

GNOPSC Harbor Safety Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held Wednesday, September 6, 2023

The following representatives were in attendance:

Attendee	Affiliation	Attendee	Affiliation
Sonny Businelle	ACBL	Price Lanier	Lanier & Associates
Ryan Donnes	ACBL	Erwin Thompson	Lebeouf Towing
Craig Broussard	ARTCo	Christine Titus	Louisiana Maritime Association
Timothy Lagarde	Associated Branch Pilots	Jake Stahl	Marine Expertise
Sean Duffy	Big River Coalition	Lisa McGoey	MVTTTC
Jonathan Davis	Bisso Towboat	Kevin Alario	NOBRA Board of Examiners
Ed Landgraf	CAMO	Jason Ledet	NOBRA Pilots
Cherrie Felder	Channel Shipyard	Charlie Hurst	Norton Lilly International
George Janssen	Channel Shipyard	Chris Voelker	Norton Lilly International
Mark Nelson	Crescent Pilots	Tim Ford	Norton Lilly International
Dan Summit	Delgado CC	Tim Reid	Shell
Colin Macpherson	E.N. Bisso	Roxanne Assevedo	St. Bernard Port
Lance Sannino	Enterprise Marine	Eric Acosta	St. Bernard Port/MSOC
Rick Bauer	ES2	Thyn Oo	Tulane Public Law Center
Hank Webster	Federal Pilots	Billy Soltz	US Lifesaving Association
Paul Dittman	GICA	Vic Landry	USACE
Michael Nation	Harbor Towing/Star Fleet	Michelle Kornick	USACE
Jeff Conner	Ingram Barge	Terri Edwards	USCBP
Jeffery Babin	Ingram Barge	Courtney Keith	USCG
Matt Lagarde	Ingram Barge	Andrew Goetz	USCG
Kevin Cador	Ingram Barge	Kelly Denning	USCG
Farrell Latour	J.H. Menge	James Phillips	USCG
Chris Ulfers	Jones Walker	Ben Walsh	USCG
Leo Falgout	Kirby	Xiaobin Tuo	USCG
Randy Boudreaux	LA Scrap Metal	Will Stewart	USCG
Christine Titus	Louisiana Maritime Assoc.	Tim Long	Valero

The following reports were given:

Harbor Safety Committee Chairman, Matt Lagarde

Chairman Matt Lagarde called the meeting to order, led introductions, and made general announcements. The final HSC meeting of 2023 will now take place on October 25. Watch your email for a potential change of venue for that meeting. We will have representatives from the National Maritime Center at that meeting, and they will be presenting on credentialing and licensing issues. It's time for HSC executive committee elections. We will have an at-large position open. Please send nominations to Christine by October 15.

USCG Sector New Orleans, CAPT Kelly Denning

CAPT Denning highlighted hurricane season and low water concerns, and discussed collaboration for upcoming river closures. Sector New Orleans is looking at a target date sometimes in November for in-person waterways action plan updates, so watch for emails about that. CAPT Denning also introduced LCDR Ben Walsh, Chief of Enforcement, and LCDR James Philips, Chief of Intelligence.

U.S. Customs & Border Protection, Terri Edwards, Area Port Director

The SW border efforts continue, and approximately 20% local staff is being sent to support those efforts. They are currently in Wave 9 and headquarters has built out to Wave 14, so this will impact staffing well into FY2024. They are doing everything they can to minimize effects on industry, and the RSP program is available. The VECS program will be piloted in New Orleans, and industry training will take place on September 21 at the customhouse. Following that training, the pilot will go live and you will no longer be able to submit entrances and clearances by email (but you can still physically take them to the desk). The Know Before You Throw seminar on Mardi Gras imports will be at the customhouse on September 20. The CES proprietor fee increase will take effect on October 1, more information is available in Southern Currents 23-023.

USACE – Michelle Kornick, Operations Manager

Water is low, and they have dredges working at the crossings. There is also one dredge at SW Pass and another will begin working there at the end of the week. Dredging will begin at the Head of Passes disposal site towards the end of September. The MM0.0-MM2.0 AHP river closure for dredge pipe installation will be postponed, and they are currently waiting on revised dates from the contractor.

USACE – Vic Landry, Operations Manager

Harvey Lock remains closed due to low water. There is a planned dewatering of Algiers Lock scheduled to begin October 2 that will last approximately 60 days and is needed for emergency repairs. The Port Allen-Morgan City alternate route will be available, and hopefully we will get enough water to reopen Harvey Lock before then, but logistic challenges are expected.

Associated Branch Pilots – Captain Tim Lagarde

There is an IMO mandate requiring ships to enter the river with reduced power to reduce emissions. This EPL is an overridable system that maintains low power, and ship captains do not have the authority to override the system. Use of EPL has created navigation safety hazards on the LMR, and we as a professional community need to address the issue. Additionally, the low water is creating anchorage challenges and there are still some AtoNs down on the Bar Pilot route.

Crescent River Port Pilots – Mark Nelson

Due to the pipeline removal operations at MM11, the Crescent Pilots are using an alternate channel in that area right now, and there are periodic draft reductions to 35'. The Boothville Anchorage is closed below MM14, and the CPRA project is making Point Celeste anchorage unusable right now.

NOBRA Pilots – Captain Toby Wattigney

The EPL issue is affecting all pilots on the LMR as well as other ports in the United States, and we need to work with USCG and NTSB to get a waiver for our river pilots. August was a very slow month, but grain projections show increased traffic is likely. The Drax facility took damage from a tornado recently.

Associated Federal Pilots – Captain Hank Webster

Captain Webster discussed the power reduction issue and explained that by the year 2030, every vessel over 400GT will be affected.

GICA, Paul Dittman

The Algiers Lock closure was originally scheduled to begin on September 15, thanks to Vic Landry for getting that adjusted. The low water is also affecting the canal, and Leland Bowman Lock is at risk for saltwater intrusion into agricultural areas. The USACE has managed it well, but they must minimize lock operations there because Leland Bowman is a flood control structure, not a navigation structure. We also have ongoing daytime closures at Bayou Sorrel lock.

CAMO, Ed Landgraf

The closure schedule has been affected by difficulty finding some pipelines, but they've been located, and the removals are scheduled to end by October 23. Projected full closure dates are 9/24-9/28 and 10/17-10/21 but those are subject to change and will be disseminated through updated Notice to Mariners. There will be a National Pipeline Task Force meeting in DC on September 28 & 29. Vessels washing into shallow water areas can be fatal during low water because there are still unidentified pipelines, so please be mindful. As a reminder, CAMO provides free training and resources, and over 2,000 mariners have taken their training to date. We need to get ahead of the offshore wind efforts in the gulf, as those will bring pipelines that will be coming to shore.

Waterways Management/Navigation Subcommittee, Erwin Thompson

The three initial working groups have submitted their reports and all recommendations have been voted on and passed. Summaries and recommendation letters will be available on the HSC website.

Certificates of Compliance Subcommittee, Matt Lagarde

Matt provided a brief and updates on the efforts to support allowing the USCG to adopt a risk-based inspection policy for all tank vessels.

Propeller Club, Michael Nation

Congratulations to Ms. Cherrie Felder for being recognized as the Maritime Person of the Year. The gala will held be on October 25 at Metairie Country Club.

HSC Chairman Matt Lagarde adjourned the meeting. The next regular meeting of the GNOPSC Harbor Safety Committee is scheduled for October 25, 2023.