

RISK ALERT

Safety of Navigation – Fishery Zones (Chinese Coastal Waters)



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Loss Prevention

Introduction

The Club is aware of casualties and other losses arising due to navigation in the proximity of fish farms, and in close quarter interaction between merchant vessels and fishing vessels.

Whilst a recently published [circular from our local correspondents \(Huatai\)](#), reports that there has been a decline in fishery farm incidents in Chinese coastal waters, Members are encouraged to review the circular and to take special note of the many geographical locations of fish farms that they are reporting.

In addition to highlighting the location of fish farms, the Club considers it a timely opportunity to focus on some of the issues associated with navigating in the vicinity of fish farms.



Ref – Huatai Insurance Agency & Consultant Service Ltd

This Risk Alert is intended to remind Members of the potential risks of navigating in the vicinity of fish farms and the importance of plotting the available information on the appropriate navigation charts and ECDIS. Note that, even if reportedly fitted, do NOT rely on AIS for locating and navigating around fish farms, use ALL available navigational tools.

Considerations

A laden container vessel passing through an active but unmanned fish farm could potentially result in high value claims for damages to both equipment and produce, and consequential losses.

Similarly, a fully laden bulk carrier manoeuvring through a fleet of fishing vessels without due consideration to available sea-room and safe speed has the potential for a casualty.

COLREGS (Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972) sets the rules for safe navigation between vessels, having due regard to any special rules made by coastal states such as those for additional station or signal lights, or shapes, for fishing vessels engaged in fishing as a fleet. It should be noted that [Article 103\(1\)](#) of the China Maritime Traffic Safety Law sets out fines for failing to “**strengthen look-out, maintain safe speed, or comply with the special navigation rules of the aforesaid areas.**”

Coastal states will often promulgate details on changes to the locations of fishery zones along with information on other hazards to surface navigation. These warnings often include the coordinates and, if applicable, the seasonal duration when these fishery zones are active. Other details may include any Traffic Separation Schemes (TSS) established for the purpose of safely navigating these areas, the requirements for reporting to Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) or for the monitoring of radio broadcasts on a designated channel.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Information on navigation hazards could be available in Navigation Warnings or over Navtex and EGC (Enhanced Group Calling) service. Alternatively, information could also be available through a local agent or correspondents' network.

Ensuring that fish farm coordinates and information, along with any specific warnings, are clearly referenced in the passage plan, and plotted on the appropriate navigation charts and ECDIS, is essential. Likewise, appraising the watch keeping teams, OOW and lookouts, of the details of fish farms is key to promoting safe navigation.

Undertaking a full appraisal of the navigational situation by sight and hearing, as well as using all available means, is critical when determining the strategy for safely



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executing the passage.

Assessing and understanding the information available in regard to fish farms and fishing fleets, with consideration to the prevailing circumstances and conditions, is essential when establishing a safe speed and taking appropriate actions for planning and executing a safe passage.

Safety should always take priority above commercial considerations

The above guidance supplements other widely available industry guidance which is not addressed in this risk alert.

Acknowledgement

The Managers are grateful to correspondents Huatai Insurance Agency & Consultant Service Ltd for their permission to quote and reproduce from their articles.

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Suggested References

COLREGS (Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972)

[Maritime Traffic Safety Law PRC 2021](#)

[Ningbo, China MSA's Advisory on Navigating in Fishing areas](#)

[PNI/SPRO\[2021\]10 -- Fishery Farm Claims in China - Trend of Claims and Geographical Extent Updates](#)

[PNI/SPRO\[2021\]09 -- China - The Newly Revised Maritime Traffic Safety Law will Come into Effect on September 1, 2021](#)

[PNI/SPRO\[2021\]05 -- Notice of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Areas on Adjusting the System of Summer Fishing Ban](#)

[PNI/SPRO\[2020\]09 -- Advisory on Navigating in Fishing Areas in/around Ningbo-Zhoushan](#)