

# Waterways Association of Pittsburgh Newsletter

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April 10, 2019

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

## April Highlights

A total of (28) twenty-eight members and guests were registered for the April 10, 2019 luncheon meeting at Chartiers Country Club. First-time attendees: Bob Boyd of Campbell Transportation, Ron Harrison of Bellaire Harbor and Christian Wirginis of Gateway Clipper Fleet were introduced.

## Navigation Committee Report

Shane Checkan provided the following report:

- The Navigation Committee has worked with the USACE during the Montgomery Lock outage to 'tweak' the NTNI. During the first part of the closure there was concern of vessels contacting the coffer box when tows are making their approach with 'doubles' upbound. We worked with the Corp and implemented a 'helper' boat to assist in keeping the tow on the wall. Also, during set over singles there were concerns of the coffer box being damaged, we adjusted NTNI to have helper boat available during down bound departures.
- Primary Chamber goes down May 1-June 14 with 3 weekend openings to help clear the expected major delays. Delays so far have been minimal.
- Contractor work that will take place to stabilize the Middle Wall Crack at Montgomery hasn't given a start date yet; we are monitoring this and will work with the USACE to minimize delays. We are hearing this could close the Primary Chamber 12 hours per day, 5 days a week starting June 12 thru mid to late July.
- Dean Marlin has written a letter, with WAP/Navigation Committee support to the USACE Col Short dated 12/14/2018 asking for a hold on reduction of service at Lock 4 Allegheny. Old outdated data is being used to determine why the Level of Service is being reduced, Dean will address this issue under his report.
- A committee has been put together that includes Industry, USACE, and the Coast Guard to address the rash of breakaways over the last couple years. Progress is being made but the one thing we as Industry need to commit to is making our fleets safer, keeping facilities up to date with repairs to cells, tri-pods, etc. And during high water events getting communication to all fleets. We do not want to go down the road of regulations.

## Port of Pittsburgh Commission

Mary Ann Bucci provided the following report:

- The Port is working with the Congested Waterways Committee and the Safe Boating Council to promote water safety and sharing the waterways at the May 26, 2019 Pittsburgh Pirates Game. Anyone

wishing to participate or donate gifts should contact Scott Harshman at the Port's offices.

- An informational meeting with Representative Conor Lamb was held on March 19, 2019. Congressman Lamb is making the Upper Ohio Navigation Project a priority. A letter has been sent to Rep. Kaptur, Chairwoman and The Rep. Mike Simpson, Ranking member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, on the importance of this project. In addition to Rep. Conor Lamb, the letter was signed by Rep. Mike Doyle, Rep Dave McKinley, Rep. Bill Johnson and Rep. Guy Reschenthaler. He testified in front of the Energy & Water Appropriations Subcommittee regarding the dilapidated conditions at the Upper Ohio Locks and Dam System on April 9, 2019. You can view his testimony at:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1l0Ot\\_X8UU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1l0Ot_X8UU) (2:17.05 time)
- Industry is currently assisting Senator Joe Manchin's office (West Virginia) for a letter being submitted to Sen. Lamar Alexander, Chairman and Senator Dianne Feinstein, Ranking Member, of the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development supporting the Upper Ohio Navigation Project.
- The President's budget is proposing funding \$111 million to the Lower Mon project. The \$111 million should fund the project to completion; however, no other inland waterway project received any funding. The inland waterway trust fund collected \$132 million, and we need to ensure that the entire trust fund is utilized each year.
- Peter Stephaich, Steve Fritz, USACE, and Mary Ann Bucci were interviewed on WESA (90.5) on the President's budget.
- Peter Stephaich, Chair of WCI testified for the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on the funding of the inland waterways.
- The Port will be hosting a round table discussion with new Representative Guy Reschenthaler on April 22<sup>nd</sup>. A formal invitation will be sent shortly to industry leaders.

### **Legislative Report**

Dean Marlin presented the following report:

#### **WHITEHOUSE BUDGET PROPOSAL - MID MARCH**

- As previously reported, the Trump Administrations released its FY20 budget proposal which includes:
  - A cut to US Army Corps civil works program of 31% from FY19 appropriation.
  - The Inland Waterways Trust Fund is proposed at \$55.5 million.
  - The good news is that \$111 million is proposed for the Lower Mon Project - which would fund it to completion (previous slated for completion in 2004).
  - Tolling ... The budget is again proposing a per-vessel charge to raise \$178 million over and above the current diesel fuel tax. The budget also proposes a toll which would have commercial operators paying approximating 10% of the (\$3 billion) Operations and Maintenance fund - historically paid by the Federal Government.

- o House floor action is on the budget is tentatively scheduled for June - followed by the Senate in July.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE BILL**

This approximate \$1.3 trillion problem has a direct, major impact on our lives, our business, our industry and our lives. Roads, Bridges, Waterways - and on. As one example of infrastructure need: The US has 47,000 bridges rated "structurally deficient" and an additional 235,000 bridges "in need of repair or replacement". (American Road and Transportation Builders Association).

The Administration made a \$200 million proposal last year which was defeated - this year (and per the State of the Union address) - they are now open to entertain proposals but are silent regarding any new suggestions.

The debate is - How to pay \$1.3 Trillion?

- o A Gas Tax Increase?
  - There is growing interest in a gas tax increase - but it would only be a short-term solution. States are also looking at a "quiet" gas tax increase.
  - On the Federal Level - Shuster (now a consultant) thinks a couple dozen republicans will support tax increase in the house.
- A Vehicle Miles Traveled tax?
  - A new study from the Libertarian Reason Foundation argues that the individual states and congress should utilize toll financing (versus gas taxes. They propose to exempt any state from the 1956 ban on interstate tolling - charge per-mile traveled that would replace fuel taxes and revenue
  - Pete DeFazio - House Transportation Chairman - is pushing a gas tax increase.
  - Republicans differ in their support: Some support federal funding, some state funding, and some support vehicle miles traveled.

Congressional pessimism on infrastructure is now in full force. There is a bipartisan feeling that "Politics is in the way" and "Political Courage is not in this Congress"

Meanwhile 77% of polled (National Association of Manufacturers don't feel that current infrastructure can support demands of a growing economy. Also, and as opposed to that study, another voter's poll suggests that only 35% of voters consider it a top priority for Congress and 36% said it should be a lower priority and most individuals 18-21 years don't even think it's an issue.

### **ADDITIONAL**

- Dean Marlin confirmed that a response had been received from COL Short declining to delay the level of service change on Allegheny Lock 4. A meeting will be held following today's luncheon to discuss further action necessary to address major concerns regarding the reduction in the level of service on the Allegheny Lock 4.

- The American Waterways Operators is holding a "barge-in" today in Washington, DC. They are planning 200 meetings to talk about policy issues affecting the tugboat, towboat and barge industry. They are focusing on the importance of the Jones Act, the need for a consistent national regulatory framework for commercial vessels involved in interstate commerce and calling for investment in modernizing waterways infrastructure.

#### **Coast Guard News**

The **attached** report was submitted.

**Note:** An additional fireworks night has been submitted by the Pirates for April 20<sup>th</sup>. They are also reviewing potential impact for the September 17<sup>th</sup> Toby Keith concert at the Highmark Stadium.

#### **Army Corp of Engineers**

The **attached** report was submitted.

**Note:** Lockfest has been scheduled for May 18<sup>th</sup> at Emsworth. The event is generating much interest.

#### **National Weather Service**

The **attached** report was submitted.

#### **Education Committee Report**

The first "Who Works the Rivers" will be held on April 11, 2019. The Man Overboard Seminar has been confirmed for July 11, 2019 at the Clarion Hotel. October 10<sup>th</sup> is the tentative date for the Barge Breakaway at the Floreffe Fire Hall. The "Who Works the Rivers" fall date is October 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Richard Lockwood reported that the OSHER Course entitled, "Our 3 Rivers: Key to Economic Health & Quality of Life" has again sold out. There will tentatively be seven site visits and additional facility locations are being sought at this time. They are also seeking volunteers for the panel discussion that will occur prior to the Waterways June 12<sup>th</sup> luncheon from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. The class participants will then attend the luncheon.

**NOTE: Lt. Shawn Simeral's final meeting with the membership will be the May luncheon. He will be greatly missed!**

#### **May Membership Meeting**

The **next** membership meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 8, 2019 at Chartiers Country Club. 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 Friday, May 3, 2019 if you plan on attending the luncheon meeting.

## **Waterways Association of Pittsburgh Meeting Response Form**

Chartiers Country Club  
May 8, 2019 @ Noon

**Menu:**

Fresh Fruit Cup w/Honey Cream  
Chicken and Asparagus Crepes w/roasted cremini mushrooms and asparagus  
Herb Roasted Redskin Potatoes  
Angel Food Cake w/fresh strawberry coulis and whipped cream  
Coffee, tea and iced tea

**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 Friday, May 3, 2019** to:

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Phone: (724) 355-4101  
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Email: [cheryll.cranmer@wapgh.org](mailto:cheryll.cranmer@wapgh.org)