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NATIONAL MATTERS

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA – UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

IALA COUNCIL SESSION 71

The United States thanks IALA for their leadership and flexibility during the COVID-19 pandemic. While our members miss the travel to France, we appreciate that the work of IALA continues in the interest of safe and efficient global navigation.

In the U.S., COVID-19 has resulted in only minimal impact to our Aids to Navigation mission. Only a few members have been diagnosed with the virus and only a few units have had to self-quarantine. For those affected units, the redundancy already built into our network allowed other nearby units to provide coverage and ensure mariners were not impacted. Our work to conduct routine servicing and respond to discrepancies has been consistent with historical levels. We continue to monitor our Aids to Navigation constellation and assess if the pandemic will have longer residual effects.

This month, the Coast Guard will complete the decommissioning of our National Differential Global Positioning System. This project started four years ago as a joint effort between the Department of Transportation and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Mariners in the U.S. no longer needed the signal and are now relying upon the satellite-based Wide Area Augmentation System and local terrestrial solutions.

The Coast Guard is closely working with the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in their efforts to discontinue use of raster navigation products. This effort will allow NOAA to focus their resources and efforts on maintenance of the Electronic Navigation Chart (ENC). NOAA intends to publish weekly updates to the ENC and the Coast Guard and other maritime partners are working with NOAA to adjust how we provide chart corrections and other Marine Safety Information. Completion of this project is expected to take approximately five years.

The Coast Guard recently had two staff members complete the IALA ATON Manager Course which was hosted by Canada. We thank Canada for their generosity in letting our members join their course. Our members found the course to be highly beneficial and we are evaluating options to get this course for more of our ATON administrators.

Moving forward, the U.S. encourages IALA to develop early contingency plans for the fall committee meetings to ensure we have a suitable technological solution should COVID-19 prevent meetings from occurring in person. This Council meeting using the Microsoft Teams application may provide a good foundation. Additionally, our members ask IALA to develop resources and scheduling methods to support convening of intersessional meetings.