



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

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From: Commander, Eleventh Coast Guard District
To: Commandant(G-NSR-2)

Subj: USCGC WALNUT; decommissioning of

Ref: (a) (G-NSR-2) ltr (undated) received 15 Dec 1981

1. Reference (a) requested our comments and a plan for decommissioning USCGC WALNUT (WLM 252) including the impact of the vessel loss and billet reductions for two implementation dates: 1 April 1982 and 30 September 1982. The 22 December 1981 deadline on this request and the uncertainty of FY1982 funding levels preclude our preparing a workable plan which could be followed with any degree of certainty. Therefore, we have analyzed the situation in light of impacts and hopefully this would form the framework for any future plans to implement changes in WLM resources.

2. The decommissioning of three 175' WLM's should cause reconsideration of the tender locations which best serve the needs of the AtoN program. I believe a buoy tender with WALNUT's capability, or better, must be assigned to the Eleventh District. Long Beach and San Diego, California have become the major operational Naval seaports on the West Coast. Over the next two years Long Beach will see a major build up of Naval vessels culminating with the Battleship NEW JERSEY being homeported there. At the same time, the Long Beach/Los Angeles commercial port complex is growing and now leads all other West Coast ports in the number of vessels arriving and cargo tonnages handled. The complex figures prominently in certain aspects of the national strategic mobility planning. The Eleventh District must retain the capability to respond quickly to aids to navigation discrepancies that arise in the congested fairways and channels leading to these busy port complexes. Without a suitable tender assigned to this District, such response could not be provided and we would be leaving ourselves open to considerable risks of major collision or grounding in these ports.

3. In the way of review, USCGC WALNUT's present aids to navigation responsibilities include:

- a. Federal Aids: 76 lighted buoys
50 unlighted buoys
75 minor shore aids
- b. Private Aids: 520 buoys/lighted
33 oil platforms

In addition, the major District ANT is integrated with WALNUT with responsibility for private aids and for the majority of major lights and fog signals. This ANT, by the way, has proven to be extremely effective due in large part to the excellent AtoN supervision, engineering and budgeting/funding assistance derived from being integrated with WALNUT's organization.

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4. The major impact of not assigning a tender to the Eleventh District would be loss of response time to correcting major aids to navigation discrepancies affecting the major Naval seaports of San Diego and Long Beach-Los Angeles. There would be a need for at least 90 tender days of effort by another District's tender simply to handle WALNUT's scheduled servicing of buoys. There obviously would be other required high priority deployments to the Eleventh District to handle the emergency correction of discrepancies as discussed above. Without WALNUT or a replacement tender, a six to eight man ANT would have to be established with suitable equipment and funding at Coast Guard Base Terminal Island. Billets to form the separate ANT would have to come from the billets made available by decommissioning WALNUT.
5. There would be many other details to include in a plan for maintaining Eleventh District aids to navigation without an assigned tender. Consideration would have to be given to changing the size of Eleventh District buoys so they could be accommodated by a smaller buoy vessel or commercially. A funding system would have to be considered for contract services to reset aids sunk or moved off station by weather or collision since there would be no local tender to restore them all fast enough. And finally, additional overall funding would have to be provided to overcome the lack of a local, cost-effective tender resource capable of managing an efficient "full cycle" service to District aids to navigation.
6. The time schedule impact of decommissioning WALNUT would be dependent on the overall decision regarding the reassignment of another tender to the Eleventh District. If another tender were not assigned, then I would consider the 1 April 1982 date to be entirely unrealistic to put all the changes into motion that would be required. The success of the 30 September 1982 date would be predicated on the availability of FY82 funds to provide the necessary alternatives to maintaining short range aids to navigation in the Eleventh District. At such time that a final decision is made regarding the final location of Coast Guard buoy tender resources, a detailed plan could be prepared.
7. Decommissioning of three 175 foot WLM's is not disputed. I urge, however, that careful consideration be given to the pressing need for a tender in the Eleventh District. Long Beach and San Diego are major Naval ports and the Long Beach-Los Angeles port complex is vital to our strategic mobility. I believe it is absolutely essential that a suitable tender be homeported here for those reasons.


A. P. MANNING