

Coast Guard Patrol Commander, (Officer in Charge, U.S. Coast Guard Station Port Huron, MI).

Dated: June 20, 1995.

Rudy K. Peschel,

Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard, Commander, Ninth Coast Guard District.

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33 CFR Part 162

[CGD-09-95-002]

RIN 2115-AF04

Amendment to Inland Waterways Navigation Regulations Establishing Speed Limits on Connecting Waters From Lake Huron to Lake Erie

AGENCY: Coast Guard, DOT.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This final rule amends the existing speed limits for vessels, less than 100 gross tons, operating in the nondisplacement mode on connecting waters from Lake Huron to Lake Erie. The normal speed limits in this area are determined in large part by concerns about wake damage. However, lesser wakes are created by nondisplacement vessels. The Coast Guard allowed nondisplacement vessels to operate at higher speeds during two temporary test periods from April 1, 1993 to November 30, 1994, with satisfactory results.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This rule is effective July 11, 1995.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Lieutenant Dave Sprunt, Chief, Case Management Section, Ninth Coast Guard District, Room 2069, 1240 E. Ninth Street, Cleveland, Ohio, 44199-2060, (216) 522-3994.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On March 27, 1995, the Coast Guard published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) regarding this regulation (60 FR 15734). A 60 day comment period was provided and interested persons were invited to submit comments during that period. No comments were received.

Background and Purpose

Current regulations in 33 CFR 162.138 which apply to connecting waters from Lake Huron to Lake Erie set the maximum speed for vessels 20 meters or more in length at limits ranging from 4 to 12 statute miles per hour in various areas. One of the primary purposes of these speed regulations is to limit wake damage, but they were not written to account for the substantially lesser wake-generating characteristics of nondisplacement vessels. During the

1993 and 1994 navigation season, the Commander of the Ninth Coast Guard District temporarily amended 33 CFR 162.138 in order to allow trial runs of these nondisplacement vessels (33 CFR 162.T139), 58 FR 17526, April 5, 1993 and 59 FR 16563 April 7, 1994). A corresponding exemption was granted by the Central Region of the Canadian Coast Guard, which has authority over the Canadian waters in the same area. The two year trial period has proven successful and the Coast Guard has therefore determined that there should now be a permanent amendment to the regulations in order to prevent an unnecessary restriction on the operation of such vessels. It should be noted that this amendment to the speed regulations for nondisplacement vessels does not in any way excuse the general obligation to exercise good seamanship when maneuvering in close quarters or the responsibility for damage which might be caused by a wake which is excessive in a location close to other vessels or shore structures.

The Coast Guard is setting an upper limit of 40 statute miles per hour for nondisplacement vessels 20 meters or more in length but less than 100 gross tons, and is allowing such nondisplacement vessels to overtake other vessels when otherwise safe. All other navigational regulations will remain in force, and the use of this special rule for nondisplacement vessels is subject to the prior approval of the Captain of the Port in order to insure that the special rule is only used by vessels which are of suitable design and which are in fact operated safely in this waterway.

Drafting Information

The principal persons involved in drafting this document are Lieutenant Katherine E. Weathers, Assistant Chief of the Port and Environmental Safety Branch, and Commander M. Eric Reeves, Chief of the Port and Environmental Safety Branch.

Environment

The Coast Guard has considered the environmental impact of this regulation and concluded that, under section 2.B.2.c of Coast Guard Commandant Instruction M16475.1B, it is categorically excluded from further environmental documentation, and has so certified in the docket file.

Federalism

This action has been analyzed in accordance with the principles and criteria contained in Executive Order 12612, and it has been determined that this regulation does not have sufficient federalism implications to warrant the

preparation of a Federalism Assessment. This regulation is not intended to preempt any state or local regulation which may also be applicable to vessels operating in the nondisplacement mode.

Regulatory Evaluation

This regulation is considered to be nonsignificant under Executive Order 12866 on Regulatory Planning and Review and nonsignificant under Department of Transportation regulatory policies and procedures (44 FR 11034 of February 26, 1979). The Coast Guard expects the economic impact of this rule be so minimal that a full Regulatory Evaluation under paragraph 10e is unnecessary.

Small Entities

The economic impact of this regulation is expected to be so minimal that a full regulatory evaluation is unnecessary. Since the impact of this regulation is expected to be minimal, the Coast Guard certifies that, if adopted, it will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. The effect of this regulation is to ease what has now been determined to be an unnecessarily restrictive regulation as applied to one business developing the use of nondisplacement vessels in the area.

Collection of Information

This regulation will impose no collection of information requirements under the Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*

List of Subjects in 33 CFR Part 162

Inland waterways, Navigation.

Regulations

In consideration of the foregoing the Coast Guard is amending Part 162 of title 33, Code of Federal Regulations as follows:

PART 162—[AMENDED]

1. The authority citation for Part 162 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 33 U.S.C. 1231; 49 CFR 1.46.

2. In § 162.134, paragraph (f) is added to read as follows:

§ 162.134 Connecting waters from Lake Huron to Lake Erie; traffic rules.

* * * * *

(f) The prohibitions in this section on overtaking in certain areas do not apply to vessels operating in the nondisplacement mode. In this section, "nondisplacement mode" means a mode of operation in which the vessel is supported by hydrodynamic forces, rather than displacement of its weight in