

US and Russia propose Bering Strait ship traffic routing measures

In response to increased Arctic shipping traffic, the United States and the Russian Federation have proposed a system of two-way routes for vessels to follow in the Bering Strait and Bering Sea. This was reported from US Coast Guard HQ in Washington at the end of January.

To view or download the routes readers are invited to see the document here:

https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/pdf/IMO/NCSR_5_3_7.pdf

The two nations jointly developed and submitted the proposal to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to establish six two-way routes and six precautionary areas.

Located in US and Russian Federation territorial waters off the coasts of Alaska and the Chukotskiy Peninsula, the routes are being recommended to help ships avoid the numerous shoals, reefs and islands outside the routes and to reduce the potential for marine casualties and environmental disasters.

The proposed two-way routes will be voluntary for all domestic and international ships.

No additional Aids to Navigation are being proposed to mark the recommended two-way routes and the routing measures do not limit commercial fishing or subsistence activities.

In the words of Mike Sollosi, Chief of the US Coast Guard Navigation Standards Division: *‘Over the past decade, the US and Russia have both observed a steady increase in Arctic shipping activity.’*

Increased commercial and recreational traffic bring the increased risk of maritime casualties, said Sollosi, and the bilateral proposal for routing measures is designed to reduce that risk.

He concluded with: *‘The U.S. Coast Guard is engaging international and interagency partners across borders in developing joint proposals for ship routes in waterways that we share.’*