

Local Knowledge: Knapps Narrows



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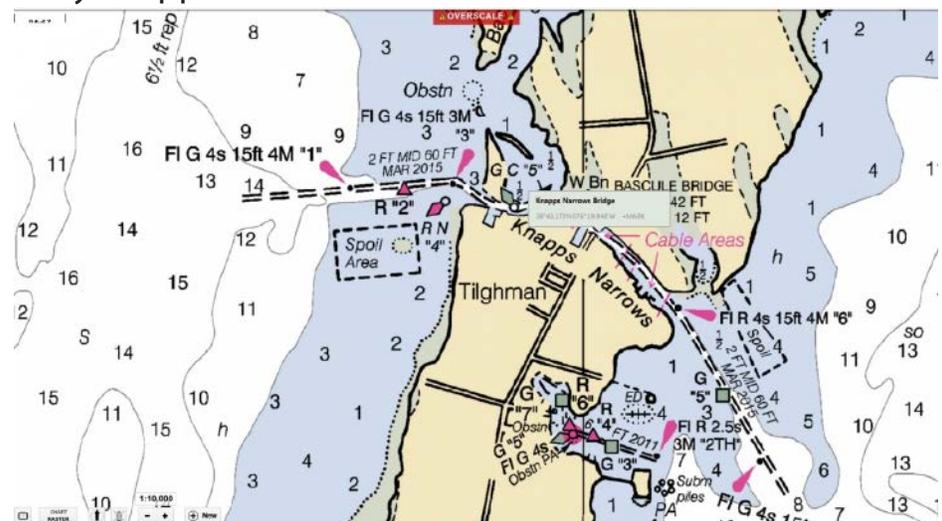
Local knowledge has always been a critical requirement for transiting Knapps Narrows. I had long used the Narrows to transit into the Choptank, but three seasons ago, the shoaling forced me around Black Walnut Point. The Hunter Sailing Association Station 1 July 4th Cruise from June 30th to July 4th presented me with an opportunity to challenge the newly dredged channel. I transited twice, once from each the Bay

side and the Choptank side. Despite the newly dredged channel, one boat ran aground and I narrowly warned another that was nearing shoal water. Local knowledge is still necessary.

The dredging has straightened the channel somewhat. It is well marked, but for those looking and heading for the old Red 4 marker, it can throw you. As you approach from the Bay and south of Poplar Island, you must ensure you avoid the fish nets south of the island. Ahead, you see two green marks (1 and 3) to port and a red can pretty much directly ahead of you. You also see a permanent mark on a pole to port, but at the distance, cannot really tell what it is. Since it is where your chart plotter shows Red 4, you may assume it is. IT IS NOT. In fact, as you approach it, you will see it is not a navigation mark, but is a warning mark with a sign that says "Danger Shoal." The red can is the correct Red Navigation Marker 4 and is about 100-150 yards southwest of the former location. It is this mistake that I believe led the boat that went aground astray. Honor the Red 4 and stay away from the 'old' mark. Interestingly, there is no red navigation aid marking the southern end of the entrance. If you were coming from the north from, for example, Solomon's, you may get caught short if you cut too far to the east as you approach.

The point of land on the north side of the Bay entrance had been my demise on a trip several years earlier when I cut that side too close and grounded hard. Now, there is a new mark, Green 5, marking that shoal, but I still give it a little extra room on that side. And, there is a new mark, Green 7, farther along opposite the now closed Tighlman Island Inn.

The exit on the Choptank was quite straight forward. The marks are



as on the charts. In fact, I passed through the Narrows at near complete low tide and never saw less than 9.3 feet of water.

The return trip on July 4th found me approaching the Narrows from the Choptank just after high tide. Again, the approach was well marked and were in the same places you see them on the charts and plotters. There was plenty of water. I ventured a little to the north side to see how wide the channel was and continued to find plenty of water several boat widths to starboard. The Green 7 and 5 on the Bay side helped me steer clear of shoal water but gave a greater impression of doglegs and a narrower channel off of Tighlman Island Inn than I recall from my passages years earlier.



Marker 5 Restaurant, Tighlman Island. Courtesy of markerfive.com

Exiting the Narrows, I was following a larger sailboat and figured I would follow him and be fine. However, he must have been following his chart plotter as he headed straight for the former location of Red 4. After alerting my wife, I blew my warning horn attracting his attention and warning him off. Nevertheless, he bounced twice and had to back off. I honored the Red 4 can as he was maneuvering and experienced no issues. On this passage, I normally saw nothing less than 10 feet, but saw 8.8 once.



Characters Bridge Restaurant and owners Bill and Karen. Courtesy of charactersbridgerestaurant.com

Passing back on July 4th, I was pleased to see that the two restaurants on either side of the drawbridge were open. On my final passage three years ago, they were closed or closing. The marinas were also showing sign of recovery. In short, the Narrows are open for business and passage, cutting the time and distance to get into the Choptank. The marks on the Bay side no longer conform to what you see on the charts and plotters for be aware and honor what you see and not what you expect from the charts.

Fair Winds.