

New Anchorage at Port Everglades

Story by PA1 Jennifer Johnson, District Seven Public Affairs

The Port Everglades Harbor Safety Committee announced March 7 it had made its final regulation and the commercial anchorage area at the entrance to Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., would be relocated.

The changes were effective immediately and are a result of damages sustained to the fragile coral reef system near the old anchorage after about a dozen ships, since 1994, that have ran aground or drug anchor over the delicate ecosystem.

“The reconfigured anchorage is expected to greatly reduce the potential for future ship groundings,” said Capt. Karl Schultz of Coast Guard Sector Miami, captain of the port and chairman of the Port Everglades Harbor Safety Committee.

The previous anchorage, Anchorage A, ran parallel to Fort Lauderdale Beach and the adjacent reef suffered damage to endangered coral from the most recent grounding of the 645-foot freighter Clipper Lasco Sept. 14, 2006. The reconfigured anchorage, Anchorage B, expands on a deeper anchorage already in place and addresses the needs of maritime commerce entering and exiting the port as well as protection of the marine environment from further potential damage.

“The new anchorage configuration represents a giant step forward in attempting to solve ship anchor and grounding issues at the Port Everglades anchorage,” said Richard Dodge, Ph.D., dean and professor of the Nova Southeastern Oceanographic Center and executive director, National Coral Reef Institute.

The changes to the existing Port Everglades commercial vessel anchorage include expanding the anchorage to deeper waters farther away from the reef, limiting the time a vessel may remain in the anchorage, and eliminating the section of anchorage closest to the fragile living coral reefs. Florida possesses approximately 84 percent of the nation’s reef system making these changes a critical component of our nation’s ability to protect this fragile ecosystem.

Schultz believes the Coast Guard, as well as numerous other agencies, has a responsibility for tending to the care and preservation of the reefs and the maritime and environmental communities here in South Florida have taken the correct step in moving forward and preserving the coral reefs.

The Harbor Safety Committee is chaired by Schultz and includes representation from federal, state and local maritime and environmental entities. Participating agencies include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Florida Department of Environmental Protection Coral Reef Conservation Program, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Nova Southeastern University Oceanographic Center and National Coral Reef Institute, Port Everglades Pilots, Broward County Port Everglades Department, City of Fort Lauderdale and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Members of the Port Everglades Harbor Safety Committee announced Thursday, March 7, 2008, that Anchorage B at the entrance to Port Everglades had been reconfigured in an effort to thwart vessel groundings devastating fragile coral reefs. (USCG image)

