

# Waterways Association of Pittsburgh Newsletter

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December 2017

[www.wapgh.org](http://www.wapgh.org)

## **December Highlights**

A total of (31) thirty-one members and guests were registered for the December 13, 2017 luncheon meeting at Bella Sera. New member, Norman Auvil, City of Pittsburgh/Bureau of Fire was introduced to members and spoke briefly on the city's new fire boat.

## **Navigation Committee Report**

David Podurgiel provided the following report:

- There have been very few navigational issues during this time of the year. However, the 2018 Army Corp repair schedule will require closures and delays. Industry must continue to work with the Corp to minimize interruptions.

## **Legislative Report**

Richard Kreider was not able to attend the meeting. Dean Marlin, incoming Legislative Chair, presented a report summary provided by Richard and is included below:

### **Legislative Committee remarks for the November 2017 Luncheon:**

I want to let everyone know it has been my pleasure to serve as the Chair of the Legislative Committee and assure everyone that the group is in good hands with Dean Marlin going forward. I truly apologize for my limited engagement over the past 8 months but, unfortunately, significant changes at CTC this year required my constant attention and prevented me from giving the WAP legislative position the attention it deserved. I met with Dean last month to discuss the position and his goals for serving the Industry in this capacity and can assure you Dean has a strong desire to make a difference. I also want everyone to know I plan to remain active and support Dean as needed going forward.

## **Washington DC Trip**

One of the first things Dean and Cheryll will do this year re the Legislative efforts is organize the annual Washington, DC trip. This year's WCI meetings and Capitol Hill visits will be February 13-15. As we have done in the past, we intend to put a small group of WAP members together to ensure our regional interests are well represented. Funding for the Lower Mon and the EDM project will once again be our primary regional area of focus. Please let Cheryll, Dean or me know if you are interested in making the trip as we will be reviewing the budget and making final arrangements between now and the January WAP meeting.

**Speaking of Capitol Hill, I have a few brief items to update you on regarding the progress, or lack thereof, in DC:**

#### **SHORT-TERM CR**

Late last week, the House and Senate passed another short-term funding bill -- known as a Continuing Resolution (CR) -- that will provide funding for the Federal government through December 22. Under this CR, like the one before it that was set to expire December 8, the Corps is funded at the lowest level of the Administration's budget request, or the House and Senate bill for FY17. The Corps' funding for FY17, provided through an Omnibus Appropriations bill passed last May, is \$6.038 billion, a slight (0.8%) increase above the FY16 funding level, but almost a 31% increase above the Obama Administration requested level.

It is anticipated yet another CR will be passed on or before December 22 extending current funding for the Corps sometime into next year. We are hopeful that early next year an FY18 Omnibus Appropriations bill can pass that would include the Energy & Water Development Appropriations bill. FY18 funding for the Corps in the House and Senate bills is extremely favorable at more than \$6 billion, including record Operations & Maintenance funding, and full and efficient funding of the top four priority navigation projects (Olmsted, Lower Mon, Kentucky and Chickamauga).

#### **SENATE PASSES TAX REFORM, NOW ONTO CONFERENCE**

As most of you know, the Senate passed its tax reform bill earlier this month by a narrow vote of 51-49 with no Democratic support. Senator Bob Corker (R-TN) was the only Republican to vote "no" on the bill. Like the House bill passed last month, the Senate bill lowers the corporate tax rate from 35% to 20%.

**The bill does not alter any transportation-related programs or Trust Funds (i.e., Inland Waterways Trust Fund, Highway Trust Fund), nor does it address diesel fuel taxes that are paid on the inland waterways system.** An amendment to dedicate taxes from repatriated income to fund infrastructure was defeated in the Senate.

The House and Senate will now try to resolve differences in each bill through the conference committee process, with the hope of passing a final bill before Christmas. House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy reported that the House would remain in session the week of December 18, with the tax bill conference report passage and passage of another CR as the primary goals.

#### **Status of the Administration's Infrastructure Package:**

The Trump Administration's Infrastructure Initiative continues to wait in the wings. This Initiative appears to have stalled out as the Administration and Capitol Hill have been consumed with keeping the Government funded and the Tax Reform efforts. Industry groups continue to work behind the scenes to ensure the Inland Waterways are included in

the eventual Infrastructure Package but at this point it appears no significant progress is expected until well after the Holidays.

### **Representatives Defending the Jones Act**

Recent weeks have focused much attention on the Jones Act in the media and on Capitol Hill. Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle have defended the Jones Act and AWO has recognized three avid supporters of this Act so critical to our Industry. These members clearly understand the fundamental role the Jones Act plays in protecting our three securities: **homeland security; national security; and economic security.**

### **VIDA Update**

On December 18, 2017, the exemption for commercial vessels under 79 feet in length and all commercial fishing vessels to the Vessel General Permit requirements is scheduled to expire. In recent days, **Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS)** has called on **Majority Leader Mitch McConnell** to pass the Coast Guard Authorization Act, which contains the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act. Senator Wicker has made it clear that he will oppose any attempts to pass an extension to the small vessel exemption that is not part of the overall comprehensive VIDA package. As a member of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, Senator Wicker has been a champion for VIDA and the Jones Act.

### **Port of Pittsburgh Commission**

Mary Ann Bucci presented the following:

- As a fiduciary agent, the Port has submitted an INFRA (Infrastructure for Rebuilding America) grant through the Department of Transportation. The INFRA program will make approximately \$1.5 billion available to projects that are in line with the Administration's principles to help rebuild America's crumbling infrastructure. In addition to providing direct federal funding, the INFRA program aims to increase the total investment by state, local, and private partners.
- Nominees for the special election scheduled for March 13, 2018 to replace Representative Tim Murphy who resigned have been identified. The Republican Party has chosen nominee, state Rep. Rick Saccone and the Democratic Party selected former federal prosecutor Conor Lamb. The Port will be working on a meet and greet with the two nominees shortly. This would provide a great opportunity to educate both candidates on current waterway issues.

### **Coast Guard News**

LT Shawn Simeral presented the **attached** report. A congested waterways meeting was held this morning and further details will be made available shortly.

### **Army Corp of Engineers**

John Dilla covered the **attached** lock closure report. Kathy Griffin provided the following information:

- COL Lloyd will be returning to the district early February following his work assignment in Puerto Rico. His focus will be on continuing to strengthen stakeholder relationships.
- The Army Corp Headquarter Office has drafted a Strategic Communication Plan for stakeholder input to national infrastructure bill.
- Regional Programs Director, David Dale will be retiring in the upcoming year. His likely replacement appears to be Stephen Durrett who currently serves as the Regional Business Director.
- On the local front, John Dilla will develop a communication and operation plan for major maintenance and lock closure at 4 projects in 2018. Goal is to have in place by mid-FEB.

#### **National Weather Service**

Alicia Miller covered the **attached** report.

#### **Education Committee Report**

Michael Graham has identified the tentative date for the first "Who Works the Rivers" as Thursday, April 19, 2018. At the beginning of the year, dates will be confirmed for the Man Overboard Seminar and the Barge Breakaway Seminar.

#### **January Membership Meeting**

The **next** membership meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 10, 2018 at Bella Sera (414 Morganza Road, Canonsburg, PA). Cost of the luncheon will be **\$30**. Registration will begin at 11:45 a.m. and lunch served promptly at noon. Please call, email or fax the response form below by Thursday, January 4, 2018 if you plan on attending the luncheon meeting.

***\*\*Immediately following the luncheon, the Waterways Association of Pittsburgh Annual Membership Meeting will be held. Please feel free to attend this special annual meeting.***

**Waterways Association of Pittsburgh  
Meeting Response Form**

Bella Sera  
January 10, 2018 @ Noon

**Menu:**

Romaine & Radicchio Salad w/Balsamic Vinaigrette or Buttermilk Ranch  
Chicken Lilliana/Sundried tomatoes, caramelized shallots in sherry cream sauce  
Roasted Garlic Mashed Potatoes - Butter, Herbs, Garlic & Shallots  
Chef's choice of vegetables  
Assorted Flavors of Cheesecake

**Cost:**        *\$30/per member*

\_\_\_\_\_        YES, I will be attending

\_\_\_\_\_        No, I will not be attending

**\*\*Special Dietary Requirements:** \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please print)

COMPANY: \_\_\_\_\_

Please respond **by Thursday, January 4, 2018** to:

Cheryll Cranmer  
Phone:        (724) 355-4101  
Fax:            (724) 285-4999  
Email:        [cheryll.cranmer@wapgh.org](mailto:cheryll.cranmer@wapgh.org)