Cape Fear River – Cape Fear to Wilmington
NOAA Chart 11537

A reduced-scale NOAA nautical chart for small boaters
When possible, use the full-size NOAA chart for navigation.

- Complete, reduced-scale nautical chart
- Print at home for free
- Convenient size
- Up-to-date with Notices to Mariners
- Compiled by NOAA’s Office of Coast Survey, the nation’s chartmaker
Nautical charts are a fundamental tool of marine navigation. They show water depths, obstructions, buoys, other aids to navigation, and much more. The information is shown in a way that promotes safe and efficient navigation. Chart carriage is mandatory on the commercial vessels that carry America’s commerce. They are also used on every Navy and Coast Guard ship, fishing and passenger vessels, and are widely carried by recreational boaters.

What are Nautical Charts?
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What is a BookletChart™?
This BookletChart is made to help recreational boaters locate themselves on the water. It has been reduced in scale for convenience, but otherwise contains all the information of the full-scale nautical chart. The bar scales have also been reduced, and are accurate when used to measure distances in this BookletChart. See the Note at the bottom of page 5 for the reduction in scale applied to this chart.

Notice to Mariners Correction Status
This BookletChart has been updated for chart corrections published in the U.S. Coast Guard Local Notice to Mariners, the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency Weekly Notice to Mariners, and, where applicable, the Canadian Coast Guard Notice to Mariners. Additional chart corrections have been made by NOAA in advance of their publication in a Notice to Mariners. The last Notices to Mariners applied to this chart are listed in the Note at the bottom of page 7. Coast Pilot excerpts are not being corrected.


(Selected Excerpts from Coast Pilot)

**Cape Fear River**, 370 miles long and the approach to the city of Wilmington, empties into the sea immediately westward of Cape Fear. Barge traffic is active as far as **Fayetteville**, 125 miles above the mouth. **Wilmington**, 24 miles above the mouth, on the east bank of Cape Fear River, is the leading port of North Carolina. It is 363 miles south of Norfolk, VA, and 315 miles north of Jacksonville, FL, by coastwise routes. Exports are tobacco, woodpulp, bulk cement, fabricated metal products, and scrap metal. Imports are petroleum products, fertilizers, ferrous and non-ferrous ores, lumber, paper, salt, sulfur, textiles, iron and steel products, fabricated metal products, and bulk chemicals. There are many tourist attractions and points of historical interest in the city and vicinity, including the USS NORTH CAROLINA, a World War II memorial, which is berthed on the west bank of Cape Fear River opposite Wilmington.

**Prominent features.**—**Oak Island Light** (33°53′34″N., 78°02′06″W.), 169 feet above the water, is shown from a 155-foot cylindrical tower, upper part black, middle white, and lower part gray, on Oak Island on the western side of Cape Fear River entrance. It is the most conspicuous object in the approach. The abandoned lighthouse, known as “Old Baldy”, on the west side of Smith Island, and the buildings of the **Oak Island Coast Guard Station**, westward of Fort Caswell, are also conspicuous.

Water tanks at Yaupon Beach, Southport and at Kure Beach and two silver radar domes about 1.3 miles southward of the tank at Kure Beach are visible well to seaward. The floodlights at the buildings on the beach about 1 mile westward of Oak Island Light are reported to be highly visible at night. The lights on the stack, microwave tower, and on the buildings of the nuclear powerplant, on the west side of Cape Fear River 2.5 miles above Southport, are prominent at night.

**Frying Pan Shoals** platform tower (33°29′06″N., 77°35′24″W.) is reported to be a good radar target in the approach to Cape Fear River. It is also reported that under ideal conditions the configuration of Cape Fear and Oak Island Light prove of some value as radar targets when closer in; these targets, however, should not be relied upon too strongly.

**Channels.**—A Federal project provides for a channel 40 feet deep over the ocean bar, thence 38 feet for 24 miles to Wilmington including the turning basin off the southerly part of the city; thence in Northeast Cape Fear River 32 feet to and including a turning basin 0.4 mile above the mouth, thence 32 feet to Hilton Bridge about 1.2 miles above the mouth, and thence 25 feet to the upstream limit of the Federal project about 1.5 miles above the bridge, including a turning basin about 1 mile above the bridge. (See Notice to Mariners and latest editions of charts for controlling depths.) The channel is well marked with lighted ranges and other aids.

An overhead power cable with a clearance of 165 feet over the main channel crosses Cape Fear River about 18.8 miles above the mouth. U.S. Route 74/76 highway lift bridge with a clearance of 65 feet down and 135 feet up crosses Cape Fear River at Wilmington, about 23.5 miles above the mouth. The bridgetender monitors VHF-FM channel 16 and works on channels 13 and 18; telephone 910-251-5773. (See 117.1 through 117.49, chapter 2, for drawbridge regulations.) Bridges crossing Cape Fear River above Wilmington are discussed later in this chapter.

**Anchorages.**—Fair anchorage is available in the Cape Fear River abreast the town of Southport. The holding ground is good, but because of strong tidal currents vessels should anchor with a good scope of chain. This anchorage is sometimes used as a harbor of refuge in the winter by coasting vessels.

Vessels awaiting entrance to the river may find good holding ground in about 7 fathoms within 0.6 mile southeastward of the sea buoy (Cape Fear River Entrance Lighted Whistle Buoy CF). The area to the northwestern part of the sea buoy is a rocky and foul, and some vessels have lost anchors or broken flukes in the area.

**Dangers.**—Frying Pan Shoals are the principal danger in the approach to Cape Fear River. Isolated wrecks, some marked, and obstructions with varying depths over them are in the approaches. In 2007, a rock was reported with shoaling to 28 feet at 33°42′38″N., 78°02′08″W.

**U.S. Coast Guard Rescue Coordination Center**

**24 hour Regional Contact for Emergencies**

RCC Miami
7th CG District          (305) 415-6800
Miami, FL
NOAA's navigation managers serve as ambassadors to the maritime community. They help identify navigational challenges facing professional and recreational mariners, and provide NOAA resources and information for safe navigation.

For additional information, please visit nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/service/navmanagers.

To make suggestions or ask questions online, go to nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/inquiry.
To report a chart discrepancy, please use ocsdata.ncd.noaa.gov/idrs/discrepancy.aspx.

For more information on aids to navigation, including those on Western Rivers, please consult the latest USCG Light List for your area. These volumes are available online at http://www.navcen.uscg.gov
CAPE FEAR RIVER
CAPE FEAR TO WILMINGTON

Mercator Projection
Scale 1:40,000 at Lat. 34°00’00"
North American Datum of 1983
(World Geodetic System 1984)

SOUNDINGS IN FEET
AT MEAN LOWER LOW-WATER

Radar reflectors
Radar reflectors have been placed on many floating aids to navigation. Individual radar reflector identification on these aids has been omitted from this chart.

Warnings
The prudent manner will not rely solely on any single aid to navigation, particularly on floating aids. See U.S. Coast Guard Light List and U.S. Coast Pilot for details.

NOAA Weather radio broadcasts
The NOAA Weather Radio station listed below provides continuous weather broadcasts. The navigation range is typically 26 to 41 nautical miles from the antenna site, but can be as much as 190 nautical miles for stations at high elevations.

Wilmington, NC
K1WS-31 162.550 MHz

Regulations for ocean dumping sites are contained in 40 C.F.R. Parts 200-209. Additional information concerning the regulations and requirements for use of the sites may be obtained from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). See U.S. Coast Pilot Appendix for addresses of EPA offices. Dumping subsequent to the survey dates may have reduced the deposits shown.

Horizontal datum
The horizontal reference datum of this chart is North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83), which for plotting purposes is considered equivalent to the World Geodetic System 1984 (WGS 84). Geographic positions referenced to the North American Datum of 1983 must be corrected an average of 6.17" northward and 1.036" eastward to agree with this chart.

Traffic within the Precursory Area may consist of vessels operating between Cape Fear River and one of the established traffic lanes. Mariners are advised to exercise extreme caution in navigating within this area. The normal First Station Area is outlined by a magenta band.

Traffic separation scheme
One-way traffic lanes superimposed on this chart are recommended for use by all vessels traveling between the points involved. They have been designed to aid in the prevention of collisions at the approaches to Cape Fear River, but are not intended in any way to supersede or alter the applicable Rules of the Road. The separation zone is intended to separate inbound and outbound traffic and to be free of obstructions. The separation zone should not be used except for crossing purposes. When crossing traffic lanes and the separation zone use extreme caution.

All vessels greater than or equal to 85 feet in length must slow to speeds of 15 knots or less in seasonal management areas.
VHF Marine Radio channels for use on the waterways:

Channel 6 – Inter-ship safety communications.
Channel 9 – Communications between boats and ship-to-coast.
Channel 13 – Navigation purposes at bridges, locks, and harbors.
Channel 16 – Emergency, distress and safety calls to Coast Guard and others, and to initiate calls to other vessels. Contact the other vessel, agree to another channel, and then switch.
Channel 22A – Calls between the Coast Guard and the public. Severe weather warnings, hazards to navigation and safety warnings are broadcast here.
Channels 68, 69, 71, 72 and 78A – Recreational boat channels.

Getting and Giving Help — Signal other boaters using visual distress signals (flares, orange flag, lights, arm signals); whistles; horns; and on your VHF radio. You are required by law to help boaters in trouble. Respond to distress signals, but do not endanger yourself.

NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards (NWR) is a nationwide network of radio stations broadcasting continuous weather information directly from the nearest National Weather Service office. NWR broadcasts official Weather Service warnings, watches, forecasts and other hazard information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/

Quick References

- Nautical chart related products and information: http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov
- Interactive chart catalog: http://www.charts.noaa.gov/InteractiveCatalog/nrnc.shtml
- Chart and chart related inquiries and comments: http://ocsdata.ncd.noaa.gov/idrs/inquiry.aspx?frompage=ContactUs
- Chart updates (LNM and NM corrections): http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/mcd/updates/LNM_NM.html
- Coast Pilot online: http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/nsd/cpdownload.htm
- Tides and Currents: http://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov
- Marine Forecasts: http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/marine/home.htm
- National Data Buoy Center: http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/
- NowCoast web portal for coastal conditions: http://www.nowcoast.noaa.gov/
- National Hurricane Center: http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/
- Pacific Tsunami Warning Center: http://ptwc.weather.gov/
- Contact Us: http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/staff/contact.htm

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This Booklet chart has been designed for duplex printing (printed on front and back of one sheet). If a duplex option is not available on your printer, you may print each sheet and arrange them back-to-back to allow for the proper layout when viewing.