



Southeast Texas Waterways Advisory Council

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21 April 2021

Rear Admiral John Nadeau
Commander Eighth Coast Guard District
Hale Boggs Federal Building
500 Poydras St., Suite 1324
New Orleans, LA 70130

Subject: Sabine-Neches Ship Channel Destroyed Critical Navigation Aid

Admiral Nadeau,

The Southeast Texas Waterway Advisory Council (SETWAC) needs your help with expediting rebuilding of two critical navigational aids on the Sabine-Neches Waterway (SNWW). During the summer of 2020 hurricane activity in the western Gulf of Mexico resulted in widespread destruction of the aids-to-navigation (ATON) on the SNWW. Aids-to Navigation Team (ANT) Sabine, led by BMC Harold Zurlo, worked closely with the Sabine Pilots to identify, and prioritize the timely restoration of the majority of the SNWW's critical ATON. Their teamwork led to the expeditious resumption of both inland and ocean-going commercial vessel traffic.

As well as ATON restoration on the SNWW has progressed, two critical sets of ranges are still waiting to be reconstructed: Alpha Range and Uniform Range. These structures require a commercial contractor to rebuild them, which requires a complicated strung-out bidding and project award process. Initially, through ANT Sabine, the Sabine Pilots and I were informed the critical aids would be restored in six months; current update is the critical aids will take years to be restored. This is unacceptable for one of the Nation's critical federal waterways, which services a major petrochemical port complex and two of the nation's busiest military strategic ports. Due to these two ranges taking years to restore, the risk of a deep-draft vessel grounding and/or obstructing the SNWW significantly increases.

Alpha Range is the first range light set coming inbound from sea and marks the centerline entrance to the Sabine Jetties. Alpha Range is extremely important to deep-draft vessels navigating inbound from the open Gulf of Mexico waters into the protected channel inside the jetty rocks. This narrow area is challenging due to cross currents and dense traffic comprised of deep drafts ship, offshore supply vessels, commercial fishing vessels, and recreational boats. The lateral reference these range lights provide to the mariner is paramount when entering or exiting the jetties. It cannot be overstated how important it is to visually know your location in the channel in relation to the centerline, especially at night and when in a meeting situation with other traffic in this reach.

Uniform Range is the inbound range light set located on the SNWW in the vicinity of Nederland, Texas. This too is a critical aid as this location is home to the largest concentration of mid-stream terminals on the waterway, moving millions of tons of crude oil and natural gas liquids daily. At this location, the ship pilots deal with a high volume of vessel traffic from both inland towing and deep draft sectors. Pilots must be able to visually reference the lateral position on vessels 160' wide in a 400' channel to ensure safe navigation.

Each year, more than 3000 deep draft vessels call on the SNWW. Four major refineries and mid-stream oil & gas terminals are serviced by this ship channel; more LNG is moved on this channel than anywhere else in North America. The SNWW is home to the Army's 842nd Transportation Battalion and hosts two of the Nation's busiest Military Strategic Ports.

Admiral, any help you can provide in this matter would be greatly appreciated. If you need any more information or wish to discuss this matter further, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Randal S. Ogrydziak". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "R".

Randal S. Ogrydziak
Chairman
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