



U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Response Activities

Fiscal Years 2020–2023

October 11, 2024



**Office of Homeland
Security Statistics**

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Maritime

Message from the Executive Director of the Office of Homeland Security Statistics

October 11, 2024



I am pleased to present the following report, “U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Response Activities” for Fiscal Years 2020–2023, which was prepared by the Office of Homeland Security Statistics (OHSS). OHSS is the DHS statistical unit established in September 2023 to perform independent statistical reporting. OHSS is led by the DHS Statistical Official. Its mission is to foster transparency and data-driven homeland security decision-making by analyzing and disseminating timely, objective DHS data and statistics.

The report supports the requirements and best practices of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act) and the 2022 Coast Guard Strategy priority to deliver timely and trusted data at all levels to generate insights for more informed decisions. The report supplies foundational facts about USCG maritime response activities and enables wider use of data across the homeland security enterprise to support future evaluations and evidence-based policymaking.

The Coast Guard’s maritime response activities safeguard the American people and promote national security, border security, and economic prosperity in the maritime environment. These activities include saving lives, environmental stewardship, and monitoring use of our natural resources. The report fosters transparency with the many stakeholders of this far-reaching and vital mission. OHSS will continue to expand reporting of Coast Guard and other DHS data and statistics to provide more comprehensive statistical information on the maritime environment.

I am pleased to respond to any questions you may have. Please do not hesitate to contact us at ohss@hq.dhs.gov.

Sincerely,



Marc Rosenblum
DHS Statistical Official
Executive Director, Office of Homeland Security Statistics



U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Response Activities

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I. Background

United States Coast Guard Mission

Since 1790, the United States Coast Guard (USCG) has safeguarded the American people and promoted national security, border security, and economic prosperity in a complex and evolving maritime environment. The Coast Guard saves those in peril and protects the Nation from all maritime threats.

The Coast Guard is a branch of the U.S. Armed Forces. It is a law enforcement organization, a regulatory agency, a member of the U.S. Intelligence Community, and a first responder. The Coast Guard is the principal federal agency responsible for maritime safety, security, and environmental stewardship in U.S. ports and inland waterways. It covers more than 95,000 miles of U.S. coastline, throughout the 4.5 million square miles of U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and on the high seas.

USCG Workforce and Assets

The Coast Guard is comprised of over 50,000 members in four types of employment: active duty, reserve, civilian, and volunteer.¹ They operate a fleet of over 250 Cutters, 200 aircraft, and 1,600 boats to perform their maritime mission.²

Figure 1.

Cutters: Any U.S. Coast Guard vessel 65 feet or greater in length.



¹ <https://www.uscg.mil/Join/>

² <https://www.uscg.mil/About/Assets/>

Figure 2.

Aircraft: A mixture of rotary wing (helicopter) and fixed wing (plane) aircraft.



Figure 3.

Boats: Any U. S. Coast Guard vessel less than 65 feet in length.



USCG Commands and Operating Locations

The Coast Guard is divided into two area commands, the Atlantic Area and Pacific Area. The area commands are further divided into nine district commands and 37 sectors. Each area, district, and sector are operationally controlled by a Commander. The Commander provides regional direction and coordination. See Appendix A for details about areas, districts, and sectors and maps of their geographic boundaries.³

³ <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-33/chapter-I/subchapter-A/part-3>

Figure 4.

USCG Districts⁴

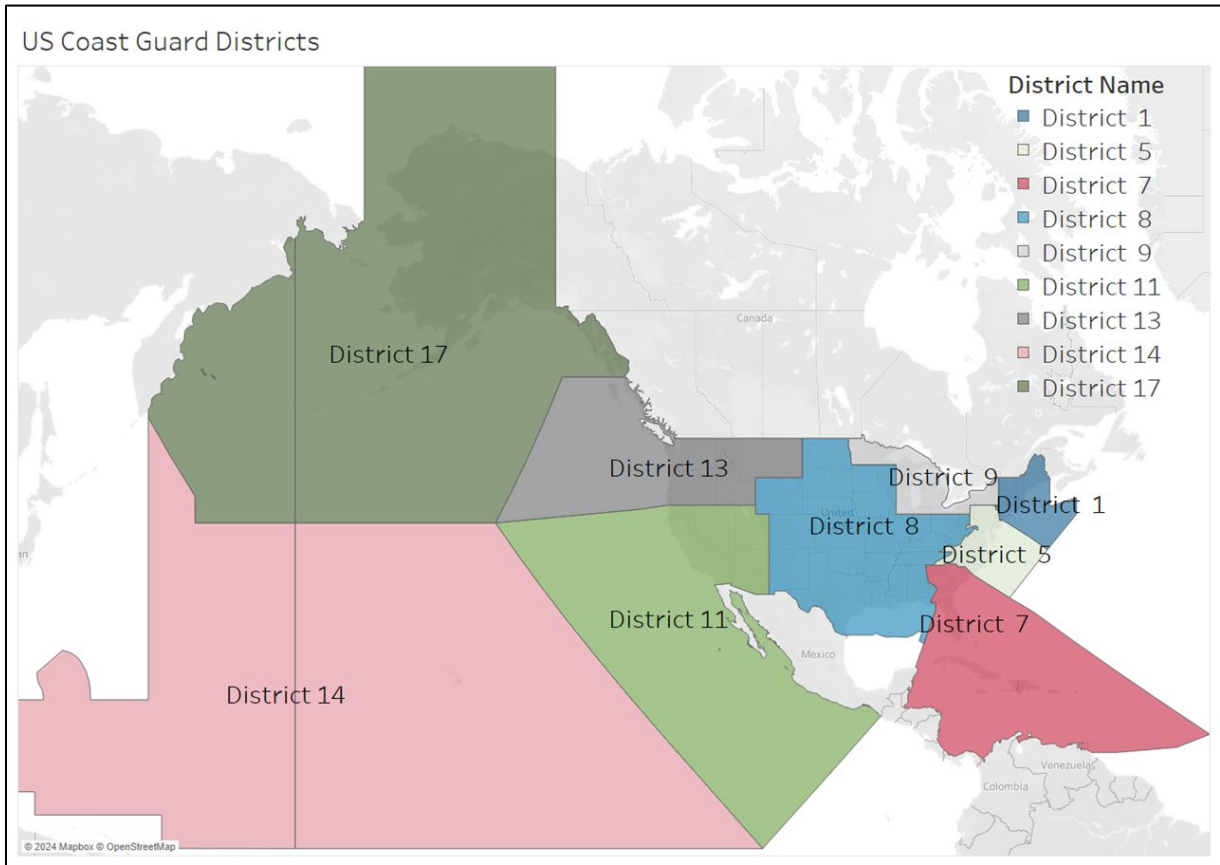


Table 1.

USCG Commands & Other Principal Operational Officials

Commanders	Responsibility
Area Commander	Responsible for the coordination of operations between subordinate command echelons. When not in direct control of an operation, they are responsible for the oversight and integration of operational missions at the strategic level. Commander for Coast Guard Defense Forces.
District Commander	Report directly to their respective Area Command. When not directly overseeing a specific operation, they are responsible for the oversight of operational missions executed by subordinate command echelons.

⁴ <https://hub.arcgis.com/datasets/fedmaps::u-s-coast-guard-districts-2/explore>

Commanders	Responsibility
Sector Commander	Report directly to their respective District Command. Responsible for all Coast Guard missions within the sector's area of responsibility. In most sectors, the Sector Commander is also the OCMI and COTP.
Officer in Charge of Marine Inspection (OCMI)	Inspects vessels, shipyards, and factories. Investigates marine misconduct, casualties, and accidents.
Captain of The Port (COTP)	Enforces port safety and security and marine environmental protection regulations.
Marine Safety Unit (MSU) Commander	In some Sectors, a MSU has OCMI and COTP authority over a designated portion of the Sector's area of responsibility.
Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator	Specified sectors have Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator (SMC) authority over a designated portion of an encompassing sector's area of responsibility.

USCG Operational Mission Programs

The Coast Guard manages six major operational mission programs. These programs oversee the 11 missions defined in in the Homeland Security Act of 2002. That Act divides Coast Guard missions into homeland security and non-homeland security missions.⁵

Table 2.

USCG Operational Mission Programs

Operational Mission Programs	Missions Codified in the Homeland Security Act of 2002	
	Homeland Security Missions	Non-Homeland Security Missions
Maritime Law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug Interdiction • Migrant Interdiction • Other Law Enforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living Marine Resources
Maritime Response		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search and Rescue • Marine Environmental Protection (Response Activities)
Maritime Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ports, Waterways, and Coastal Security (Prevention Activities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine Safety • Marine Environmental Protection (Prevention Activities)

⁵ <https://www.uscg.mil/About/Missions/>

Operational Mission Programs	Missions Codified in the Homeland Security Act of 2002	
	Homeland Security Missions	Non-Homeland Security Missions
Maritime Transportation System Management		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aids to Navigation • Ice Operations
Maritime Security Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ports, Waterways, and Coastal Security (Response Activities) 	
Defense Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defense Readiness 	

This report focuses on data related to USCG maritime response activities. Table 3 aligns the USCG Operational Mission Programs to the data included in this report.

Table 3.

Alignment of USCG Operational Mission Programs and Data

Operational Mission Programs	Description	USCG Data
Maritime Law Enforcement	Protects America on, under, and over the seas. This includes protecting maritime borders, defending maritime sovereignty, facilitating legitimate waterway use, and suppressing violations of U.S. federal law. Also includes illegal migration and Transnational Organized Crime.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug Interdictions • Migrant Interdictions • Fishing Vessel Boardings
Maritime Response	Mitigates the consequences of marine casualties and disastrous events. The Coast Guard is the Nation's premiere maritime first responder. They aim to reduce loss of life and property by searching for and rescuing people in distress. They mobilize resources to provide an immediate and reliable response to maritime incidents. They support and coordinate with federal, state, local, territorial, and tribal agencies, as well as private sector partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search and Rescue Operations • Pollution Cleanup and Impact Limitation

Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement System

The Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement (MISLE) system captures information to support the Coast Guard's programs. These programs include marine safety, security, environmental protection, and law enforcement programs. Coast Guard personnel use MISLE to schedule and record operational activities. These activities include vessel boardings, pollution response actions, law enforcement actions, and search and rescue operations. Data on response actions is entered in real time as the incident unfolds. Most data on boardings, inspections, and investigations is entered after completion of the action.

II. Data Summary

This section defines the data fields included in the accompanying MISLE summary statistics data. Each row of data in this report is rounded to the nearest 10 to protect privacy and, at times, law enforcement and national security sensitivities. As a result, the data in this report can vary greatly from the actual totals when the individually rounded rows are aggregated. For transparency into the magnitude of these variances, the actual aggregated totals for each fiscal year are also provided separately.

Enterprise

There are multiple mission-specific tables in the accompanying data. There are several enterprise variables that are common across two or more of the tables.

Table 4.

Enterprise Data Fields

Data Field	Example	Description
Area	Atlantic	Global geographic areas of responsibility.
District	Five	Regional geographic areas of responsibility.
COTP Zone	Boston	Local geographic areas of responsibility.
Fiscal Year	2023	Begins on October 1 st of the previous calendar year.
Month	June	Gregorian calendar.
Cases	50	Distinct count of a unique identifier in the MISLE system.
Quantity	1,000	Sum of the unit of measure for all applicable cases.

Drug Interdiction

The Coast Guard denies drug smugglers access to maritime routes. They also deter trafficking activity. Both noncommercial and commercial vessels carry illicit maritime drug shipments. Noncommercial vessels include small “go-fast” vessels with more than one outboard engine, semisubmersible vessels, fishing vessels, and sailing vessels. Commercial vessels include container ships. The Coast Guard also shares intelligence and provides other assistance to drug interdiction operations by foreign partners and other government agencies.

Table 5.

Drug Interdiction Data Fields

Data Field	Example	Description
Drug Type	Cocaine	Controlled substance.
Disposition	Seizure	Status of physical custody of the drug.

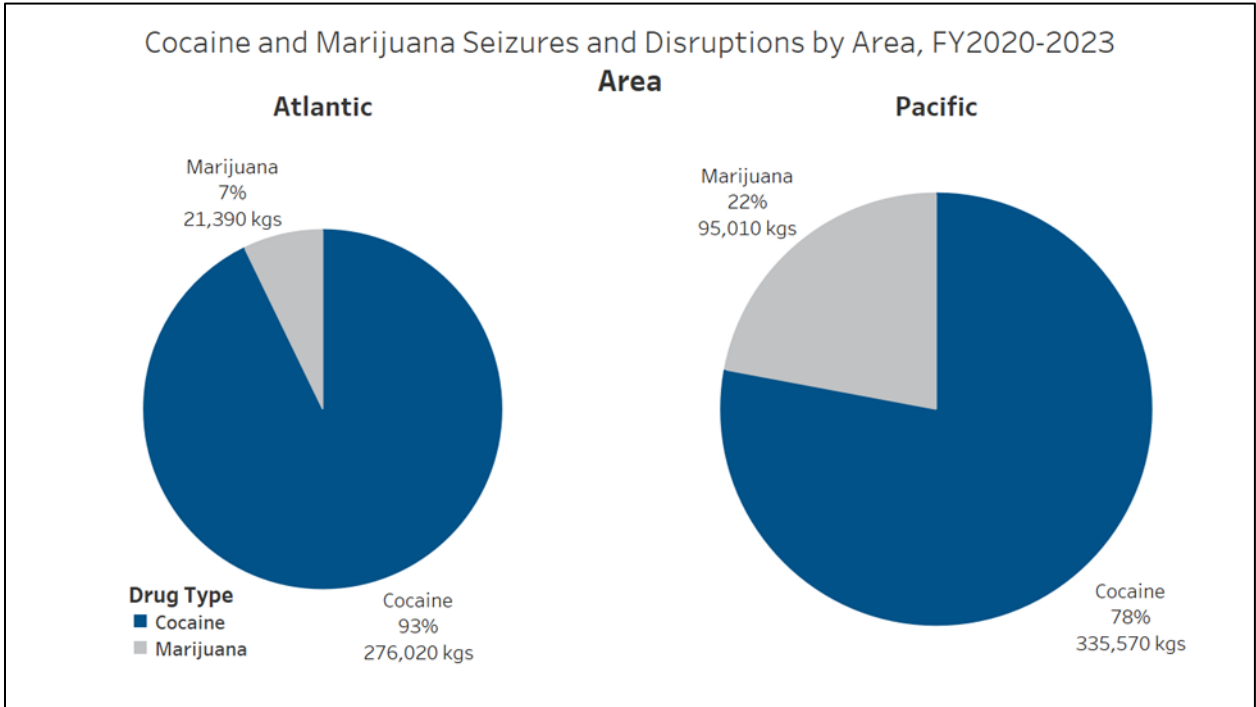
The Coast Guard tracks and reports drug removals, which is the total flow of illicit drugs removed from the supply chain due to Coast Guard law enforcement action. Removals include the amount of drugs physically seized and weighed by the Coast Guard, as well as the drugs intentionally destroyed by smugglers and not physically recovered by the Coast Guard. Smugglers increasingly destroy contraband to avoid prosecution. The amount of drugs destroyed during a smuggling event is determined from a variety of sources. These include intelligence information, video from pursuits, and jettisoned drugs relocated by interdiction units to determine the actual amount of drugs in a given load. This report includes two distinct dispositions, seizure and disruption, which together amount to total removal.

- **Seizure:** Drugs taken into physical custody by the Coast Guard.
- **Disruption:** Drugs physically recovered by other government agencies as a result of Coast Guard law enforcement activities and drugs prevented from reaching an intended destination because of jettison, scuttling, or destruction by smugglers due to Coast Guard law enforcement action.

This report includes cocaine and marijuana drug interdiction data. These two drugs comprise over 99 percent of all drug seizures and disruptions by the Coast Guard. Figure 5 shows the Coast Guard drug seizures and disruptions by Area and Drug Type.

Figure 5.

Drug Seizures and Disruptions by Area and Drug Type

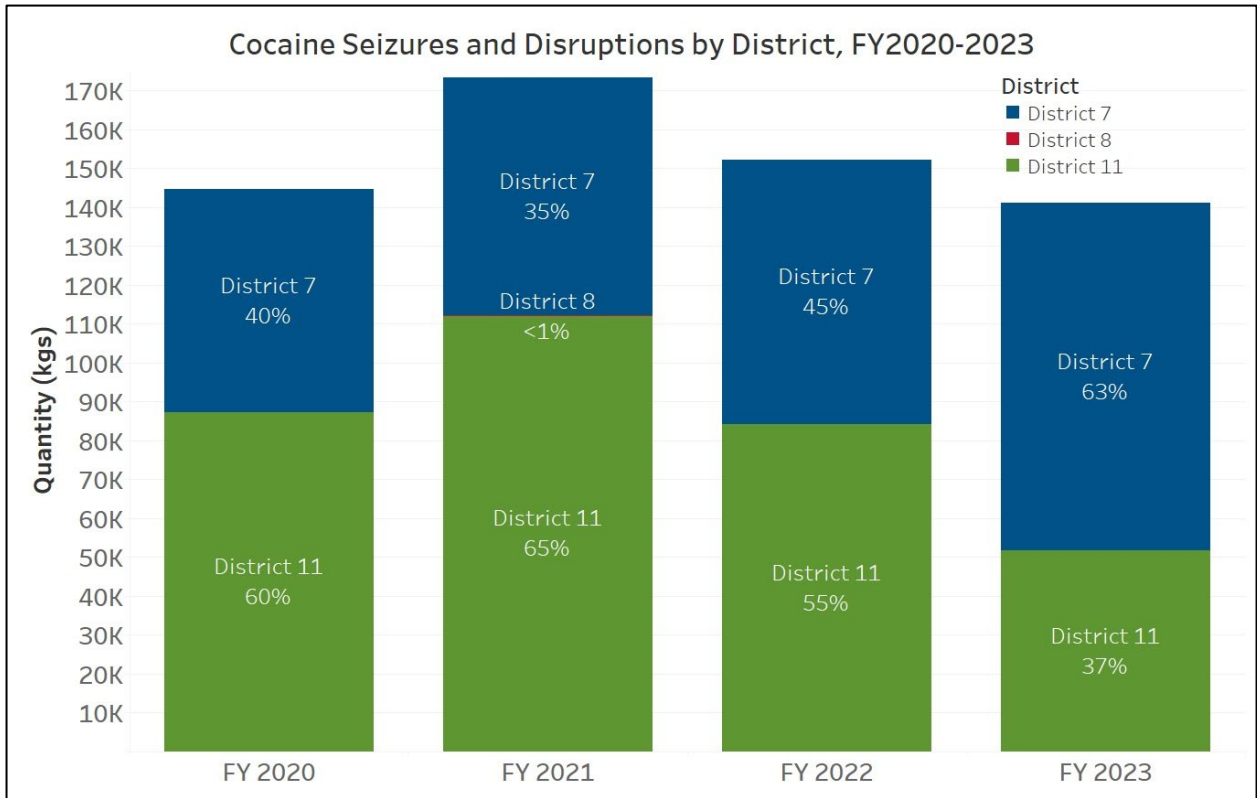


Source: OHSS analysis of Coast Guard data.

Most known maritime drug flow occurs in Districts 7 and 11 via noncommercial means. This activity goes through the Western Hemisphere Transit Zone (WHTZ) – the waters off the coasts of Central and South America and the Caribbean Sea. Figure 6 shows Coast Guard drug seizures and disruptions by District and Fiscal Year.

Figure 6.

Cocaine Seizures and Disruptions by District and Fiscal Year



Source: OHSS analysis of Coast Guard data.

Migrant Interdiction

The Coast Guard deters, detects, and interdicts migrants and transnational smugglers from using maritime routes. Their mission is to prevent unlawful entry into the United States. Migrants use maritime routes through the Caribbean, off the coast of southern California, and occasionally through the Gulf of Mexico.

Table 6.

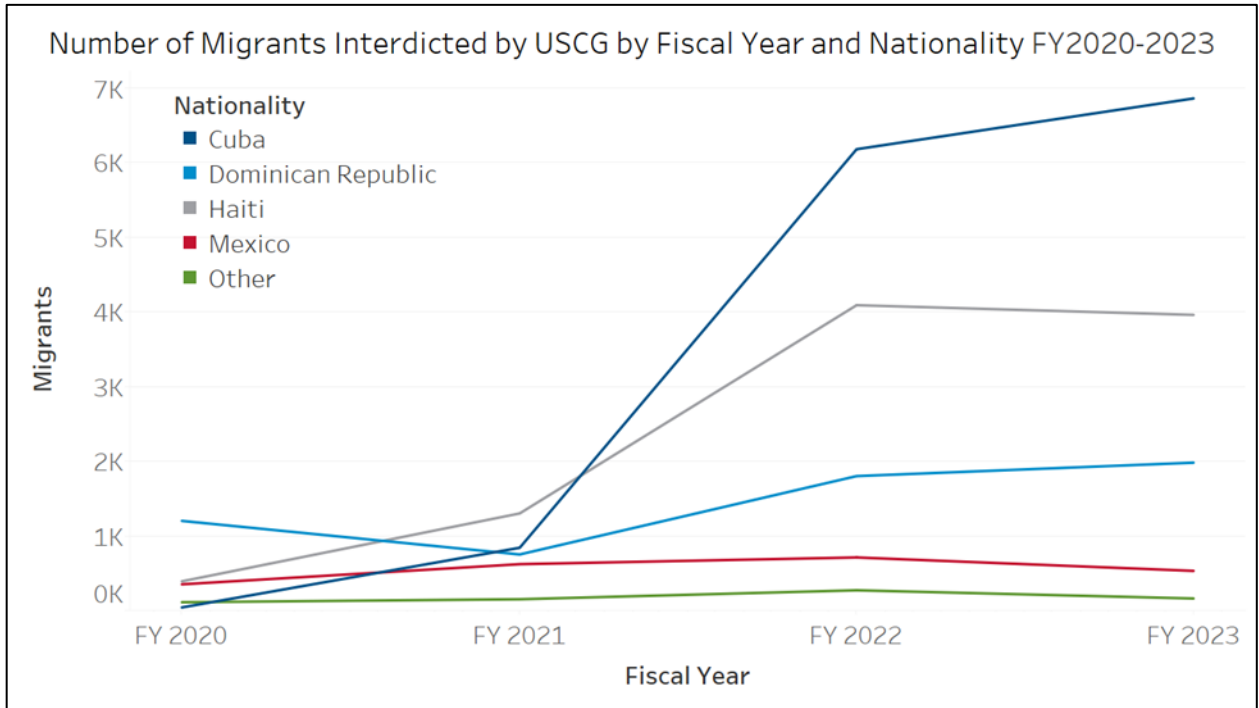
Migrant Interdiction Data Fields

Data Field	Example	Description
Nationality	Haiti	The status of belonging to a particular nation.

The Coast Guard encounters migrants from Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico more than migrants of all other nationalities combined. This report includes data on migrant interdictions by these four nationalities. The rare interdictions of migrants of other nationalities are grouped together to preserve privacy, law enforcement, and national security sensitivities.

Figure 7.

Number of Migrants Interdicted by Fiscal Year and Nationality



Source: OHSS analysis of Coast Guard data.

Search and Rescue

The Coast Guard aids people in distress and property in the maritime environment. Their goal is to reduce the loss of life, injury, and property damage or loss. When a person is in distress there are three possible outcomes. The life is saved, the life is lost, or the person remains missing at the conclusion of search efforts. In some cases, the life is lost before the Coast Guard is notified or has any chance to affect the outcome.

Table 7.

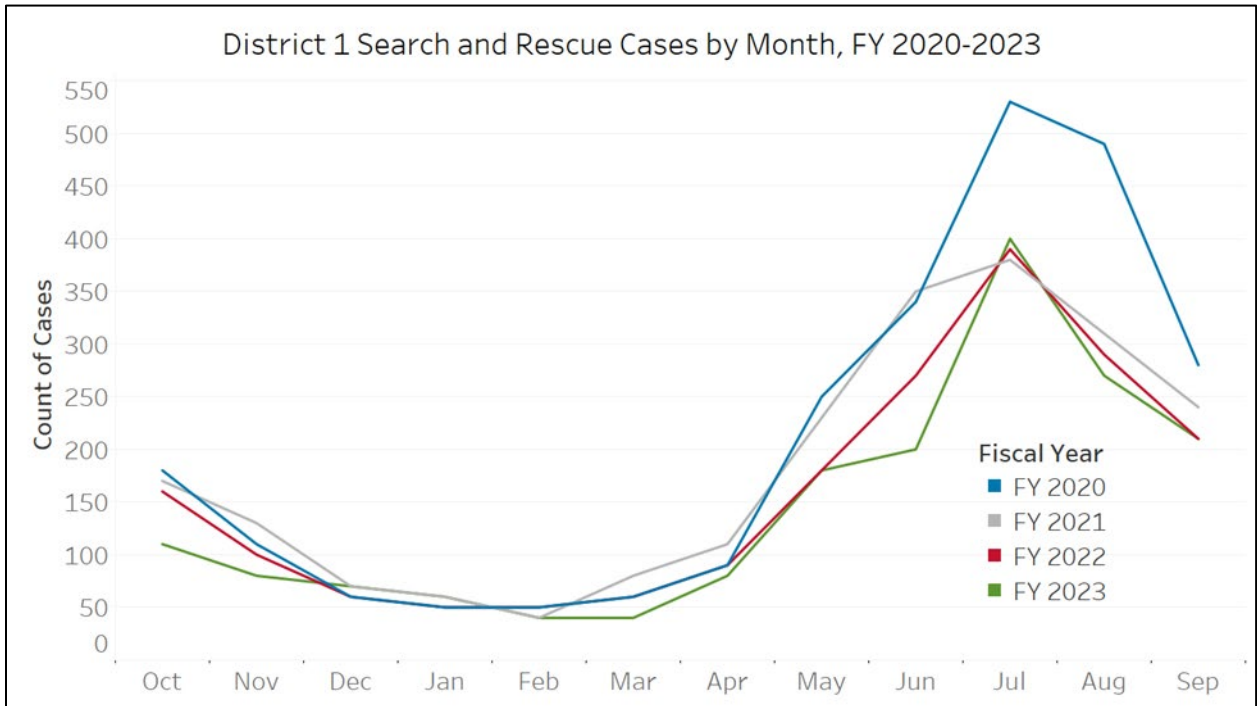
Search and Rescue Data Fields

Data Field	Example	Description
Outcome	Lives Saved	The disposition of the person or property in distress.

Coast Guard search and rescue cases are affected by the seasonality of maritime activity. Figure 8 shows the increase of search and rescue cases in District 1 during the summer months.

Figure 8.

District 1 Search and Rescue Cases by Month



Source: OHSS analysis of Coast Guard data.

Fishery Boarding

The Coast Guard boards commercial, recreational, and charter fishing vessels to enforce laws. These laws govern living marine resource conservation and management.

Table 8.

Fishery Boarding Data Fields

Data Field	Example	Description
Authority	Domestic Fisheries Law Enforcement	The Coast Guard authority to conduct the boarding.
Vessel Use	Commercial	The primary purpose for the vessel.
Violation Action	Written Warning Issued	The law enforcement action taken.
Fishery Type	(Gulf of Mexico) Shrimp	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) fishery

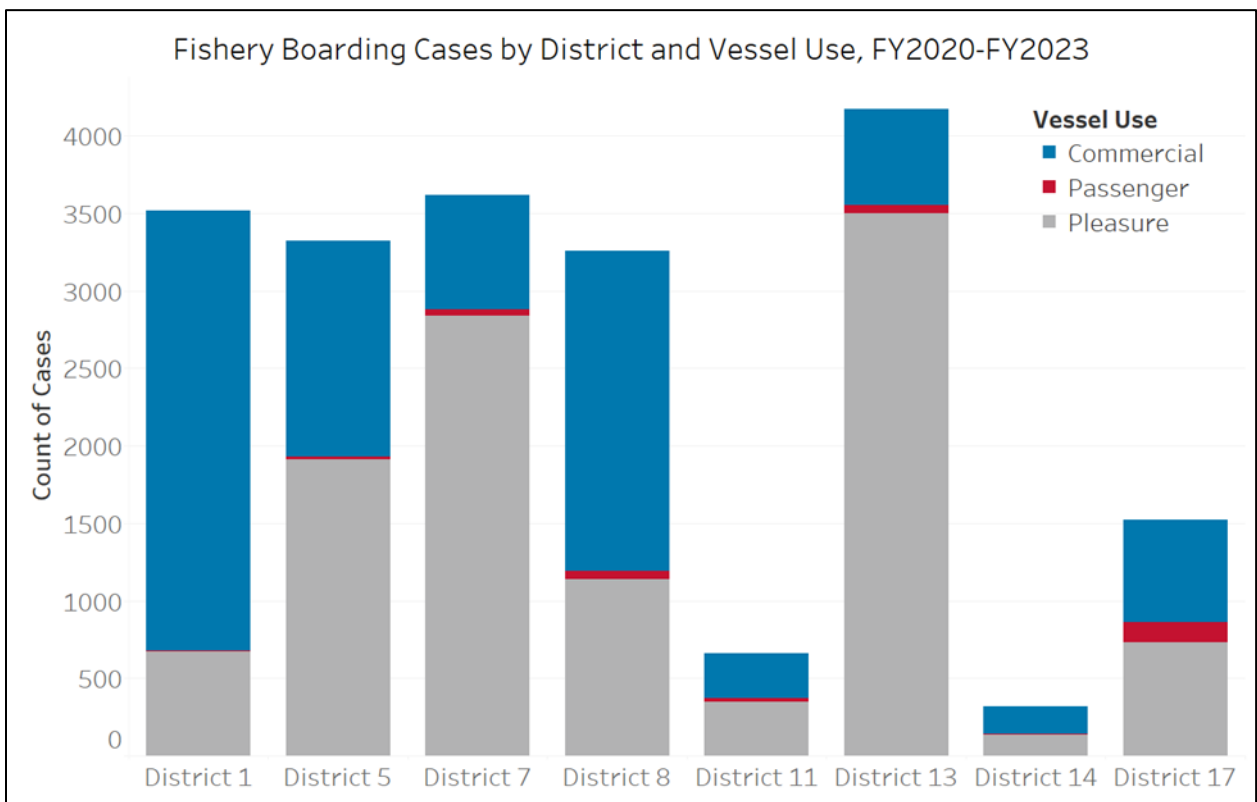
The Coast Guard has four types of fisheries-related operations:

- **Domestic Fisheries Law Enforcement:** Enforcement of federal fisheries laws and regulations.
- **Marine Protected Resources Law Enforcement:** Enforcement of laws and regulations regarding certain marine species, endangered species, and designated marine areas.
- **Exclusive Economic Zone Enforcement:** Enforcement against foreign incursion of the exclusive rights of the United States under international law to the use of marine resources within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone.
- **Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Operations:** Operations verifying compliance with fishing activities regulated by international fisheries management organizations and operations pursuant to bilateral maritime law enforcement agreements with partner nations.

Coast Guard fisheries operations vary by District. Figure 9 shows boarding numbers in each District by vessel use from FY2020-FY2023.

Figure 9.

Fishery Boarding Cases by District and Vessel Use



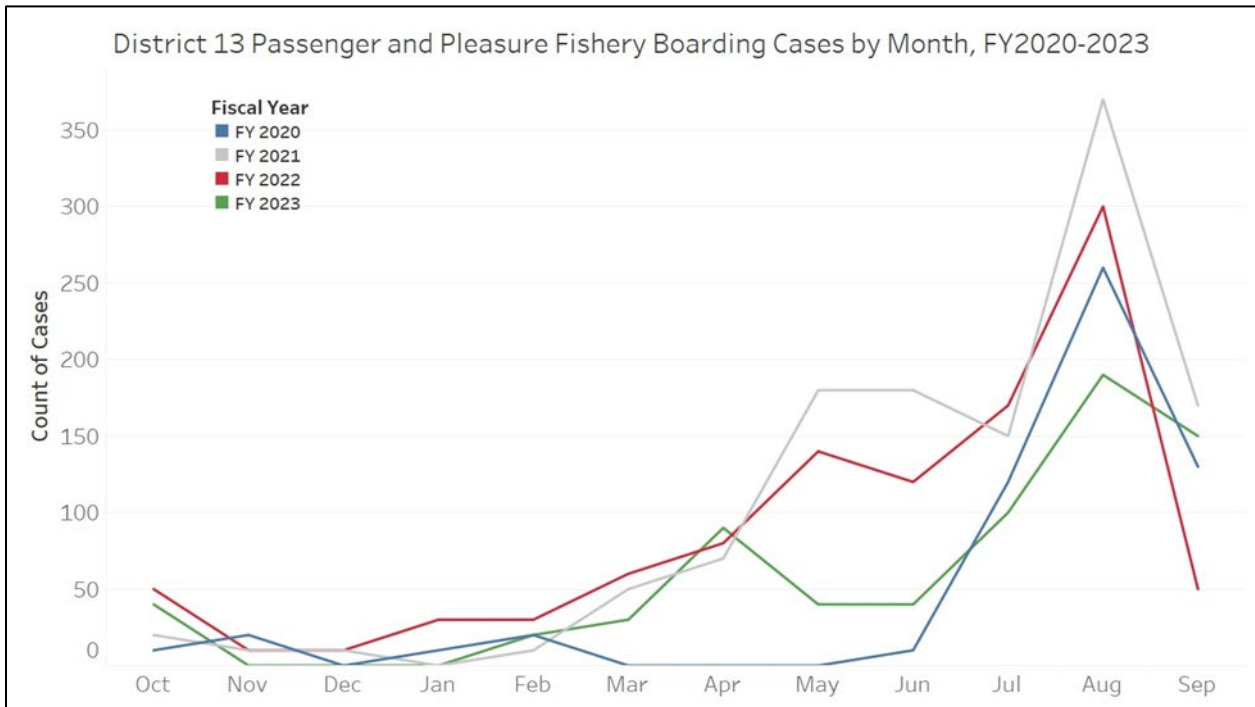
Source: OHSS analysis of Coast Guard data.

Fisheries activity varies regionally. Accordingly, Coast Guard boarding activity varies by District. District 13, covering the Pacific Northwest, has the most passenger and pleasure use vessel boardings. Fisheries activity is also highly seasonal. Accordingly, Coast Guard

boarding activity fluctuates throughout a given year. Figure 10 shows this seasonal trend for passenger and pleasure use vessel boardings in District 13.

Figure 10.

District 13 Passenger and Pleasure Fishery Boarding Cases by Month



Source: OHSS analysis of Coast Guard data.

Pollution Cleanup and Impact Limitation

The Coast Guard responds to unintentional or intentional pollution incidents. These include oil discharges and hazardous substance releases in U.S. waters.

Table 9.

Pollution Cleanup and Impact Limitation Data Fields

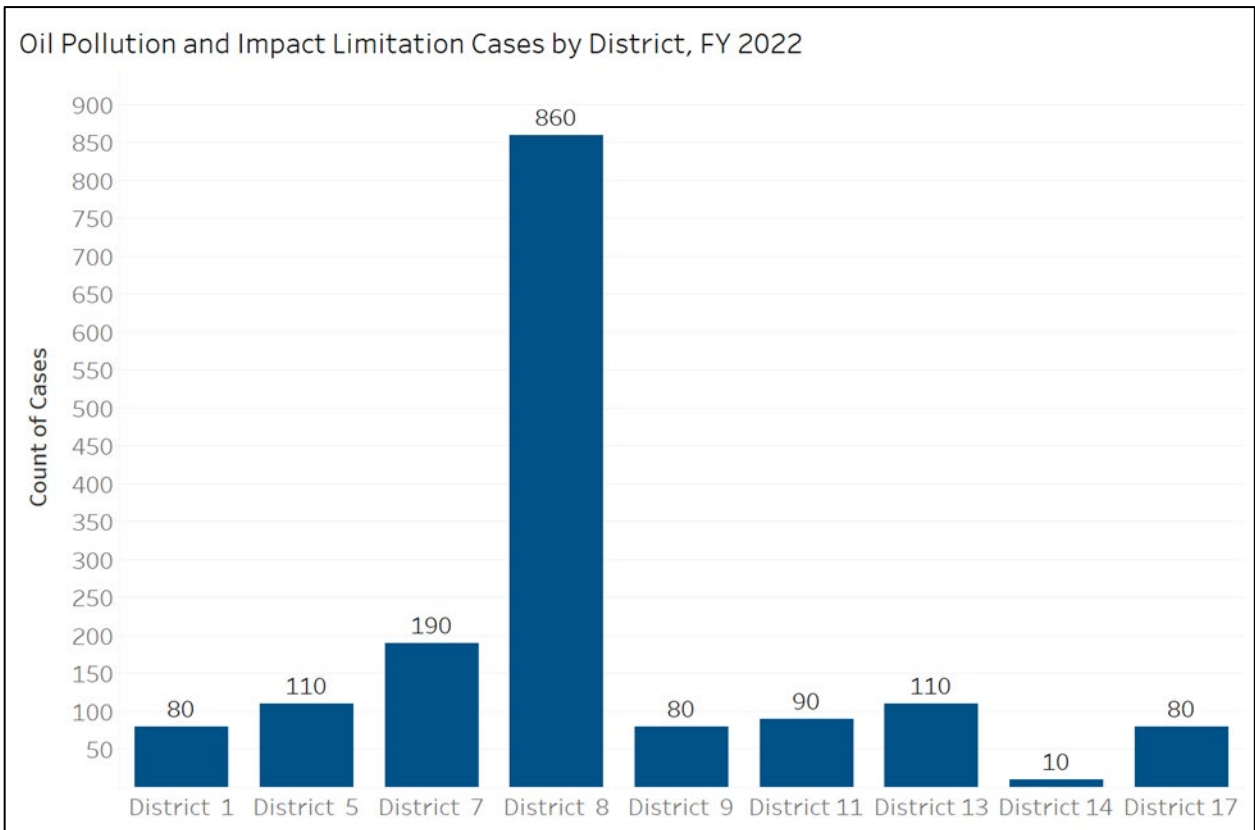
Data Field	Example	Description
Substance Type	Oil	Categorical classification of the pollutant: oil, chemical, and other.
CHRIS Code	ODS	Three-digit Chemical Hazard Response Information System (CHRIS) code for the pollutant. ⁶

⁶ [Chemical Hazards Response Information System \(Chris\) - Content Details - \(govinfo.gov\)](https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2016-07-26/pdf/2016-07-26.pdf)

District 8 includes the Gulf of Mexico. Figure 11 shows that District 8 had more pollution cases than the rest of the districts combined in FY 2022. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the Gulf of Mexico federal offshore oil production accounts for 15% of total U.S. crude oil production and federal offshore natural gas production in the Gulf accounts for 5% of total U.S. dry production. Over 48% of total U.S. petroleum refining capacity is located along the Gulf coast, as well as 51% of total U.S. natural gas processing plant capacity.⁷

Figure 11.

Oil Pollution Cleanup and Impact Limitation Cases by District



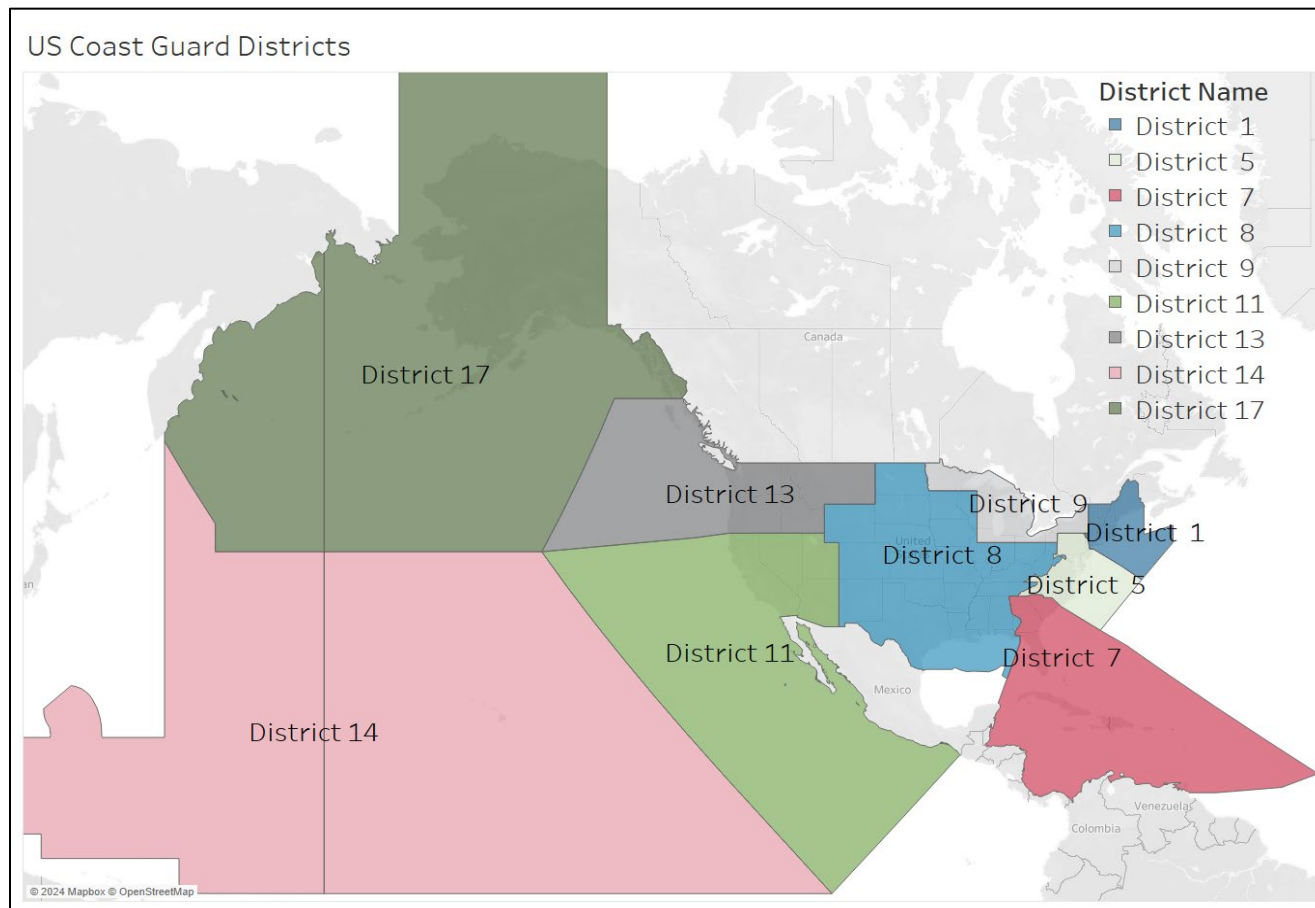
Source: OHSS analysis of Coast Guard data.

⁷ [U.S. Energy Information Administration - EIA - Independent Statistics and Analysis](#)

Appendix A

Figure 12.

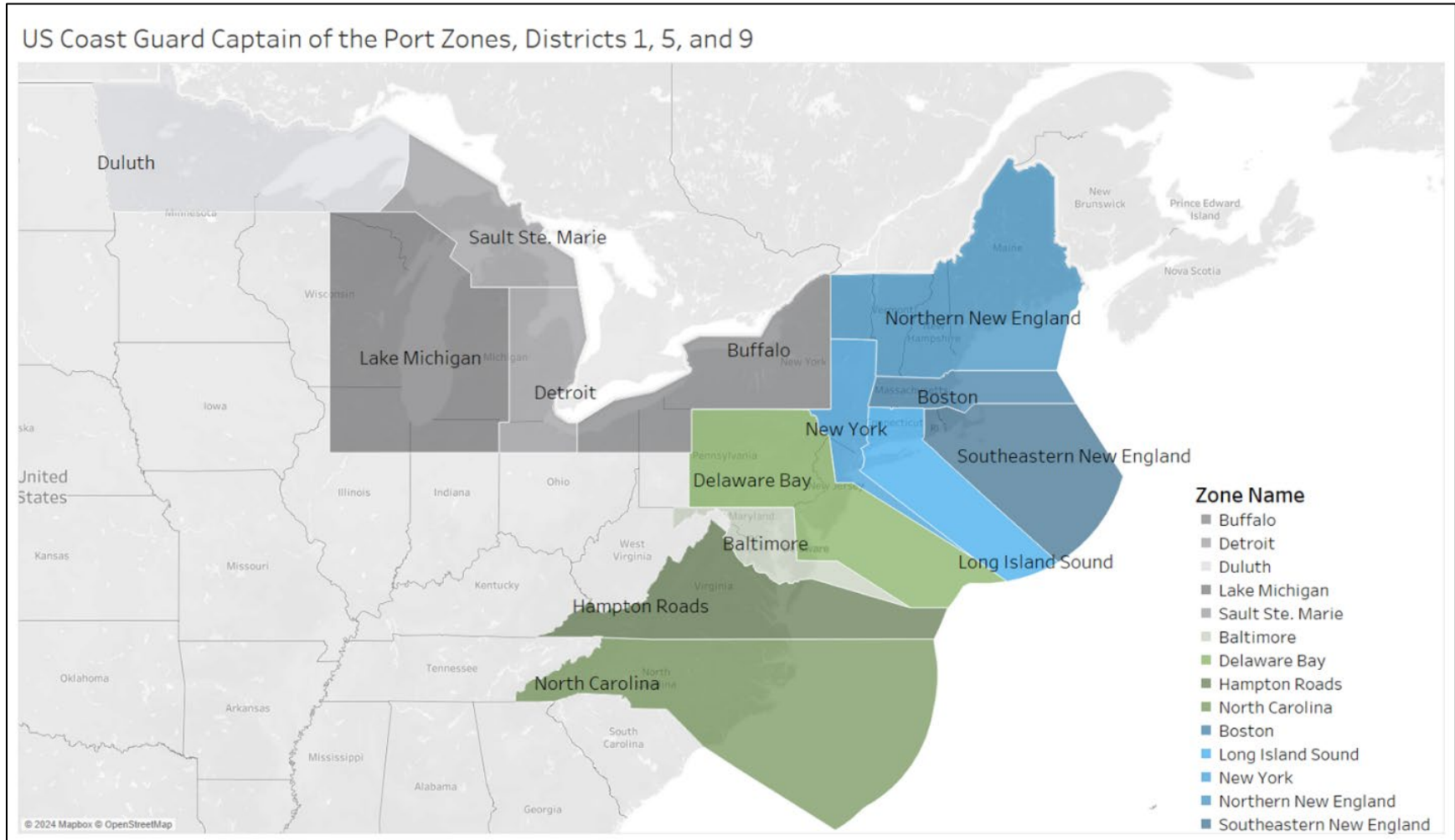
Map of U.S. Coast Guard Districts⁸



⁸ <https://hub.arcgis.com/datasets/fedmaps::u-s-coast-guard-districts-2/explore>

Figure 13.

Map of U.S. Coast Guard Captain of the Port Zones Map for Districts 1, 5, and 9⁹



⁹ <https://hub.arcgis.com/datasets/fedmaps::u-s-coast-guard-districts-2/explore>

Figure 14.

Map of U.S. Coast Guard Captain of the Port Zones for Districts 7 and 8

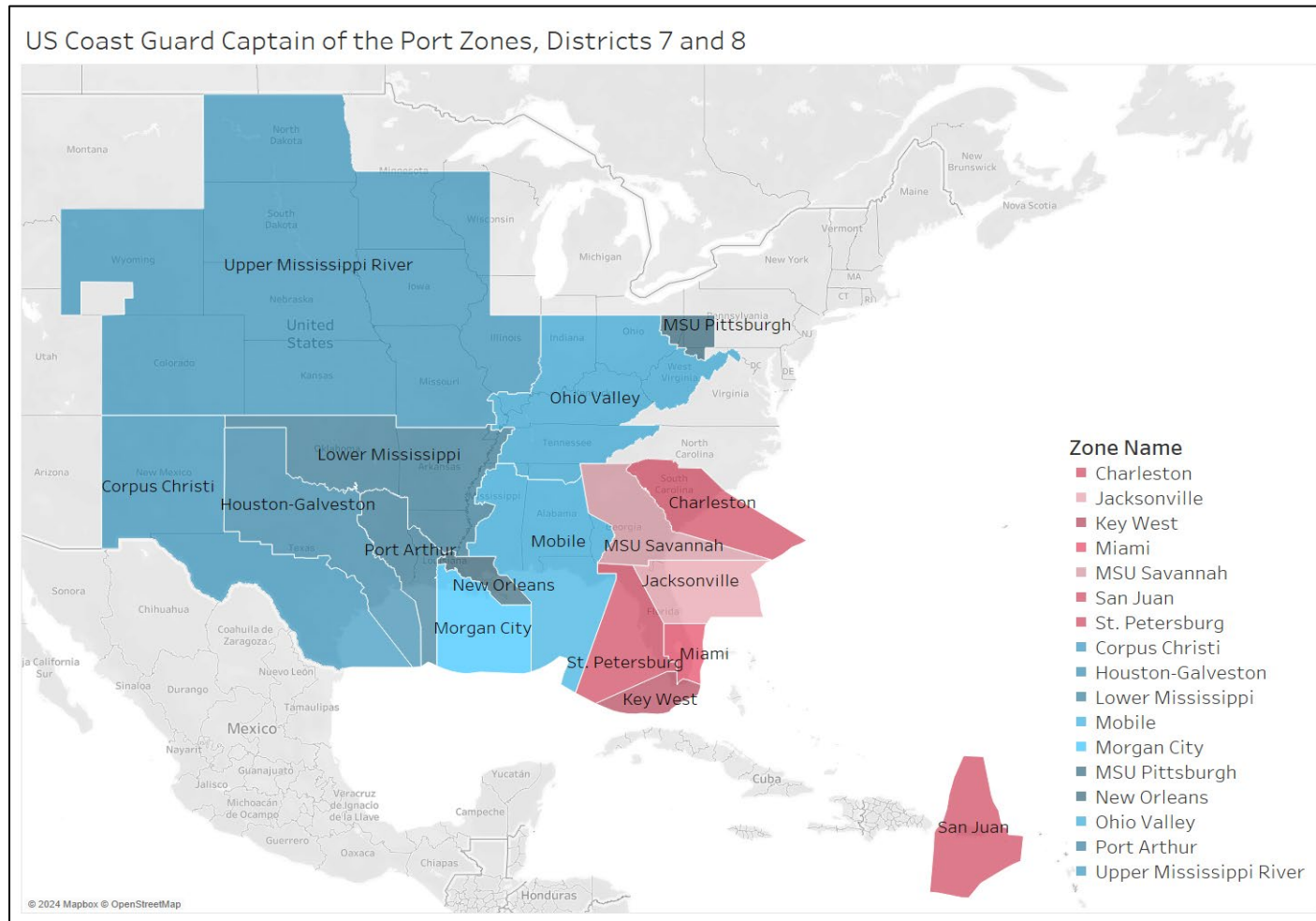


Figure 15.

Map of U.S. Coast Guard Captain of the Port Zones for Districts 11 and 13

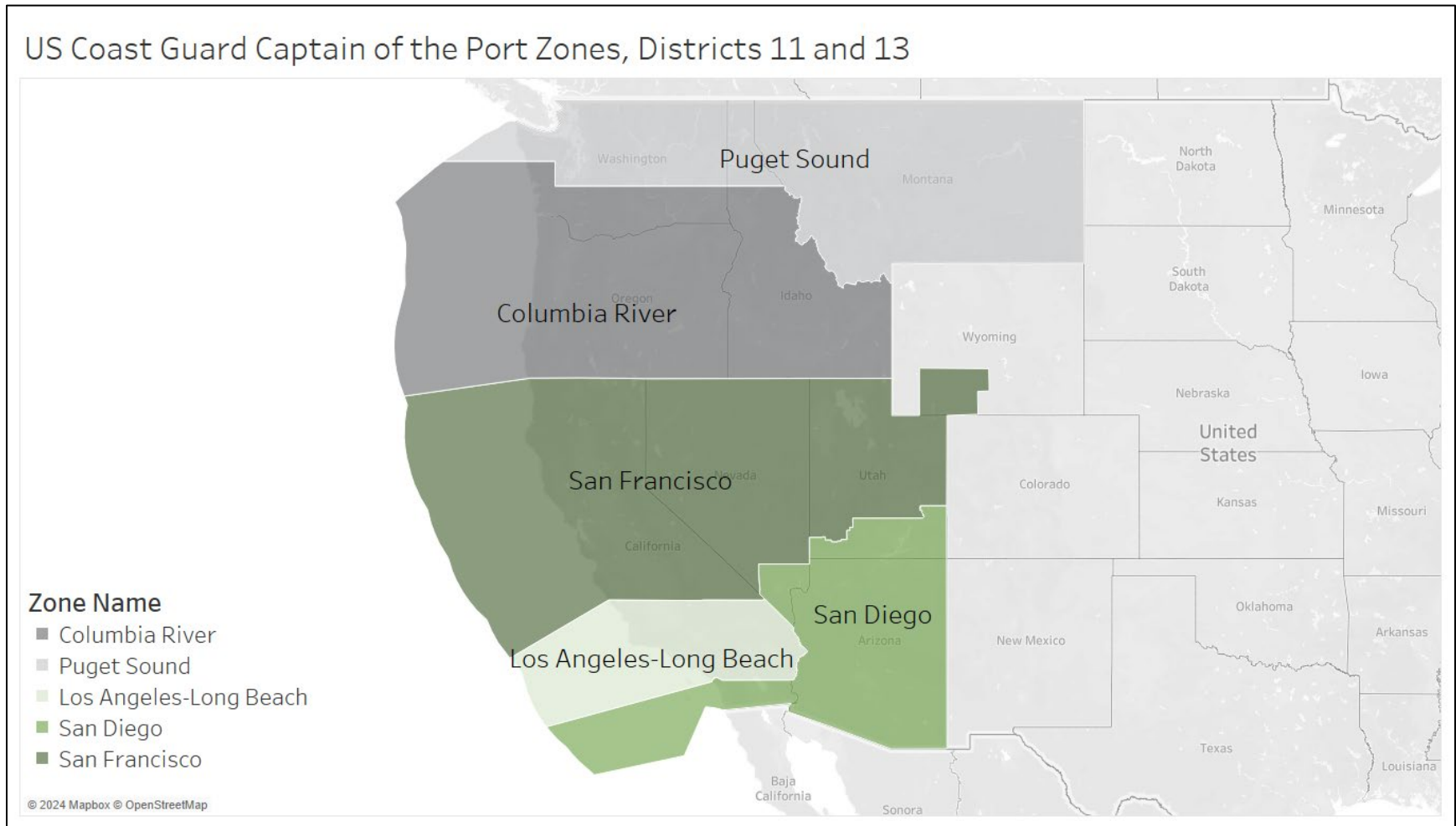


Figure 16.

Map of U.S. Coast Guard Captain of the Port Zones for Districts 14 and 17

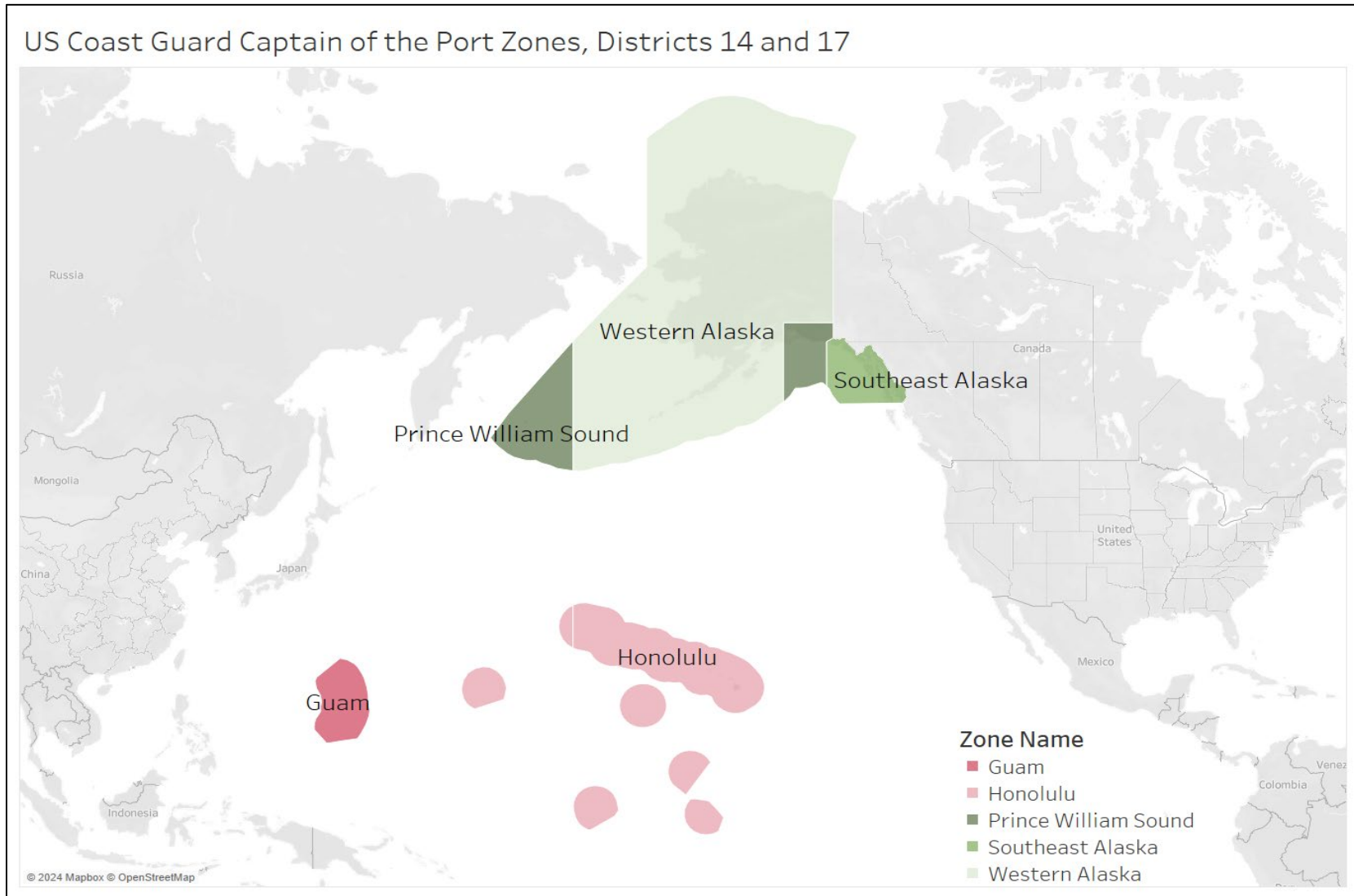


Table 10.

U.S. Coast Guard Areas, Districts, Sectors, Zones, and Subordinate Units

Area	District	Sector/Marine Inspection Zone/Captain of the Port (COTP) Zone	Subordinate Units
Atlantic	One	Boston	
		Northern New England	
		Southeastern New England	
		New York	
		Long Island	
	Five	Delaware Bay	
		Virginia	
		Maryland – National Capital Region	
		North Carolina	
	Seven	Miami	
		Charleston	Savannah Marine Safety Unit
		Jacksonville	
		San Juan	
		St. Petersburg	
		Key West	
	Eight	Outer Continental Shelf Marine Inspection Zone ¹⁰	
		Mobile	
		New Orleans	Houma Marine Safety Unit
		Houston-Galveston	Port Arthur Marine Safety Unit
		Corpus Christi	
Upper Mississippi			
Lower Mississippi			
Ohio Valley		Pittsburg Marine Safety Unit	

¹⁰ A separate marine inspection zone that performs the OCMI functions for all mobile offshore drilling units and fixed and floating outer continental shelf (OCS) facilities associated with exploration for, or development or production of, the minerals of the OCS wherever located in the Eighth Coast Guard District.

Area	District	Sector/Marine Inspection Zone/Captain of the Port (COTP) Zone	Subordinate Units
	Nine	Eastern Great Lakes	
		Lake Michigan	
		Detroit	
		Northern Great Lakes	Duluth Marine Safety Unit
	None	Activities Europe Marine Inspection Zone ¹¹	
Pacific	Eleven	Los Angeles - Long Beach	
		San Diego	
		San Francisco Bay Marine Inspection Zone and COTP Zone	
		Sector San Francisco ¹²	
		Sector Humboldt Bay ¹³	Humboldt Bay Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator Zone
	Thirteen	Puget Sound	
		Columbia River	
	Fourteen	Honolulu	
		Guam	
		Activities Far East Marine Inspection Zone ¹⁴	
	Seventeen	Southeast Alaska	
		Sector Anchorage	
		Western Alasta Marine Inspection Zone and COTP Zone ¹⁵	
		Prince William Sound Marine Inspection Zone and COTP Zone ¹⁶	

¹¹ Located within the Atlantic Area but outside the boundary of any District or Sector.

¹² Located within the boundary of the San Francisco Bay Marine Inspection Zone and Captain of the Port Zone

¹³ Located within the boundary of the San Francisco Bay Marine Inspection Zone and Captain of the Port Zone.

¹⁴ Located within the Atlantic Area but outside the boundary of any District or Sector.

¹⁵ Located within the boundary of Sector Anchorage.

¹⁶ Located within the boundary of Sector Anchorage.