

Summary Minutes
Inland Waterways Users Board Meeting No. 51

February 22, 2006
Alexandria, Virginia

The 51st meeting of the Inland Waterways Users Board was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Executive Secretary Mark Pointon. Executive Director Major General (MG) Don T. Riley welcomed everyone, particularly new Board members Mr. Gerald Jenkins of Ursa Farmers Cooperative in Ursa, Illinois and Mr. Deane Orr of Consol Energy in Elizabeth, Pennsylvania. He then invited the Federal Observers to make remarks. Mr. Alan Bunn, representing the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), stated that his agency's hurricane response efforts continue. Mr. Nick Marathon, representing the Department of Agriculture (USDA), stated that his agency appreciates the importance of the inland waterway system to agricultural exports. Mr. Douglas Lamont, representing the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, remarked that the meeting provided him a good opportunity to meet and interact with the inland waterways community.

General Riley, in his opening remarks, provided an update on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2006 appropriations act, the supplemental appropriations received for hurricane recovery work, the FY 2007 President's Budget and the current proposed Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). He emphasized that the aging inland waterways infrastructure needs modernization, and encouraged Board members to continue with their efforts to support this goal.

Board Chairman Gerald Brown complimented Board members for working together on the prioritization process and the Annual Report. He announced that the target date for release of the report is mid-March.

Minutes of Meeting No. 50 were unanimously approved as written.

Mr. David Grier of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Institute for Water Resources presented the Inland Waterways Trust Fund Status Report and Analysis. The trust fund balance at the end of FY 2005 was the lowest ending balance since 1997. Transfers to the Corps of \$136 million are the highest level since 1991. Projected FY 2006 transfers are anticipated to be the highest in the history of the Inland Waterways Trust Fund. Total commerce was up slightly during FY 2005 (0.4%). Decreases in grain and petroleum shipments were offset by increases in coal and other commodities. Traffic for September 2005 declined 22% apparently due to hurricane impacts.

Mr. Len Henry of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters (HQUSACE) presented a program and funding timetable and a status report on the FY2006/2007 funding of inland navigation projects and studies. The USACE is currently executing the FY 2006 program, defending the FY 2007 budget and developing the FY 2008 program.

The Board unanimously approved a draft of their 2006 Annual Report to Congress, subject to minor editing, and agreed to finalize it and aim for release in mid-March.

Mr. Joseph Hartman of the (HQUSACE) Engineering Division presented a report on Lock Gate Performance. This was done in response to questions posed by Board members at the October meeting. Specifically, the Corps was asked to review lock gates constructed in the 1960's and determine if we have a systemic problem. The short answer is yes. There are systemic problems with lock gates constructed in the 1960's. These problems are due primarily to design and construction practices, rather than lack of maintenance. Many gate reliability problems are related to fatigue cracking of the gate structure; others are related to the operating mechanisms. They occur on all the major river systems, and on different types of gates.

Anne Sudar, Doug McDonald, and Tomiann McDaniel, all of the Corps, made a presentation on RiverPass, a system whereby waterborne commerce information could be captured electronically, thus virtually eliminating the need for paper forms.

Chairman Brown announced that the next Board meeting is tentatively scheduled for July in Paducah, Kentucky.

A notice for nominations for new Board members for the upcoming year was published in the Federal Register on February 17, 2006. The nomination period will be open until April 3, 2006.

Mr. John Jamian, Acting Administrator of the Maritime Administration (MARAD), made a presentation on the Cabinet-level Committee on the Marine Transportation System (CMTS). This is an interdepartmental committee, with representatives from 11 departments including the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MARAD, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Council on Environmental Quality, and others. They have also set up an advisory committee called the Maritime Transportation System National Advisory Committee (MTSNAC). The CMTS has met twice, primarily to adopt a charter and other administrative activities and start to get familiar with the issues. It is now ready to get into the issues. He encouraged the Board to bring their issues to the CMTS Secretariat.

Mr. Michael Kidby of HQUSACE Operations Division then showed a video, "America's Inland Waterways System—An Invisible Transportation Network".

Public Comments were made by Ms. Worth Hager, president of the National Waterways Conference (NWC); Mr. Paul Rohde, president of Midwest Area River Coalition 2000 (MARC 2000); and Mr. Dale Roth of the Carpenters' District Council of Greater St. Louis and Vicinity.

Neither the Executive Director MG Riley nor Chairman Brown had any closing comments. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:20 p.m. by Chairman Brown.