Chesapeake Bay
NOAA Chart 12280

A reduced-scale NOAA nautical chart for small boaters
When possible, use the full-size NOAA chart for navigation.

- Complete, reduced-scale nautical chart
- Print at home for free
- Convenient size
- Up-to-date with Notices to Mariners
- Compiled by NOAA’s Office of Coast Survey, the nation’s chartmaker
Nautical charts are a fundamental tool of marine navigation. They show water depths, obstructions, buoys, other aids to navigation, and much more. The information is shown in a way that promotes safe and efficient navigation. Chart carriage is mandatory on the commercial ships that carry America’s commerce. They are also used on every Navy and Coast Guard ship, fishing and passenger vessels, and are widely carried by recreational boaters.

**What are Nautical Charts?**

Nautical charts are an essential tool for safe and efficient navigation. They provide vital information about water depths, obstructions, buoys, and other navigational aids. Chart carriage is mandatory for commercial vessels, and they are also used by recreational boaters, fishing vessels, and passengers. Nautical charts are updated regularly to reflect changes in the marine environment.

**What is a BookletChart?**

This BookletChart is designed to help recreational boaters locate themselves on the water. It has been reduced in size for convenience, but it still contains all the essential information found on the full-scale nautical chart. The reduced size makes it easier to carry and use while on the water.

**Notice to Mariners Correction Status**

This BookletChart has been updated for chart corrections published in the U.S. Coast Guard Local Notice to Mariners, the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency Weekly Notice to Mariners, and, where applicable, the Canadian Coast Guard Notice to Mariners. Additional chart corrections have been made by NOAA in advance of their publication in a Notice to Mariners. The last Notice to Mariners applied to this chart are listed at the bottom of page 5.


*Selected Excerpts from Coast Pilot*

**Chesapeake Bay**

The largest inland body of water along the Atlantic coast of the United States, is 168 miles long with a greatest width of 23 miles. The bay is the approach to Norfolk, Newport News, Baltimore, and many lesser ports. Deep-draft vessels use the Atlantic entrance, which is about 10 miles wide between Fishermans Island on the north and Cape Henry on the south. Medium-draft vessels can enter from Delaware Bay on the north via Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, and lightdraft vessels can enter from Albemarle Sound on the south via the Intracoastal Waterway.

The waters surrounding a vessel that is carrying liquefied petroleum gas are a safety zone while the vessel transits the Chesapeake Bay and Elizabeth River. (See [165.506](http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/nsd/coastpilot_w.php?book=3), chapter 2, for limits and regulations.)

**North Atlantic Right Whales**

Endangered North Atlantic right whales may occur within 30 miles of the Virginia coasts in the approaches to the Chesapeake Bay (peak season: November through April, although right whales have been sighted in the area year round). (See [North Atlantic Right Whales](http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/nsd/coastpilot_w.php?book=3), indexed as such in Chapter 3, for more information on right whales and recommend measures to avoid collisions.)

All vessels 65 feet or greater in length overall (L.O.A.) and subject to the jurisdiction of the United States are restricted to speeds of 10 knots or less in a Seasonal Management Area existing around the entrance to the Chesapeake Bay between November 1 and April 30. The area is defined as the waters within a 20-nm radius of 37°00’36.9”N., 75°57’50.5”W. (See [50 CFR 224.105](http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/nsd/coastpilot_w.php?book=3) in Chapter 2 for regulations, limitations, and exceptions.)

**Chesapeake Light** (36°54’17”N., 75°42’46”W.), 117 feet above the water, is shown from a blue tower on a white superstructure on four piles, 14 miles eastward of Cape Henry. The name CHESAPEAKE is displayed on all sides. A sound signal and racon are at the light. A fish haven, consisting of sunken fishing-boat hulls and marked by private unlighted buoys, is about 0.4 mile southwestward of the light.

**Cape Charles**

On the north side of the entrance, is low and bare, but the land back of it is high and wooded. Wise Point is the most southerly mainland tip of the cape. Low Fishermans Island, a National Wildlife Refuge, is 1 mile south of Wise Point. The southwest end of Smith Island is 2.4 miles eastward of Wise Point; the island is 6 miles long, low, and sparsely wooded, and awash at half tide midway along its length.

**Smith Island Shoal**

Which breaks in heavy weather, has depths of 21 feet. 7.5 miles east-southeast of Cape Charles Light. Depths less than 40 feet extend another 5 miles northeastward. Outer limits of the shoal area are marked by a lighted buoy.

**Nautilus Shoal**

Which extends 4 miles southeastward from Fishermans Island, has patches with depths of 6 to 11 feet. The buoyed channel along the southwest side of Nautilus Shoal, thence northward between Fishermans Island and Inner Middle Ground, had a controlling depth of about 16 feet in 1977-1980. The channel is used by local vessels drawing up to 12 feet. This channel is not recommended for strangers because of shifting shoals. In 1996, a 10-foot shoal was reported 1.5 miles S of Fishermans Island in about 37°03’31.2”N., 75°57’27.0”W. Breakers frequently occur along the axis of Inner Middle Ground, starting on the seaward side of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel and continuing the entire length of the shoal. This phenomenon appears to be associated with large swells rolling in from sea from the southeast-southeast to southeast.

**Cape Henry**

On the south side of the entrance, has a range of sand hills about 80 feet high.

**Cape Henry Light** (36°55’35”N., 76°00’26”W.), 164 feet above the water, is shown from an octagonal, pyramidal tower, upper and lower half of each face alternately black and white, on the beach near the turn of the cape.

**A naval restricted area** extends northwest and eastward from Cape Henry. (See [334.320](http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/nsd/coastpilot_w.php?book=3), chapter 2, for limits and regulations.)
For more information on aids to navigation, including those on Western Rivers, please consult the latest USCG Light List for your area. These volumes are available online at http://www.navcen.uscg.gov.
SOUNDINGS IN FEET

UNITED STATES - EAST COAST
MARYLAND AND VIRGINIA

CHESAPEAKE BAY

Mercator Projection
Scale 1:200,000 at Lat. 38°10'
North American Datum of 1983
(World Geodetic System 1984)

SOUNDINGS IN FEET
AT MEAN LOWER LOW WATER

HEIGHTS
Heights in feet above Mean High Water.

AUTHORITIES
Hydrography and topography by the National Ocean Service, Coast Survey, with additional data from the Corps of Engineers, and U.S. Coast Guard.

HORIZONTAL DATUM
The horizontal reference datum of this chart is North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83), which for charting purposes is considered equivalent to the World Geodetic System of 1984 (WGS84). Geodetic positions referred to the North American Datum of 1927 do not require conversion to NAD 83 for plotting on this chart.

POULATION REPORTS
Report all spills of oil and hazardous substances to the National Response Center, Vols. 1-800-424-8802 (toll free), or to the nearest U.S. Coast Guard facility if telephone communication is impossible (93 CFR 155).

NOTE S
Regulations for ocean dumping sites are contained in 40 CFR, Parts 250-259. Additional information concerning the regulations and requirements for use of the sites may be obtained from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). See U.S. Coast Pilots appendix for addresses of EPA offices. Dumping subsequent to the survey dates may have reduced the capacities shown.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION
Consult U.S. Coast Pilots 3 & 4 for important supplemental information.

AIMS TO NAVIGATION
Consult U.S. Coast Guard Light List for supplemental information concerning aids to navigation.

NOTE 2
NO-DISCHARGE ZONE 40 CFR 140
Under the Clean Water Act, Section 312, all vessels operating within a No-Discharge Zone (NDZ) are completely prohibited from discharging any sewage, liquid or untreated, into the waters. All vessels with an installed marine sanitation device (MSD) that are navigating, anchored, or docked within a NDZ must have the MSD certified to prevent the overboard discharge of sewage (liquid or untreated) or install a holding tank. Regulations for the NDZ are contained in the U.S. Coast Pilot.

Additional information concerning the regulations and requirements may be obtained from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) web site: http://www.epa.gov/owow/conserve/regulatory/vessel_sewage/

Note: Chart grid lines are aligned with true north.
NOTE
TRAFFIC SEPARATION SCHEME
The traffic separation scheme is designed to aid in the prevention of collisions at the approaches to Chesapeake Bay and does not supersede or alter the applicable Rules of the Road.

The RECOMMENDED routes for entering and departing from Chesapeake Bay are overprinted on this chart. The Northern Approach is marked by a hatched magenta line centered on a line of ternary buoys which separates the courses of inbound and outbound vessels. Vessels should observe the duties for their port hand.

It is RECOMMENDED that the following ships use the Southern Approach deep-water route when bound for Chesapeake Bay from sea or to sea from Chesapeake Bay: Deep-draft ships, vessels directed as 45 feet (13.7 m) or greater in fresh water, and naval aircraft carriers. Ships drawing less than 45 feet (13.7 m) may use the deep-water route when, in their master's judgment, the effects of ship characteristics, her speed, and prevailing environmental conditions may cause the draft of the ship to equal or exceed 45 feet (13.7 m). It is RECOMMENDED that a ship using the deep-water route:
Announce its intention on VHF FM channel 16 as it approaches the Chesapeake Bay Entrance Lighted Buoy “CB” on the south end, or the Chesapeake Bay Entrance Lighted Buoy “SH” on the north end of the route.
Avoid, as far as practicable, overtaking other ships operating in the deep-water route.
Keep as near to the outer limit of the route which lies on the starboard side as is safe and practicable.
All other ships approaching the Chesapeake Bay traffic separation scheme should use the appropriate inbound or outbound traffic lane of the traffic separation scheme. Traffic within the precautionary area may consist of vessels operating between Thomas Point Shoal and Chesapeake Channel and one of the southernmost traffic lanes. Mariners are advised to exercise extreme care in navigating within this area. The northern plat boarding area is outlined by a magenta band.

Use NOAA electronic navigational charts for the most up-to-date information.

NOTE

TRAFFIC SEPARATION SCHEME

The traffic separation scheme is designed to avoid head-on collisions at the approach to Chesapeake Bay and does not supersede or alter the applicable Rules of the Road.

The RECOMMENDED routes for entering and departing from Chesapeake Bay are outlined on this chart. The Northeast Approach is marked by a yellow line on this chart. Vessels should avoid all buoys on this chart.

It is RECOMMENDED that the following ships use the Southern Approach deep-water route when bound for Chesapeake Bay from sea or to sea from Chesapeake Bay:

- Deep-draft ships, defined as all except 90 feet (27.4 meters) or more in length, and over 300,000 deadweight tons, use the deep-water route when, in their master’s judgment, the effects of ship characteristics, as speed, and prevailing environmental conditions may cause the ship to exceed or equal the depth of 10 feet (3.0 meters).

It is RECOMMENDED that a ship using the deep-water route announce its intention on VHF-FM channel 16 as it approaches Chesapeake Bay Entrance Lighted Whistle buoy "CH" on the north end of the route.

Avoid, as far as practicable, overtaking other ships operating in the deep-water route.

Keep as near to the outer limit of the route as practicable.

All other vessels operating within the vicinity of the southern approach deep-water route should use the appropriate inbound or outbound traffic lane of the traffic separation scheme.

Traffic within the approaches area may consist of vessels operating between Thimble Shoals and Chesapeake Channels. The western boundary of the approaches area is marked by a magenta line.
NOTE
TRAFFIC SEPARATION SCHEME
One-way traffic lanes overlain on this chart in the vicinity of Smith Point are RECOMMENDED for all vessels except small craft. They have been designed to aid in the prevention of collisions but are not intended in any way to supersede or alter the applicable Rules of the Road. The recommended route is marked by a leading buoy and a fixed egg-shaped band which separates the courses of inbound and outbound vessels. Vessels should leave the buoy on their port hand.
Assist, as far as practicable, overtaking other ships operating in the deep-water route:

Go as near to the outer limit of the route which lies on thestarboard side as is safe and practicable.

All other ships approaching the Chesapeake Bay traffic separation scheme should use the appropriate inbound or outbound traffic lane of the traffic separation scheme.

Traffic within the restricted area may consist of vessels operating between Thimble Shoal and Chesapeake Channels and one of the established traffic lanes. Vessels are advised to exercise extreme caution in navigating within this area. The normal Pilot boarding area is outlined by a magenta line.

NOTE K

RIGHT-OF-WAY SEASONAL MANAGEMENT AREA

All vessels greater than 50 feet in length must maintain speeds of 10 knots or less in occasional management areas.

NOTE G

CAUTION

The Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel complex has on several occasions suffered damage from vessels due to adverse weather conditions. Cautions in excess of three knots may be expected in the area. Mariners transiting this area are urged to be particularly alert in regards to the weather situation. The National Weather Service provides 24-hour weather broadcasts on 162.55 MHz. The Local Marine Operator also transmits weather information at 0130, 0700, 1300, and 1900 local time on 2538 and 2460 kHz. Transmitting schedules are subject to change, and Notice to Mariners warning vessels in close proximity of the bridge-tunnel complex is discouraged.
Note: Chart grid lines are aligned with true north.
VHF Marine Radio channels for use on the waterways:
Channel 6 – Inter-ship safety communications.
Channel 9 – Communications between boats and ship-to-coast.
Channel 13 – Navigation purposes at bridges, locks, and harbors.
Channel 16 – Emergency, distress and safety calls to Coast Guard and others, and to initiate calls to other vessels. Contact the other vessel, agree to another channel, and then switch.
Channel 22A – Calls between the Coast Guard and the public. Severe weather warnings, hazards to navigation and safety warnings are broadcast here.
Channels 68, 69, 71, 72 and 78A – Recreational boat channels.

Getting and Giving Help — Signal other boaters using visual distress signals (flares, orange flag, lights, arm signals); whistles; horns; and on your VHF radio. You are required by law to help boaters in trouble. Respond to distress signals, but do not endanger yourself.

NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards (NWR) is a nationwide network of radio stations broadcasting continuous weather information directly from the nearest National Weather Service office. NWR broadcasts official Weather Service warnings, watches, forecasts and other hazard information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/

Quick References

Nautical chart related products and information — http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov
Interactive chart catalog — http://www.charts.noaa.gov/InteractiveCatalog/nrnc.shtml
Chart updates (LNMs and NM corrections) — http://ocsdata.ncdc.noaa.gov/idrs/inquiry.aspx?frompage=ContactUs
Chart and chart related inquiries and comments — http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/mcd/updates/LNM_NM.html
Coast Pilot online — http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/nsd/cpdownload.htm
Tides and Currents — http://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov
Marine Forecasts — http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/marine/home.htm
National Data Buoy Center — http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/
NowCoast web portal for coastal conditions — http://www.nowcoast.noaa.gov/
National Hurricane Center — http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/
Pacific Tsunami Warning Center — http://ptwc.weather.gov/
Contact Us — http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/staff/contact.htm

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This Booklet chart has been designed for duplex printing (printed on front and back of one sheet). If a duplex option is not available on your printer, you may print each sheet and arrange them back-to-back to allow for the proper layout when viewing.