
Saba Bank Particularly Sensitive Sea Area

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This Technical Alert is issued by the Bahamas Maritime Authority (BMA) to highlight the designation of the Saba Bank as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA).

2. Introduction

- 2.1. International Maritime Organization (IMO) Resolution MEPC.226(84) [Designation of the Saba Bank as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area](#) was adopted by the IMO on 05 October 2012.
- 2.2. Accordingly, on 17 June 2017, the Saba bank area became a Particular Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) as well as an Area To Be Avoided (ATBA).
- 2.3. That means that, as stated by the notice to mariners, the mentioned area is closed for all shipping of 300 gross tonnage and above. **This applies to all ships, including private yachts.**

3. Saba Bank PSSA

- 3.1. The reefs of the Saba Bank are far removed from land and as a consequence there is an absence of land-based influences such as elevated levels of sedimentation due to increased erosion, high nutrient concentrations caused by pollution from agricultural run-off and wastewater disposal, or sedimentation from coastal construction activities. Worldwide, reefs are in decline, from just such impacts originating from land. This unique position of the Saba Bank reefs, provide a potentially greater resilience to changes in the environmental conditions, such as climate change, and it is a relatively untouched centre for recruitment and recuperation for the coastal reefs in the region.
- 3.2. The coral reefs of the Saba Bank, characterized by high coral cover of around 70 per cent in some places, have been determined to be among the four healthiest of the Caribbean, based on the Atlantic and Gulf Rapid Reef Assessment (AGRRA) health index, which is a compilation of many variables, including coral cover, fish populations, presence of diseases, types and cover of algae on the reef, and ratio of living coral versus dead coral.
- 3.3. Because of its location and prevailing currents in the area, the Saba Bank is a source of larval recruitment for corals and coral reef associated organisms, including important

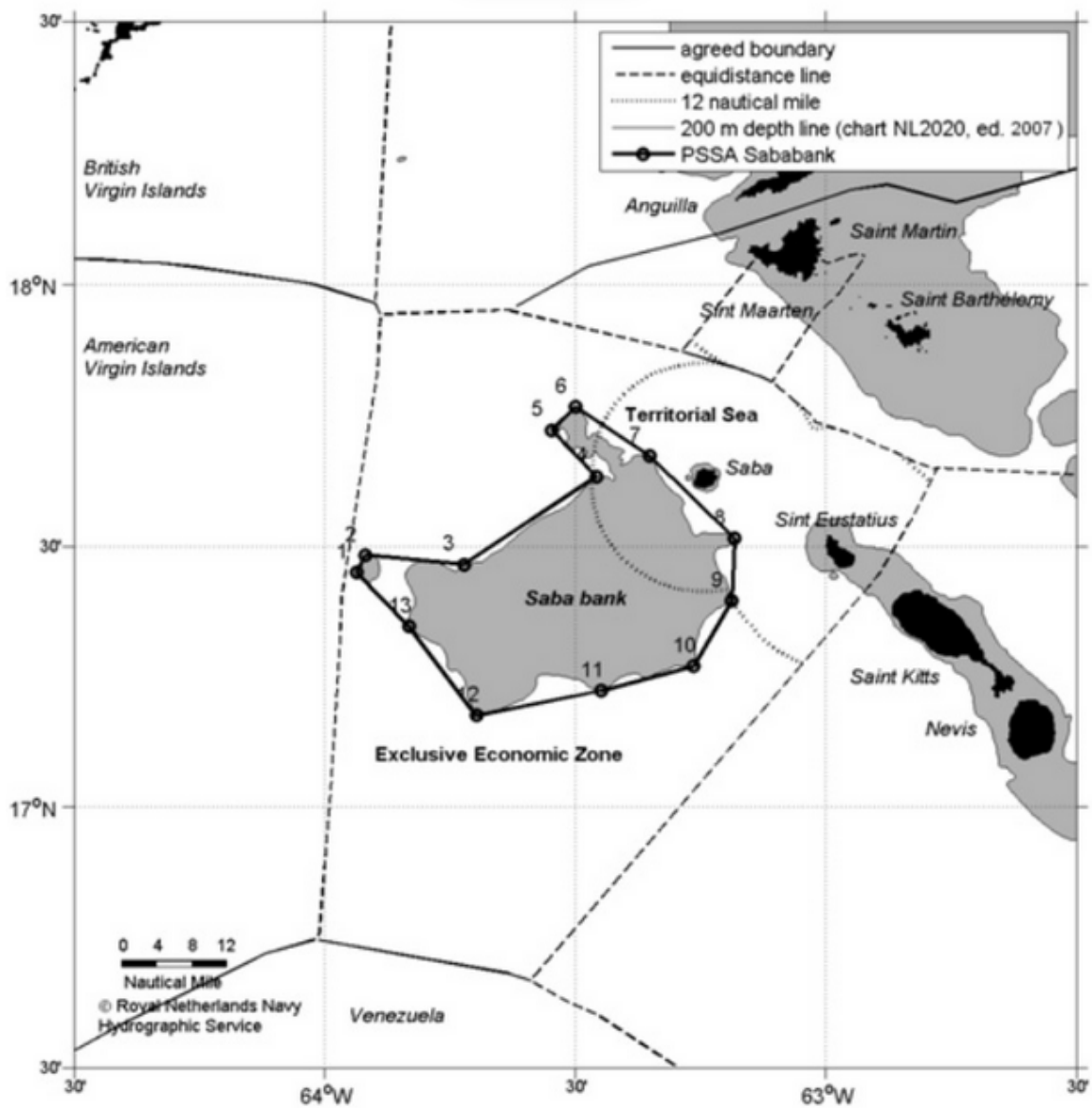
fishery species such as conch (*Strombus gigas*), and lobster (*Panulirus argus*) for the entire region.

3.4. The Saba Bank is formed and sustained by the growth of the corals and coral reefs on it. As such, these organisms provide habitat, food and shelter for all animals and plants living on the Bank. The high diversity of the area is maintained by the numerous feedback mechanisms characteristic for these kinds of ecosystems. As a self-sustaining ecosystem, it is highly productive and also forms an attractive feeding and nursery ground for many migratory species.

3.5. In order to avoid the risk of pollution and damage to this unique, fragile and pristine coral reef ecosystem, and the risks to the artisanal fisheries of the area, mariners should exercise extreme care when navigating in the area bounded by a line connecting the following geographical position, which is designated as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area. The area to be avoided by ships of 300 gross tonnage and above and a mandatory no anchoring area for all ships is established in the area designated as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area and bounded by a line connecting the following geographical positions:

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|-----|--------------|---------------|
| 1. | 17° 27'.06 N | 063° 56'.14 W |
| 2. | 17° 29'.00 N | 063° 55'.09 W |
| 3. | 17° 27'.94 N | 063° 43'.32 W |
| 4. | 17° 38'.03 N | 063° 27'.41 W |
| 5. | 17° 43'.35 N | 063° 32'.74 W |
| 6. | 17° 45'.98 N | 063° 29'.98 W |
| 7. | 17° 40'.34 N | 063° 21'.10 W |
| 8. | 17° 30'.88 N | 063° 10'.92 W |
| 9. | 17° 23'.80 N | 063° 11'.25 W |
| 10. | 17° 16'.27 N | 063° 15'.85 W |
| 11. | 17° 13'.44 N | 063° 26'.89 W |
| 12. | 17° 10'.55 N | 063° 41'.81 W |
| 13. | 17° 20'.85 N | 063° 49'.89 W |

3.6. Owners, Masters and Companies operating Bahamian ships are advised that they can no longer cross the Saba Bank and the fines associated are high.



Chartlet of the mandatory no anchoring area and area to be avoided

4. Validity

4.1. This Technical Alert is valid until further notice.