Vessel Traffic Service Berwick Bay

User Manual, 16th Edition
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PURPOSE & APPLICABILITY

Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) Berwick Bay implements vessel traffic management regulations within the VTS Area (VTSA) and enforces certain sections of the Ports and Waterways Safety Act to enhance navigation, vessel safety, and marine environmental protection. VTS Berwick Bay provides mariners with information and direction to promote safe vessel movement by reducing the potential for collisions, rammings, and groundings, and the loss of lives and property associated with these incidents. Mariner compliance with those directions and regulations enhance the safe transit of commercial vessels through the navigation complexities of the waterway. It is our objective to issue the proper direction and provide accurate information to mariners to facilitate the safe movement of vessels, and minimize inherent risks associated with the transit of the VTSA. VTS Berwick Bay uses installed communications surveillance equipment, implements Captain of the Port (COTP) regulations, and executes specific VTS navigation safety regulations to ensure the security and safety of the Marine Transportation System (MTS).

VTS User Manual: As defined in the Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 33 CFR 161.4, each VTS Berwick Bay user shall carry on board and maintain for ready reference a copy of this User Manual.

VTS User: As defined in 33 CFR 26.03 & 33 CFR 161.2, a VTS User means a vessel, or an owner, operator, charterer, master, or person directing the movement of a vessel that is:

- Subject to the Vessel Bridge-to-Bridge Radiotelephone Act, or;
- Required to participate in a Vessel Movement Reporting System (VMRS),
- Equipped with a required Coast Guard type-approved Automatic Identification System (AIS) within a VTS area.

Bridge-to-Bridge Radiotelephone Act: The below vessels are VTS users and must monitor the VTS radio frequency, channel 11 VHF-FM at all times while navigating within the VTSA, respond if hailed and participate if directed by the VTS.

- Every power-driven vessel of 20 meters or over in length while navigating.
- Every vessel 100 gross tons and upward carrying one or more passengers for hire while navigating.
- Every towing vessel 26 feet or over in length while navigating.
- Every dredge and floating plant engaged in or near a channel or fairway in operations likely to restrict or affect navigation of other vessels except for an unmanned or intermittently manned plant under the control of a dredge.

VMRS: As defined in 33 CFR 161.15, a VMRS is a system used to monitor and track vessel movements within a VTS or VMRS area. This is accomplished by requiring that vessels provide information under established procedures as set forth in this part, or as directed by the VTS Center. To avoid imposing an undue reporting burden or unduly congesting radiotelephone frequencies, reports shall be limited to information which is essential to achieve the objectives of the VMRS. There reports are consolidated into three reports (sailing plan, position, and final).

VMRS User: As defined in 33 CFR 161.16, the below vessels are VMRS Users and must monitor the VTS frequency, channel 11 VHF-FM, at all times within the VTSA and participate fully in the VMRS.

- Every power-driven vessel of 40 meters (approximately 131 feet) or more in length while navigating.
- Every towing vessel of 8 meters (approximately 26 feet) or more in length, while navigating.

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

AIS carriage requirements:

AIS Class A device. The following vessels must have on board a properly installed, operational Coast Guard type-approved AIS Class A device:

- A self-propelled vessel of 65 feet or more in length, engaged in commercial service.
- A towing vessel of 26 feet or more in length and more than 600 horsepower, engaged in commercial service.
- A self-propelled vessel that is certificated to carry more than 150 passengers.
- A self-propelled vessel engaged in dredging operations in or near a commercial channel or shipping fairway in a manner likely to restrict or affect navigation of other vessels.

VTS Berwick Bay Oversize Tow (OST) Permits

33 CFR 162.75 applies to all waterway's tributary to the Gulf of Mexico (except the Mississippi River and its tributaries, South and Southwest passes, and the Atchafalaya River) from St. Marks, FL, to the Rio Grande and includes the Gulf intracoastal Waterway. These regulations grant the Eighth Coast Guard District Commander the authority to permit oversize tows, the movement of vessels with projection, and mooring or anchoring in the land cuts of waterways. This authority has been delegated to the Captain of the Ports (COTP).

OVERSIZE TOW PERMIT REQUESTS FOR BARGE FLOTILLAS
For VTS Berwick Bay (985-380-5370, recorded line), an OST permit is required if a vessel is greater than 54 feet wide *and* is 750 feet or more in length (including the towing vessel) that can be broken down. Oversize tow permit request for barge flotillas that can be broken down can be arranged via telephone with the COTP zone where the voyage originates. A written request is not required. The requesting party will provide the following info:

a) Requestor's name and vessel contact information,
b) towing vessels owner/operator,
c) towing vessels name,
d) towing vessels horsepower, and
e) tow dimensions and barge cargo.

Granted permits stipulate the understanding that owner/operator fully accepts the responsibility, liability, and obligation to operate the barge flotilla prudently and safely. The owner/operator is reminded of the requirements of 33 CFR 162.75 (b)(1), which includes reducing the size of a tow as necessary to always ensure a clear and free channel be left open to permit free and unobstructed navigation by all types of vessels and tows normally using the various waterways.

Owner/operators should also understand that OST in narrow channels are required to stand-by until vessels less than 55 feet wide have cleared. When passing in a narrow channel is necessary, the OST shall yield to the maximum.

VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICE AREA (VTSA)

VTS Berwick Bay: 33 CFR 161.40. Encompasses the navigable waters between 29° 37’ N and 29° 45’ N, bound by 91° 18’ W and 91° 10’ W to include the following:

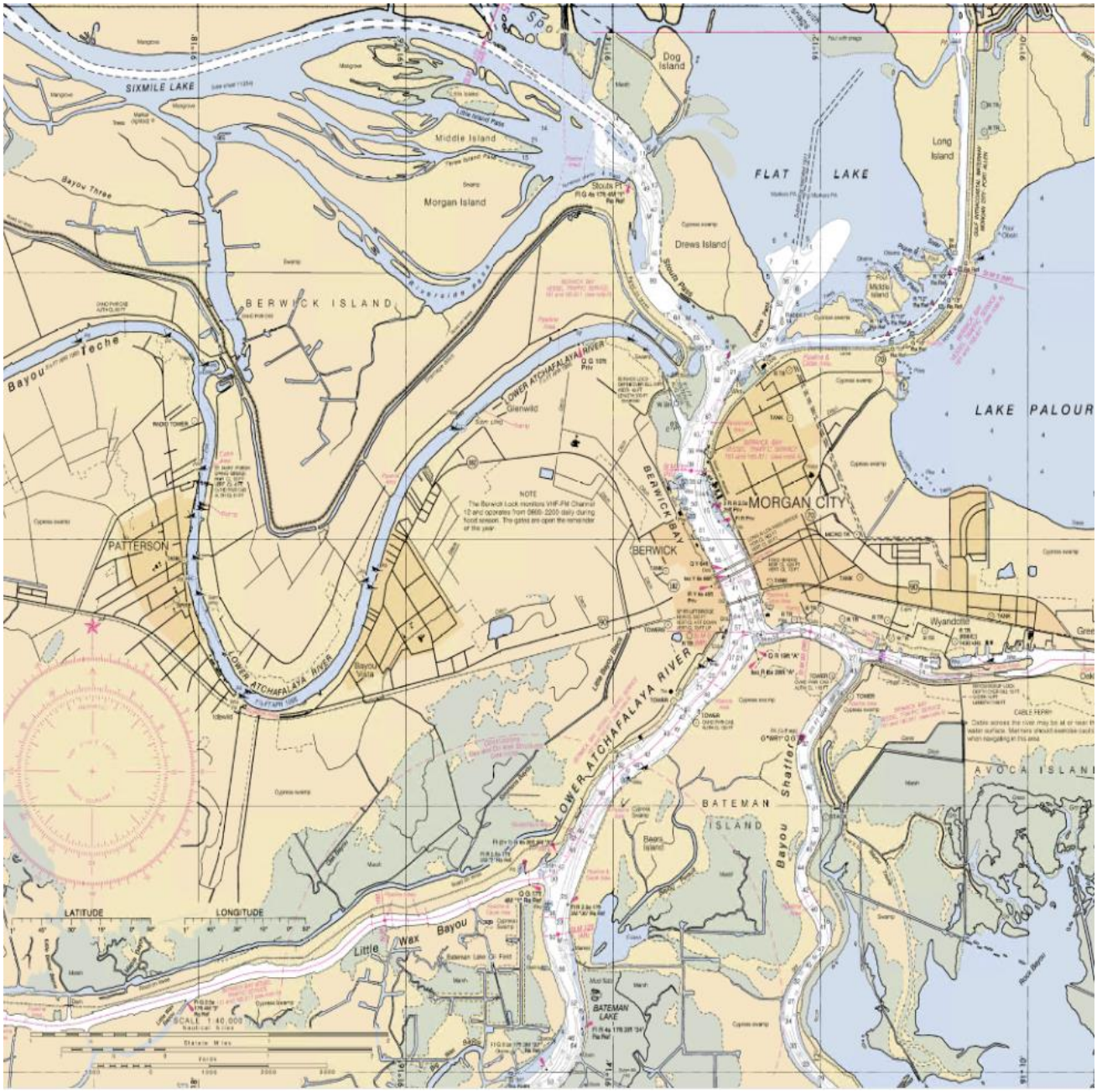
The Atchafalaya River (AR) from MM 117 AR to MM 126 AR.

The Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) from MM 93 West of Harvey Lock (WHL) to MM 102 (WHL).

The Morgan City/Port Allen Alternate Route (MCPA) from MM 0 to MM 5.

Bayou Teche from Berwick Lock (BL) to one statue mile northwest along Bayou Teche.

Bayou Shaffer (BS) Junction at MM 94.5 (WHL) to one statute mile south.



REPORTING POINTS, SAILING PLAN & COMMUNICATIONS

Reporting Points: A VRMS User shall provide a sailing plan to VTS Berwick Bay on channel 11 VHF-FM at the following reporting points:

Boundary Point	Local Reference
Stouts Pass	Stouts Point Light "1". MM 117 Atchafalaya River
Berwick Lock (if transiting lock)	MM 2 Morgan City/Port Allen Route
Conrad's Point Junction	Buoy "1" MM 1.5 Morgan City/Port Allen Route

Swift Ships Flat Lake Junction	MM 3 Morgan City/Port Allen Route
20 Grand Point Junction	Bayou Boeuf-Atchafalaya River. MM 95.5 ICW
Bayou Shaffer Highlines	Overhead Power Cable at MM 96.5 ICW
Bayou Shaffer Junction	MM 94.5 ICW-Bayou Shaffer
Wax Bayou Junction	MM 99 ICW
Bayou Boeuf Lock	MM 93 GIWW WHL
Light "26"	MM 126 Atchafalaya River
Light "3"	MM 102 ICW
Buoy "10"	MM 5 Morgan City/Port Allen Route

Sailing Plans: Vessels transiting VTSA shall be in compliance with 33 CFR 161.19. At least 15 minutes prior to entering the VTSA, a vessel must report the following:

- Vessel name & type
- Position
- Destination and ETA
- Intended route
- Time and point of entry
- Dangerous cargos on board or in its tow, as defined in 33 CFR 160.202
- Towing vessels shall also provide:
    - Length and Width of Tow (barges only)
    - Status of barges (loaded or empty)
    - Horsepower

Communications: VTS Berwick Bay Radio Frequency Assignments:

Channel 11: (156.550 MHz) Primary VTS operations. Designated for VTS Berwick Bay communications concerning vessel traffic management. Guard continuously.

Channel 12: (156.600 MHz) Secondary VTS operations. Also designated for VTS communications concerning vessel traffic management. Secondary channel for VTS Berwick Bay; primary frequency for Berwick Lock.

Channel 13: (156.650) Designated as the Bridge-to-Bridge radiotelephone communications frequency. May be used to inform users to shift to the appropriate VTS primary frequency and may be used to preface a General Broadcast and to pass VTS advisories when no other channel is available. Transmissions on channel 13 should be kept to a minimum. Each traffic controller in the VTS shall monitor channel 13 for information applicable to the VTS mission. Guard continuously.

Channel 14: (156.700 MHz) Bayou Boeuf Lock Primary Channel.

Channel 16: (156.800 MHz) The International Calling and Distress frequency. No administrative communications will be passed on Channel 16. The normal VTS use of channel 16 is to call a vessel that they have been unable to reach on channels 11 or 13, and then shift the vessel to an appropriate working frequency as soon as contact is made. Channel 16 may be used to preface a General Broadcast. Channel 16 is not authorized for communications with mobile land units. VTS Users should guard continuously.

Channel 22A: (157.100 MHz) Tertiary VTS operations. Designated for liaison between government and non-government vessels and for issuing Coast Guard Marine Information Broadcasts. Channel 22A may be used for transmitting or collecting VTS information.

Shoaling or Aids to Navigation (AToN) Discrepancies Reporting: While transiting the area contact the VTS for any shoaling concerns not previously noted or for any AToN discrepancies to include missing, extinguished, off station navigation aids. USCG AToN units will respond to correct these issues as soon as possible.

Dead Ship Tows (ships in which main propulsion plant, boilers and auxiliaries are not in operation): Please contact the VTS with all dead ship tow permits 72 hours prior to movement. This is especially critical during High Water and allows for the USCG to determine risk, request a tow plan if deemed necessary, and potentially close waterways in preparation for the voyage. During High Water, all dead ship tows should expect a minimum of two assist boats when transiting through the triple span bridges and or turning west at mile 99 WHL.

Incident Reporting: Owners, agents, masters, operators, or persons in charge are reminded that hazardous conditions, in addition to reportable marine casualties, are to be immediately reported to the Coast Guard. As soon as is practicable, a VTS User shall notify the VTS of any of the following:

- A marine casualty as defined in 46 CFR 4.05–1;
- Involvement in the ramming of a fixed or floating object;
- A pollution incident as defined in 33 CFR 151.15 ;
- A defect or discrepancy in an aid to navigation;
- A hazardous condition as defined in 33 CFR 160.202 ;
- Improper operation of vessel equipment required by 33 CFR 164;
- A situation involving hazardous materials for which a report is required by 49 CFR 176.48; and
- A hazardous vessel operating condition as defined in 33 CFR161.2.

HIGH WATER OPERATIONS

Due to runoff from the Red River, Mississippi River, and tributaries that enter the Gulf of Mexico through the Atchafalaya River Basin, IAW 33 CFR 165.811, anytime the Atchafalaya River stage at Morgan City is 3.0ft or above, it is classified as high water for vessel traffic management purposes. The Captain of the Port (COTP) will carefully consider implementing High Water Control Measures at the following thresholds. High Water Control Measures will be implemented via Marine Safety Information Bulletin (MSIB) signed by the COTP, and Broadcast Notice to Mariners (BNM).

The following High-Water Restrictions are in place for the designated regulated navigation area (RNA) that encompass the Atchafalaya River in the vicinity of the Morgan City Triple Span Bridges, including the waters extending 2000 yds north of the Highway 182 Bridge and 4000 yds south of the Morgan City Railroad Bridge (MCRRB).

To be in compliance with Assist Boat requirements, tows must ensure the assist boat is ready, and in position to provide IMMEDIATE assistance throughout the entire transit through the Regulated Navigation Area (RNA).

TANDEM TOWS Minimum Available Horsepower Requirement [The *greater* value listed.]		
	Daytime (sunrise to sunset)	Nighttime (sunset to sunrise)
Upbound	400 hp or (Length of tow - 300ft) x 3.	600 hp or (Length of tow - 200ft) x 3.
Downbound	600 hp or (Length of tow - 200ft) x 3.	600 hp or (Length of tow) x 3.
Certain Dangerous Cargo (CDC)	600 hp or (Length of tow) x 3.	600 hp or (Length of tow) x 3.
NOTE: A 5% variance from the available horsepower is authorized.		

Tows 55-feet wide or greater, the lesser value listed.

Minimum Available Horsepower Requirement

- Doubled wide tows, length of tow is calculated as if they were arranged in tandem.
- When transporting hazardous and/or red flag barges, or Certain Dangerous Cargos, require HP equal to 3 times the length of the barges, as if they were arranged in tandem, or 3,000 horsepower, whichever is less.

	Daytime (sunrise to sunset)	Nighttime (sunset to sunrise)
Upbound	1800 hp or (Length of tow) x 3.	2400 hp or (Length of tow) x 3.
Downbound	2400 hp or (Length of tow) x 3.	3000 hp or (Length of tow) x 3.
Certain Dangerous Cargo (CDC)	3000 hp or (Length of tow as if arranged in tandem) x 3.	3000 hp or (Length of tow as if arranged in tandem) x 3.
NOTE: A 5% variance from the available horsepower is authorized.		

River Level > 3ft or river currents 3kts sustained:

(a) Max length of tow (LoT) remains 1,180ft transiting the Morgan City Triple Bridge Complex (the bridges).

(b) Max length of tows 55-feet wide or greater remains 600ft transiting the bridges.

(c) Tows with a loaded box in the lead must not exceed 600-feet in length.

(d) Minimal available horsepower requirements for tows are in affect.

(e) Tows 55-feet wide or greater shall have at least 75% of the required horsepower, wired in, tows 54-feet wide or less shall have at least 50% of the required horsepower wired in when transiting the bridges. Once that condition is met, an assist boat can be used to make up the remaining required horsepower.

(f) Towing on a hawser is not authorized, except that if a tug is pushing ahead on a barge that is being towed on a hawser by another towing vessel, it is considered “Pushing Ahead” and is allowed.

(g) Towing Certain Dangerous Cargoes (CDC) Barges defined in 33 CFR 160.202: Must have available horsepower of at least 600 OR three times the length of tow, whichever is GREATER.

(h) Performing a top-around maneuver in a narrow channel in high water incurs elevated levels of risk due to swift river currents and restricted maneuverability. Therefore, prior to performing a top-around maneuver inside the Vessel Traffic Service Area (VTSA), tows shall notify and receive authorization from VTS Berwick Bay. Tows requesting to top-around above the Morgan City Triple Span Bridges will be directed to do so above Conrad's Point. Tows requesting to top-around south of the Morgan City Triple Span Bridge will require an assist vessel.

River Level > 5ft – TEMPORARY EMERGENCY VESSEL MOVEMENT CONTROLS (TEVMC)

In addition to all previous restrictions.

(a) In addition to all previous restrictions;

(b) All tows shall have at least 75% of the required available horsepower wired in when transiting the bridges.

(c) All Southbound tows transiting the bridges will be limited to maximum tow length of 600 feet when loaded. Tows with empties in the lead may exceed 600 feet with an ASSIST boat.

(d) All Westbound tows turning into the GIWW at mile 98.5 WHL will be limited to a maximum tow length of 600 feet when loaded. Tows with empties in the lead may exceed 600 feet with an ASSIST boat.

(e) Mariners shall use extreme caution when transiting the Wax Lake Outlet due to high abeam currents. All mariners unfamiliar with this transit should consider using an assist boat.

River Level > 6ft - EMERGENCY VESSEL MOVEMENT CONTROLS (EVMC)

In addition to all previous restrictions.

(a) In addition to all previous restrictions;

(b) All tows transiting the bridges will be limited to maximum tow length of 600 feet.

(c) All South and Northbound tows with a length of tow >400 ft (regardless of horsepower) must have an additional ASSIST BOAT when turning westbound into the GIWW at mile 98.5 WHL.

(d) All Southbound tows with a length of tow >400 ft (regardless of horsepower) must have an additional ASSIST BOAT through the bridges.

River Level 7ft and over

In addition to all previous restrictions.

(a) In addition to all previous restrictions;

(b) Predicted shoaling and high currents may also require assist boats at 20 Grand Point (GIWW at mile 94 WHL).

(c) Unmanned barge fleeting areas must ensure all barges are wired in, spuds or anchors are deployed, and a watch schedule is formulated to conduct safety checks.

(d) Mooring no more than two across

(e) Ensure all lights are working IAW the prescribed rules.

Special Note: Navigating vessels in high water conditions increases the risk of casualties. Mariners are reminded of their ongoing responsibility to conduct and manage their navigation assessments, or voyage plans, as required by applicable regulations. Proper voyage planning prepares all vessel watch teams for encountering known waterway and navigational hazards. In addition, vessel operators are strongly encouraged to continuously evaluate the experience of their mariners operating in high water conditions and consider ensuring more experienced wheelmen are on watch during critical stages of the voyage or using "posted" wheelmen to transit through high-risk areas.

HURRICANE PORT CONDITIONS

The official Atlantic Hurricane season is typically from May 15th to November 30th. If a tropical storm and/or hurricane is forecasted to impact the COTP Zone, the COTP will set the following Hurricane Port Conditions:

Port Condition WHISKEY: Anticipated gale force winds (34kts/39mph) within 72 hours

Port Condition X-RAY: Anticipated gale force winds (34kts/39mph) within 48 hours

Port Condition YANKEE: Anticipated gale force winds (34kts/39mph) expected within 24 hours

Port Condition ZULU: Anticipated gale force winds (34kts/39mph) expected within 12 hours

CONTACT US:

Marine Safety Unit Morgan City Officer of the Day: (985) 397-3300

Vessel Traffic Center Berwick Bay: (985) 380-5370 / (985) 397-3306

Director, Vessel Traffic Service Berwick Bay: (985) 397-3289

For a current list of MSIBs in the COTP Houma Zone visit:
https://homeport.uscg.mil/port-directory/Houma

For a current list of USCG Local Notice to Mariner (LNM) visit:
https://www.navcen.uscg.gov under LNM>District 8 Region>Eight District Gulf Coast LNMs

The Coast Guard set advisories based on the information obtained on the hydrographic surveys conducted by the Army Corps of Engineers. These surveys can be found here:
https://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/ under Missions>Navigation>Channel Surveys

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