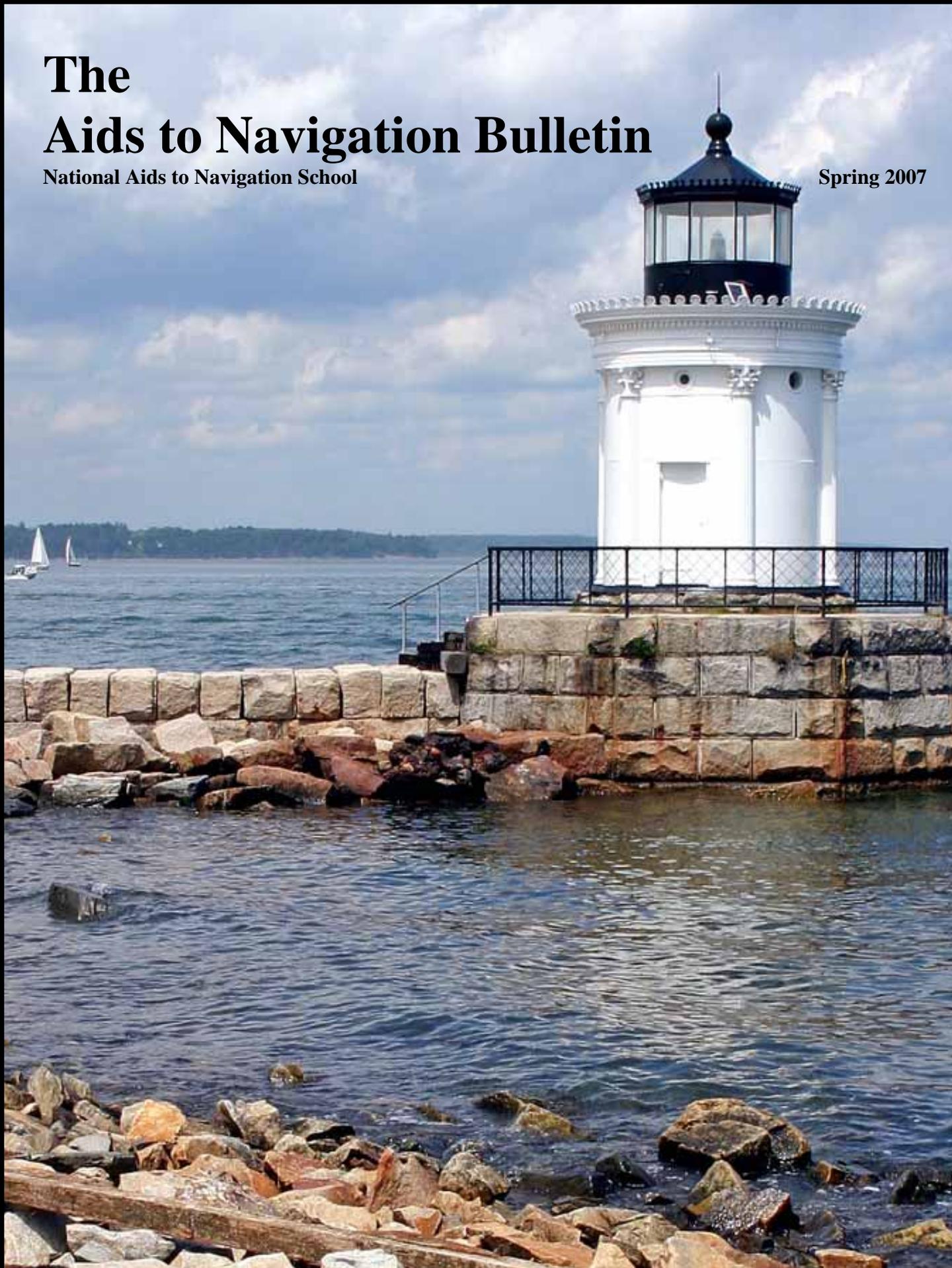


# The Aids to Navigation Bulletin

National Aids to Navigation School

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## Retired Sinkers Support New Jersey Reef Program

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JUNIPER, KATHERINE WALKER, and ANT Bayonne service over 400 aids annually throughout southern New England. On some of these visits, our crews discover damaged or worn sinkers and, once replaced, the sinkers are put to rest in the Bayonne or Newport buoy depot. As the sinkers began to pile up over the years, we faced a long standing dilemma of how to legally get rid of these unusable sinkers. Unlike worn chain which is easily recycled, used sinkers are a hindrance. Unfortunately, the environmental laws can prevent easy disposal of the unused sinkers at sea and the sheer weight make

them cumbersome for landside recycling or disposal, not to mention the stench.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection had been purchasing concrete blocks to build artificial reefs, which offered a perfect solution to the sinker disposal problem. After receiving approval from the District 1 legal office, JUNIPER and KATHERINE WALKER began to “clean house” at our respective buoy yards. KATHERINE WALKER deployed 60,000 pounds of sinkers on December 21 for the first of two planned sinker deployments, and JUNIPER deployed 160,000 pounds on February 3. Once our buoy depots are cleaned out, we will offer to deploy used sinkers from local ANTs.

On JUNIPER, the sinkers were equipped with 10 to 15-foot sections of chain attached to the bail to facilitate manipulation. The deck force put the sinkers over the side at the forward hydraulic chain stopper and then secured the chain in the stopper and shackled it to the deck with a pelican hook. Then, after lifting the hydraulic roller, the sinker was set to be dumped by releasing the pelican hook. With long enough chain, the bitter end hung safely over the side. KATHERINE WALKER used the mechanical stopper to reduce the strain on the sinker’s bail caused by the angle created when the hydraulic roller lifts and to exercise the less commonly used equipment.

With the combined efforts of JUNIPER, KATHERINE WALKER, and the state of New Jersey, the Coast Guard has expanded the spirit of its missions for environmental response and fisheries law enforcement to include ecological awareness and stewardship. The new reef has already begun to recruit the mussels and small invertebrates that will blanket the sinkers’ surface and provide a nutrient-rich foundation for the sea bass, tautog, scup, and summer flounder soon to populate the once empty stretch of seabed.

