

GNOPSC Harbor Safety Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held Wednesday, July 1, 2026

The following representatives were in attendance:

<i>Attendee</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Attendee</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Henry Peterson	Bar Pilots	Vaughn McDaniel	LeBeouf Bros. Towing
Ryan Gaubert	Boh Bros.	David Beerbohm	McDonough Marine
Sean Duffy	BRC, LLC	Steve Wall	NOBRA Pilots
Cherrie Felder	Channel Shipyard	Mariangel Zarraga	Seaport Hub Agencies
Robert Socha	Conrad Shipyard	Dillon Henneman	Trend Communications
James Rousse	Crescent Towing	Ben Walsh	USCG
Jean-Paul Richard	E.N. Bisso	Brooke Cumbie Lopez	USCG
Paul Dittman	GICA	Brendan O'Conner	USCG
Philip Vandercook	Global Maritime Ministries	Elizabeth Newton	USCG
Michael Nation	Harbor Towing/Star Fleet	Dan Velez	USCG
Todd Clower	Harbor Towing/Star Fleet	Melanie Burnham	USCG
Kevin Woods	Jefferson Parish OEP	Jake Gamble	USCG
Leo Falgout	Kirby	Zachary Ranier	USCG
John Maurin	Lanier Engineers	Brianne Fowler	USCG

The following reports were given:

Harbor Safety Committee Secretary/Treasurer, Christine Titus

Christine called the meeting to order and made general announcements.

USCG Sector New Orleans, CAPT Melanie Burnham

CAPT Burnham introduced herself as the new Captain of the Port following the recent Change of Command. She congratulated CAPT Callaghan on his retirement and thanked those who attended the ceremony. CAPT Burnham introduced CAPT Beth Newton, the new Deputy Sector Commander, noting her extensive experience in Louisiana, including previous assignments in Lake Charles and Morgan City.

CAPT Burnham shared several priorities for the coming months and encouraged attendees to contact Sector leadership with opportunities for engagement or issues they would like discussed. CAPT also Burnham reviewed Sector New Orleans' response to Tropical Storm Arthur and noted that hurricane preparedness had been discussed extensively during recent industry meetings and events, and encouraged continued sharing of forecasting tools, weather resources, and best practices throughout the season.

CAPT Burnham announced several personnel changes within Sector New Orleans. Commander Dan Velez will retire at the end of the month. Commander Scott Arbeiter will become Prevention Department Head, Lieutenant Commander Haley Spindell will report in August as Chief of the Inspections Division, and Commander Ben Walsh will transition into Emergency Management and Force Readiness. Most other key leadership positions remain unchanged, providing continuity for industry partners.

USCG Sector New Orleans, Waterways Management

Waterways Management provided an update on current Mississippi River conditions. Recent river stages resulted in the issuance of an **8-foot rising Marine Safety Information Bulletin (MSIB)** as the Carrollton Gauge approached eight feet. Vessel Traffic Service implemented restrictions in accordance with the Waterways Action Plan and issued Broadcast Notices to Mariners outlining applicable operating requirements. Based on current forecasts, the high-water restrictions are expected to be temporary. Sector New Orleans

continues to coordinate closely with Baton Rouge, Houma, Morgan City, and Lafayette to ensure consistency in waterway restrictions throughout the region. Industry members were encouraged to monitor Broadcast Notices to Mariners and contact Waterways Management with any questions.

Bar Pilots – Captain Henry Peterson

Captain Henry Peterson reported continued challenges with heavy silt accumulation. The pilots continue coordinating closely with the Crescent Pilots and currently have draft recommendations in place for deep-draft vessels. Recent vessel movements have produced encouraging results despite the conditions.

NOBRA Pilots – Captain Steve Wall

Captain Wall reported increasing customer requests for vessel drafts above Mile Marker 180. Before additional draft increases can be supported, additional information is needed regarding pipeline locations, pipeline ownership, etc. and noted that current information is insufficient to confidently support deeper draft operations. We will begin evaluating this issue in a working group.

Federal Pilots – Hank Webster

Nothing To Report

GICA – Paul Dittman

The recent 12-day closure of the Algiers Canal for bridge repairs was successfully completed. Paul thanked CDR Gamble for serving as the primary Coast Guard point of contact throughout the closure and for maintaining excellent communication with industry. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also suspended guide wall work at Bayou Sorrel to maintain access through the Port Allen Route during the closure. That suspension has now been extended until approximately mid-September.

There is significant bridge damage near Lake Charles that has created operational challenges and increased the importance of hurricane evacuation planning for both marine traffic and local communities. Paul advised of several upcoming bridge closures, including Moreauville Railroad Bridge, BNSF Railroad Bridge, and LA Highway 1 Bridge near Port Allen Lock

The annual GICA Seminar will be held August 5–7 at the Westin.

Marine Industry Day Subcommittee – Christine Titus

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

Port Safety Council Secretary/Treasurer Christine Titus adjourned the meeting. The next meeting of the GNOPSC Harbor Safety Committee scheduled for September 2, 2026.