Rear Admiral Will E. Watson
Commander, Heartland District
U.S. Coast Guard

Rear Admiral Watson serves as Commander, Heartland District where he is responsible for Coast Guard operations spanning 26 states, including the Gulf of America coastline from the Florida panhandle to the United States border with Mexico, the adjacent offshore waters and outer continental shelf, and the inland waterways of the Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and Tennessee River systems.

In his previous assignment, he served as the Director of Governmental and Public Affairs, where he was responsible for external engagement with Congress, the media, and other inter-governmental entities.

Admiral Watson's operational tours include serving as Commander, Sector New Orleans from 2018-2022, where he directed all Coast Guard missions in an area of responsibility that includes the Louisiana Gulf Coast and the Mississippi River System from Baton Rouge to the Gulf of America - among the largest, and most complex coastal and port areas in the United States. Of note, during this tour of duty, he served as Incident Commander for Hurricane Ida Response and Recovery Operations following the catastrophic impacts of one of the most powerful hurricanes to ever make landfall on the U.S. mainland. Admiral Watson also served as Commanding Officer at Marine Safety Unit Lake Charles, Louisiana, from 2012 to 2015, and as Executive Officer at Marine Safety Unit Texas City, Texas, from 2010 to 2012. From 2005 to 2007, he served as Executive Officer at Marine Safety Unit Cleveland, Ohio. During this tour of duty, in 2005, he deployed to Joint Field Office Baton Rouge in support of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Response and Recovery Operations.

Admiral Watson's staff assignments include serving as Senior Military Assistant to the Secretary of Homeland Security, as Executive Assistant to the Vice Commandant, and as Congressional Affairs Liaison.

Admiral Watson holds a Master of Science in National Security Strategy from the National War College in Washington, D.C., a Master of Business Administration from Loyola University, New Orleans, Louisiana, as well as a Master of Arts in Education and a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana. Admiral Watson is a 2016-2017 Fellow of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Seminar XXI on Foreign Politics, International Relations and the National Interest. He has earned numerous personal, unit, and service awards during 30 years of service.