

SOUTHEAST TEXAS WATERWAY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes for January 25, 2024, Full-Committee Meeting

A meeting of the Southeast Texas Waterway Advisory Council (SETWAC) was held on January 25th, 2024, at MSU Port Arthur in Port Arthur, TX. The current SETWAC Charter is dated January 29th, 2019. Meeting information and power point presentations are available electronically through the SETWAC website www.setwac.org.

1. Call to Order:

- SETWAC Vice Chair, Randal Ogrydziak, called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. Mr. Ogrydziak welcomed those in attendance. 63 members and guests attended in person at MSU Port Arthur and 3 guests attended via Microsoft Teams. Mr. Ogrydziak 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 began by thanking all those involved with the dredging operations and coordination that has been done in Taylor's Bayou. CDR Hantal spoke on the expansion of the port and mentioned that the MSU Port Arthur staff is expected to gain additional Marine Inspectors as a result. She mentioned that ANT Sabine will be downgraded to one boat, however reminded the audience to continue to report ATON discrepancies. The Coast Guard will continue to work swiftly to rectify ATON discrepancies.
- CDR Hantal then introduced the new VTS Director, Mr. Daren Mathis. Mr. Mathis began with an introduction and a brief history of his career, including 22 years of service in the U.S. Navy, 13 years with the VTS in San Fransico, and his most recent job working in the VTS Policy and Regulation Office at Coast Guard Headquarters.
- CDR Hantal presented a Coast Guard Certificate of Merit to Captain Andrew Guidry, Sabine Pilots, for his work and efforts during his tenure as the President of the Sabine Pilots Association from 2021 through 2023.

3. Approval of the October 26th, 2024, Minutes:

- A motion was made (Sean Marchant) and seconded (Rob Dubois) to vote to approve the October 26th, 2023, minutes without edit. A vote was conducted; the minutes were approved.

4. Committee Reports:

Navigation Sub-Committee Report:

- Capt. Moore, Sabine Pilots, gave an update on the Sabine Pilots Helo Trial which began on January 8th and will go through April 8th. On March 8th, the trial will shift to 24-hour services. To date, there has been 82 transfers by helicopter with a collective 36 flight hours.

With this program the Sabine Pilots can react faster and get to ships quicker, following any delays. Feedback has been positive, and Capt. Moore solicited for more feedback.

- Capt. Guidry, Sabine Pilots, provided an update on four Waterway Suitability Assessments (WSA) that were reviewed by the Navigation Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee worked hard during the holiday season to submit draft letters of support to SETWAC, and they all passed. The presentation slides, found on SETWAC's website, contain information about each project. He solicited for questions and comments. Mark Vitor, Sabine Pass, asked about the expected traffic in the channel for 2027. Capt. Guidry anticipated up to 1,100 LNG vessels by 2027.

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 following the SETWAC meeting at 1:00 p.m. at the Sabine Pilots office January 25th. There have been four meetings to date, during which the sub-committee invited a software company to present how the company can assist in the goal of optimizing tug utilization in the waterway. At the meeting on January 25th, Lamar University will present how a more academic approach and a study can also aid in this effort.

Education, Research & Workforce Development Sub-Committee Report:

- Rob Dubois, Lamar University, introduced Dr. Liv Haselbach who presented on ISTC Courses for Hurricane Preparedness.
- Dr. Liv Haselbach spoke to the ISTC Hurricane Preparedness Courses that are being offered. There are 3 courses online for free, the three courses are estimated to collectively take less than 1 hour to complete. There are three tier levels for these courses. There is an option for volunteers in this program, volunteers can earn a goodie bag. Additionally, she mentioned that this is a certificated program.

Port Welfare Public Ad-Hoc:

- Sade Chick, Port of Beaumont, she spoke to the discussion on the MLK Bridge and the restrictive air draft, which creates a limitation on the waterway. She mentioned how they met with TxDOT to do a study and now they are looking to see how they can identify funding for these bridges. She solicited for input into potential or current operational impacts due to bridge height restrictions.
- Fr. Sinclair Oubre, Seafarer's Center, addressed improvements that they have seen at facilities to rectify issues related to seafarer access. He also identified two upcoming dates: May 22nd is National Maritime Day and will be observed at the Seafarer's Center; on May 23rd the Texas Maritime Day Gala will be hosted by the Seafarer's Center at the Bob Bower's Center.

Commercial Fisheries Report:

- Nikki Fitzgerald, Texas A&M AgriLife, provided an update on the strife of the local fishing fleet. SETWAC had provided a Letter of Support for the local fisherman, this letter was sent to the U.S. Commerce. The U.S. Commerce officially opened an investigation. The shrimpers may be seeing a relief with tariffs over the next year. On January 31st, there will be a meeting at the Seafarer's Center with the Shrimper's Association.
- Larry Kelley, Port of Port Arthur, spoke to Camp Seaport which is beginning the last Monday of January and continues through the end of March. The time spent aids the youth in learning life skills, such as cooking in a galley. One example provided is that the group builds small boats which are then taking to the Port Arthur pool and tested. He noted that one of the alumni of this program has recently joined the Coast Guard.

Waterway Maintenance and Improvement Sub-committee:

- Tim White, Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), discussed the deepening project on behalf of the Sabine Neches Navigation District. He mentioned that the STUYVESANT has finished the first 4-foot cut and removed the material and the dredge from the waterway. The next 4-foot cut will be done by Great Lakes Dredge and Dock, no construction start date has been set. The SNND schedule is to have contracts 2B and 3 completed by the end of the 2024 fiscal year.

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:

- Michael Hiatt, USCG Port Security, spoke to Port Security Grant, which closed May 18th, 2023. It is currently the time to start discussions with him on projects that industry and facilities have and would like to present to the Captain of the Port. Last year the Golden Triangle and Lake Charles got \$4.2 million, which he believes could be doubled. Anyone interested can contact Mr. Hiatt.
- He moved to speaking about the Port Readiness Committee Meeting that is happening on February 14th, this is a closed-door meeting. Additionally, he noted that the SETX/SWLA Area Maritime Security Committee Meeting will be on April 17th at the Orange County Texas Expo Center.
- Mr. Hiatt also spoke the Maritime Security Risk Analysis Model (MSRAM), a tool he uses to assess the risk across the region (Slides on SETWAC website).

ATON Status/Projects Report:

- LCDR Gates, MSU Port Arthur, spoke on behalf of ANT Sabine. She addressed the continued uptick in ATON vandalism, batteries are being stolen and lights are being shot. Urging the audience to report any suspicion activity to VTS, Station Sabine, or the MSU Port Arthur CDO.
- She then informed the audience that the CGC HATCHET was in the area last week and corrected lots of ATON discrepancies.

5. State of the Waterway (SoWW):

- LCDR Gates, MSU Port Arthur, presented the 2023 State of the Waterway (Slides on SETWAC website).

6. New Business:

- LCDR Gates, MSU Port Arthur, spoke on behalf of NOAA. Dr. Quinn Stubbs is updating the Coast Pilot for this area and is looking for input. NOAA is also shifting fully to electronic charts, as discrepancies on charts are noticed, please email Dr. Stubbs.
- Mr. Ogrydziak, Vice Chair, spoke on SETWAC Managing Board Chair vacancies, applications have been submitted. Mike Thomas, Seabulk, applied as the alternate for Harbor Tugs. Vick Butler, Moran, applied to be alternate for Shipping Agents. This went to a vote for approval and passed.
- Mr. Ogrydziak, next spoke about the National Harbor Safety Conference that will take place in March. This conference will be held in Chicago, and SETWAC President Dan Plumley will be attending the conference to represent SETWAC.
- LT Bennett Aneralla, Coast Guard Intelligence, presented slides on data that his office has collected to identified areas of concern for groundings, collisions, and allisions on the waterway (Slides on SETWAC website).

7. Next Meetings:

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

8. Adjourn:

- Mr. Ogrydziak adjourned the meeting at 11:13 a.m.