

# QUILLAYUTE BAR HAZARDS

## CROSSING THE QUILLAYTUE RIVER BAR

The bar is the area where the deep waters of the Pacific Ocean meet with the shallower waters near the mouth of the Quillayute River.

Crossing the bar can be dangerous, and boaters must make sure the bar is safe prior to crossing. This pamphlet provides you with some common-sense knowledge about crossing the bar as well as resources you should check before you go.

Keep in mind, most accidents and deaths that occur on coastal bars are from capsizing, due mainly to improper loading and /or overloading a boat. When improperly loaded, boats are less stable and sit lower in the water, which can allow seas to break over and into the vessel.

Boats are more likely to capsize when crossing the bar from the ocean because the seas are on the stern side, and the boater may have less control over the vessel.

### If you are caught on a rough bar running in from the ocean:

- Make sure everyone aboard is wearing a personal flotation device.
- Keep the boat square before the seas.
- Keep the boat on the back of the swell. Ride the swell, and stay clear of the following wave.
- Avoid sudden weight shifts from passengers or gear moving around in the boat. If possible, have passengers lie down as near the centerline of the boat as possible.
- Do not allow the waves to catch your boat on the side (beam). This condition is called broaching and can easily result in capsizing.

The U.S. Coast Guard may close coastal bars to recreational boats when conditions are hazardous. Failure to comply with the closure may result in voyage termination and civil and/or criminal penalties. Regulations are enforced by U.S. Coast Guard boarding teams.

## TIDES & CURRENTS

Tides are the vertical rise and fall of the water, and tidal current is the horizontal flow of the water. Tidal changes occur roughly four times each day in the Pacific Northwest. Tidal movement toward the shore or upstream is the flood current. Movement away from the shore or downstream is the ebb current. The period between the two is known as slack water. Tidal currents may gain tremendous velocity, particularly when the ebb current is strengthened by river runoff.

The best time to cross the bar is during slack water or on a flood tide, when the seas are normally the calmest. Avoid getting caught on the bar during an ebb tide—it is extremely dangerous. Even on days that are relatively calm, a fast-moving ebb can create bar conditions that are too rough

for small craft. Always know the stage of the tide before you cross the bar.

## REGULATED NAVIGATION AREA

The Coast Guard has established a regulated navigation area in the area surrounding and on the Grays Harbor bar. When the amber lights on this sign are flashing, the Coast Guard has placed a restriction on recreational and uninspected passenger vessels crossing the bar. The Coast Guard has the authority to restrict all recreational and uninspected passenger vessels from crossing the bar when hazardous conditions exist. Failing to comply with posted bar restrictions may result in a maximum civil penalty of \$25,000. (Per 33 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 165.1325)



## BAR WARNING SIGN LOCATIONS

- Mounted on the Coast Guard station's boathouse, facing the village of La Push and marina: A white diamond shape sign with an orange border indicating "Rough Bar" and amber lights.
- La Push boat ramp: A blue sign with amber lights that say, "Warning, When Flashing, Bar Restrictions in Effect, Tune to 1610 AM."

When the amber lights are flashing on any of the warning signs, hazardous conditions are present, and a restriction is in place for recreational and uninspected passenger vessels crossing the bar. Mariners should tune in to listen to the restriction information.

## BAR CONDITIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

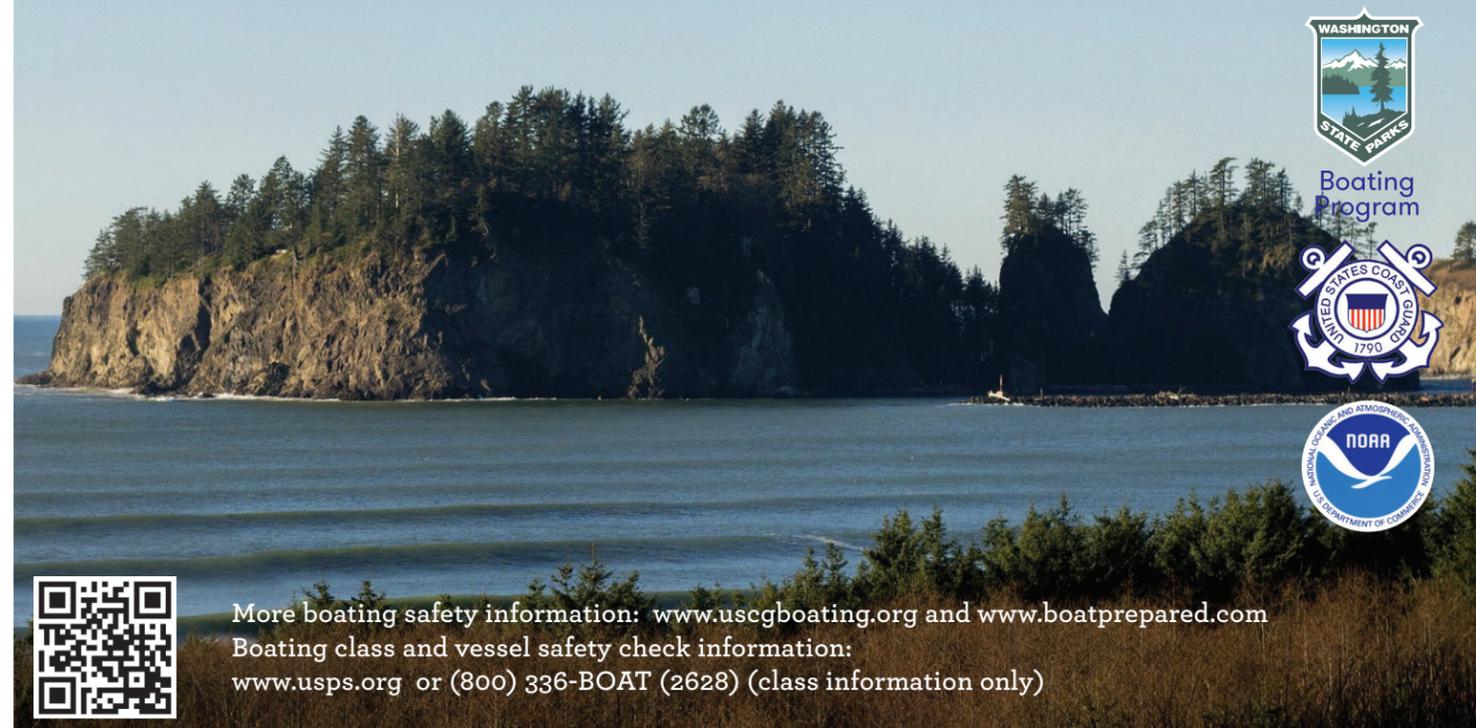
Observed weather and bar conditions are updated every three hours or more frequently if there is a significant change in weather. For conditions, check one or more of the following:

- A continual radio broadcast on 1610 AM is audible within a 6 mile radius from the Coast Guard Station at Quillayute River. The broadcast includes bar conditions, bar restrictions and local weather.
- For recorded bar and weather conditions, call the Coast Guard Station Quillayute River at (360) 374-6469.
- The Coast Guard broadcasts marine information on Channel 16 VHF when hazardous bar conditions and restrictions are put into place or are lifted. Monitor channel 16 VHF for all notices and weather updates.

• Local Bar Observations are also available online at <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/marine/BarObs.php>



# Crossing the Quillayute Bar



Boating Program



More boating safety information: [www.uscgboating.org](http://www.uscgboating.org) and [www.boatprepared.com](http://www.boatprepared.com)  
Boating class and vessel safety check information:  
[www.usps.org](http://www.usps.org) or (800) 336-BOAT (2628) (class information only)

## Boat Smart. Know before you go and be prepared...It can be a lifesaver!

CALLING FOR HELP - if in distress (threatened by grave and imminent danger), call for help right away. **Make sure everyone is wearing a life jacket!**

### VHF-FM radio (MAYDAY call)

1. Make sure radio is on
2. Select channel 16
3. Press and hold the transmit button
4. Speak slowly, and clearly say "MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY"
5. Give the following information
  - Vessel name and/or description
  - Nature of emergency
  - Position and/or location
  - Number of people on board
6. Release transmit button and wait for 10 seconds
7. If no response, repeat "MAYDAY" call



Phone 911. Tell the operator you have a marine emergency. Be ready to provide the same information required in item number 5 of the mayday call.

If not in immediate danger, but you need assistance, switch the VHF radio to channel 22, and follow the same steps as above, except don't use the word MAYDAY.



Coast Guard Station  
• Quillayute River in LaPush, WA (360) 379-6469

## BOATING TIPS

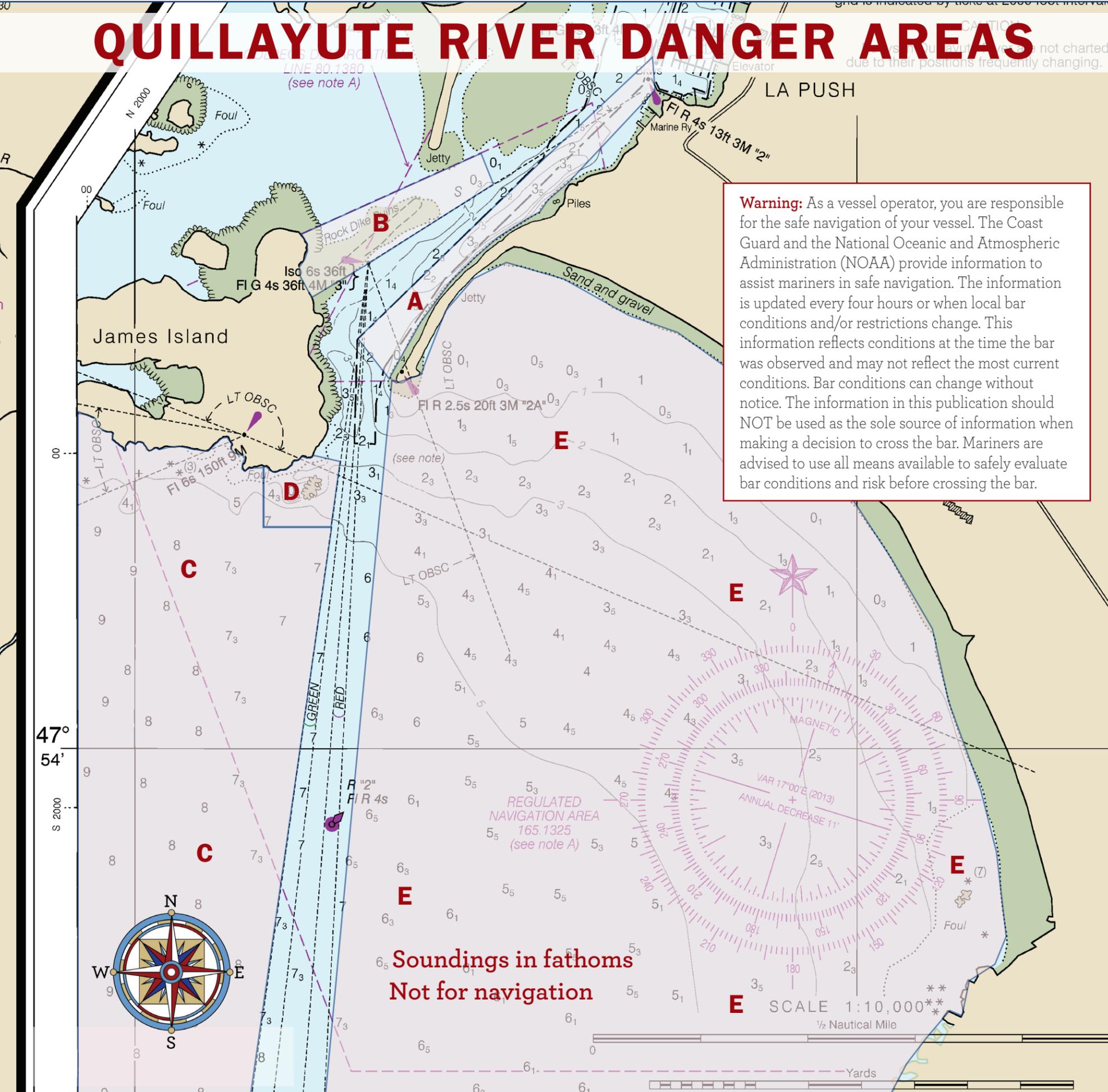
- Check weather, tide and bar conditions on 1610 AM
- Know your limits
- Double check you have essential gear on board
- File a float plan with friends/relatives
- Don't overload your boat
- Always wear your life jacket
- Carry two forms of communication that will work when wet (flares, VHF radio, cellphone in a waterproof bag or distress locator beacon)
- Stay clear of commercial vessels
- Have an anchor with adequate line
- Boat sober



*"Within seconds of seeing the wave, the boat flipped. The fact that I had my life jacket on kept me alive."*

Graden Davis  
Survivor

# QUILLAYUTE RIVER DANGER AREAS



**A. Navigable channel.** The navigable channel in the river is very narrow—approximately 60 yards wide at its widest point and follows closely along the south jetty. During the summer, the northern edge of the channel is marked by two seasonal aids to navigation—green numbers 5 and 7—due to a steep shelf of sand shoaling, covered by just a foot or two of water.

**B. Rock dike ruins.** These rocks are almost always covered by all but the lowest tides yet still provide the entrance with some shelter from north swells. However, winds and seas from the north, coupled with a high tide, may create a strong surge across the channel. In extreme conditions, this surge can produce rough water and even surf-like conditions inside the river.

**C. James Island.** With swells out of the west or north. James Island provides protection to the channel entrance. When the wind or seas are out of the south or southwest, the island's sheer cliffs will reflect wave energy back into the oncoming swell, causing very confused and choppy seas.

**D. Wash rock.** A large wash rock is located next to James Island and immediately outside the north side of the entrance. This rock is nearly always covered by breaking waves and can provide a small lee (protected from the wind) area once inside the river. Use extreme caution when entering in calm conditions to maintain a safe distance from the rocks.

**E. First beach.** The area between the red buoy line and the beach, depending on swell size and direction, can break well into the navigable channel. Breaking waves become more prevalent as the depth decreases toward shore.

**BAR AND WEATHER CONDITIONS**

**Listen to the local broadcast on 1610 AM**

