



May 10, 2019

Captain Holly Najarian, Sector Commander
U.S. Coast Guard, Sector St. Petersburg
600 8th Avenue Southeast
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

Re: Navigation Range Replacements and Repairs – Tampa Bay

Dear Captain Najarian,

The Board and participants of the Tampa Bay Harbor Safety & Security Committee (TBHSSC) are formally requesting that the repairs and replacement of critical navigation ranges in Tampa Bay be expedited due to significant safety concerns and commercial impacts within the Port of Tampa and Port Manatee. The four ranges identified below have been awaiting replacement or repair dating back to September 2017 and at this time are not scheduled for replacement or repair until April 2020.

- Egmont Channel Rear Range (#22285) – Range was destroyed by Hurricane Irma, this is a critical range used by piloted vessels and non-piloted vessels approaching Tampa Bay and entering the main ship channel.
- Mullet Key Front Range (#22355) – Range was destroyed by a small commercial vessel, this critical range marks the main ship channel at the approach of the Sunshine Skyway Bridge.
- Gadsden Channel Rear Range (#22855) – Range is in disrepair with extinguished light, this critical range is reported to be scheduled for relocation and upgrade with schedule unknown.
- Hillsborough C Cut Inbound Rear Range (#23440) – Range light is frequently extinguished, currently awaiting repair parts and schedule for repairs.

The list above represents ranges determined to be extremely critical to safe navigation by the Tampa Bay Pilots as well as commercial vessel operators transiting Tampa Bay. Due to these missing or inoperable ranges the Tampa Bay Pilots have implemented risk mitigation measures such as one way traffic and draft restrictions in certain areas of the main ship channel, however risk still remains especially considering there are non-State piloted commercial and recreational vessels transiting the ship channel who may be unfamiliar with the risk mitigation protocols imposed by the Tampa Bay Pilots.

The TBHSSC was established as a result of a significant three vessel marine casualty in 1993 and that casualty followed two others dating back to 1980 both of which resulted in loss of life, vessel casualties and destruction of the Skyway Bridge. The Tampa Bay main ship channel is narrow with multiple turns, tidal and current influences and auxiliary channel intersections that require consistently functional navigation ranges and ATON to prevent casualties such as those experienced in 1993 and prior. As you are aware the two ports within Tampa Bay are home to petroleum facilities that supply 47% of the aviation and motor fuels for the State. Keeping our main ship channel safe, clear and commercially efficient is of paramount importance from a statewide economic perspective.



The TBHSSC Board and membership are well aware of the current budget constraints that USCG is subject to nationally especially in the area of waterways maintenance. As a maritime community we are urgently requesting an emergency funding appropriation from USCG for the range repairs and replacements listed above due to their critical role in providing pilots and vessel masters safe transits into and out of Tampa Bay as well as ensuring the economic vitality of the two largest ports on the west coast of Florida.

Sincerely Yours,

Terry W. Fluke
Chairman, TBHSSC