

CHATHAM LIGHT

Navigational Performance and Safety

A safety-first request for Town-Coast Guard partnership

CHATHAM FIRST LIGHT · AUGUST 2026

● The Navigation Issue

Why Chatham should ask the Coast Guard to review the change

PRIORITY 1 • NEAR-SHORE NAVIGATION

Gone

The rotating near-shore sweep — present 1993–2026

The loom mariners relied on close to shore was a function of intensity, not beam width — the old beacon's own beam was narrow too. At roughly 3% of its prior candela, the installed unit no longer carries enough light to scatter and produce that near-shore reference (U.S. Coast Pilot 2).

PRIORITY 2 • OFFSHORE PERFORMANCE

19.1 vs 24 nm

Offshore range vs. the Light List standard (LLNR 525)

Manufacturer-published data — confirmed directly with the manufacturer — shows the installed single-tier unit falls about 5 nautical miles, or 20%, short of Chatham's published 24 nm range. Effective intensity is down to roughly 78,000 candela, about 3% of the 2.8 million candela the prior beacon carried.

Every prior transition at this station — 1923, 1939, 1969, 1993–94 — held the line on performance, or improved it. This is the first that did not.

● What Needs to Be Restored

Define the navigational objectives before choosing the technology

PRIORITY	PRIOR CONDITION	TODAY	OBJECTIVE
Near-shore navigation	Strong rotating reference	Materially reduced	Restore useful reference
Offshore performance	24.3 nm / listed 24 nm	19.1 nm published performance	Address the 24 nm listing
Historic character	Recognizable rotating sweep	Changed nighttime appearance	Consider after safety
Decision process	Coast Guard AtoN authority	Coast Guard AtoN authority	Develop solution together

Technical options have been studied and are available as background for a Coast Guard working discussion.

The immediate question is performance, not equipment selection.

The Partnership Approach

Start with the Coast Guard, the Town and mariners at one table

1

Lead with navigation and safety

2

Agree on performance objectives

3

Evaluate technical options together

4

Explore local funding/cost-sharing if useful

The Coast Guard remains the federal Aid to Navigation authority. Chatham brings local maritime experience, technical work and a willingness to help solve the problem.

A formal proposal should follow the working discussion — not precede it.

● What We're Asking Tuesday

Endorse the objective and authorize a partnership process

1 Endorse the navigational objective

Support the Waterways Advisory Committee's recommendation: address near-shore navigation first and the published 24 nm offshore performance second.

2 Empower Waterways to engage the Coast Guard

Authorize the Waterways Advisory Committee and delegation to engage Sector Southeastern New England directly and lead a collaborative working session on the concern.

No solution selected today

Technical options have been studied, but equipment selection should follow the Coast Guard discussion. No Town expenditure is authorized at this stage.

Waterways recommended action Aug. 20; the Historical Commission separately voted to support the effort. Waterways would lead engagement with the Coast Guard and report back to the Select Board.