

# **SOUTHEAST TEXAS WATERWAY ADVISORY COUNCIL**

## **Meeting Minutes for January 27, 2022, Full-Committee Meeting**

A meeting of the Southeast Texas Waterway Advisory Council (SETWAC) was held on January 27, 2022 at the Sabine Pilots Office in Port Arthur, TX. The current SETWAC Charter is dated January 29, 2019. Meeting information and power point presentations are available electronically through the SETWAC website [www.setwac.org](http://www.setwac.org).

### **1. Call to Order:**

- SETWAC Chairman, Mr. Randall Ogrydziak, called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Mr. Ogrydziak welcomed those attendance. 43 members and guests were in attendance at the Sabine Pilots Office; 13 attended remotely. Mr. Ogrydziak opened the floor to CAPT Wike, MSU Port Arthur Commanding Officer.

### **2. Remarks by the Captain of the Port:**

- CAPT Wike welcomed those in attendance and thanked the Sabine Pilots for the use of their conference room. She welcomed Captain Andrew Guidry as the new President of the Sabine Pilots Association.

### **3. Approval of the October 28, 2021 Minutes:**

- A motion was made (Sean Marchant) and seconded (CAPT Guidry) to vote to approve the October 28, 2021 SETWAC minutes. A vote was conducted; the minutes were approved.

### **4. Committee Reports:**

#### ***Navigation Sub-Committee Report:***

- CAPT Guidry updated the group on the continuing efforts of the “Near-Miss Working Group,” highlighting two recent fishing vessel/ship interactions, one of which resulted in a fine levied by the State on the fishing vessel for failure to answer the marine radio as required by the Bridge-to-Bridge Radio Telephone Act.
  - SETWAC Chair, Mr. Ogrydziak, commented that good work is being done by the “Near-Miss Working Group,” and Ms. Nikki Fitzgerald, to educate the local fishing fleet on Rules of the Road and the necessity to respond to radio calls. Mr. Ogrydziak offered that the recent fine levied upon a fishing vessel that failed to respond to repeated radio hails is, “Notification that things are changing in the SNWW.” He added, “Other ports are looking at what we’re doing for possible development of “best practices” in their waterways.”
- Mr. Ogrydziak explained the while the rebuild of the ALFA Rear Range appears to be “painfully slow,” the process is underway and currently working through the various Coast Guard and private industry channels. The build contractor, BOMAC, needs to obtain core samples of the seabed where the range piles are to be driven. The Coast Guard Civil Engineering Unit must then review and confirm range design/build. Once complete, Coast

Guard District EIGHT will work with the Port of Beaumont for the “gifting” of the Range back to the Coast Guard.

***Education, Research & Workforce Development Sub-committee Report:***

- Mr. Erik Stromberg, Lamar University, was unable to attend the SETWAC meeting. His slides covering CAPM-Sponsored Research and Workforce Development are available on the SETWAC website.

***Port Welfare Public Ad-Hoc:***

- Fr. Sinclair Oubre, introduced CAPT James Chatlosh as the new head of the Maritime Training Program at LSC-Orange. He added that Sabine Pilot CAPT Tyler Crawford has been assisting with the program. Fr. Oubre also brought attention to the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of “Operation Drumbeat” and the sinking of the SS Francis E. Powell by German U-Boat 130.
- Fr. Oubre informed the group of a meeting of the Ad-Hoc “Seafarer Access Committee” on January 20, 2022 during which Mr. Bryan Markland, SETWAC Co-Chair, discussed Seafarer Access rules with area FSO’s. Mr. Markland championed the “best practice” of creating a list of Pilots and Seafarer Center Labor Representatives that will be regularly updated and sent to area FSO’s to ease access problems at area facilities (Slides on SETWAC website).
- Mr. Doreen Badeaux spoke to continuing progress with mariner vaccinations. To date, 2,400 vaccinations have been administered. Vaccinations continue to be administered using local National Guard members and the City Health Department.

***Commercial Fisheries Report:***

- Ms. Nikki Fitzgerald, Texas A&M AgriLife, spoke to the Alaskan Marine Safety Education Association Drill Conductor Class. Turnout exceeded expectation such that a 1-day course was expanded to a 5-day course offering training to more than 30 fisherman. She said 8 out-of-area fisherman attended, with the balance coming from the Port Arthur.
- Ms. Fitzgerald held a meeting of the Port Arthur Shrimper’s Association on January 22, 2022 with a turnout of 50 fisherman in-person and 6 remote attendees. During the meeting, CAPT Guidry discussed navigation and communication requirements.
- Ms. Fitzgerald informed the group that each of the two fishing vessels involved in the most recent incidents with transiting ships were in attendance. During discussions, it was discovered that the fishing vessel involved in the most recent incident was carrying only one radio. This created confusion because they were being hailed and/or talking on multiple channels. As such, fisherman are being notified that they should carry two VHF radios so that they always remain on Channel 13 (Bridge-to-Bridge).

***Waterway Maintenance and Improvement Sub-committee:***

- Mr. Larry Fountain, SNND, gave an update on the SNWW Deeping Project: Contract #1 (Turning Basin 1) is complete. Contract #2A (USACE), for offshore dredging inbound,

should commence in March 2022. Contract #2B (SNND) will pick up where Contract #2A stops, and will continue to Cheniere. Contract #3 will be put out around 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2024 and will cover Cheniere to Taylor Bayou. SNND will then put out Contract #13 for Anchorage Basin 8.

- Regarding the Pipeline Removal Project, Mr. Fountain indicated 5 pipelines have been removed to date, and 3 pipelines have been replaced.

***Dredge Operations Report:***

- Mr. Tim White (USACE) spoke to ongoing and future dredge projects including PA-8 and PA-11 improvements; Neches River improvements; SNWW Entrance Channel to Sabine Pass deepening; Sabine Outer Bar & Bank dredging; the Orange County and Port Arthur & Vicinity Coastal Storm Risk Management Projects, and the Taylor's Bayou Channel improvement proposal (Slides on SETWAC website).

***Area Maritime Security Report:***

- Mr. Jeremy Hanson, Port Security Specialist, USCG, reiterated Seafarer Access and continued collaborations between the AMSC, SETWAC, and the Seafarer Center.
- Mr. Hanson reported on the success of the Ad-Hoc Cyber-Security Webinar held at Lamar, indicating 43 people participated in excellent presentations and discussions.
- Regarding the Port Security Grant Program, Mr. Hanson informed the group that January kicks off the strategic planning phase for Port Security Grants. Mr. Hanson advised socializing projects through the COTP for complete review, providing detailed budgets with all proposed projects, and the current buzzword remains "Cybersecurity."

***ATON Status/Projects Report:***

- BMC Harold Zurlo, ANT Sabine, provided a list of 2 currently discrepant aids to navigation: Sabine Pass ALFA RRL and Neches River UNIFORM RRL.

**5. New Business:**

- Mr. Scott Whalen, USCG, presented the 2020 "State of the Waterway." (Slides on SETWAC website) .
- Mr. Mic Cowart, Sabine Pass Port Authority, informed the group of ongoing issues with sediment shift in the vicinity of the Highway 87 bridge on the Sabine Pass side of the GIWW. He expects six months for the test results to get back to TXDOT. Mr. Cowart elaborated on the continuing development of Sabine Pass into a "deep water port" including Port City Partner's purchase of the Versabar and Rowan facilities and their ongoing movement of rock and pipe into the port. He notified the group of the recent sale of 220 acres of undeveloped property (1800-ft waterfront) adjoining the Sabine Pass Port Authority to an undisclosed buyer.

**6. Next Meetings:**

- The next working group meeting will be held at the Sabine-Neches Navigation District offices on Thursday, April 14, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.
- The next full committee meeting will be held at MSU Port Arthur on Thursday, April 28, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.

**7. Adjourn:**

- Mr. Ogrydziak adjourned the meeting at 11:05a.m.