



MARINE SAFETY AND SECURITY INFORMATION BULLETIN (MSIB) 25-02



July 02, 2025

U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Coast Guard Sector San Francisco

San Francisco Bay Offshore Traffic Lanes: Safety Guidance for Small Vessels

This bulletin provides navigation safety information to commercial fishermen and other small vessel operators who fish or navigate in and around the San Francisco Bay offshore ocean approach lanes. To minimize the risk of accidents, all maritime operators must understand the traffic lane locations, boundaries, and be prepared to communicate their maneuvering intentions with larger commercial vessels.

Safety Recommendations for Fishing Vessels and Small Craft:

1. **Monitor Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) VHF Channels:** The U. S. Coast Guard VTS monitors and coordinates commercial vessel traffic. VTS monitors VHF channels 12 and 14 (VTS primary channels), and 13 and 16.
2. **Listen to VTS Traffic Reports:** Offshore Vessel Traffic Advisories are broadcast on VHF channel 12 at 15 and 45 minutes past each hour. These reports provide commercial vessels bearing, range, and ETA to the San Francisco Sea Buoy for inbound vessels and ETA to the seaward VTS limits for outbound vessels.
3. **Adhere to Navigation Rules:** All vessels seaward of the COLREGs demarcation line (west of Point Bonita) must comply with the International Navigation Rules, Rule #10.
4. **Communicate on VHF Channel 13:** VTS participants are not required to monitor VHF channel 16, instead they use channel 13 to communicate maneuvering intentions with other commercial vessels. Most vessels in U.S. navigable waters are required to monitor and communicate on channel 13 per the Bridge-to-Bridge Radiotelephone Act (33 CFR 26).
5. **Contact VTS for Information:** Contact VTS on VHF channel 12, 14 or by phone at (415) 399-7410 for information on offshore vessel movements. Contact USCG Sector San Francisco Command Center at (415) 399-3547 for additional questions regarding this bulletin.

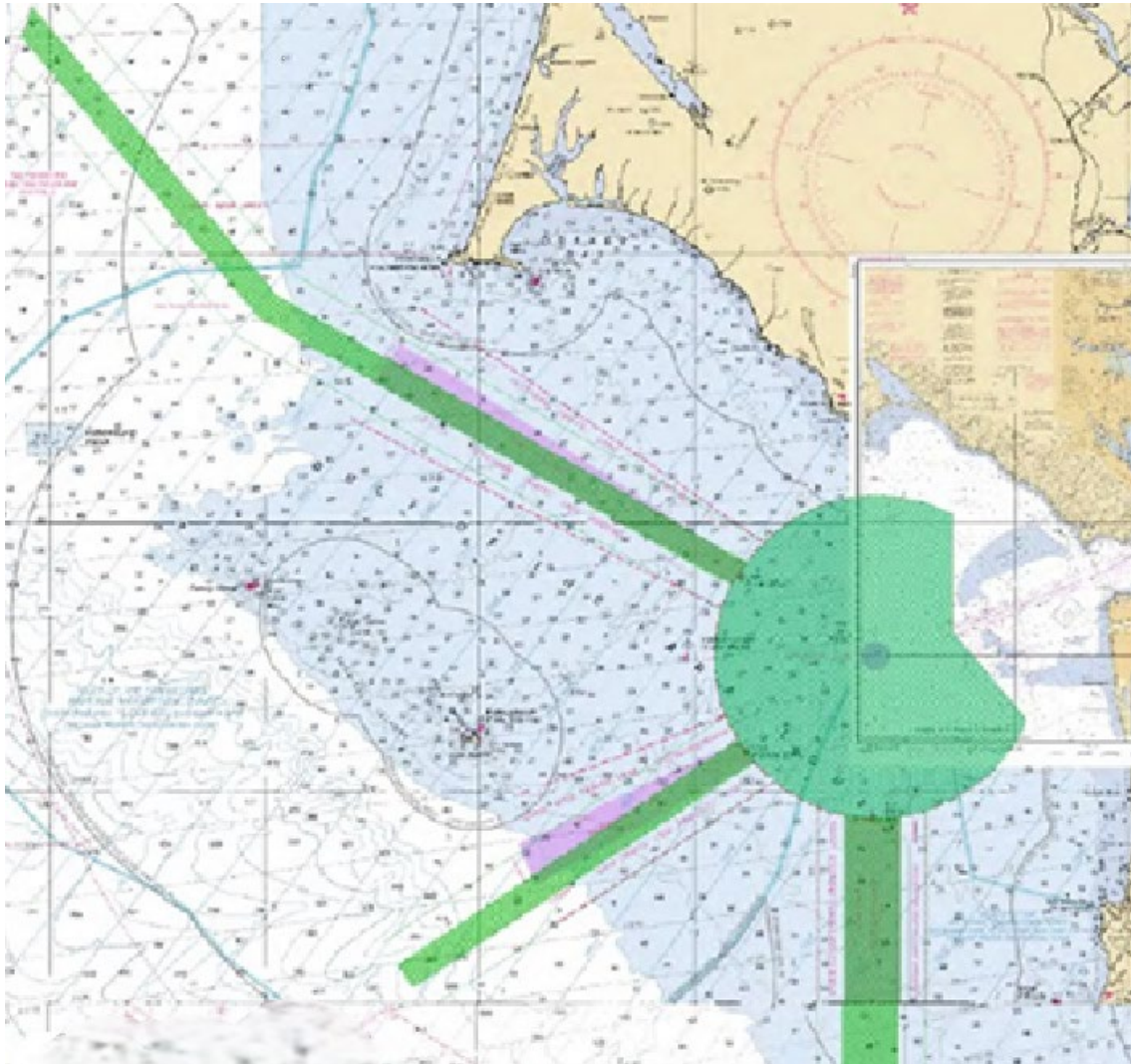
Key COLREGs Reminders:

- Rule 9 (Narrow Channels): Fishing vessels shall not impede vessels navigating within a narrow channel or fairway.
- Rule 10 (Traffic Separation Schemes):
 - While permitted to use inshore traffic zones, small vessels should use the appropriate traffic lane when safe to do so.
 - Do not enter separation zones or cross separation lines except in emergencies or to fish within a separation zone.
 - Fishing vessels shall not impede vessels following a traffic lane.

These offshore approach lanes consist of an International Maritime Organization approved Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) including:

- **Northern, Southern, and Western Approaches** (Parts I-III): Each include a separation zone and two traffic lanes.
- **Central Area** (Part IV): Consists of a precautionary area, an area to be avoided within the precautionary area, and a main ship channel comprised of a separation zone and two traffic lanes.

The TSS facilitates safe vessel movement into and out of San Francisco Bay and is routinely used by commercial vessels. See the chart below for further details.



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