

# **STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA SECURITY NEEDS FOR PORT AND MARITIME ENVIRONMENT**

Since the tragic events of September 11, all law enforcement groups have redefined the mission priorities within their respective agencies. The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Law Enforcement Division is no exception. We have modified our efforts and priorities making the security of our state and nation a priority goal. We must send a strong message that our ports, harbors, waterways, power plants, bridges, coastline, and water intake facilities are protected and safe.

Traditionally, our officers have been responsible for the enforcement of our state fish, game, and boating laws. In 2001, our coastal marine patrol officers were involved with:

- 1) 9,000 cases
- 2) 17,000 boating hours
- 3) 500 search and rescue hours

## **A FULL TIME JOB!**

The United States Coast Guard (USCG) has also redefined its mission, with Homeland / Port Security now being their number one priority. Fisheries and recreational boating enforcement are still important missions for the Coast Guard, but are second in importance to their security mission. These enforcement activities must now be shouldered by the State. We anticipate that these changes within the Coast Guard will be long term, and at some level permanent.

In 1999, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) entered into a Joint Enforcement Agreement with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to expand SCDNR's enforcement authority into federal waters off the coast of South Carolina. Officers of the Marine Patrol district were certified as deputy National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) agents that were empowered to enforce federal fisheries laws off the coast of South Carolina.

With this agreement in place with NMFS, the Coast Guard can now take their near shore assets, and shift them from fisheries to security in the ports, while SCDNR assists with fisheries enforcement. This enforcement activity by the state also serves as a deterrence to terrorist activity by providing a law enforcement presence on the waters adjacent to the state.

In January 2002, DNR Marine Patrol officers monitored the offloading of a long line

fishing vessel that had returned from fishing eighty to one hundred miles offshore. At the conclusion of the offload, a secret compartment was discovered in the vessel. This compartment was filled with illegal fish fillets. This secret compartment could have contained explosives or other items that could have been used by terrorist.

In addition, these fishermen could be approached to smuggle in various items. An increased law enforcement presence would deter this kind of activity. The commercial fisheries industry in South Carolina landed 2.4 million pounds of fish in 2000. There were two hundred eighty-eight charter and head boat permits issued, which resulted in over ten thousand trips offshore. Total recreational offshore trips were estimated at twenty five thousand one hundred twenty-one. All of these fishing trips leave our harbors, bays, sounds, and rivers, go offshore and then return. Any of these could be a security concern.

Along the coast of South Carolina, there are many bays, sounds, and navigable rivers from which one can gain access to South Carolina. There are twenty navigable entrance points where boaters can gain access to South Carolina and then on to the Intercoastal Waterway (ICW), which transverses the entire coast of the state. There are one hundred twenty-two public launching sites and one hundred marinas located in the six coastal counties. There are one hundred commercial fishing docks from Little River to Hilton Head, South Carolina. These areas are patrolled by SCDNR Law Enforcement officers. Many of these coastal rivers extend inland and so do our enforcement needs. There are many launching sites on these inland rivers where a boat can be launched and then travel downstream into the port. We also need to be aware of inland dams, i.e. Santee Cooper, that could create major problems down stream, and into the port if broken.

South Carolina is the home of three commercial ports, Beaufort, Charleston, and Georgetown. The United States Coast Guard relies heavily on enforcement officers from SCDNR to assist in security in and around these port sites. However, commercial shipping in our ports is not the only maritime threat to South Carolina. The waterways and ports of South Carolina provide unlimited opportunities for access. The Limehouse Drawbridge located on the Stono River (ICW), south of Charleston opened five thousand, eighty-eight times in 2001 for large vessel traffic.

Maritime security is a greater issue then just security in the port. As you have seen, there are many opportunities for one to gain access into the state through the marine environment. These areas need a law enforcement presence, which in turn will act as a deterrence.

Since September 11, SCDNR coastal officers have participated in the following activities:

- 1) In the Beaufort areas we have increased water patrols around the Marine Corp

Air Station, Parris Island Marine Corp Training Center, Harbor Town Marina, and access areas to the Savannah ports. We have also provided security escorts for vessels using the port. This amounts to over eight hundred additional hours of patrol time during this period.

- 2) In Charleston, officers are regularly patrolling train trusses, bridges, and marina areas, as well as assisting the Coast Guard with marine escorts of passenger vessels in and out of the harbor. DNR officers have also completed approximately one hundred thirty-five hours of USCG training on boat tactics and security escorts. This amounts to over six hundred hours of training and patrol time during this period.
- 3) In Georgetown, SCDNR officers have performed water patrols adjacent to 3-V Chemical Plant, Winyah Generating Power Station, major bridges, and two major water intake systems. Officers have also assisted in the escort of vessels in and out of Georgetown Harbor. This amounts to over four hundred hours of patrol time during this period.

This work has been completed while these officers continue with their traditional responsibilities. These activities performed by state officers allow the Coast Guard to focus their efforts on security issues. Any enforcement by state officers enhances national security because of their law enforcement presence on state waters. To fulfill our obligations to both port / maritime security, and boating / fisheries enforcement, additional assets will be needed in the areas of personnel, equipment, and operating revenue. S.1214 will go a long way towards insuring that Federal, State, and local enforcement agencies will be able to have proper personnel, train and equip those officers, and have sufficient funds and authority to support this mission. Without this support we may literally run out of gas. Everyone is stretched thin and doing all they can possibly do, both inland and along the coast. Support of this nature is desperately needed!

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