



Cruising Cape Breton

The Cruisers' Guide to Cape Breton Island and the Bras d'Or Lakes

Section IV — The Highlands Coast

Updated: 2015-03-10

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Caution: These chartlets are NO substitute for CHS charts. They are intended to provide supplementary information and detail, unavailable in the large-scale CHS charts 4363, 4364, 4365 & 4367.

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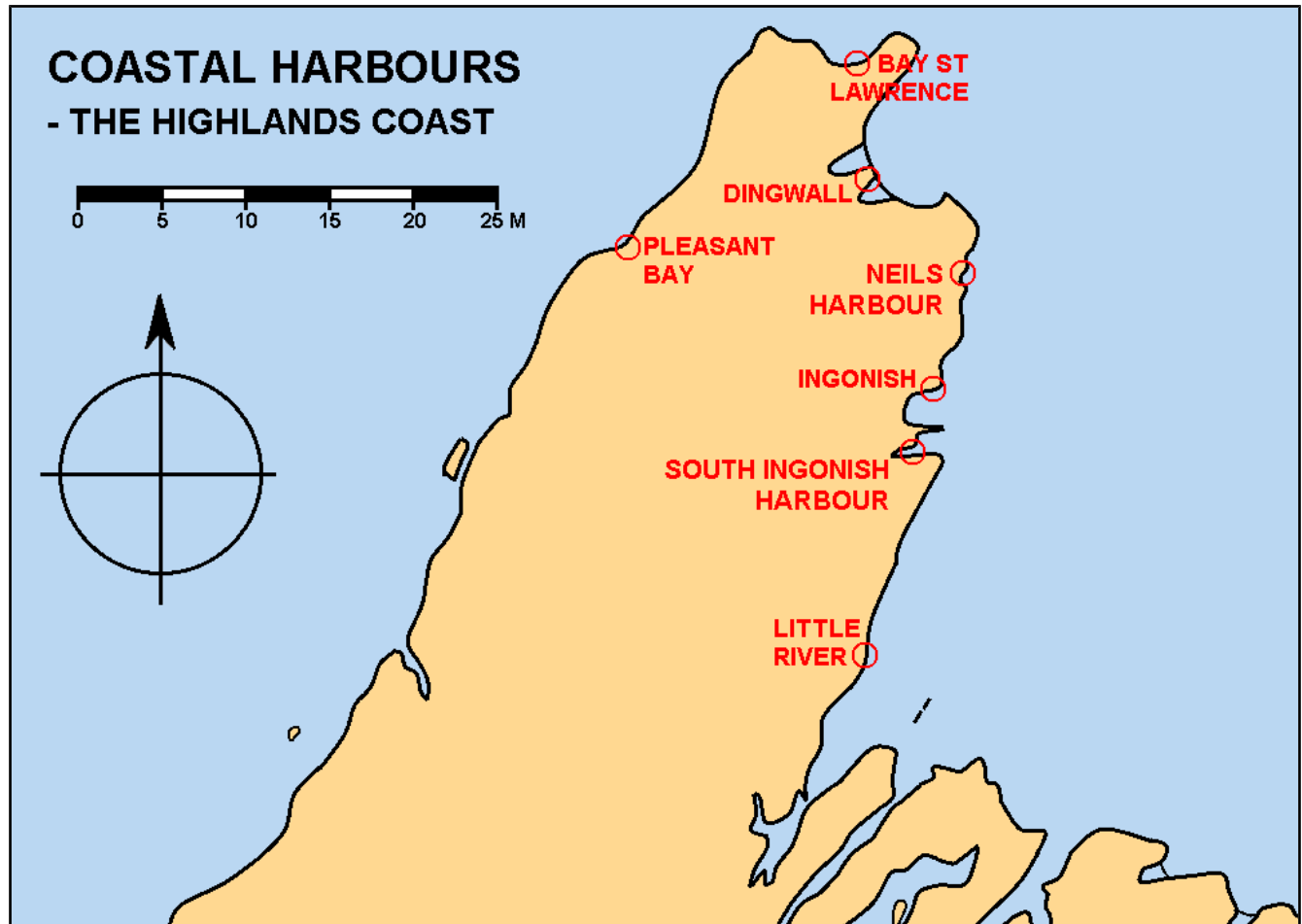
This information is provided for guidance purposes only.

As a cruiser, you assume full and complete responsibility for the use of this information and for the safe and prudent operation of your vessel.

Highlands Coast — Overview

CHS Chart Nos: 4363 – Cape Smoky to St Paul Island
 4367 – Ingonish and Dingwall Harbours
 4367 – Flint Island to Cape Smoky
 4464 – Chéticamp to Cape St Lawrence

This area is a work-in-progress. Only some of the charts have been completed, others are in progress.



CAUTION: With the exception of Neils Harbour and White Point Harbour, these harbours have shallow entrances facing the sea and are dangerous to enter in strong onshore winds.

Some need periodic dredging to keep them open. A single violent storm can radically change the depths on the approach. Local knowledge is always advisable.

Revised: 2014-09-01

Little River Harbour (Breton Cove)

CHS Chart No: 4367 – Flint Island to Cape Smoky†

Amenities: Dockage, launch ramp, water, fuel (diesel only), swimming beach
Fees apply for dockage.

Description:

Little River harbour is a convenient stopover for those making an early entrance or late exit to/from the Great Bras d'Or Channel, being the nearest well-protected harbour on the ocean side, and is a pleasant stopover for those cruising the coast of Cape Breton Island. A fine, sandy beach on the south side of the southern breakwater is a popular swimming spot in summer. The harbour is quite shallow and is best suited for boats with a draught of 5 feet or less.

The harbour is managed by the Little River Harbour Authority.
Harbourmaster: Wendell Murphy (902) 929-2262

However, it is first and foremost a fishing harbour, and cruisers should avoid entering, except in an emergency, during 'lobster season', which generally runs from the second Saturday in May to the second Wednesday in July, but may vary (see website for latest info). This is a very congested harbour during that period. Lobster fishers are usually under way before first light and back, having hauled their traps, by early afternoon.

There are lobster pounds located in the harbour. Vessels should refrain from discharging sewage even AFTER the lobster fishing season has closed. A portable toilet is usually located on the wharf.

What's in a name? Although it is generally referred to as Little River, the name Breton Cove is also used by some, although Breton Cove is about 0.6 nm to the north (This is spelled Briton Cove on the nautical chart and in the Sailing Directions.). To confound things further, the Little River entry range is listed as the Breton Cove Range, and the fairway buoy, **KN**, as the 'Breton Cove light and bell buoy' in the List of Lights, yet the inner light on the breakwater is referred to as the 'Little River Inner'.

Navigation:

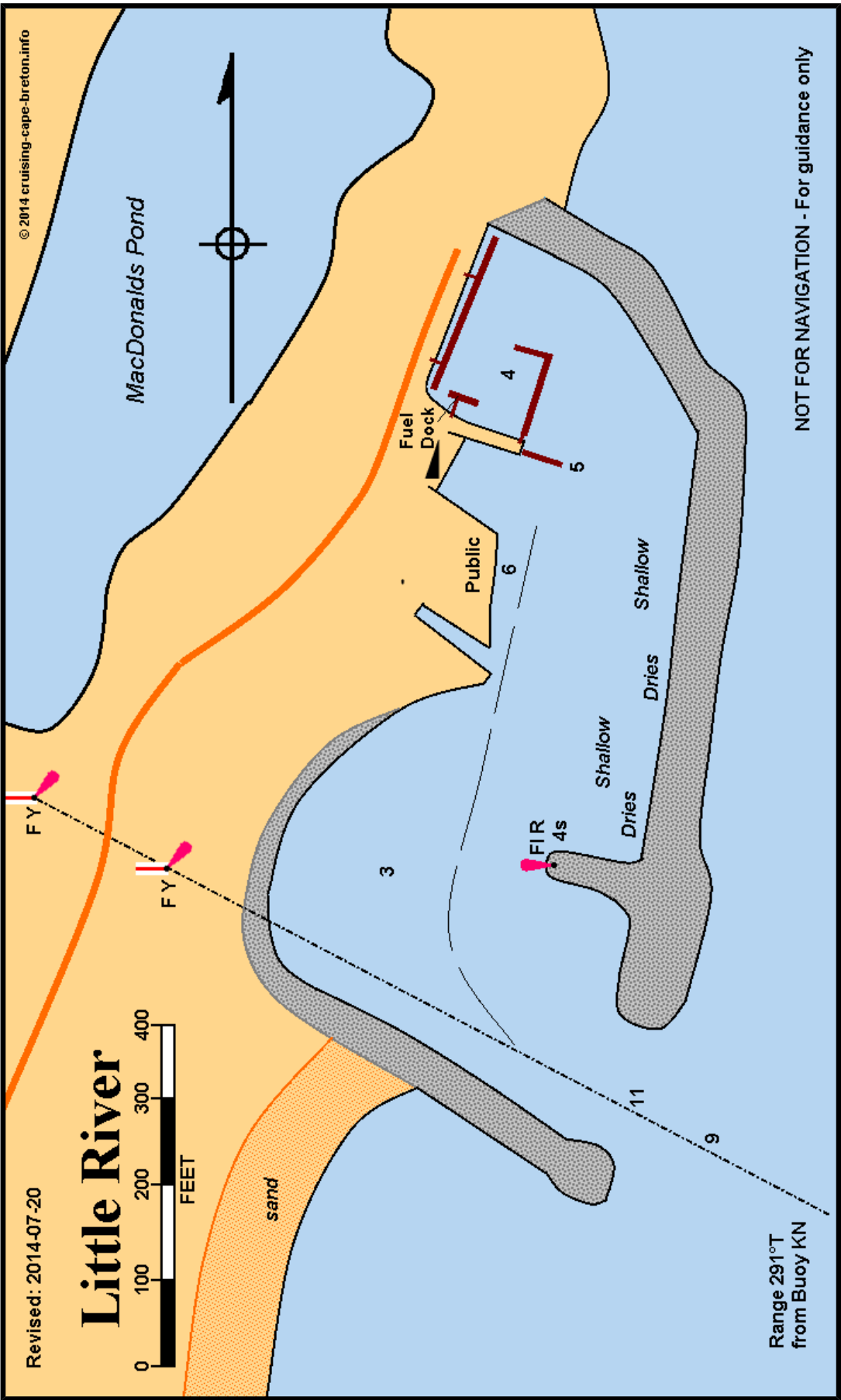
Tidal range on a 'Large tide' is about 4.4 feet. Use tidal predictions for Sydney.

Fairway light and bell buoy, **KN** (4626.5/6026.8), moored 0.6 nm off the entrance puts one on the range leading into the harbour, on a bearing of 291T. When inside the breakwaters favour the west side of the harbour as the seaward side is shoal, and shoaling occurs close to the small groyne. Boats with up to five-foot draft can use the Public wharf. The floating wharves generally have only 4 feet of water. There is no space to anchor.

Update September 2012: Dredging was carried out in summer of 2012 to remove silting near the small inner groyne on the east breakwater.

Revised: 2014-07-20

† Spelled 'Smokey' on terrestrial maps, the nautical charts and Sailing Directions consistently show it as 'Smoky', which is probably the 'proper' spelling since there is no such word in the English language as 'smokey'. Smokey is US slang for a highway trooper or patrol car, and derived from Smokey the Bear. It seems highly unlikely that this majestic cape would be named after a cartoon bear!



South Ingonish Harbour

CHS Chart No: 4365 – Ingonish and Dingwall Harbours
4367 – Flint Island to Cape Smoky
4363 – Cape Smoky to St Paul Island

Amenities:

Ingonish Landing Marina; Main Street Restaurant & Bakery (902-285-2225); Doucette's RiteSTOP Convenience (902-285-2861); Doucette's "Caper Gas" Service Station (902-285-2029) - gas, diesel, ice, propane filling; HomeHardware Store; beaches; Cape Breton Highlands National Park

Description:

Ingonish (South) Harbour provides good all round protection in a beautiful setting. With depths of 50 to 60 feet, much of the harbour is a little deep for anchoring. Some cruisers anchor close to the sandbars just inside the entrance, but find themselves scrambling to weigh anchor in the teeth of a strong katabatic wind, which can arrive with little warning, threatening to drive them onto the sandbar. The most protected anchorage is in what is locally known as Dunphys Cove to the north of the entrance. There is just enough room for a couple of boats to raft up here, but it is a good place to ride out bad weather. The other preferred anchorage is at the head of the bay, where there is good holding in 15 to 20 feet, or close to the Ingonish Landing Marina in the protection of the point of land that juts out there. Depending on the weather, one may have to move anchor to get the best protection.

Most amenities are located in Ingonish Beach. Easiest access is by taking the dinghy to the launch ramp on the east side of the entrance to Dunphys Cove, or, on a suitable tide, to the head of Dunphys Cove and climbing the embankment to the road, from where it is only 1 km (0.6 mi) to the village.

Update November 2013: Unfortunately, through lack of funding, this marina never became fully operational and such facilities that did exist have gone. The 350-foot wharf is in good condition and carries about 7' at chart datum.

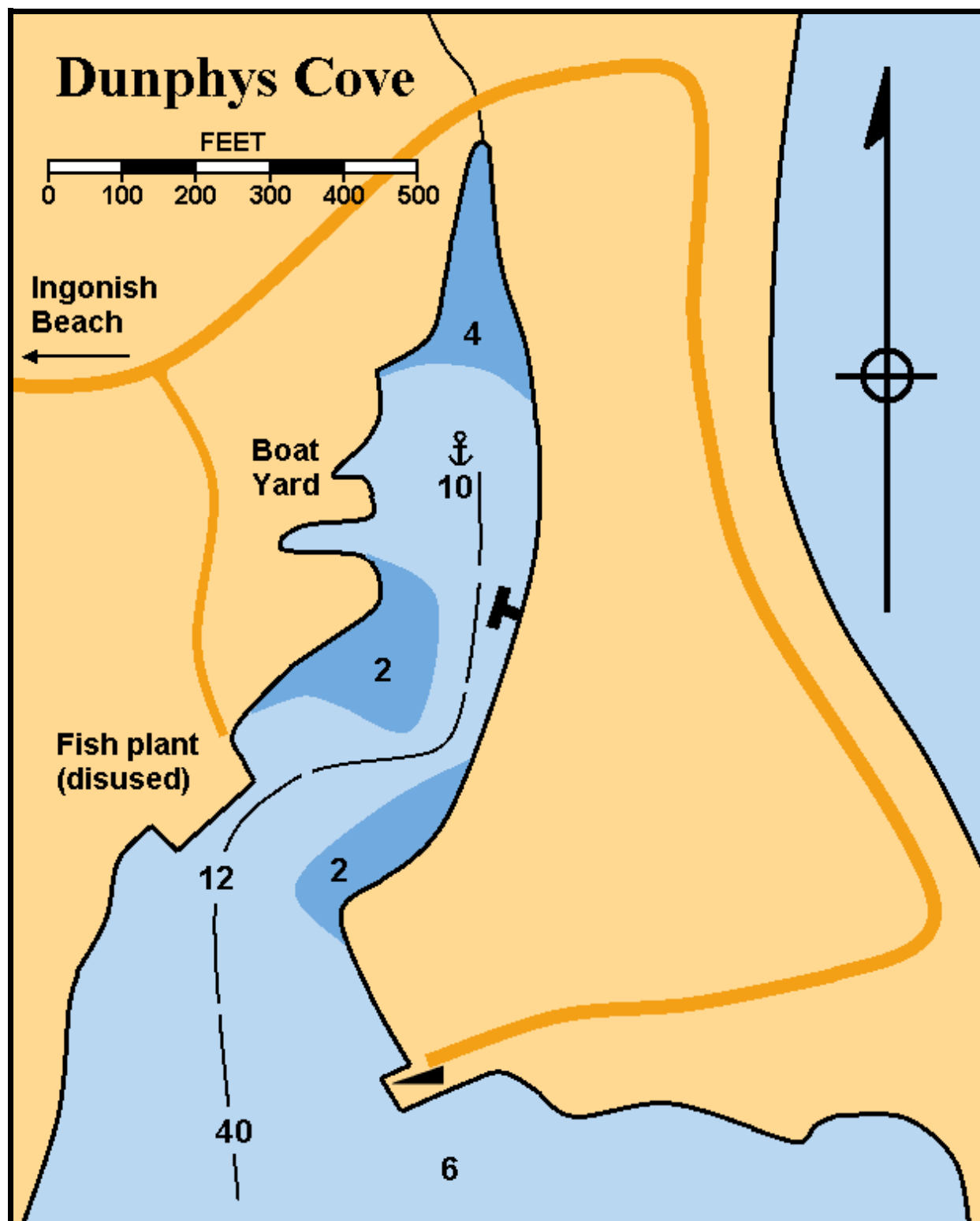
Navigation:

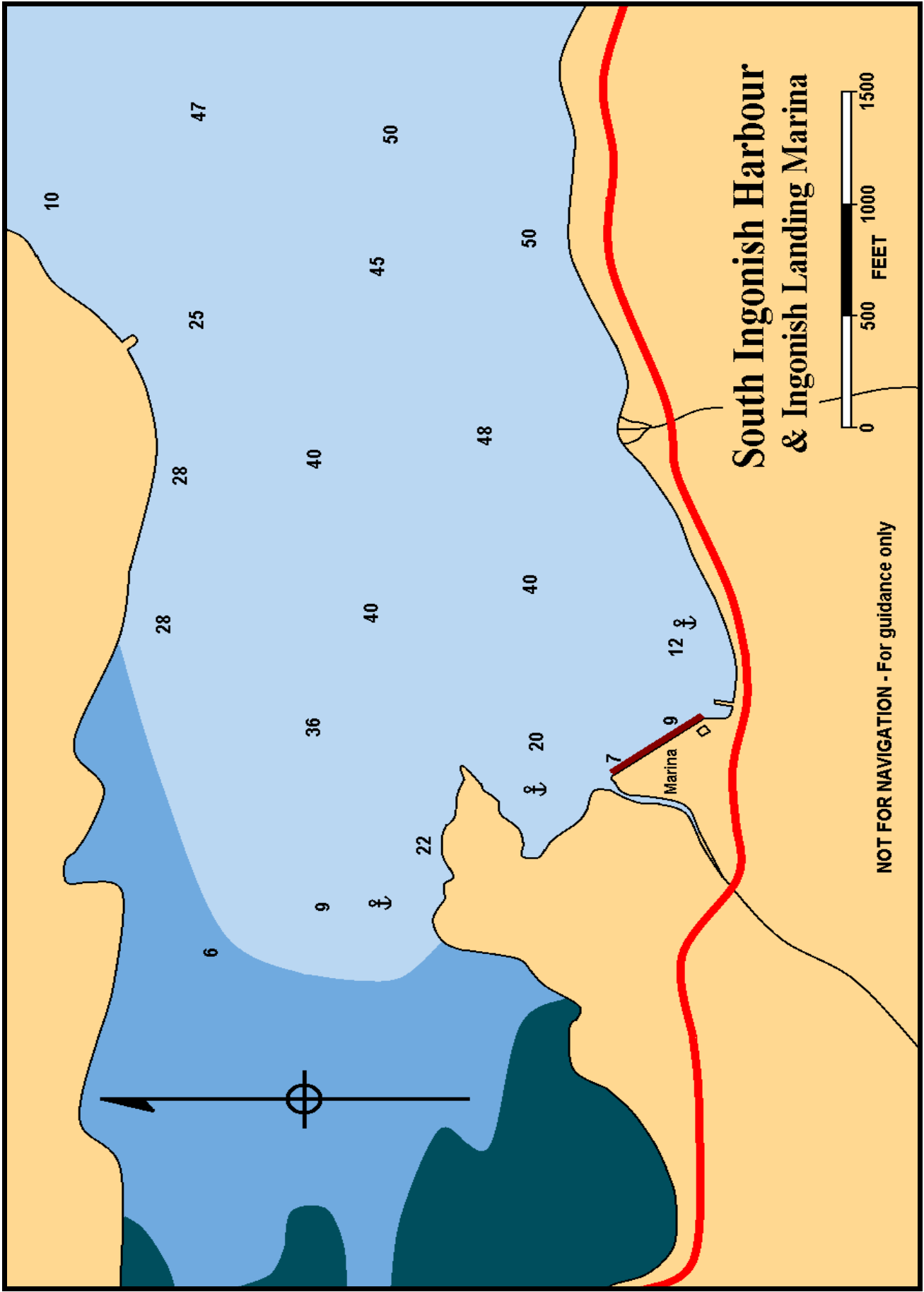
Tidal range on a 'Large tide' is about 4.4 feet. Suggest using tidal predictions for Table Head and add 15 minutes.

From the South Bay Ingonish light buoy **KM** (4638.0/6022.8), located one-third of a mile off the entrance, follow the buoyed channel. The entrance is very narrow, and the deepest water at the entrance is close to the sand bar, so favour the green side. Although about 16 feet deep, cruisers should avoid entering in strong easterly winds. Once through the sandbars the water deepens quickly.

A couple of sandbars guard the entrance to Dunphys Cove. Proceed close to the west shore until just past the old fish landing dock, then turn sharply east until close to the east shoreline, then stay close to the shore until past the large T-dock. The sandbars are usually staked by local boaters, but the colours of the attached ribbons may not follow IALA standards! A good lookout on the foredeck is essential.







Neils Harbour

CHS Chart No: 4363 – Cape Smoky to St Paul Island

Amenities: dockage, water, gas & diesel, Neils Harbour Co-op (902-336-2827, Grocery, hardware, NSLC Agency), pharmacy, hospital, restaurant

Harbour Authority: NVSPHA¹, (902) 336-2235, e-mail: nvspha@ns.aliantzinc.ca.
Fees apply for dockage.

Description:

The harbour is one of the few along this coast which is accessible in a strong easterly wind, having good depths on the approach. However the harbour is **very** small, and should be avoided, except in an emergency, during Lobster Season, which generally runs from the second Saturday in May to the second Wednesday in July, but may vary (see website for latest info). Despite the small size of its harbour, Neils Harbour offers the most amenities of any harbour on the east side of the highlands coast.

Cruisers should tie or raft to a vessel on the west side to the long wharf or the north side of the small square wharf on the south side of the harbour, unless directed otherwise.

Navigation:

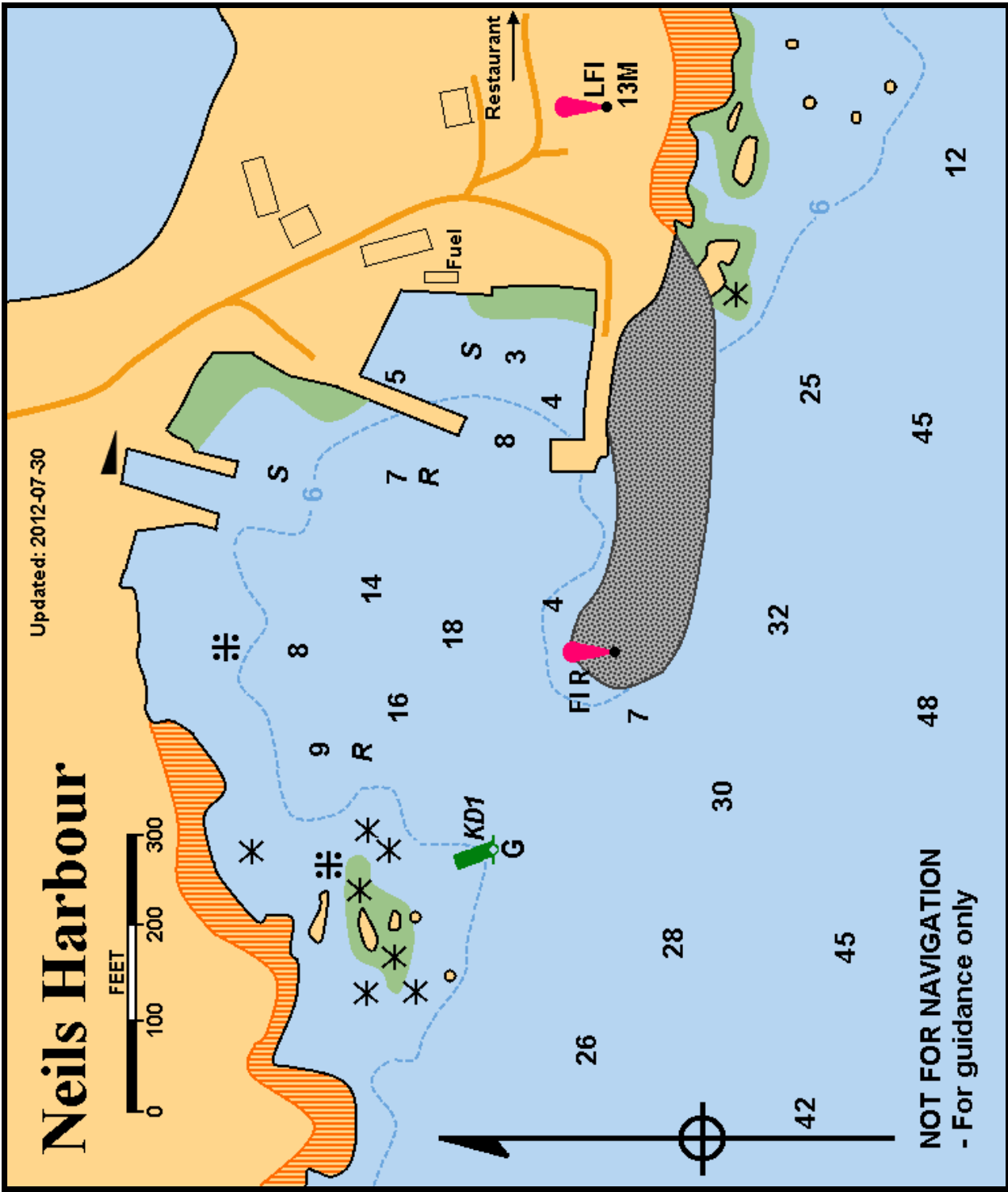
Tidal range on a 'large tide' is about 4 feet. Use tidal predictions for Dingwall?

From the fairway light and bell buoy, **KD** (4647.7/6018.2), moored 1 M SE of the entrance breakwater, a course of 308T leads to the harbour entrance. Some dredging of the inner harbour was done recently (2011?) during wharf renovations and may give greater depths than shown on the chart..

The outer area of the harbour has a rocky bottom. Anchoring in this area is not advised.

Revised: 2014-04-01

¹ **NVSPHA**, North Victoria Six Ports Harbour Authority, with offices located in Neils Harbour, is responsible for the harbours of Dingwall, White Point, New Haven, Neils Harbour, Ingonish, Ingonish Beach, and Ingonish Ferry.



Dingwall Harbour

CHS Chart No: 4363 – Cape Smoky to St Paul Island
4365 – Ingonish and Dingwall Harbours

Amenities: dockage, water, gas & diesel, ~~small café (Trails End Café, 902 383 2525, a few supplies)~~

Harbour Authority: NVSPHA¹, (902) 336-2235, e-mail: nvspha@bellaliant.com.
Fees apply for dockage.

Description:

CHS Chart 4365 provides excellent information for this harbour, so no other chart is provided here. This is a busy fishing harbour, especially in 'lobster season'. However, the inner harbour provides excellent anchoring in mud. The entrance requires periodic dredging, and shoals between the outer breakwaters, so consultation of the tide tables advised. If planning to enter on the bottom half of the tide, seek local knowledge or consult NVSPHA. Some dredging of the entrance between the breakwaters was done in the Fall of 2011. Depths on the approach may not be as shown on the chart.



Ashore, the St Paul Island Museum provides an insight to life as it once was on the island, and has one of the old lighthouses as part of its display. It is well worth a visit!

Navigation:

Tidal range on a 'large tide' is about 4 feet. Use tidal predictions for Dingwall.

From the fairway light and bell buoy, **KA** (4654.2/6025.9), moored ~0.86 M E of the entrance breakwater, a course of 270T leads to the harbour entrance. A pair of small buoys mark the final approach. Once past the breakwater the depths are good.

Revised: 2015-03-10

¹ **NVSPHA**, North Victoria Six Ports Harbour Authority, with offices located in Neils Harbour, is responsible for the harbours of Dingwall, White Point, New Haven, Neils Harbour, Ingonish, Ingonish Beach, and Ingonish Ferry.

Bay St Lawrence (MacDougall Pond)

CHS Chart No: 4363 – Cape Smoky to St Paul Island

Amenities: Dockage, launch ramp, water, fuel

Harbour Authority: (902) 383-2000

Description:

A small fishing community at the northern tip of Cape Breton Island, and a convenient stop over when rounding Cape North, which through some oversight has been omitted from the Sailing Directions. The harbour has been dredged to about 8 feet as shown, though further silting may occur, especially at the entrance. This is a small crowded fishing harbour; cruisers should not venture in here during lobster fishing season, except in an emergency. Fees apply for dockage.

Lobster Season:

Second Saturday in May to the second Wednesday in July, but may vary (see website for latest info).

Navigation:

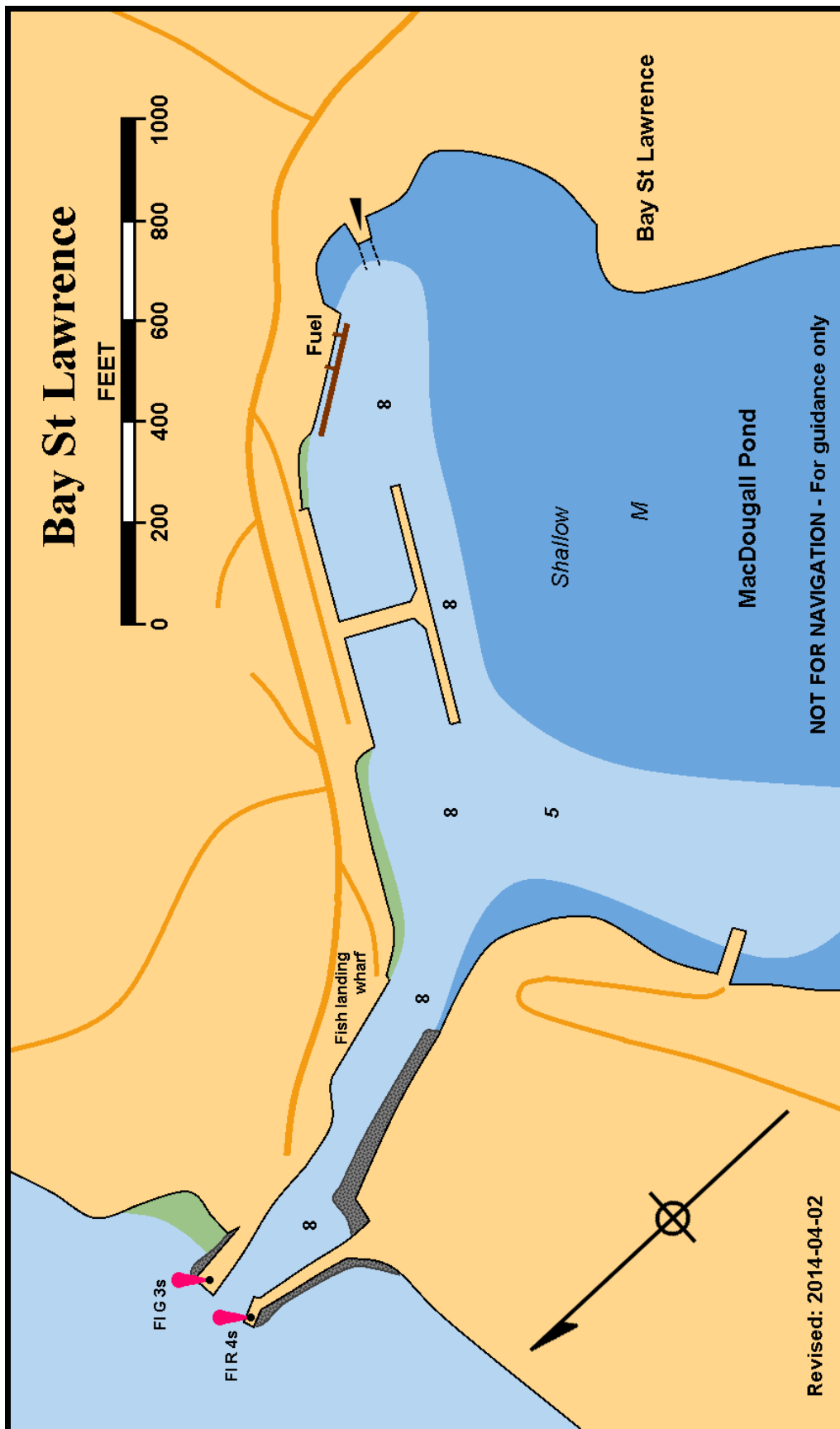
Tidal range on a 'Large tide' is about 5 feet. Use tidal predictions for Bay St Lawrence.



From the St Lawrence Bay light and whistle buoy, **VV** (4701.0/6028.4), moored 0.8 M off the entrance breakwaters, a course of 164T leads to the harbour entrance. Inside favour the eastern shore and stay very close to the wharves to avoid the shallows just east of the inner wharves. There is only room for a boat to pass very close to a berthed boat on the outer wharf, for this reason, do not raft up to a boat on that side of the wharf. The picture shows the harbour entrance from seaward.

Cruisers should berth at the floating dock past the wharves and at the end away from the fuelling area, unless directed otherwise.

Revised: 2014-04-02



Pleasant Bay

CHS Chart No: 4464 - Chéticamp to Cape St Lawrence

Amenities: Dockage, launch ramp, water, fuel (diesel, gasoline), swimming beach. Restaurant beside the harbour at Mid-Trail Motel (1-800-215-0411) www.midtrail.com, other restaurants in the area. Timmin's General Store (902) 224-2174

Harbour Authority: Pleasant Bay Harbour Authority, (902) 224-3103, harbourauthorityofpbay@gmail.com. Fees apply for dockage.

Description: Pleasant Bay harbour is the closest Cape Breton port to the Magdalen Islands, being only 55 M from Cap-aux-Meules or Havre-Aubert. It is a busy fishing port throughout the summer, but especially so in lobster season (May 1 to June 30, give or take a day). Cruisers should avoid entering during that period except in an emergency.

Navigation:

Tidal range on a 'Large tide' is about 4.0 feet. Use tidal predictions for Chéticamp. The entrance may be impassable in strong NW winds. The minimum depth at mid-channel on the approach is said to be about 6 feet at LLW.

From the Pleasant Bay light and bell buoy **VC** (4650.5/6048.3) moored 0.6 M off the harbour entrance, white range boards with a red vertical stripe and fixed red lights lead into the harbour. A turn into the basin should be made close to the inner breakwater to keep clear of the shoal on the eastern side.

Unless otherwise directed by the Harbour Authority, cruisers may tie to other boats on the marginal wharf, located on the NW side of the harbour, away from the fuelling station and only with permission of the buyers at off-loading ramps.

Updated: 25 February 2013

