

SOUTHEAST TEXAS WATERWAYS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Southeast Texas Waterways Advisory Council was held on July 25, 2013, at the Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit Port Arthur, TX. The current SETWAC Charter is dated July 21, 2011. Printed materials presented at the meeting are available for copying at the office of the U.S. Coast Guard, Marine Safety Unit at 2901 Turtle Creek Drive, Port Arthur, TX 77642. The meeting information is also available electronically through the SETWAC website www.setwac.org.

1. **Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 10:03am.

Remarks by the Chairman:

Mr. Randy Reese welcomed everyone to the meeting and started the meeting by having everyone present introduce themselves. Approximately 25 board members and 35 audience participants were present.

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

CAPT Joe Paitl welcomed everyone to the meeting and recognized LTC Darrin M. Bowser, newly arrived Commander for the 842nd Transportation Battalion to the meeting. He highlighted the \$25-\$100 billion projection in new facility and construction projects presently in planning and construction stages along the Sabine-Neches waterway. He highlighted the importance of the SETWAC organization in facilitating the integration of these new facilities while, at the same time, maintaining the safety and security of the port. He referenced the agenda item "EAGLE OTOME USCG report" that was to be presented later in the program. He offered regrets and high praise for the recent loss to the USCG and reemployment with Cheniere Energy of Ms. Jacqueline Grayless, former Executive Secretary of the SETWAC organization. Captain Paitl thanked Ms. Grayless in her absence for her eight years of service to the USCG and to SETWAC.

3. **Approval of the April 25, 2013 minutes:**

A motion was made and passed to approve the previous meetings minutes.

4. **Committee Reports:**

Navigation Sub-Committee Report

Captain Mark Taylor commented on two items of concern:

1. He stressed the importance of local dock facilities providing to the Sabine Pilots their quarterly water depth sounding reports. Captain Taylor emphasized that the Pilots were concerned about vessels going aground at the docks because of outdated draft information.

2. He cautioned about doubled up barge tows, especially when towboats were positioned alongside the barges, at barge docks and the need for secure mooring and the need to infringe on the channel as little possible to facilitate passing traffic.

Captain Paitl offered from the floor to transmit an MSIB from the USCG to re-enforce the need for quarterly water depth soundings for the docks.

Port Welfare Sub-Committee Report

Father Sinclair Ubre was not in attendance, and no report was given for the Port Welfare Sub-Committee.

Waterway Maintenance and Improvement Sub-Committee Report

Mr. Randy Reese reported on the status of the Sabine-Neches Deepening and Widening Project. The Water bill has passed the Senate, but it is stalled in the U. S. House or representatives along with other projects. SNND continues to lobby and work the issue, and optimism is still high that the project will get funding approval.

USACE Waterway Maintenance Report

Paula Wise with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers gave an operations and maintenance update on the following:

- Neches River Channel:
 - o Bid opening scheduled for 30 July 2013.
 - o Estimated start date is late September 2013.
- Outer Bar and Bank Channel:
 - o Project bid solicitation delayed until FY 14.
 - o Estimated start date is December 2014.
- Sabine Jetties radar reflector project:
 - o Project bid solicitation delayed until FY 14.
 - o Efforts on-going in coordination with USCG.
- Private Dock Dredging - notes:
 - o Be sure to specify method of dredging in permit application.
 - o Need permit amendments in advance of performing the work.
 - o Regulator POC is Kim McLaughlin, 409-766-3938.

Waterway Security Sub-Committee Report

Captain Joe Paitl commented on on-going efforts to restore Tier 1 port status to the Sabine-Neches Waterway.

Mr. Jeremy Hansen discussed 2013 Port Security Grant awards – total of \$7.8 million and provide power point slide with itemized list of grants.

ATON Status/Projects Report

- No ATON status report was available for this meeting.

5. New Business:

1. EAGLE OTOME – USCG Report:

- a. LT Wade Thomson presented findings and recommendations relevant to SETWAC from the January 2010 EAGLE OTOME accident. Among the items:
 - i. Develop a consensus agreement relating to identification of ship names and charted locations to be used in radio communications on the Sabine-Neches Waterway. Issue an MSIB to this effect.
 - ii. Recommend SETWAC review the recommendations in detail and provide mitigation strategies, as appropriate to address the risks posed by deep draft vessels in this port.
- b. Captain Paitl followed up with comments to the effect that many of the recommendations had been previously addressed during the three years following the EAGLE OTOME incident that the safety record on the waterway had already improved, that efforts were on-going, and that the safety record had improved in spite of increases in the volume of traffic.
- c. Captain Mark Taylor followed up with comments that Safety had indeed improved and that the Sabine Pilots had an overall, years-long, excellent record of safety on the waterway despite increases in ship sizes and vessel transits.

2. Taylor's Bayou Drainage Area, seawall protection:

Mr. Mike Measells, USCG, presented Google Earth slides and pictures of the unprotected portion of the seawall in the Taylor's Bayou turning basin and relayed to the group that Drainage District 7 had requested that the USCG and SETWAC assist with discouraging vessels to remain in the area of the exposed seawall for the 2013 Hurricane Season. Drainage District 7 plans to reinforce and replace protective pilings for the seawall prior to the beginning of the 2014 Hurricane Season.

3. Inland Anchorages and Turning Basins:

- o Mr. Mike Measells, USCG, presented a summary of present anchorage and turning basin availability for deep draft vessels on the Sabine-Neches Waterway and discussed the intended use and importance of those areas to maintaining efficiency and safety in the Port.

- Mr. Measells offered as an example, a recent situation where the vessel SKS ABORELLO occupied the Fina Upper Anchorage for a 36 day period during a financial crisis for the operating company. At one time, it was a concern of the Port stakeholders that the ship might occupy the Fina Upper Anchorage indefinitely – bringing up the larger question of who controls the anchorages, who can enforce local anchorage protocol, and how the Port might either prevent or deal with future incidents of vessels using the inland anchorages for other than the intended purpose.
- Mr. Measells requested permission from the SETWAC board to form an ad hoc sub-committee to include USCG, ACOE, SNND, TGLO, and other interested parties to study the issue of authorities and responsibilities for the inland anchorages, and to report back to the SETWAC board. The ad-hoc sub-committee would also look into recommendations for clarifying or simplifying control of the anchorage areas.

Follow-up: A motion was made and seconded to form the committee with Mr. Measells as the chairman of the committee. SETWAC members and interested parties are encouraged to contact Mike Measells to participate in committee discussions.

6. Next Meeting

The working group meeting will be held at the Sabine-Neches Navigation District office on Thursday, October 10, 2013 at 10:00 am.

The full committee meeting will be held at MSU Port Arthur on Thursday, October 24, 2013 at 10:00 am.

7. Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 11:23 am.