

SOUTHEAST TEXAS WATERWAY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes for April 28, 2022, Full-Committee Meeting

A meeting of the Southeast Texas Waterway Advisory Council (SETWAC) was held on April 28, 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.

1. Call to Order:

- SETWAC Chairman, Mr. Randall Ogrydziak, called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. Mr. Ogrydziak welcomed those attendance. 43 members and guests were in attendance at the Sabine Pilots Office. 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 touched on the offshore wind turbine project (presented later during the meeting) and the new “unofficial” May 15th start of the upcoming hurricane season. CAPT Wike informed the group that the MSU Port Arthur Emergency Planning department would present at the next SETWAC meeting in August ahead of the hurricane season.

3. Approval of the January 27, 2022 Minutes:

- A motion was made (Erik Stromberg) and seconded (CAPT Guidry) to vote to approve the January 27, 2022 minutes. A vote was conducted; the minutes were approved.

4. Award:

- CAPT Wike presented CAPT Charlie Tweedel, Sabine Pilots, the Coast Guard Public Service Commendation for outstanding contributions to navigation safety, environmental stewardship and maritime commence while serving at the President of the Sabine Pilot’s Association from January 2019 through December 2021.

5. Committee Reports:

Navigation Sub-Committee Report:

- CAPT Guidry, Sabine Pilots, updated the group on the continuing efforts of the Near-Miss Working Group, indicating there were no incidents to report and interactions between ships and fishing vessels were “much improved.” However, there were two recent fines levied on fishing vessel operators as a result of failing to follow the Navigation Rules.
- Chris Fisher, Port Director, Port of Beaumont, updated the group on the rebuild of the Alpha Range. The Port of Beaumont (POB) is steadily moving ahead on the range rebuild and a service agreement from USCG CEU Miami is expected shortly. POB has been

working with stakeholders to raise money to pay for the \$500K project. Mr. Fischer indicated that they would be reaching out to Plant Managers shortly.

Education, Research & Workforce Development Sub-committee Report:

- Mr. Erik Stromberg, Lamar University, discussed continuing education workshops for 2022, and ongoing CAPM-sponsored research being conducted at LAMAR (slides available on SETWAC website).
- Mrs. Sade Chick, Port of Beaumont, presented workforce development including a BISD Maritime Program update, and program available at LIT, LSCO, and LU. Mrs. Chick also announced “Transportation Week” is being held May 8-15 (slides available on SETWAC website).

Port Welfare Public Ad-Hoc:

- Fr. Sinclair Oubre, Seafarer’s Center, introduced Mary Kate Flanagan as the new Director of the Port Arthur International Seafarer’s Center. Ft.
- Fr. Oubre discussed current issues facing Russian and Ukrainian mariners due to the Russian attack on Ukraine. He announced the National Maritime Day Observance to be held at the Seafarer’s Center on May 13th, and the Texas National Maritime Day Gala at the Carl Parker Center on May 19th.

Commercial Fisheries Report:

- Ms. Nikki Fitzgerald, Texas A&M AgriLife, informed the group on the Alaskan Marine Safety Education Association Drill Conductor Class, indicating 85 commercial fisherman attended, while 60 fisherman attended the instruction pertaining to navigation.
- Ms. Fitzgerald informed the group of a “Hurricane Meeting” scheduled for July 6th. Ms. Fitzgerald indicated public speakers are needed for the event.
- Fr. Oubre offered 90% of the fishing fleet is currently docked because of high fuel prices. He also indicated more fisherman need to get involved in the “Sunset Review of Shrimp Tariffs” to avoid a detrimental price collapse of locally harvested shrimp.

Waterway Maintenance and Improvement Sub-committee:

- Representatives unable to attend.

Dredge Operations Report:

- Mr. Scott Sherman (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. Mr. White also addressed improvements and additions to the existing Hurricane Flood Protection Project throughout the Port Arthur area (Slides on SETWAC website).

Area Maritime Security Report:

- Mr. Jeremy Hanson, Port Security Specialist, USCG, spoke to the upcoming application period for port security grants running May 13, 2022 through June 13, 2022. Mr. Hanson reported Cybersecurity and the protection of soft targets in crowded places are the top two priorities for the grant program this year.
- Mr. Hanson reported a “return to normalcy” for the AMSC after a “great” in-person meeting in early-April.

ATON Status/Projects Report:

- BMC Harold Zurlo, ANT Sabine, provided a list of 16 currently discrepant aids to navigation, including Sabine Pass Alpha RFL and RRL, and Neches River Uniform RRL. Chief Zurlo said the ANT is close to finalizing a contract to repair the ladder on the Alpha RFL. This will permit them to repair the discrepant range light.

6. New Business:

- Mr. Douglas Hendrix, USCG, informed the group of the upcoming 18th Biennial National Harbor Safety Committee Conference to be held in Boston at the Boston Park Plaza June 13-15, 2022. SETWAC was submitted for “Harbor Safety Committee of the Year.”
- Mr. Hendrix commented on the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management’s initiative to build windfarms in the Gulf of Mexico as part of the current Administration’s “Renewable Energy” program (slides on SETWAC website).
 - Mr. Ogrydziak indicated he’d like to form a Navigation Sub-committee to get SETWAC involved in the process so stakeholders can address local concerns regarding the construction of wind farms.

7. Next Meetings:

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

8. Adjourn:

- Mr. Ogrydziak adjourned the meeting at 11:20 a.m.