



FOREIGN YACHT FAMILIARIZATION PACKET

Washington State Board of Pilotage Commissioners

2901 3rd Ave, Suite 500
Seattle, WA 98121
(206) 515-3904
www.pilotage.wa.gov

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
BROAD DESCRIPTIONS OF AREAS OF CONCERN.....	4
1. SAN JUAN ISLANDS	4
2. DECEPTION PASS	5
3. SWINOMISH CHANNEL	5
4. ADMIRALTY INLET.....	5
5. BALLARD LOCKS AND LAKE WASHINGTON SHIP CANAL.....	6
6. DUWAMISH RIVER WATERWAY.....	9
MONITORING VHF 13	10
RULES OF THE ROAD AND DEEP DRAFT VESSELS.....	10
VTS QUICK SUMMARY: WORKING CHANNELS/AREAS/ COOPERATIVE VTS.....	11
WHALE INFORMATION	12
NO DISCHARGE ZONE.....	13
BALLAST WATER	13
RESOURCES	13
WEATHER	14
LINKS TO WASHINGTON STATE AND BC FISHING REGULATIONS.....	14
OIL SPILL, GROUNDING OR EMERGENCY.....	14
CONTACTS.....	14

INTRODUCTION

The State of Washington Board of Pilotage Commissioners (BPC) is provided the authority under [WAC 363-116-360](#) and [RCW 88.16.070](#) to grant exemptions from compulsory pilotage to certain foreign-flagged yachts.

Please note: This familiarization packet is provided for informational purposes only and does not constitute a law, rule, or order of the Board of Pilotage Commissioners. In the event of a conflict between this packet and any applicable law, regulation, or BPC policy, the law, regulation, or policy shall control. The BPC does not guarantee the accuracy or currentness of any information in this packet. Nothing contained herein shall waive, alter, or override the Captain's responsibility to ensure the safety of the vessel and comply with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

Applicants for pilotage exemptions shall certify in their BPC Exemption Petition that they have reviewed this Familiarization Packet.

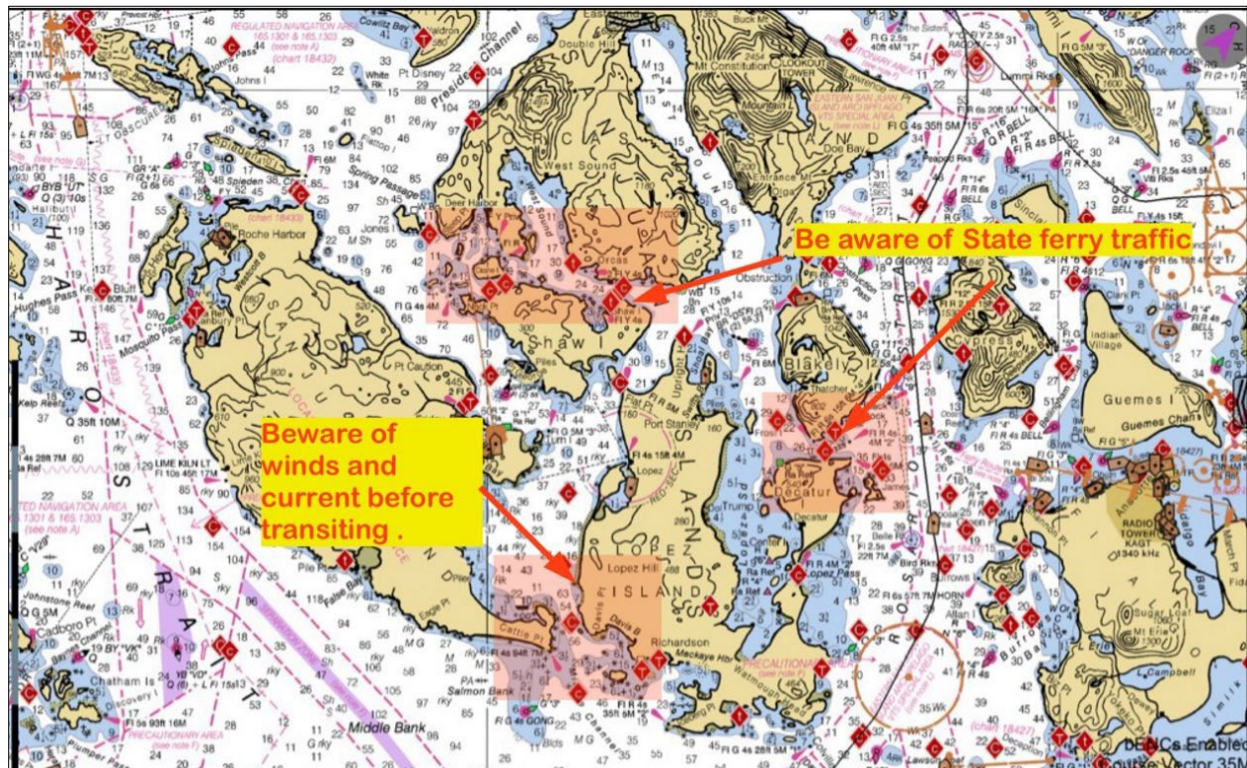
The current editions of the following documents should be QUICKLY ACCESSIBLE on board the vessel.

1. [VTS USER MANUAL](#)
2. [COAST PILOT 10](#)
3. [TIDE AND CURRENT INFORMATION](#)
4. [HARBOR SAFETY PLAN](#)
5. CURRENT PAPER/ELECTRONIC NAVIGATIONAL CHARTS
6. [USCG NAVIGATION RULES AND REGULATIONS HANDBOOK](#)

BROAD DESCRIPTIONS OF AREAS OF CONCERN

1. SAN JUAN ISLANDS

In the summer months, there is a great deal of recreational traffic throughout the San Juan Islands. Particular caution needs to be taken to avoid Washington State ferry traffic. The chartlet below shows some areas to take caution.



a. ANCHORING SAN JUAN ISLANDS IN GENERAL

During the summer months, the San Juan Islands are a very popular destination for recreational boaters. Anchorages fill up quickly in the early afternoon, as most boaters find an anchorage early. Due to the volume of vessels at anchor and at close proximity in Sucia Island, Jones Island, and Stuart Island Marine Parks, some vessels stern tie to shore. Other than public parks, most uplands and some tidelands are not trespass, private property.

b. ANCHORING FRIDAY HARBOR

Friday Harbor has a Washington State Ferry Terminal and ferries transit North of Brown Island on approach. Vessels should stay well clear of the ferries transiting to/from Friday Harbor and anchor well clear of their route. There is a significant amount of current at the entrance to Friday Harbor, but larger yachts have anchored outside of Friday Harbor to the West of Brown Island. An alternative anchorage used less frequently is to the South of Brown Island and to the East of the Friday Harbor Ferry Dock.

c. TRANSITING CATTLE PASS

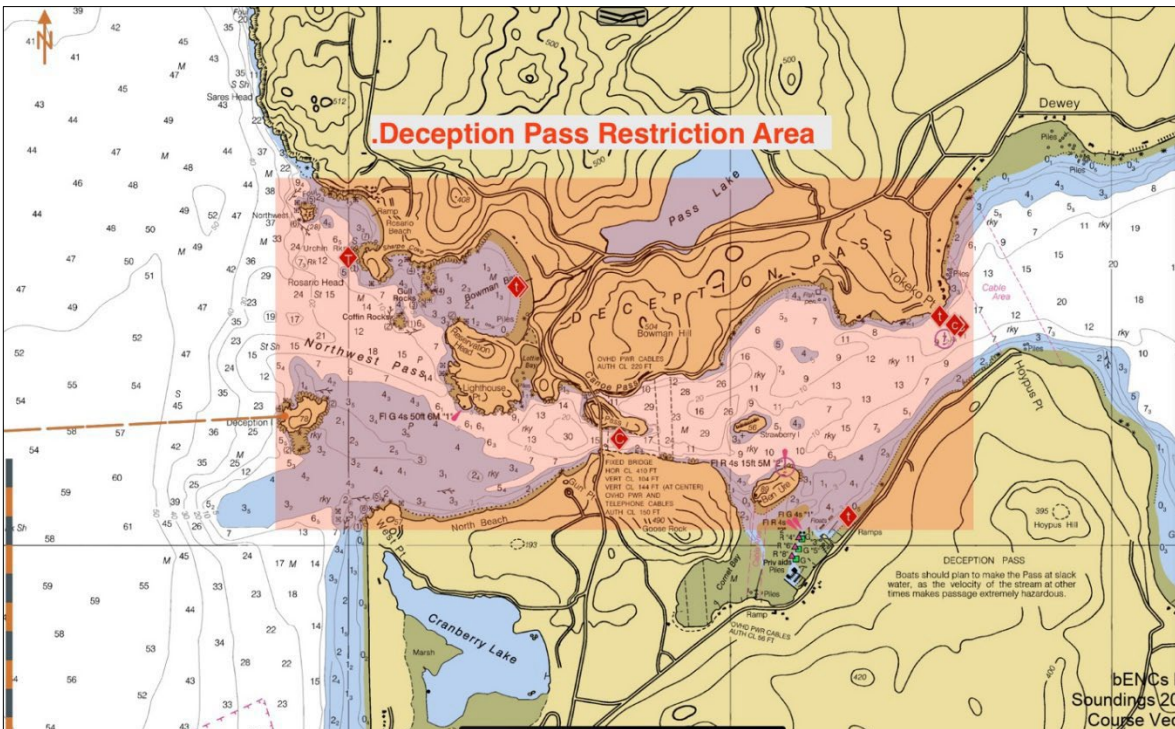
Cattle Pass separates San Juan Island and Lopez Island and currents reach nearly 5 kts almost daily. Therefore, it is best to transit Cattle Pass at slack water, in hand steering and with vigilance as there are several tiderips.

d. VOLUNTARY NOGO ZONE

In order to help protect whales, vessels are asked to avoid the Voluntary NoGo Zone on the west side of San Juan Island, extending 1/4-mile offshore from Mitchell Bay to Cattle Point, and a 1/2-mile off Lime Kiln Lighthouse.

2. DECEPTION PASS

Deception Pass is a special exemption area. Deception Pass is one of the most beautiful places in Puget Sound but must be transited with extreme caution as the currents can exceed 8 kts with large tide rips. Exempted yachts shall adhere to the following guidelines for Deception Pass, as a condition of their exemption: Transits of Deception Pass shall be inducted in daylight, in good visibility, and when the predicted current at Pass Island



is less than 2 knots. Vessels transiting Deception Pass on a pilotage waiver shall transit South of Pass Island when transiting under the Deception Pass Bridge and North of Strawberry Island. Canoe Pass, North of Pass Island, is transited only by small vessels with local knowledge.

3. SWINOMISH CHANNEL

Swinomish Channel is a very narrow and shallow channel connecting Skagit Bay to Padilla Bay. This channel should only be transited at HW, currents can be rather strong if docking in LA Conner, otherwise current is safe for passage.

4. ADMIRALTY INLET

Admiralty Inlet connects Puget Sound to the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Currents can exceed 4 kts, however present low risk for transiting in favorable weather. Vigilant monitoring of set and drift is required when transiting during strong current. During the summer months in

the afternoon, wind often increases quickly to gale or near gale conditions. When wind opposes current, steep, tall waves will build quickly.

5. BALLARD LOCKS, LAKE UNION and LAKE WASHINGTON SHIP CANAL

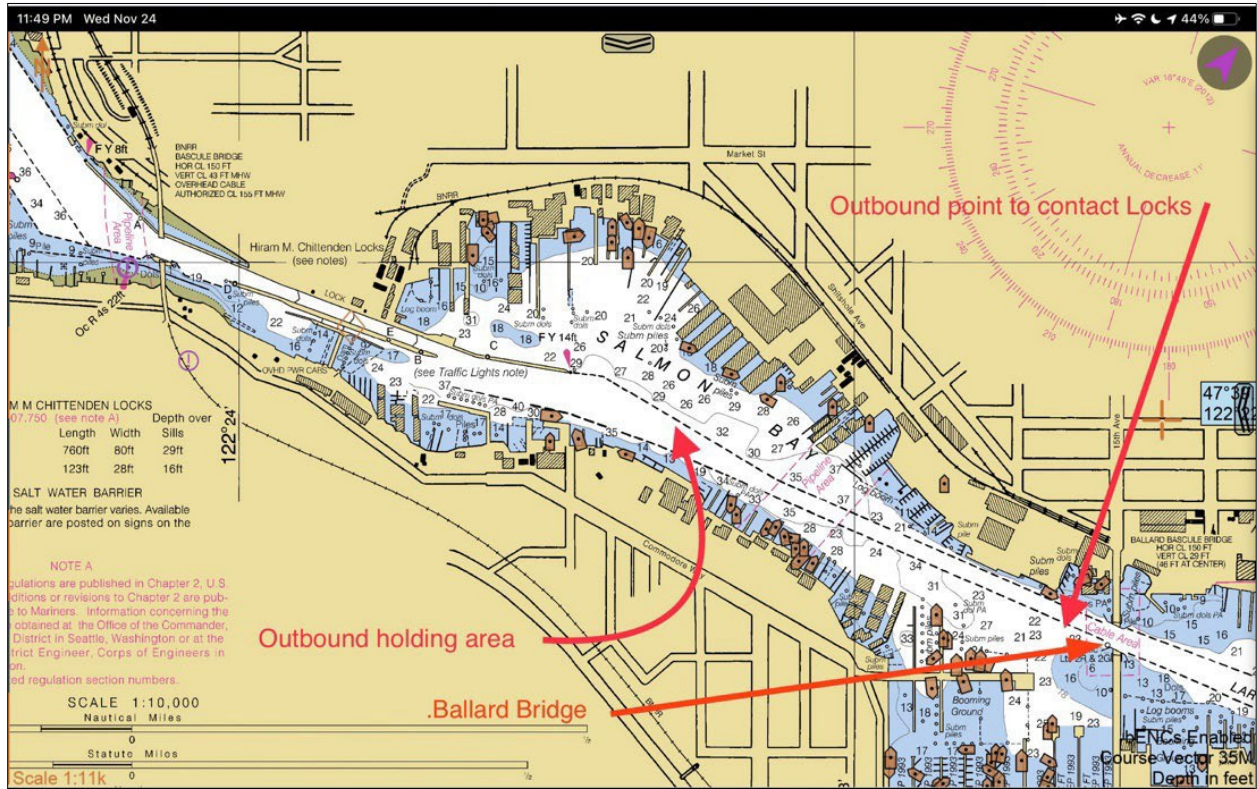
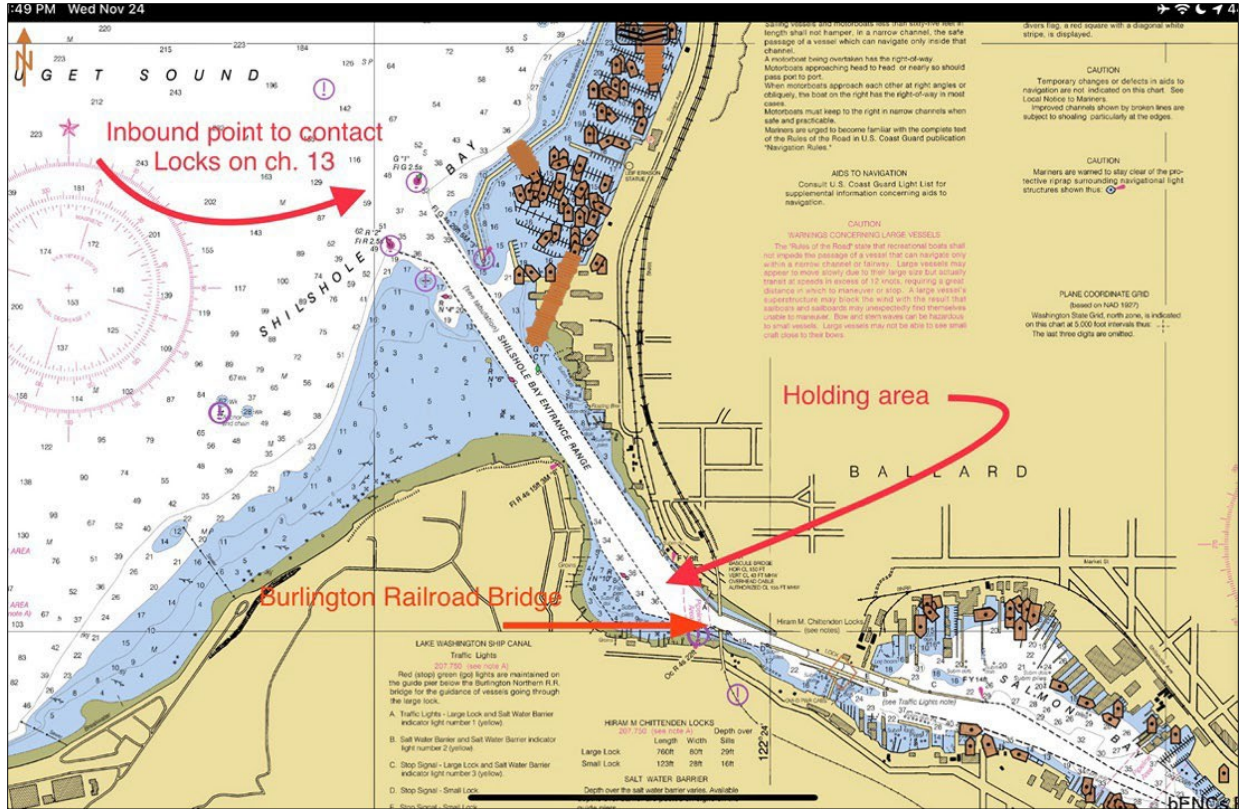
This is a Special Exemption area and an exemption is required to transit the Ballard Locks. Vessels transiting the Ballard locks transit either the Large Lock or the Small Lock. The Ballard locks and Burlington Northern Railroad Bridge both monitor VHF 13, however, typically only answer commercial radio traffic calls.

The large locks have 2 chambers with a combined length of 760', width of 80', 29' deep depth. The small locks are 123' in length, width of 28', and depth of 16'. Both locks have a lift of approx. 26' depending on the tide height. The locks are open 24 hours a day year-round, and only close for maintenance and repair. Priority is given to emergency and commercial vessels.

Recreational yachts and all other vessels standby for instructions via a loud hailer from the lock wall or a red/green traffic light letting waiting vessels know it is safe to enter either the large or small lock. When standing by to enter the locks from seaward be mindful of the strong currents in the area and give way to commercial traffic and all vessels exiting the lock. When entering the locks, vessels will use their own lines to make fast to the lock wall. Lock handlers will pass a heaving line to the vessel to pass the lines if the vessel lines cannot be passed. Typically, one bow and one stern line are made fast when transiting the locks. If the bow and stern lines cannot be made fast at the same time the lock attendants will instruct the vessel to make fast the stern line first. In the large locks, vessel make fast to a fixed wall and lines, at least 50 feet in length, must be tended constantly, as opposed to the small locks where vessels make fast to a floating lock wall and lines are only adjusted as needed. It is advised to have fenders on both sides of the vessel, as often boats are rafted alongside in both the small and large locks. When the lock doors open, there is a significant amount of residual current. When the lock attendant informs the vessel, it is ok to exit the lock, the captain should wait until they are comfortable with the current. The current drastically reduces within a short time. Vessels drafting more than 14 feet transiting the large lock should contact the lock handlers to request the Saltwater Barrier be lowered. The maximum speed limit in the government locks is 4 kts. The speed limit from the locks to the entrance of Lake Washington at Webster Pt. is 7 knots. All bridges have hours of restrictions for opening. Seattle VTS ends coverage at the entrance to Shilshole Marina, therefore vessels should monitor VHF 13, and make security calls as necessary to ensure safe navigation.

The Lakes and Ship Canal have a large amount of milfoil and may affect vessel cooling systems. Anchoring is not permitted in Lake Union except for specific Holiday Events as outlined in Local Notice to Mariners. Anchoring is permitted in Lake Washington for short periods of time in a few of the coves. Overnight anchorage is only permitted in Andrews Bay.

There are two floating bridges that span the width of Lake Washington with fixed vertical clearance passages at both high-rise ends.





a. BRIDGE TRANSITS

There are 5 movable bridges and one fixed bridge between Shilshole Bay and the entrance to Lake Washington. Lake Washington Ship Canal Bridges will not open for vessels less than 1,000 gross tons on weekdays from 0700-0900 and 1600-1800, except for federal holidays, excluding Columbus Day. All movable bridges monitor VHF 13 for openings. Non-commercial vessels shall request openings by whistle signal until dusk (one prolonged, one short) Bridges open on request from 0700-2300, after hours is by appointment only with a minimum of 1-hour notice.

6. DUWAMISH RIVER WATERWAY

This is a Special Exemption area and an exemption is required to transit the Duwamish River Waterway.

The Duwamish River extends from the West Waterway through the Spokane Street Bridge, and approximately 2 miles further to Delta Marine Shipyard. Both of these Bridges have restricted hours of opening. The Duwamish River has numerous ship and barge terminals. Caution should be taken when transiting to avoid commercial traffic.

Particular caution must be taken during the salmon gillnetting season in the late-summer and early fall. Numerous gillnets, up to 300 feet long, may severely restrict the channel. Information about fishing season opening dates and regulations can be found at <https://nwifc.org/member-tribes/muckleshoot-tribe/> and USCG Local Notice to Mariners Yachts bound for Delta Marine may also contact the shipyard for a recent report of fishing activity in the river.

VHF 13 MONITORING

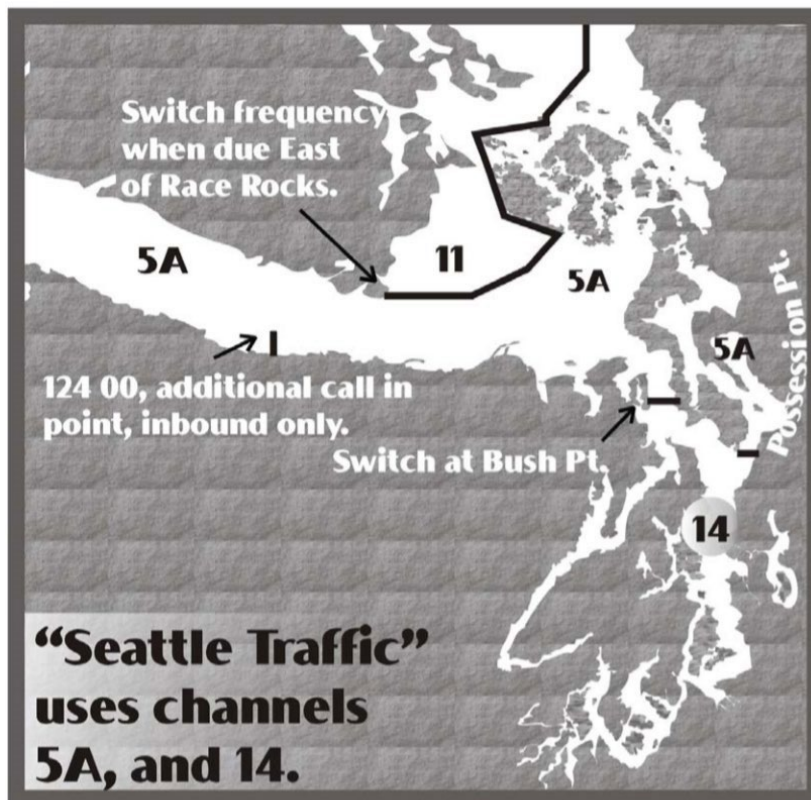
All deep draft vessels, tug and tows, and other commercial vessels monitor the Vessel Traffic VHF Channel and VHF 13, **DEEP DRAFT VESSELS DO NOT MONITOR VHF 16**. Deep draft vessels make contact and passing arrangements on VHF 13, so will attempt to contact your vessel on VHF 13. **Monitor VHF 13 at all times.**

RULES OF THE ROAD AND DEEP DRAFT VESSELS

International Rules of the Road (72 COLREGS) apply to all waters of Puget Sound including Lake Union, Lake Washington and the Duwamish River. Deep draft vessels, tugs with tows, and commercial vessels primarily use the traffic lanes. As a vessel on pilotage waiver, it is best to transit near the outside edge of the traffic lanes. Deep draft vessel will prefer to overtake on your port side in deeper water.

It is advisable to stay well clear of deep draft vessels maneuvering in Puget Sound and be mindful of their wake, which can be steep. Puget Sound Pilots make great effort in minimizing the vessel wakes, but due to the design of certain vessels caution should be observed. Additionally, staying well clear of deep draft vessels maneuvering is essential as these vessels have a limited amount of maneuvering room and ability.

- (a) This Rule applies to traffic separation schemes adopted by the Organization and does not relieve any vessel of her obligation under any other rule.
- (b) A vessel using a traffic separation scheme shall:
- (i) proceed in the appropriate traffic lane in the general direction of traffic flow for that lane;
 - (ii) so far as practicable keep clear of a traffic separation line or separation zone;
 - (iii) normally join or leave a traffic lane at the termination of the lane, but when joining or leaving from either side shall do so at as small an angle to the general direction of traffic flow as practicable.
- (c) A vessel shall, so far as practicable, avoid crossing traffic lanes but if obliged to do so shall cross on a heading as nearly as practicable at right angles to the general direction of traffic flow.
- (d)
- (i) A vessel shall not use an inshore traffic zone when she can safely use the appropriate traffic lane within the adjacent traffic separation scheme. However, vessels of less than 20 meters in length, sailing vessels and vessels engaged in fishing may use the inshore traffic zone.
 - (ii) Notwithstanding subparagraph (d)(i), a vessel may use an inshore traffic zone when en route to or from a port, offshore installation or structure, pilot station or any other place situated within the inshore traffic zone, or to avoid immediate danger.
- (e) A vessel other than a crossing vessel or a vessel joining or leaving a lane shall not normally enter a separation zone or cross a separation line except:
- (i) in cases of emergency to avoid immediate danger;
 - (ii) to engage in fishing within a separation zone.
- (f) A vessel navigating in areas near the terminations of traffic separation schemes shall do so with particular caution.
- (g) A vessel shall so far as practicable avoid anchoring in a traffic separation scheme or in areas near its terminations.
- (h) A vessel not using a traffic separation scheme shall avoid it by as wide a margin as is practicable.
- (i) A vessel engaged in fishing shall not impede the passage of any vessel following a traffic lane. (j) A vessel of less than 20 meters in length or a sailing vessel shall not impede the safe passage of a power-driven vessel following a traffic lane



VMRS

(Vessel Movement Reporting System)

Users:

- Every power-driven

vessel of 40 meters (approximately 131 feet) or more in length, while navigating;

- Every commercial vessel engaged in towing 8 meters (approximately 26 feet) or more in length, while navigating;
- Every vessel certificated to carry 50 or more passengers for hire, when engaged in trade.

VTS (Vessel Traffic Service) Users:

- Every power-driven vessel of 20 meters (approximately 66 feet) or more in length, while navigating;
- Every vessel of 100 gross tons or more carrying 1 or more passengers for hire, while navigating;
- A dredge or floating plant.

Waterborne Craft:

- 1972 Collision Regulations definition of a vessel. Note: Vessel length is measured from end to end over the deck, excluding sheer.

Level of participation

ALL waterborne craft are subject to:

- 1. 1972 Collision Regulations (72 COLREGS);
- 2. VTS Measures (direction given by the VTS, 33CFR 161.11);
- 3. All other practices of safe navigation and prudent seamanship.

VTS Users (in addition to the above requirements):

- 4. Shall monitor the designated VHF-FM VTS frequency for the area in which they are operating, and Channel 13; 5. Shall respond if hailed; 6. Shall comply with general VTS operating rules.

VMRS Users (in addition to all of the above):

Shall make required reports to the VTS, see VTS User Manual.

U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION REPORTING

Pursuant to 19 CFR 4.2, any small vessel arriving to the United States from a foreign port or place to include any small vessel which has visited a hovering vessel or received merchandise outside the territorial sea, are required to report their arrival to CBP immediately (see 19 U.S.C. 1433). See www.cbp.gov/travel/pleasure-boats-flyers for more information.

WHALE INFORMATION

Link to Whale Regulations, Recent Whale Sightings Map and Whale Watching Guidelines.

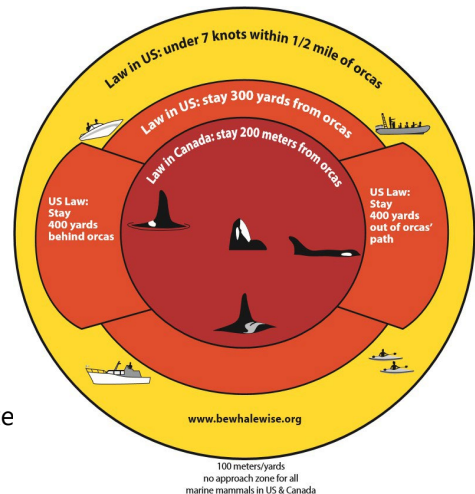
<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/at-risk/species-recovery/orca>

<https://www.bewhalewise.org>

As of January 1, 2025, It is unlawful for a vessel to approach within 1,000 yards of a Southern Resident Orca Whale (Southern Resident Killer Whales SRKW). it is unlawful to position a vessel to be within 1,000 yards of a Southern Resident Orca. Vessels are to reduce and restrict their speed to seven (7) knots when within 1,000 yards of a Souther Resident Orca. Vessels that are within 400 yards of a Southern Resident Orca are required to disengage the vessel's transmission.

In areas where Southern Resident Orcas may be present are asked to voluntarily set depth finders to 200 kHz frequency or temporarily turn them off. Vessel operators are asked to watch for the Whale Warning Flag to know when whales might be nearby.

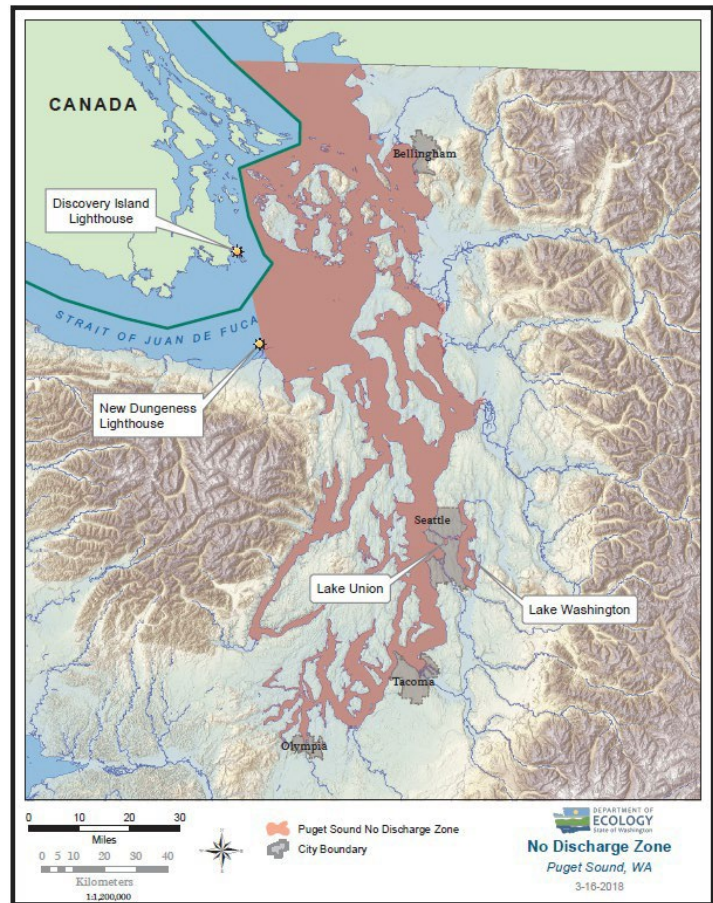
Vessels must remain 100 yards away from all other whales and marine mammals and 200 yards if they are resting or with their calf.



NO DISCHARGE ZONE

Puget Sound is a No Discharge Zone for vessel sewage. Even small amounts of sewage discharges over or near shellfish beds can cause enough pollution to require harvest closures. Puget Sound is a unique and sensitive environment that is prone to poor water quality conditions. A no discharge zone addresses this source of preventable pollution from impacting shellfish beds, beaches, and water quality. If your boat has a toilet on board, you are required to have a marine sanitation device (MSD).

More information can be found at <https://ecology.wa.gov/Water-Shorelines/Puget-Sound/No-discharge-zone>



BALLAST WATER

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is responsible for implementing state ballast water laws. These rules apply to vessels 300 gross tons or more and can be found here: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/invasive/ballast-water>

RESOURCES

Nautical Supply Stores:

- West Marine
- Fisheries Supply
- LFS Marine Supply
- Seattle Marine & Fishing Supply

Popular PNW Cruising Guides

- [Waggoner Cruising Guide](#)
- Exploring the San Juans and Gulf Islands by Douglas
- Ports and Passes: PNW Tide and Current Guide

WEATHER

The USCG continuously transmits weather observations and forecasts on VHF channels WX1 to WX8. National weather service forecasts can be found at www.marine.weather.gov

LINKS TO WASHINGTON STATE AND BC FISHING REGULATIONS

- Washington State Fishing Information: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing>
- British Columbia Fishing Information: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/fish/>

OIL SPILL, GROUNDING OR EMERGENCY

1. Minimize Risk to People and the Environment
2. Contact Seattle Traffic by phone or VHF as well as USCG Contact Spill Recovery Agency

Report the spill immediately to BOTH:

- Washington Emergency Management Division (800) 258-5990
- National Response Center (800) 424-8802

CONTACTS

- Seattle Traffic (206) 217-6050
- Victoria Traffic (250) 363-6333
- Puget Sound Pilots 24hr Dispatch (206) 448-4455
- USCG Nation Response Center (800) 424-8802
- Seattle Harbor Police (206) 684-4071

TUG COMPANIES

- Crowley (206) 332-8201
- Foss (206) 281-3810
- Western Towboat (206) 789-9000
- Fremont Tugboat (206) 632-0151