



CHARLESTON BRANCH PILOTS' ASSOCIATION

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March 29, 2023

Commanding Officer
Coast Guard Sector Charleston
Attn: Waterways Management Division
1050 Register St
North Charleston, SC 29405

Dear Captain Cole,

We appreciate the continuing opportunity to provide input on the placement of buoys in the Port of Charleston. In particular, we are grateful for your patience through what has turned out to be an iterative process to find the best solution to meet the objectives of the Coast Guard Aids to Navigation Program, the Federal Government's responsibilities associated with maintaining both the channels and the aids that mark them, and the interests of mariners such as ourselves.


We have realized our original request for buoys marking the exposed waters of the deepened Fort Sumter Range was lacking foresight for the watch circles of the aids in even moderate weather. In practicality, we often found ourselves close aboard buoys, particularly when ships were meeting, to the point that masters would comment, and while safety was never in question, the distraction within the bridge team can be a detriment. Our recent experience during the first maintenance cycle on the improved entrance channel has indicated that having the buoys set some 200 feet off the channel eliminated the concern and distractions, without significantly affecting our navigational precision.

After careful deliberation within our Association, and education from your excellent Waterways Management staff, we respectfully ask for your consideration to place buoys "C" through "16", marking the exposed portion of Fort Sumter Range, to be placed in line 125 feet outboard of the channel toes. This will serve to effectively mark the channel while not creating obstructions when buoys are extended to the limits of their watch circles, and as we understand it, enable channel maintenance without needing to move them.

Also of concern is marking the east edge of Range D, across from Wharf A at the Naval Weapons Station. The eastern shore of this reach had been unmarked, and at our request, your team installed buoy "72A" on a temporary authorization. This aid has proven to be extremely effective aiding pilots to set up for the turn to Range C, and therefore, we respectfully request "72A" be granted permanent authorization.

Again, we greatly appreciate the professionalism and diligence of your Waterways team and your colleagues at the Seventh District. Thank you.

Sincerely,


John E. Cameron
Captain, U.S. Coast Guard (Ret.)
Executive Director

Copy: Port of Charleston Harbor Safety Committee