

GREAT LAKES MARITIME STRATEGY

A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE
U. S. COAST GUARD ON THE GREAT LAKES



SEPTEMBER 2017

We will maintain and safeguard the Great Lakes system and the commercial and recreational users that depend on it through the collaborative pursuit of safety, security and stewardship.

Great Lakes Maritime Strategy Vision Statement



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The last thing an explorer arrives at is a complete map that will cover the whole ground he has traveled, but for those that follow, his map is the first thing with which they will begin. So it is with strategy...we must get our theory clear before we can venture in search of practical conclusions.

Sir Julian Corbett, 1911
British Naval Historian and Strategist



OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

The United States Coast Guard is a multi-mission federal agency, one of the nation's armed services and the largest component of the Department of Homeland Security. Over the past 227 years, the Coast Guard and its predecessors merged or absorbed other agencies' missions, authorities and statutory requirements with its own.

The resulting amalgam of civil and military responsibilities, coupled with a diverse fleet of cutters, boats and aviation resources guided by an extensive command and control network, empowers the Coast Guard to protect the American public, maintain and secure our maritime equities, and preserve our marine environment.

The fundamental concepts that authorize and guide our actions in support of national objectives are provided by a set of national, Department of Homeland Security and Coast Guard plans, strategies and policies addressing the full spectrum of our principal, supportive and contingency operations.

The Coast Guard Ninth District's Great Lakes Maritime Strategy (GLMS) serves as a bridge between these broad national instruments of policy and doctrine, and the operational objectives of the Coast Guard's Ninth District, ensuring the safety, security and stewardship of the Great Lakes system as detailed in the Strategy's accompanying Vision Statement.

Most importantly, the GLMS puts forth five Strategic Priorities to inform and guide the Ninth District staff and field commands as they execute their daily missions on the Great Lakes meeting the unique challenges posed by its shared, seasonal and freshwater environment.

The GLMS is a dynamic, adaptive document. It initially provides a three to five year framework and can be updated as necessary. The Strategic Priorities will be incorporated into the annual Ninth District Operational Planning Direction for use by its major commands.



In addition to its internal use by the Coast Guard's Ninth District, the Strategy provides valuable information on the Coast Guard's roles and missions to our stakeholders who include: the general public, our elected congressional members, U. S. and Canadian partner agencies, tribal members, representatives of the maritime industry and other users of the Great Lakes and its maritime transportation system.

The Ninth District's Coast Guard family, constituted by the men and women of our active duty, reserve, civil servant and auxiliary forces, is particularly well suited to serve and safeguard this critically important border region. The Coast Guard's multi-mission competencies and capabilities deliver tremendous value to the American public and its maritime interests on the Great Lakes.





ECONOMICALLY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY CRITICAL REGION FOR THE U. S. AND CANADA

As the shared internal waters of two sovereign nations, the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway system are one of the most unique bodies of water in the world.

The region is characterized by its fresh water, its diverse communities, its domestic and international marine trade, and its immense recreational boating population. The Great Lakes Basin is governed by two nations, eight states, three provinces, numerous first and tribal nations and hundreds of local communities. It is equally and passionately represented by multiple entities including commercial, industrial, recreational and environmental interests.



SHARED AND INTERCONNECTED SYSTEM OF BINATIONAL IMPORTANCE

The U. S. and Canadian maritime border environment includes shared transportation systems along a contiguous body of water that is a vital artery to the economies of both countries. The entirety of the Great Lakes maritime border encompasses 1,500 miles or the equivalent to the southwest border between Brownsville, Texas and San Diego, California.



This continuous, interconnected and interdependent system shared by both countries grants access to a wide variety of commercial and recreational vessels. Upon entering the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence Seaway system, a foreign-flagged commercial vessel may cross between U. S. and Canadian waters as many as 22 times while transiting the entire maritime

transportation system. Once a vessel is in the system, it has equal opportunity access to both countries.

As North America's industrial heartland, the Great Lakes region is the economic center of gravity for the U. S. and Canada and a major contributor to our respective economic strengths and health.

It supports not only a critical economic highway of agriculture, industrial and manufacturing goods but also a multi-billion dollar outdoor recreation and tourism industry. The Great Lakes also support a world-class fishery, valued at \$7 billion a year, with an estimated 180 species of native fish. The region's four-season climate, uniquely influenced by the Great Lakes, supports boating, fishing, diving, swimming and other forms of coastal and water-based recreation. Paddlesports and other human-powered watercraft businesses are growing in size across the Great Lakes with significant numbers of new entities in urban and suburban locations.

It is a region of binational importance that has been the focus of significant international and domestic attention for more than a century. This reality requires a shared governance of the system as a whole.



DIVERSE, SENSITIVE AND SEASONAL ENVIRONMENT

The Ninth District area of responsibility includes the federal navigable waters of the eight Great Lakes states and a diverse set of connecting waterways, including portions of the St. Lawrence Seaway, boundary lakes in Minnesota, parts of the Western Rivers and its tributaries, the New York State Barge Canal and historically navigable inland bodies of waters in many states. It consists of more than 6,700 miles of U. S. shoreline encompassing 86 counties along the shores.

The Great Lakes – the largest group of freshwater lakes on Earth – are true wonders of the world. They hold 21 percent of the entire world's surface freshwater, 84 percent of what is accessible in North America, and 95 percent of the supply in the United States. Spread evenly across the continental U. S., the six quadrillion gallons of precious freshwater they contain would cover the country with more than 9 feet of water. The Lakes serve as a source of drinking water for more than 30 million citizens of the U. S. and Canada.

The sand dunes, coastal marshes, rocky shorelines, lakeplain wet prairies, savannas, forests, fens, wetlands and other Great Lakes landscapes contain globally unique and sensitive ecosystems that sustain a wealth of biological diversity. The region

is home to more than 40 plant and animal species found nowhere else in the world and over 200 globally rare plants and animals.



The seasonal nature of the area of responsibility, including ice and sometimes harsh winter conditions, poses additional challenges to executing the Coast Guard's statutory mission mandates. The cyclic training and equipment preparations for the "soft and hard" water seasons continually test our personnel with different sets of operating conditions and their attendant risks.

The arrival of ice creates challenges in waterways management, aids to navigation, icebreaking, ice rescue and cross-border security like no other place in the Coast Guard.

Did you know?

- **The Great Lakes -- Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie and Ontario -- and their connecting channels form the largest fresh surface water system on earth.**
- **Nearly 25 percent of Canadian agricultural production and 7 percent of American farm production are located in the Great Lakes basin.**
- **More than 30 million people live in the Great Lakes basin - roughly 10 percent of the U. S. population and more than 30 percent of the Canadian population.**
- **The water in these freshwater seas covers more than 94,000 square miles with more than twice as much land draining into these waters from throughout the Great Lakes basin; if spread evenly across the contiguous 48 states, the water from these lakes would be more than 9 feet deep.**
- **From Lake Ontario, the water from the Great Lakes flows through the St. Lawrence River all the way to the Atlantic Ocean, about 1,000 miles away.**



The Great Lakes are bodies of fresh water that are truly “Great.” When stacked end-for-end along the eastern seaboard, they stretch from New York to Florida. Thinking of them merely as “lakes” belies their size and complexity as well as the threats and challenges they present to those involved with ensuring their safety, security and stewardship.



Did you know?

- Canada and the U. S. are the world’s largest trading partners with about \$1.7B in daily two-way trade.
- The Great Lakes Region accounts for over 60% of the total U. S. and Canada two-way trade.
- Half of Canada’s 20 largest ports are part of the Great Lakes Seaway system. On average, these ports handle 40% of Canada’s total marine trade.
- If the Great Lakes region was its own nation, it would host the third largest economy in the world, just behind the United States and China.
- The Great Lakes support 1.5 million jobs and \$62 billion in wages annually.





STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND GUIDANCE

The Ninth District arrived at our current organization, arrangement of forces and mission set through a long legacy of statutory mandates, customer and stakeholder requirements, external influences and evolving priorities based on opportunities and in response to challenges.

Additionally, an array of national, Departmental and Coast Guard strategy documents, doctrine and analyses inform and guide our current actions, establish priorities and commitments, and identify future areas of emphasis.

VISION

We will maintain and safeguard the Great Lakes system and the commercial and recreational users that depend on it through the collaborative pursuit of safety, security and stewardship.





COAST GUARD MISSIONS

The Coast Guard's diverse set of missions are regularly executed in the Ninth District in support of our country's enduring maritime interests on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway.

We have a long legacy of marine safety, icebreaking, search and rescue, maritime law enforcement and border security missions. These missions protect those on the Great Lakes, protect us from threats delivered by a maritime mode and protect the Great Lakes and Seaway itself.

Our military, multi-mission, maritime force offers a unique blend of law enforcement, humanitarian, regulatory, maritime security and diplomatic capabilities. These capabilities support our three broad roles: **maritime safety, maritime security and maritime stewardship.**

MARITIME SAFETY

A fundamental responsibility of our government is to safeguard the lives and safety of its citizens. The Coast Guard, in partnership with other federal, Canadian, state, tribal governments and agencies and with the assistance of the commercial and recreational users of the Great Lakes, ensures safety in the maritime domain through marine safety and search and rescue.



The **Marine Safety** mission seeks to improve maritime safety through a prevention program designed to address vessel lifesaving, firefighting, structural, stability and navigational standards. This is achieved by conducting regulatory inspections aboard commercial vessels, educating the public on recreational boating safety and investigating maritime casualties. Elements of this program require collaboration with Transport Canada and the St. Lawrence Seaway Corporations. Additionally, merchant marine credentialing ensures operators and crew are certified for their positions.

The **Search and Rescue** mission has a long and proud heritage here on the Great Lakes with the mission's roots originating with the legacy U. S.

Lifesaving Service beginning in the 1870s. When mariners find themselves in harm's way, a response from our strategically placed stations is quickly dispatched under the command and control of one of our four Sector Commands. The U. S. Coast Guard and Canadian Coast Guard regularly assist each other by utilizing the nearest or most capable resource depending on the nature of the distress and its location.

The search and rescue mission minimizes the loss of life, injury and property damage or loss on the Great Lakes by conducting search planning, coordinating both search and rescue response and locating and rescuing mariners in distress. In the Ninth District, our small boat crews and aviators train so they are ready to deploy in "soft water" during the summer months. During the winter, when "hard water" exists, our Coast Guard crews must be ready to apply a different set of skills and types of rescue equipment on the ice-covered lakes and rivers.





MARITIME SECURITY

Maritime law enforcement and border control are some of the oldest missions of the Coast Guard and our predecessor agencies. Non-compliant vessel use of force tactics were bred on the Great Lakes during prohibition when rum runners took advantage of the Great Lakes geography to move illegal contraband.

An extensive 1,500 mile-long maritime border continues to present a potential conduit for the movement of illegal products, drugs and people necessitating a narcotic and migrant interdiction mission on most of the Lakes. Since the September 2001 attacks on our country, Coast Guard security resources and authorities protect us from threats delivered by a maritime mode through our ports, waterways and coastal security mission.

The **Drug Interdiction** mission reduces the supply of illegal narcotics to the U. S. by disrupting the maritime flow of illegal drugs. Interdiction and seizure of smuggling vessels carrying narcotics and other illegal contraband takes place along the maritime border, especially at choke points and where transits are short. The Ninth District relies on joint, interagency and international partnerships and the intelligence community to conduct drug interdiction.



The **Migrant Interdiction** mission enforces U. S. immigration laws and international conventions against human smuggling through interdiction. Similar to drug smuggling, illegal migration on the Lakes takes place where transit zones are short and counter-surveillance is difficult to detect. The Coast Guard accomplishes this mission in conjunction with other federal, state, tribal and local agencies, including U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Customs and Border Protection and the Department of State. During the winter season, the formation of ice can further facilitate the movement of drugs and humans across the border at certain locations.

The **Ports, Waterways and Coastal Security** mission protects people and property in the Great Lakes maritime transportation system by preventing, disrupting and responding to terrorist attacks, sabotage, espionage or subversive acts.



Security activities include preparedness, planning and exercises, initiatives to enhance the resilience of the maritime transportation system including critical infrastructure and key resources, the execution of antiterrorism and counterterrorism activities, and initial recovery efforts after attacks. The Coast Guard's Sector Commanders, serving as the Federal Maritime Security Coordinators, ensure their region's Area Maritime Security Plan is maintained and the requirements of the industry's Vessel and Facility Security Plans are enforced. The security of our ports and waterways especially relies upon the Coast Guard's broad authorities and long-standing partnerships with governmental, maritime industry and international partners.





MARITIME STEWARDSHIP

The maritime environment of the Great Lakes region is the largest and one of the most valuable freshwater resources on Earth. In addition to providing drinking water to more than 30 million citizens of the U. S. and Canada, it is also a region of extraordinary recreational activity, viable commercial and recreational fisheries and serves as an efficient transportation mode vital to our two countries' economies. Our stewardship role has expanded to include enforcing laws intended to protect the environment for the common good.

The Coast Guard helps preserve the Great Lakes' **Living Marine Resources** through the protection of sensitive marine habitats, sanctuaries and endangered species. The Coast Guard's efforts ensure the sustainability of the fish stocks for the vibrant recreational fishing business and a small but important commercial fishing industry sector. Furthermore, our highly effective bi-national ballast water enforcement program has greatly reduced the risk of the introduction of aquatic nuisance species through ballast water discharge.

The **Marine Environmental Protection** mission includes planning, preparations and operations to prevent, enforce, investigate, respond to and mitigate the threat, frequency and consequences of oil discharges and hazardous substance releases in U. S. waters. This mission includes distinct but complementary functions across the prevention, preparedness and response spectrum.



Under the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan, the Coast Guard is the pre-designated Federal On-Scene Coordinator for oil and hazardous substance incidents in Great Lakes waters. In addition to developing local contingency

plans with the states and broader regional plans with the Environmental Protection Agency and Canadian Coast Guard, we are responsible for coordinating effective response operations to all-hazards in the maritime domain. We regularly exercise these plans with a diverse group of government and commercial entities and potentially affected stakeholders to ensure our readiness and maintain our response competencies.



The Coast Guard's support to the Great Lakes Maritime Transportation System through its fixed and floating **Aids to Navigation System** is vital to the national economies of the U. S. and Canada and the billions of dollars of business that takes place between the world's two biggest trading partners. We work closely with the Army Corps of Engineers and the U. S. and Canadian St. Lawrence Seaway Corporations as we facilitate the safe and efficient movement of commerce.

This economic highway on the Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway is a complex system that relies upon our short-range aids to navigation, navigation schemes and standards, support for mapping and charting, pilotage information and vessel traffic services. The recreational users of the waterways benefit from these services as well. We also ensure any bridges on the Lakes or connecting waterways will not impede the flow of marine traffic.

In the wintertime, our fleet of domestic icebreakers joins Canadian Coast Guard icebreaking ships on our interconnecting waterways ensuring ships transporting the critical energy, construction and



other bulk commodities vital to our two countries' economies continue to move as the Lakes freeze over.

The Coast Guard's ability to ensure maritime safety, security and stewardship makes us truly a unique instrument of national strategy. We not only safeguard our Great Lakes and the maritime community, we safeguard our economic prosperity.



PRINCIPLES OF COAST GUARD OPERATIONS

The Principles of Coast Guard operations complement the Department of Defense's Principles of Joint Operations and accommodate the distinctions between war-fighting, security operations and law enforcement. These principles apply across the full range of missions:

- CLEAR OBJECTIVE
- EFFECTIVE PRESENCE
- UNITY OF EFFORT
- ON-SCENE INITIATIVE
- FLEXIBILITY
- MANAGED RISK
- EXERCISE RESTRAINT

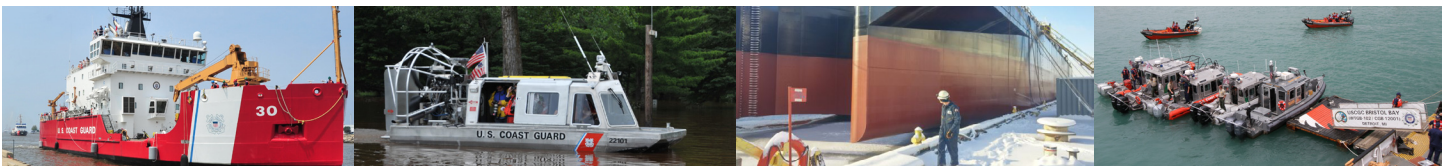




STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Great Lakes Maritime Strategy's vision for the Ninth District is executed through the conduct of Coast Guard missions with areas of emphasis and opportunity categorized across five Strategic Priorities. These Priorities are met through identified Tasks that include distinct activities and emerging issues as well as reiteration of the keenly important emphasis placed on operational performance and readiness.

Ninth District staff and field commands shall pursue these Strategic Priorities, and their respective Tasks, in the daily execution of their missions. All or some of these Strategic Priorities will be incorporated in the annual Ninth District Operational Planning Direction to further inform the Sector Commands in the development of their operational and planning documents.



ENSURE PREPAREDNESS FOR EMERGING THREATS AND CHALLENGES

The Great Lakes region has historically served as a catalyst for innovation and as a result has borne witness to a variety of revolutions across the environment. With ingenuity and progress comes the need to best predict, prevent and mitigate the impacts new threats and challenges may bring. To this end, the Ninth District will prioritize efforts to:

- a. Maintain preparedness to respond to all hazards in the maritime environment;
- b. Support research, development and deployment of technologies for recovering oil in ice and fresh water environments; and
- c. Ensure coordination with Canadian, federal, state and regional partners in the prevention of aquatic nuisance species introductions via the maritime mode.

ENHANCE COOPERATION AND STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

This region benefits from the strong bonds forged between stakeholders serving in the public and private sectors, and these unique relationships have been at the forefront of the success, adaptability and cordiality enjoyed in the Great Lakes maritime region. Continued deliberate collaboration will further galvanize the reach and impact of these interactions and the Coast Guard will actively work to:

- a. Leverage partnerships to enhance safety and economic security for the shared border;
- b. Collaborate with Canadian, tribal, federal, state, local and industry stakeholders to bolster regional all-hazards response capabilities and prevent a transportation security incident within the port environment; and
- c. Focus joint contingency planning, drills and exercises on worst case and most probable discharges of oil or releases of hazardous substances into the navigable waters of the Great Lakes. High risk sources of pollution shall be a priority.



MAINTAIN THE SAFE AND EFFICIENT USAGE OF GREAT LAKES WATERWAYS

As a system of interconnected, binational waterways, the Great Lakes are enjoyed daily by a wide variety of commercial, recreational and governmental enterprises. From small streams and rivers to the open waters and depths of the Lakes themselves, careful attention and management is needed to allow for safe and equitable access to these reaches by interests that are sometimes competing in nature or intent. To particular focus, the Ninth District will:

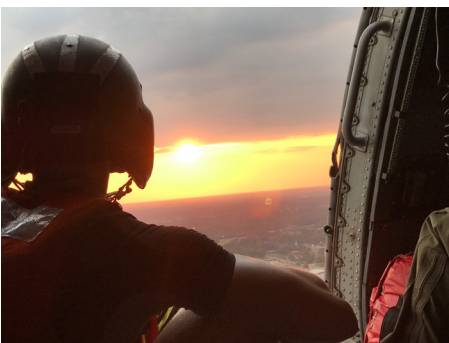
- a. Execute prevention and response initiatives that enhance vessel safety and minimize adverse effects upon the marine environment;
- b. In cooperation with Canada, assess and mitigate risks to safe navigation in the maritime environment;
- c. Develop informed mariners through timely communications on navigational hazards and changes to aids to navigation; and
- d. Develop and implement a recreational boating safety strategy especially focused on human powered craft and their interaction with commercial users of confined waterways.



PROTECT THE CYBERSPACE OF THE GREAT LAKES AND SEAWAY SYSTEM

The challenges presented by the confluence of technologies and information in cyberspace are myriad. While the regimes managing many of these interactions, and those who may seek to exploit them, may exist outside of the Coast Guard's span of control, the Ninth District will be vigilant to:

- a. Enhance security initiatives to safeguard the Coast Guard's cyber domain;
- b. Collaborate with the maritime industry to reduce the risk of a cyber-based transportation security incident affecting the Great Lakes Maritime Transportation System or its critical infrastructure; and
- c. Improve resiliency and be prepared to respond to any internal cyber incidents in the Coast Guard and coordinate the public and industry response to any disruption of the Great Lakes Maritime Transportation System from a cyber-based transportation security incident.





OPTIMIZE MISSION READINESS AND EXECUTION

The professional men and women of the Coast Guard deserve the highest levels of support and training we can provide to ensure they are able to safely and effectively accomplish every mission as well as adjust to the diverse elements framed in the other Strategic Priorities captured herein. As such, it is of equal importance and priority that the Ninth District:

- a. Ensure our personnel are well-trained, proficient and properly equipped for every mission across all seasons;
- b. Ensure appropriate allocation of resources to meet emergent response requirements; and
- c. Inform external and internal decision makers and stakeholders regarding the urgent need to recapitalize aging infrastructure and assets.



GREAT LAKES MARITIME STRATEGY GOVERNANCE

Primary ownership and governance of the Great Lakes Maritime Strategy (GLMS) lies with the Ninth District staff. Annually, the District Senior Leadership Group, the District's Division Officers and field commanders, will review the GLMS to both validate the Strategic Priorities and their respective Tasks and assess the implementation progress of the Tasks as applicable. Relevant measures for the Tasks can be developed and monitored as appropriate. Changes, additions or deletion to the Strategic Priorities and Tasks can be recommended during this annual review.

As previously mentioned, the Strategic Priorities and their Tasks will be incorporated into the Ninth District's Operational Planning Direction. These Priorities, coupled with other guidance in the operational planning direction, provides overarching direction for operations within the Ninth District. Any approved modifications to the GLMS' Strategic Priorities or Tasks proposed by the leadership group will be incorporated into the current operational planning direction until the next iteration of the GLMS is promulgated.

In addition to the annual highlights from our field units, the GLMS Annual Report will include a report on the progress and events related to the Strategic Priorities and their Tasks.



Commander

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