical weather, as reported in authoritative nautical publications, such as the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration Coast Pilot Five, was also utilized and continues to be valid.

1. Storms

Rapidly changing weather and thunderstorms are common in the spring and summer months. A tropical cyclone is threatened by strong winds, rough seas, storm tides, and torrential rains from late May through early November. The study area has

experienced all of these. While September is the most likely month for a hurricane, devastating storms have occurred in all hurricane months except November. In the winter, continental-influenced cold fronts develop weak squall lines that are typically not severe.

2. Winds

Winds in the GOA are typically southeast and south, except in winter when frequent passages of high-pressure areas bring polar air and prevailing northern winds. Winds can be more robust in open seas but more complex along the coast as the region's topography influences them. Weekly average wind speeds were obtained for five locations in the study area from 2021 through 2023, with graph representations in Appendix E and a summary in Table 5. The region's highest wind speeds were seen during the late fall and winter months, with average wind speeds reported by some stations approaching 23 knots. Ship observations indicate that winds exceed 20 knots five to 15 percent of the time in the north Gulf region. January and February are the worst months, and conditions are roughest off Louisiana and Texas coasts. Gale-force winds (speeds of 34 knots or more) are encountered up to 2 percent of the time (Raimondo, Spinrad, and Leboeuf n.d.).

3. Waves

According to the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration Coast Pilot 5:

“Gales between the fall and early spring months typically generate rough seas in the region. Wave heights of ten feet or more are encountered up to eight percent of the time, while winds of 28 knots or more blow up to six percent. Spring is one of the most trouble-free seasons in the Gulf. Easterly wave and tropical cyclone activity increases during August and peaks in September. Wave heights of 40 feet can be encountered, threatening ships at sea and coastal installations. This threat remains through November (Raimondo, Spinrad, and Leboeuf n.d.).”

Weekly average wave heights were obtained for two locations in the study area from 2021 through 2023 with graph representations in Appendix E and a summary in Table 6. Like wind speeds, wave heights in the study area are typically the highest in the fall and winter months, with wave heights reported by some stations as reaching 8 feet or greater.

Station	Location	Avg. Wind Speed (MPH)	Avg. Wave Height (ft)
42019	Freeport, TX	22	7
42035	Galveston, TX	23	2.6
CAPL1	Calcasieu Pass, LA	18	N/A
GNJT2	Galveston Bay Entrance North Jetty	23	N/A
TXPT2	Texas Point Sabine Pass, TX	21	N/A

Table 6 – Wind and Wave Summary

4. Tropical Cyclones

According to the NOAA Coast Pilot 5:

“Tropical cyclones are warm-core low-pressure systems that develop over the tropical oceans' warm waters with a counterclockwise rotary circulation in the northern hemisphere. When maximum sustained windspeeds exceed 63 knots, a hurricane in the North Atlantic is a relatively small, unpredictable system capable of generating 200-knot winds, 40-foot seas, and 20-foot storm surges. A combination of the seas and winds can cause stress on vessels and platforms, causing capsizing and destruction (Raimondo, Spinrad, and Leboeuf n.d.).”

D. Navigational Difficulty

As indicated by public comments and supported by analysis of vessel traffic patterns, the most significant indications of navigational difficulty within the study area are related to conflicting waterway use that do not align with the Marine Planning Guidelines found in the *Marine Planning to Operate and Maintain the Marine Transportation System [MTS] and Implement National Policy* (U.S. Coast Guard 2019). Furthermore, an array of oil wells and rigs near existing Traffic Separation Schemes [TSSs] pose additional concerns in foul weather.

E. Aids to Navigation

Based on vessel traffic analysis, mariners continue to use the marked routing measures and rely on the region's ATON for safe passage and when approaching key port areas.

- There are 97 federal ATON in the TX/LAPARS Study Area.
- There are 1,074 private ATON [PATON] in the TX/LAPARS Study Area.

Any fixed structure constructed within a potential future mineral/non-mineral energy area may also serve as ATON. Developers must mark, light, and label such structures consistent with the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authority and the United States Bureau of Ocean Energy Management [BOEM] guidelines.

BOEM may require developers to submit a comprehensive aid-to-navigation plan for review by the United States Coast Guard as a construction and operations permit condition. Each structure associated with any future mineral/non-mineral energy area would need a PATON permit issued from the United States Coast Guard Heartland District's Office of Waterways Management.

As detailed in the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration 2022 Guide to Permitting Aquaculture in the United States, aquaculture project applicants are required to apply for and receive authorization to deploy PATON at their approved aquaculture operation site once all other federal permits have been obtained (National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration 2022).

F. Radar

Marine vessel radar can be critical for safe navigation and collision avoidance, primarily when operating in reduced visibility environments. While carriage requirements vary depending on vessel type and size, International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea 1972 [COLREGS] Rules five and eight each suggest that using a Marine Vessel Radar, when available, is required to "determine if the risk of collision exists." (U.S. Department of Homeland Security n.d.).

The maritime community has expressed concern that wind turbine generators could cause radar shadows and obfuscate smaller vessels transiting near wind turbine generator arrays. In 2020, the United States Bureau of Ocean Energy Management requested the *National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine* to complete a study that would provide more insight into the impacts of wind turbine generators on marine vessel radars operating near offshore wind farms. In February 2022, the National Academies published the completed Consensus Study Report - *Wind Turbine Generator Impacts to Marine Vessel Radar* (Committee on Wind Turbine Generator Impacts to Marine Vessel Radar, Ocean Studies Board, Division on Earth and Life Studies, and National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2022).

In addition to 28 key findings, the report’s authoring committee provided the following two specific conclusions:

- “Wind turbines in the maritime environment affect marine vessel radar in a situation-dependent manner, with the most common impact being a substantial increase in strong, reflected energy cluttering the operator’s display, leading to complications in navigation decision-making.”
- “Opportunities exist to ameliorate wind turbine generator-induced interference on marine vessel radars use active and passive means, such as improved radar signal processing and display logic or signature-enhancing reflectors on small vessels to minimize lost contacts.”

The study conclusions imparted two primary recommendations. The first focuses on the need for the United States Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and other relevant federal agencies to fill knowledge gaps through additional data collection, modeling, and analysis. The second recommendation suggests these agencies should continue to examine several potential options for mitigating wind turbine generator impacts on marine vessel radars, such as additional marine vessel radar operator training, reference buoys, use of radar reflectors onboard smaller vessels, and additional design measures for reducing the radar cross-section of a wind turbine generator.

According to a 2018 report by the World Association for Waterborne Transport Infrastructure [PIANC], deep-sea pilots reported that a 0.8 nautical mile spacing was needed from offshore wind farm areas to avoid interference and confusion on radar signatures (PIANC 2018). Further, “surveys have identified that a minimum distance of 1.5 nautical miles is needed from offshore wind farms to alleviate interference on ship-born radar and automatic radar plotting acquisition.

G. Maritime Incidents

Historical data regarding SAR cases and marine casualty events provide essential risk management considerations. Data from the United States Coast Guard’s Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement [MISLE] database was examined to determine incident trends and identify potential correlations to current vessel routing measures within the study area.

1. Search and Rescue

SAR cases within the United States Coast Guard Sector Houston/Galveston Captain of the Port Zone study area have averaged 118 incidents annually since 2013. While numbers have fluctuated from year to year, the cases indicate consistent trends, with the highest numbers being in 2013 (156 cases) and 2023 (129 cases). Table 7 shows the total number of SAR cases for each fiscal year.

Incident FY	Total
2013	156
2014	101
2015	109
2016	74
2017	92
2018	116
2019	103
2020	106
2021	94
2022	97
2023	129
Grand Total	1,177

Table 7 – USCG Study Area SAR Cases 2013-2023

Based on data gathered from the United States Coast Guard MISLE database, the most frequent assistance has been provided for cases involving disabled vessels, medical evacuations, and persons in the water. Table 8 shows the total number of cases divided by incident type.

Incident Type	Total
Disabled Vessel	338
Adrift (Unmanned)	46
Person in the Water	106
Aground	29
Distress Alert- situation unknown	106
Taking on Water	94
Capsized Vessel	49
Fire	18
Uncorrelated MAYDAY	69
Medical Evacuation	169
Overdue Vessel	35
Beset by Weather	14
Abandoned/Derelict	8
Disoriented Vessel	6
MEDICO	18
Assist Other Agency	5
Stranded (on an island)	3
MAYDAY Broadcast	37
Non-Maritime EMS Transport	1
Aircraft Emergency	2
Collision	6
Mass Rescue Operation	1
Unreported Vessel	11
Diving Accident	3
Allisions	1
Aircraft Crash	2
Grand Total	1,177

Table 8 – USCG Study Area SAR Case Types 2013-2023

While SAR assistance has been provided throughout the study area, it has been most heavily required inside bay and harbor areas and within approximately 10-12 NM of shore.

2. Marine Casualties

A marine casualty, as defined in 46 C.F.R. Part 4, is a casualty or accident involving a vessel (other than a public vessel) that occurs upon the navigable waters of the United States. Examples may include vessel groundings, collisions, allisions, injury

or loss of life, and several other events that could harm the environment or create a hazard to navigation.

Applicability, reporting requirements, and categories of casualties, including Reportable Marine Casualties, Serious Marine Incidents, and Major Marine Casualties, can also be found in 46 C.F.R. Part 4.

From 2013 to 2023, 453 individual marine casualty events occurred within the study area, which fell within the United States Coast Guard Sector Houston/Galveston Captain of the Port Zone. Table 9 shows the total marine casualty events for each calendar year. Table 10 shows the total marine casualties by event type.

Incident FY	Total
2013	75
2014	67
2015	33
2016	38
2017	50
2018	40
2019	29
2020	35
2021	29
2022	22
2023	35
Grand Total	453

Table 9 – USCG Study Area Marine Casualty Events 2013-2023

Incident Type	Total
Material Failure / Malfunction	163
Loss/Reduction of Vessel Propulsion/Steering	45
Grounding	19
Discharge/Release - Pollution	102
Flooding – Initial	6
Sinking	2
Vessel Maneuver	11
Flooding - Progressive	1
Allision	18
Set Adrift	5
Fire - Initial	4
Loss of Electrical Power	16
Fouling	1
Collision	11
Loss of Stability	1
Abandonment	1
Vessel Yawl/Pitch/Roll/Heel	6
Cargo/Fuel Transfer/Shift	1
Well Blowout	1
Personnel Casualty – Death	10
Personnel Casualty - Exposure	1
Personnel Casualty - Injury	24
Personnel Casualty - Missing	1
Personnel Entering in Water	1
Personnel fall in the water	2
Grand Total	453

Table 10 – USCG Study Area Marine Casualty Event Types 2013-2023

Most marine casualty events involved Tank Ships (91 events) and Towing Vessels (71 events). Like SAR incidents, marine casualty events occurred throughout the study area but were primarily located within bay and harbor areas and 10-12 NM of shore.

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District further divided and examined the location of specific SAR incidents and marine casualty event types, including collision, allision, and groundings, to determine any potential correlation with existing vessel routing measures. The United States Coast Guard Heartland District determined that existing routing measures did not significantly correlate or contribute to the locations/occurrences of these incidents.

H. Public Comments

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District considered input and recommendations from seven comments provided by the public in response to *Federal*

Register Notices and other outreach efforts. The received comments were offered directly to the electronic docket and comprised various industry groups.

Table 11 provides an overview of concerns and recommendations in public comments to the notice of study (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Record Administration 2023, 12966). The table is divided into categories based on content and includes an associated response from the United States Coast Guard Heartland District, where appropriate.

Please note that summaries provided in the following table are not verbatim or all-inclusive. They are intended only to highlight several primary concerns and recommendations. The complete comments can be accessed through the electronic docket.

Public Comment	Coast Guard Response
<i>Comment regarding the PARS process</i>	
World Shipping Council (WSC) supports the Coast Guard’s decision to conduct the Port Access Route Study and believes that updating and possibly creating new Gulf of America Fairways, Traffic Separation Schemes, and anchorages will not only provide a safe, unobstructed space for vessels transiting but also help in planning future offshore projects. The WSC further asks the Coast Guard to consider the increase in vessel traffic when conducting the study.	The United States Coast Guard Heartland District appreciates the feedback and participation in the PARS process. Recommendations are noted. As proposed, the United States Coast Guard Heartland District considers the TX/LAPARS fairways appropriate for current and anticipated traffic patterns. The TX/LAPARS study area will continue to be monitored for changing conditions, and if necessary, appropriate actions to promote waterway and user safety will be considered.
American Clean Power understands the Port Access Route Study process's importance as critical to high-level marine spatial planning and urges the United States Coast Guard to employ appropriate methodologies to achieve a balance of better waterway uses and defer project-specific analyses until after a COP has been submitted.	The primary purpose of the TX/LAPARS is to determine if a need exists for additional routing measures to maintain safe and efficient port access; the United States Coast Guard will consider all concerns of the various industries. Throughout the study, the United States Coast Guard will consider a variety of recommendations as well as numerous studies for the continued safe navigation of the MTS.

<i>Comments regarding navigation and recommended routing measures</i>	
World Shipping Council recommends placing an additional two nautical mile buffer zone on either side of the eight nautical mile fairway.	The United States Coast Guard Heartland District appreciates the feedback and participation in the PARS process. Throughout the study, the United States Coast Guard considered the recommendations of the Marine Planning Guide and numerous studies, including PIANC's 2018 study on the recommended width of shipping channels. In this analysis, it was determined that current infrastructure in the GOA restricts any expansion of the Safety Fairway within the study area as outlined in the requirements of 33 C.F.R. § 166.105
The American Waterways Operators supports the United States Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's GOA WEA Memorandum in the proposal of adding a two-nautical mile buffer zone on already established safety fairways.	The United States Coast Guard Heartland District appreciates the feedback and participation in the PARS process.
Sabine Pilots proposes the establishment of two fairway anchorages to accommodate vessels in preparation for the deepening and widening of the Sabine-Neches channel.	The primary purpose of the TX/LAPARS is to determine if a need exists for additional routing measures to maintain safe and efficient port access; the United States Coast Guard will consider all concerns of the various industries, including the proposal of additional anchorages. In consideration for any additional anchorages, the United States Coast Guard will examine the proximity of the proposed anchorages to established infrastructure within the GOA as well as any specific requirements outlined within 33 C.F.R. § 110.
Cheniere Energy supports the Sabine Pilots Association's proposal to establish two new fairway anchorages.	The United States Coast Guard Heartland District appreciates the feedback and participation in the PARS process.

Calcasieu Harbor Safety Committee is concerned that the two proposed wind farm areas that border two Gulf Safety Fairways will impact the ability of deep draft vessels to anchor. The committee also encourages the study to evaluate the east jetty's extension and deepening of its channel.	The United States Coast Guard Heartland District appreciates the feedback and participation in the PARS process. The primary purpose of the TX/LAPARS is to determine if a need exists for additional routing measures to maintain safe and efficient port access, the United States Coast Guard will consider all concerns of the various industries, including the proposal of additional anchorages. In consideration for any additional anchorages, the United States Coast Guard will examine the proximity of the proposed anchorages to established infrastructure within the GOA as well as any specific requirements outlined within 33 C.F.R. § 110. While outside the scope of this PARS, the request for a study to evaluate the east jetty's extension and deepening of its channel has been noted.
American Clean Power recommends avoiding changes to long-standing routing measures within the GOA without evidence that current fairways and the TSS are inadequate.	The United States Coast Guard Heartland District appreciates the feedback and participation in the PARS process. The TX/LAPARS study area will continue to be monitored for changing conditions and, if necessary, appropriate actions to promote waterway and user safety will be considered. The United States Coast Guard will consider all comments and recommendations through numerous studies when considering any changes to current fairways and the traffic separation scheme.

AET Inc. requests that the Port Access Route Study consider how re-routing safety fairways or safety zones for offshore wind energy may affect already established lightering areas.	The United States Coast Guard understands the importance and criticality of Lightering Operations and the attributed risk that comes with these operations. The primary purpose of the TX/LAPARS is to determine if a need exists for additional routing measures to maintain safe and efficient port access, the United States Coast Guard will take into account all concerns of the various industries while also continuing to work with the United States Bureau of Ocean Energy Management on facility characteristics, including how a site will be marked, design requirements, and navigation-related risks associated with a non-mineral energy development project will be assessed on a case-by-case basis as part of the Construction and Operation Plan, and National Safety Risk Assessment submitted by the developer.
<i>Comments regarding impacts on marine species and the environment</i>	
No comments received	
<i>Comments regarding the commercial fishing industry</i>	
No comments received	

<i>Comments regarding offshore non-mineral energy development</i>	
Calcasieu Harbor Safety Committee recommends that the PARS evaluate the potential impacts of the interaction of a deep draft vessel or offshore support vessels with the typical voltage and current of the lines transmitting the power to shore. This evaluation should include both safety fairways and anchorage areas that the study may suggest. Furthermore, the study should consider the impact of wind turbines falling into fairways and anchorages and unattended drill rigs' allisions with turbines.	The request for additional guidelines has been noted. Submarine transmission and export cables are not inherently prohibited within shipping safety fairways or traffic lanes. Overlays showing the location of submarine energy and communication transmission cables that presently pass through traffic lanes and other proposed fairways can be found on the GOA Open Data Platform. Offshore non-mineral transmission cables will be buried to a depth according to several factors – the route from the non-mineral energy area to the substation, the seabed geology, the types of vessels that transit the area, and the cable to be installed. Presently, the United States Coast Guard has not provided broad offshore equipment separation and spacing guidelines since an appropriate distance would be based on several variables related to the location of a specific area. As such, recommendations are considered best provided on a case-by-case basis through coordination with the United States Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and the developer at the project level.

American Waterways Operators encourages ongoing communication to deconflict WEA or other ocean developments with historic towing vessel navigation routes.	The primary purpose of the TX/LAPARS is to determine if a need exists for additional routing measures to maintain safe and efficient port access, the United States Coast Guard will continue to work with the United States Bureau of Ocean Energy Management on facility characteristics, including how a site will be marked, design requirements, and navigation-related risks associated with a non-mineral energy development project will be assessed on a case-by-case basis as part of the Construction and Operation Plan, and National Safety Risk Assessment submitted by the developer.
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Table 11 – Public Comments and Responses

V. NAVIGATION ANALYSIS

In conducting the TXLAPARS, the United States Coast Guard Heartland District sought to determine whether existing routing measures should be amended, or additional measures implemented to improve navigation and ensure safe and efficient port access due to several impacting factors. This process included assessing how well current measures facilitate the movement of vessels, whether current measures would continue to be adequate considering projected traffic and waterway uses, and how well these measures align with marine planning principles.

The United States Coast Guard’s *Marine Planning to Operate and Maintain the Marine Transportation System and Implement National Policy* provides a non-regulatory set of standards for placing structures near shipping routes, established routing measures, and multiple-use areas (U.S. Coast Guard 2019). Application of these guidelines will result in the lowest level of acceptable risk reduction as they are based on minimum distances for the largest vessels to maneuver safely.

Offshore mineral/non-mineral energy development and its potential impact on navigation, marine resources, and other waterway uses was frequently cited as a concern during the PARS comment periods. In assessing the efficacy of existing routing measures and the need for additional measures, it is helpful to clarify the United States Coast Guard’s role and responsibilities for offshore mineral/non-mineral energy infrastructure.

As stated in *Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular [NVIC] No. 02-23, Change 1*, the United States Coast Guard’s role is as follows:

“The Coast Guard is a cooperating agency for proposed OREI [Offshore Renewable Energy Installations] activities on the OCS [Outer Continental Shelf]. As a cooperating agency, the Coast Guard’s role is limited to providing the lead agency with an evaluation of the potential impacts a proposed activity may have on maritime safety, maritime security, maritime mobility (management of maritime traffic, commerce, and navigation), national defense, protection of the marine environment, and other activities identified by the lead agency. The Coast Guard does not have the authority to approve, disapprove, permit nor in any way authorize the issuance of a lease or associated plans.” (U.S. Coast Guard 2024)

A. Traffic Separation Schemes

One TSS within the study area comprises a southwest approach to Galveston. The Galveston Bay TSS was established in 1983, redesignated in 1987 and 1989, and incorporated under 33 CFR Part 167. From 2021–2023, approximately 31,831 AIS equipped vessel tracks entered or exited the Galveston Approach TSS. Table 12 shows a breakdown of vessel tracks that transited Galveston’s approach.

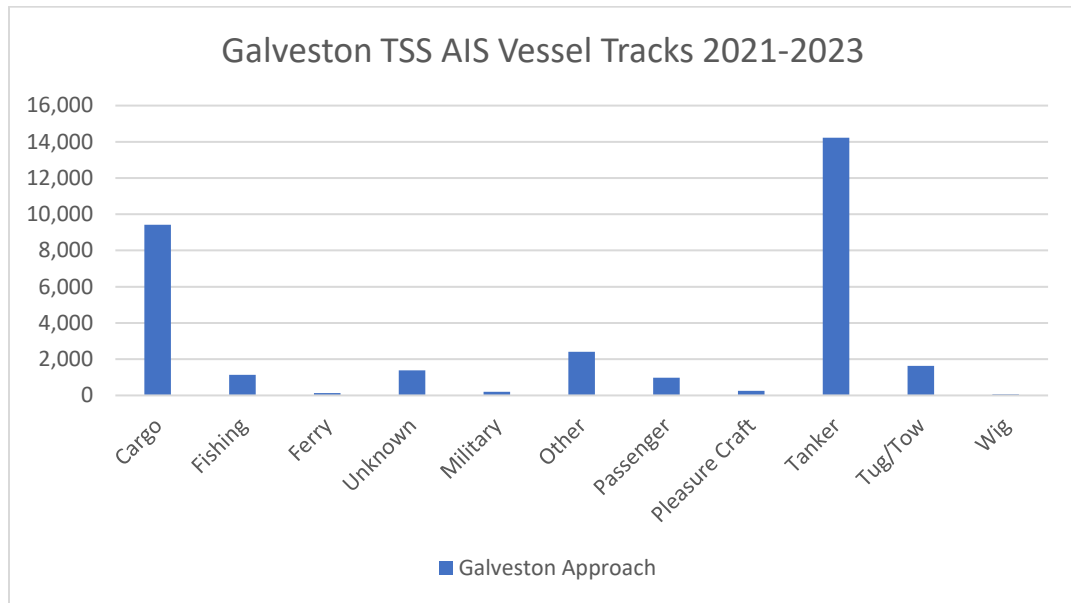


Table 12 – Galveston Approach TSS AIS Tracks

As vessel traffic is funneled in and out of the Galveston Approach TSS, complex meeting situations can result in other cross-traffic. Inclement weather and sea states can further complicate such situations and raise the risk of marine causality if combined with a potential material malfunction. Inbound and outbound traffic transit to and from various locations, with a significant amount of commercial traffic proceeding on direct routes to other domestic ports and international destinations.

While no international standard specifies minimum distances between shipping routes and fixed structures, it is widely accepted that fixed structures in the offshore environment should not interfere with navigation.

The *Marine Planning to Operate and Maintain the Marine Transportation System and Implement National Policy* recommendations listed below specify buffer zones for placing offshore structures adjacent to shipping routes. These recommendations are based on generic deep draft vessel maneuvering characteristics and account for the minimum distances for larger vessels to maneuver in emergencies.

- Two nautical miles from a traffic lane's parallel outer or seaward boundary. (assumes 300 – 400-meter vessels)
- Five nautical miles from the entry/exit (terminations) of a TSS

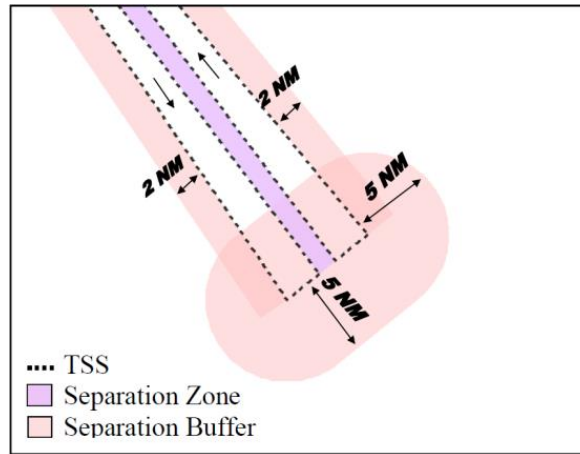


Figure 9 – TSS Example

The five nautical mile separation from the entry and exit of a TSS is necessary to enable vessels to detect one another visually and by radar in areas where vessels converge and diverge from and to multiple directions.

Figure 10, also taken from Enclosure 1, shows the approaches to Galveston, Texas. From 2021 – 2023, 31,831 AIS vessel tracks, comprised primarily of tanker and cargo vessels, utilized the Southeast Galveston Approach when transiting to and from Galveston Bay.

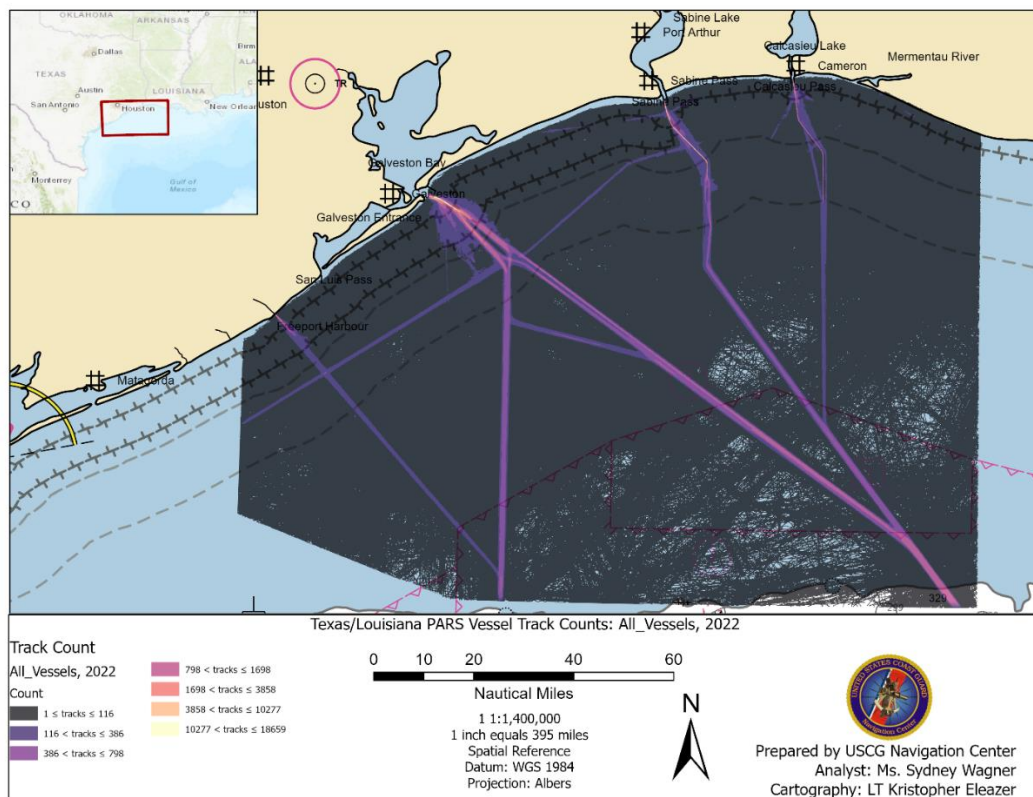


Figure 10 – 2022 Approaches to Galveston All Vessels

As part of the notification of inquiry published on March 1, 2023, the United States Coast Guard Heartland District sought additional information from maritime stakeholders regarding the use of these routes and the potential need for amendments to current regulations (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration 2023).

Based on further analysis and information provided by pilot organizations and other industry stakeholders, it was determined that no amendments to the current Galveston Bay Approach TSS should be made, and current routing measures are adequate for the vessels utilizing the approach.

B. Coastwise or Coastal Shipping Routes

The sea space necessary for vessels to maneuver safely is determined by the size and maneuverability of vessels and the density of vessel traffic. Vessels that tend to follow the coastline are smaller vessels and vessels that cannot safely transit too far offshore due to sea state limitations.

Vessels of particular concern are those towing astern on a wire. In this configuration, their footprint is large, maneuvering ability is constrained, and the catenary of the tow wire will dictate significantly greater water depths than the drafts of the tug or barge alone.

Figure 11 shows the primary tug and tow vessel transit routes within the study area, the bulk of traffic transiting to and from Galveston Bay, utilizing the established Southeast Galveston Approach.

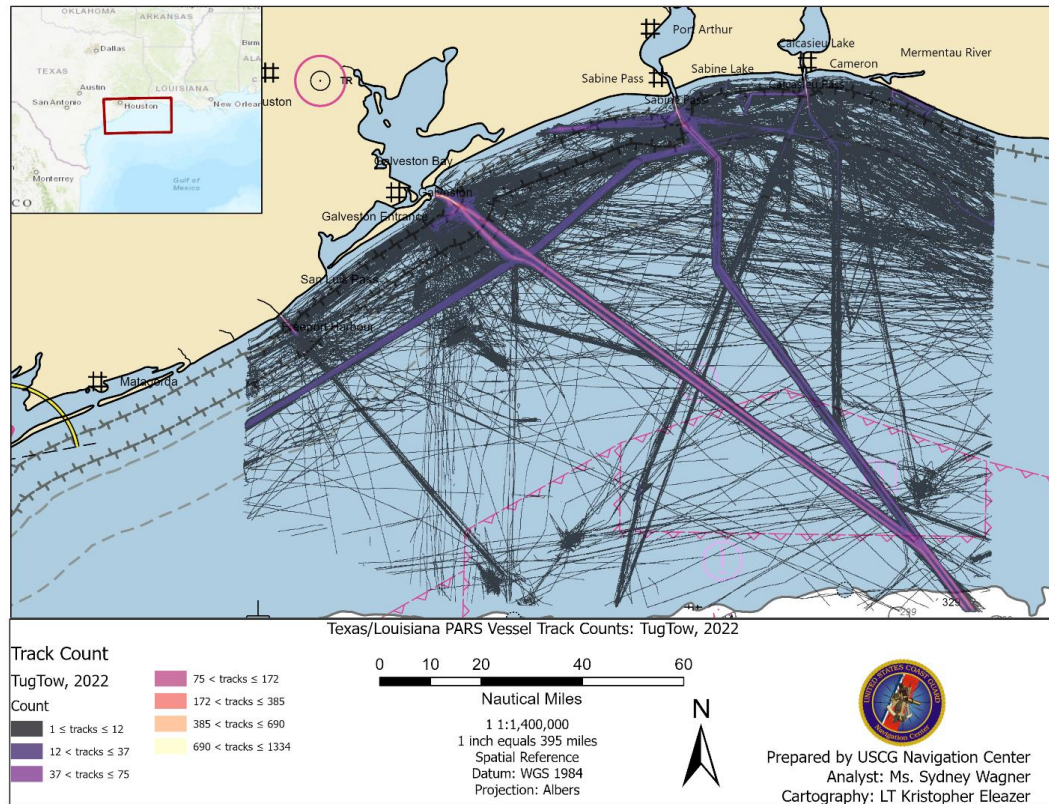


Figure 11 – 2022 Tug Tow AIS Track Density

This same coastal zone is also heavily transited by other vessel classes, including cargo, tanker vessels, fishing, and passenger vessels calling on the Freeport, Houston/Galveston, Sabine/Port Arthur, and Calcasieu Pass ports.

From 2021 – 2023, 57,415 AIS vessel tracks transited in and out of ports of Houston/Galveston, with 32,237 of those tracks comprising tanker vessels.

Densely trafficked coastal routes and port approaches extend between each port within the study area. Most of this traffic utilizes the approaches to these ports out to the South and Gulf Safety Fairway, which provides the most direct transit and better protection from inclement weather and concentrations of offshore oil/gas platforms. While each of the ports within the study area sees a large concentration of tanker traffic, a small concentration of this traffic can be seen within 20 miles of the coast utilizing the Aransas Pass to Calcasieu Pass Safety Fairway between the ports of Freeport, Houston/Galveston, and Sabine Pass, as shown in Figure 12.

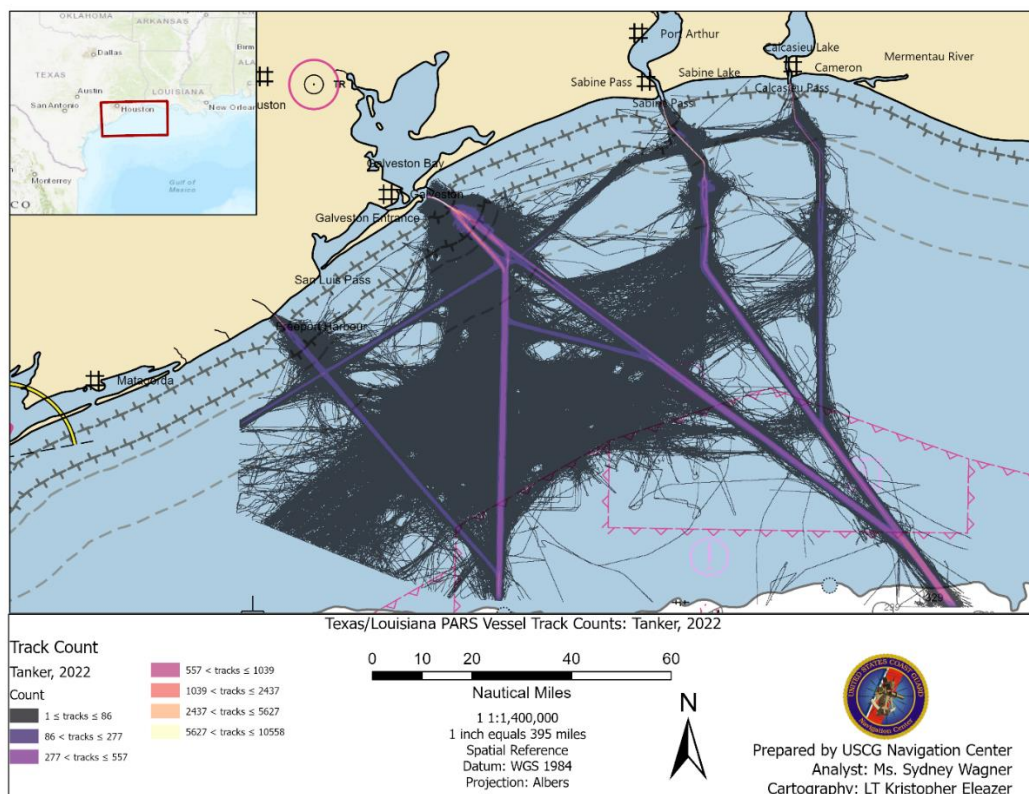


Figure 12 – 2022 Tanker Vessel AIS Tracks

The ports in this region are also amongst the most highly trafficked fishing and passenger vessel ports within the study area, as shown in Figure 13 and Figure 14. See Enclosure 1 for the complete vessel traffic analysis.

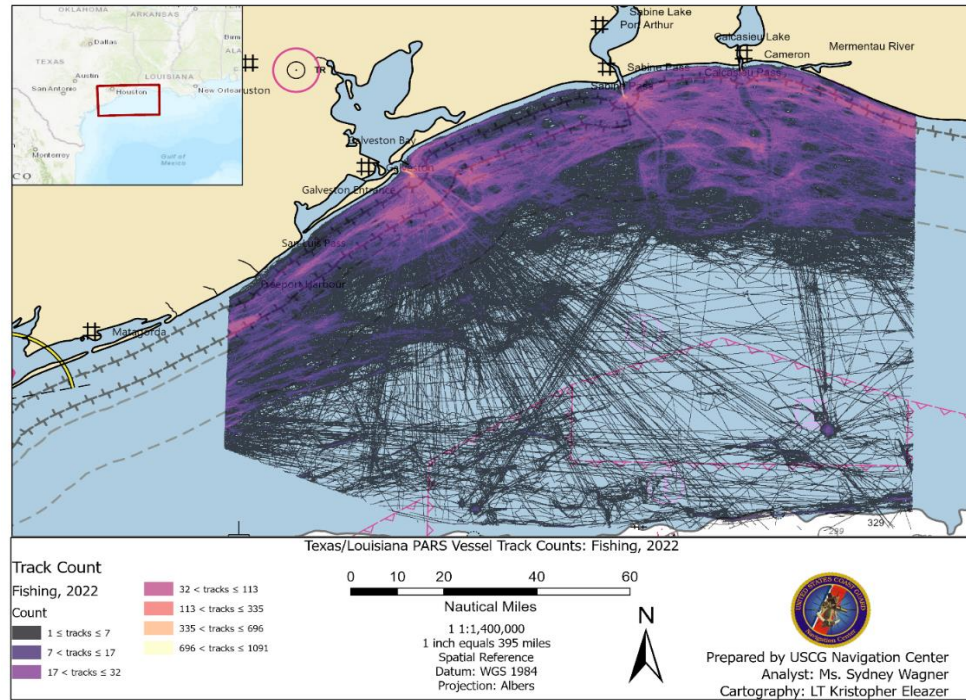


Figure 13 – 2022 Fishing Vessel AIS Tracks

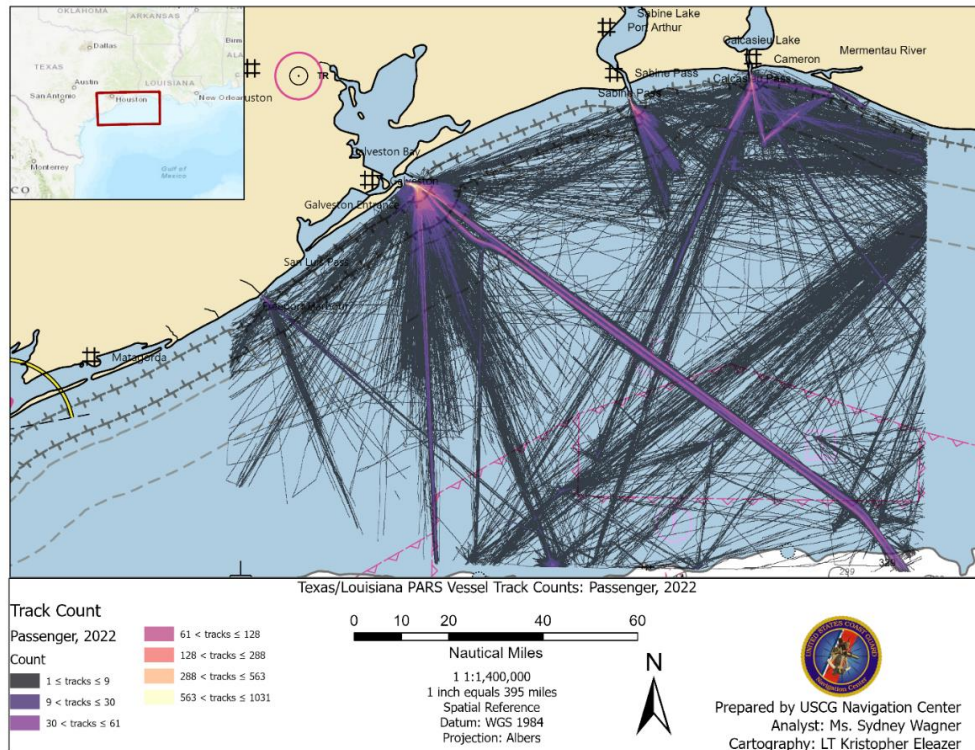


Figure 14 – 2022 Passenger Vessel AIS Tracks

The study area's vessel types and classes comprise coastal shipping routes and densely trafficked port approaches. These routes are utilized to afford vessels with the most direct transit while considering the weather, sea state, water depth, and coastal geography.

Unlike further offshore routes, potential displacement or funneling of coastal traffic is far less flexible and presents more significant navigation safety concerns. As outlined in the United States Coast Guard's *Marine Planning to Operate and Maintain the Marine Transportation System and Implement National Policy*, efforts should be made to avoid displacing traffic further offshore or in a manner that will result in the mixing of vessel types.

To ensure the preservation of unobstructed port access and coastal shipping routes that are vital for efficient maritime commerce and the continued viability of coastal communities, the United States Coast Guard Heartland District proposes that the following safety fairways, as outlined by 33 C.F.R. § 166.200 be maintained with any additional proposals outlined in Section VI of this study:

- Freeport Harbor Safety Fairway
- Freeport Harbor Anchorage Areas
- Galveston Entrance Safety Fairways
- Galveston Entrance Anchorage Areas
- Sabine Pass Safety Fairway

- Sabine Pass Anchorage Areas
- Sabine Bank Offshore (North) Anchorage Area
- Sabine Bank Offshore (South) Anchorage Area
- Sabine Bank Offshore (East) Anchorage Area
- Aransas Pass to Calcasieu Pass
- Calcasieu Pass Safety Fairway
- Calcasieu Pass Anchorage Areas
- Calcasieu Pass South Anchorage Area

C. Determining Shipping Safety Fairway Width

In considering an appropriate width and if any changes are necessary for current shipping safety fairways, the United States Coast Guard Heartland District utilized a method discussed in a 2018 report by the *World Association for Waterborne Transport Infrastructure [PIANC]*. This global organization provides guidance and technical advice for port and waterway infrastructure (PIANC 2018).

The PIANC MarCom Working Group Report 161 (WG 161) was conducted to provide guidelines for assessing required vessel maneuvering space when operating near non-mineral energy areas. Considering the potential for future installation of structures on the outer continental shelf, this methodology provides the United States Coast Guard with a baseline to determine adequate sea space for preserving unobstructed vessel transit to and from domestic ports (PIANC The World Association for Waterborne Transport Infrastructure. 2018).

The calculation consists of the following formula:

$$\text{Fairway width} = (2L \times T) + (6L \times 2) + (1.5L \times 2)$$

L = Largest vessel length transiting

T = Factor assigned based on annual vessel traffic

According to the International Maritime Organization *General Provisions on Ships' Routing [sic]*, a guideline that has proven to be accurate when determining routing measure width considers both the number of vessels transiting a route and the maximum vessel size, keeping in mind potential future developments in both ship size and traffic density (International Maritime Organization n.d.).

For example, two-way traffic in the Southeast Galveston Approach, shown in Figure 9, represents an estimated ten to 15 thousand vessel transits annually. Based on the ranges provided in the PIANC report, this suggests the number of vessels side by side is expected to be no more than three.

- <4,400 annual vessels require space for two vessels aside – A factor of two
- 4,400 – 18,000 annual vessels require space for three vessels aside – A factor of three
- >18,000 annual vessels require space for four vessels aside – A factor of four

Year	Number of Unique Vessels	Mean Vessel Length (ft)	Median Vessel Length (ft)	Maximum Vessel Length (ft)
2021	5,610	561	412.5	1,000
2022	5,683	568.3	429.5	1,000
2023	6,141	481.6	486.5	1,000

Table 13 – Study Area Unique Vessel Lengths

Using the maximum vessel length as shown in Table 13, the calculation is as follows:

Vessel Length in Feet x Minimum Safe Distance x Factor = Channel Width

$$1,000 \text{ ft} \times 2 \times 3 = 6,000 \text{ feet}$$

The PIANC study also identifies the need to account for a ship's ability to conduct a complete round turn to avoid a collision. The primary difference between calculating two-way versus a one-way traffic lane is the need to account for the reaction time and course deviation for vessels traveling in both directions. Using the International Maritime Organizations Standards for Ship Maneuverability (IMO resolution MSC.137 (76) and MSC/Circ.1053), the standard turning ability should not exceed an advance of 4.5 ship lengths, and the tactical diameter should not exceed five ship lengths (U.S. Coast Guard 2002). The PIANC report concluded that adding an extra ship length is reasonable, considering that a ship's operator may not be fully prepared for the maneuver (PIANC The World Association for Waterborne Transport Infrastructure 2018). Therefore, six times the ship's length was doubled for a complete round turn to port and starboard.

$$1,000 \times 6 = 6,000 \times 2 = 12,000 \text{ feet}$$

PIANC also adds 0.3 NM, based on a 400-meter ship length, to account for any prior deviation from the original track that a ship may take in collision avoidance before determining the need to conduct a complete round turn (PIANC The World Association for Waterborne Transport Infrastructure 2018). Based on PIANC's report, this equates to

a reaction/length ratio of 1.389. The United States Coast Guard Heartland District rounded this to 1.5 and incorporated 1.5L as the collision avoidance factor in the fairway width calculation to be conservative.

$$1,000 \times 1.5 = 1,500 \times 2 = 3,000 \text{ feet}$$

Based on these figures, the width calculation would be:

$$W = (6,000 + 12,000 + 3,000)$$

$W = 21,000$ feet or 3.46 NM. This distance was rounded to 3.5 NM to account for any plotting error.

Lastly, in alignment with the Coast Guard's Marine Planning Guidelines, a 2 NM buffer is added to both sides of any new safety fairways, resulting in a final width of 7.5 NM. Figure 15 shows the methodology for calculating fairway widths using the previously described variables L (vessel size) and T (traffic factor).

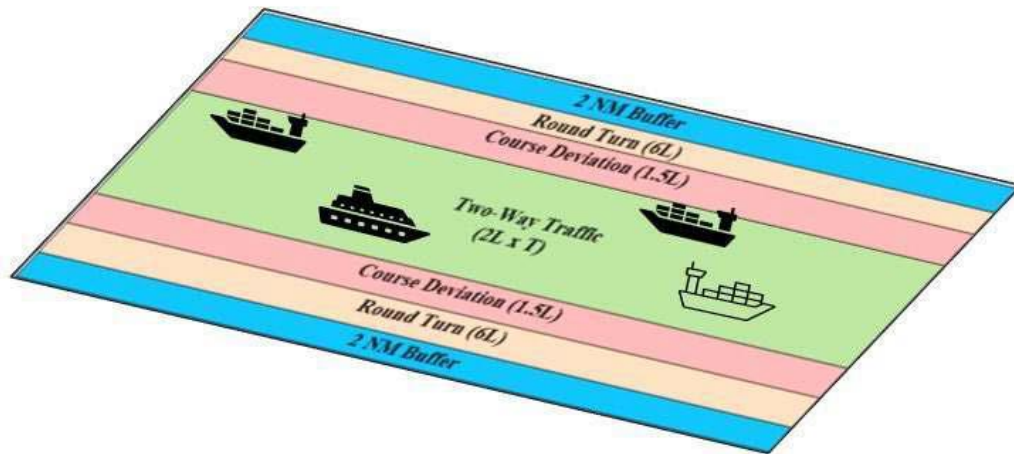


Figure 15 – Fairway Width Methodology

Due to the amount of established infrastructure in the GOA surrounding established shipping safety fairways, no changes to the width can be made per 33 C.F.R. § 166.200.

VI. PROPOSED ACTIONS

Based on input and proposals from industries and associations, the United States Coast Guard Heartland District proposes the implementation of two anchorages off the coast of Sabine Pass, Texas, and one anchorage off the coast of Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana.

Mariners may utilize fairway anchorages but are not mandatory for any specific class of vessel. Per 33 C.F.R. § 166.105, the definition of a fairway anchorage means:

“An anchorage area contiguous to and associated with a fairway, in which fixed structures may be permitted within certain spacing limitations, as described for specific areas in Subpart B.”

Figures 1 and 2 provide an overview of the proposed anchorage locations for Sabine Pass and Calcasieu Pass.

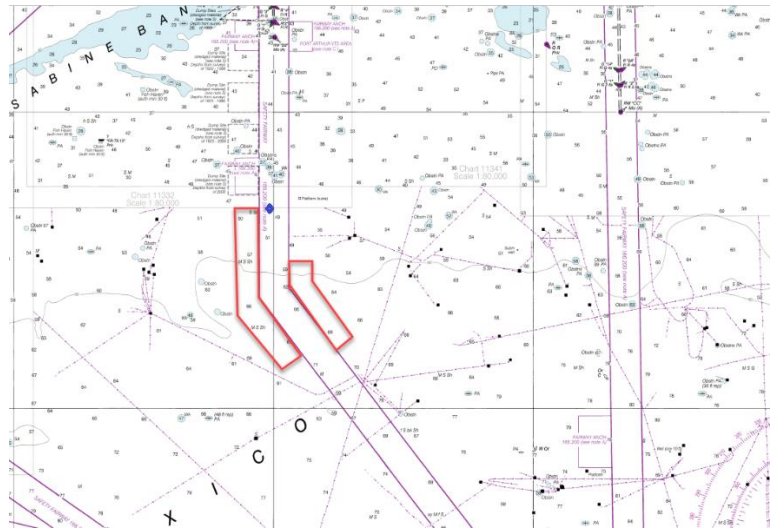


Figure 1 – TX/LAPARS Sabine Pass Proposed Anchorages

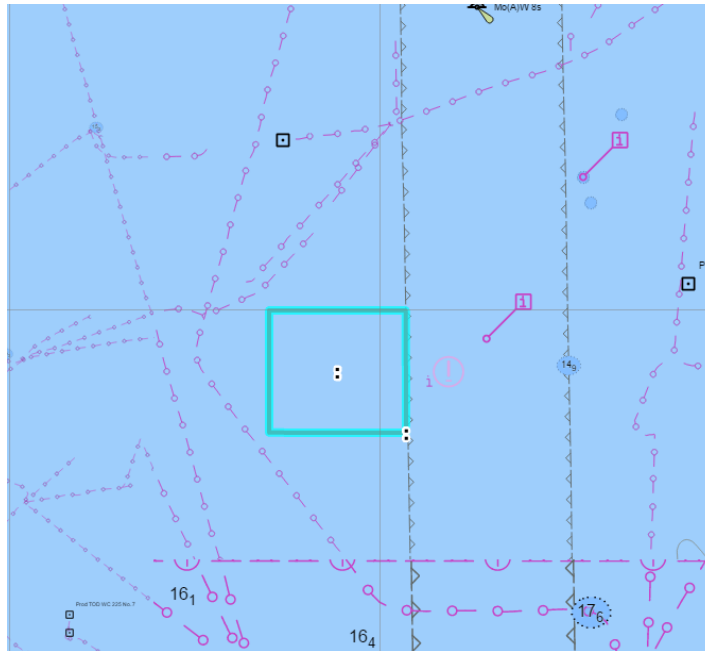


Figure 2 - TX/LAPARS Calcasieu Pass Proposed Anchorage

A. Sabine Bank Approach (East) Anchorage

A 1.3-mile wide and seven-mile-long anchorage located on the east side and adjacent to the current Sabine Pass Safety Fairway, 17 miles southeast of the Sabine Pass, Texas sea buoy and 38 miles offshore (Figure 1) is proposed to accommodate vessels of varying drafts and sizes up to the future channel design draft of 48 feet. The proposal of the new anchorage would benefit vessel owners and operators who transit this area because it would facilitate the movement of vessels, promote safe anchoring, and alleviate congestion in the waterway (USCG-2018-0388-0001).

Latitude and Longitude of Primary Points:

	Latitude (North)	Longitude (West)
1	29° 09' 55"	093° 38' 50"
2	29° 09' 55"	093° 37' 34"
3	29° 08' 46"	093° 37' 34"
4	29° 04' 45"	093° 33' 58"
5	29° 03' 53"	093° 35' 07"
6	29° 08' 11"	093° 38' 50"

Table 14 - Proposed Sabine Bank Approach (East) Anchorage Points

B. Sabine Bank Approach (West) Anchorage

A 1.7-mile wide 14-mile-long anchorage located on the west side and adjacent to the current Sabine Pass Safety Fairway, 13 miles southwest of the Sabine Pass, Texas sea buoy and 35 miles offshore (Figure 1) is proposed to accommodate vessels of varying

drafts and sizes up to the future channel design draft of 48 feet. The proposal of the new anchorage would benefit vessel owners and operators who transit this area because it would facilitate the movement of vessels, promote safe anchoring, and alleviate congestion in the waterway (USCG-2018-0388-0001).

Latitude and Longitude of Primary Points:

	Latitude (North)	Longitude (West)
1	29° 13' 29"	093° 42' 57"
2	29° 13' 29"	093° 41' 06"
3	29° 07' 31"	093° 41' 06"
4	29° 03' 36"	093° 37' 44"
5	29° 02' 09"	093° 39' 30"
6	29° 06' 11"	093° 42' 57"

Table 15 - Proposed Sabine Bank Approach (West) Anchorage Points

C. Calcasieu Pass Offshore East Anchorage

A 2.9 mile wide and two mile long anchorage located on the west side and adjacent to the current Calcasieu Pass Safety Fairway, five miles southwest of the Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana sea buoy and 40 miles offshore (Figure 2), is proposed to accommodate vessels of varying drafts. The proposal of the new anchorage would benefit vessel owners and operators who transit this area because it would facilitate the movement of vessels, promote safe anchoring, and alleviate congestion in the waterway.

Latitude and Longitude of Primary Points:

	Latitude (North)	Longitude (West)
1	29° 16' 10.42"	93° 14' 20.14"
2	29° 16' 10.42"	93° 16' 19.47"
3	29° 14' 37.5"	93° 16' 19.47"
4	29° 14' 37.31"	93° 14' 19.82"

Table 16 - Proposed Calcasieu Pass Offshore East Anchorage Points

D. Mineral/Non-mineral Energy Areas

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District continues its commitment to supporting State and Federal Agencies in their energy initiatives. The United States Coast Guard Heartland District concurs with the concerns and recommendations outlined in the comments to the United States Bureau of Ocean Energy Management [BOEM] Request for Interest [RFI] in commercial leasing for mineral/non-mineral energy development on the GOA Outer Continental Shelf [OCS] (U.S. Department of Interior 2021). The United States Coast Guard Heartland District also concurs with the concerns and recommendations outlined in the comments to the State of Louisiana Department of Natural Resources Letter of Intent (State of Louisiana n.d.).

1. Layouts and Cabling

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District recommends that BOEM and state governments define consistent layouts and cable routes for any future mineral/non-mineral energy areas in the GOA. Regardless of the area's size and equipment type, each energy area should be organized in straight rows and columns, creating a grid pattern consisting of two orientation lines. Standard equipment 1-nautical mile spacing and layout will help facilitate navigation safety, consistent and continuous marking and lighting, search and rescue [SAR], and other uses, such as commercial fishing (U.S. Coast Guard 2023). When multiple non-mineral energy projects share a border, standard equipment spacing and layout throughout all adjoining energy projects is paramount and should be required. This will have the cumulative effect of presenting one non-mineral energy project with consistent straight-line routes for the mariner through the entire area.

2. Mooring Systems and Ancillary Equipment

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District insists that all mooring systems and ancillary equipment do not impede the safe navigation of vessel traffic in an energy area and should be contained inside any approved lease area as a requirement under the terms and conditions of a specific lease.

3. Siting

Consistent with the *Marine Planning to Operate and Maintain the Marine Transportation System and Implement National Policy*, energy areas should avoid conflict with vessels using a traffic separation scheme [TSS] or safety fairway. Regardless of location, it is essential to analyze cumulative impacts on navigation for each project and identify appropriate mitigations as part of a developer's Navigation Safety Risk Assessment. In alignment with the *CGNAV Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures [TTP] Marine Planning 2025-01*, site selection will not impede the separation distance with which the water area facilities cannot be directly affected by the collapse of an offshore piece of equipment nor the affected wake behind the equipment.

The United States Coast Guard will provide evaluations of the potential impacts a project may have on the Marine Transportation System, the safety of navigation, other traditional waterway uses, and the Coast Guard's ability to conduct its statutory missions.

4. Marine Vessel Radar

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District recommends that mariners consider the mitigation methods described within the *Wind Turbine Generator Impacts to Marine Vessel Radar*, such as implementing supplemental watch standers, greater utilization of non-radar navigation tools, and leveraging additional onboard technologies such as AIS or adopting solid-state Marine Vessel Radar equipment that are better capable of filtering out unwanted radar returns (National Academies 2022). In addition, updated training to enhance a radar operator's proficiency in distinguishing targets and reducing clutter could be beneficial.

While outside the scope of this PARS, the United States Coast Guard Heartland District concurs with the National Academies' assessment that a need exists to collect

more data and develop physics-based models for developing strategies to mitigate the potential adverse effects of wind turbine generators on marine vessel radar.

Ultimately, the mariner will be forced to implement appropriate safety measures when navigating within or adjacent to any future offshore non-mineral energy area developed within the study area.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District considered implementing new routing measure regulations to promote safe navigation and efficient access to ports within the study area. The United States Coast Guard Heartland District thoroughly examined the concerns presented through the public comment period to identify current vessel traffic trends and determine potential changes that may result due to environmental factors, changes in fishery management and species distribution, port development projects, and future offshore energy infrastructure.

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District concluded that these factors may result in larger vessel classes, increased traffic densities, and displacement of traditional transit routes. The United States Coast Guard Heartland District thoroughly examined established safety fairways and compared them to recommendations through several working groups. The United States Coast Guard Heartland District determined that safety fairways within the study area are adequate; however, they cannot be widened as recommended due to established infrastructure within the GOA. As ports expand in the next decade, the United States Coast Guard Heartland District further concluded that implementing several new anchorages would be critical to providing vessels a safety zone as they await clearance into port.

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District provided recommendations for the siting and layout of potential offshore mineral/non-mineral energy areas within the study area. It will continue to serve as a NEPA cooperating agency to BOEM's environmental review of each proposed project. In that role, the United States Coast Guard will evaluate the navigational safety risk of each proposal on a case-by-case basis.

The United States Coast Guard Heartland District actively monitors all waterways subject to its jurisdiction to help ensure navigation safety. As such, the United States Coast Guard Heartland District will continue to monitor the TX/LAPARS study area for changing conditions and consider appropriate actions to promote waterway and user safety.

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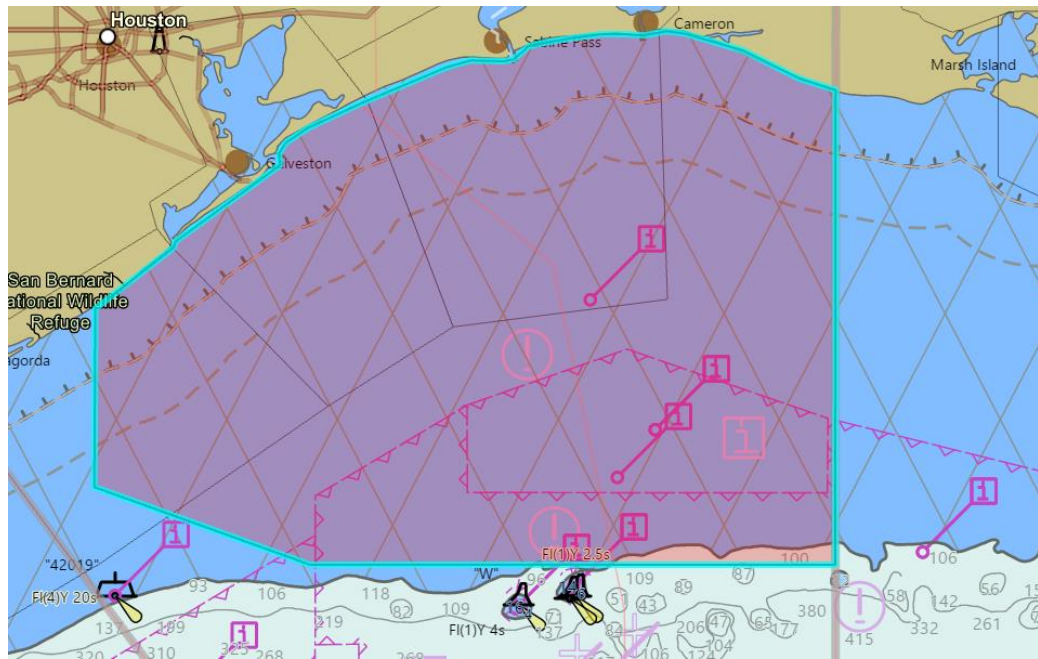
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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

TX/LAPARS STUDY AREA



APPENDIX B

Definition of Terms

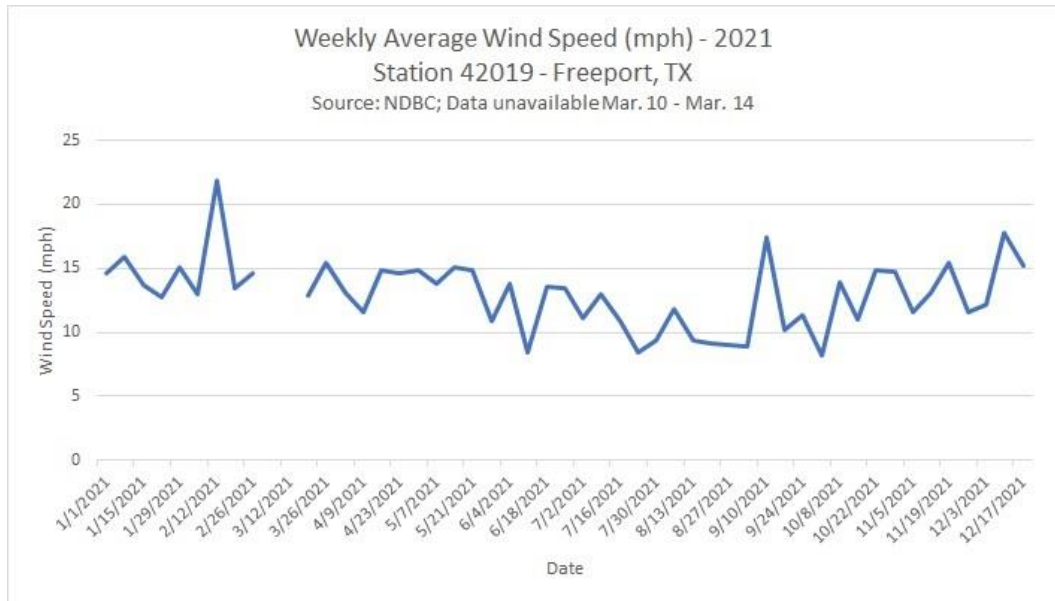
1. Area to be avoided or ATBA – a routing measure comprising an area within defined limits in which navigation is particularly hazardous or crucial to prevent casualties, which should be avoided by all vessels or particular classes of vessels.
2. Deep-water route – within defined limits, which has been accurately surveyed for clearance of sea bottom and submerged obstacles as indicated on nautical charts.
3. Fairway – a lane or corridor in which no artificial island or structure, whether temporary or permanent, will be permitted so that vessels using U.S. ports will have unobstructed approaches.
4. Inshore traffic zone – a routing measure comprising a designated area between the landward boundary of a traffic separation scheme and the adjacent coast to be used under the provisions of Rule 10(d), as amended, of the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972 (COLREGS), 33 CFR 83.
5. Marine Environment – the navigable waters of the United States and the land resources therein and thereunder; the waters and fishery resources of any area over which the United States asserts exclusive fishery management authority; the seabed and subsoil of the Outer Continental Shelf of the United States, the resources thereof and the waters superjacent to that; and the recreational, economic, and scenic values of such waters and resources.
6. No anchoring area – a routing measure comprising an area within defined limits where anchoring is hazardous or could result in unacceptable damage to the marine environment. All vessels or particular classes of vessels should avoid anchoring in a no-anchoring area except in case of immediate danger to the vessel or the persons on board.
7. Precautionary area – 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.
8. Recommended route – a route of undefined width for the convenience of vessels in transit, often marked by centerline buoys.
9. Recommended track – a route that has been specially examined to ensure that it is free of dangers and that vessels are advised to navigate along it.
10. Regulated navigation area (RNA) – a water area within a defined boundary for which regulations for vessels navigating the region have been established under 33 CFR part 165.
11. Roundabout – a routing measure comprising a separation point or circular separation zone and a circular traffic lane within defined limits. Traffic within the

roundabout is separated by moving counterclockwise around the separation point or zone.

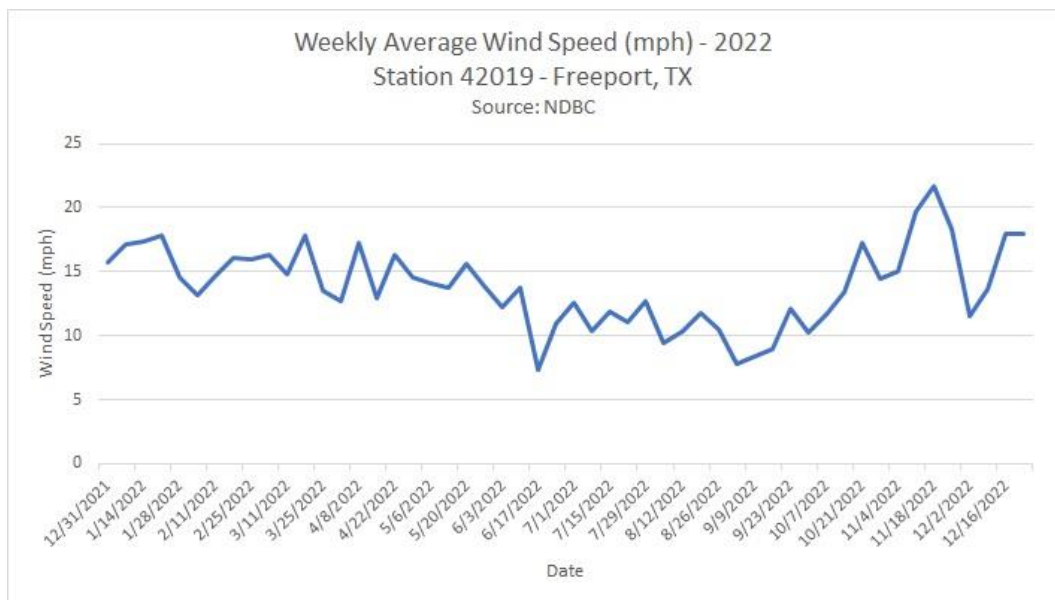
12. Separation Zone or separation line – separates the traffic lanes in which vessels are proceeding in opposite or nearly opposite directions from the adjacent sea area or separating traffic lanes designated for particular classes of vessels proceeding in the same direction.
13. Traffic lane – an area within defined limits where one-way traffic is established. Natural obstacles, including those forming separation zones, may constitute a boundary.
14. Traffic separation scheme (TSS) – a routing measure aimed at separating opposing traffic streams by appropriate means and establishing traffic lanes.
15. Two-way route – a route within defined limits inside which two-way traffic is established, aimed at providing safe passage of ships through waters where navigation is difficult or dangerous.
16. Vessel routing system – any system of one or more routes or routing measures aimed at reducing the risk of casualties; it includes traffic separation schemes, two-way routes, recommended tracks, areas to be avoided, no anchoring areas, inshore traffic zones, roundabouts, precautionary areas, and deep-water routes.

APPENDIX C

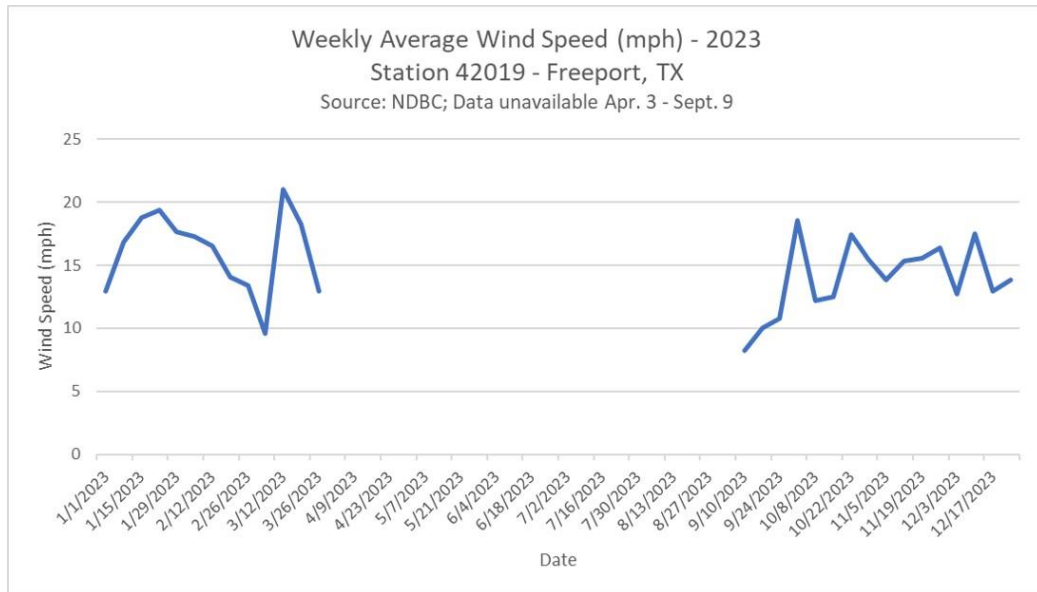
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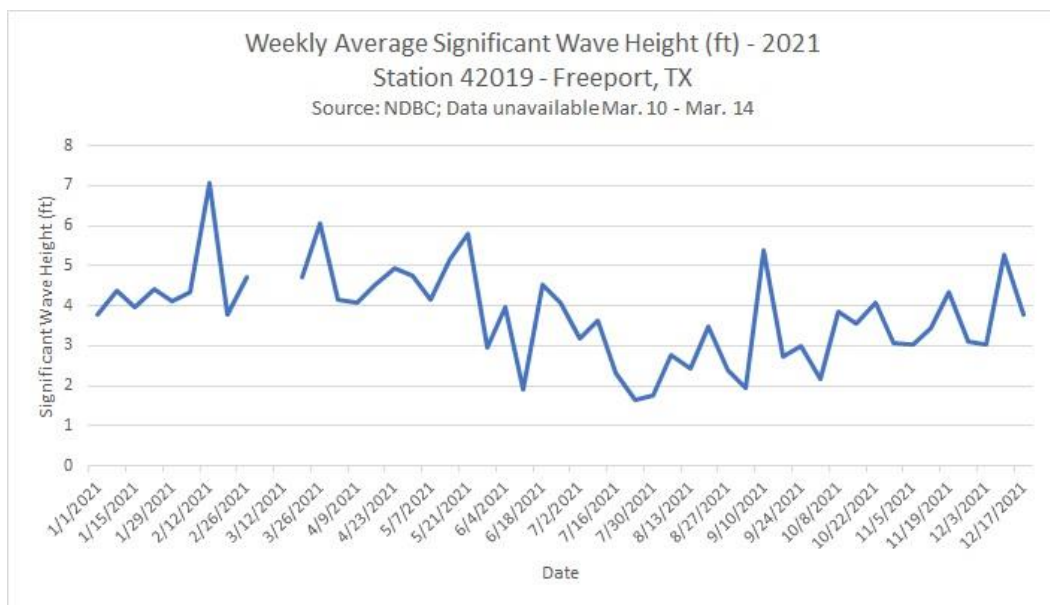
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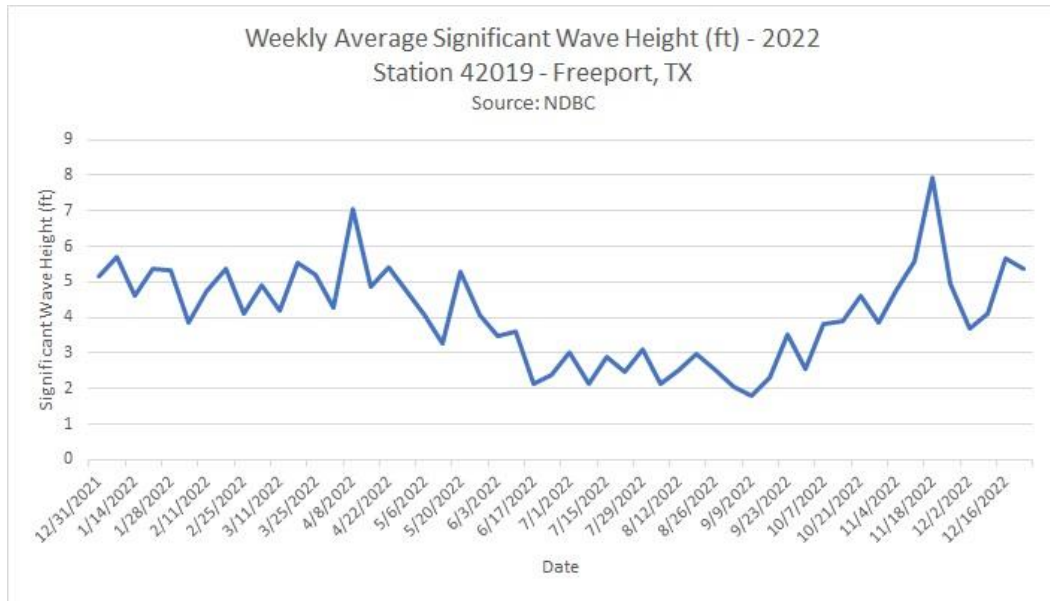
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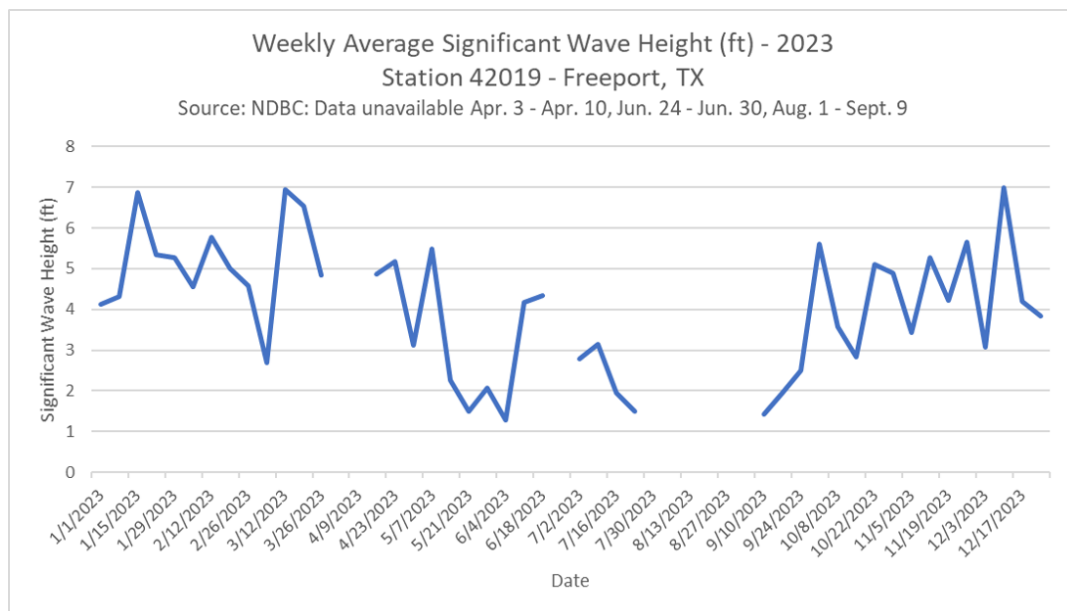
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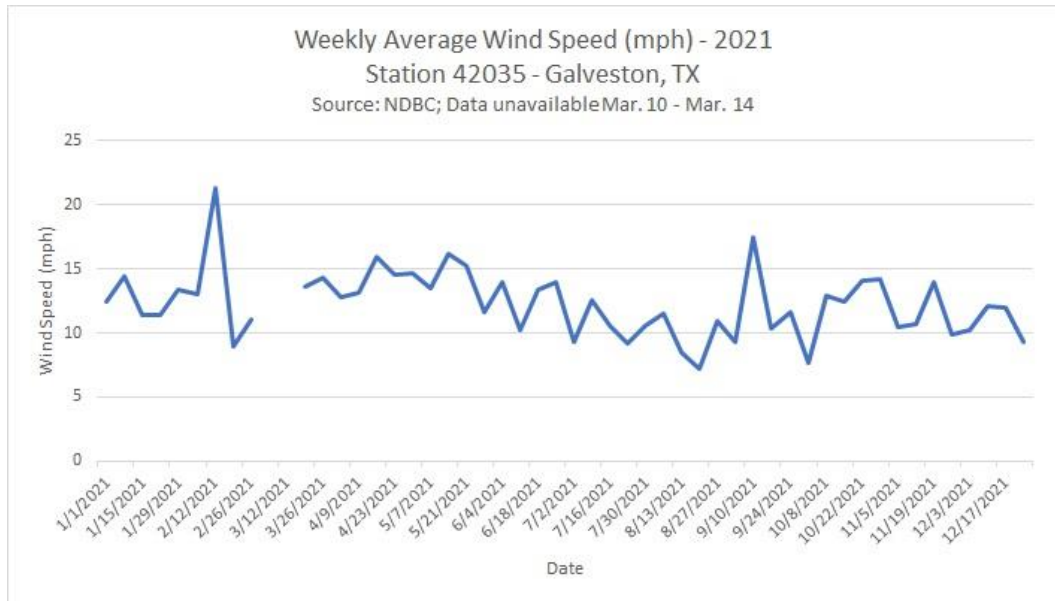
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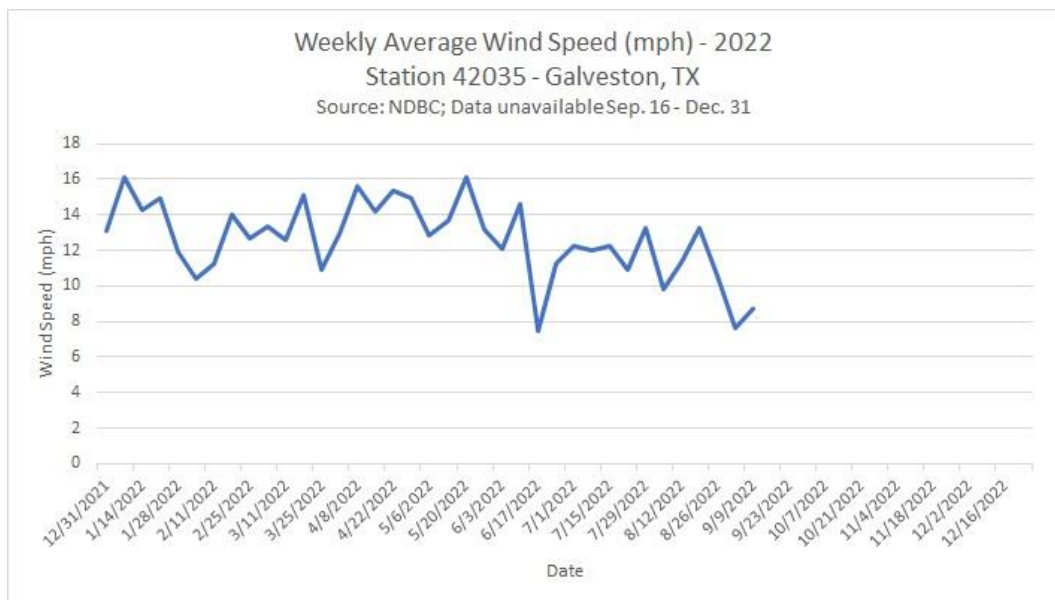
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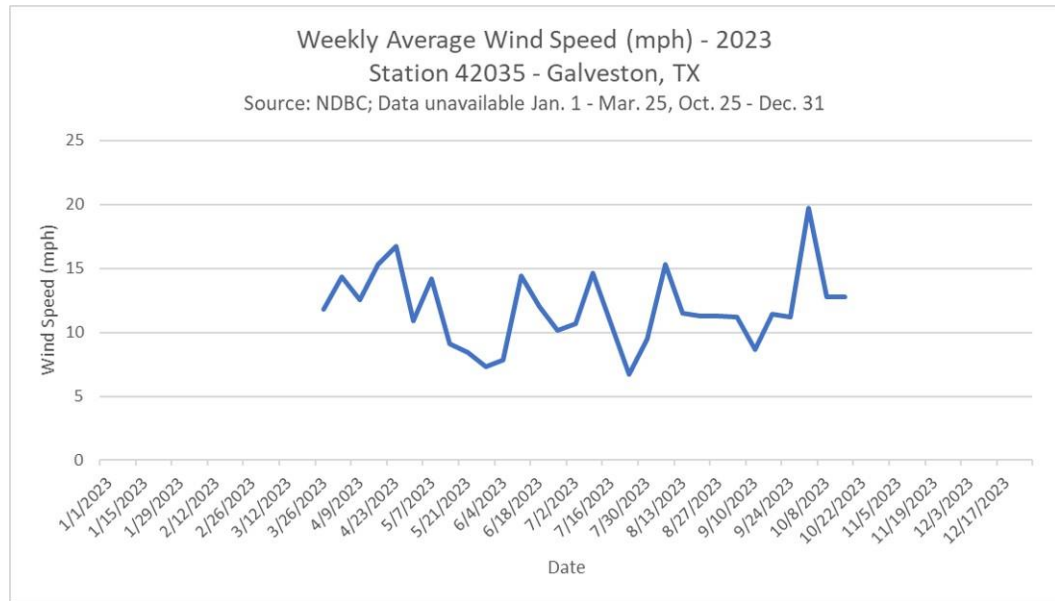
Weekly Average Significant Wave Height Freeport, TX 2023



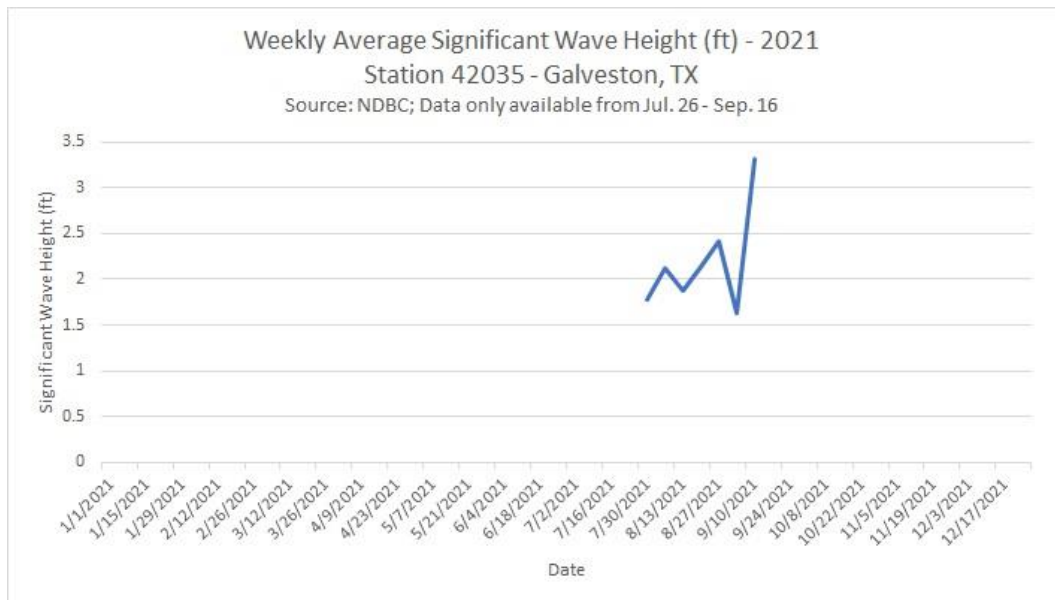
Weekly Average Wind Speed Galveston, TX 2021



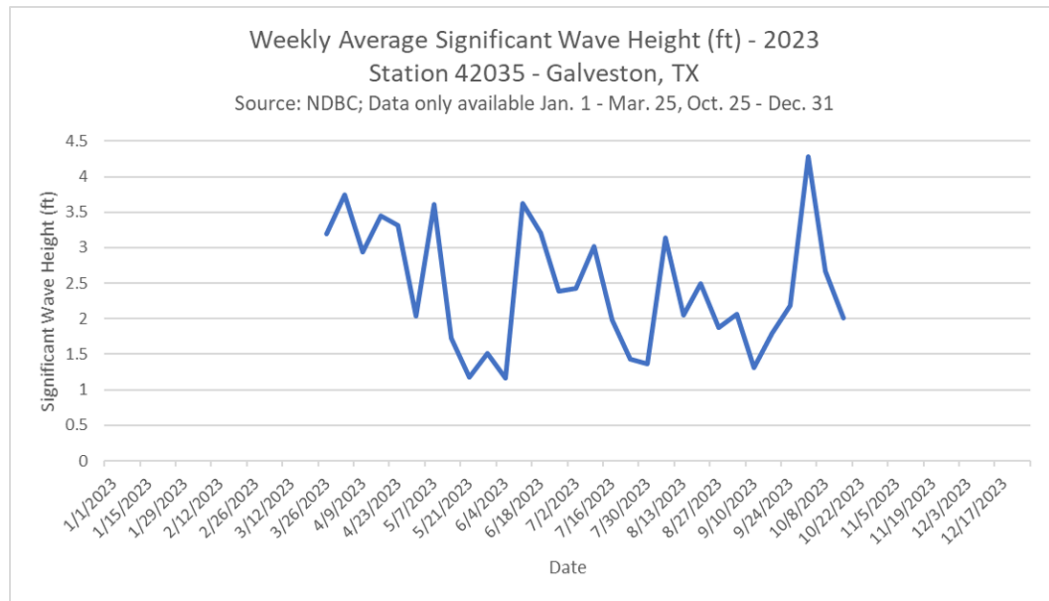
Weekly Average Wind Speed Galveston, TX 2022



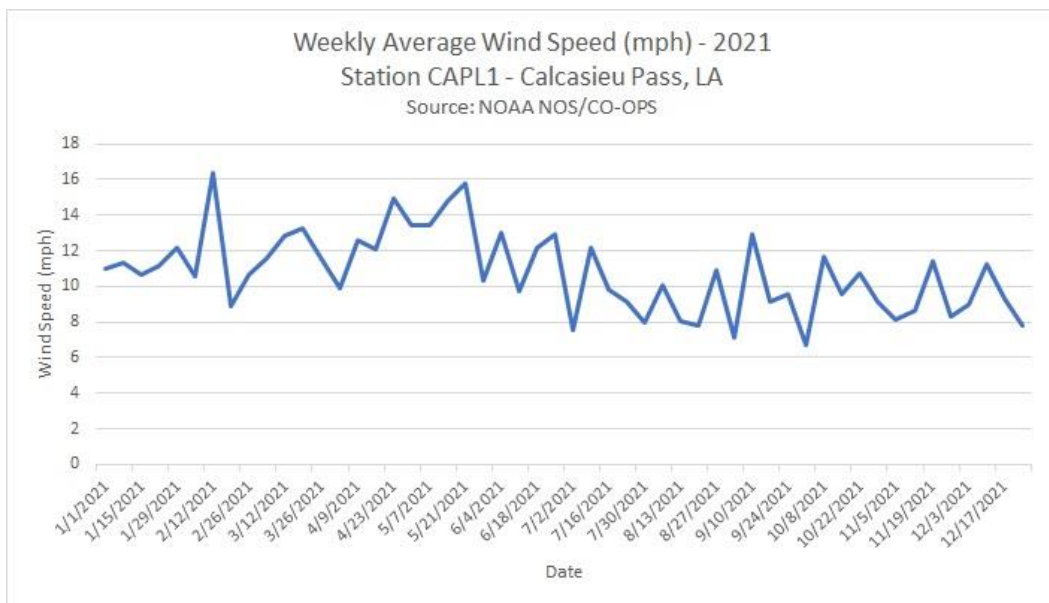
Weekly Average Wind Speed Galveston, TX 2023



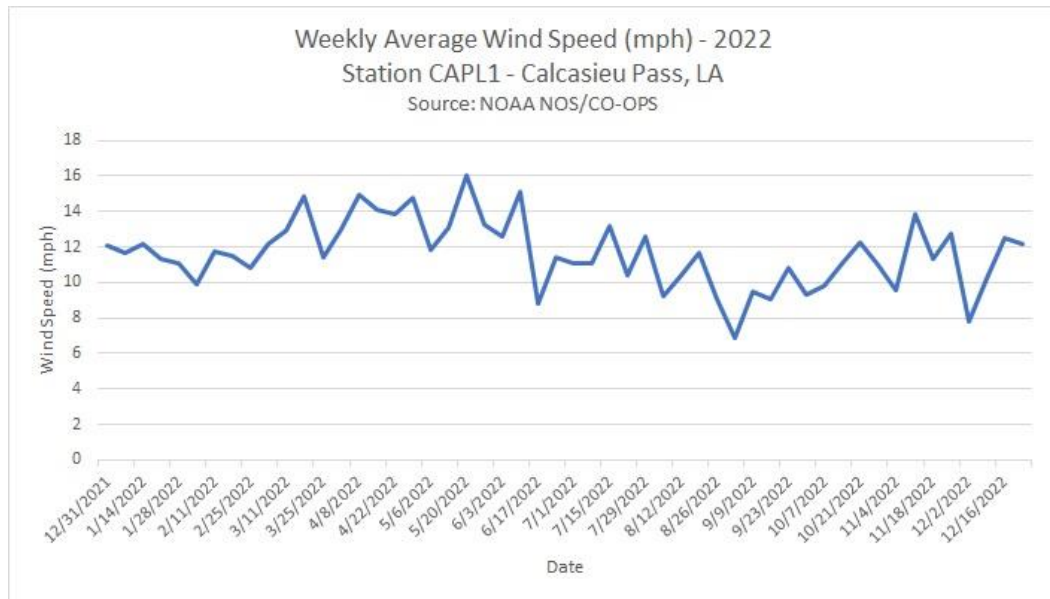
Weekly Average Wave Significant Wave Height Galveston, TX 2021



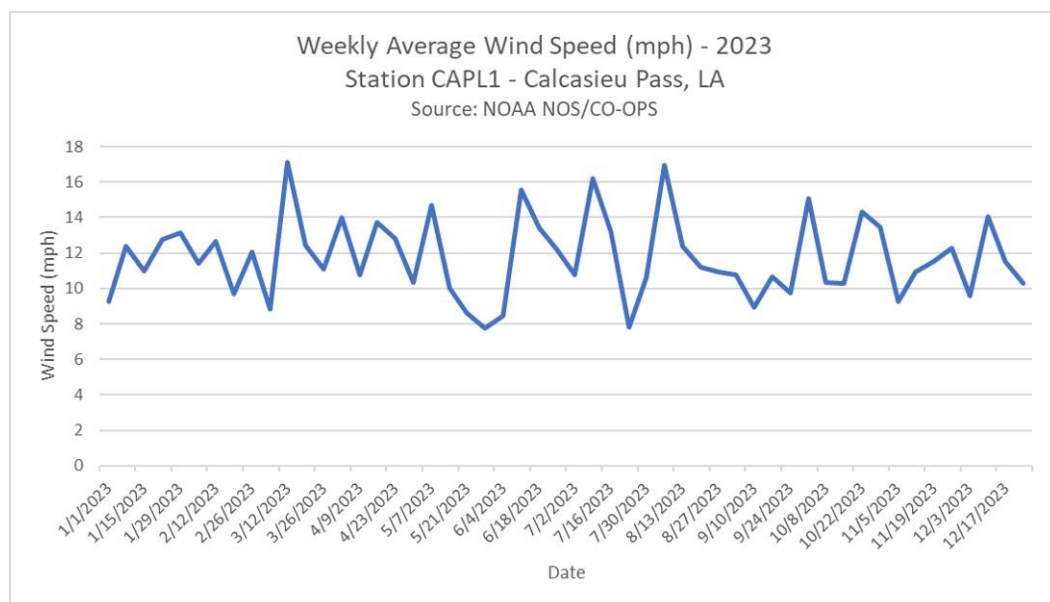
Weekly Average Wave Significant Wave Height Galveston, TX 2023



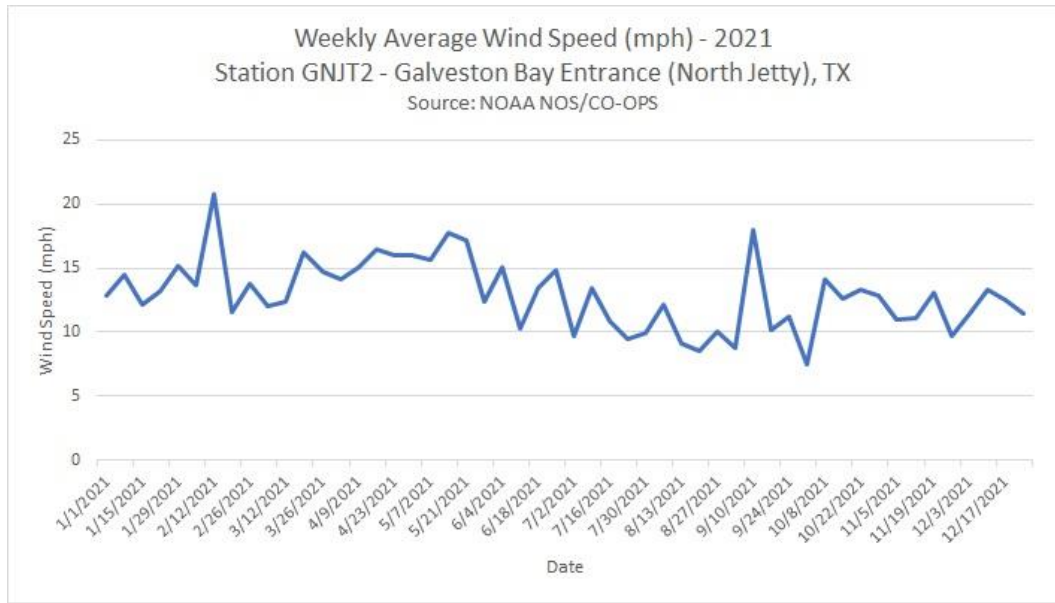
Weekly Average Wind Speed Calcasieu Pass, LA 2021



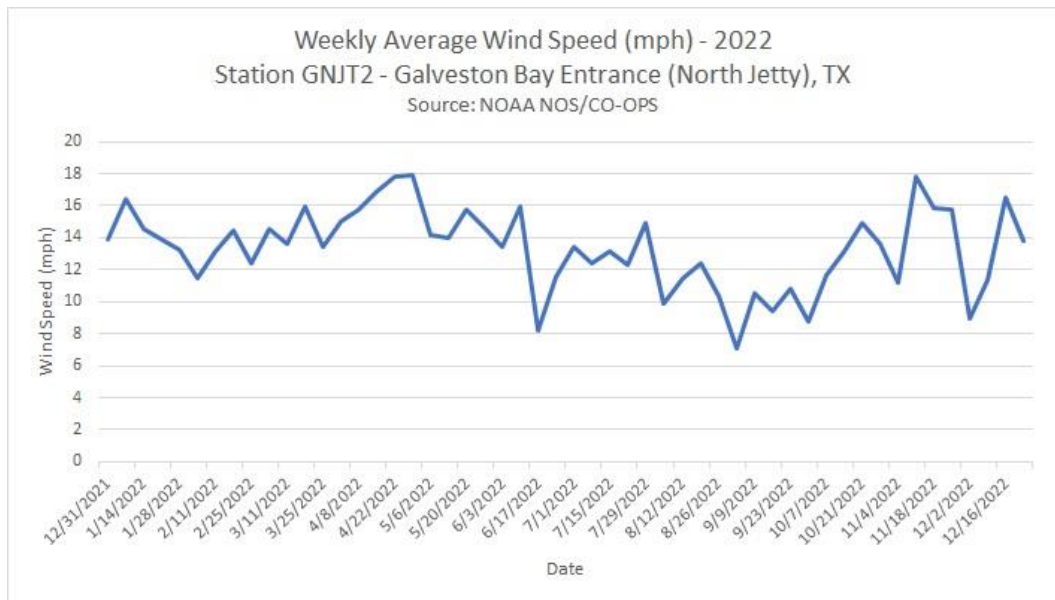
Weekly Average Wind Speed Calcasieu Pass, LA 2022



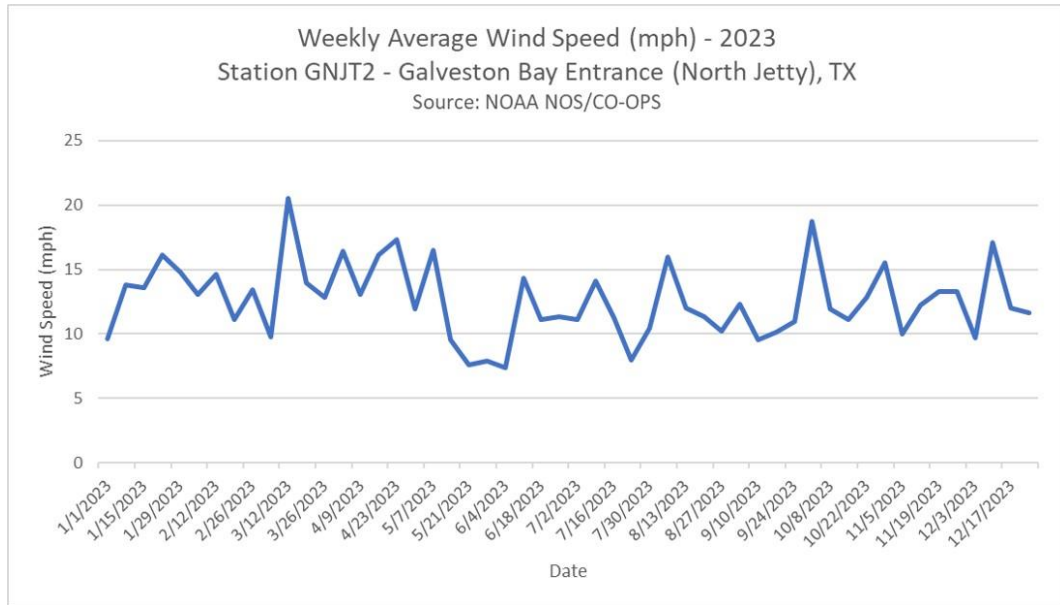
Weekly Average Wind Speed Calcasieu Pass, LA 2023



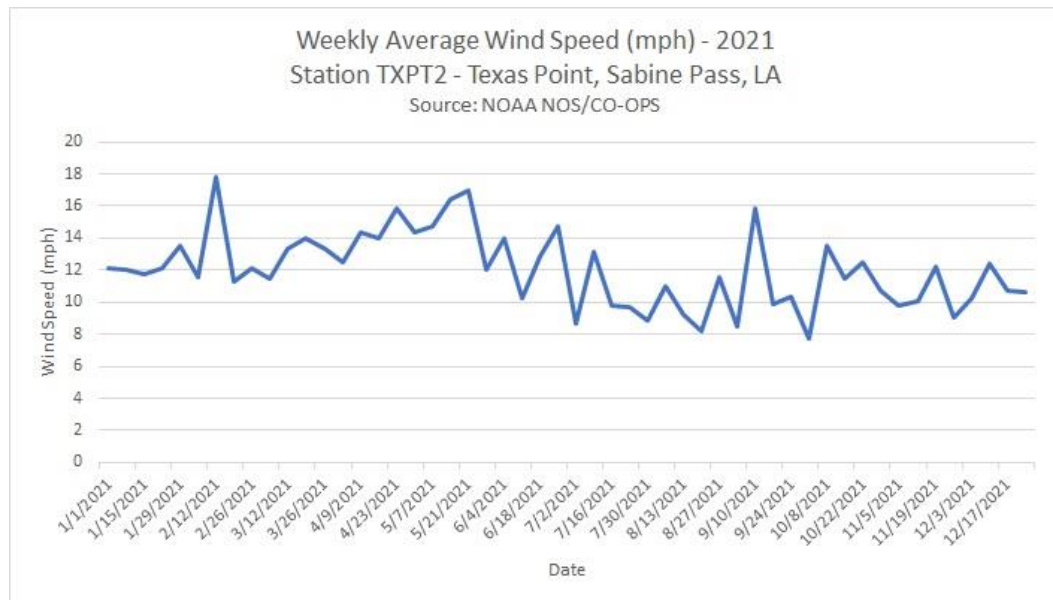
Weekly Average Wind Speed Galveston, TX North Jetty 2021



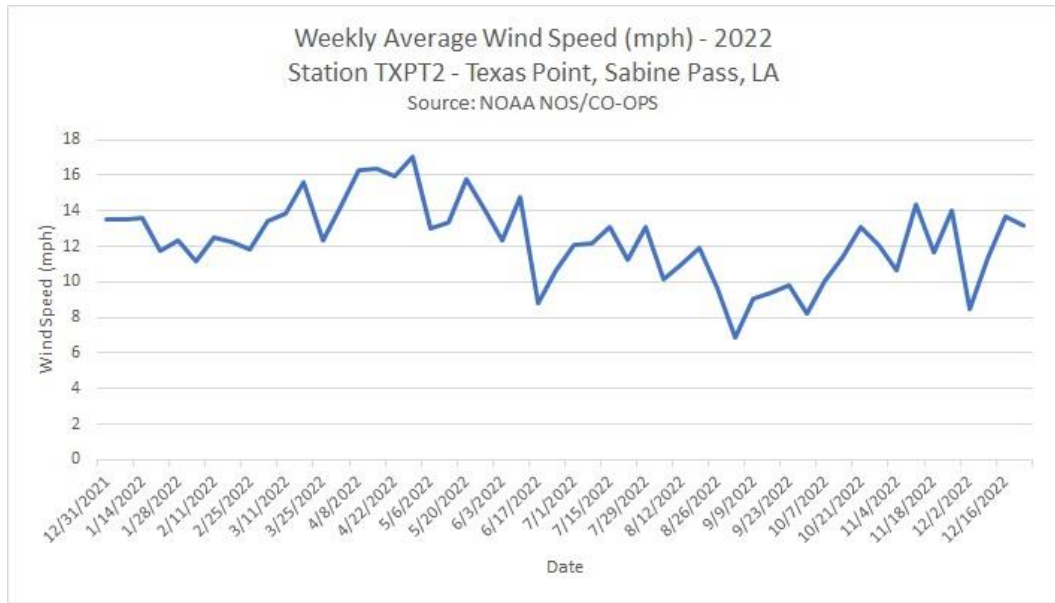
Weekly Average Wind Speed Galveston, TX North Jetty 2022



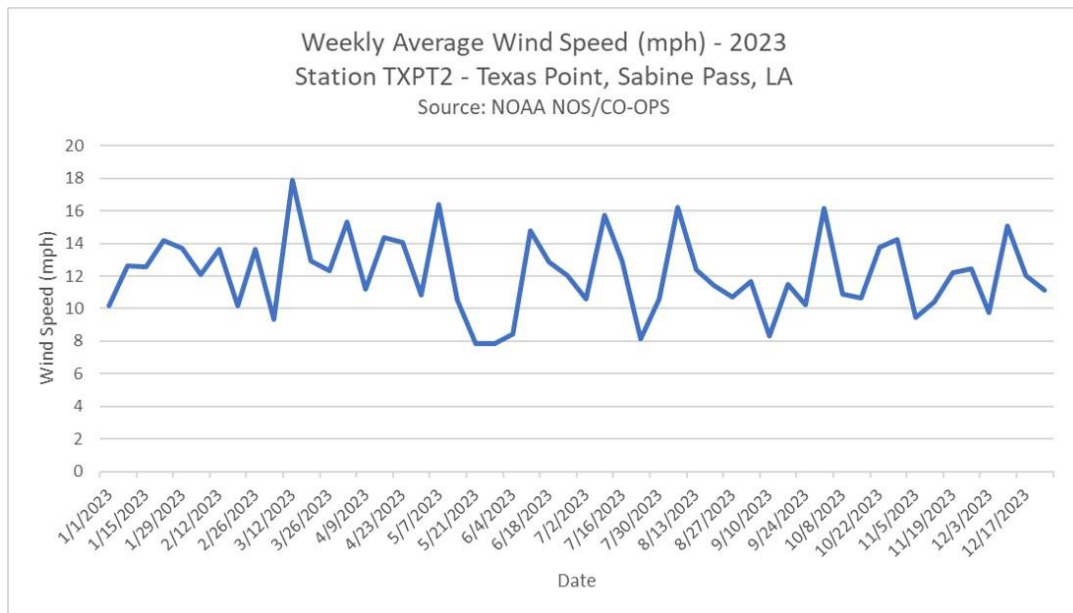
Weekly Average Wind Speed Galveston, TX North Jetty 2023



Weekly Average Wind Speed Sabine Pass, LA 2021



Weekly Average Wind Speed Sabine Pass, LA 2022



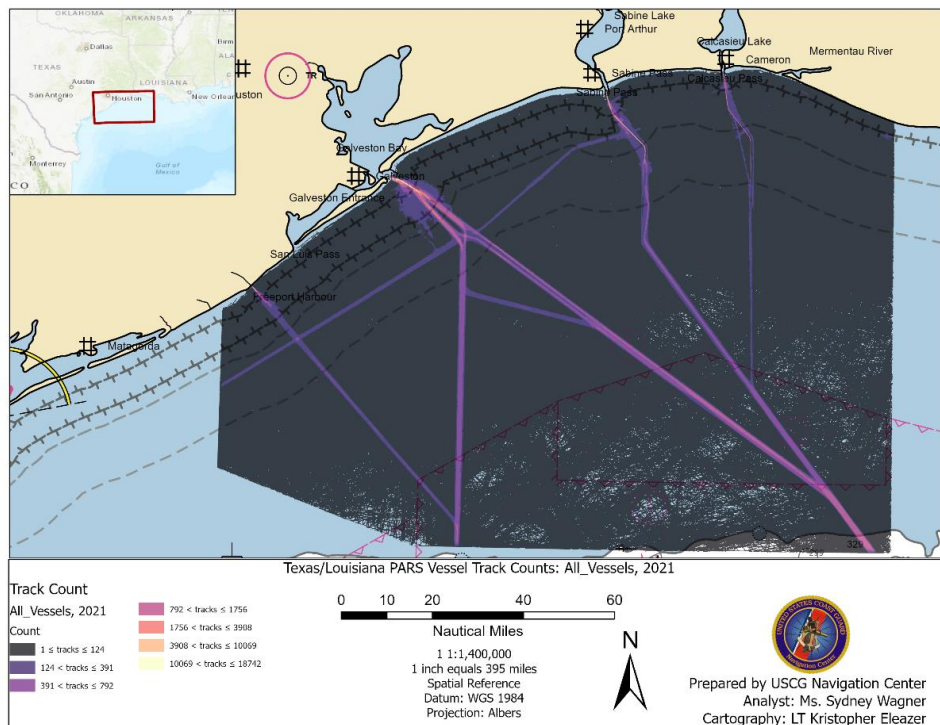
Weekly Average Wind Speed Sabine Pass, LA 2023

ENCLOSURES

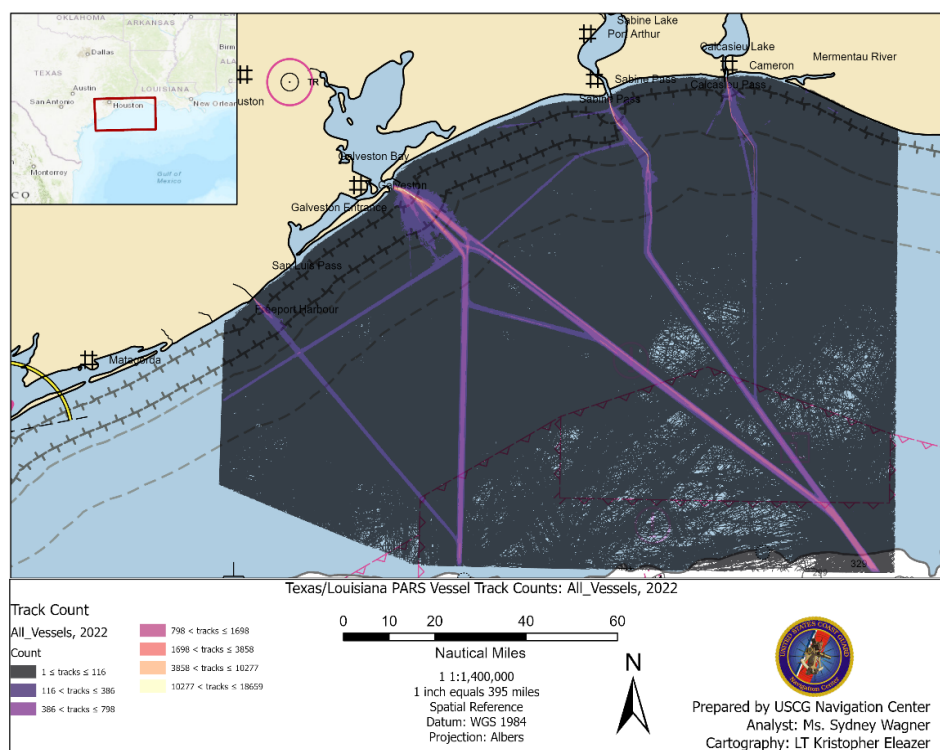
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ENCLOSURE 1

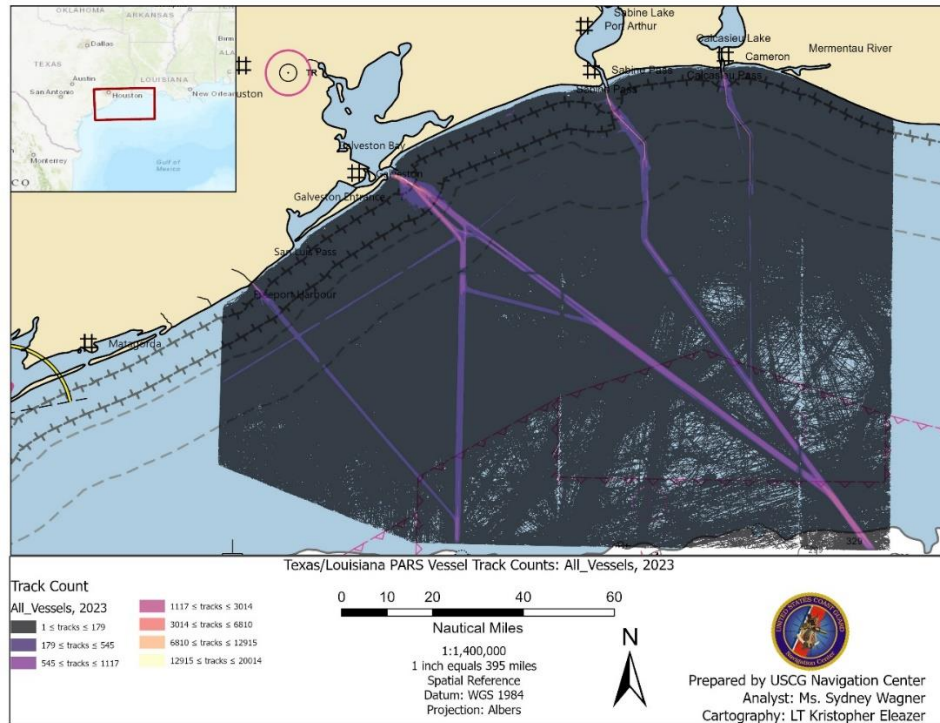
Vessel Traffic Summary



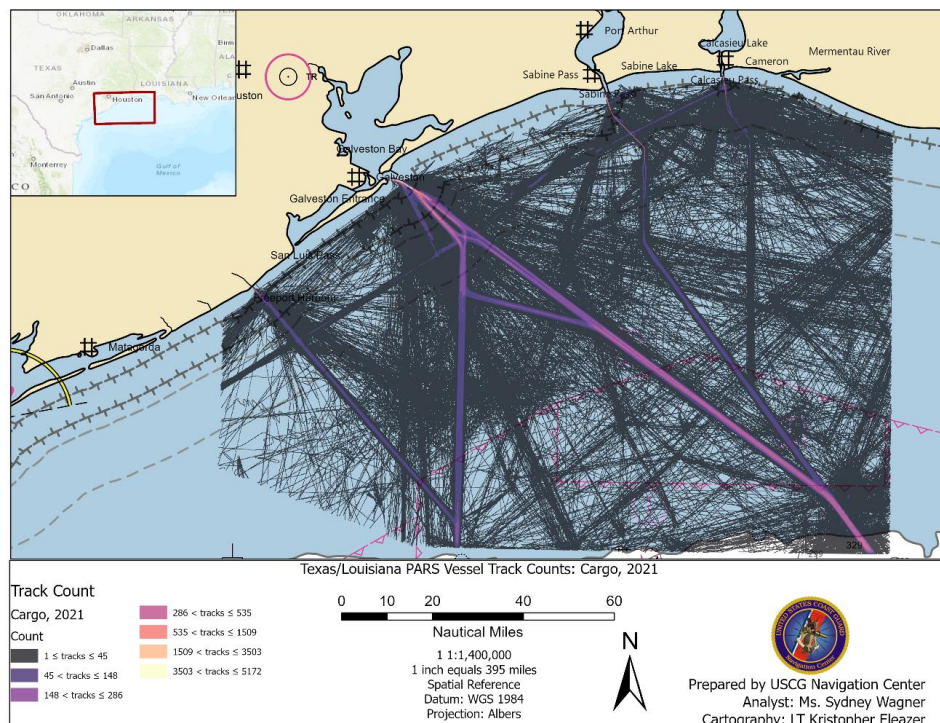
All Vessel AIS Tracks 2021



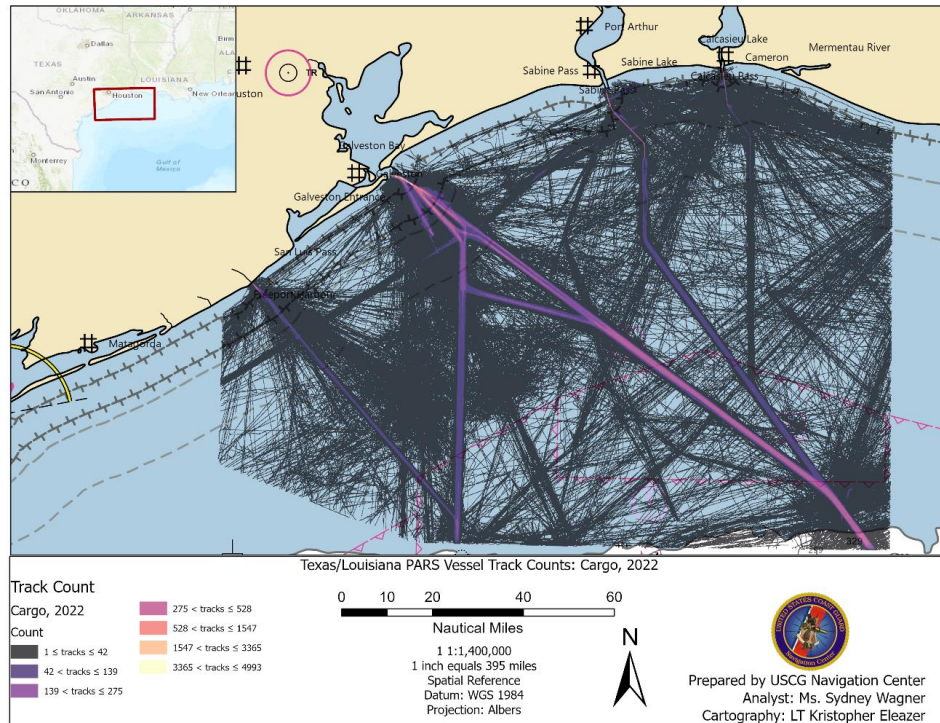
All Vessel AIS Tracks 2022



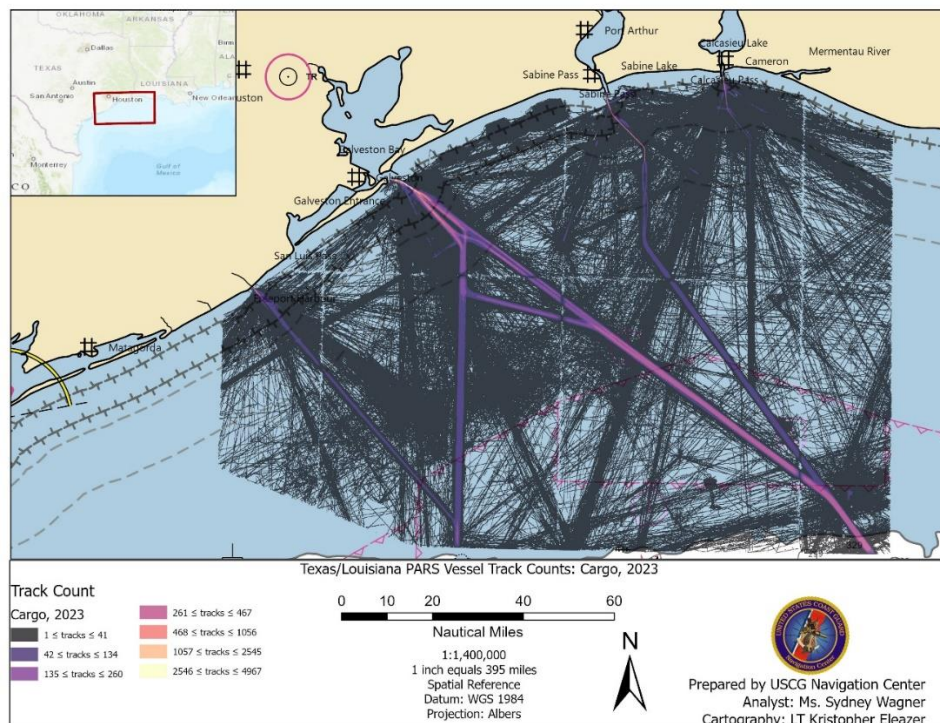
All Vessel AIS Tracks 2023



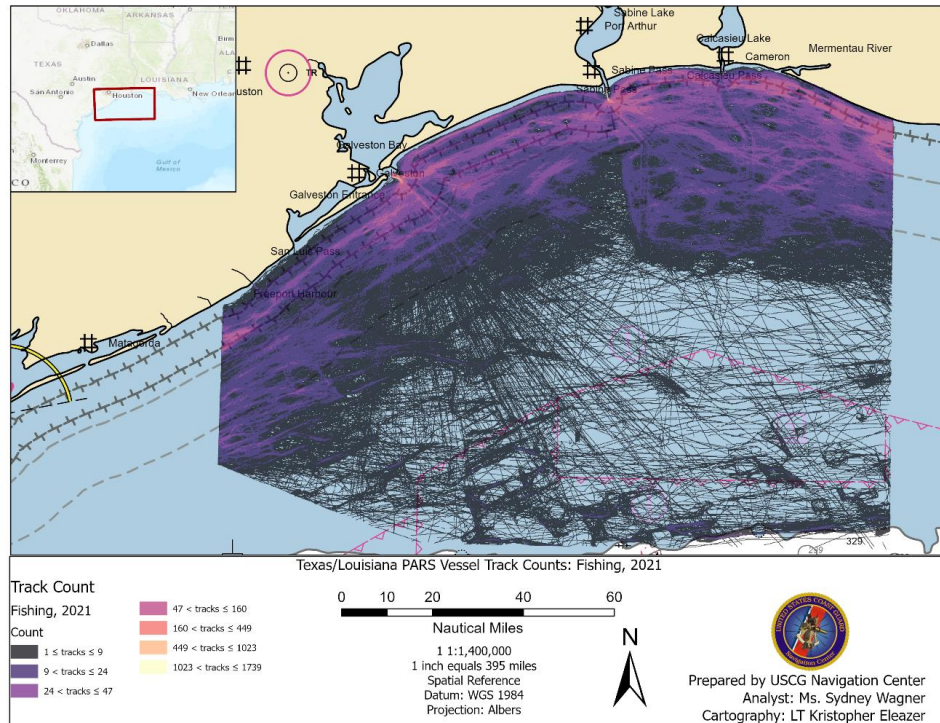
Cargo Vessel AIS Tracks 2021



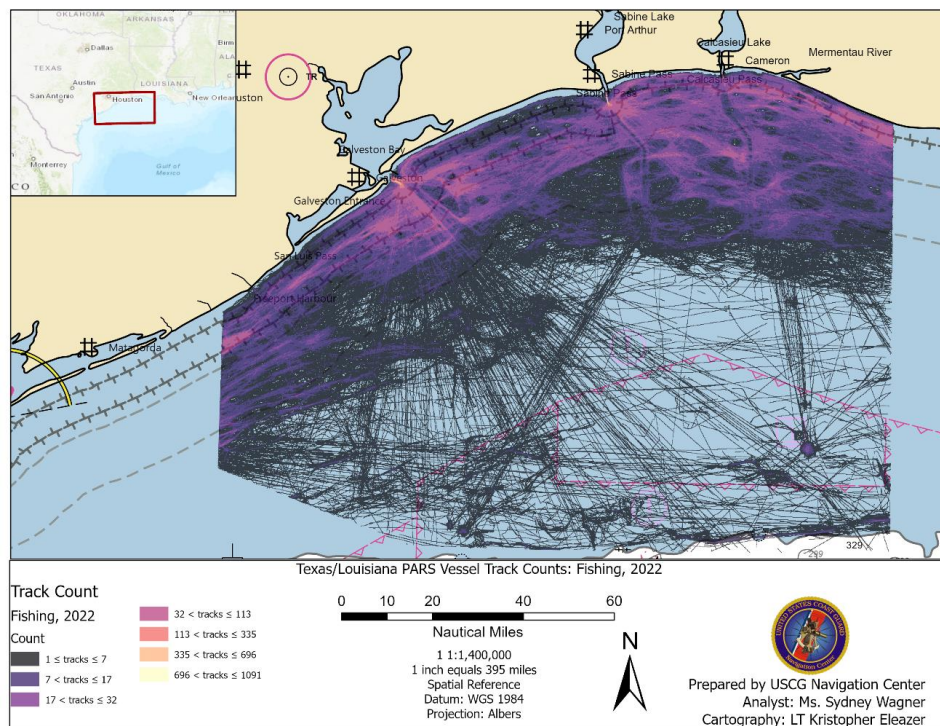
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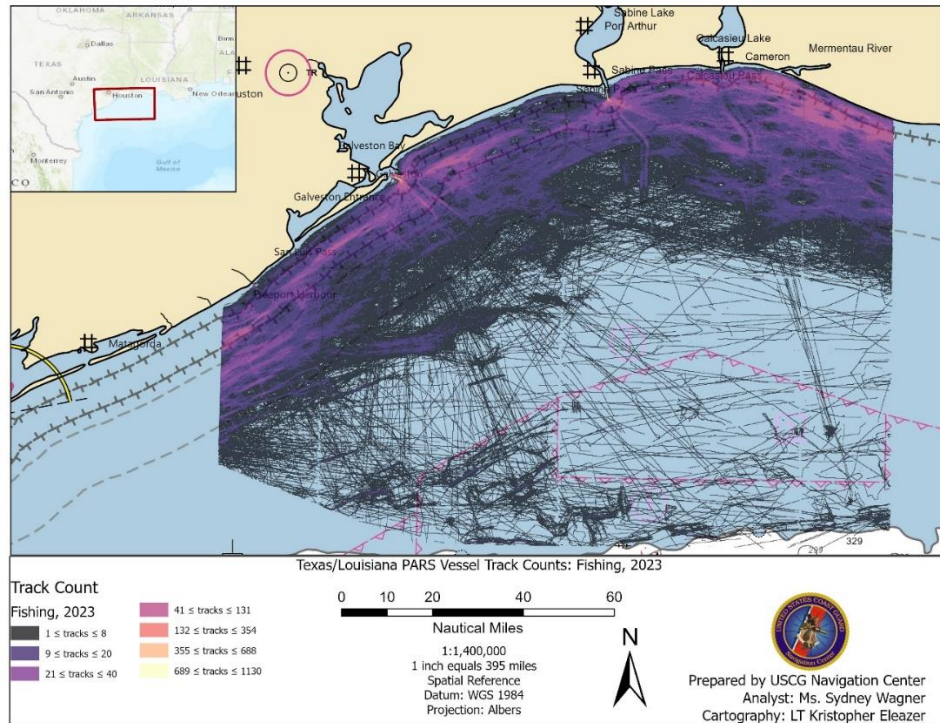
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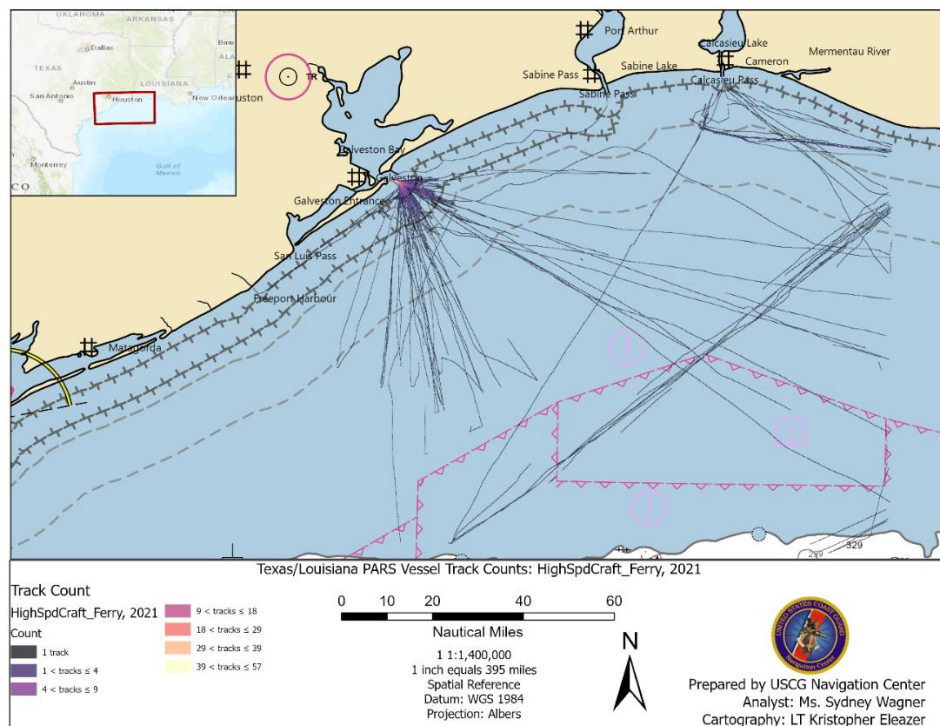
Fishing Vessel AIS Tracks 2021



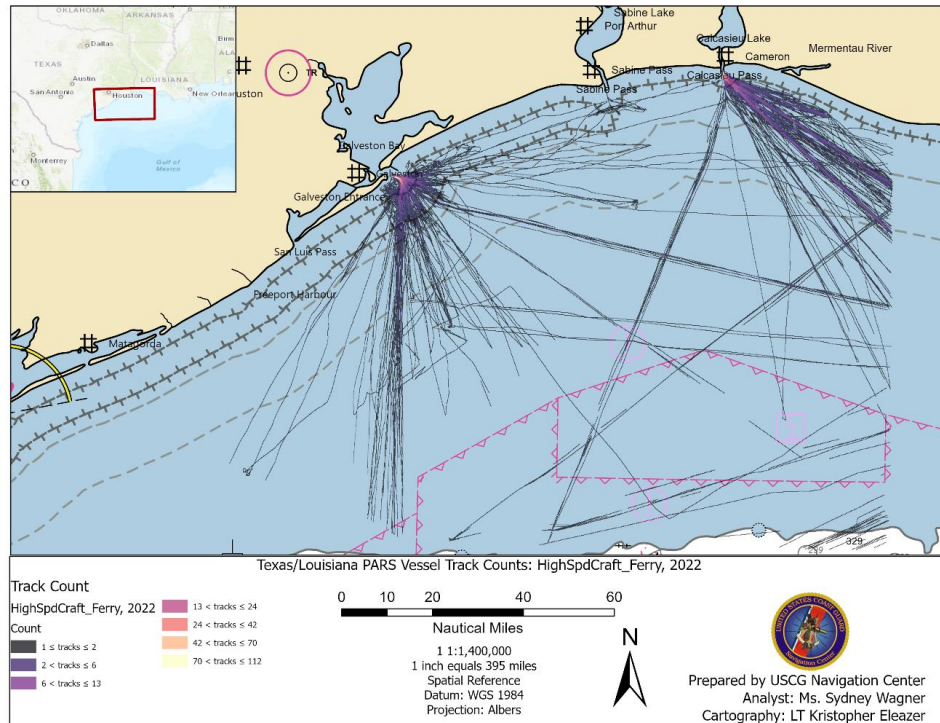
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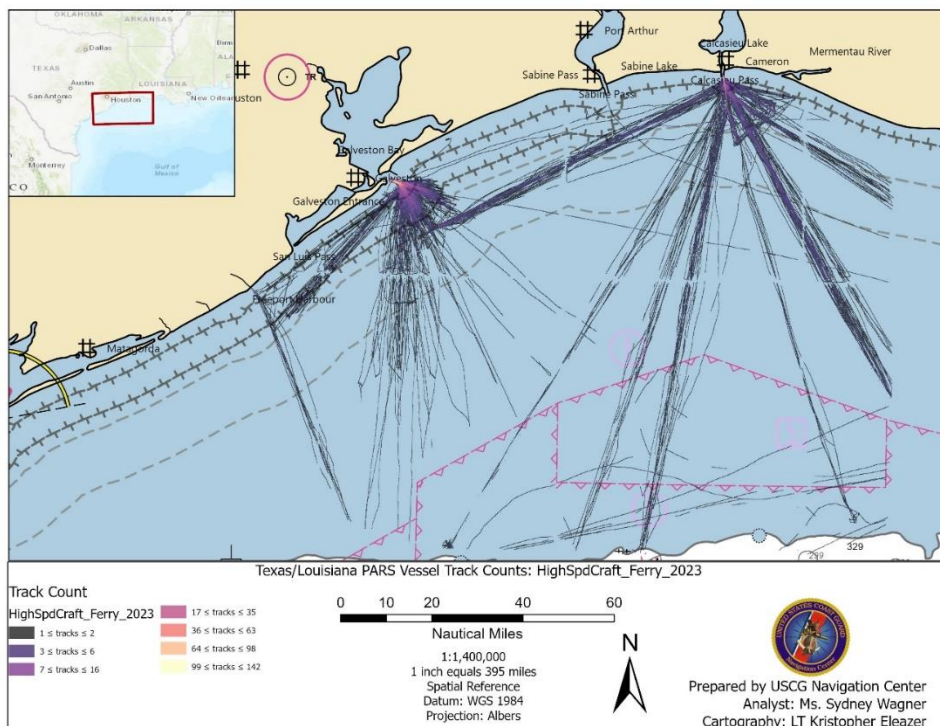
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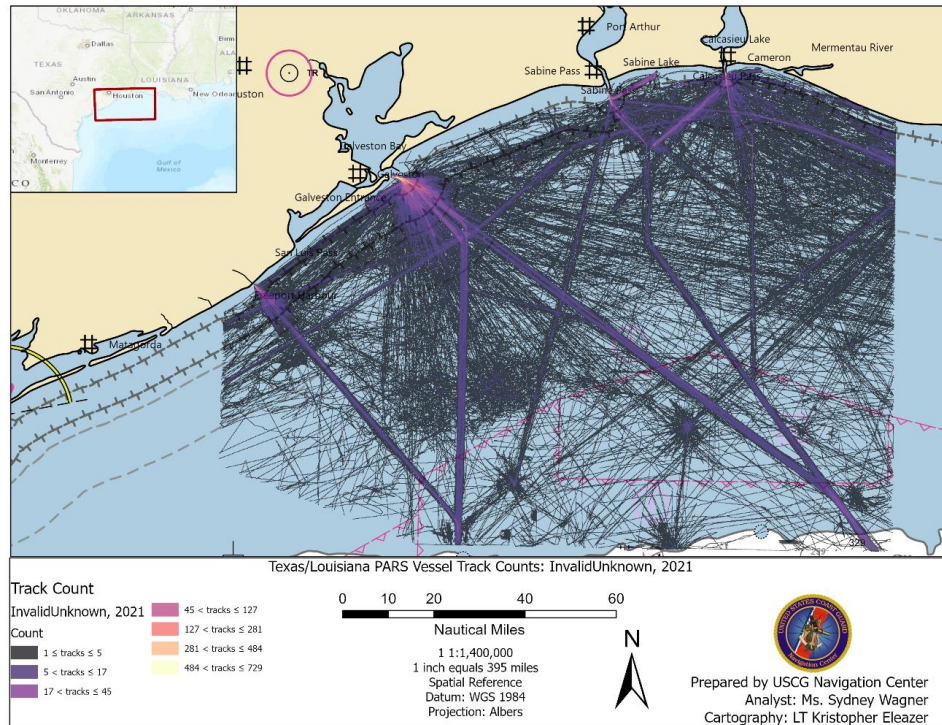
High Speed Vessel AIS Tracks 2021



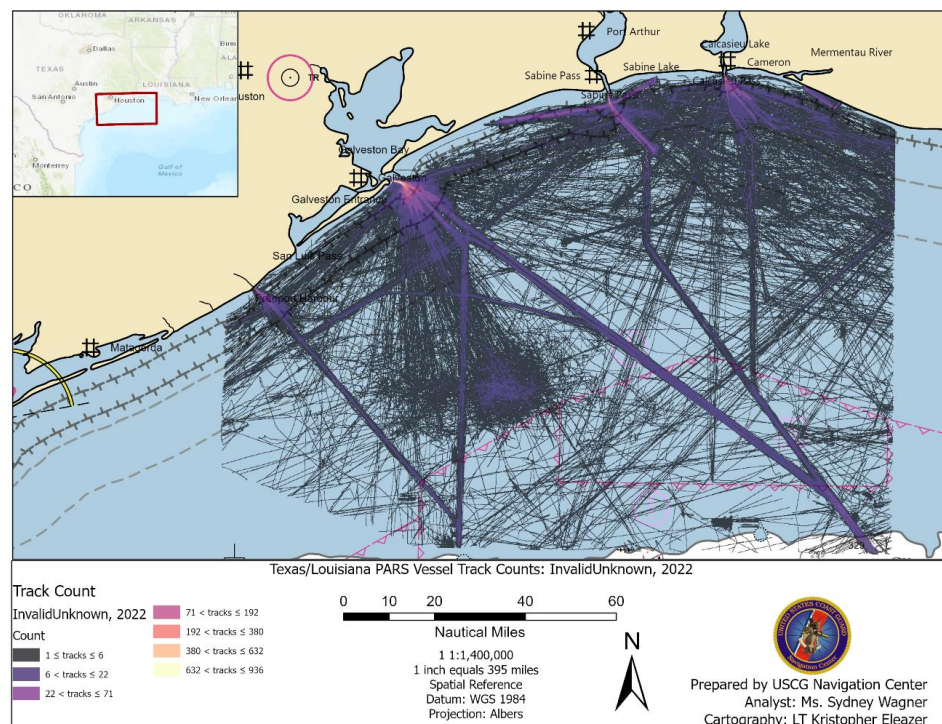
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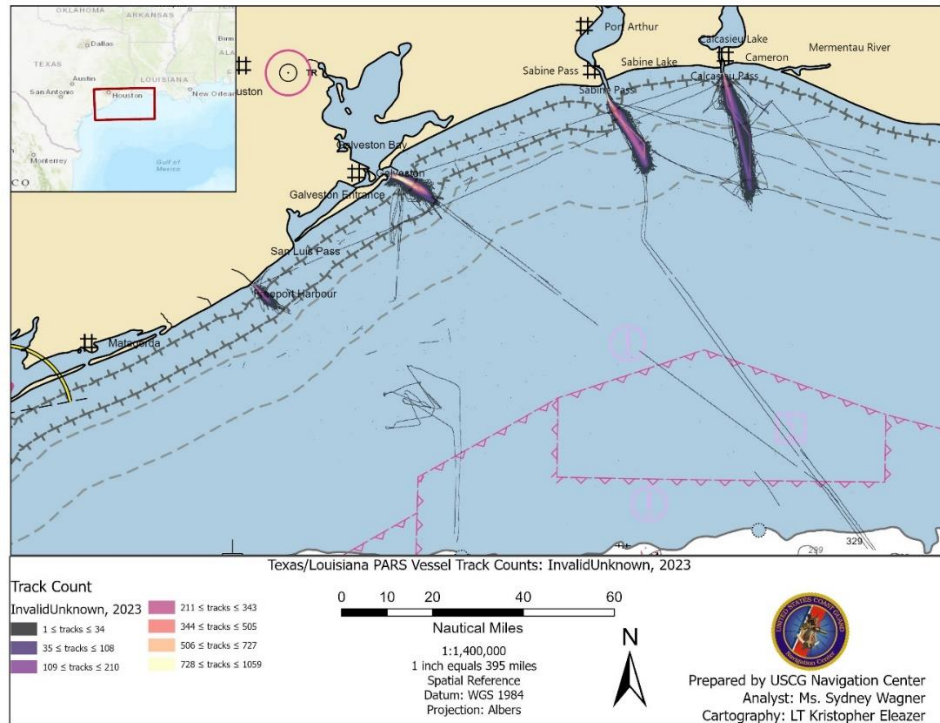
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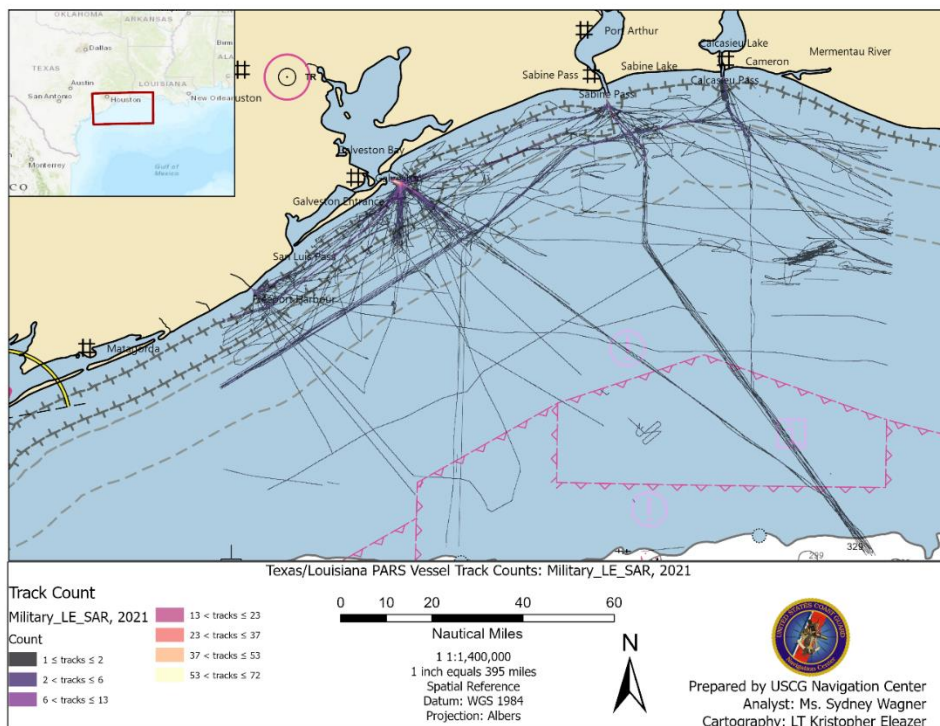
Invalid/Unknown Vessel AIS Tracks 2021



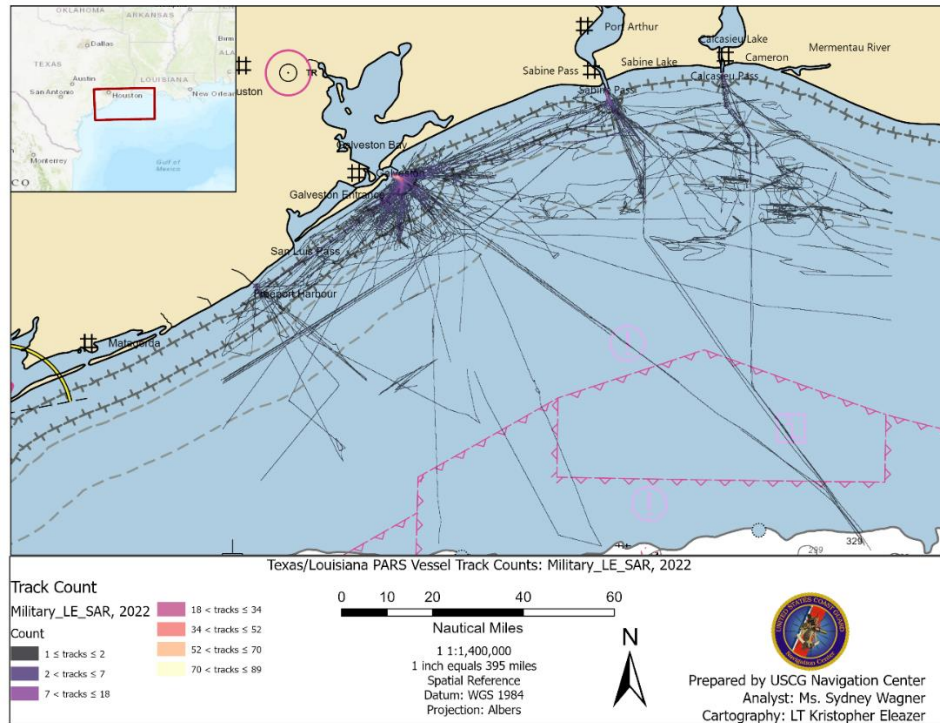
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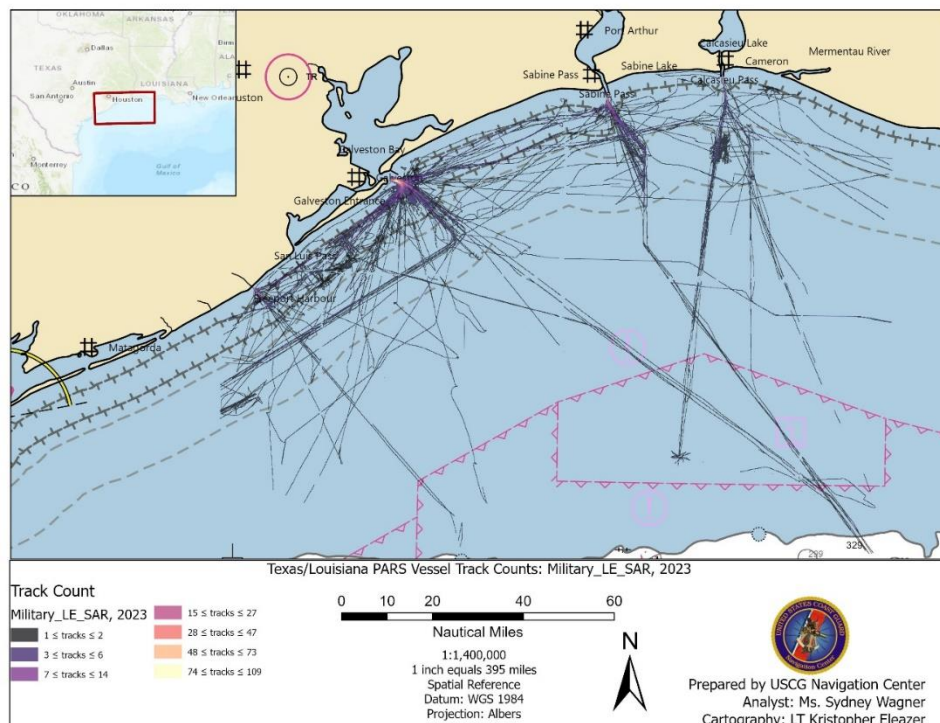
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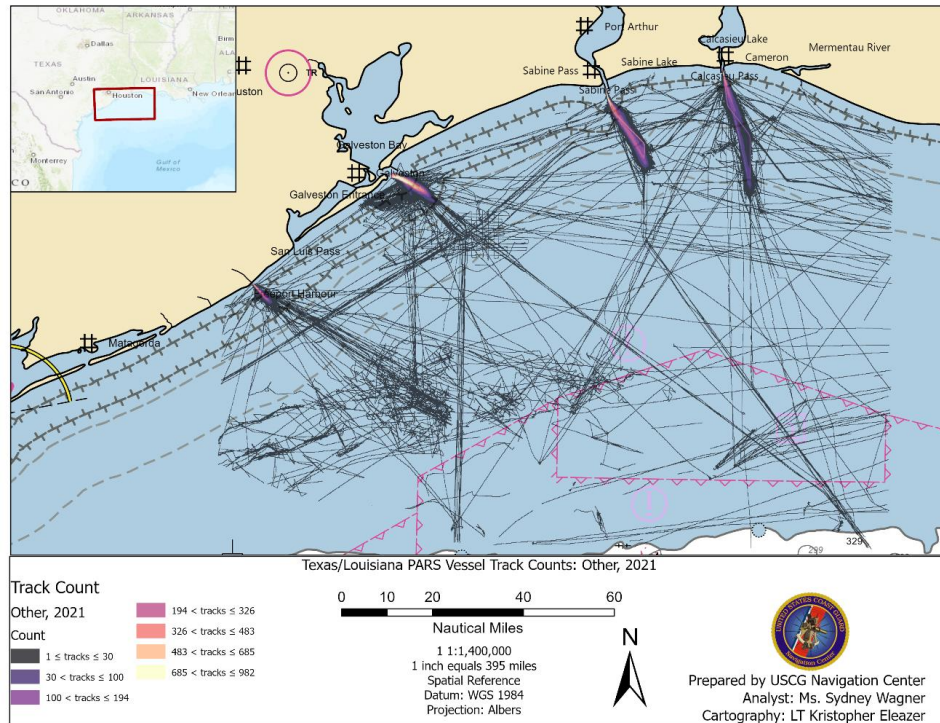
Military Vessel AIS Tracks 2021



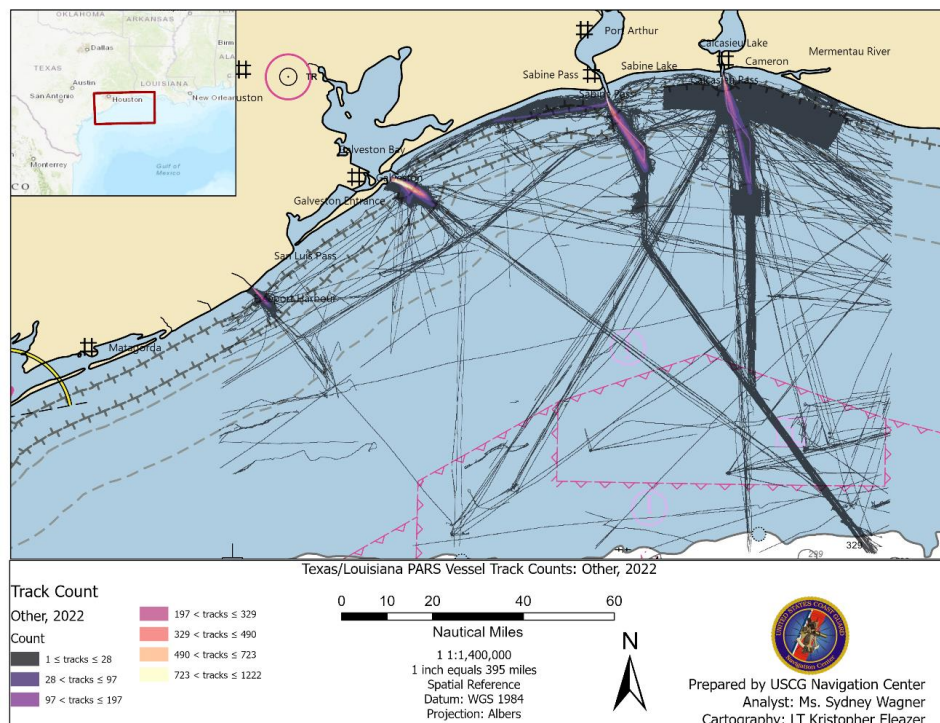
Military Vessel AIS Tracks 2022



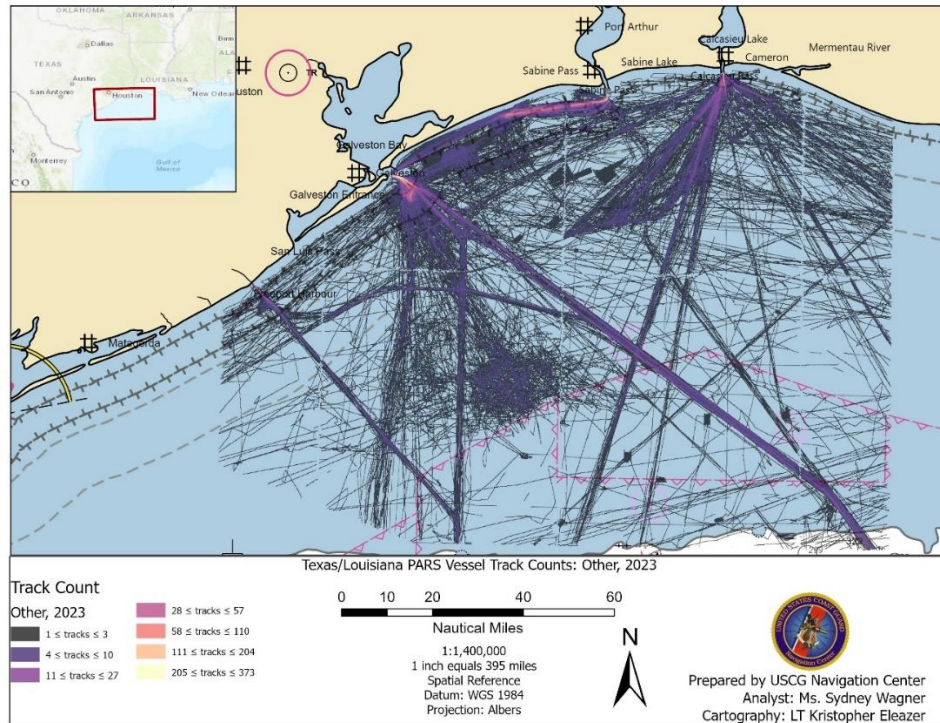
Military Vessel AIS Tracks 2023



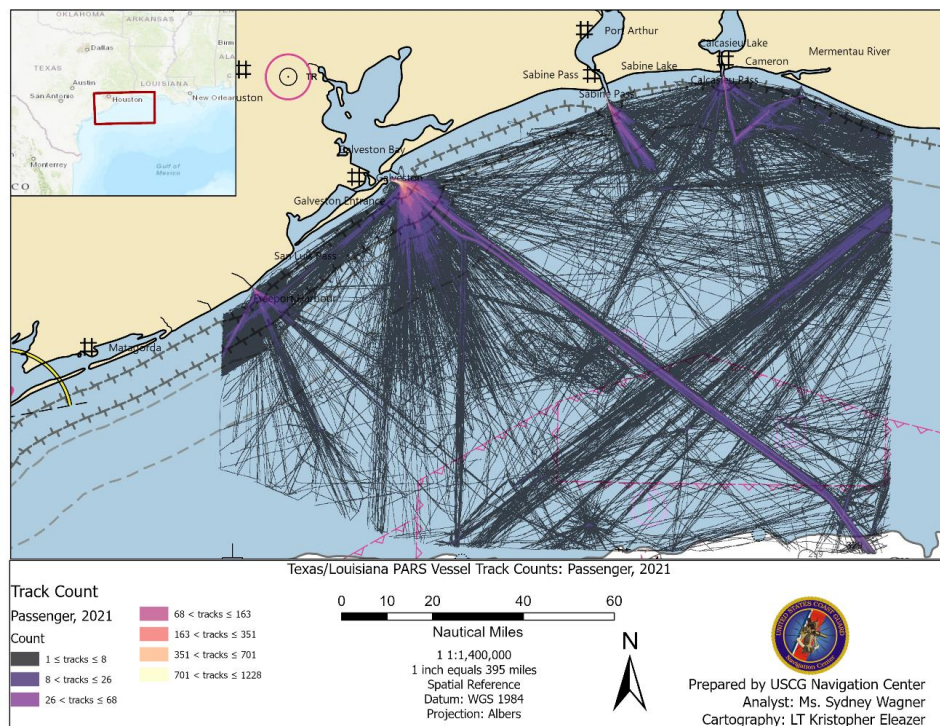
Other Vessel AIS Tracks 2021



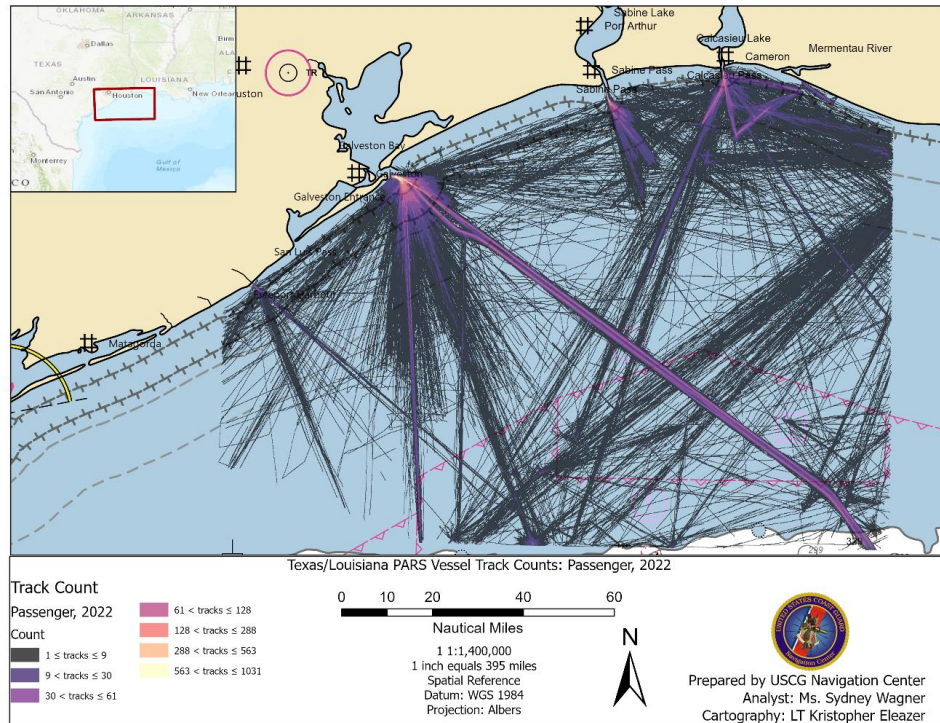
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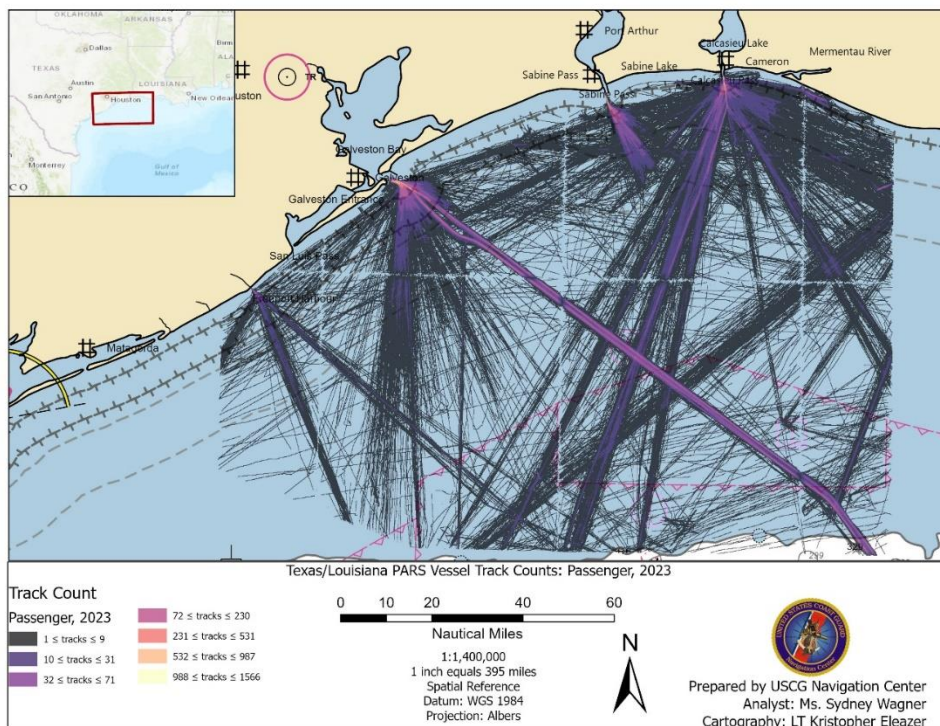
Other Vessel AIS Tracks 2023



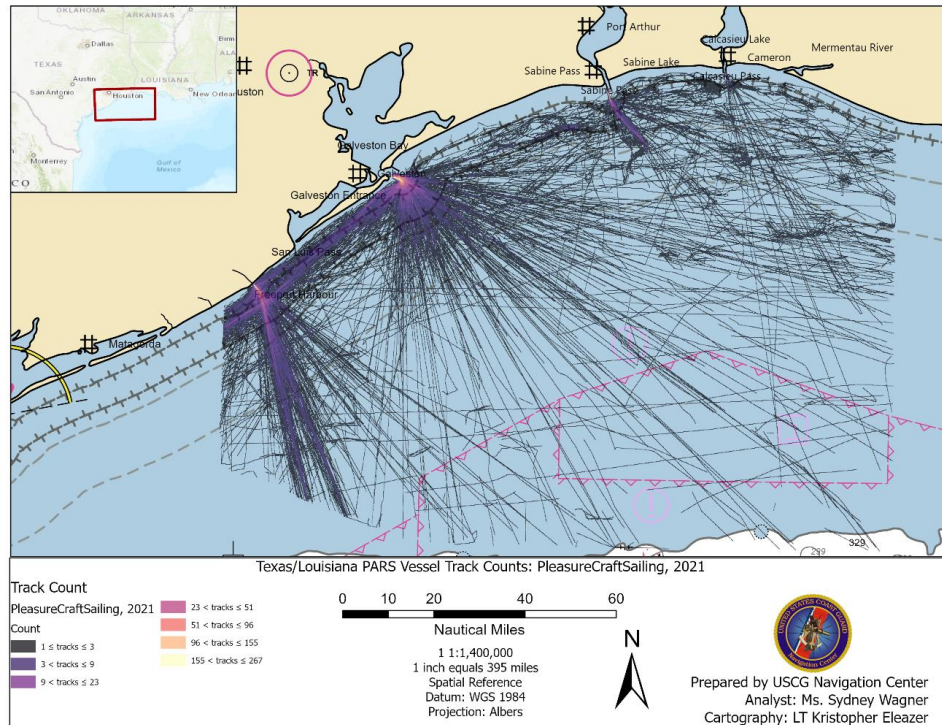
Passenger Vessel AIS Tracks 2021



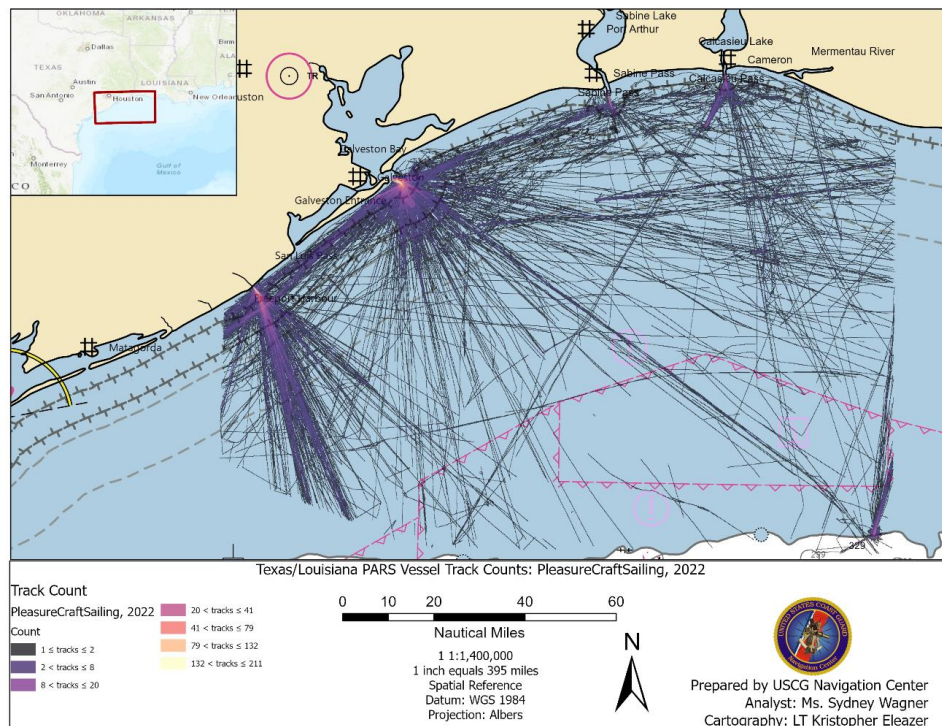
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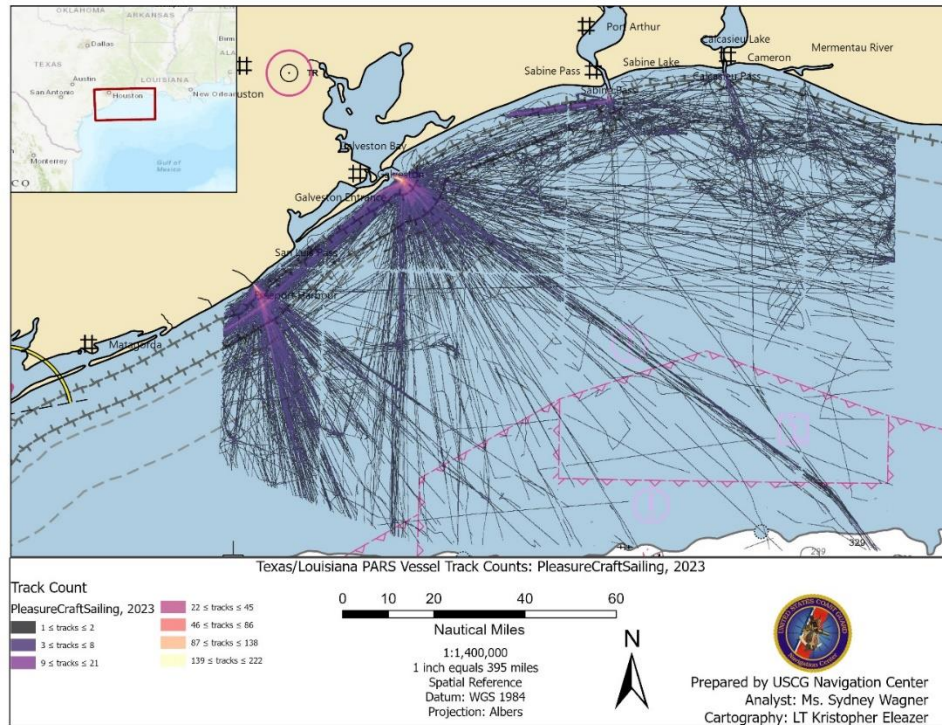
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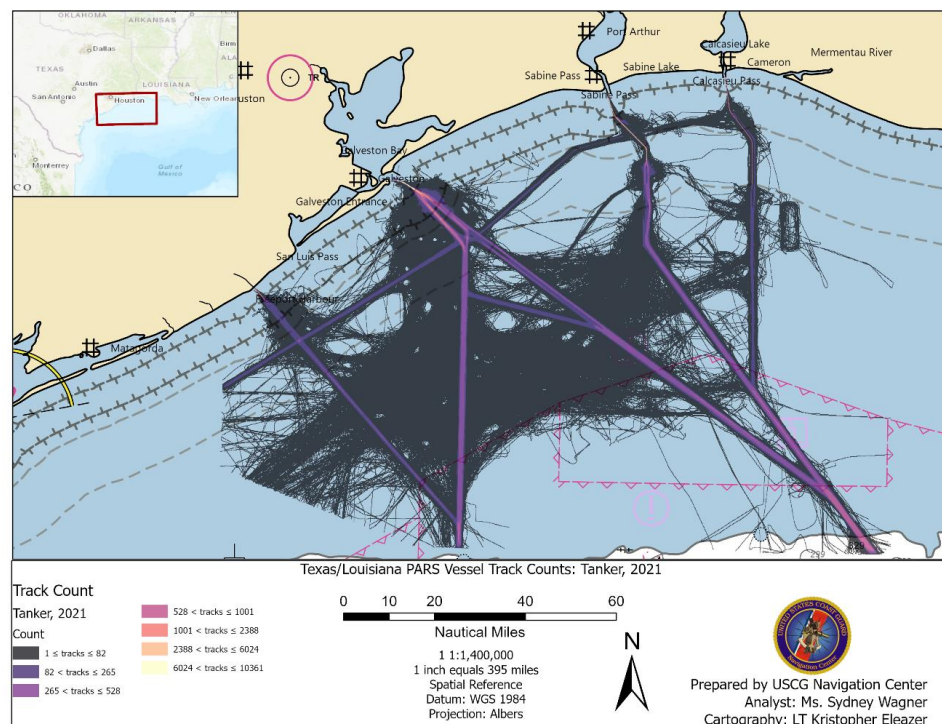
Pleasure Craft Vessel AIS Tracks 2021



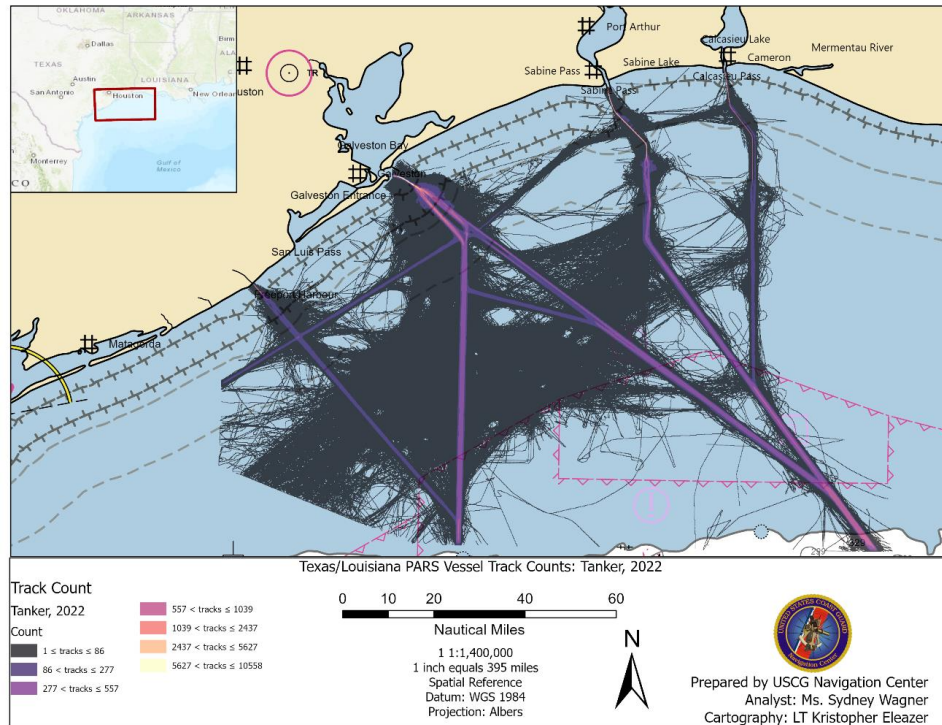
Pleasure Craft Vessel AIS Tracks 2022



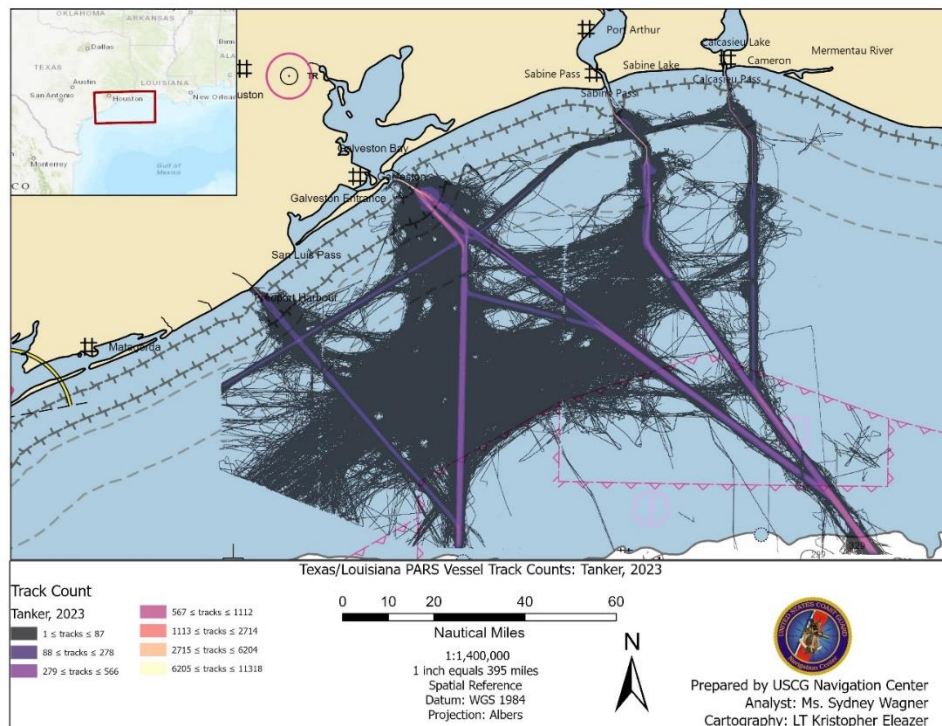
Pleasure Craft Vessel AIS Tracks 2023



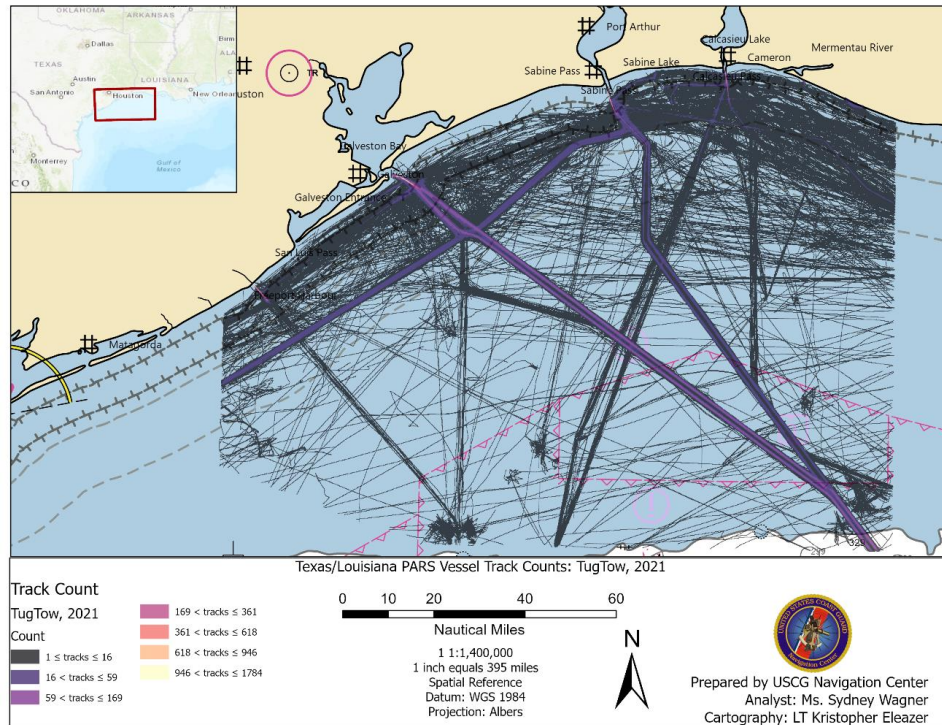
Tanker Vessel AIS Tracks 2021



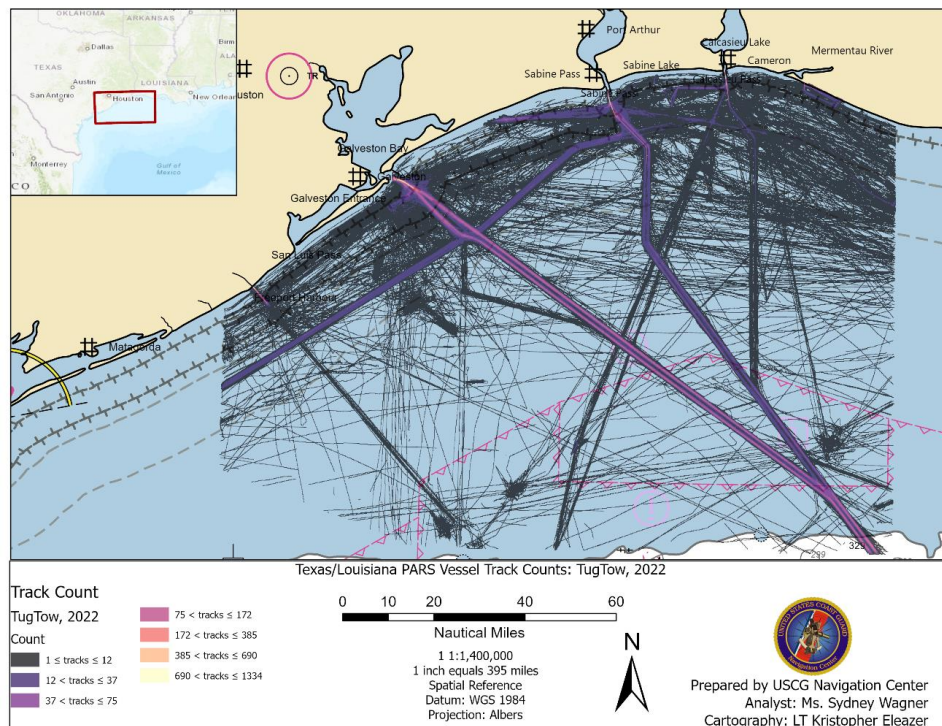
Tanker Vessel AIS Tracks 2022



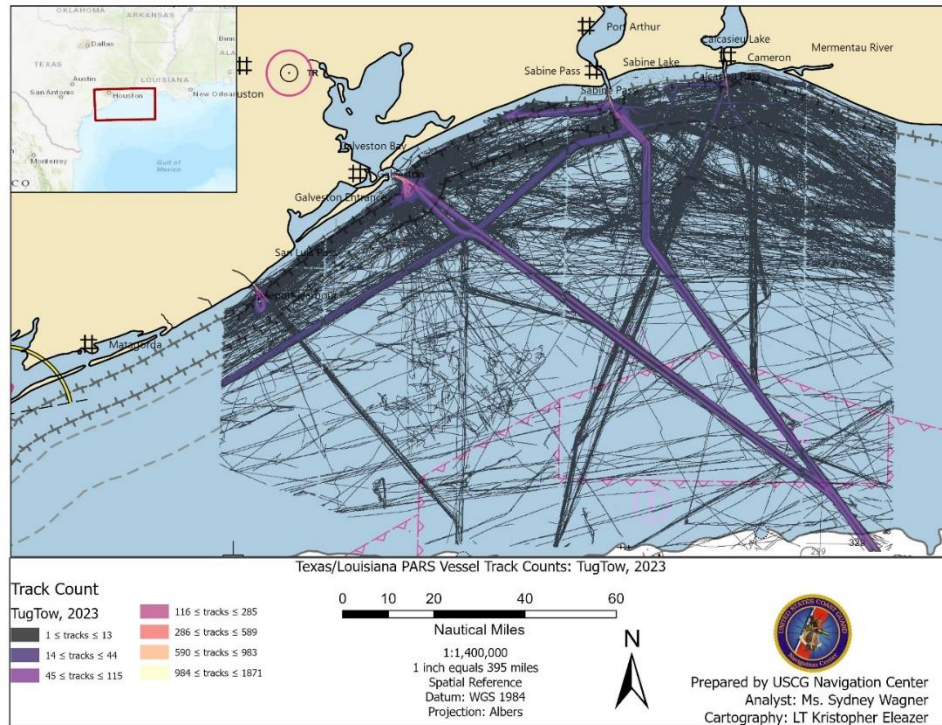
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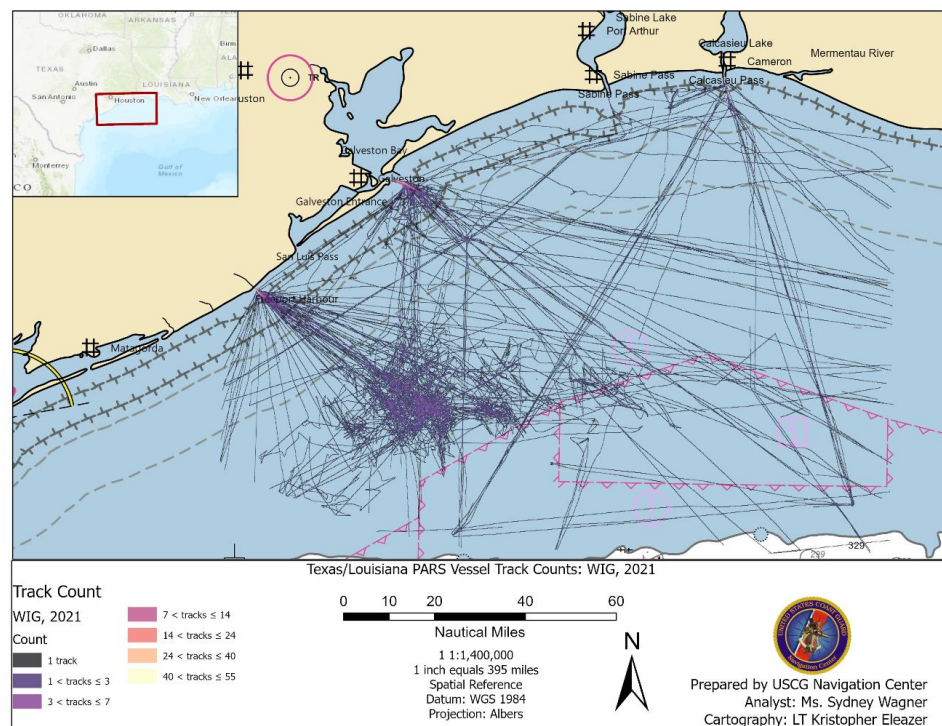
Tug/Tow Vessel AIS Tracks 2021



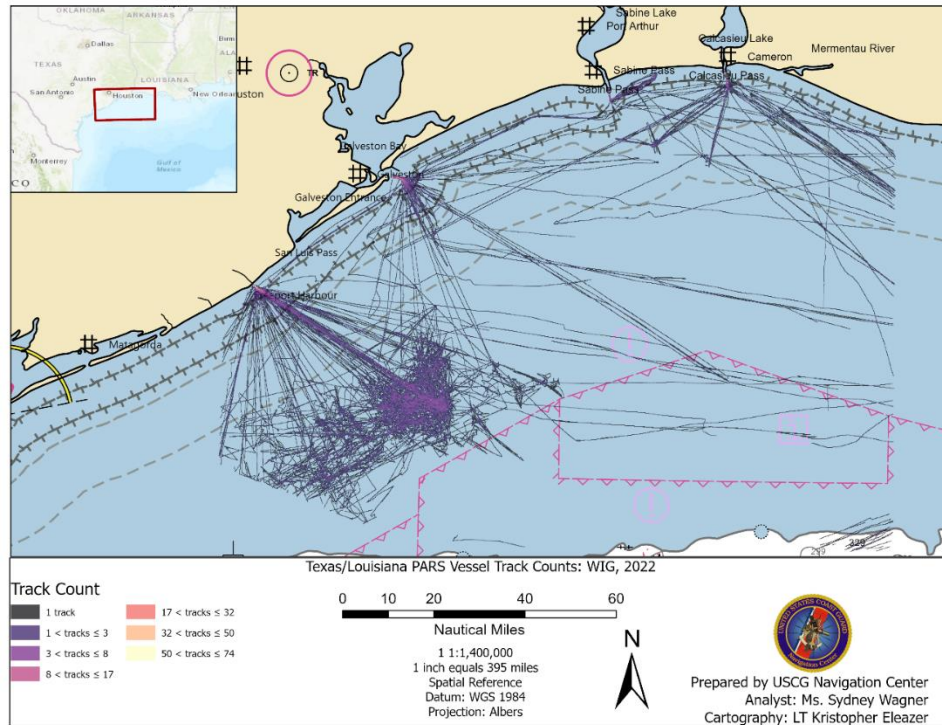
Tug/Tow Vessel AIS Tracks 2022



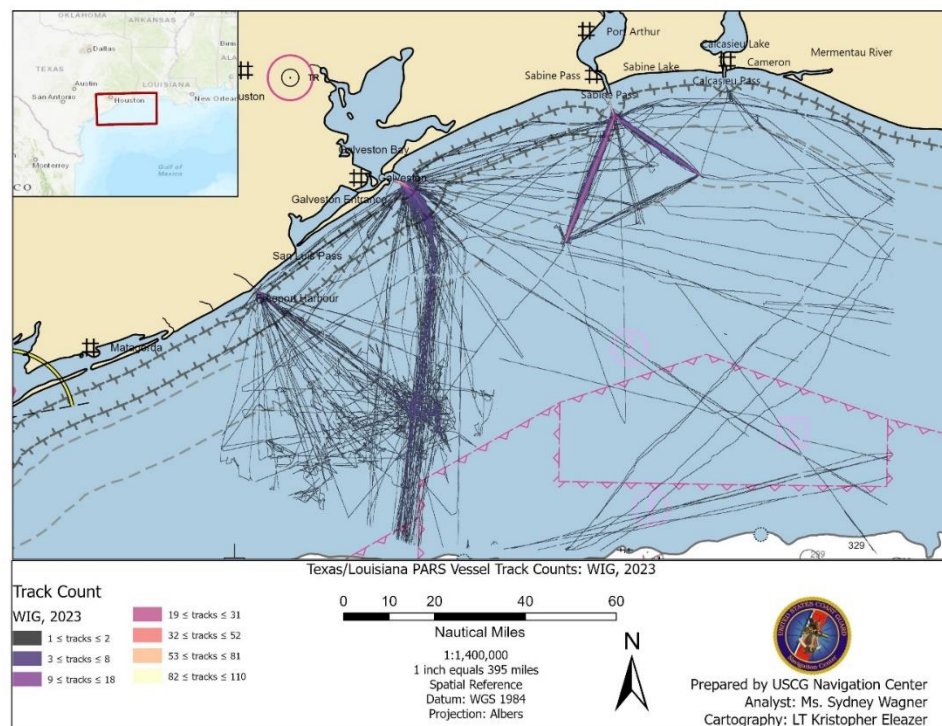
Tug/Tow Vessel AIS Tracks 2023



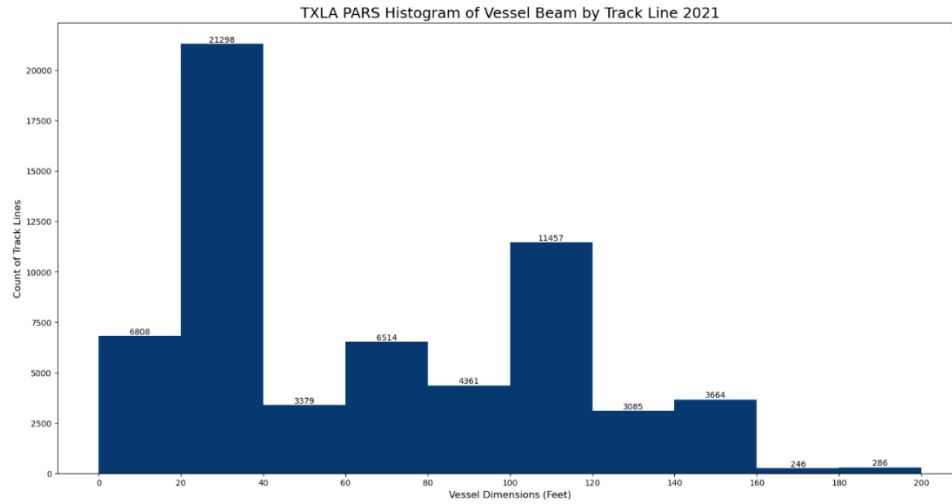
WIG AIS Tracks 2021



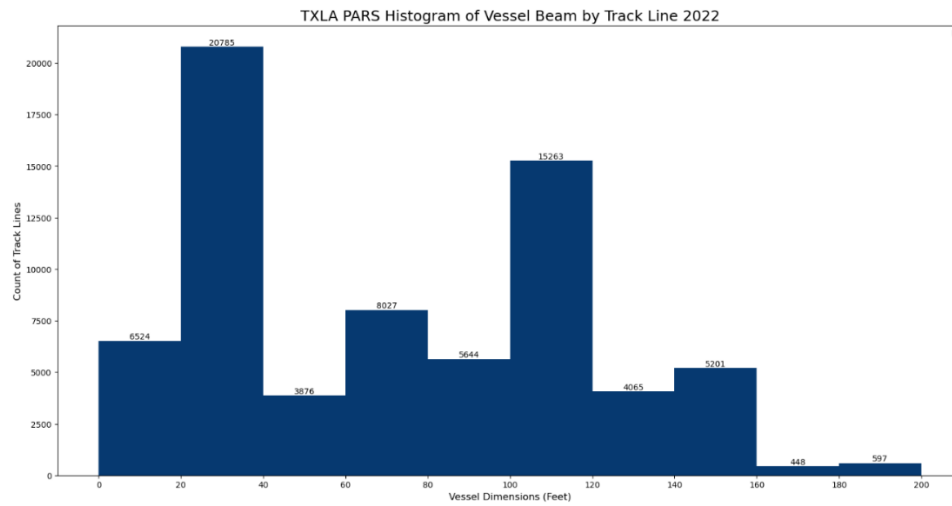
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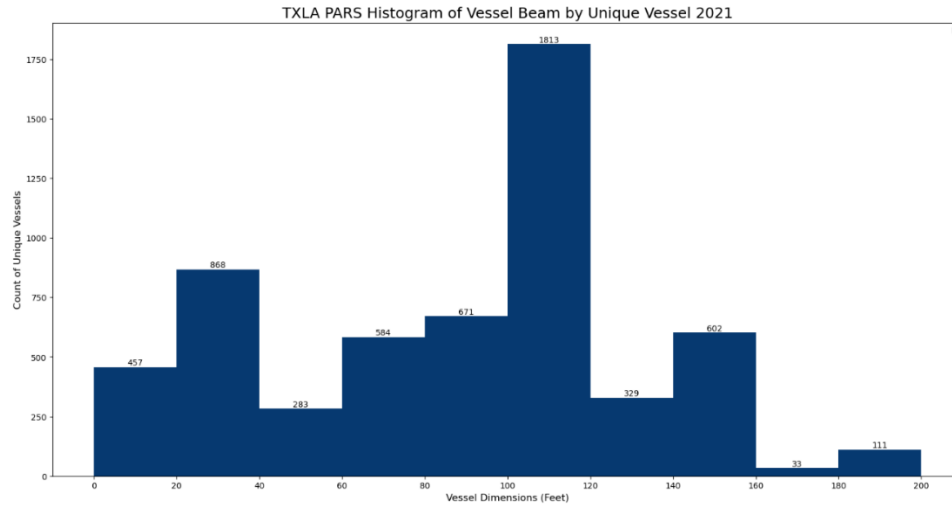
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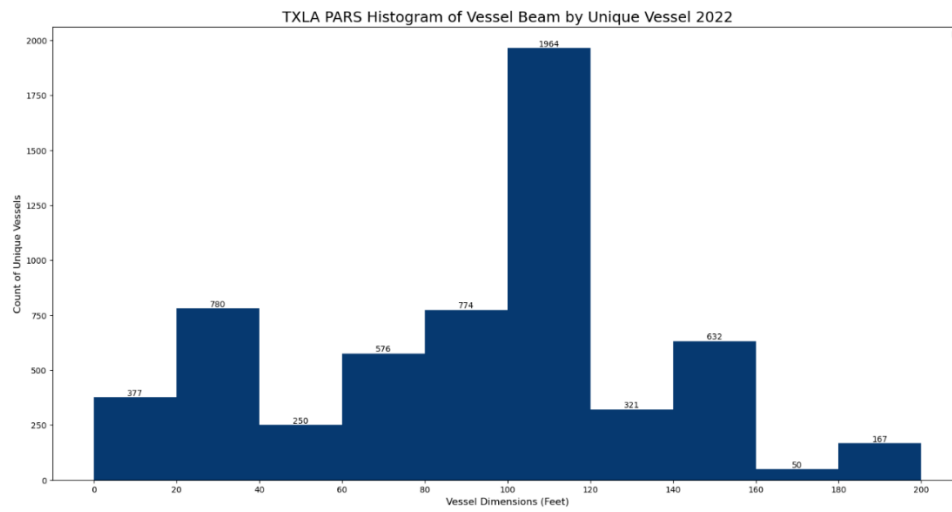
Vessel Beam by Track Line 2021



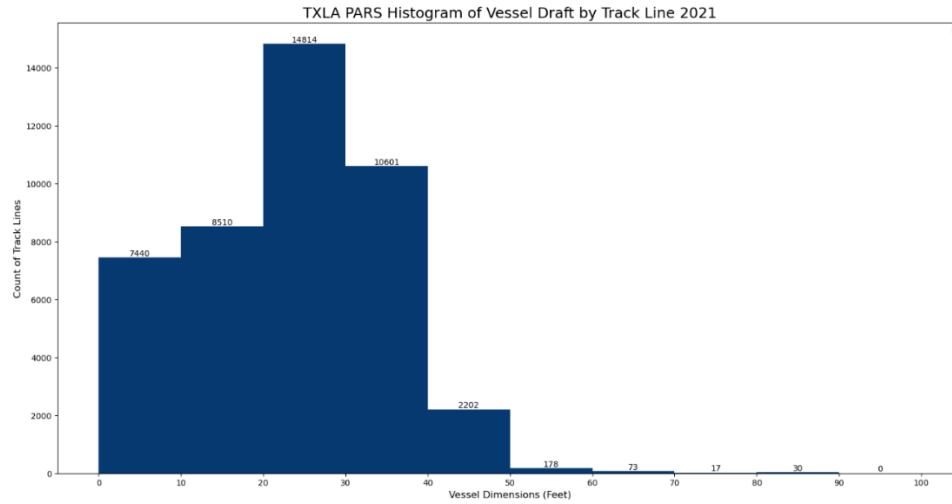
Vessel Beam by Track Line 2022



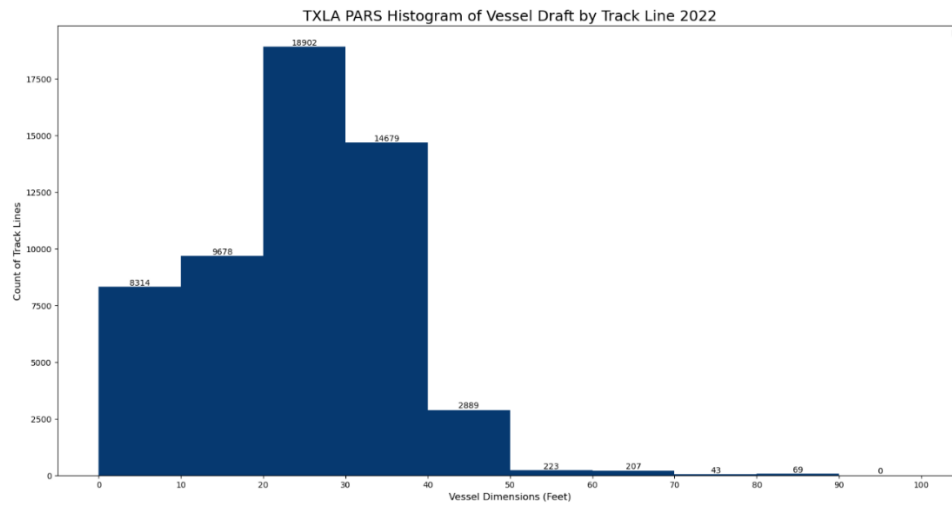
Vessel Beam by Unique Vessel 2021



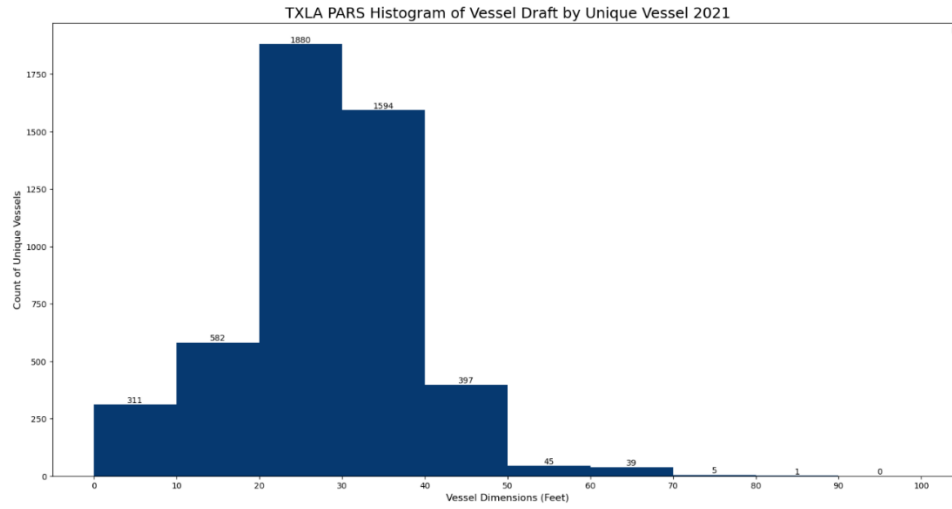
Vessel Beam by Unique Vessel 2022



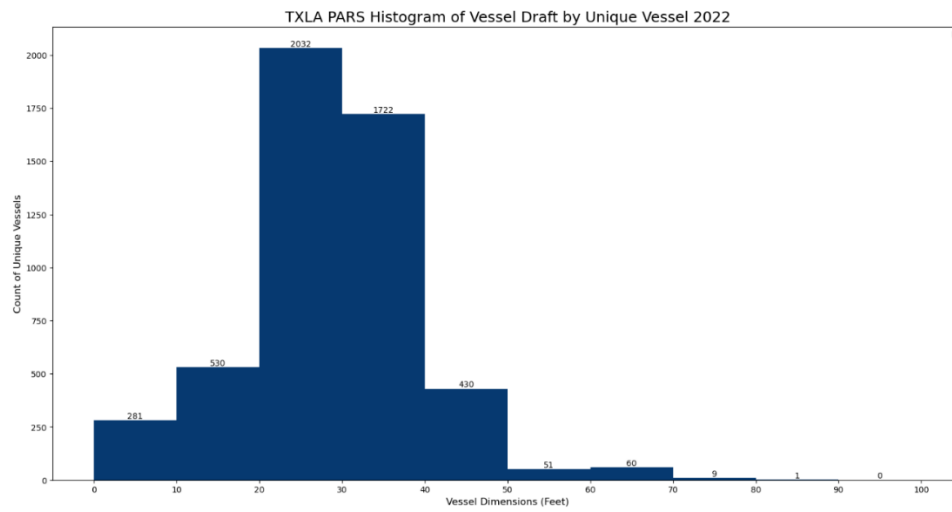
Vessel Draft by Track Line 2021



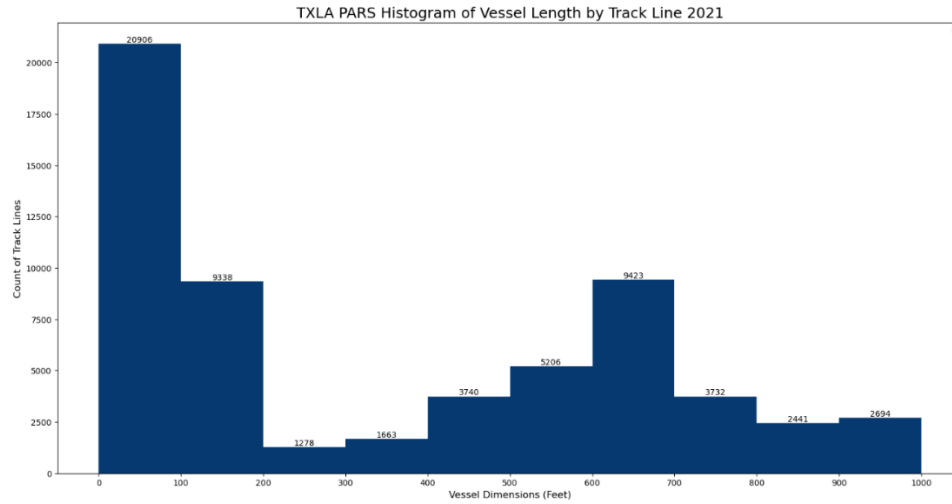
Vessel Draft by Track Line 2022



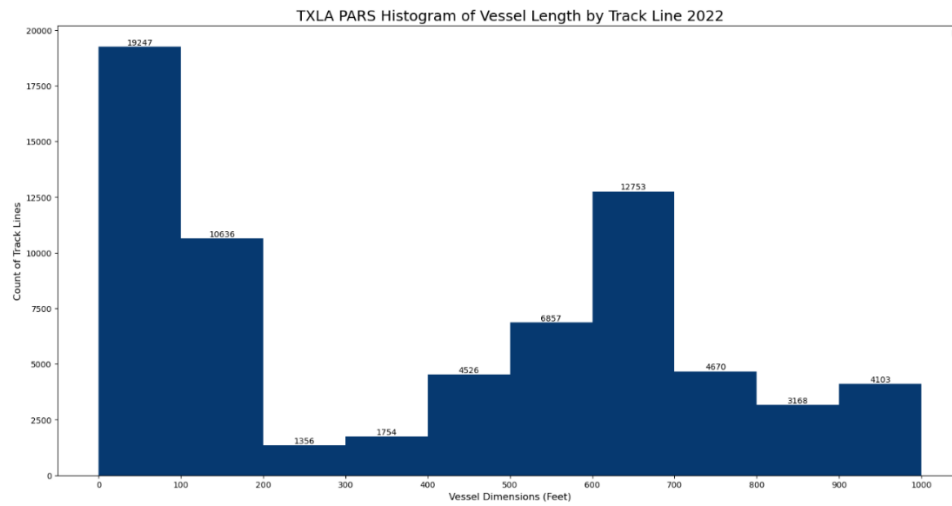
Vessel Draft by Unique Vessel 2021



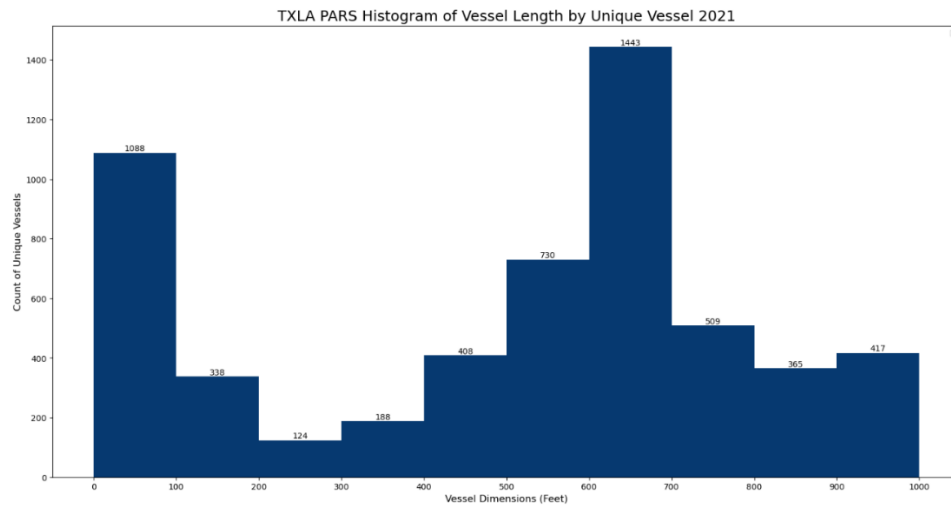
Vessel Draft by Unique Vessel 2022



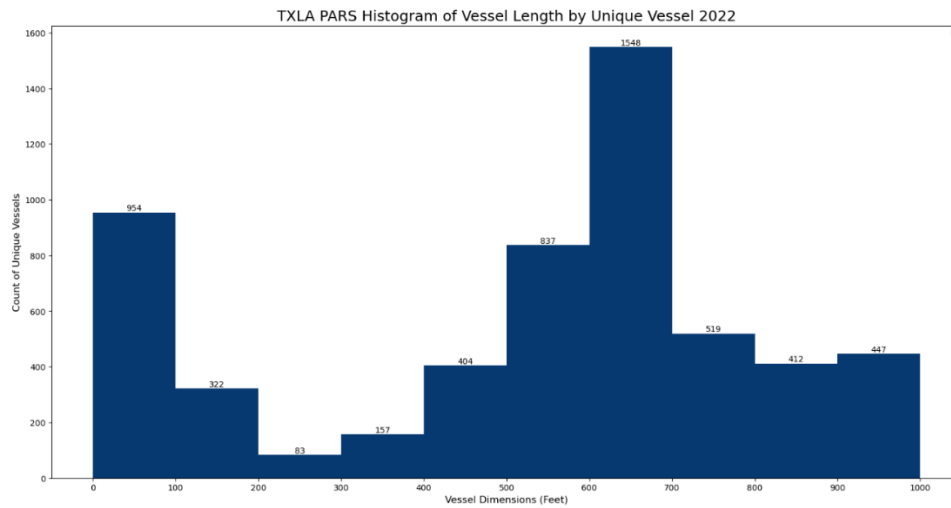
Vessel Length by Track Line 2021



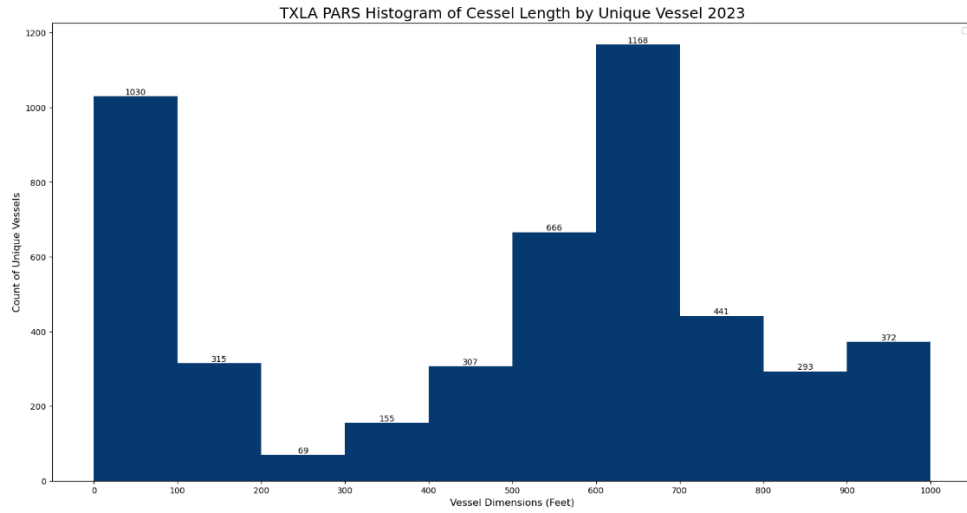
Vessel Length by Track Line 2022



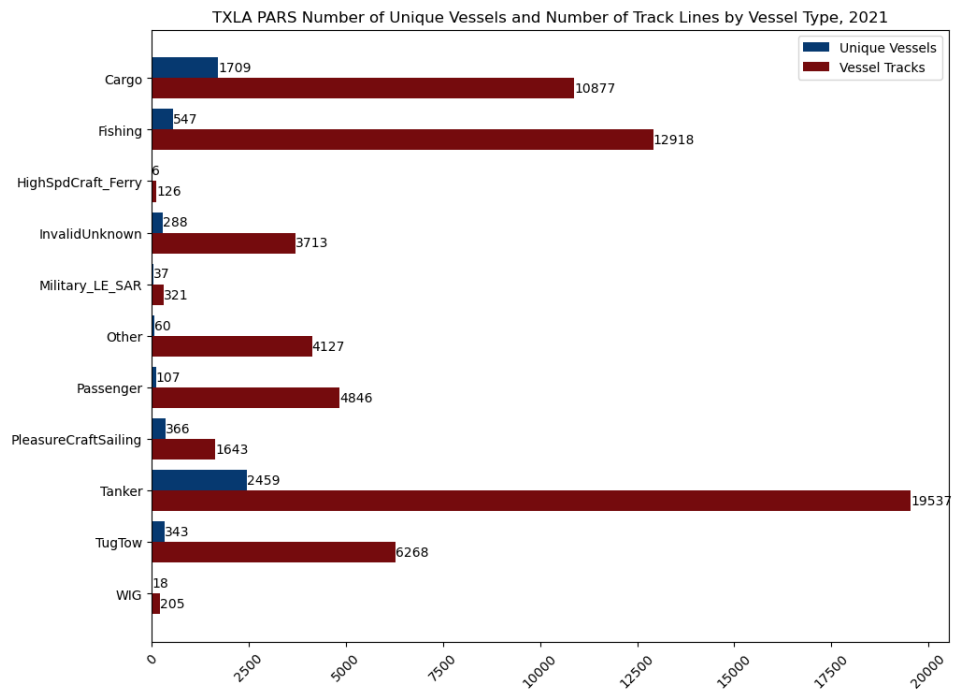
Vessel Length by Unique Vessel 2021



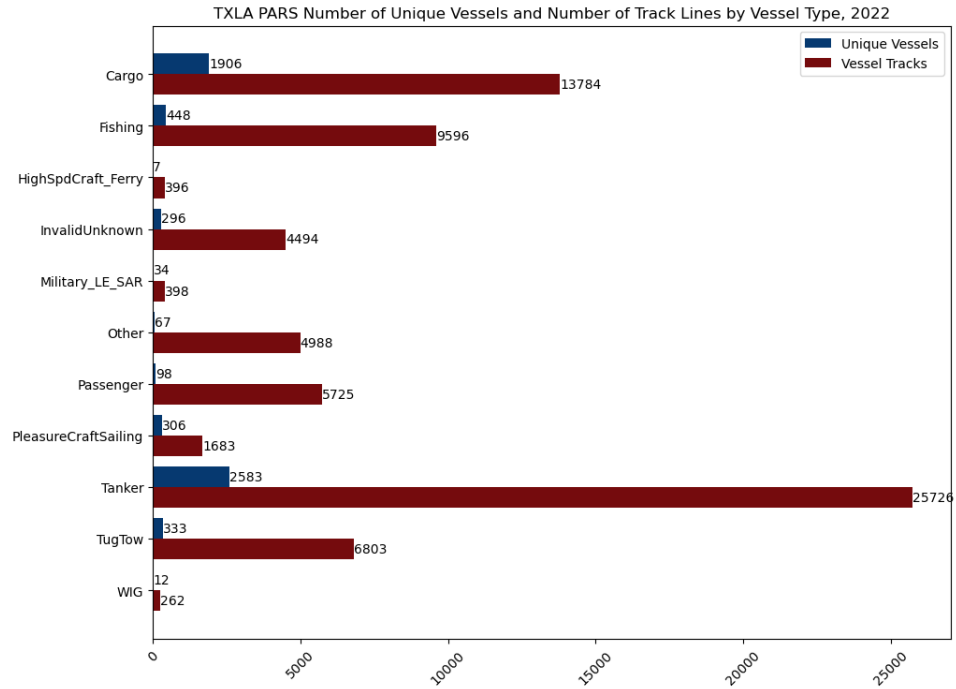
Vessel Length by Unique Vessel 2022



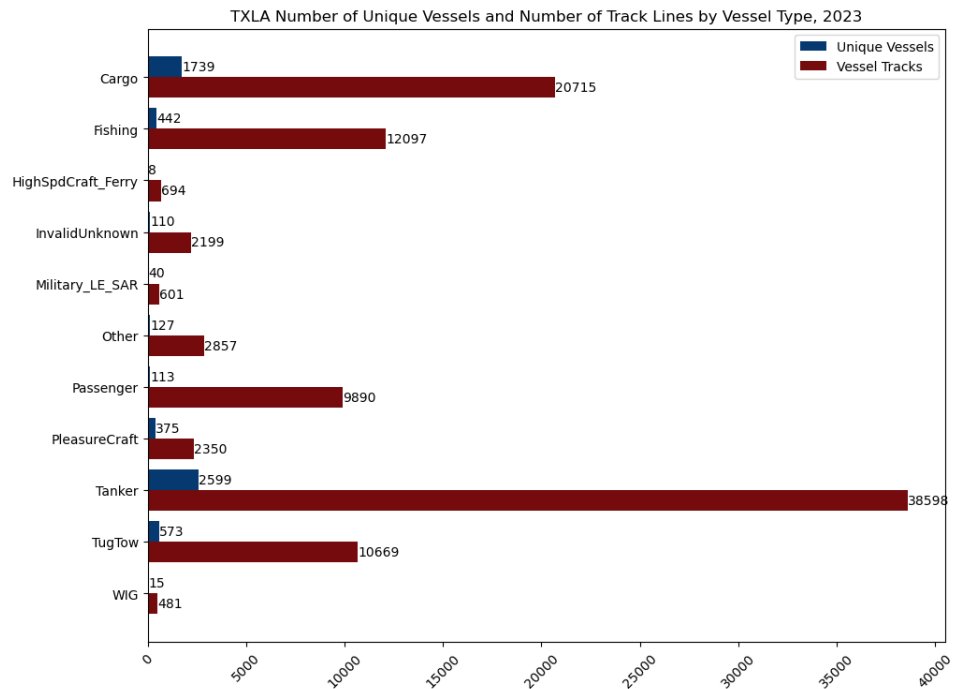
Vessel Length by Unique Vessel 2023



Number of Unique Vessels and Number of Track Lines by Vessel Type 2021



Number of Unique Vessels and Number of Track Lines by Vessel Type 2022



Number of Unique Vessels and Number of Track Lines by Vessel Type 2023

ENCLOSURE 2

Federal Register Notice (88 FR 12967)

that the test facility has met minimum standards. HHS does not allow IITFs to conduct oral fluid testing.

HHS-Certified Laboratories Approved To Conduct Oral Fluid Drug Testing

In accordance with the Mandatory Guidelines using Oral Fluid dated October 25, 2019 (84 FR 57554), the following HHS-certified laboratories meet the minimum standards to conduct drug and specimen validity tests on oral fluid specimens:

At this time, there are no laboratories certified to conduct drug and specimen validity tests on oral fluid specimens.

HHS-Certified Instrumented Initial Testing Facilities Approved To Conduct Urine Drug Testing

In accordance with the Mandatory Guidelines using Urine dated January 23, 2017 (82 FR 7920), the following HHS-certified IITFs meet the minimum standards to conduct drug and specimen validity tests on urine specimens:

Dynacare, 6628 50th Street NW, Edmonton, AB Canada T6B 2N7, 780-784-1190, (Formerly: Gamma-Dynacare Medical Laboratories)

HHS-Certified Laboratories Approved To Conduct Urine Drug Testing

In accordance with the Mandatory Guidelines using Urine dated January 23, 2017 (82 FR 7920), the following HHS-certified laboratories meet the minimum standards to conduct drug and specimen validity tests on urine specimens:

Alere Toxicology Services, 1111 Newton St., Gretna, LA 70053, 504-361-8989/800-433-3823, (Formerly: Kroll Laboratory Specialists, Inc., Laboratory Specialists, Inc.)

Alere Toxicology Services, 450 Southlake Blvd., Richmond, VA 23236, 804-378-9130, (Formerly: Kroll Laboratory Specialists, Inc., Scientific Testing Laboratories, Inc.; Kroll Scientific Testing Laboratories, Inc.)

Clinical Reference Laboratory, Inc., 8433 Quivira Road, Lenexa, KS 66215-2802, 800-445-6917

Desert Tox, LLC, 5425 E Bell Rd, Suite 125, Scottsdale, AZ, 85254, 602-457-5411/623-748-5045

DrugScan, Inc., 200 Precision Road, Suite 200, Horsham, PA 19044, 800-235-4890

Dynacare, * 245 Pall Mall Street, London, ONT, Canada N6A 1P4, 519-679-1630, (Formerly: Gamma-Dynacare Medical Laboratories)

ElSohly Laboratories, Inc., 5 Industrial Park Drive, Oxford, MS 38655, 662-236-2609

Laboratory Corporation of America Holdings, 7207 N Gessner Road, Houston, TX 77040, 713-856-8288/800-800-2387

Laboratory Corporation of America Holdings, 69 First Ave., Raritan, NJ 08869, 908-526-2400/800-437-4986, (Formerly: Roche Biomedical Laboratories, Inc.)

Laboratory Corporation of America Holdings, 1904 TW Alexander Drive, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709, 919-572-6900/800-833-3984, (Formerly: LabCorp Occupational Testing Services, Inc.; CompuChem Laboratories, Inc.; A Subsidiary of Roche Biomedical Laboratory; Roche CompuChem Laboratories, Inc., A Member of the Roche Group)

Laboratory Corporation of America Holdings, 1120 Main Street, Southaven, MS 38671, 866-827-8042/800-233-6339, (Formerly: LabCorp Occupational Testing Services, Inc.; MedExpress/National Laboratory Center)

LabOne, Inc. d/b/a Quest Diagnostics, 10101 Renner Blvd., Lenexa, KS 66219, 913-888-3927/800-873-8845, (Formerly: Quest Diagnostics Incorporated; LabOne, Inc.; Center for Laboratory Services, a Division of LabOne, Inc.)

Legacy Laboratory Services Toxicology, 1225 NE 2nd Ave., Portland, OR 97232, 503-413-5295/800-950-5295

MedTox Laboratories, Inc., 402 W County Road D, St. Paul, MN 55112, 651-636-7466/800-832-3244

Minneapolis Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Forensic Toxicology Laboratory, 1 Veterans Drive, Minneapolis, MN 55417, 612-725-2088. Testing for Veterans Affairs (VA) Employees Only

Pacific Toxicology Laboratories, 9348 DeSoto Ave., Chatsworth, CA 91311, 800-328-6942, (Formerly: Centinela Hospital Airport Toxicology Laboratory)

Phamatech, Inc., 15175 Innovation Drive, San Diego, CA 92128, 888-635-5840

Quest Diagnostics Incorporated, 400 Egypt Road, Norristown, PA 19403, 610-631-4600/877-642-2216, (Formerly: SmithKline Beecham Clinical Laboratories; SmithKline Bio-Science Laboratories)

US Army Forensic Toxicology Drug Testing Laboratory, 2490 Wilson St., Fort George G. Meade, MD 20755-5235, 301-677-7085, Testing for Department of Defense (DoD) Employees Only

* The Standards Council of Canada (SCC) voted to end its Laboratory Accreditation Program for Substance

Abuse (LAPSA) effective May 12, 1998. Laboratories certified through that program were accredited to conduct forensic urine drug testing as required by U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) regulations. As of that date, the certification of those accredited Canadian laboratories will continue under DOT authority. The responsibility for conducting quarterly performance testing plus periodic on-site inspections of those LAPSA-accredited laboratories was transferred to the U.S. HHS, with the HHS' NLCP contractor continuing to have an active role in the performance testing and laboratory inspection processes. Other Canadian laboratories wishing to be considered for the NLCP may apply directly to the NLCP contractor just as U.S. laboratories do.

Upon finding a Canadian laboratory to be qualified, HHS will recommend that DOT certify the laboratory (**Federal Register**, July 16, 1996) as meeting the minimum standards of the Mandatory Guidelines published in the **Federal Register** on January 23, 2017 (82 FR 7920). After receiving DOT certification, the laboratory will be included in the monthly list of HHS-certified laboratories and participate in the NLCP certification maintenance program.

Anastasia Marie Donovan,

Public Health Advisor, Division of Workplace Programs.

[FR Doc. 2023-04121 Filed 2-28-23; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4162-20-P

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Coast Guard

[Docket No. USCG-2023-0063]

Port Access Route Study: Approaches to Galveston Bay and Sabine Pass, Texas and Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana

AGENCY: Coast Guard, DHS.

ACTION: Notice of study; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Coast Guard is conducting a Port Access Route Study (PARS) to evaluate the adequacy of existing vessel routing measures and determine whether additional vessel routing measures are necessary for port approaches to Galveston Bay and Sabine Pass, Texas, Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana, and international and domestic transit areas in the Eighth Coast Guard District area of responsibility (AOR). The Approaches to Galveston Bay and Sabine Pass, Texas and Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana PARS (TX/LAPARS) will consider whether existing or additional

routing measures are necessary to improve navigation safety due to factors such as planned or potential wind energy offshore development, current port capabilities and planned improvements, increased vessel traffic, changing vessel traffic patterns, weather conditions, or navigational difficulty. Vessel routing measures, which include traffic separation schemes, two-way routes, recommended tracks, deep-water routes, precautionary areas, and areas to be avoided, are implemented to reduce risk of marine casualties. The recommendations of the study may subsequently be implemented through rulemakings or in accordance with international agreements.

DATES: All comments and related material must be received on or before April 17, 2023. Commenters should be aware that the electronic Federal Docket Management System will not accept comments after midnight, Eastern Daylight Time, on the last day of the comment period.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments identified by docket number USCG–2023–0063 using the Federal eRulemaking Portal (<http://www.regulations.gov>). See the “Public Participation and Request for Comments” portion of the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section for further instructions on submitting comments.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: If you have questions about this notice of study, call or email Ms. Brandi Canada, Eighth Coast Guard District (dpw), U.S. Coast Guard; telephone (504) 671–2107, email SMB-D8NewOrleans-TXLAPARS@uscg.mil.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Table of Abbreviations

AIS	Automatic Identification System
COMDTINST	Commandant Instruction
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
TXPARS	Approaches to Texas Port Access Route Study
MTS	Marine Transportation System
PARS	Port Access Route Study
TSS	Traffic Separation Scheme
USCG	United States Coast Guard

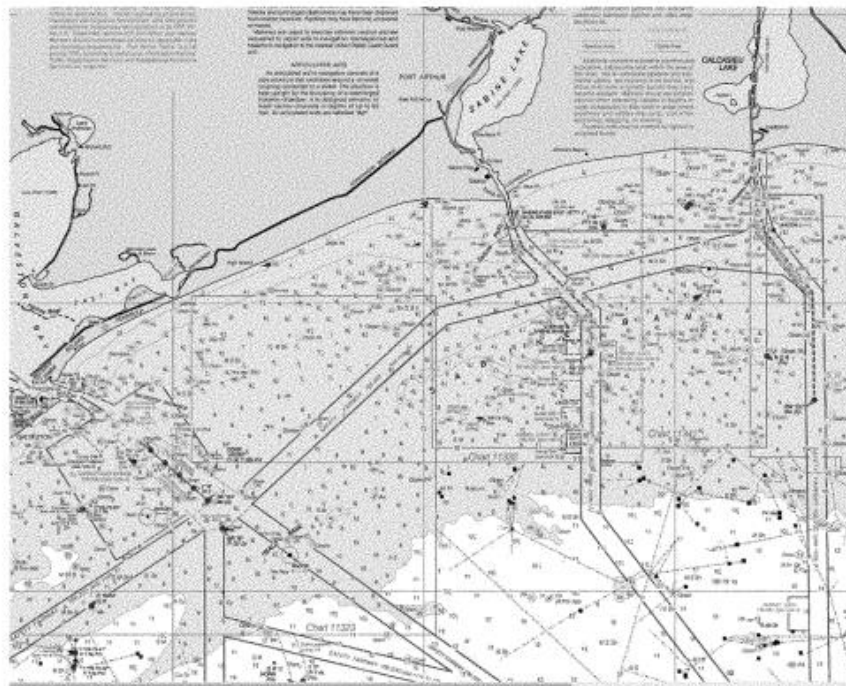
II. Background and Purpose

A. Requirements for Port Access Route Studies: Under section 70003 of title 46 of the United States Code, the Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard may designate necessary fairways and traffic separation schemes (TSSs) to provide safe access routes for vessels proceeding to and from U.S. ports. The designation of fairways and TSSs recognizes the paramount right of navigation over all other uses in the designated areas.

Before establishing or adjusting fairways or TSSs, the Coast Guard must conduct a PARS, *i.e.*, a study of

potential traffic density and the need for safe access routes for vessels. Through the study process, the Coast Guard must coordinate with Federal, State, Tribal, and foreign state agencies (where appropriate) and consider the views of maritime community representatives, environmental groups, and other stakeholders. The primary purpose of this coordination is, to the extent practicable, to reconcile the need for safe access routes with other reasonable waterway uses such as anchorages, construction, operation of renewable energy facilities, marine sanctuary operations, commercial and recreational activities, and other uses.

In addition to aiding in the establishment of new or adjusting existing fairways or TSSs, this PARS may recommend establishing or amending other vessel routing measures. Examples of other routing measures include two-way routes, recommended tracks, deep-water routes (for the benefit primarily of ships whose ability to maneuver is constrained by their draft), precautionary areas (where ships must navigate with particular caution), and areas to be avoided (for reasons of exceptional danger or especially sensitive ecological environmental factors).



Charted vessel routing measures in study area

B. Previous Port Access Route Studies within this Study Area: The Coast Guard established the TSS in the approaches to Galveston Bay, TX in 1983. It was redesignated in 1987 and 1989. There are no previous PARS within this study area.

C. Need for a New Port Access Route Study: The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) has designated two areas in the Gulf of Mexico for the development of offshore wind projects. These Wind Energy Areas (WEA) would be the first in the Gulf of Mexico. One WEA is located approximately 24 nautical miles (nm) off the coast of Galveston, Texas and the other is located approximately 56 nm off the coast of Lake Charles, Louisiana. The Coast Guard has determined the need to conduct the TX/LAPARS to determine what impact, if any, the WEAs may have on existing users of the study area.

III. Information Requested

The purpose of this notice is to announce commencement of this PARS and to solicit public comments. We encourage you to participate in the study process by submitting comments in response to this notice. Comments should address impacts to navigation in the area of study resulting from factors such as offshore development, increased vessel traffic, changing vessel traffic patterns, weather conditions, or navigational difficulty.

IV. Public Participation and Request for Comments

We encourage you to participate in this study by submitting comments and related materials.

A. Submitting Comments: To submit your comment online, go to <http://www.regulations.gov>, and insert "USCG-2023-0063" in the "search box." Click "Search." Then click "Comment." The "Comment" button can be found on the following pages:

- Docket Details page when a document within the docket is open for comment,

- Document Details page when the document is open for comment, and
- Document Search Tab with all search results open for comment displaying a "Comment" button.

Clicking "Comment" on any of the above pages will display the comment form. You can enter your comment on the form, attach files (maximum of 20 files up to 10MB each), and choose whether to identify yourself as an individual, an organization, or anonymously. Be sure to complete all required fields depending on which identity you have chosen. Once you have completed all required fields and chosen an identity, the "Submit Comment" button is enabled. Upon completion, you will receive a Comment Tracking Number for your comment. For additional step by step instructions, please see the Frequently Asked Questions page on <http://www.regulations.gov> or by clicking <https://www.regulations.gov/faq>.

We accept anonymous comments. Comments we post to <http://www.regulations.gov> will include any personal information you have provided.

We review all comments and materials received during the comment period, but we may choose not to post off-topic, inappropriate, or duplicate comments that we receive.

B. How do I find and browse for posted comments on Regulations.gov. On the previous version of *Regulations.gov*, users browsed for comments on the Docket Details page. However, since comments are made on individual documents, not dockets, new *Regulations.gov* organizes comments under their corresponding document. To access comments and documents submitted to this draft version of the study report go to <http://www.regulations.gov>, and insert "USCG-2023-0063" in the "search box." Click "Search." Then scroll down to and click on the "notice" entitled "Port Access Route Study: Notice of availability of draft report and public information session; request for comments." This will open to the

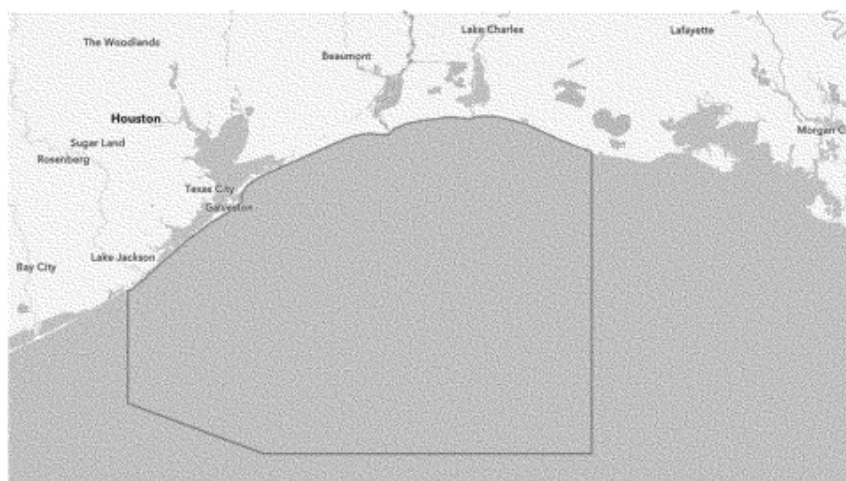
"Document Details" page. Then click on the "Browse Comments" tab. On the comment tab, you can search and filter comments. Note: If no comments have been posted to a document, the "Comments" tab will not appear on the Document Details page.

C. If you need additional help navigating the new Regulations.gov. For additional step by step instructions to submit a comment or to view submitted comments or other documents please see the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) at <http://www.regulations.gov/faq> or call or email the person in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section of this document for alternate instructions.

D. Privacy Act: Anyone can search the electronic form of comments received into any of our dockets by the name of the individual submitting the comment (or signing the comment, if submitted on behalf of an association, business, labor union, etc.). You may review a Privacy Act, system of records notice regarding DHS's eRulemaking in the March 11, 2020 issue of the **Federal Register** (85 FR 14226).

V. TX/LAPARS: Timeline, Study Area, and Process

The Eighth Coast Guard District will conduct this PARS. The study will commence upon publication of this notice and may take 12 months or more to complete. The study area will include the Gulf of Mexico regions within the Eighth Coast Guard District AOR encompassed by a line connecting the following geographic points: beginning where the coast intersects longitude 95°25'00" N; thence south to latitude 28°16'00" N, longitude 95°25'00" W; thence southeast to latitude 28°00'00" N, longitude 94°36'00" W; thence east to latitude 28°00'00" N, longitude 92°37'00" W; thence north along latitude 92°37'00" W to the coast. This area extends approximately 106 nautical miles seaward at its greatest distance and covers approximately 13,100 square nautical miles. An illustration showing the study area is below.



Chartlet showing the TX/LA PARS study area

Analyses will be conducted in accordance with COMDTINST 16003.2B, Marine Planning to Operate and Maintain the Marine Transportation System (MTS) and Implement National Policy. Instruction is available at https://media.defense.gov/2019/jul/10/2002155400/-1/-1/0/CI_16003_2B.PDF.

We will publish the results of the PARS in the **Federal Register**. It is possible that the study may validate the status quo (no routing measures) and conclude that no changes are necessary. It is also possible that the study may recommend one or more changes to address navigational safety and the efficiency of vessel traffic management. The recommendations may lead to future rulemakings or appropriate international agreements.

VI. Future Actions

In Person Public Meetings: Although the Coast Guard prefers and highly encourages all comments and related material be submitted directly to the electronic docket we do understand the value that in person public meetings will add to the study. Therefore, the Coast Guard intends to hold public meetings at various locations throughout the study area as the 2023 study process continues. For this initial comment period we ask that you make your comments directly to the docket, addressing impacts to navigation in the area of study resulting from factors such as offshore development, increased vessel traffic, changing vessel traffic patterns, weather conditions, or navigational difficulty. We anticipate that these early comments will inform us as to prevalent concerns and how

best to use our limited resources when scheduling meeting locations.

Future public meetings will be announced by a notice in the *Federal Register*.

This notice is published under the authority of 5 U.S.C. 552(a).

Dated: February 24, 2023.

R.V. Timme,
Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard, Commander,
Eighth Coast Guard District.

[FR Doc. 2023-04207 Filed 2-28-23; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 9110-04-P

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

U.S. Customs and Border Protection [1651-0117]

Free Trade Agreements

AGENCY: U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Department of Homeland Security.

ACTION: 30-Day notice and request for comments; extension of an existing collection of information.

SUMMARY: The Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection will be submitting the following information collection request to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review and approval in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA). The information collection is published in the **Federal Register** to obtain comments from the public and affected agencies.

DATES: Comments are encouraged and must be submitted (no later than March 31, 2023) to be assured of consideration.

ADDRESSES: Written comments and/or suggestions regarding the item(s)

contained in this notice should be sent within 30 days of publication of this notice to www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain. Find this particular information collection by selecting "Currently under 30-day Review—Open for Public Comments" or by using the search function.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Requests for additional PRA information should be directed to Seth Renkema, Chief, Economic Impact Analysis Branch, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Office of Trade, Regulations and Rulings, 90 K Street NE, 10th Floor, Washington, DC 20229-1177, Telephone number 202-325-0056 or via email CBP_PRA@cbp.dhs.gov. Please note that the contact information provided here is solely for questions regarding this notice. Individuals seeking information about other CBP programs should contact the CBP National Customer Service Center at 877-227-5511, (TTY) 1-800-877-8339, or CBP website at <https://www.cbp.gov/>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: CBP invites the general public and other Federal agencies to comment on the proposed and/or continuing information collections pursuant to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*). This proposed information collection was previously published in the **Federal Register** (87 FR 77131) on December 16, 2022, allowing for a 60-day comment period. This notice allows for an additional 30 days for public comments. This process is conducted in accordance with 5 CFR 1320.8. Written comments and suggestions from the public and affected agencies should address one or more of the following four points: (1) whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the

ENCLOSURE 3

Federal Register Supplemental Notice (88 FR 18326)

Dated: March 21, 2023.

Joni L. Rutter,

Director, Office of the Director, National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences.

[FR Doc. 2023-06318 Filed 3-27-23; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4140-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Coast Guard

[Docket No. USCG-2023-0063]

Port Access Route Study: Approaches to Galveston Bay and Sabine Pass, Texas and Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana

AGENCY: Coast Guard, DHS.

ACTION: Notice of study; correction and extension of comment period.

SUMMARY: On March 1, 2023, the Coast Guard published a notice of a Port Access Route Study to evaluate the adequacy of existing vessel routing measures and determine whether additional vessel routing measures are necessary for port approaches to Galveston Bay and Sabine Pass, Texas, Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana, and international and domestic transit areas in the Eighth Coast Guard District area of responsibility. The Notice contained an incorrect telephone number for the agency contact listed. This document corrects that error and extends the public comment period to April 27, 2023.

DATES: All comments and related material in response to the notice published at 88 FR 12966, on March 1, 2023, must be received on or before April 27, 2023.

Commenters should be aware that the electronic Federal Docket Management System will not accept comments after midnight, Eastern Daylight Time, on the last day of the comment period. The correction in this document to the March 1, 2023 notice, FR Doc. 2023-04207, is applicable March 28, 2023.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments identified by docket number USCG-2023-0063 using the Federal eRulemaking Portal (<http://www.regulations.gov>). See the "Public Participation and Request for Comments" portion of the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section in the March 1, 2023 notice (88 FR 12966) for further instructions on submitting comments.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: If you have questions about this notice of study, call or email Ms. Brandi Canada, Eighth Coast Guard District (dpw), U.S. Coast Guard: telephone (504) 671-2330,

email SMB-D8NewOrleans-TXLAPARS@uscg.mil.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The comment period for the notice entitled "Port Access Route Study: Approaches to Galveston Bay and Sabine Pass, Texas and Calcasieu Pass, Louisiana," that was published on March 1, 2023 (88 FR 12966) is extended to May 17, 2023.

Correction

In the **Federal Register** of March 1, 2023, in FR Doc. 2023-04207, on page 12967, in the second column, correct the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section to read:

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: If you have questions about this notice of study, call or email Ms. Brandi Canada, Eighth Coast Guard District (dpw), U.S. Coast Guard: telephone 504-671-2330, email SMB-D8NewOrleans-TXLAPARS@uscg.mil.

Dated: March 23, 2023.

Michael T. Cunningham,

Chief, Office of Regulations and Administrative Law.

[FR Doc. 2023-06372 Filed 3-27-23; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 9110-04-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS-HQ-R-2023-N022

FXGO1664091HCC0-FF09D00000-190]

Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council Meeting

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) gives notice of a meeting of the Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council (HWCC), in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

DATES:

Meeting: The HWCC will meet on Monday, April 17, 2023, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Eastern Time).

Registration: Registration to attend or participate in the meeting is required. The deadline for registration is Monday, April 10, 2023.

Accessibility: The deadline for accessibility accommodation requests is Monday, April 10, 2023. Please see *Accessibility Information* below.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will take place at the U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20240. Virtual participation will also be available via teleconference and broadcast over the internet. To register

and receive the web address and telephone number for virtual participation, contact the Designated Federal Officer (see **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Douglas Hobbs, Designated Federal Officer, by email at doug_hobbs@fws.gov, or by telephone at 703-358-2336. Individuals in the United States who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability may dial 711 (TTY, TDD, or TeleBraille) to access telecommunications relay services. Individuals outside the United States should use the relay services offered within their country to make international calls to the point-of-contact in the United States.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council (HWCC) was established to further the provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742a *et seq.*), the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701-1785), the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C. 668dd-ee), other statutes applicable to specific Department of the Interior bureaus, and Executive Order 13443 (August 16, 2007), "Facilitation of Hunting Heritage and Wildlife Conservation." The HWCC's purpose is to provide recommendations to the Federal Government, through the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, regarding policies and endeavors that (a) benefit wildlife resources; (b) encourage partnership among the public; sporting conservation organizations; and Federal, State, Tribal, and territorial governments; and (c) benefit fair-chase recreational hunting and safe recreational shooting sports.

Meeting Agenda

This meeting is open to the public. The meeting agenda will include briefings from Department of the Interior and Department of Agriculture agencies on their efforts to implement the Great American Outdoors Act, Inflation Reduction Act, and Bipartisan Infrastructure and Jobs Act; on the status of current operations of the National Wildlife Refuge System related to hunting and shooting sports; on landlocked Federal lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management; and on implementation of big game migration corridor conservation efforts. The HWCC will also hear reports from its subcommittees and provide time to hear public comment. The final agenda and other related meeting information will

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