

**MEETING OF THE HOUSTON/GALVESTON NAVIGATION  
SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
May 27, 1999

The fifty-third meeting of the Houston/Galveston Navigation Safety Advisory Committee was held on Thursday, May 27, 1999, in the Conference Room at the Houston Pilots' Office, Houston, Texas. A list of attendees is attached as enclosure (1), and a verbatim recording is available upon request.

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman, Tim Leitzell, with quorum, at 9:00 AM.

**OPENING REMARKS BY COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Captain Wayne Gusman welcomed members and guests and made some general announcements on Coast Guard personnel changes affecting HOGANSAC.

**OPENING REMARKS BY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN**

Chairman Leitzell greeted committee members and attendees. Self-introductions of the Committee members followed.

**APPROVAL OF JANUARY 28, 1999 MINUTES**

A motion was made and seconded to approve the previous meeting's minutes. Motion carried.

**NAVIGATION SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT**

Mr. Larry Miller, Subcommittee Chairman, presented the minutes from the May 13, 1999 Subcommittee meeting [enclosure (2)] and the following discussion ensued.

**BAYTOWN TUNNEL REMOVAL**

Mr. Dan Buchsbaum gave an update on the status and thanked VTS Houston/Galveston for their comprehensive and timely faxes on activities pertaining to the removal project. He reported that the fourth tunnel section will be lifted around the 12<sup>th</sup> of June, preceded by an *ad hoc* subcommittee meeting at Oiltanking on June 4<sup>th</sup>. Discussion on the placement of submerged pipeline ensued and Mr. Larry Miller clarified the issue. Also it was acknowledged that the project has not progressed as smoothly as anticipated and better communications with the contractor are the key.

**CHANNEL DREDGING**

Mr. James Jackson updated the Committee on Port of Houston's dredging projects [enclosure (3)] as well as private contract activity [enclosure (4)]. Colonel Nicholas Buechler, Army Corps of Engineers, reported on the status of the dredges currently dredging on the deepening and widening project. He then provided a briefing on the ACOE's position on "barge lanes." He began with what he perceived as three myths: (1) the ACOE is opposed to barge lanes, (2) the ACOE has authority to construct barge lanes, and (3) the 530' by 45' channel being constructed is less safe. Pertaining to the second myth, discretionary authority can be used to fix simple problems, but not to construct something new or different, such as barge lanes. He also explained that ACOE authority comes

from Congress; the Corps is an agent of the Executive Branch. Next he provided a detailed description of the Houston Ship Channel Navigation Project with diagrams. The Lower Bay Contract is being dredged offset from the centerline. Due to the cost-savings over the life of the project, and by using a value engineering approach, the channel can be restored to its pre-contract conditions. Discussions on how to dredge the Upper and Mid-Bay reaches (centerline versus off-centerline) are ongoing, but for all practical purposes, Colonel Buechler said the Corps would be doing centerline dredging the whole way to Morgans Point. He next displayed a chart with important dates pertaining to advertised plans and specifications: the Lower Bay Reach date was June 1998, the Mid-Bay Reach date is 1 February 2000 and the Upper Bay Reach date is 5 November 1999. Any proposed changes to centerline dredging would have to be received by these hard and fast dates. In a follow-on diagram, Colonel Buechler indicated that a "1000' channel" is possible the length of Galveston Bay however it would require some unique engineering solutions. He next presented a preliminary cost estimate of \$34M for the 1000' channel from Redfish to Morgans Point, which includes 135 acres of oyster mitigation, and \$1.4M for pipeline contingencies in the event pipelines would have to be moved for the barge lanes. Colonel Buechler next described the possible approaches for a 1000' channel from Bolivar Roads to Morgans Point. The first is for TWA to continue working with their Congressional representatives on legislative authorization and appropriation. The second avenue is through a "post-authorization change report" whereby an existing project could be changed if it is justified. The third process is to establish a completely separate project. The first course of action is the most expeditious and the one currently being explored.

Although Mr. Les Sutton did not speak at the HOGANSAC meeting, enclosure (5) is a formal statement on maintaining navigation safety on the Houston Ship Channel. Colonel Buechler clarified that there is a study ongoing in Corpus Christi pertaining to the feasibility of barge lanes, however it does not mean that Corpus will be safer and the Houston Ship Channel will be less safe under the current project as implied in the statement.

Mr. Miller went on record for the Port of Houston Authority by stating that they do support the barge lane concept. They do believe the current Houston Ship Channel project and its parameters do promote a safer channel. To the best of their ability they would like to assist the AWO and channel users in achieving the enhancement to safety by incorporating the barge lanes between Bolivar Roads and Morgans Point.

Discussion continued on how best to present this to Congress, such as by highlighting the costs of environmental disasters and subsequent port shutdowns, showing economic impact through the use of traffic controls if the barge lanes were not returned to a useable width, and devising various cost-sharing options (for the barge lanes that are less than 20 feet in depth, the cost-share is 90% federal and 10% local sponsor). Chairman Leitzell recognized that the 530' wide and 45' deep channel will be a safer channel than the existing 400' by 40' one, but also emphasized that the separation of deep draft and tow traffic through barge lanes is an added layer of safety realized over the past five years. The Safety Advisory Committee (HOGANSAC) needs to put its weight behind maintaining this added margin of safety.

Mr. Lamar Doyle, TWA President, presented enclosure (6), a graph of current, future and proposed conditions for barge lanes between Redfish and Morgans Point based on dredging ratios, and enclosure (7), a chronology of events for widening the beacons to 1,000 feet. He emphasized that the penalties associated with environmental accidents have dramatically increased in recent years and we can't

afford to take those chances by again mingling barge and deep draft traffic. Ms. Roof shared her environmental assessment concerns and Colonel Buechler assured her that the appropriate assessments would occur with any changes from the original project in dredging procedures. Chairman Leitzell went on record by saying HOGANSAC strongly supports the separation of deep and shallow draft traffic in the HSC and barge lanes are the appropriate scheme. The Committee worked hard in the early 1990's to develop this safety measure, and it wants this additional margin of safety to remain. Mr. Ken Wells, American Waterway Operators, questioned the ACOE's willingness to support the authorization for barge lanes and Colonel Buechler categorically assured the Corps' support.

#### **ELECTRONIC NAVIGATION**

Mr. Miller introduced a team of engineers from the Johnson Space Center who over the last two years has been working on a heading antenna that can be used in concert with any electronic navigation system. The system would be considered an aid to navigation in low visibility on the Houston Ship Channel, not an all-weather alternative. Ms. Sue Gomez and Mr. Al Dupont provided a briefing and video on their efforts to produce a heading angle without external input. Captain Mike Morris, Houston Pilots, briefly summarized their review of various portable electronic navigation systems in an effort find the one that best meets their needs.

In concert with developing electronic navigation systems, the Committee is concerned about existing navigation rules and regulations and how they will pertain to these new systems. Captain Harry Lydick introduced enclosure (8), which is a letter from HOGANSAC to RADM Pluta expressing these concerns. Ms. Roof moved and Captain Lydick seconded the motion: **That this letter be sent to RADM Pluta and forwarded to the Navigation Safety Advisory Council for action on a national level.** Motion passed unanimously. It was also recommended that a Headquarters' representative provide an update at the next HOGANSAC meeting.

#### **PORTS**

Ms. Tricia Clark reported that the Port of Houston Authority is working with the ad hoc oversight committee on the transition of PORTS from NOAA to the Port. The committee is working on drafting an MOU and determining the funding requirements, as well as how much federal moneys remain from this fiscal year. All indications are that the transition will occur by September 30, 1999 with a mechanism in place on how to replace meters, determine new locations and the methods by which to accomplish these.

#### **NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE**

Mr. Jack Smith introduced Mr. Gene Hafele of the National Weather Service who reported and elaborated on the changes at the NWS. The local office now has forecast responsibilities for the entire southeast Texas region including the coastal areas.

#### **HL&P TRANSMISSION TOWER PROTECTION**

Ms. Teichman reported that HL&P has budgeted and designed protection for the towers in the vicinity of Old River, Morgans Point and Baytown, and construction is scheduled to begin during the third quarter of this year.

## **WATERWAYS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT**

Ms. Ellyn Roof, Subcommittee Chairman, presented the minutes from the January 14, 1999 Subcommittee meeting [enclosure (9)].

### **AIDS TO NAVIGATION**

Captain Lydick introduced Chief Horan of Group Galveston Aids to Navigation Team, who presented knockdown cost data [enclosure (10)]. The information includes costs for FY98, FY99 and for ranges, lights and day beacons.

### **CLEAR CREEK ENTRANCE CHANNEL**

Ms. Roof stated there is shoaling at markers 22 and 24.

### **PIPELINE SAFETY**

Ms. Tricia Clark reported that RACAL has been contracted by several companies to investigate and locate pipelines offshore. The Texas Railroad Commission will be the state repository for inshore and on-land pipeline information.

Mr. Miller indicated that the Port of Houston is developing a digital pipeline map of the Houston Ship Channel and its tributaries.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Chairman Leitzell recommended that Houston Ship Channel "barge lanes" be placed under Old Business henceforth. The tug and barge members on the Committee will take the lead and the TWA representatives in the audience were requested to actively interface and communicate with the Committee. He indicated this was a safety issue the Committee worked hard to obtain and it is imperative that the issue be kept alive.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Bowen Shaw of Brown and Root and Mr. Ed Lynch of Exxon Upstream Development Company made a presentation on the 10,000 ton oil rig module that is due to be moved in October 1999 [enclosures (11) and (12)]. The size of the barge and modules will require incredible coordination and communication among various waterway users, HL&P, and environmentalists. It is being viewed as a collaborative and team effort. Several meetings are scheduled and the parties will again present a highly accurate sequence of events at the September HOGANSAC meeting.

Commander Carroll spoke to the membership drive for HOGANSAC. All memberships expire in October this year and a whole new slate must be proposed. She also mentioned the Legislative Change Proposal whereby the Commandant of the Coast Guard will be the final approving authority vice the Secretary of Transportation.

### **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the full Committee will be held at the Houston Pilots' Office at 9:00 AM on September 9, 1999. The Committee members and attendees were polled and voiced no concerns regarding the location of the next meeting.



The following Committee members were present at the meeting:

Executive Director  
CAPT Wayne D. Gusman, USCG

Executive Secretary  
CDR Paula Carroll, USCG

Committee Chairman  
Mr. Tim Leitzell

Mr. Daniel Buchsbaum	Captain Jack H. Smith
Mr. James Jackson, Jr.	Ms. Kelly Teichman
Captain Harry Lydick, Jr.	Mr. Mang Vo
Mr. Larry Miller	Ms. Wyndylyn von Zharen
Mrs. Ellyn H. Roof	Ms. Dena Wilson
COL Nicholas Buechler, USACOE (Ex Officio)	

The following Committee members were not present:

Mr. Marlon Brown	Captain John Hawkins
Mr. Stan Cook	Mr. Charles Stewart
Captain Stephen F. Ford	

Others in attendance were:

CAPT John Simpson USCG Group Galveston	Mr. Ted Walters Port of Houston Authority
LT Greg DeLong USCG MSU Galveston	CDR Todd Gentile USCG D8(oan)
Mr. Mike Morris Houston Pilots	Mr. Thomas Phelps Houston Pilots
LTJG Sue York USCG VTS Houston/Galveston	LCDR Frank Kingett USCG, CGC Papaw
Mr. Ted Thorjussen West Gulf Maritime	Mr. Dalton Krueger Army Corps of Engineers
LTJG Matt York USCG MSO Houston-Galveston	Mr. Herbie Maurer Army Corps of Engineers
Mr. Gene Hafele National Weather Service	Mr. R. Roof Citizen
Mr. Jonathan Whitworth SeaRiver Maritime Inc	Ms. Tricia Clark Skaugen PetroTrans
CDR Peter Simons USCG VTS Houston/Galveston PCO	Mr. Al DuPont NASA/JSC

Mr. Ken Wells  
AWO

Mr. Les Sutton  
Hollywood Marine/TWOA

BMCS Gary Bean  
USCG, CGC Clamp

Mr. Brian Kyle  
National Weather Service

Mr. Greg Pollock  
Texas General Land Office

Mr. John Windus  
Barnett & Casbarian, Inc.

Mr. Pat Kilbride  
Exxon Upstream Development

Mr. Garry Blowers  
Saipem

Ms. Jamie Guerrero  
TAMUG student

Mr. Darryl Hanus  
TAMUG student

Mr. Zach Taylor  
TAMUG student

Ms. Maria H. Staalnacke  
TAMUG student

Mr. Robert Fry, Jr.  
Megafleet

Mr. Todd Wheeler  
Brampco Shipping

Mr. John Salvesen  
Odfjell Tankers

Mr. Lamar Doyle  
Intracoastal Towing/TWOA

Ms. Susan Gomez  
NASA/JSC

Mr. Monty Ledet  
USCG D8(mov-1)

CDR Mike Bechtel  
USCG MSO Houston-Galveston

BMC Tom Horan  
USCG, Gru Galv AtoN

Mr. Ed Lynch  
Exxon Upstream Development

Mr. Todd Redmond  
Exxon Upstream Development

Mr. Scott Nichols  
TAMUG student

Ms. Marcy Hancock  
TAMUG student

Ms. Monica Schmiz  
TAMUG student

Ms. Regina Woodrom Luna  
TAMUG student

CDR Bob Acker  
USCG, MSO Houston-Galveston

Mr. Luigi Lattanzio  
Saipem

Mr. Leslie B. Brewer  
Coastal Towing, Inc.