



Back in Business



Aerial photo of the Chickamauga Lock Replacement Project on the Tennessee River in Chattanooga, Tenn.

Inland waterways users are one of the rare groups that have a Congressionally mandated board – the Inland Waterways Users Board (IWUB) – that works to make recommendations about investment decisions related to the inland waterways system and its lock and dam infrastructure and maintenance needs. In February 2021, the IWUB and all Department of Defense (DoD) Advisory Committees had been temporarily disbanded and deactivated while the DoD conducted a zero-based review under the then-newly inaugurated Biden Administration.

In July 2021, the review concluded and the Secretary of Defense approved the reinstatement of the IWUB. However, not until February 2022 would the IWUB be officially repopulated with maritime companies across the system.

The following are the organizations and their representatives serving on the IWUB:

- American Commercial Barge Line (ACBL), represented by Martin Hettel.
- Bruce Oakley, Inc., represented by Dennis Oakley.
- Canal Barge Company, represented by Spencer Murphy, Chairman.
- Cargill, Inc., represented by Jeff Webb.
- CGB Enterprises, represented by Lance Rase.
- Continental Cement Company, represented by David Loomes.
- Ingram Barge Company, represented by Daniel Mecklenborg.
- Kirby Corporation, represented by Matt Woodruff.
- Marquette Transportation Company, represented by Damon Judd, Vice Chairman.
- SCF Marine, Inc., represented by Tim Power.

- Shaver Transportation Company, represented by Rob Rich.

Now reinstated and repopulated, the IWUB met April 19-20 in New Orleans, Louisiana, beginning with tours of Bayou Sorrel Lock and the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC) Lock.

Bayou Sorrel Lock is in the East Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levee about 20 miles south of



Chickamauga Lock project is funded to completion in FY 2023 Budget



Baton Rouge, where a study is authorized to re-evaluate the benefits of modifying the lock to increase the lock's capacity, reduce delays to barge tows on the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway system, and provide for better flood protection

The Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC or Industrial Canal) was constructed from 1918 to 1923 to create a connection between Lake Pontchartrain and the Mississippi River. In 1956, Congress authorized construction of a replacement lock, which has yet to receive funding for construction. Currently, the Corps is working with community leaders in the Lower 9th Ward to identify and address logistical and environmental concerns shared by members of the community.

The IWUB held its 96th meeting on April 20 for the first time in almost two years with the discussion focusing on the progress of the \$2.5 billion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funds that were allocated to the inland waterways system, Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 appropriations, the FY23 President's Budget, and FY23 construction capabilities.

The biggest revelation of the meeting revolved around Kentucky Lock Addition on the Tennessee River. Its construction of a new 1,200-foot chamber officially was authorized in 1996. Kentucky Lock Addition project was presumed funded to completion with the \$465.49 million received from IIJA. New information, however, contradicts that. The Corps last year made a contracting decision on the downstream lock monolith contract to go from a 48-month contract to a 67-month contract, which will now move the operational date from 2025 to 2028. A report is expected out sometime in May that will lay out the new timeline and the additional cost that will be required to complete this project.

A good news story from the IWUB meeting was that the \$39 million provided in the FY23 President's Budget will fund the Chickamauga Lock project on the Tennessee River to completion.

The IWUB meeting was attended by Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) Michael Connor who discussed the impact of the industry as it relates to the Administration's priorities. Throughout the discussion, Secretary Connor maintained a theme of fighting climate change and applauded the industry for its environmental record, and he stressed the need to continue strengthening the relationship between the IWUB and the Corps/Administration to achieve successful outcomes.

The IWUB is an important conduit to Congress for the inland waterways and we applaud their getting back to business.

For more details about the Inland Waterways Users Board, visit <https://www.iwr.usace.army.mil/Missions/Navigation/Inland-Waterways-Users-Board/> and www.waterwayscouncil.org.



TRACY R. ZEA
President/CEO,
Waterways Council Inc.