

## Rules of the Road – Changes to Rule #9      Captain Ed Says

After years of waiting, the United States Coast Guard is finally stating exactly where areas to be declared “regulated navigation areas” now exist. This means that in these “areas now declared regulated”, Rule #9 – Narrow Channels will apply to all vessels navigating within these declared areas. Before this change, each captain interpreted Rule # 9 loosely. Each captain would say, “To me, this would be a narrow channel” and act or navigate accordingly. While other captains would say, “This to me, is not a narrow channel and not follow Rule #9.

The change to Rules of the Road, Rule #9 – Narrow Channels more precisely defines the captain’s responsibility and reduces the confusion. Here’s what this means to the Recreational Boaters, while navigation within these, now declared areas of narrow channels:

- Shallower draft boats must stay further to the right side of a channel, or in fact stay outside of the channel, if they can safely do so, to allow deeper draft ships to stay within the narrow channel.
- Sailboats do not have the automatic right of way over a deep draft vessel that can only safely navigate within said narrow channel.
- In a crossing situation, do not expect your “green side light” to give you the right of way over a vessel that can only safely navigate within the narrow channel.
- Fishing vessels shall not impede any other vessel that can only safely navigate within this narrow channel.

This should not be news to any boater out there. But now the guess work is over....you now will officially know if you are in a “narrow channel” and if Rule #9 applies.

Safe boating to all,  
Captain Ed Galston