

RESOLUTION OF THE ROCKLAND RIVERFRONT COMMUNITIES COUNCIL IN OPPOSITION TO PROPOSED RULE 2016-13701

WHEREAS, the U.S. Coast Guard is considering designating 2,400 acres of Hudson River Estuary as new anchorage areas for commercial barges along the Hudson River shoreline from Yonkers to Kingston and has proposed a rule establishing such new anchorage grounds; and

WHEREAS, there are three proposed anchorage grounds in the Hudson River adjacent to the Hudson River shoreline in Westchester County and Rockland County and those locations are known as Yonkers Extension, Montrose Point and Tomkins Cove; and

WHEREAS, the only notification that has been provided by the Coast Guard regarding the proposed anchorage grounds is through the publication in the Federal Register; and

WHEREAS, despite requests from several public interest organizations and local, state and federal elected officials, including U.S. Senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, to hold public hearings on the new proposed anchorage grounds, to date the Coast Guard has declined to schedule any public hearings and will only be accepting written comments until December 6, 2016; and

WHEREAS, the designation of these new anchorage grounds, which would become water-based parking areas for commercial barges on the way to and from the ever-busier Port of Albany, portends an increase in barge traffic on the Hudson River; and

WHEREAS, the proposed anchorage sites abut the main shipping channel of the river, which will increase congestion on the river, and may lead to collisions and create additional homeland security issues along the riverfronts; and

WHEREAS, such efforts by the Coast Guard would serve to re-industrialize the Hudson River in areas undergoing transformation, coastal revitalization and adaptive reuse away from commercial and industrial uses and toward residential and recreational uses, and which re-industrialization would be inconsistent with the local long-term waterfront goals and regional initiatives toward Hudson Valley tourism; and

WHEREAS, the anchorage grounds proposed in Tomkins Cove would cover approximately 98 acres in the Hudson River, and are located just north of the Stony Point Battlefield State Historic Site and the Stony Point Bay Marina and just south of the Hudson Highlands Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance as part of the Coastal Management Program; and

WHEREAS, given the proposed anchorage ground locations in Tomkins Cove, recreational opportunities and scenic vistas will be compromised and impair the landscape's scenic quality through the addition of structures which reduce views or are discordant with the landscape because of their inappropriate scale, form, or construction materials; and

WHEREAS, Scenic Hudson and Riverkeeper, as well as many municipalities, have voiced their concern and opposition to establishing these new anchorage grounds; and

WHEREAS, the proposed anchorage sites and the resulting industrial traffic resulting therefrom, will have, at a minimum, a detrimental visual impact on the Rockland County municipalities that front on the Hudson River, and the program is inconsistent with the municipal Comprehensive Plans and the Town of Stony Point, and the Villages of Haverstraw, Nyack, and Piermont Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs; and

WHEREAS, the Haverstraw Bay is a unique ecological feature in the Hudson River, and is one of the most significant estuarine areas and plays a central role in the health of fish populations in the river, and has been designated as a "Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitat,"; and

WHEREAS, large anchoring equipment used by commercial vessels disturbs bottom sediment and can damage wildlife habitats, including those of endangered species that live in and abut the river; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of these anchorages will also cause noise and light pollution, produce river bed scarring of delicate river bottom habitat from the use of heavy ground tackle and congregate dangerous material, such as crude oil, directly adjacent to the shoreline; and

WHEREAS, the anchoring of ships and barges pose health, safety and welfare concerns from possible oil and fuel spills; and

WHEREAS, the Rockland Riverfront Communities Council, an inter-municipal organization which is composed of the river communities within Rockland County, participates with the Hudson River Valley Greenway Act, part of the intent of which is to establish a cooperative effort to advance the State's commitment to preserve, enhance and develop the world-renowned scenic, natural, historic, cultural and recreational resources of the Hudson River Valley; and

WHEREAS, the Rockland Riverfront Communities Council municipalities have a population of recreational boaters, who will be required to bypass the nearby proposed anchorage sites and navigate the increased commercial traffic on the Hudson River, which may create health, safety and welfare issues; and

WHEREAS, the Rockland Riverfront Communities Council municipalities have a population of fisherman who utilize the river as a source of sustenance and who may be harmed by the increased contamination caused by the proposed anchorage sites; and

WHEREAS, the foregoing potential impacts of the new anchorage grounds have not been adequately studied or addressed, including identifying all impacts from the proposed anchorage grounds; and

WHEREAS, the Coast Guard's proposal does not indicate what agency(ies) will be responsible for overseeing and/or maintaining the proposed anchorage sites and the anticipated impacts that will result from such; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rockland Riverfront Communities Council members do hereby register its opposition to the proposed rule and urges its disapproval; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council calls upon the Coast Guard to increase the ability for public comment by scheduling and actively promoting additional public forums that are easily accessible throughout the affected area so that the community concerns over this complex proposal can be heard and integrated into the rulemaking process as early as possible; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Rockland Riverfront Communities Council urges residents to voice their concerns on the proposed new anchorage locations identified as Docket ID USCG-2016-0132 at <http://www.regulations.gov> by December 6, 2016; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution be distributed to U.S. Senator Charles Schumer, U.S. Senator Kristen Gillebrand, U.S. Congresswoman Nita Lowey, U.S. Congressman Eliot Engel, Governor Andrew Cuomo, N.Y.S. Secretary of State Rossana Rosado, N.Y.S. Senator David Carlucci and N.Y.S. Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffe; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Rockland Riverfront Communities Council authorizes the President to execute any and all correspondence conveying the Council's concerns as set forth herein or as may become known in the future based upon further review of the proposal.

SIGNED: Towns of Clarkstown, Haverstraw, Orangetown and Stony Point; Villages of Grand View-on-Hudson, Haverstraw, Nyack, Piermont, South Nyack, Upper Nyack, and West Haverstraw; Palisades Interstate Park Commission; and the County of Rockland