

America's Boating Club-Marco Island and the City's Waterway Committee to discuss Safe Navigation in area waters

Recognizing that there are more boaters than ever enjoying our waterways, America's Boating Club – Marco Island has been invited to present current information about the condition of Aids to Navigation (ATONs) in and around Marco Island to the City's Waterway Committee at their meeting on Thursday, November 19, 2020 at 9am in the Main Council Chamber. Clifford Winings, Chair of the Club's Cooperative Charting Committee will be presenting. Members of the public are invited to attend.

The waters in and around Marco Island are one of the key attractions of our area. Many of the waterways in the area are quite shallow with constantly shifting shoals. In addition, most of the boating traffic in our area is recreational, including a large number of boating rentals. Many boaters have limited navigational skills and equipment. Because of this, boaters are heavily dependent on physical markers to help avoid grounding and to guide them safely to their destinations. These physical markers, also known as Aids to Navigation (ATONs), are owned by various governmental agencies in the area who are responsible for their repair, maintenance and accuracy.

In 2006, as the US Coast Guard Auxiliary was assigned greater homeland security responsibilities, America's Boating Club- Marco Island stepped up to supply information on the ATONs in the immediate area. The intent was to supply the US Coast Guard and NOAA information that would lead to repairs, maintenance and accurate information on nautical charts.

In 2015, America's Boating Club-Marco Island initiated a new project to conduct ongoing surveys of ATONs in the Marco Island area and shared it with all of the other agencies responsible for ATON maintenance (the US Coast Guard, Collier County Coastal Zone Management Group, and the City of Marco Island's Department of Public Works).

In February 2016, the Waterways Committee clarified responsibilities for ATON maintenance.

- The City of Marco Island is responsible for all ATONs within the city limits except Caxambas Bay, Big Marco River, Capri Pass and Horrs Island North Channel.
- The US Coast Guard is responsible for the markers in the Everglade City main channel, Capri Pass and the Channel from Marco Island toward Naples, as well as Coon Key Light.
- Collier County is responsible for all other ATONs, about 60% of the total in the area between Everglades City and a mile north of Marco Island

As a result of the information provided and the clarification of the responsibilities by the City's Waterways Committee, the City replaced numerous signs and markers over the past several years. The Committee has expressed interest in the current status of the ATONs so they can make recommendations on additional maintenance and repair needs.

America's Boating Club- Marco Island will continue to maintain a database of ATONs in the specific area noted above to:

- Supply information to the USCG so nautical charts, small craft charts and Coast Pilot publications can be corrected
- Inspect ATONs and report those that are damaged or missing to the appropriate agency as noted above.

Members of the public and boating community that are interested in the survey database that is available as well as contributing to these ongoing and collaborative boating safety initiatives can find out more information at marcoboatingclub.org in the Aids to Navigation section.