

GNOPSC Harbor Safety Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held Wednesday, September 2, 2026

The following representatives were in attendance:

Attendee	Affiliation	Attendee	Affiliation
Craig Broussard	ADM/ARTCo	John Rutherford	Lanier Engineers
Dana Crotwell	ADM/ARTCo	John Maurin	Lanier Engineers
Frank Martinez	American Maritime Svcs.	Vaughn McDaniel	LeBeouf Bros. Towing
Jill Bessetti	AWO	Faisal Mallum	LSUNO
Jason Mott	Bar Pilots	Gary Frommely	Manthey Hospitality
Ryan Gaubert	Boh Bros.	Iam Burnette	Marathon Petroleum
Nick Fleming	Boh Bros.	Eric Anderson	McDonough Marine
Ed Landgraf	CAMO/MarineSafe811	Pat Stant	McDonough Marine
Cherrie Felder	Channel Shipyard	Lisa McGoey	MVTTC
Sean Duffy	Coal Coalition	Steve Wall	NOBRA Pilots
Kevin Jacobs	Cooper Mooring	Amy Dawson	Port NOLA
Jason Andrews	Crescent River Port Pilots	Ryan Bergeron	Port NOLA
William Loga	Crescent River Port Pilots	Hartley Crunk	Reeflyne
Michael Bopp	Crescent River Port Pilots	Jeff Roesel	Regional Planning Commission
Steve Vogt	Crescent River Port Pilots	Jonathan Davis	Ret.
Eddie Pinner	Crescent Towing	Mario Munoz	Rio Mar Global
James Rousse	Crescent Towing	Phil Schiffilin	Seamens Church
Andrew Cooper	Crescent Towing	Mariangel Zarraga	Seaport Hub Agencies
Jean-Paul Richard	E.N. Bisso	Brad Chauvin	Turn Services
Hank Webster	Federal Pilots	Vic Landry	USACE
Bobbi Brothers	Global Environmental	Robby Swayze	USACE
Philip Vandercook	Global Maritime Ministries	Melanie Burnham	USCG
Stephen McKinney	Global Maritime Ministries	Chris Booth	USCG
Karl Gonzales	GNOBFA/Cooper Marine	Jake Gamble	USCG
Bruce Lambert	Go Group	Elise Forfinski	USCG
Michael Nation	Harbor Towing/Star Fleet	Brendan O'Conner	USCG
Todd Clower	Harbor Towing/Star Fleet	Scott Arbeiter	USCG
Matt Lagarde	Ingram Barge	Jon Scott	USCG
Leo Falgout	Kirby	Jeremy Schoonfield	USCG
Brandon Harris	Labmar Ferry	John Meek	USCG
Christine Titus	LAMA	Ben Adrien	USCG
Matt Denning	LAMA	Adam Authement	USCG
Cat WesterKamp	Lanier Engineers	Ben Walsh	USCG

The following reports were given:

Harbor Safety Committee Chairman, Mario Muñoz

Chairman Muñoz welcomed attendees and announced that the National Harbor Safety Committee Steering Team is seeking a local representative to participate in a national recreational boating safety initiative.

Christine Titus will attend the initial virtual meeting but asked members to consider volunteering to serve as the Committee's representative. The initiative is expected to require limited effort, with meetings held virtually and most of the work concluding once the initial project is completed. The American Waterways Operators is also participating in the initiative.

USCG Sector New Orleans, CAPT Melanie Burnham

CAPT Burnham thanked the maritime community for its continued partnership and support during her first two months as Sector Commander. She introduced several members of the Coast Guard's new and returning leadership team, including representatives from Marine Safety Unit Baton Rouge, Prevention, Waterways Management, Vessel Traffic Service, and Emergency Management. She emphasized that, despite several personnel changes, the Sector maintains significant continuity and remains prepared to support the maritime community.

CAPT Burnham thanked stakeholders for their coordination during Tropical Storm Bertha, including participation in port coordination calls and compliance with Regulated Navigation Area protocols. Impacts throughout the Sector New Orleans area of responsibility were minimal. She reminded members that the region remains in the peak of hurricane season and encouraged facilities and vessel operators to review their hurricane plans, secure loose equipment, monitor Marine Safety Information Bulletins, and continue participating in coordination calls.

The Coast Guard is also monitoring developing low-water conditions. The Carrollton Gauge was approximately five feet and was projected to fall to approximately 2.5 feet by mid-September. The Baton Rouge Gauge was approximately 15 feet and expected to fall to approximately 12 feet within the next several days. The Coast Guard will continue coordinating with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and industry as conditions develop.

Sector New Orleans recently conducted a cyber-resilience tabletop exercise with maritime stakeholders and state and federal agencies. Participants discussed how a significant cyber incident could affect river operations, possible changes to the MARSEC level, reporting procedures, and the government and industry partners that would need to be involved. The exercise identified areas requiring additional education and coordination. The Coast Guard plans to provide additional opportunities for stakeholders to practice and improve cyber-incident preparedness.

CAPT Burnham also discussed significant proposed and ongoing infrastructure investment throughout South Louisiana, including the proposed SpaceX expansion and the recently issued permits for the Louisiana International Terminal. She emphasized that the Harbor Safety Committee will be an important forum for stakeholder input as these projects develop. Future discussions will address safe waterway management, anchorage needs, navigation impacts, and responsible support for maritime growth.

USCG Sector New Orleans VTS – LCDR Chris Booth

LCDR Booth provided an update on the Coast Guard's next-generation Vessel Traffic Service modernization project. Three of the five potential vendors had visited VTS Lower Mississippi River to observe operations, inspect remote sites, and evaluate potential improvements to equipment, sensors, and system capabilities. Additional vendors were expected to visit during September.

Stakeholders were encouraged to submit comments regarding current VTS operations, desired improvements, and future system capabilities. LCDR Booth thanked the organizations that had already provided input and emphasized that additional feedback could still be incorporated into the project.

USACE – Michelle Kornick

Michelle reported that the Corps was monitoring both low-water conditions and saltwater intrusion. As of August 26, the toe of the saltwater wedge was near Mile 44. A recent rise in the river was expected to push the wedge downriver temporarily, after which it could begin advancing upriver again.

The Corps had been approaching the point at which construction of an underwater sill near Mile 64 might be necessary. If the sill is required, the Corps will notify navigation interests and coordinate the relocation of affected fleeting operations. All or part of Alliance Anchorage may also need to be closed during construction.

Dredging was underway at crossings between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, with additional dredges expected to become available. The Corps anticipated continuing crossing work for approximately another month, depending on river conditions. Dredging in New Orleans Harbor had recently been completed.

Dredging in Southwest Pass was scheduled to resume with two dredges. The channel was reported to be in good condition, and the work would primarily provide advance maintenance in preparation for the following year. Two additional contracts had been awarded to provide dredging capacity for the next low-water season.

The Corps also anticipated future dredging in South Pass and Baptiste Collette. Work in Baptiste Collette could begin as early as October, although the exact schedule had not been finalized.

During discussion, an industry representative reported significant shoaling near the Port Allen span of the U.S. 190 bridge. The Corps agreed to inspect the area and determine whether funding might be available to dredge it as equipment is moved upriver, potentially near the end of October.

USACE – Robby Swayze

Harvey Lock remains open but could close as early as next week because of falling river levels. The Coast Guard's Waterways Management staff would be asked to issue a notice requesting that vessels reduce speed when passing Harvey Lock to help prevent damage to the gates.

Daytime closures at Calcasieu Lock were continuing, with the work expected to conclude within approximately the next month.

Current dredging funds had been redirected to lock-related needs, limiting dredging activity during the present fiscal year. With the new fiscal year beginning in October, the Corps anticipates dredging at locations including Port Allen Lock and the 20 Grand area.

USACE – Vic Landry

The Corps announced that a Record of Decision had been signed for the General Reevaluation Report associated with the IHNC Lock Replacement Project. The decision clears the way for the project to proceed into design, subject to funding and any potential legal challenges.

The earliest anticipated construction would begin in the early 2030s. Construction is expected to take approximately ten years. The existing lock would remain operational while the new lock is constructed north of the current channel using a bypass channel. The Corps characterized the decision as significant progress following decades of delays and obstacles.

Bar Pilots – Captain Jason Mott

Captain Mott reported that flocculation-related restrictions along the Bar Pilots' route have been lifted and that the channel remains in good condition.

Crescent Pilots – Captain Michael Bopp

CAPT Bopp introduced members of the Crescent Pilots' board and discussed the rapid growth of LNG vessel traffic associated with Venture Global. The facility handled more than 200 vessels during the previous year and was expected to handle approximately 400 during the current year, with traffic potentially increasing to approximately 600 vessels annually within the next two years.

He explained that continued growth will require careful planning for tug availability, anchorages, vessel staging, and fog-season operations. Unlike LNG operations at some other ports, vessels calling on the Lower Mississippi River may need to use staging anchorages when docks are unavailable. The pilots are working with facility representatives to help them understand the operational realities of the river and plan for increasing traffic.

CAPT Bopp also announced a maritime business seminar scheduled for September 23 at The Sazerac House. The seminar is intended to give working pilots an opportunity to speak directly with vessel agents,

facilities, terminals, and other stakeholders about the operational considerations behind pilot decisions. Topics are expected to include vessel staging, anchorage assignments, vessel characteristics, and the factors considered when ordering a vessel to anchor. Additional information and invitations will be distributed separately.

NOBRA Pilots – Captain Steve Wall

The Association reported significant proposed development on the upper portion of the deep-draft channel, including steel and blue-ammonia projects. Particular attention is being given to pipelines and other infrastructure that may affect the ability to deepen the channel above Mile 180.

The channel currently provides a 50-foot draft up to Mile 180 and a 45-foot draft above that point. The Association expressed interest in continuing discussions regarding pipeline modifications, dredging, and other work that could eventually allow a deeper draft above Mile 180.

Federal Pilots – Hank Webster

Nothing To Report

AWO – Jill Bessetti

Jill Bessetti announced a regional roundtable scheduled for September 17 at the FMT training facility in Mandeville. A member-only session will be held from 2:00-3:00 p.m., followed by a discussion with CAPT Burnham and Coast Guard staff beginning at approximately 3:00 p.m. The discussion will focus on local and regional issues.

AWO also issued a member alert on August 31 regarding vessel-availability requests associated with a Jones Act waiver. Tank-barge owners were encouraged to submit available vessels to the Maritime Administration through the established process. AWO offered to redistribute the alert because the information may also be relevant to nonmembers and other companies able to provide vessels for domestic movements.

CAMO – Ed Landgraf

Ed Landgraf provided an update on pipeline construction and removal associated with expanding LNG infrastructure. New pipelines are being proposed and constructed to transport natural gas to liquefaction facilities.

Near Mile 183, three 20-inch pipelines are scheduled to be removed during the following summer. Initial stakeholder-engagement meetings may be held in October to begin planning the work. Significant coordination will be required because of the location and potential navigation impacts.

New 30-inch pipelines are also being installed beneath the river. One was installed during the previous year, and another was being drilled at the time of the meeting. Additional work will replace existing infrastructure. The project team will coordinate with the Coast Guard, pilots, and other affected stakeholders and will provide information as planning progresses.

A separate company is expected to remove pipelines in Tiger Pass. Because Tiger Pass does not carry significant deep-draft vessel traffic, the work is expected to have limited impact on major ship movements.

A Marine Infrastructure Safety Meeting will be held in Morgan City on September 23 from 9:30 a.m.-noon. The meeting will provide an opportunity for discussion of marine-infrastructure safety issues and will be followed by a Harbor Safety Committee meeting that afternoon.

Marine Industry Day Subcommittee

Our next Marine industry Day conference will be held on May 27, 2027 at the Higgins Hotel and Conference Center in New Orleans.

Announcements

Marine Industry Day is scheduled for May 27, 2027, at the Higgins Hotel.

Upcoming Propeller Club events include the Maritime Education Forum on September 9 and the Maritime Person of the Year Celebration on September 22, honoring Sean Duffy.

Global Maritime Ministries' annual Lighthouse Gala will be held September 24 and will honor Joseph Toomy and CAPT Gregory Callaghan. The maritime ministry also invited members to its regular industry lunches. A special Thanksgiving-themed luncheon will follow the Harbor Safety Committee's November 4 meeting.

Chairman Mario Muñoz adjourned the meeting. The next meeting of the GNOPSC Harbor Safety Committee scheduled for November 4, 2026.