

REMOVING PHYSICAL AIDS TO NAVIGATION

This issue pertains to Virtual Aids To Navigation (VATONS). The USCG plans to begin removing physical aids to navigation and in fact, has already started in numerous places, (in particular around Long Beach and Catalina Island areas in California), replacing them with virtual aids. In other words, when you return to port and expect to see the sea buoy, it won't be there. Instead, you'll see it only represented on your ECDIS that is connected to your AIS. The criticisms of this plan include:

- 1.) Not all vessels (most notably recreational vessels) carry electronic chart displays let alone AIS. These stakeholders will be immediately disenfranchised. In addition, if operators cannot determine where a major channel or TSS is by seeing physical ATONs, they may well stray into harm's way while trying to negotiate such areas.

- 2.) While the USCG claims to give the public and maritime stakeholders plenty of advance warning of such plans and invites them to contribute their thoughts, it solicits such input strictly via the government's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and the Federal Register. So far, I have been unable to find a single mariner anywhere -- commercial or recreational -- who ever reads either publication. Therefore, it doesn't constitute a valid means of soliciting stakeholder input.

Therefore, I would like to present this as an agenda item for next May's NBSAC meeting.

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