

# Waterways Association of Pittsburgh Newsletter

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August 14, 2019

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

## August Highlights

A total of (35) thirty-five members and guests were registered for the August 14, 2019 luncheon meeting at Chartiers Country Club. Patrick Kelly welcomed first-time attendees: Eddie Outlaw and Mark Whalen of Crouse Corporation; Petty Officer Kevin Schneider of the US Coast Guard and Clifford (Butch) Leport of AEP.

Richard Lockwood was asked to introduce guest Barry Palmer. Barry was instrumental in river advocacy in the past and was the first WCI president. Barry addressed luncheon attendees regarding advocacy history.

## Navigation Committee Report

David Podurgiel provided the following report:

- The AWO held its yearly Congressional Vessel visit last week at Montgomery Lock and upon a CTC vessel. This is always a great opportunity to highlight our needs and progress in the Pittsburgh District. We had a chance to see firsthand the crack in the middle wall and the work the contractor is doing to reinforce it. There was discussion about future lock expansion where we will have twin 600 ft chambers, it befuddles me why we don't push for a 1200 ft chambers, it makes sense and further discussion should happen if we want to keep our district viable and attractive to new industries.
- Water levels are low, and vessels are experiencing rubs on their unbound approaches to the locks, I recommend that anytime this occurs with your vessels that they let the lock personnel know.
- The incident last week where the recreation vessel was hit by the down bound vessel highlights the discussions, we have been having the last couple years with our Congested Waterways Committee and reinforce the need for further enforcement to clear anchored vessels from the navigation channel. This furthers the Waterways Association of Pittsburgh's decision not to support the Point of Pittsburgh Sailing League initiative which would have young boys and girls learning to sail at the point. This should be done in the back channel or at a lake. I had the chance to speak to the Director of Economic Development, Sports & Exhibition Authority of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County highlighting the dangers of this initiative and he was very receptive to the information I shared.

- Executives from local companies recently met with the Commander Demo and Col Short to discuss our progress on the Barge Fleeting Safety Initiative. Our team will be meeting next week to discuss a way forward which includes options of self-regulation or an RNA (Regulated Navigation Area).

### **Port of Pittsburgh Commission**

Mary Ann Bucci provided the following report:

- The recent AWO Congressional Vessel visit at the Montgomery Lock and dam provided an excellent opportunity to highlight navigational issues in the Pittsburgh area. With the upcoming election, the availability of legislative representative visits tends to increase. This will provide an excellent opportunity to urge them to change the cost sharing under WRDA from a 50/50 split to a 75/25 split.
- The Port participated in "Water Week" held at the Children's Museum. This outreach program explores, creates and experiments with water.
- On July 31<sup>st</sup> - August 1<sup>st</sup>, Beaver County Chamber of Commerce conducted an educational program, "Rivers of Opportunity". This program highlighted potential impacts of change among the local rivers. The Port also participated in this event which ended in a Gateway Clipper River Cruise that provided an historical commentary and panel discussion on river issues with legislators.
- The PPC is happy to announce their new Administrative Assistant, Adrianna Workman. Adrianna is a graduate of St. Vincent College and most recently worked as an Account Coordinator with Zoll Lifevest. Adrianna can be reached at [adrianna@portpitt.com](mailto:adrianna@portpitt.com) or (412) 201-7332. Please join me in welcoming Adrianna to our team.

### **Legislative Report**

Dean Marlin presented the following report:

Congress is in recess until after the Labor Day.

#### **FY 20 APPROPRIATIONS**

- In late July Congress and the White House struck a budget deal that boosts federal spending levels and the debt ceiling which would have been otherwise breached in Mid-September.
  - This 2-year agreement provides \$2.7 trillion in spending over 2 years - increasing defense spending by 3% and non-defending spending 4% over FY 19.
  - This deal takes some pressure off the Senate so that the 12 appropriations bills (10 already approved by the House) can move to markup in September without (hopefully) shutting down the government. (hopefully)
- On August 1 the Senate Commerce Committee (preceded by the house) approved a 2-year Coast Guard Reauthorization. This provides the Coast Guard with 6 polar icebreakers as well as an assurance that our Coast Guard members will now be paid during any future government shutdown(s).

The House - Water Resource Subcommittee (to the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee) began meeting in July on the Water Resource Development Act with view toward a renewed 2-year approval required in 2020.

- Inland Waterways User Board Chairman and WCI Board Member Rob Innis testified in July on behalf of WRDA emphasizing that:
  - There are 15 high priority inland waterway navigation projects under or awaiting construction - but at the current rate it will take 20 years to complete them
  - He urged changing the cost share between the Government and the Inland Waterways Trust fund from a 50/50 to a 75/25 split - a level currently enjoyed by our deep draft ports. If the recommendation is adopted, the completion of the projects (and more) will be significantly accelerated.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE**

On July 30 another attempt was initiated in the Senate to address this urgent national issue. This time the strategy is to reduce the scope of the bill to primarily address surface transportation - consequently lowering the cost and possibly providing a vehicle for a more robust infrastructure add-in.

- The proposed bill would authorize \$285 billion in highway (surface transportation) spending - to be distributed to the states.
- This bill would also authorize \$12.5 million per year to fund state and regional pilot test for "user-based alternative revenue mechanisms" - like gas taxes and vehicle miles travelled and tolling.

However, since July the suggested federal gas tax increase is considered "off the table" and the bill is not really receiving bi-partisan support.

### **SPECIAL REPORT: THE COMMITTEE FOR SAVING AND REVIVING LOW USE RIVERS**

As reported last month we have been moving on two fronts in order to restore important commercial and recreational use on low-use rivers such as the Allegheny and Monongahela. As follows:

1. Establishing an Off-Hours Locking Request System
  - The USACE has implemented an after-hours locking request system for commercial barging on the Allegheny and the Monongahela Rivers. This system includes a calling tree, formalized request control and monthly activity report.
  - This system will provide statistics that will ultimately enable a better, more efficient and predictable locking system for off-hour requests that will be well below the current 24-hour notification - to - execution mandate.
2. A National Review and revision of the IMTS Level of Service Criteria System and Regulation
  - a. Our request for a review and overhaul of this system-wide regulation is not proceeding with the same alacrity or transparency as demonstrated by our USACE-Pittsburgh District.

- b. Specifically - The IMTS Working Group and Board will not be begin a review process until this month and will be reviewing and possibly not providing any response until next year. Nor have we received any information or questions regarding this request.
  - i. It is important to note that of the approximate 27 Rivers which comprise the Inland and Intercostal Waterways of the United States - only 8 are considered high use rivers - and the balance are counted as moderate (4) or low-use (15)
  - ii. Our position is that the existing USACE - Level of Service regulation negatively biases 19 of the 27 rivers (70%) - placing commercial and recreational use at the mercy of faulty metrics and a USACE manpower scheduling system that has no apparent concern or accounting for money generated by existing or future commerce, recreational boating interests and socio economic benefits - or the direct and indirect consequences which lead to lost businesses, lost jobs, decaying communities, stressed infrastructures and welfare economies.
- c. To that end - we will be actively focusing on forwarding this investigation and resolution in the coming weeks.

#### **MISCELLANEOUS**

The WCI annual meeting will be in Pittsburgh November 6-8 at the Fairmont Hotel. Senator Bob Casey will be speaking.

#### **Coast Guard News**

The **attached** report was reviewed.

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

The **attached** report was reviewed.

#### **National Weather Service**

The **attached** report was reviewed.

#### **Education Committee Report**

The Man Overboard Seminar was held on Thursday, July 11, 2019 at the Clarion Hotel with 65 individuals participating. There was also strong participation in the water training portion of the course. The "Who Works the Rivers" fall date is October 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The Barge Breakaway Seminar will be held on October 17<sup>th</sup> at the Floreffo Fire Hall. Based upon the recent increase in breakaways within our region, member companies are strongly encouraged to reach out to all non-member companies to participate in this seminar. The Coast Guard confirms that attendance to such a course is considered an advantage in the case of a breakaway investigation.

### **September Membership Meeting**

The **next** membership meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 11, 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, September 6, 2019 if you plan on attending the luncheon meeting.

**Waterways Association of Pittsburgh  
Meeting Response Form**

Chartiers Country Club  
September 11, 2019 @ Noon

**Menu:**

House Salad w/balsamic vinaigrette  
Chicken Caprese (Roasted Breast of Chicken stuffed w/Buffalo Mozzarella,  
Fresh Basil and Sundried Tomatoes)  
Wild Rice Pilaf  
Haricot Verts Almondine  
Carrot Cake

**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, September 6, 2019** to:

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