



By JIM MYERS

WJ Washington Correspondent

Washington, D.C.—An ongoing mariner shortage and other workforce issues are expected to be the focus of a September 7 meeting in Dania Beach, Fla., that is being promoted by the Merchant Mariner Credentialing Program.

That session is part of a series of meetings previously announced by the National Merchant Marine Personnel Advisory Committee (NMERPAC).

“A robust Merchant Marine is vital to national security, and NMERPAC welcomes input from all facets of the industry on measures to help address the shortage,” stated Mayte Medina, chief of the Office of Merchant Mariner Credentialing.

During the session on September 7, Medina said, the full committee will discuss the mariner shortage and other workforce issues.

Anyone who is not part of the NMERPAC e-mail list and would like to attend this meeting is encouraged to contact Megan Johns Henry at megan.c.johns@uscg.mil.

NMERPAC scheduled its meetings September 7-9 at the STAR Center, 2 West Dixie Highway, Dania Beach, Fla. 33004.

NMERPAC makes recommendations to the secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.

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Daylight Closures Planned At Kentucky Lock

By SHELLEY BYRNE

A broken stem on one of two emptying valves at Kentucky Lock will require a closure during daylight hours beginning September 6.

The closure at the lock, Tennessee River Mile 22.4, is expected to continue until September 26. Traffic will be able to pass through the chamber from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.

During the closures, vessels are

encouraged to use Barkley Lock via the Barkley Canal, according to the navigation notice sent by Brian Mangrum, the Nashville Engineer District's chief of the maintenance section technical support branch.

Caleb Skinner, lockmaster for both Kentucky and Barkley locks, said a crew was doing a normal inspection a little less than two months ago when they discovered the valve

stem had bent. As it had been fine earlier in the day, they know exactly which day it occurred.

“We are going to repair that valve stem and, hopefully, during that time discover what was the cause of the valve being bent and the operating machinery not being able to be used,” he said.

The emptying valve has been out of service since the bent valve stem

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CMT To Provide Barge Shifting, Fleeting At Yellow Creek Port

By FRANK MCCORMACK

Yellow Creek State Inland Port (YCP), the uppermost port on the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway (Tenn-Tom), at the intersection of the Tenn-Tom and the Tennessee River, has announced that Cooper Marine & Timberlands (CMT) is now the port's exclusive provider of barge fleeting and shifting services. The arrangement took effect September 1.

“Thanks to the leadership of federal, state and local officials, Yellow Creek Port is on a trajectory of exciting new growth,” said YCP Executive Director Robert Dexter. “Tonnage and revenues have grown by double digits in the past few years. Millions in private and public investments have been made in order to expand job opportunities and modernize facilities. Securing CMT as our port's

exclusive barge fleeting and shifting service provider is another step forward on our mission of growing and diversifying the port's capabilities to best serve our current and future tenants and to create high-paying and reliable jobs for the state of Mississippi.”

A multimodal facility, YCP offers barge, truck and rail transfer capabilities.

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Wheat Growers Respond To Snake River Report

By DAVID MURRAY

The National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) released a statement August 26 in response to the Final Lower Snake River Dams Benefit Replacement Report and recommendations recently released by Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) and Gov. Jay Inslee (D-Wash.). Environmental advocates of Pacific salmon have long argued that the locks and dams are decimating Pacific salmon. The final report lays out a range of options and the costs associated with each but notes that it “does not constitute

a recommendation on whether the Lower Snake River dams should be either breached or retained.”

“The dams play a vital role in providing a safe, efficient and affordable way for wheat farmers to get their product to market,” said NAWG CEO Chandler Goule. “We are glad the recommendations released by Sen. Murray and Gov. Inslee recognize the role these dams play in agriculture and acknowledge dam breaching is not feasible at present. However, we remain concerned and

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Family Reconnected With Son's Message In A Bottle, Thanks To Shipyard Workers

By FRANK MCCORMACK

Thirty-three years ago, students in Martha Bur-

green bottle that piqued his curiosity.

“I’m always looking for stuff like that,” Mitchell said

more of the letter together, assembling part of an address and phone number, the date (August 30

Nick Buhbe reported that there were nine entries for the WEDA 2022 Environmental Excellence Award: five in the environmental dredging category, two for navigation dredging and two for the climate change category. Of these, seven were accepted, he said, and three were awarded in three categories: navigation dredging, environmental dredging and mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

Vogt called on Kendall Brome for a report on TechNotes, a program started in 2019 to provide notes on a variety of technical dredging topics to be available on the WEDA website. She was given the assignment to follow up on the initiative, in which eight topics have been drafted and provided to authors. Brome is the first WEDA fellow, taken on as a project during her master's degree studies. She receives her degree this summer and has accepted a position with Geosyntec Consultants. She will continue to work on TechNotes beyond her fellowship, along with Stacy Goetz.

WEDApedia

Carol Shobrook presented a progress report on the WEDApedia in place of Marsha Cohen, whose travel schedule did not get her to Houston in time for the meeting. WEDApedia is an exhaustive glossary of dredging terms that is posted on the WEDA website under Publications. It is based on a Corps dredging desk reference organized by Tom Verna in 1991 and never completed. Paul Fuglevand has been using the PDF of the document as a useful reference for the intervening decades and had the idea of converting it for posting online with the possibility of reader input for availability to all. Beginning in 2021, the document was edited, annotated, proof-read and formatted for the internet by a small group of editors who were honored at the general meeting.

Kentucky Lock

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was discovered.

"When it's bent like that, the machinery doesn't operate properly," Skinner said.

However, the lock was built with two emptying valves, so the chamber has remained in service. It just takes twice as long to empty, Skinner said, averaging 30 minutes instead of 15 minutes.

The lock's emptying valves are 12 feet tall and 12 feet wide and made in a semi-circular shape. They open a passageway into a culvert that allows water to run into or out of the lock chamber.

As machinery to operate the lock needs to be at the top of the wall, a series of motors and gearboxes is attached to the 62-foot-tall valve stem that connects the machinery to the valve. The stem is made of 18-inch-diameter metal pipe.

Snake River

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

opposed to breaching, as it would be detrimental to wheat growers across the region. Last month, NAWG filed a public comment outlining our concerns, whereby other modes of transportation cannot simply replace barging. Wheat farmers move grain most efficiently by using the waterway instead of rail or truck while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. NAWG remains committed to working with our federal partners and stakeholders to meet the challenge of helping facilitate a healthy river ecosystem while supporting wheat growers."

NAWG is a federation of 20 state wheat grower associations and other industry partners that works to represent the needs and interests of wheat producers before Congress and federal agencies. Based in Washington, D.C., NAWG works in areas as diverse as federal farm policy, trade, environmental regulation, transpor-

The machinery normally pulls the valve upward using the stem or reverse to set the valve back down.

Bent valve stems are not uncommon, Skinner said. He noted that since 2015, three stems have bent. The valve stems are designed to do so when something is wrong with the system, preventing damage to the machinery or valve. "We keep spare ones on hand to be able to change these out whenever it happens," Skinner said.

It takes longer to schedule a repair crew and an available crane, however.

"We're actually really lucky this time that this happened less than two months ago, and we've already got a crew available to work on it," he said.

So far, the valve stem repair has not caused additional delays, Skinner said. He noted that the average delay at the lock is about 12 hours, and the Corps has been able to keep that from build-

ing. At times, he said, the wait has decreased to four to six hours.

However, Skinner said it is possible that with the chamber closed during daylight hours, it may not be possible to clear the queue at night. He suggested using Barkley Lock, accessed through the canal between Kentucky Lake and Lake Barkley, as an alternative route.

However, the Cumberland River is expected to be closed September 12-13 for the float-in and lift in place of the main span of a new bridge over the Cumberland River at Smithland, Ky., as long as the weather cooperates. Skinner said that with some extra time built into the schedule, it may be possible to allow navigation through the lock on those days if the queue has grown to a substantial wait and the extra time isn't needed for the valve stem replacement.

tation and sustainability.

In July, as part of the public comments filed by NAWG in response to the Draft Lower Snake River Dams Benefit Replacement Report published on June 9, the group said, "NAWG questions many of the baseline assumptions argued in the draft report, which is incomplete because of the many key vari-

ables that cannot be quantified. The Lower Snake River dams are a critical infrastructure system required to move U.S.-grown wheat to high-value markets around the world. Breaching the dams would have serious economic consequences for producers and grain handlers while contradicting carbon reduction goals."

