

in effect while the facility is being constructed and after the construction is completed.

This proposed safety zone is in the deepwater area of the Gulf of Mexico. For the purposes of this regulation it is considered to be in waters of 304.8 meters (1,000 feet) or greater depth extending to the limits of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) contiguous to the territorial sea of the United States and extending to a distance up to 200 nautical miles from the baseline from which the breadth of the sea is measured. Navigation in the area of the proposed safety zone consists of large commercial shipping vessels, fishing vessels, cruise ships, tugs with tows and the occasional recreational vessel. The deepwater area also includes an extensive system of fairways. The fairways include the Gulf of Mexico South Pass Fairway, and the South Pass to Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet Channel Safety Fairway. Significant amounts of vessel traffic occur in or near the various fairways in the deepwater area.

TotalFinaElf E&P USA, Inc., hereafter referred to as TotalFinaElf has requested that the Coast Guard establish a safety zone in the Gulf of Mexico around the Matterhorn TLP construction site and for the zone to remain in effect after construction is completed.

The request for the safety zone was made due to the high level of shipping activity around the site of the facility and the safety concerns for construction personnel, the personnel on board the facility after it is completed, and the environment. TotalFinaElf indicated that the location, production level, and personnel levels on board the facility make it highly likely that any allision with the facility during and after construction would result in a catastrophic event. The Matterhorn TLP will be a high production petroleum and gas drilling facility, capable of producing approximately 30,000 barrels of oil per day and 50 million cubic feet of gas per day, and manned with a crew of approximately 60 people.

The Coast Guard has reviewed TotalFinaElf's concerns and agrees that the risk of allision to the facility and the potential for loss of life and damage to the environment resulting from such an accident during and following the construction of Matterhorn TLP warrants the establishment of this safety zone. The proposed regulation would significantly reduce the threat of allisions, oil spills and natural gas releases, and increase the safety of life, property, and the environment in the Gulf of Mexico. This regulation is issued pursuant to 14 U.S.C. 85 and 43 U.S.C.

1333 as set out in the authority citation for 33 CFR part 147.

Discussion of Proposed Rule

The specific risk factors which necessitate a safety zone for the Matterhorn TLP construction site and for the safety zone to remain in effect after the facility is completed are: (1) The construction site is located approximately 14 nautical miles southeast of the South Pass Fairway and on a direct course for vessels approaching the entrance to fairways to the Mississippi River; (2) the facility will have a high production capacity of 30,000 barrels of oil per day and 50 million cubic feet of gas per day; (3) the facility will be manned with a crew of 60 people; (4) the facility will be a tension leg platform; and (5) the platform, anchored by tendons, will slowly oscillate around a fixed position.

Regulatory Evaluation

This proposed rule is not a "significant regulatory action" under section 3(f) of Executive Order 12866 and does not require an assessment of potential costs and benefits under section 6(a)(3) of that Order. The Office of Management and Budget has not reviewed it under that Order. It is not significant under the regulatory policies and procedures of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

The impacts on routine navigation are expected to be minimal because the safety zone will not overlap any of the safety fairways within the Gulf of Mexico.

Small Entities

Under the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601–612), we have considered whether this proposed rule would have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. The term "small entities" comprises small businesses, not-for-profit organizations that are independently owned and operated and are not dominant in their fields, and governmental jurisdictions with populations of less than 50,000.

The Coast Guard certifies under 5 U.S.C. 605(b) that this proposed rule would not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. Since the construction site for the Matterhorn TLP is located far offshore, few privately owned fishing vessels and recreational boats/yachts operate in the area and alternate routes are available for those vessels. Use of an alternate route may cause a vessel to incur a delay of 4 to 10 minutes in arriving at their destinations depending on how fast the vessel is traveling.

Therefore, the Coast Guard expects the impact of this regulation on small entities to be minimal.

If you think that your business, organization, or governmental jurisdiction qualifies as a small entity and that this rule would have a significant economic impact on it, please submit a comment (see **ADDRESSES**) explaining why you think it qualifies and to what degree this rule would economically affect it.

Assistance for Small Entities

Under section 213(a) of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996 (Pub. L. 104–121), we want to assist small entities in understanding this proposed rule so that they can better evaluate its effects on them and participate in the rulemaking. If the rule would affect your small business, organization, or governmental jurisdiction and you have questions concerning its provisions or options for compliance, please contact LT Karrie Trebbe, Project Manager for Eighth Coast Guard District Commander, Hale Boggs Federal Bldg., 501 Magazine Street, New Orleans, LA 70130, telephone (504) 589–6271.

Small businesses may send comments on the actions of Federal employees who enforce, or otherwise determine compliance with Federal regulations to the Small Business and Agriculture Regulatory Enforcement Ombudsman and the Regional Small Business Regulatory Fairness Boards. The Ombudsman evaluates these actions annually and rates each agency's responsiveness to small business. If you wish to comment on actions by employees of the Coast Guard, call 1–888–REG–FAIR (1–888–734–3247).

Collection of Information

This proposed rule would call for no new collection of information under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501–3520.).

Federalism

A rule has implications for federalism under Executive Order 13132, Federalism, if it has a substantial direct effect on State or local governments and would either preempt State law or impose a substantial direct cost of compliance on them. We have analyzed this proposed rule under that Order and have determined that it does not have implications for federalism.

Unfunded Mandates Reform Act

The Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 (2 U.S.C. 1531–1538) requires Federal agencies to assess the effects of their discretionary regulatory actions. In