

U.S. Department
of Transportation

**United States
Coast Guard**



Commandant
United States Coast Guard

Washington, D.C. **20593-0001**
Staff Symbol:
Phone:

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

U. S. COAST GUARD

STATEMENT OF CAPTAIN ROBERT C. NORTH

ON THE PROBLEM OF FLOATABLES POLLUTION IN THE NEW JERSEY-NEW YORK
HARBOR COMPLEX

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
INVESTIGATION

COMMITTEE ON MERCHANT MARINE AND FISHERIES

22 MAY 1989

Captain Robert C. North
Captain of the Port, New York
Commander, Coast Guard Group New York
United States Coast Guard

Captain North is presently serving as Captain of the Port of New York and New Jersey and Commander, Coast Guard Group New York. He was graduated from the Baltimore Polytechnic Institute in 1962, and from the New York State Maritime College in 1966. Previous Coast Guard assignments include Marine Inspection Office, Portsmouth, VA; USCGC WESTWIND; Marine Inspection Office, Baltimore, MD; Marine Safety Office, Corpus Christi, TX; Marine Safety Office, Paducah, KY; Marine Safety School, Yorktown, VA; and Marine Inspection Office, New Orleans, LA. Following graduation from the U. S. Army War College in 1986, Captain North was assigned to the Planning Staff of the Office of Marine Safety, Security and Environmental Protection at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, D.C. He was reassigned to New York in 1987.

Captain North's military awards include the Meritorious Service Medal, two awards of the Coast Guard Commendation Medal, the Coast Guard Achievement Medal, the Commandant's Letter of Commendation, and two Meritorious Unit Commendations.

Captain North is a native of Baltimore, MD. and is married to the former Sharon Sells of Corpus Christi, TX.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CAPTAIN ROBERT C. NORTH
U.S. COAST GUARD CAPTAIN OF THE PORT, NEW YORK
ON THE PROBLEM OF FLOATABLES POLLUTION IN THE NEW JERSEY-
NEW YORK HARBOR COMPLEX
TO BE PRESENTED BEFORE THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATION
COMMITTEE ON MERCHANT MARINE AND FISHERIES
IN NORMANDY BEACH, NEW JERSEY
22 MAY 1989

THANK YOU VERY MUCH AND GOOD AFTERNOON, MR. CHAIRMAN.

I AM CAPTAIN ROBERT C. NORTH, U.S. COAST GUARD CAPTAIN OF THE PORT, NEW YORK. I AM HERE TODAY REPRESENTING ADMIRAL RYBACKI, THE COMMANDER OF THE FIRST COAST GUARD DISTRICT. I AM PLEASED TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TODAY TO DISCUSS THE COAST GUARD'S ROLE IN DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM OF FLOATABLE POLLUTION.

AS YOU KNOW, MR. CHAIRMAN, THE COAST GUARD HAS BEEN CONCERNED FOR SOME TIME ABOUT THIS PROBLEM. THERE ARE MULTIPLE SOURCES FOR FLOATABLE POLLUTION SUCH AS: PIER DECAY AND PIER RESTORATION WHICH GENERATES LARGE AMOUNTS OF FLOATING TIMBER; MATERIAL IN SEWERS THAT IS WASHED OUT BY HEAVY RAINS; SHORE DEBRIS FROM BAYS AND ESTUARIES RESUSPENDED BY HIGH TIDES; TRASH LEFT ON BEACHES BY CARELESS PEOPLE; AND TRASH DISCARDED FROM VESSELS AND PLEASURE BOATS OFFSHORE. THE RESULTING POLLUTION DEGRADES OUR BEACHES AND COASTAL WATERS, CREATES HEALTH AND SAFETY PROBLEMS, THREATENS MARINE LIFE AND WATERFOWL, CAUSES LOSS OF REVENUE FOR THE TOURIST INDUSTRY AND CREATES CLEANUP COSTS WHICH MUST BE BORNE BY THE PUBLIC.

BECAUSE OF THESE CONCERNS, THE COAST GUARD HAS JOINED WITH OTHER FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL AGENCIES IN DEVELOPING THE "SUMMER '89 FLOATABLES ACTION PLAN". THIS IS A COORDINATED EFFORT TO DETECT AND REPORT AGGREGATIONS OF FLOATABLE DEBRIS EARLY ENOUGH TO PERMIT EFFECTIVE CLEANUP, THEREBY MINIMIZING THEIR IMPACT ON

OUR MARINE ENVIRONMENT. UNDER THIS PLAN, THE COAST GUARD, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA) AND THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY'S DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, WILL PROVIDE OVERLAPPING AERIAL SURVEILLANCE OF NEW YORK HARBOR AS PART OF ROUTINE OPERATIONS BETWEEN 15 MAY AND 15 SEPTEMBER. DAILY, A COAST GUARD HELICOPTER FROM AIR STATION BROOKLYN WILL BE DEPLOYED TO SURVEY DIFFERENT AREAS OF THE NEW YORK BIGHT AS PART OF ROUTINE OPERATIONS. THE HELICOPTERS WILL BE ABLE TO DETECT "SLICKS" OR AGGREGATIONS OF FLOATABLE DEBRIS. IN ADDITION TO AERIAL SURVEILLANCE, OUR DAILY SURFACE HARBOR PATROLS WILL REPORT DEBRIS SLICKS TO THE CAPTAIN OF THE PORT, NEW YORK FOR ACTION. DAILY SMALL BOAT PATROLS BY COAST GUARD GROUP NEW YORK WILL BE EXPANDED TO COVER THE UPPER NEW YORK HARBOR, INCLUDING ALL WATERS NORTH OF THE VERRAZANO BRIDGE, THE ENTIRE SHORELINE OF STATEN ISLAND, THE ENTIRE SHORELINE OF MANHATTAN, AND THE BROOKLYN SHORELINE NORTH OF THE VERRAZANO BRIDGE. THE DAILY PATROLS CONDUCTED BY COAST GUARD GROUP SANDY HOOK, NEW JERSEY, WILL ALSO BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR DEBRIS SLICKS IN THEIR AREA OF OPERATIONS. THEY WILL REPORT THEIR SIGHTINGS TO THE CAPTAIN OF THE PORT, NEW YORK. ADDITIONALLY, COAST GUARD CUTTERS ON PATROL IN THE NEW YORK BIGHT WILL BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR FLOATABLE DEBRIS.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE PORT, NEW YORK WILL REPORT ALL SIGHTINGS OF FLOATABLE DEBRIS TO THE EPA FLOATABLE DEBRIS COORDINATOR FOR APPROPRIATE ACTION. CONSISTENT WITH THE URGENCY OF OTHER OPERATIONS AT THE TIME, COAST GUARD AIRCRAFT AND SURFACE VESSELS WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE TO TRANSPORT FEDERAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO DEBRIS SLICKS AND TO TRANSPORT PERSONNEL FOR CLEANUP OPERATIONS.

IN ADDITION TO OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE "SUMMER '89 FLOATABLES ACTION PLAN," THE COMMANDER, FIRST COAST GUARD DISTRICT, WHOSE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY INCLUDES COASTAL NEW YORK AND NORTHERN NEW JERSEY, IS IMPLEMENTING SPECIFIC COAST GUARD INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE COMING SUMMER. THESE INSTRUCTIONS WILL DOVETAIL WITH THE INTERAGENCY SUMMER '89 PLAN AND PROVIDE LOCAL COAST GUARD UNITS WITH DETAILED GUIDANCE FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION. THE COAST GUARD MARINE SAFETY OFFICE, PHILADELPHIA, WHICH HAS POLLUTION ENFORCEMENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SOUTHERN PART OF NEW JERSEY, HAS ALSO ENTERED INTO A RESPONSE AGREEMENT WITH THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION. THIS AGREEMENT DEALS WITH FLOATABLE POLLUTION, INCLUDING MEDICAL WASTE AND SEWAGE, AND IDENTIFIES THE DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITY BETWEEN THE COAST GUARD AND THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY IN DEALING WITH THESE VARIOUS FORMS OF POLLUTION. THIS CONCENTRATED EFFORT SHOULD ALLEVIATE SOME OF THE PROBLEMS OF THE PAST.

I WILL BE HAPPY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.