

A private aids to navigation verification patrol

David Forrest SO-NS

Spring brings high water to the rivers in the Midwest and May was no different this year. We like to do our night verification patrols on the Mississippi River during the illumination of a near full moon and scheduled our first on the Saturday evening of May 22.

But the water was high, nine feet over flood stage and we worried that the Captain of the Port would close the river due to flood waters carrying the wakes to the shore and causing undue erosion. We waited anxiously for the Local Notice to Mariners due out on the Wednesday prior and found no prohibition of operations. A quick trip to the ramp revealed a little problem for access but decided a capable crew could launch.



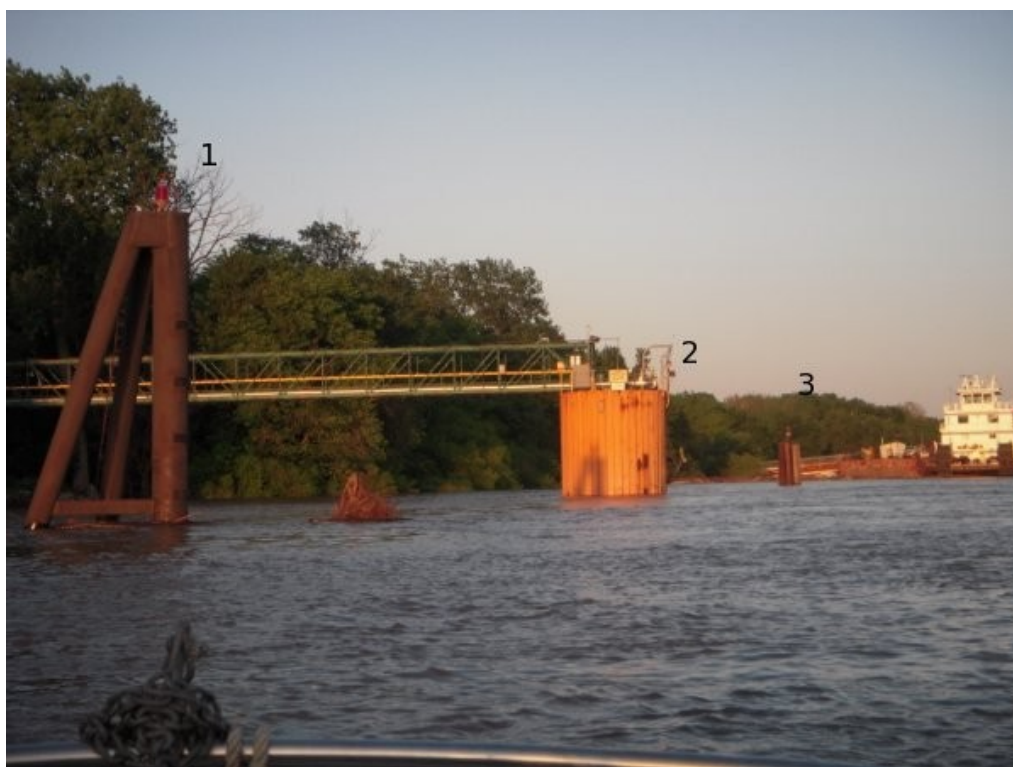
On Saturday evening, AUXFAC 1610382 launched at 1830 and spent a couple of hours in the warm evening locating our 12 targeted facilities before it became dark enough to check whether the lights were operating correctly.



The Clark Highway Bridge carrying Highway 67 over the Mississippi River at Alton Illinois



The water intake for the Illinois Power Company power plant near Alton Illinois



The Koch Nitrogen Dock Lights – three of them

... And ten others dutifully recorded but not shown here until our most Southerly target six miles downstream from our launching ...



The Marathon Dock Lights where Marathon Oil loads their products for shipping

We also found a charting error on the Army Corps of Engineers Electronic Navigation Charts that were issued on April 23, 2010 and we spent a few minutes gathering information to share with the Corps.



All-in-all, it was an enjoyable trip and, after checking the lights for proper operation (four watching properly and eight discrepant to various degrees) and reporting our results to Sector Upper Mississippi River, we retrieved and secured at 2236 and arrived back home before midnight.

No job is complete until the paperwork is filed and this patrol was no exception. Completion of the orders and submission for reimbursement along with the worksheets to the District web site maintainer took another five hours. The coordination with the Corps and the Coast Guard on chart updating and Light List maintenance took another fourteen hours with the investigation of prior reports and compositions of e-mails taking most of that.

But nothing really compares to the pleasure of receiving “Good patrol” from my crew, Jim Daniels, Mike Yerion, and Haley Pepper, who all said they enjoyed the activity.

Think you may be interested in this important activity where we augment the Coast Guard active duty? Just give us a call and we'll get you started.