

GNOPSC Harbor Safety Committee

Minutes of the 2026 Hurricane Season Meeting held Monday, June 15, 2026

The following representatives were in attendance:

<i>Attendee</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Attendee</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Jason Mott	Bar Pilots	Lauren Chandler	NOAA
Henry Peterson	Bar Pilots	Steve Wall	NOBRA Pilots
Ed Landgraf	CAMO/MarineSafe811	Curtis Bruce	Oil Spill Response
Phil Constantin	CISA	Amy Dawson	Port NOLA
Mark Matthews	Clean Gulf Association	Emmet Wright	Ports America
Robert Socha	Conrad Shipyard	Jeff Roesel	Regional Planning Commission
Michael Bopp	Crescent River Port Pilots	Mario Munoz	Rio Mar Global
Andrew Cooper	Crescent Towing	Jeff Kindl	Steiner Construction
Scotty Cooper	Crescent Towing	Kelly Denning	Tulane University
Michael Killelen	E.N. Bisso	Vic Landry	USACE
Rhett Schwing	E.N. Bisso	Michelle Kornick	USACE
Hank Webster	Federal Pilots	Brooke Cumbie Lopez	USCG
Paul Dittman	GICA	Brendan O'Conner	USCG
Michael Nation	Harbor Towing/Star Fleet	Elise Forfinski	USCG
Jeffery Babin	Ingram Barge	Melanie Burnham	USCG
Leo Falgout	Kirby	Gregory Callaghan	USCG
Brandon Harris	Labmar Ferry	Chris Booth	USCG
Christine Titus	Louisiana Maritime Assoc.	Ben Walsh	USCG
Matt Denning	Louisiana Maritime Assoc.	Dan Velez	USCG
Jake Stahl	Marine Expertise	Austin Wohler	USCG
David Beerbohm	McDonough Marine	Reliance Henderson	USCG
Brett Bourgeois	New Orleans Board of Trade	Steven Woodard	USCG
Earl Hersch	No More Carbon USA	Tim Duffy	USCG
Tim Osborn	NOAA	Scott Wingfield	USCG

Harbor Safety Committee Chairman, Mario Muñoz

Chairman Muñoz welcomed attendees and thanked representatives from the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Weather Service, pilot associations, ports, and industry for participating. He emphasized that the purpose of the meeting was to strengthen preparedness, encourage collaboration, and facilitate open discussion before hurricane impacts occur. Participants were encouraged to ask questions throughout the meeting and share lessons learned from previous storms.

NOAA, Lauren Chandler

The National Weather Service provided an overview of the 2026 Atlantic hurricane season outlook, noting that seasonal forecasts apply to the entire Atlantic Basin and should not be interpreted as predictions for Louisiana. The presenters reviewed current forecast products, including updated forecast cone graphics, seven-day tropical outlooks, Potential Tropical Cyclone advisories, and wind probability products. Attendees were reminded that impacts often extend well outside the forecast cone and that operational decisions should rely on official National Weather Service products. The presenters also cautioned against relying on unverified social media forecasts, isolated weather model graphics, or AI-generated weather summaries that may lack context.

USCG Sector New Orleans, CAPT Melanie Burnham

CAPT Burnham outlined the Coast Guard's hurricane preparedness framework and emphasized that planning occurs year-round through lessons learned, exercises, and continuous plan updates. She introduced members of the Incident Management Team and explained their responsibilities during preparedness, response, and recovery.

The Coast Guard reviewed expectations associated with Port Conditions WHISKEY, X-RAY, YANKEE, and ZULU, including vessel movement timelines, facility preparations, remain-in-port procedures, and cargo operation considerations. Attendees were encouraged to review the Maritime Hurricane Contingency Port Plan and understand the requirements associated with Regulated Navigation Areas. Discussion also covered use of drones, aerial reconnaissance, liaison officers, post-storm assessments, facility reporting, and the importance of Port Coordination Team calls. CAPT Burnham emphasized that decisions regarding port conditions are collaborative and rely heavily on feedback from industry partners.

US Army Corps of Engineers

Representatives from the Corps of Engineers reviewed internal preparedness efforts, navigation restoration planning, and post-storm recovery operations. The Corps maintains dedicated hurricane response personnel, liaison officers embedded with emergency operations centers, and hydrographic survey assets positioned to begin channel assessments as soon as conditions permit.

Navigation Restoration Team calls will continue serving as the primary forum for waterway recovery coordination. Survey priorities, bridge coordination, Southwest Pass assessments, and communication with navigation stakeholders were discussed.

LMR Pilot Associations

Representatives from NOBRA, the Associated Branch Pilots, Crescent River Port Pilots, and Federal Pilots described their respective hurricane preparedness procedures. Topics included remote dispatch capability, crew relocation plans, vessel refuge planning, anchorage management, emergency vessel movements, and reopening priorities.

Pilot representatives emphasized that maintaining flexibility is essential because every storm behaves differently. They also discussed coordination with the Coast Guard and Corps of Engineers to conduct post-storm test vessel transits and rapidly restore vessel movements once channels are verified safe.

Lessons Learned and Open Discussion

A facilitated discussion focused on lessons learned from Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav, Ida, Francine, Ike, and other significant storms. Participants agreed that no two storms are alike and that communication remains the single most important component of successful hurricane response.

Paul Dittman reviewed the Gulf Intracoastal Waterways Joint Hurricane Protocol and the evolution of Port Coordination Team and Navigation Restoration Team calls following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Participants noted that these collaborative processes have significantly improved regional coordination. Discussion also addressed test vessel operations, common operating pictures, facility status reporting, utility restoration, bridge operations, spill response, pipeline inspections, and coordination with infrastructure partners.

Key Discussion Items

- Improve sharing of post-storm facility operating status.
- Continue development of common operating picture tools.

- Strengthen coordination with Entergy and bridge operators.
- Maintain active participation in Port Coordination Team and Navigation Restoration Team calls.
- Continue using test vessels when appropriate to accelerate reopening decisions.
- Leverage trade associations and Harbor Safety Committee communications to distribute official information.

Action Items

- All stakeholders should review hurricane preparedness plans before significant tropical threats develop.
- Industry partners should verify emergency contacts, remain-in-port procedures, and communication pathways.
- USCG and industry representatives will continue evaluating methods for sharing facility status information following storm events.
- Harbor Safety Committee leadership will continue facilitating coordination among agencies and industry before, during, and after storms.

Closing Remarks

HSC Chairman Muñoz thanked the presenters and attendees for their continued partnership and emphasized that the Harbor Safety Committee's greatest strength is the collaborative relationships that have been built over many hurricane seasons. He encouraged attendees to continue sharing information, identifying opportunities for improvement, and supporting one another throughout the hurricane season. The next Harbor Safety Committee meeting was announced for July 1.