



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

*Marine Resources Commission*  
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## **U.S. COAST GUARD HONORS TANGIER ISLAND MARINE POLICE OFFICER**

Newport News, Va. – The U.S. Coast Guard today honored Virginia Marine Master Police Officer Richard W. Pruitt of Tangier for his “vital assistance” in the investigation of the sinking of a commercial fishing vessel in April, which resulted in the death of a Tangier Island waterman and the rescue of his son.

Coast Guard Capt. Richard J. Wester, who is Captain of the Port of Hampton Roads, presented Officer Pruitt with the Coast Guard Sector Hampton Road’s “Command Coin” in a ceremony during the Virginia Marine Resources Commission monthly board meeting.

“You acted as a liaison between the involved party and the local fishing community on Tangier Island, to assist our investigating officer in gathering time-sensitive evidence and witness statements regarding the incident,” Captain Wester said. “The hospitality and vital assistance you provided during the multi-day investigation was critical to the identification of causal factors that could prevent similar tragic casualties from occurring again. On behalf for the United States Coast Guard, I extend to you my sincere appreciation for your assistance. Please accept this Sector Hampton Roads Command Coin as a token of our appreciation on a job well done. Bravo Zulu!”

On April 24, 2017 at approximately 2:30 pm, a distress signal was sent out by the late commercial watermen Edward Charnock, 70, and his son Jason Charnock, 39 that their boat, the HENRIETTA C, was sinking. The two commercial watermen were crabbing that day in high winds, rain and reduced visibility. A search began as soon as the radio call went out. The searchers found debris from the sunken boat and Jason Charnock was eventually rescued by a Good Samaritan and taken to the Tangier Island Health Center. A Smith Island waterman found

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Edward Charnock's body May 4 in the water about 5.5 miles southwest of Tangier toward the Rappahannock River. The father and son had been crabbing together for more than 20 years.

Officer Pruitt has been with the Marine Resources Commission since December of 1995. He graduated from the Virginia State Police Academy. He is one of two Marine Police Officers stationed full time on the island.

"I am honored to receive this recognition, but I accept this on behalf of all the members of the Virginia Marine Police," said Officer Pruitt. "We have such high respect for the Commonwealth's working water communities and know what a tough job it is earning a living as a commercial harvester. I have lived on Tangier Island all my life. I know the Charnock family very well. This hurts. I think about Ed Charnock every time I go on patrol. I keep all the watermen in my thoughts and prayers."

"We here at VMRC mourn the loss of anyone on our waterways but we hold a special place of honor and respect for our working watermen," said VMRC Commissioner John M.R. Bull. "I am constantly impressed by the dedication and passion watermen show in bringing to market genuine, high-quality, sustainably-caught seafood. And I am continually amazed at the devotion and can-do attitudes by the men and women of the Virginia Marine Police. I want to thank our partners in the Coast Guard for honoring the Virginia Marine Police in general and Officer Pruitt in particular in this way. I am touched and grateful."

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**Pictured from Left to Right:**

Col. Rick Lauderman, Chief, Virginia Marine Police

Capt. Richard Wester, Captain, USCG Hampton Roads Sector and Captain of the Port

John M.R. Bull, Commissioner, Virginia Marine Resources

Capt. Kevin Carroll, Deputy Captain of the Port

Master Police Officer Richard "Ritchie" Pruitt, Officer, Virginia Marine Police

Lt. Col. Warner Rhodes, Deputy Chief, Virginia Marine Police



**Presentation of the Command Coin**

Capt. Richard Wester, Captain, USCG Hampton Roads Sector and Captain of the Port  
Master Police Officer Richard "Ritchie" Pruitt