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Coast Guard trims space for AmCup

Premium content from San Francisco Business Times by Eric Young, Reporter

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The U.S. Coast Guard proposes to shrink dramatically the race area for the 2013 America's Cup while also carving out space on the bay for swimmers, ferries and cargo vessels, under a plan unveiled recently.

The Coast Guard, which regulates the daily throng of aquatic traffic on San Francisco Bay, said it tried to strike a balance between commercial demands, recreational activity and racing needs.

"We want to ensure that ferries, fishing vessels and other commerce continue to flow and meet their schedules on race days," said [Mathew Bliven](#), the Coast Guard's principal coordinator for the 34th America's Cup.

America's Cup racing will take place over an estimated 45 days in 2013, and there will be an estimated seven racing days in 2012 as part of lead-up racing events.

Vessels of various types cross the bay more than 120,000 times a year.

Some maritime companies that have studied the Coast Guard's proposed zoning said it was an encouraging development.

"I'm pretty pleased they have moved in a sensible commercial direction," said [Taylor Safford](#), president of the Blue and Gold Fleet, which carries about 2.5 million people each year on bay cruises and commuter ferries.

The race zone lies south of the main east-west deepwater channel used by cargo vessels to get to the Port of Oakland and oil tankers to get to the Port of Richmond and beyond.

When originally proposed by America's Cup officials, the race zone spread across a huge swath of the bay, bordered roughly by the Golden Gate Bridge, the Bay Bridge and Angel Island State Park.

The Coast Guard now is proposing a race area taking up less than half that space. The 2013 proposed zone resembles a misshapen rectangle about 4 miles across bounded by the San Francisco waterfront, Golden Gate Bridge and Alcatraz. That zone also makes space for ferries and other motorized vessels and even swimmers.

For the 2012 preliminary races, the Coast Guard is proposing a slightly smaller version of the race zone. The zone is smaller in 2012 because the races will involve 45-foot catamarans, smaller than the 72-foot catamarans that will be in the 2013 races.

America's Cup organizers, who worked with the Coast Guard on the proposed racing zone, said it will meet their needs.

The Coast Guard is soliciting comments on its proposed race zone until April 30. It will finalize its proposal by July, said Bliven.

Eric Young covers law, government and the business of sports for the San Francisco Business Times.