A VISUAL NAVIGATION GUIDE

From Military Service to a Maritime Career

The map, the routes, the paperwork, and the people who hire — drawn as one picture-first guide for veterans charting a course into the maritime industry.

WHO IT'S FOR

Veterans & transitioning service members

HOW TO USE

Follow the routes page by page

BUILT FROM

Military-to-Mariner navigation workbook

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One Visual Language, Every Page

COLOR = DIRECTION

Every page uses the same four colors, so you always know which world you're looking at.

- AFLOAT — jobs where you go to sea
- SHORESIDE — maritime jobs on land
- BOTH WORLDS — blends sea and shore
- ACTION — the paperwork every route needs

ICONS = MEANING

Sixteen small signs repeat throughout the guide.

- Vessel & sea-service roles
- Industrial, port & office roles
- Credentials, records & applications
- Funding & benefit programs
- Where the jobs concentrate
- Schedules, rotations & hitches
- The question to ask yourself first
- Confirmed, verbatim guidance

METERS = VETERAN FIT

Filled dots show how strongly employers in that lane seek veteran experience — exactly as rated in the source workbook, never invented.

VERY HIGH · HIGH · MODERATE

Start on page 3. The master map shows every route at a glance; each following page zooms into one route. Every page after it is one route, drawn big.

Which Water Do You Want to Work On?

One service record. Three directions. Pick a lane.

YOUR MILITARY SERVICE

ANY BRANCH · ANY RATING · ANY RANK

GO AFLOAT

Take your skills to sea

PAGES 5–14

DECK PATH

OS → AB → Mate → Master

ENGINE PATH

QMED → Licensed Engineer

- Towing
- Offshore
- Research
- Inland rivers
- Ferries
- Government

BOTH WORLDS

Blend sea + shore + technology

PAGES 12, 15–18

RAS

ROBOTIC & AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS

Remote operations · field testing · sensors · controls · vessel trials · systems integration

SEA · SYSTEMS · SHORE

Sometimes goes to sea. Often works from a remote operations center, lab, dock, or test site.

STAY SHORESIDE

Maritime work on land

PAGES 5–9, 16–18

- Shipyards
- Port operations
- Logistics
- Maintenance
- Safety
- Manufacturing
- Workforce
- Defense base
- Autonomy / RAS

Most shoreside roles need no MMC. Technical roles may blend lab, waterfront, and occasional vessel work.

PICK THIS IF

You miss being underway, or want a licensed path that grows with sea time.

PICK THIS IF

You want technical work spanning remote operations, waterfront testing, and occasional sea duty.

PICK THIS IF

Home every night matters more than sea time, or your trade skill sails with you.

START → DD-214 → Sea service records → MMC → TWIC

Every route starts with the same paperwork. See page 4.

FIND YOUR BRANCH: NAVY 5–6 · COAST GUARD 7 · ARMY 8–9

Five Documents Open Every Door

Before choosing a lane, line up these five. Nothing on the map moves without them.

DD Form 214 EVERY ROUTE

Your certificate of release or discharge — the key that proves veteran status and unlocks benefits.

DOCUMENT MILITARY SERVICE AND VETERAN STATUS. FREE COPIES: NATIONAL ARCHIVES VETERANS' RECORDS SERVICE

A DD Form 214 alone is usually **not enough** to substantiate sea service for an MMC evaluation — detailed vessel, assignment, duty, and service documentation matter.

Sea Service Letter AFLOAT

Employer or service documentation of your qualifying time and duties aboard vessels — critical for credential evaluation.

FEEDS YOUR MMC SEA-SERVICE EVALUATION.

Service Transcript ALL LANES

Your military education and training record — e.g. the Joint Services Transcript — documenting courses and learning.

TRANSLATES SCHOOLS & COURSES INTO CIVILIAN TERMS.

MMC — Merchant Mariner Credential AFLOAT

The Coast Guard-issued credential most mariners need on qualifying U.S.-flag vessels. Endorsements depend on the job, route, tonnage, sea service, exams, and medical review.

CORE CREDENTIAL FOR VESSEL WORK.

TWIC — Transportation Worker Identification Credential MOST JOBS

TSA identity credential for access to secure maritime facilities — frequently requested for ports, terminals, and vessel operations.

SECURE-AREA ACCESS AT PORTS & TERMINALS.

DOCUMENT YOUR SERVICE, WHICHEVER BRANCH YOU SERVED

For Navy, Coast Guard and Army vessel experience, collect vessels, dates, tonnage, horsepower, waters and duties. Keep training transcripts, licenses and course certificates; a DD Form 214 alone does not establish qualifying sea service. Army mariners: request the Transcript of Sea Service from the Maritime Qualification Division at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, or use SF-180. See pages 19–20 for supporting records.

Your Job Already Has a Civilian Twin

NAVY · DECK, NAVIGATION & LEADERSHIP

Navy Boatswain's Mate

"Do you want a vessel-based career, a home-most-nights maritime role, or both?"

PREP Obtain Sea Service Letter, assignment history, training records, qualifications, and DD Form 214.

AFLOAT

Able Seaman; towing deck crew; mate track; ferry operations.

SHORESIDE

Port operations; terminal operations; marine construction; vessel operations support.

Navy Quartermaster

"How much bridge/navigation/watchstanding experience can be documented?"

PREP Gather watchstanding records, navigation qualifications, course certificates, Sea Service Letter, and assignment history.

AFLOAT

Able Seaman; mate track; navigation/officer pathway; Dynamic Positioning Operator pathway after progression.

SHORESIDE

Vessel scheduling; operations center; port operations; maritime safety; logistics coordination.

Navy Operations Specialist

"Do you prefer operations-center work, bridge work, or field/terminal work?"

PREP Document operational watchstanding, systems experience, supervisory roles, and security clearances where relevant.

AFLOAT

Able Seaman/mate-related pathways where qualifying watchstanding exists; operations support.

SHORESIDE

Port operations; vessel scheduling; operations center; maritime security; logistics coordination.

Navy Surface Warfare Officer

"Do you want to pursue a civilian license or apply leadership experience shoreside?"

PREP Document shipboard billets, navigation/watchstanding, leadership scope, sea-service records, and relevant courses.

AFLOAT

Mate-to-master pathway, subject to civilian licensing requirements; government-vessel opportunities.

SHORESIDE

Program management; operations leadership; shipbuilding; defense industrial base; safety/compliance.

Logistics Specialist / Supply Corps

"Do you want operations, procurement, supply chain, or port/terminal work?"

PREP Translate inventory, procurement, contracting, transportation, and leadership accomplishments into civilian terms.

AFLOAT

Vessel supply and operations-support roles.

SHORESIDE

Maritime logistics; procurement; supply chain; port logistics; contracting; warehousing.

Your Civilian Job Twin

NAVY · ENGINEERING & CONSTRUCTION

Navy Engineman

"Do you want engine-room sea time or technical maintenance work ashore?"

PREP Document engine-plant duties, maintenance records, qualifications, Sea Service Letter, and technical training.

AFLOAT

QMED; engineer track; government-vessel engine roles.

SHORESIDE

Vessel maintenance; marine technician; shipyard maintenance; marine equipment support.

Navy Machinist's Mate

"Which systems did you maintain, and do you want to sail or work in a maintenance facility?"

PREP Gather training transcripts, qualifications, maintenance certifications, assignment history, and sea-service documentation.

AFLOAT

QMED; engineer track; specialized propulsion/maintenance roles.

SHORESIDE

Shipyard maintenance; marine manufacturing; machinery repair; field service; defense industrial base.

Navy Gas Turbine Technician

"Do you want a vessel engineering path or high-skill equipment-maintenance work ashore?"

PREP Document technical schools, equipment/platform experience, qualifications, and maintenance history.

AFLOAT

QMED/engineer pathway where qualifying requirements are met.

SHORESIDE

Turbine/propulsion maintenance; manufacturing; field service; shipyard or defense maintenance.

Navy Nuclear-Trained Personnel

"Is maritime specifically the goal, or is high-reliability technical work more broadly the priority?"

PREP Translate technical experience into plain-language resume bullets; retain training/qualifications as permitted.

AFLOAT

Engineer pathway may be attractive but requires civilian credential review; highly technical vessel opportunities.

SHORESIDE

Defense industrial base; power/propulsion systems; quality; maintenance; engineering; program management.

Seabee / Construction Battalion

"Are you open to travel and project-based construction schedules?"

PREP Gather trade qualifications, equipment certifications, safety training, project history, and supervisory experience.

AFLOAT

Dredging or marine-construction vessel roles where applicable.

SHORESIDE

Marine construction; waterfront infrastructure; heavy equipment; shipyard trades; project supervision.

Your Civilian Job Twin

COAST GUARD

Coast Guard Boatswain's Mate

"Are you seeking commercial vessel work, port/waterfront operations, or a federal role?"

PREP Obtain service/sea-time documentation, qualifications, training certificates, and cutter/small-boat records.

AFLOAT

Able Seaman; mate track; towing; ferry operations; government vessels.

SHORESIDE

Port operations; terminal operations; marine safety; waterfront operations.

Coast Guard Machinery Technician

"Do you prefer hands-on repair, management, or a seagoing engineering ladder?"

PREP Document machinery duties, technical courses, cutter sea time, and maintenance qualifications.

AFLOAT

QMED; engineer pathway; cutter or government-vessel opportunities.

SHORESIDE

Vessel maintenance; repair yards; marine equipment; port and waterfront technical support.

Coast Guard Officer

"Do you want civilian vessel command progression or shoreside regulatory/operations leadership?"

PREP Preserve cutter/sector assignments, leadership scope, inspections/safety experience, training records, and service documentation.

AFLOAT

Master/mate pathway where qualifications and civilian requirements align; government vessels.

SHORESIDE

Port management; maritime safety; compliance; operations leadership; emergency management; program management.

ANY BRANCH · SENIOR LEADERS

Senior Enlisted Leader / Chief

"Do you want direct people leadership, training, operations, or technical supervision?"

PREP Build a civilian resume that quantifies team size, budgets, equipment, readiness, training, and outcomes.

AFLOAT

Senior vessel roles after credential progression; crew leadership.

SHORESIDE

Program management; training; operations supervision; workforce development; shipyard/terminal leadership.

Your Civilian Job Twin

ARMY · WATERCRAFT · SOLDIER-MARINERS

Army 88K Watercraft Operator

"Which Army vessels did you crew (Logistics Support Vessel, Landing Craft Utility, tug, Maneuver Support Vessel (Light), causeway), on what waters, and do you want to keep sailing commercially?"

PREP Request the Army Transcript of Sea Service from the Maritime Qualification Division (Joint Base Langley-Eustis) or use SF-180; gather Army Marine Certification level, Army Marine License (vessel-specific), Marine Radar Observer certificate, Coast Guard-approved Army course certificates, and DD Form 214.

AFLOAT

Ordinary Seaman / Able Seaman; towing deck crew; Mate of Towing Vessels and mate track; ferries; offshore support vessels; government vessels (MSC, NOAA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers).

SHORESIDE

Port and terminal operations; cargo and vessel loading; vessel operations coordination; marine construction support; waterfront operations.

Army 88L Watercraft Engineer

"Which engines, generators, hydraulics, and auxiliary systems did you run and maintain, and on vessels of what horsepower?"

PREP Request the Army Transcript of Sea Service (vessel horsepower and tonnage matter for engine endorsements); gather Army Marine Certification/License records, maintenance qualifications, technical course certificates, and DD Form 214.

AFLOAT

QMED; engineer track (assistant engineer / Designated Duty Engineer pathways); towing and offshore support vessel engine rooms; government vessels.

SHORESIDE

Vessel maintenance and repair; marine diesel and power-generation technician; shipyard machinery trades; field service; marine manufacturing.

Army 880A Marine Deck Officer · Warrant Officer

"Do you want to pursue civilian vessel command, or apply vessel-command and crew-leadership experience in shoreside fleet or port leadership?"

PREP Document vessel class (Class A1/A2), tonnage, waters, and command/position held on the Transcript of Sea Service; keep Army Marine License records, navigation and radar certificates, and leadership scope.

AFLOAT

Mate-to-master pathway, including towing and offshore vessels; government-vessel officer roles; subject to Coast Guard license evaluation.

SHORESIDE

Port captain; marine operations manager; vessel operations superintendent; maritime safety and compliance; training; program management.

Army 881A Marine Engineering Officer · Warrant Officer

"Do you want a seagoing engineering-officer ladder, or fleet maintenance and engineering leadership ashore?"

PREP Document propulsion horsepower, plant type, engineering positions held, and maintenance-program leadership; keep Army Marine License records and engineering course certificates.

AFLOAT

Assistant engineer to chief engineer pathway; towing, offshore, and government-vessel engineering officer roles; subject to Coast Guard license evaluation.

SHORESIDE

Port engineer; fleet maintenance manager; shipyard repair or project management; marine surveying; defense industrial base.

Your Civilian Job Twin

ARMY · CARGO, LOGISTICS & CONSTRUCTION

Army 88H Cargo Specialist

"Do you want hands-on terminal and equipment work, cargo planning, or logistics coordination?"

PREP Gather equipment operator licenses (cranes, forklifts, container handlers), hazardous-materials and cargo documentation training, and prepare for TWIC.

AFLOAT

Limited afloat fit; deck roles may be possible where qualifying vessel service is documented.

SHORESIDE

Port and terminal operations; longshore/stevedoring; crane and cargo-handling equipment operation; cargo planning; maritime logistics.

Army 88N Transportation Management Coordinator / Transportation Officer

"Are you most interested in logistics planning, port coordination, or supply-chain management?"

PREP Translate movement planning, transportation documentation, scale of shipments, and systems used into civilian logistics terms.

AFLOAT

Generally shoreside; vessel operations-support roles possible.

SHORESIDE

Maritime logistics and supply chain; freight forwarding; port logistics; vessel scheduling; defense transportation contractors.

Army Engineer, including 12C Bridge Crewmember

"Are you open to project-based construction schedules, travel, or dredging and workboat roles?"

PREP Gather equipment qualifications, boat-operator records, safety training, and project history; ask whether any boat time is documented for possible small-vessel credit.

AFLOAT

Dredging and marine-construction vessel roles; small-boat and workboat operations where qualifying service is documented.

SHORESIDE

Marine construction; waterfront infrastructure; heavy equipment; shipyard trades; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers civilian roles.

The Deck Ladder — Bow to Bridge

Six rungs from first civilian footing to full command. The **clock** on each rung shows the typical time to reach it.

1

Ordinary Seaman (OS)

TIME TO GET HERE **Immediate to several months after documentation, medical review, and hiring process**

Entry-level deck crew: maintenance, cleaning, painting, line handling, basic deck work, and vessel operations support.

●●●○ HIGH VETERAN FIT ALIGNS: Navy / Coast Guard shipboard; changing fields; Army 88K

2

Able Seaman (AB)

TIME TO GET HERE **Often months after documentation review; longer if sea-time, course, or assessment gaps remain**

Skilled deck crewmember and watchstander: mooring, anchoring, maintenance, bridge watches, cargo work, towing support, and emergency duties.

●●●● VERY HIGH VETERAN FIT ALIGNS: Boatswain's Mates; Quartermasters; OS; Army 88K

3

Mate (Third Mate, Second Mate, Chief Mate)

TIME TO GET HERE **Often 1–several years depending on qualifying service, credential route, exams, and training gaps**

Licensed navigation officer: bridge watches, navigation, safety, cargo operations, deck crew, compliance, and emergency response.

●●●○ HIGH VETERAN FIT ALIGNS: SWO; Coast Guard deck officers; senior QM; Army 880A / senior 88K

4

Dynamic Positioning Operator (DPO)

TIME TO GET HERE **Usually follows initial deck credentialing and required DP sea time; not normally a first civilian role**

Operates computerized systems that hold a vessel precisely on position and heading during offshore, construction, drilling-support…

●●●○ HIGH VETERAN FIT ALIGNS: Quartermasters; OS; Coast Guard watchstanders; Army 880A

5

Master (Captain)

TIME TO GET HERE **Multi-year progression in most cases**

Commands the vessel, crew, safety system, operations, navigation, and regulatory compliance.

●●●○ HIGH VETERAN FIT ALIGNS: SWO; Coast Guard officers; senior mates; Army 880A

6

Marine Pilot

TIME TO GET HERE **Multi-year, competitive pathway after significant licensed experience**

Boards vessels and pilots them through ports, harbors, rivers, and restricted waterways.

●●○○ MODERATE VETERAN FIT ALIGNS: **Senior mates and masters**

Coast Guard / Navy navigators; Army 880A after extensive civilian progression

The Engine Ladder — Fire Room to Chief

Two big rungs from skilled rating to licensed engineer.

1

Qualified Member of the Engine Department (QMED)

MONTHS TO MORE THAN A YEAR DEPENDING ON SERVICE CREDIT...

Skilled engine-room mariner supporting licensed engineers with machinery rounds, maintenance, propulsion support, pumps…

●●●● VERY HIGH Navy engineering ratings · Coast Guard Machinery Technician · Army 88L

2

Engineer (Third Assistant, Second Assistant, Chief Engineer)

OFTEN 1–SEVERAL YEARS BASED ON DOCUMENTED SERVICE...

Licensed engineering officer overseeing propulsion, electrical/mechanical systems, maintenance planning, watchstanding…

●●●● VERY HIGH Navy engineering ratings · Coast Guard engineering experience · Army 881A

INSIDE THE ENGINEER RUNG — ONE LICENSED LADDER

Third Assistant
First license — sailed with your QMED sea time plus exams

Second Assistant
More documented sea service, more assessments

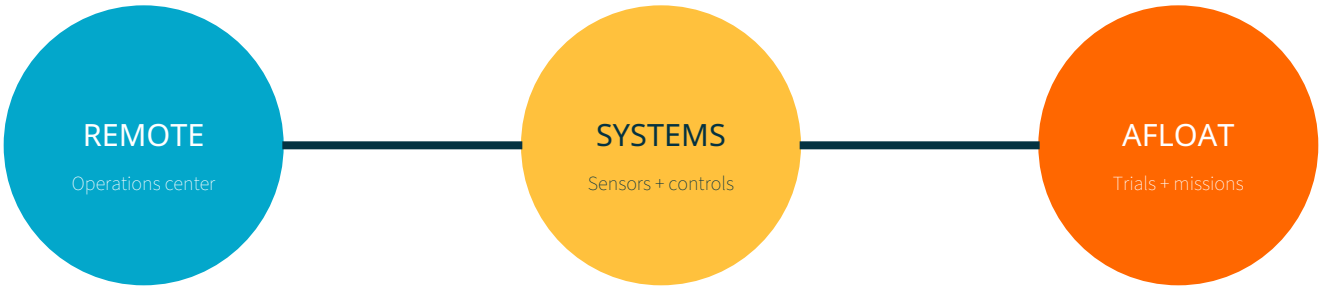
Chief Engineer
Top of the engine department — years, exams, leadership

Every step up is climbed the same way: documented sea service, exams, and assessments — the system already familiar from military advancement.

Document propulsion horsepower, plant type, engineering duties and qualifying sea service. Coast Guard review determines the civilian endorsement—not the military job title.

The New Bridge: Robotic & Autonomous Systems

A technical career that can move between shore, waterfront, and sea.



YOU MAY ALREADY HAVE

- Electronics troubleshooting
- Sensors + communications
- Propulsion or machinery
- Cyber + network operations
- Unmanned systems experience

WHERE THE WORK HAPPENS

- Remote operations center
- Lab or integration bay
- Dock or shipyard
- Waterfront test site
- Vessel deck / at sea

ILLUSTRATIVE ROLES

- Remote operator
- ROV / AUV technician
- Field-service representative
- Systems-integration technician
- Mission-systems operator

CAREER STAGE

Bridge Needed

ENTRY FRICTION

Moderate — technical skills, employer-specific training, and possibly TWIC/MMC/STCW or clearance depending on duties.

COMMON BRIDGE

Employer-specific technical training; an unclassified technical portfolio; controls, electrical, or electronic troubleshooting; and role-dependent TWIC, MMC, STCW, or clearance eligibility.

AUV | ROV | ROC | UMS | Systems integration

Where the Boats Work — Part 1

Towing, inland rivers, offshore support and government fleets lead the veteran-hiring pack.

Towing

●●●● VERY HIGH

ENTRY ROLES

Ordinary Seaman | Able Seaman | deckhand | tankerman trainee

WHY VETERANS SUCCEED

Boat handling, line work and machinery experience transfer from Navy and Coast Guard deck roles and Army watercraft roles. Army ST / LT (Small / Large Tug) experience includes barge handling and vessel assistance.

GEOGRAPHY

Gulf Coast; Atlantic Coast; Great Lakes; Mississippi River system and connected waterways.

Often a clear entry route for veterans open to rotational work.

Inland Waterways

●●●● VERY HIGH

ENTRY ROLES

Deckhand | Able Seaman | steersman track | engine-room roles

WHY VETERANS SUCCEED

Large operating workforce and many deck/engine pathways; documented vessel operations, safety and military teamwork are valued across branches.

GEOGRAPHY

Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Arkansas and Illinois River systems.

May require travel to crew-change locations or proximity to river ports.

Offshore Support Vessels (OSVs)

●●●○ HIGH

ENTRY ROLES

Able Seaman | mate track | QMED | engineer track

WHY VETERANS SUCCEED

Bridge, engineering, maintenance and safety experience can transfer across branches. Army LSV (Logistics Support Vessel) heavy-cargo and deck/engine experience can be relevant; civilian requirements still apply.

GEOGRAPHY

Louisiana; Texas; broader Gulf Coast.

Hiring and compensation can be sensitive to offshore energy and project cycles.

Government Vessels

●●●○ HIGH

ENTRY ROLES

Civil Service Mariner roles | Ordinary Seaman | Able Seaman | QMED

WHY VETERANS SUCCEED

Relevant Navy, Coast Guard and Army experience can fit mission-driven civilian fleets. Army 88K, 88L, 880A and 881A experience is relevant; hiring and credential eligibility remain job-specific.

GEOGRAPHY

Nationwide; major concentrations near Norfolk, San Diego, Jacksonville and Hawaii.

MSC mariners are federal civilians, not active-duty members. Army civilian-mariner openings are limited and location-specific.

APPLYING FOR A FEDERAL OR GOVERNMENT VESSEL JOB? (MSC, NOAA, ARMY CORPS)

SF-15 · Application for 10-point Veterans' Preference — used by federal agencies and OPM examining offices to decide veterans' preference claims.

Civil Service Preference Letter · States only your overall disability percentage, without identifying your specific disability. Available from VA.

Review the MSC rating chart to see how your military rating lines up with Civil Service Mariner jobs. Scan the code or visit sealiftcommand.com/veterans/mss-chart

MSC RATING CHART

Where the Boats Work — Part 2

Dredging, ferries and research — three more ways to be paid on the water.

Dredging

MODERATE–HIGH

ENTRY ROLES

Deck/engine crew | equipment operator | mechanic | welder

WHY VETERANS SUCCEED

Heavy equipment, engineering and construction skills transfer, including Navy Seabees and Army Engineers / 12C Bridge Crewmembers. Army LCU (Landing Craft Utility) and MSV(L) (Maneuver Support Vessel (Light)) shallow-water cargo and ramp experience can connect to workboats and marine construction.

GEOGRAPHY

Nationwide; coastal regions; major river systems; ports and waterways.

Gather equipment qualifications, safety training and boat records. Small-vessel credit depends on documented duties and Coast Guard review.

Ferries

MODERATE

ENTRY ROLES

Deckhand | Able Seaman | mate | engineer

WHY VETERANS SUCCEED

Public-service mission, vessel operations, engineering and passenger safety align with veteran backgrounds from any branch.

GEOGRAPHY

Northeast; Pacific Northwest; California; Great Lakes; urban waterfronts.

Can suit veterans seeking regional maritime work and more predictable living arrangements.

Research Vessels

MODERATE

ENTRY ROLES

Deck crew | engineers | electronics technicians | marine technicians

WHY VETERANS SUCCEED

Technical, scientific and mission-oriented experience can be relevant across branches, but roles are fewer and specialized.

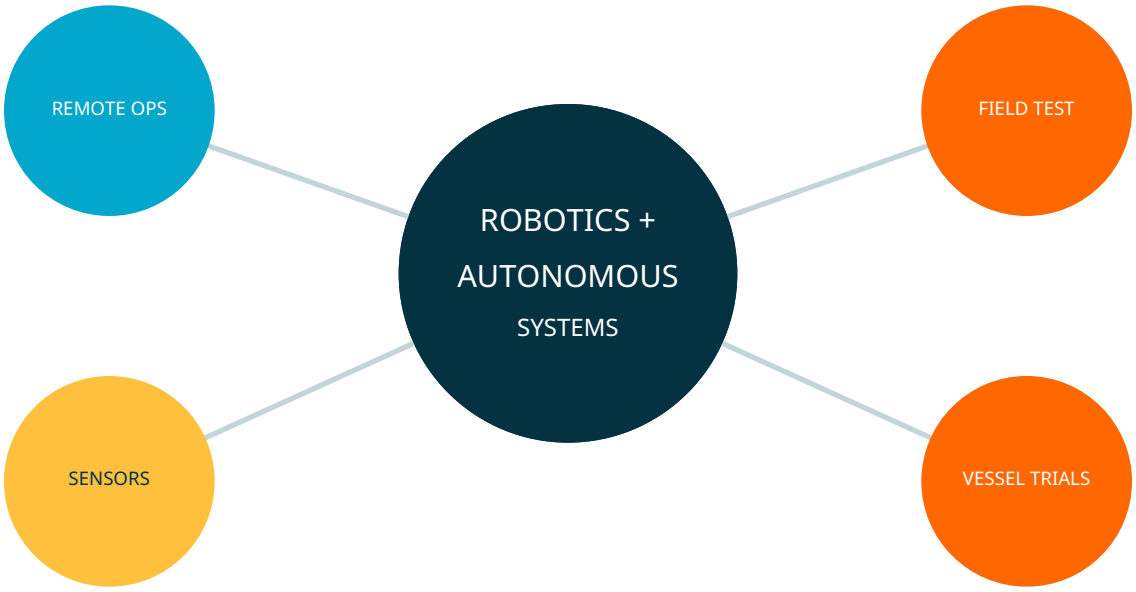
GEOGRAPHY

Woods Hole; San Diego; Seattle; Gulf Coast; Hawaii; academic and federal research hubs.

Smaller labor market; useful for technically specialized or mission-oriented applicants.

Where Maritime Technology Works

Robotic and autonomous systems create a new bridge across vessel, shore, and field operations.



ENTRY ROLES

- Remote operator
- ROV pilot / technician
- AUV technician
- Electronics technician
- Test engineer
- Controls technician

WHY VETERANS FIT

Veterans often bring mission discipline, navigation, technical maintenance, electronic troubleshooting, sensor operations, communications, security awareness, remote command-and-control experience, and operational risk management.

HIRING APPETITE	CAREER STAGE	MUST GO TO SEA?
High	Bridge Needed	Sometimes

GEOGRAPHY

Maine/New England; Hampton Roads; San Diego; Gulf Coast; Pacific Northwest; Great Lakes; defense and ocean-technology hubs.

Eleven Shoreside Careers That Fit Veterans

Home-most-nights maritime work — plus one hybrid technology path.

Shipyards

Build, repair, modernize, overhaul, and sustain vessels and naval platforms.

●●●● EXCELLENT

Port Operations

Manage terminals, cargo flow, vessel scheduling, security, yard operations, gate…

●●●● EXCELLENT

Marine Construction

Build and repair docks, bridges, seawalls, terminals, waterfront structures, offshore…

●●●○ STRONG

Maritime Logistics & Supply Chain

Coordinate cargo, transportation, warehousing, procurement, vessel provisioning,…

●●●● EXCELLENT

FROM: Logistics Specialists; Supply Corps; transportation personnel; contracting; warehouse and…

Vessel Maintenance & Repair

Repair engines, propulsion, electrical systems, electronics, hull components, and…

●●●● EXCELLENT

Program Management

Manage contracts, budgets, schedules, risks, people, shipbuilding programs,…

●●●● EXCELLENT

FROM: Officers; Chiefs; senior enlisted leaders; acquisition, operations, engineering, logistics, and…

Maritime Manufacturing

Produce marine engines, propulsion systems, navigation equipment, ship components,…

●●●○ STRONG

FROM: Technical ratings; mechanics; electricians; engineers; quality specialists; manufacturing…

Maritime Safety & Compliance

Lead safety systems, inspections, audits, environmental compliance, quality assurance,…

●●●● EXCELLENT

FROM: Coast Guard personnel; safety officers; quality-assurance professionals; inspectors; officers;…

Workforce Development & Training

Recruit, train, educate, place, and support maritime talent pipelines; operate…

●●●○ STRONG

FROM: Instructors; Chiefs; officers; human-resources professionals; recruiters; career counselors;…

Defense Industrial Base

Support Navy and Coast Guard shipbuilding, maintenance, modernization, weapons…

●●●● EXCELLENT

FROM: Nearly all military occupational specialties; especially technical, logistics, engineering, cyber,…

Robotic & Autonomous Systems

Design, build, integrate, test, operate, maintain, supervise, and support maritime…

●●●● EXCELLENT

FROM: Robotics Warfare Specialists; Electronics Technicians; Sonar Technicians; Fire Control…

Most shoreside roles do not require an MMC. Requirements vary by employer and role; autonomy positions may include field tests, travel, shifts, or occasional vessel work.

Afloat or Shoreside? One Question Decides It

The source workbook calls this the best first conversation — here it is, drawn as a choice.

GO AFLOAT

A vessel-based career — blocks at sea, blocks home

- You live the rotation: 14/14, 28/28, hitch or voyage patterns — blocks at sea, blocks home.
- MMC + TWIC + medical certificate are the standard ticket; sea service must be documented.
- Towing & inland waterways rate **Very High** veteran hiring appetite; MSC rates **Very High** program strength.
- Concentrated on the Gulf Coast, river systems, Great Lakes, Alaska & major ports.

Ask yourself: “Do I want a vessel-based career?”

STAY SHORESIDE

A home-most-nights maritime role

- Local shift work near ports, yards and bases — overtime common around milestones.
- Usually **no MMC**; trade certifications, clearances and technical skills carry you.
- Shipyards, port operations, logistics, maintenance & defense base rate **Excellent** veteran fit.
- Follows the defense-industrial map: Maine→Virginia, Gulf, Wisconsin, California + every major port.

…or “a home-most-nights maritime role — or both?”

Your Skills Are the Starting Point

Translate what you can do — not only the title you held.

1 Navigation, watchstanding, seamanship

Deck operations; towing; ferries; government vessels; port operations; maritime autonomy operations.

Document watchstanding and sea service; assess MMC pathway; explore vessel or Remote...

2 Engines, propulsion, pumps, mechanical...

Engine department; vessel maintenance/repair; shipyards; marine manufacturing; robotic-system…

Translate equipment and maintenance experience; evaluate QMED/engineer route or employer...

3 Electrical systems, sensors, electronics

Marine electronics; shipyard electrical; autonomy/robotics; ROV/AUV systems; field service; test and…

Build unclassified technical portfolio; seek manufacturer training, controls/PLC...

4 Cyber, networks, communications, data systems

Remote operations; maritime cyber; autonomy support; port technology; mission systems; systems…

Translate tools and protocols in civilian terms; identify clearance eligibility and...

5 Supply, contracting, cargo, transportation

Maritime logistics; procurement; terminal operations; vessel provisioning; port logistics.

Translate scale, budgets, inventory, and outcomes; consider employer-specific logistics...

6 Safety, inspections, environmental compliance

Maritime safety; port safety; quality assurance; shipyard compliance; classification; environmental…

Identify desired sector; add relevant safety/quality/environmental training; translate...

7 Training, instruction, leadership

Workforce development; shipyard supervision; operations leadership; program management; technical…

Quantify team size, training outcomes, budgets, schedules, and performance results;...

8 Construction, heavy equipment, field operations

Marine construction; dredging; waterfront infrastructure; shipyard trades; equipment maintenance.

Capture trade and equipment qualifications; connect to apprenticeship, CTE, or employer...

9 Unmanned systems, remote operations, mission...

Robotic & Autonomous Systems; maritime technology; defense integration; testing; remote operations.

Translate work at an unclassified level; identify hardware/software/controls strengths;...

Credentials Decoded — Part 1

The alphabet of maritime work, drawn as ID badges.

MMC — **Merchant Mariner Credential**

WHO · Most mariners serving in roles requiring Coast Guard credentialing…

WHY · Core Coast Guard-issued credential for merchant mariners.

NOTE · Endorsements depend on job, vessel route, tonnage, horsepower, sea service…

TWIC — **Transportation Worker Identification Credential**

WHO · Many mariners and shoreside workers needing access to regulated…

WHY · Provides identity verification for secure maritime access.

NOTE · Frequently requested for ports, terminals, vessel operations…

STCW — **Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping**

WHO · Mariners working on vessels/routes where international standards…

WHY · Establishes internationally recognized training and certification…

NOTE · Applicability depends on vessel, route, position, and endorsement.

AB — **Able Seaman**

WHO · Deck crewmembers.

WHY · Indicates a qualified deck rating beyond entry-level Ordinary…

NOTE · Endorsement requirements vary by vessel service and sea-time category.

OS — **Ordinary Seaman**

WHO · Entry-level deck crewmembers.

WHY · Common initial deck role.

NOTE · May be a starting pathway for people who cannot yet qualify for AB.

QMED — **Qualified Member of the Engine Department**

WHO · Engine-room ratings.

WHY · Indicates a qualified engine-department rating.

NOTE · Endorsement category and duties depend on the specific role.

MILITARY RECORDS THAT SUPPORT YOUR CREDENTIAL REVIEW

Military records support evaluation; they do not automatically become civilian credentials.

SEA-SERVICE EVIDENCE

Across branches: document vessels, dates, tonnage, horsepower, waters and position. Army mariners request a Transcript of Sea Service (TOSS) from the Maritime Qualification Division at JBLE or via SF-180. A DD Form 214 alone is insufficient.

MILITARY QUALIFICATIONS

Keep branch-issued licenses, qualification records and training transcripts as supporting evidence—not automatic civilian credentials. Army examples: USAMC (U.S. Army Marine Certification), earned through the Marine Technical Examination; USAML (U.S. Army Marine License), vessel-specific and earned through a Duty Performance Test.

Credentials Decoded — Part 2

Six more badges — from watchstanding ratings to safety cards.

RFPNW — Rating Forming Part of a Navigational Watch

WHO · Deck personnel who participate in navigational watchkeeping.

WHY · Often relevant to deck watchstanding progression.

NOTE · Requirements are position- and route-specific.

DPO — Dynamic Positioning Operator

WHO · Deck officers and specialized offshore bridge personnel.

WHY · Supports precision vessel positioning for offshore and specialized…

NOTE · Usually builds on an established deck/officer career—not typically a first…

PMP — Project Management Professional

WHO · Shoreside program/project managers.

WHY · Recognized project-management credential.

NOTE · Helpful but not required for all management roles

OSHA — Occupational Safety and Health Administration

WHO · Construction, shipyard, manufacturing, maintenance…

WHY · Safety training commonly valued in industrial workplaces.

NOTE · Employers may specify course levels or site-specific safety requirements.

CDL — Commercial Driver License

WHO · Marine construction, logistics, transport…

WHY · May be useful for commercial driving or equipment-related roles.

NOTE · State-issued; requirements differ by class and endorsements.

NDT — Nondestructive Testing

WHO · Inspection and quality roles in shipyards, manufacturing…

WHY · Used to inspect materials/components without damaging them.

NOTE · Specialized certification path relevant to quality and inspection careers.

TRAINING CERTIFICATES TO KEEP—ANY BRANCH

Military records support evaluation; they do not automatically become civilian credentials.

MRO · MARINE RADAR OBSERVER

For deck personnel with radar training: keep certificates and confirm dates, renewal and endorsement requirements. Radar-observer training is relevant beyond Army; some Army licenses also require it.

COAST GUARD-APPROVED MILITARY COURSES

Keep completion certificates from your service and check the National Maritime Center's approved course list before paying for duplicate training. Approved Army Transportation School courses at Joint Base Langley-Eustis can satisfy some MMC training requirements; credit depends on the specific course and endorsement.

Funding & Training for the Transition

Benefits, paid pathways, fee relief and training—check the rules for your service and situation.

1	**GI Bill benefits**	**WHO QUALIFIES** Eligible veterans and dependents, depending on benefit chapter and program eligibility.	**CHECK / ACTION** Confirm the specific program—not merely the school—is approved.
2	**Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E)**	**WHO QUALIFIES** Eligible veterans with service-connected disabilities.	**CHECK / ACTION** Work with a VA counselor; eligibility and the approved plan determine coverage.
3	**Credentialing Assistance (CA) / COOL**	**WHO QUALIFIES** Serving members, subject to branch and component policy. Army programs include eligible Active Army, Reserve and Guard soldiers.	**CHECK / ACTION** Verify funding caps and approved credentials. Army COOL maps specialties to civilian credentials; use the applicable service resource.
4	**SkillBridge**	**WHO QUALIFIES** Eligible transitioning service members with command approval.	**CHECK / ACTION** Timing, command approval, provider availability and location are decisive.
5	**WIOA workforce programs**	**WHO QUALIFIES** Eligible jobseekers; veterans may receive priority in some workforce programs.	**CHECK / ACTION** Contact an American Job Center / Workforce Board; eligibility and training lists vary locally.
6	**State workforce grants**	**WHO QUALIFIES** Eligibility varies by state, region, income, dislocation, occupation and provider.	**CHECK / ACTION** Ask about incumbent-worker, dislocated-worker and sector-partnership programs.
7	**Employer sponsorship**	**WHO QUALIFIES** New hires or existing employees, depending on employer policy.	**CHECK / ACTION** Ask about upfront payment, reimbursement and service commitments.
8	**Apprenticeship / paid training**	**WHO QUALIFIES** Eligible applicants; program-specific requirements apply.	**CHECK / ACTION** Can provide income while gaining civilian experience.
9	**Military Sealift Command pathway**	**WHO QUALIFIES** Transitioning members and veterans meeting MSC and position requirements.	**CHECK / ACTION** Review sea-service and training records plus MMC, medical, passport and security requirements.
10	**Military-to-Mariner fee waiver**	**WHO QUALIFIES** Active-duty uniformed service members—not Army only. Confirm current Selected Reserve eligibility.	**CHECK / ACTION** Verify NMC rules for MMC evaluation, examination and issuance fee waivers; apply while eligible.
11	**Military maritime training**	**WHO QUALIFIES** Eligibility depends on service and program. Army Transportation School serves Soldier-Mariners and other government mariners.	**CHECK / ACTION** At JBLE, approved courses may count toward MMC requirements. Keep certificates and sea-service records.
12	**Reserve watercraft experience**	**WHO QUALIFIES** Program-specific entry and service requirements. Army Reserve watercraft is one option for veterans and students, including USMMA midshipmen.	**CHECK / ACTION** Potential vessel time, training and sea-service credit. Army units concentrate in MD, VA, FL and NC; confirm openings and travel.

Programs and funding change. Confirm eligibility, approved training, fees and service obligations with the program administrator.

REALITY CHECK

Rosters, Maps & Honest Unknowns

The three realities veterans ask about first — schedules, places, and pay.

THE RHYTHM OF SEA LIFE — ROTATIONS

Each square is one day.

14 / 14

Two weeks at sea · two weeks home



28 / 28

A month on · a month off



Voyage / hitch

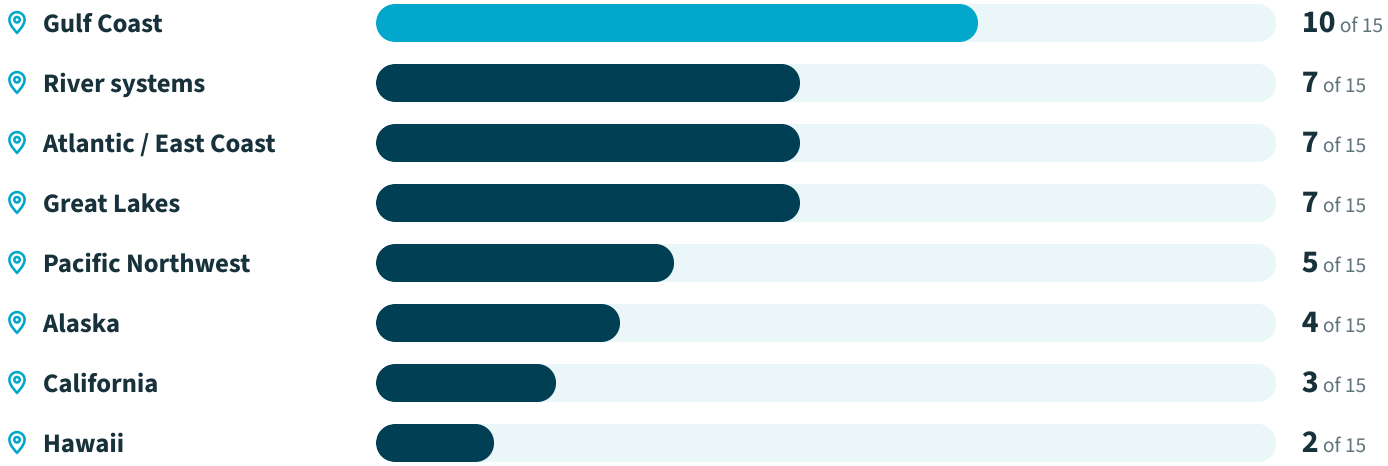
Set by employer & vessel route



Patterns vary by employer, vessel and route — ferries can mean home most nights; offshore hitches run longer.

WHERE THE JOBS ARE — GEOGRAPHY

How many of the 15 vessel roles and sectors in this guide name each region as a hiring hub.



Major ports: LA/Long Beach, NY/NJ, Houston, Savannah, Norfolk, Seattle

WHAT THE GUIDE WILL NOT TELL YOU

$

Compensation stays qualitative on purpose. Pay varies substantially by vessel type, overtime, union status, rotation, horsepower, route and employer — the workbook deliberately gives no dollar figures. Validate locally before advising anyone.

Turn Exploration Into a Plan

Eight actions. One month. A clear primary path and a backup.

DAY 1 · DAY 10 · DAY 20 · DAY 30

1 Days 1–3

Choose preliminary path: afloat, shoreside, maritime technology/autonomy, or a combination.

Selected pathway(s) and a short rationale based on interests, sea-time preference, and...

☐ COMPLETED

2 Days 1–7

Set non-negotiables: time at sea, rotation length, travel, relocation, home-most-nights...

One-page preference profile or intake form.

☐ COMPLETED

3 Days 1–10

Gather service and technical records: DD Form 214, Joint Services Transcript,...

Digital document folder and a list of records still needed.

☐ COMPLETED

4 Days 5–14

Create a civilian skills inventory using the Skills → Maritime Pathways tab.

One-page civilian skills inventory with examples and measurable accomplishments.

☐ COMPLETED

5 Days 7–21

Identify three realistic target roles and three employers/training partners for each.

Target-role/employer matrix with location, requirements, contacts, and next action.

☐ COMPLETED

6 Days 10–24

Check immediate requirements: passport, Transportation Worker Identification Credential,...

Requirements checklist showing complete, in progress, and unknown items.

☐ COMPLETED

7 Days 14–28

Speak with at least two employers and one credentialing, training, workforce, or...

Conversation notes: role, requirements, hiring timing, training support, and follow-up.

☐ COMPLETED

8 Days 21–30

Select one primary pathway and one backup pathway; set a 60–90 day action plan.

Written plan with milestones, owners, target dates, and required support.

☐ COMPLETED

FINISH LINE · One primary pathway + one backup + a 60–90 day action plan

Where Every Claim Comes From

Core public references behind this guide, plus the caveats that travel with them.

National Maritime Center	**MMC application process** www.dco.uscg.mil · Open reference
National Maritime Center	**Military Sea Service** www.dco.uscg.mil · Open reference
National Maritime Center	**Crediting Military Sea Service** www.dco.uscg.mil · Open reference
U.S. Coast Guard National Maritime Center	**Military-to-Mariner brochure (includes Army sea-service documentation)** www.dco.uscg.mil · Open reference
U.S. Coast Guard	**CG-CVC Policy Letter 15-03 (uniformed service vessels, including Army)** www.dco.uscg.mil · Open reference
MARAD	**Military to Mariner** www.maritime.dot.gov · Open reference
Army Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL)	**Army COOL overview** myarmybenefits.us.army.mil · Open reference
Department of the Army	**AR 56-9, Army Intratheater Watercraft Systems** apps.dtic.mil · Open reference
Department of the Army	**DA Pam 600-25, Transportation Career Management Field 88** api.army.mil · Open reference
U.S. Government Accountability Office	**GAO-25-106387, Army Watercraft** files.gao.gov · Open reference
Defense News	**The Army's new watercraft plan banks on autonomy, commercial ships** www.defensenews.com · Open reference
U.S. Army Reserve	**Army Reserve watercraft units brochure** www.usar.army.mil · Open reference
Army.mil	**Landing watercraft careers in the Army Reserve** www.army.mil · Open reference
Army.mil	**Army's mariner hub offers credentialing opportunities** www.army.mil · Open reference
Military Sealift Command	**Civil Service Mariners** www.msc.usff.navy.mil · Open reference
Military Sealift Command	**Conditions of Employment** sealiftcommand.com · Open reference
Military Sealift Command	**Resources** sealiftcommand.com · Open reference

THE FINE PRINT

- Planning tool only : compensation , timing , schedules , and requirements vary by employer , vessel , route , union agreement , and credential level . Validate before advising a candidate .
- Many shoreside maritime roles can be accessed without an MMC . Requirements are employer - and role - specific ; compensation figures should be validated locally .
- Funding programs change . Treat this as a navigation checklist and verify current rules with the benefit administrator , local workforce system , school certifying o ff icial , or employer .
- This is an orientation tool , not a substitute for the U . S . Coast Guard National Maritime Center or an employer ' s credentialing guidance .
- A DD Form 214 alone is usually not enough to substantiate sea service for an MMC evaluation ; detailed vessel , assignment , duty , and service documentation matter .
- Disclaimer : This workbook is a workforce - navigation resource , not legal , licensing , medical , financial , or employment advice . The U . S . Coast Guard and the relevant employer decide credential eligibility , employment requirements , and acceptance of military sea service . Compensation and schedule fields are intentionally qualitative because they vary materially by employer , role , location , contract , vessel , and market conditions .

ABOUT WAVEWORKS ALLIANCE

Building the ocean economy workforce

WaveWorks Alliance is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening the ocean economy workforce through workforce development, career awareness, education, and industry collaboration.

Our mission is to help more people discover, prepare for, and succeed in rewarding careers across the maritime, marine, and ocean industries. We work with employers, educators, training providers, workforce organizations, and community partners to expand awareness of career opportunities and support the development of a skilled workforce prepared to meet the evolving needs of the ocean economy.

LEARN MORE **www.waveworksalliance.org**

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Questions, feedback, or suggestions regarding this guide are welcome. We encourage employers, educators, workforce organizations, veterans, and job seekers to connect with us to share ideas and help strengthen the future maritime workforce.

THANK YOU FOR HELPING BUILD THE FUTURE MARITIME WORKFORCE.