

Anchoring Considerations (Using your GPS numbers properly)

A lot of people think all they have to do is to navigate to the GPS location they have, throw the anchor over the side, tie it off, and they will be located properly for what ever the location has to offer. This may happen once in a blue moon, but the majority of times it will not. There are many things to consider and remedies to be taken, to have this work out.

Some of the considerations are: the source of the numbers, the wind direction and speed at the time of acquiring the numbers, the tidal flow direction and speed at the time of acquiring the numbers, and the reason the numbers were acquired. Each of these considerations is equally as important for the proper use of the numbers.

GPS numbers are addresses to places that hold items of interest. For boaters this usually means navigation aids or a bottom structure that has interest in the form of fish and/or lobster to catch, or the beauty of nature to observe.

Without talking to and relying on the memory of the source of the numbers you cannot be sure of the original source of the numbers. Were they fishing numbers, diving numbers? Were the numbers taken over the spot or while anchored? If anchored, how did the wind and/or current effect boat position in reference to the desired spot?

You can see that the variables are many and you will need to do something to ensure you use the numbers as they were meant.

As a seasoned fishing and dive boat captain I have been successful in anchoring correctly. If you read and heed the following bit of advice you should be able to do the same.

First, I would like to point out that anchoring to fish is different than anchoring for diving. For fishing you want to anchor in such a way that your baited lines will end up in the fish, which normally means up wind and current. For diving you want to drop your anchor down wind or current just off the reef (or wreck) area, and have the divers go down the anchor line and swim into the current.

I normally have two marking jugs available in the cockpit. A jug is a bleach bottle with line wrapped around it and a weight attached. I normally use mono for the line. The circumference of a gallon bleach bottle is about 18 inches or a foot and a half. I ensure I have enough line wrapped to cover more than the probable depth of the water.

My procedure is as follows: I navigate to the GPS numbers and drop the first jug. Next I travel in ever increasing circles around the jug until I find the structure on my depth finder. (For extremely small spots this may take awhile.) I mark the structure with the second jug. (I also make note of the new GPS numbers and indicate it as structure). I then pull the first jug.

I now have the true location of the spot and need to anchor on it properly. For diving, if there is wind or current, I pull up to the jug and while watching the depth finder have the mate drop the anchor when I first clear the reef. I have him let out enough scope to ensure the anchor will not slip. I instruct the divers to go down the anchor line and they will find the reef in front of the anchor. If the wind and current is calm I will pull off the reef to drop the anchor to protect the reef from damage.

For fishing I need to take into account the speed of current and wind to decide how far ahead of the jug I need to drop the anchor for my bait to end up where the fish are. You may need to make adjustments with the change of current and wind velocity.

It sounds pretty simple, but it will take a little time to be able to get it right the first time. If you give this some thought the next time you need to anchor on your GPS numbers you will be way ahead of the normal weekender. Enjoy!

Captain Piper