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BREAKING

Calhoun shares importance of inland waterways

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Waterways Council Senior Vice President Deb Calhoun shares information about the marine industry and the inland waterways' role in the industry at the Rotary Club of Paducah meeting Wednesday.

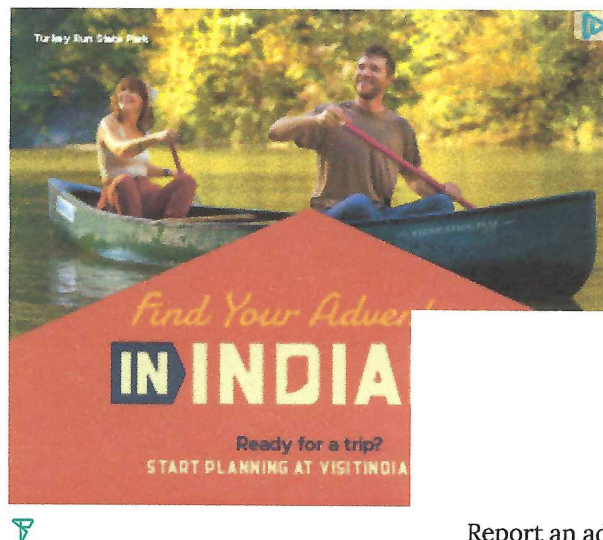
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Deb Calhoun, senior vice president of Waterways Council, Inc., shared information on the marine industry and Paducah's role as the "epicenter of the marine industry" along inland waterways at the Rotary Club of Paducah meeting Wednesday afternoon.

Waterways Council's primary mission, Calhoun said, is focusing on maintaining an efficient inland waterways system. The Waterways Council represents those with a vested interest in the inland waterways system including commercial operators, ports, conservation groups, shippers, and building trade and labor groups.

The Myre River Room at The Carson Center, where Calhoun spoke on Wednesday, overlooks the confluence of the Ohio and Tennessee Rivers, two rivers used to transport supplies and goods throughout the country. With Paducah at this confluence and near the confluence of the Mississippi River, Calhoun said Paducah is a great spot for marine industries to headquarter or have offices.

Waterways Council also lobbies Congress to allocate funding to the Army Corps of Engineers and funding to improve aging river infrastructure.



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The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, signed into law last November, allocated \$2.5 billion to inland waterways infrastructure. One place benefitting from this funding is the Kentucky Lock and Dam in Grand Rivers, which Calhoun said is receiving \$465.49 million from the infrastructure legislation to continue progress on a new larger lock that aims to improve efficiency and cut down on delays for vessels traveling on the Tennessee River.

"This was a real opportunity, a once in a lifetime, once in a generation opportunity to do some real modernization work and to return those national transportation benefits to the United States," Calhoun said.

According to the National Waterways Foundation, where Calhoun also serves as secretary, inland waterways industries supported nearly 110,000 jobs in Kentucky in 2018, including several marine businesses in Paducah. In that same year, 108 million tons of freight, valued at \$11.9 billion, was moved on Kentucky's inland waterways. This freight is equivalent to about 2.7 million trucks.

Barge boats typically transport raw materials and large materials, like rocket ship materials for NASA, that is cheaper and easier to transport on water than on land or in the air, Calhoun said.



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She also highlighted the importance of the marine industry to the U.S. grain trade. About 60% of grain exports are moved on the river system, Calhoun said. The inland waterways system could play an even bigger role for grain exports in the next few years.

With the war between Russia and Ukraine impacting grain supply and exports from Ukraine, Calhoun said the United States could begin exporting more grain to countries that normally trade with Ukraine, which could mean even more grain would be shipped via the inland waterways.

Calhoun also shared that the Waterways Council is hosting its annual symposium in December in Paducah for the first time for industry leaders to share their thoughts on the river industry.

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