

By Eric Brinsfield

Contributors and Editors:

Summary:

Mobjack Bay is a wonderful anchoring location for a weekend or longer cruise that is within a day of Hampton Roads. Although Mobjack offers very few marina options, you will find the anchorages beautiful and protected. This is a great place for beginning cruisers to practice anchoring and hanging on the hook overnight. It is also a preferred getaway for most local experienced cruisers.

Location:

Entrance Mark 4MB = $37^{\circ} 16.042'N$, $76^{\circ} 16.542'W$, which is on the west side of the lower Chesapeake Bay north of York River and about 22 nautical miles NNW of Little Creek Inlet.

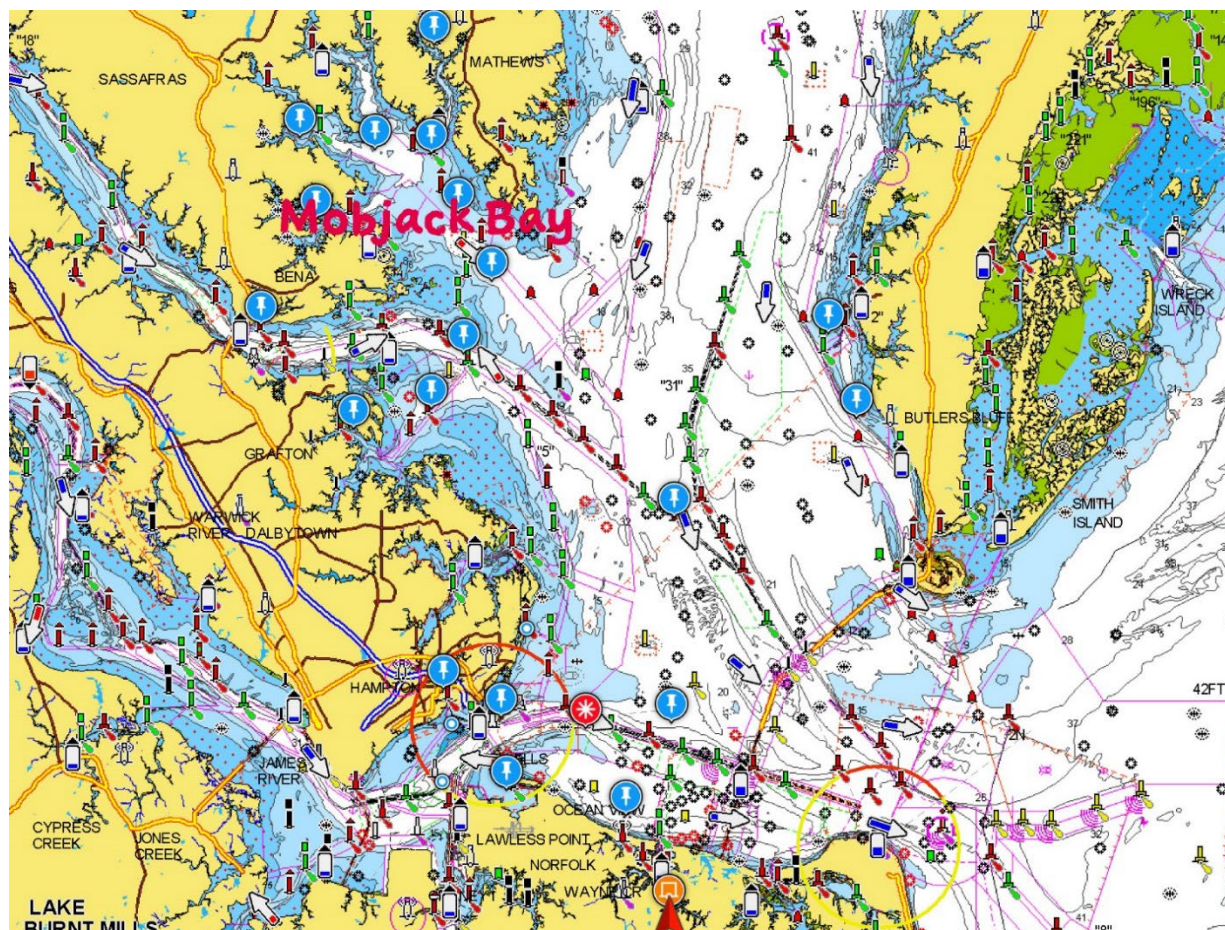


Figure 1: Mobjack Bay on the west side of the lower Chesapeake Bay

Navigation:

NOTE: I will describe navigation from Little Creek, but everything applies to boats departing from Hampton, Willoughby, and Norfolk after you make it to Poquoson Flats marker # 2PF, which you can pass on either side.

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Unless there is some favorable wind that I want to catch or I am heading to New Point Comfort, I usually do not go to 2MB or follow the Mobjack Channel. I usually sail straight from Little Creek to a point between York Spit Swash Channel Daybeacon 5 and the Mobjack Bay Channel Bouy 5MB. This skirts a shallow point but be sure to make your own decisions based on your navigation charts. In fact, I usually cutis closer to the west. Note that you can make it all the way to the East River Entrance in a straight line.

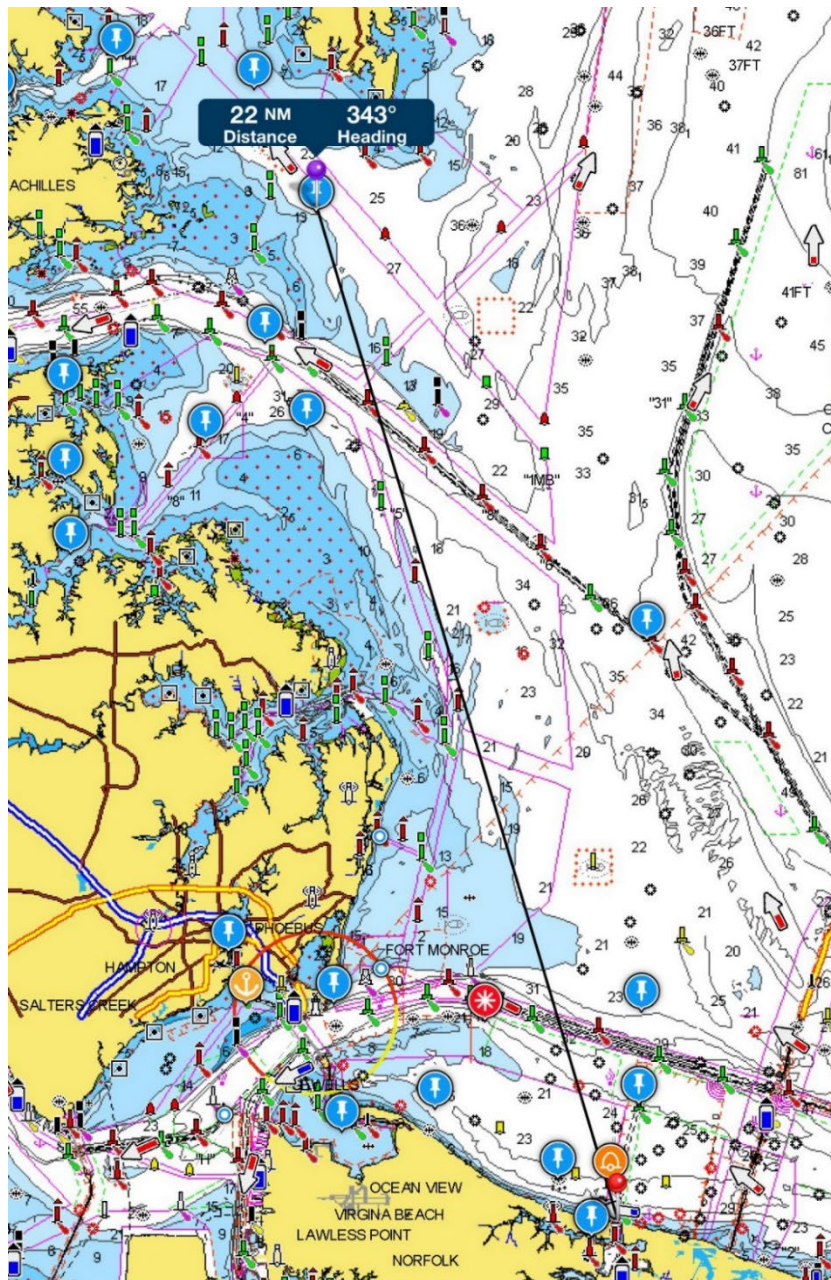


Figure 2: Route from Little Creek to Mobjack Bay entrance

Notice the Poquoson Flats Channel that extends north from marker 2PF and (light blue section above). You can follow the channel or go outside to the east. There is plenty of depth if you do not stray too far to the west onto Poquoson Flats (see the 3-foot section).

Caution: Even though the course from Little Creek to Mobjack is a straight line, beware of setting your autopilot without maintaining a proper watch. There are lots of buoys along the route. You do not want to hit one, because they are hard and heavy.

Once you are in Mobjack, you can turn to your desired destination, usually up one of the rivers.

Destinations within Mobjack Bay

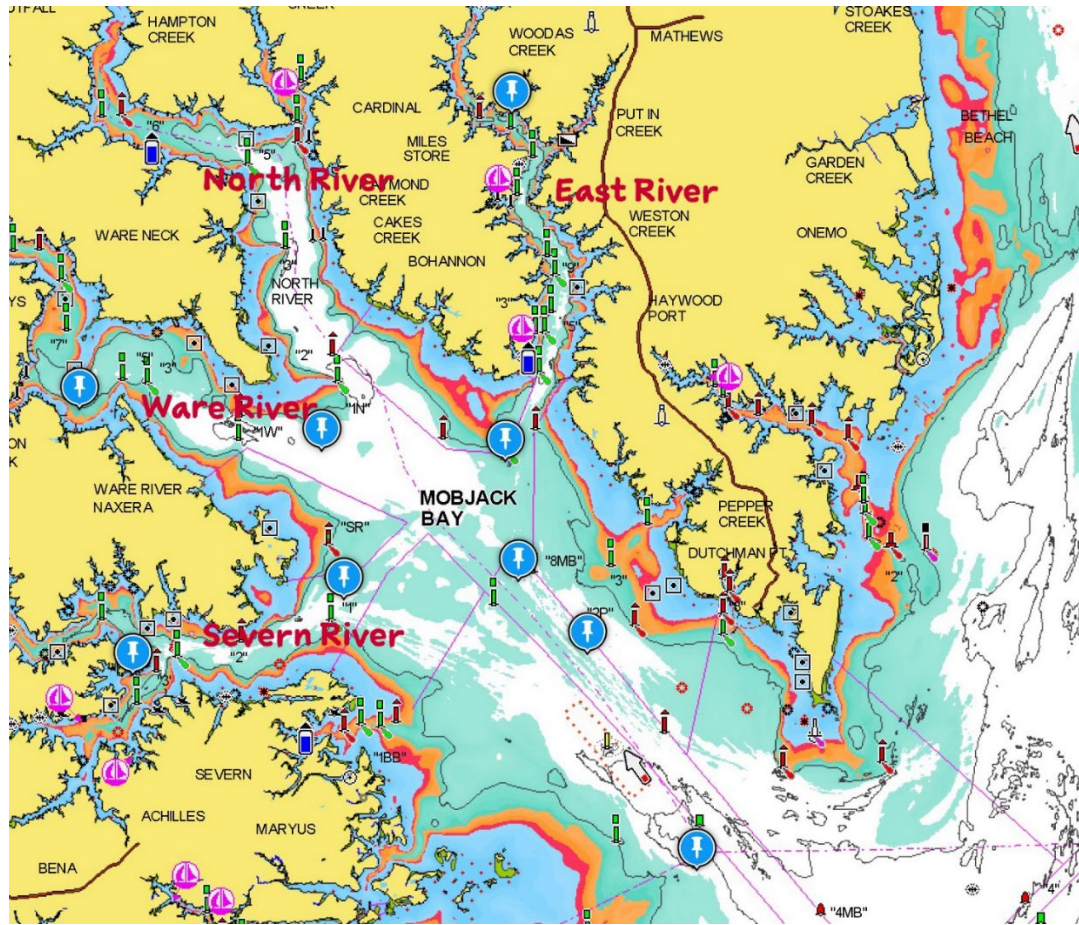


Figure 3: Mobjack Bay with primary rivers labeled.

New Point Comfort

Anchoring off New Point Comfort at the north entrance of Mobjack Bay is a beautiful fair-weather anchorage, offering beautiful vistas of the Chesapeake Bay and Bay traffic as well as unbelievable sunsets and sunrises. Be sure to check the weather forecast or move upriver for the night. Swells can be a problem close to the Chesapeake Bay even when the weather seems mild. Thunderstorms with strong rotating winds are a frequent visitor during summer evenings. Be prepared and make sure your anchor is well set.

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East River

Summary

East River is the first river on the north side of Mobjack Bay as you head west. I would estimate that East River is the most visited anchoring river by Hampton Roads sailors. It is deep, well-marked and beautiful. It offers multiple anchoring locations for protection from any direction. With multiple landing spots for dinghies, the river is popular for taking a hike or walking the dog. You can even dinghy into Mathews for dinner or lunch. Traditionally, Broad Bay Sailing Association, along with other sailing clubs, cruise to East River for Memorial Day.

East River is also the home to [Zimmerman's Marine](#), a boatyard that specializes in catamarans. They do not accept transients.

Navigation

It is about 29.8 NM from Little Creek Entrance to Williams Wharf in East River. The river is well marked the entire length of deep water. From the entrance of East River (marker #2), the distance is about 2.8 NM to William's Wharf.

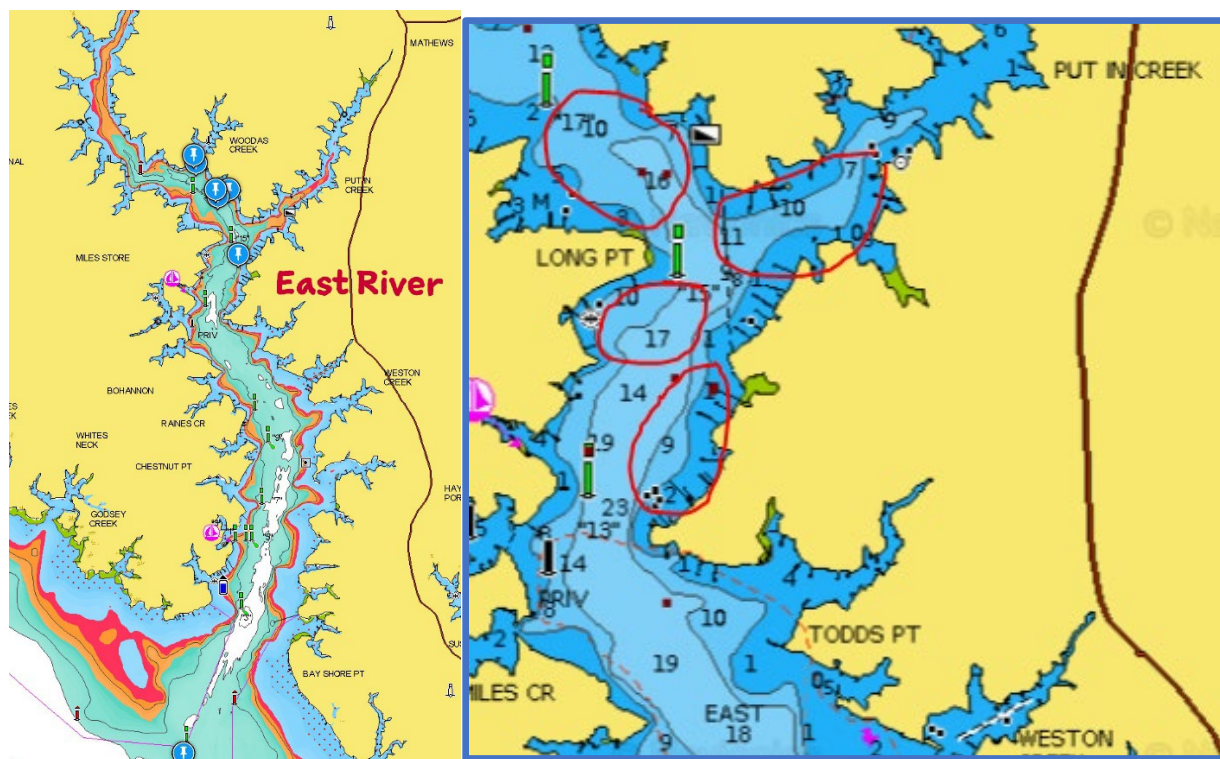


Figure 4: East River (left) and favorite anchorages (right).

Anchoring

You can anchor all along the river on either side and out of the channel, but most sailors head further up the river past William's Wharf. You can pick any of the circled locations in Figure 4, depending on the wind direction, number of boats, or your preference. In the cooler months you can pull up closer to

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shoreline protection, but in the summer months, you may want to keep your distance in order to get some breeze and avoid the insects.

When anchoring along the edges, keep an eye out for crab pot floats. They have a habit of moving under your prop overnight. Some spots are quite muddy, so make sure your anchor is set before you settle down or turn out the lights.

Going Ashore

Williams Wharf offers easy access to a public area and the road to town. You cannot pull your sailboat up to the docks, so you need to dinghy over. Recently, a new kayak dock was added. I am not sure if they approve of dinghies using that dock but last time I was there, no cleats had been installed. There are other spots to pull in with a dinghy.



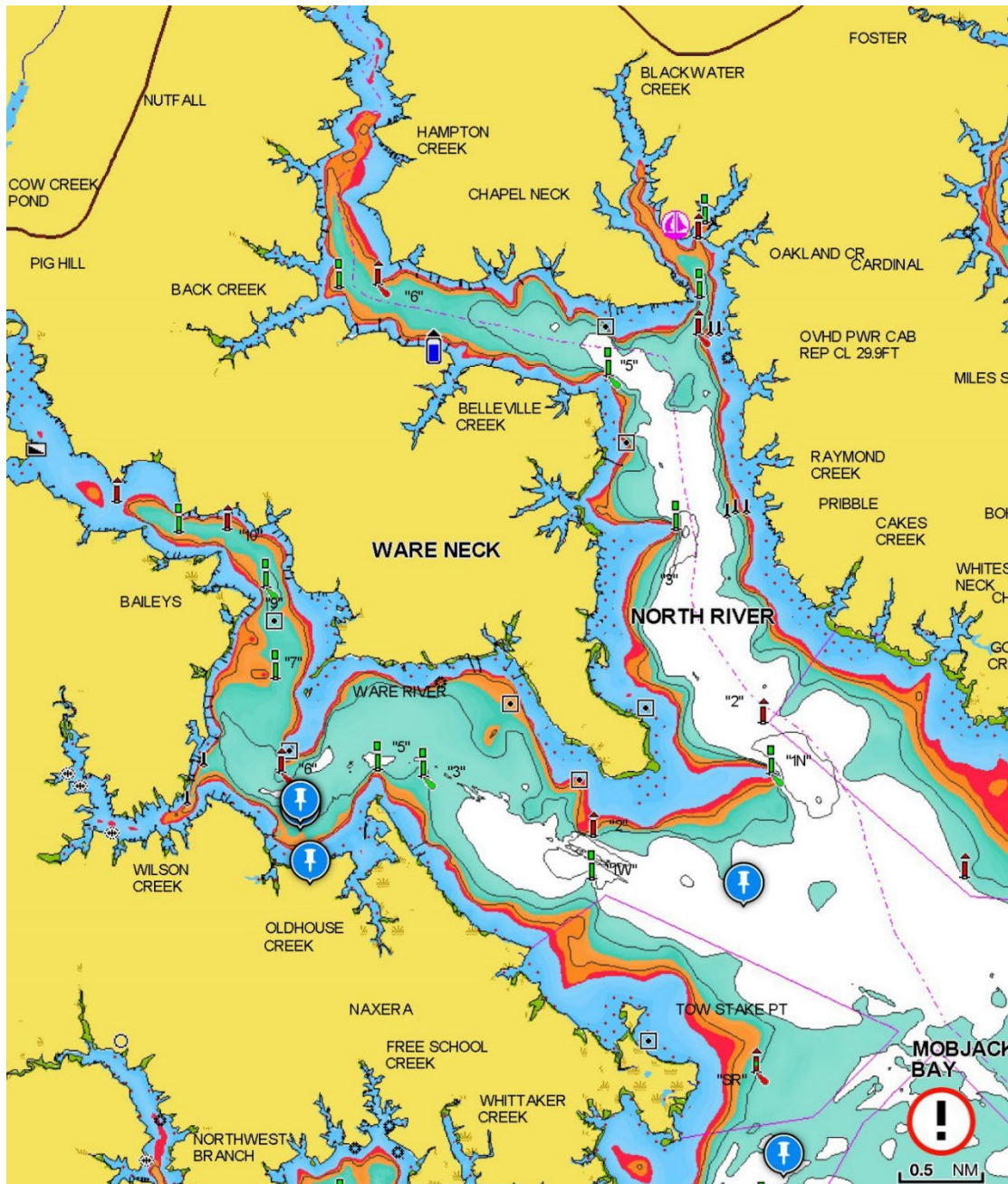
Figure 5: Williams Wharf with kayak dock in the foreground.

If you time the tides correctly, you can dinghy up **Put In Creek to Mathews**. You can tie up to a public kayak dock when you reach the town. It is about 1.6 NM from the entrance of Put In Creek to the kayak dock in Mathews. The upper reaches of the creek get very shallow and even dry at low tide, so be sure to visit Mathews with the proper time window for your intended stay.

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North River

Another pretty and secluded river, the North River is a nice change of pace. For east-west winds, you can anchor just about anywhere south of marker 5. For north-south winds, you can find adequate depth past marker 5, but watch the depths as you progress up the river.



Ware River

Similar to North River, you can anchor almost anywhere if the winds are light. For best protection in a south wind, try anchoring just south of marker 6.

Severn River

In light winds, you can anchor anywhere out of the channel and where you have enough depth in the lower part of the river. As you move upstream, you will encounter two branches at marker 7: northwest and southwest. The northwest channel continues the marker numbers from the entrance of the Severn, while the southwest branch starts over at #1, so don't get confused.



Southwest Branch of Severn

There is a wide bay on the right as you enter the southwest branch, but I tend not to use that bay because it contains some uncharted shallow spots and it is somewhat exposed in strong winds. The southwest branch is also home to the Severn Yachting Center. It is rumored that they have a new lift that can handle large catamarans. The marina and people are nice, but some slips can get shallow.

The depths off the marina are sufficient for most boats, but can get shallow and the bottom is a dark, thick mud. I find the anchorage there a bit exposed, mainly because during summer months the prevailing winds are SW. I tend to prefer the Northwest Branch.

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Northwest Branch of Severn

You can anchor in multiple locations within the Northwest Branch, such as the north side after passing Cedar Point, but some of those areas have some shoaling spots. If you are comfortable weaving your way in and finding a spot with enough swinging room, the north side of the branch provides nice protection from the north and a pleasant view.

If you continue up the Northwest Branch past green #5, you can ease your way into a nice opening in the river that is protected from the east and south and somewhat protected from the north, depending on the wind strength. To the north, is a span of marsh land the blocks wave action but not heavy winds.

The location is secluded and pretty with lots of river to explore with the dinghy. There is plenty of room for multiple boats. Over the past few years, the location has been popular with the powerboat party crowd in the summer. So, if you like privacy, you may want to schedule your visits here during the spring and fall.

