Coast Guard Cutter Shearwater Decommissioned after 19 Years of Service



Coast Guard Cutter Shearwater, homeported in Cape May, New Jersey, is moored to the pier prior to the cutter's decommissioning ceremony at Coast Guard Training Center Cape May, April 15, 2021. Coast Guard Cutter Shearwater was the 49th vessel of the Marine Protector Class of Coast Guard Patrol Boats. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 3rd Class Kimberly Reaves*

CAPE MAY, N.J. — The Coast Guard decommissioned the cutter Shearwater during a ceremony at Coast Guard Training Center Cape May that was presided over by Capt. Jonathan Theel, the commanding officer of Coast Guard Sector Delaware Bay, April 15, 2021, the Coast Guard 5th District said in a release.

Shearwater was one of the Coast Guard's 70 remaining 87-foot Marine Protector-class patrol boats. Training Center Cape May

is now the homeport to three Coast Guard Fast Response Cutters.

Commissioned in 2002, the Shearwater was the 49th of 73 coastal patrol boats built for search and rescue, ports, waterways, and coastal security, living marine resource enforcement, marine safety, and marine environmental protection.

“Shearwater is a special ship that has served District 5 throughout the course of her history,” said Master Chief Petty Officer Tony Martinez, commanding officer of the Shearwater. “With a who’s who of prominent Coast Guard members, including high profile command master chiefs and command cadres with multiple tours, Shearwater boasted some of the finest crews throughout her tenure. She has been a fixture in both of her homeports, remaining durable and dependable throughout her history. I personally want to thank all of the crews for their dedication and service to our great nation as they were instrumental to Shearwater’s mission of takin’ care of business.”

Shearwater’s keel was laid on April 30, 2002 at Bollinger Shipyards in Lockport, Louisiana. Shearwater was launched on Aug. 6, 2002, and commissioned on Oct. 5, 2002.

Over the past 19 years of service, Shearwater’s crews conducted a wide range of operations. Living up to the Shearwater’s motto “Takin’ Care of Business,” coined by the commissioning crew, crews completed 1,664 activities ranging from law enforcement boardings to search and rescue responses throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. From 2002 to 2018, the ship was homeported at Coast Guard Base Portsmouth, Virginia. Upon relocating to Cape May in 2018, the ship was dubbed “the Queen of the Cape” by a Coast Guard Auxiliarist.

During the cutter’s last year of service, the sunset crew of 12 enlisted crew members continued this legacy, conducting

high profile operations including the disentanglement of a leatherback turtle off of Cape May in August of 2020, and an 18-hour tow of a disabled fishing vessel 70 nautical miles east of Cape Charles, Virginia.

“With a strong personal connection to the first officer in charge of this ship, I felt an immense honor being the final OIC aboard Shearwater,” said Martinez. “As I pause and reflect, remembering the first time I saw the ship from an 87 on the other end of the pier, the pride I feel commanding this ship is indescribable. To lead this sunset crew and watch them grow over the past two years has been humbling and rewarding. I am grateful for their dedication and service and look forward to staying in touch and following their careers. While our business here is done, we will proudly carry on Shearwater’s legacy of hard work and reliability.”