

OK so you've probably figured out by now the preceding two charts are pretty neat and useful except there is not to much you can do with them like print. Wouldn't it be great if you could customize your favorite charts at home, mark them up with your preferred routes and maybe some of your private way points and hot spots.

Well believe it or not Uncle Sam, in conjunction with MapTech, is providing free online and map files for the entire US. These maps can be zoomed, printed annotated and have interactive tide tables and NOTMs (only when you're online of course). Is there a catch, well only two that we've found so far. First, you can't interface the free version to your GPS for real time vessel positioning. Second, there are NO INSTRUCTIONS as to how to get the charts you need. The default is for Salem, MA. which really doesn't do us South Jersey Boaters a lot of good what follows are detailed instructions how to download and install the software and then how to select, package, download and install (the last is the part they forgot to explain) charts for this area. The instructions work for any area so if your next trip is to the Outer Banks or Islamaroda you're good to go. BTW I'm putting these instructions in PDF format at the end so you can just print them out and follow along. Also please be advised all the links I'm providing are referenced from the official NOAA website. Gifford Marine assumes no liability for the use of these charts and has not validated their accuracy.

Step 1. Get the software.

You can actually find the program by digging your way though the NOAA web site, which is worthwhile in itself, but to save time you simply want navigate to:

<http://nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/mcd/Raster/resources.htm>

This is an extremely useful Portal Page but for now we will concentrate on just getting our free software package, currently MAPTECH Chart Navigator Viewer 5.08. On this page you want to select the following link:

[Maptech Raster Chart Software](#)

We chose this package simply because of familiarity with the full commercial system. Assuming the link functioned properly select the version in your language of choice. (we are not mirroring the site because of possible liability issues and this way we know we are pointing you to the most current version). We chose:

[CHTNAV_ENGLISH.exe](#)

This file is a self expanding zip file and you probably get a warning from your anti virus software (you are running anti-virus software aren't you) about the dangers of downloading executables, this is normal. Save the file in a convenient location just remember where. Te download is approximately 47MB so if you don't have broadband you are going to be waiting for a while.

Step 2. Expand and install the software.

This part is really straight forward. Just go to "My Computer" navigate to the location you where you saved the file (you do remember where you saved it don't you) and click on "CHTNAV_ENGLISH.exe".

Assuming that all went well Chart Navigator is now installed on your PC and you may delete the download file if you need to conserve space. You may run the program by Start>Programs>Chart navigator or just look for the Chart Navigator Icon that should have been installed on your desktop. The program should start and you will be presented with Chart 13725_1 which is Salem and Lynn Harbor, which would have been really useful if this was 1620 and you were a Pilgrim preparing to set sail to Jamestown.....

Step 3. Get the charts that you really need.

Now we navigate back to:

<http://nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/mcd/Raster/resources.htm>

and select "Download NOAA RNCs™,"
or click

<http://nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/mcd/Raster/download.htm>

At this point you will need to read and scroll through all of the legal warnings and disclaimers until you get to a button that says:

Proceed to NOAA RNC? (BSB) Downloads

At this point (BTW this link is often slow, be patient) you will be offered the option of graphic or textual selection. We strongly suggest Textual as the drill down on graphics is very cumbersome. Please note, even though it appears you are placing an order, there is no charge. Select the charges you want (south Jersey is covered by Charts 12316, 12317, 12318, 12323, and 12324) once completed select "Review Changes" followed by "Order Selections" and they will be combined into a single download in the ZIP format, Click "Download" and specify the download location.

Step 4. Expand the Zip File you just downloaded

If you selected the above choices you will have created directories, 12316, 12317, 12318, 12323 and 12324. You need to remember the entire path to these directories.

STEP 5. Import your downloaded files into Chart Navigator

Start Chart Navigator (in case you closed it).

Select "File">"Open Chart"

A list of Charts appears but the ones you just down loaded are nowhere to be found.

Select the "Advanced Chart Management Tab"

Use the "Browse" Button to Navigate to one of the directories named above.

Double click the directory and click the "Add" button. Repeat for each Directory mentioned above.

At this point you should be able to select from your downloaded charts. If you are connected to the INTERNET try clicking on some of the Tide Station Icons or the Obstruction Rings for more information.

For comments or suggestions contact webmaster@giffordmarineinc.com

BTW as of this posting (8/24/08) STAPLES is offering double sided 8.5" x 11" laminates for 49¢

