

# **SOUTHEAST TEXAS WATERWAY ADVISORY COUNCIL**

## **Meeting Minutes for October 26, 2023, Full-Committee Meeting**

A meeting of the Southeast Texas Waterway Advisory Council (SETWAC) was held on October 26, 2023, at MSU Port Arthur 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 Chair, Dan Plumley, called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. Mr. Plumley welcomed those in attendance. 75 members and guests attended at MSU Port Arthur. Mr. Plumley opened the floor to CDR Hantal, XO, MSU Port Arthur.

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

- CDR Hantal, XO, MSU Port Arthur, welcomed those in attendance. She informed the group that CAPT Migliorini was attending a conference in New Orleans. CDR Hantal introduced LT Sean Yanez and LCDR Kimberly Gates as the new Waterways Division staff, and CDR Lisa Woodman as the new Prevention Department Head.
- CDR Hantal informed the group that SETWAC administrative responsibilities were to be passed from Mr. Gardiner to the Waterways Management Staff. CDR Hantal addressed the arrival date of the new VTS Director, which remains unknown but will likely be no sooner than January 2024. Finally, CDR Hantal discussed the ongoing potential for a government shutdown in November, indicating there will be no impacts to Coast Guard missions in the COTP area.

### **3. Approval of the July 27, 2023, Minutes:**

- A motion was made (Capt. Guidry) and seconded (Sean Marchant) to vote to approve the July 27, 2023, minutes. A vote was conducted; the minutes were approved.

### **4. Membership Report:**

- Mr. Plumley excused himself as the primary rep for LNG Terminals. Mr. DeRanieri (Golden Pass LNG) will assume the primary position while Tam Dinh (Golden Pass LNG), will serve as alternate. Christopher Deslatte (SUN) will serve as primary rep for Marine Terminals. A motion was made (Capt. Guidry) and seconded (Robert Hawn) to vote to approve the appointees. A vote was conducted; the appointments were approved.
- Mr. Plumley discussed several positions currently vacant including Harbor Tug Companies alternate rep; Commercial Fisheries Association alternate rep; Chemical and Oil Refining Docks alternate rep, and Ship Operating Companies alternate rep. If anyone is interested in these positions, contact Mr. Plumley or the Coast Guard for applications.

## 5. Committee Reports:

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

- Capt. Guidry, Sabine Pilots, reminded terminals to submit Controlling Depth Letters, indicating these letters are supposed to be submitted once per quarter and kept updated. He also spoke to the dredges on the waterway, reminding dredge operators to continue to monitor VHF Ch 13.
- Capt. Guidry spoke to the virtual aid to navigation placed on the red side of the channel, south of the Ready Reserve Fleet turning area. The virtual aid seems to be working satisfactory; however, the Pilots would prefer a fixed aid to navigation.
  - BM1 Sistrunk, ANT Sabine, explained that after conducting a survey of the proposed placement area, it was determined it is not possible to place a fixed aid at that location because of depth of water.
- Capt. Guidry discussed the upcoming helicopter delivery trial the Pilots will be participating in over the next three months. The trial will test feasibility and cost of transporting Pilots to ships offshore via helicopter. The trial will start January 1, 2024. During the first two months, all Pilot deliveries will be daylight only operations. The final month will be 24-hour operations. (Slides on SETWAC website).
  - Sean Marchant asked if the Pilots would be able to provide a letter to ships' masters explaining the helicopter operations. CAPT Guidry responded in the affirmative.

### ***Tug Utilization Sub-Committee (Ad Hoc)***

- Sean Marchant, Valero, provided an update indicating the next meeting of the Tug Utilization Sub-Committee is to take place on November 28, 2023, at 10:00am at the Sabine Pilots office. During the meeting, OptiPort will present their web-based planning tool for tug scheduling. Anyone who desires to be added to the distribution list for the Tug Utilization Sub-Committee can contact Mr. Marchant.

### ***Education, Research & Workforce Development Sub-Committee Report:***

- Mr. Rob Dubois, Lamar University, spoke to the Maritime and Industry educational pipeline available through Lamar State College Orange, Lamar State College Port Arthur, and Lamar Institute of Technology (Slides on SETWAC website).
- Dr. Ben Staffer, Lamar State College Port Arthur, discussed the training facilities the college is proposing to build. The College received federal funding through a "Recompete" grant designed to address areas with long-term economic stagnation. LSCPA is proposing to build a training facility for Terminal Management, a \$39 million project to be constructed over 5 years.

- Dr. Keith Jones, Lamar State College Orange, discussed Maritime Training. LSCO is currently offering high school maritime classes to numerous ISDs and have a hands-on mobile training unit. These resources are available to all maritime industry partners.
  - Fr. Sinclair Oubre added that Stella Maris raised money for members of the Lamar State College Orange program, financially supporting 13 students in receiving their TWIC.

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

- Fr. Sinclair Oubre, Seafarer's Center, addressed continuing issues with seafarer access.
  - LCDR Kimberly Gates, MSU Port Arthur WWM, introduced herself as the new Waterways Management Department Head. LCDR Gates formally addressed the split of the combined VTS/WWM department into separate departments. She stressed there will be no loss of continuity or services provided by the division of duties. Anyone with questions related to the new WWM Department at MSU Port Arthur can contact LCDR Gates via her duty cell phone, (409) 277-1752.
  - LCDR Gates passed that facilities or agents experiencing seafarer access issues can call the MSU Port Arthur Facilities Inspection, (409) 460-0640.

***Commercial Fisheries Report:***

- Mrs. Nikki Fitzgerald, Texas A&M AgriLife, spoke to the continuing strife of the local fishing fleet due to imported shrimp, high diesel prices, and lack of freezer space to store their catch. Mrs. Fitzgerald informed the group that in January, the Shrimpers Association had a meeting during which a lawyer with the Southern Shrimp Alliance conducted a survey of the fishing fleet. The survey was presented to the U.S. Department of Commerce who ultimately determined the fishing industry is not being negatively impacted. Further, there is a petition by the American Processor Association and Southern Shrimp Alliance to instigate an investigation to determine the real impact of these issues on the local fishing industry, and to potentially impose higher tariffs on imported shrimp.
  - SETWAC drafted a letter of support for the local fishing industry to be sent to the U.S. Department of Commerce. A motion was made (Fr. Oubre) and seconded (Sean Marchant) to sign the letter. A vote was held; SETWAC to send their letter of support to the Dept. of Commerce.

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

- Kyle Reed, SNND, provided an update on the SNWW deepening and pipeline removal project. Mr. Reed indicated there are 4 pipelines to remove, all of which have been pushed to the Summer of 2024.

- Mr. Reed spoke to the Deepening Project - there is a mandatory bid meeting on Wednesday November 1, with the bid opening on November 22 for Contract 2B. Contract 2B and Contract 3 to be completed by December 2024.
  - Mr. Plumley asked if there is a “Plan B” if they don’t figure how to remove the pipelines by next summer. Mr. Reed responded, “Navigational Servitude will be enacted.”
  - Capt. Guidry mentioned the offshore channels are currently being dredged to 46-ft; however, if 44-ft drafted vessels are not using the channel, the 46-ft clearance will likely be lost to shoaling. Mr. Reed replied that USACE cannot pick up maintenance dredging until the entire dredge contract is complete, but they don’t believe the channel will shoal before that happens.

***Dredge Operations Report:***

- Mr. Tim White, USACE, spoke to ongoing and future dredge projects, including deepening and widening plans, SNWW Maintenance, the offshore channel extension, Coastal Storm Risk Management Projects, and the Taylor’s Bayou Channel improvement (Slides on SETWAC website).

***Area Maritime Security Report:***

- Mr. Michael Hiatt, USCG Port Security, spoke to the FY-23 SETX and SWLA awarded port security grants (\$4.2 Million). Mr. Hiatt advertised the upcoming PRC meeting immediately following the SETWAC meeting; the FSO Subcommittee Meeting on December 7 (members only); the SWLA Subcommittee Meeting on November 15 at Freedom Hall in Westlake LA at 9:00am, and the AMSTEP Seminar at MSU Port Arthur on November 29, 2023.
- Mr. Hiatt also spoke to the U.S. Court of Appeals overturning a case regarding a Texas law which makes flying a drone around a facility a crime in Texas (Texas Government Code Title 4, Subtitle B, Chapter 423).

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

- BM1 Sistrunk, ANT Sabine, reported there are 10 ATON discrepancies in the waterway.
- CGC HARRY CLAIBORNE repositioned Sabine Pass LBs 27 and 31. CGC HATCHET is scheduled for ATON ops in the SNWW in late -November. HATCHET will rebuild 7 wood structures during their visit.
- BM1 Sistrunk indicated CEU Miami is due to inspect the East Jetty Light. The structure is currently deteriorated and unsafe for the ANT to climb and repair. He passed that CEU does not have the light on its FY-25 agenda. SETWAC to consider taking action to correct long-running discrepancy to the light.

- BM1 Sistrunk asked that anyone who witnesses suspicious activity related to Coast Guard ATON, please report it immediately to the ANT, the VTS, or Coast Guard Station Sabine. Recently, two ranges were vandalized (batteries stolen).

**6. New Business:**

- Mr. Plumley relayed the 2024 National Harbor Safety Committee Conference will be held March 21-22, 2024, in Chicago. SETWAC has been asked to present, and to participate in various panels during this conference. The topics will cover partnership, success of the Ad Hoc Sub-Committees, the tug utilization initiative, WSA process, and education and workforce development.

**7. Next Meetings:**

- The next working group meeting will be held at the Sabine-Neches Navigation District offices on Thursday, January 11, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.
- The next full committee meeting will be held at MSU Port Arthur on Thursday, January 25, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

**8. Adjourn:**

- Mr. Plumley adjourned the meeting at 11:16 a.m.