

# CAPITOL CURRENTS



July 16, 2024



## WRDA: PEAKS AND VALLEYS

By Tracy Zea, President/CEO, Waterways Council, Inc.

**W**hile Waterways Council, Inc. (WCI) has been applauding the practice of Congress passing Water Resources Development Acts (WRDA) biennially since 2014, the Senate Environment & Public Works (EPW) Committee's May 22 passage of WRDA 2024 was particularly noteworthy.

On May 22, the EPW Committee marked up and unanimously approved its WRDA 2024 bill that included a permanent 75% general revenues/ 25% Inland Waterways

Trust Fund (IWTF) cost-share adjustment for inland waterways construction and major rehabilitation projects. The current cost-share formula is 65%/35%.

A major league win for WCI and inland waterways infrastructure, the outcomes of the Senate WRDA 2024 bill will accelerate project completion and ensure greater efficiency for the future of the navigation construction program.

For example, under a 25% cost-share

requirement, Lock and Dam 25 could pursue efficient funding and potentially receive all of its funding by FY30 rather than receiving smaller funding portions over a longer period stretching through FY37. The Corps of Engineers also estimates more efficient funding of L/D 25 could save an estimated \$720 million.

For Montgomery Lock, a 25% cost-share paves the way to fully fund the project by FY28.

The Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) Brazos River Westside gate replacement could also be completed much earlier, and the next mega priority lock construction project at LaGrange on the Illinois Waterway could receive all of its estimated funding needs by FY34.

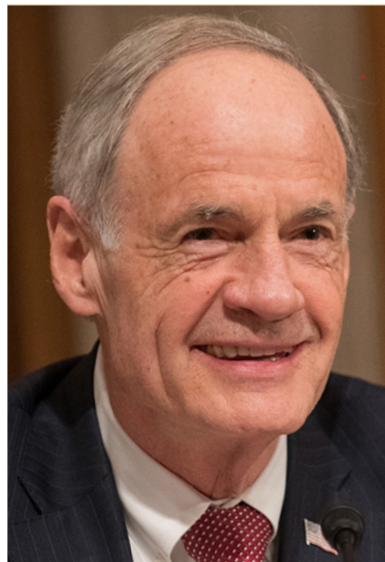
Current annual IWTF revenues are \$125 million, but the 25% cost-share match would facilitate an estimated \$1.4 billion in additional project funding availability over a decade, equating to an annual program level of \$500 million. This is a whopping \$143 million more than what could be provided through the current 35% cost-share each fiscal year (\$357 million).

All said, the annual construction program could efficiently fund more than one

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**Senate Environment & Public Works Chairman Tom Carper scored a victory for inland waterways modernization in the passage of the WRDA 2024 bill.**

# WRDA: PEAKS AND VALLEYS

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major navigation modernization project at a time with the revised cost-share. Current project capabilities for major lock projects often exceed \$200 million each year.

The Senate WRDA 2024 bill also authorized one inland waterways Chief's Report on the GIWW in Brazoria and Matagorda Counties at a cost of \$314,221,000 (\$204,244,000 from Federal treasury and \$109,977,000 from the IWTF).

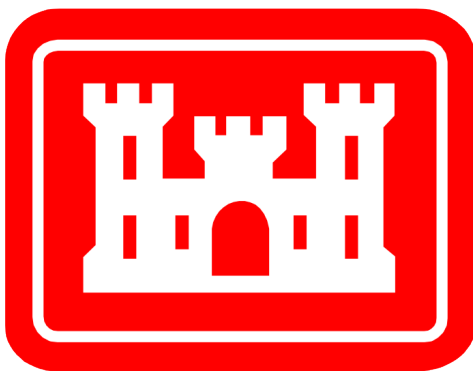
On June 26, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee marked up its WRDA 2024 bill. In a very

disappointing outcome, the House bill did not contain any provision to modernize the inland waterways despite more than 50 House members requesting it.

Leaders in the House are hoping to move the measure to the floor in the coming weeks. The Senate and House will then confer and negotiate the two bills, with the hopes that a final bill can be passed in the early fall with a provision to modernize the inland waterways. WCI will continue to track the progress of the final bill and report on developments to its members. ❖

## FY24 WORK PLAN SCORES BIG WINS FOR WCI AND NATION'S WATERWAYS

By Jennifer Armstrong, WCI Director of Government Relations



## US Army Corps of Engineers®

On May 13, 2024, the Corps of Engineers released its FY24 Work Plan, allocating critically needed funding to four ongoing inland waterways construction projects. The inland waterways industry scored two huge wins with record-level funding of \$456 million and no cost-share requirement for that funding from the IWTF.

Of the six total ongoing construction projects, three projects were funded to completion—the Chickamauga Lock in Tennessee which received \$236.8 million; Locks 2, 3, and 4 on

the Lower Monongahela River received \$41 million; and the Three Rivers project on the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System received \$103.17 million. The Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) also received \$120 million including \$45 million for ecosystem restoration projects and \$75 million for navigation related projects. Without the funding provided in the FY24 Work Plan, the program could have faced devastating consequences under another Continuing Resolution (CR) including little funding,

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## FY24 WORK PLAN SCORES BIG WINS FOR WCI AND NATION'S WATERWAYS

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the mothballing of projects, and lengthening timelines for completion.

For Congressional appropriators to reach agreement on FY24 appropriations and avoid another CR, they had to find a way to offset some of the spending to appease fiscal conservatives while keeping levels sufficient to cover member requested priorities, such as earmarks. To do this, appropriators repurposed \$1.4 billion of Bipartisan Infrastructure Funding (BIL) that had remained unallocated and gave the Corps the flexibility to determine which projects included in the bill would receive the BIL funding. In doing so, they removed restrictions on what programs must receive specific levels of BIL funding while maintaining important terms and conditions included in the original infrastructure bill, notably waiving the requirement that construction funding for inland waterways be cost-shared with the IWTF.

After effective engagement with key decision makers, the Corps allocated the entire \$456 million from BIL funding in the FY24 Work Plan. Ultimately this increased the amount of BIL funding provided for inland waterways construction by \$343 million, from \$2.5 billion to \$2.843 billion overall. This also means none of those funds must be cost-shared with the IWTF, putting the program one step closer to addressing limitations of the IWTF to meet the significant future funding needs to cover project cost escalations.

The Work Plan also included funding for two inland waterways studies in the Investigations account: \$800,000 to continue the feasibility study for Bayou Sorrel and \$500,000 to initiate a study to evaluate deepening the J. Bennett Johnston Waterway, both in Louisiana. The Mississippi River



*Bayou Sorrel Lock Replacement Project in Louisiana received feasibility study funding in the FY24 Work Plan.*

and Tributaries (MR&T) received \$368 million, including an additional \$10 million for dredging the Mississippi River. ❖

## BIG RIVER: CAN THE MISSISSIPPI BUILD AMERICA AGAIN?

On July 4, with WCI's assistance, [Politico](#) published a feature story about the importance of the inland waterways transportation system to the U.S. economy, environment, and the Nation's shippers.❖

**POLITICO**



# LEGISLATOR PROFILE: SENATOR CINDY HYDE-SMITH

*In this issue of Capitol Currents, we profile another elected official who has championed the inland waterways, Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS)*



**Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith**

**U**.S. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith is the first woman elected to represent Mississippi in Washington, D.C., winning a six-year term in November 2020, following her April 2018 appointment to fill the U.S. Senate seat vacated by long-time U.S. Senator Thad Cochran and subsequent November 2018 special

election victory to complete his term.

She serves on the Senate Committee on Appropriations, Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, and Committee on Rules and Administration.

In her role on the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee, Hyde-Smith has used her subcommittee positions and influence to benefit Mississippians and its economy in a variety of ways whether it involves shipbuilding on the Gulf Coast, Mississippi's strong defense and aerospace sectors,

agriculture, rural broadband and rural health, infrastructure, or other priority issues.

As a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, Hyde-Smith was influential in the crafting and passage of the 2018 Farm Bill, which included provisions she authored pertaining to rural economic development, better crop insurance for flood-prone regions, Chronic Wasting Disease research, and forest health. The Senator will apply those lessons in working to develop the 2024 Farm Bill.

In early 2019, Hyde-Smith reinitiated the effort to address the catastrophic flooding in the Yazoo Backwater Area by securing commitments from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency to revisit the previously vetoed project. Hyde-Smith continues the work on the Backwater Area pump issue, while working to secure funding for the Corps of Engineers to build and maintain its extension flood control system in Mississippi.

As a U.S. Senator, Hyde-Smith has received the Award for Conservative Achievement from the American Conservative Union Foundation, the Spirit of Enterprise Award from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and Champion of Small Business – National Federation of Independent Business. Among other commendations, the National Rural Health Association gave the Senator its Rural Health Champion Award, and she received National Legislator of the Year honors from the

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## BIOGRAPHICAL FACTS

### Name

Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS)

### Born

May 10, 1959 in Brookhaven, MS

### Education

Copiah-Lincoln Community College and the University of Southern Mississippi

### Occupation

Before being elected to the Senate, Hyde-Smith served as the Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce, elected in 2011 and reelected in 2015. Before that, she served 12 years in the Mississippi State Senate. A fifth-generation farming family, Senator Hyde-Smith's family raises beef cattle and are partners in a local stockyard auction market in Brookhaven.

## LEGISLATOR PROFILE: SENATOR CINDY HYDE-SMITH

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Mississippi Rural Health Association.

Additionally, Hyde-Smith has received the Agriculture Legislator of the Year Award from the Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts, the Ambassador Award from the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation, the Achievement Award from Delta Council, and the Outstanding Service to Small Farmers Award from Alcorn State University.

**Q. You have been a huge advocate for the agriculture industry throughout your career helping American farmers compete in the global marketplace. How does your experience as part of a fifth-generation farming family and former Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce shape your policy goals in the Senate?**

A. America's role as a global leader in agriculture is influenced by a complex web of factors that extend far beyond domestic farm policy. My experiences working in and with the agricultural sector have provided me with valuable insight into what helps or what hurts when it comes to a number of different policy areas, from water resources infrastructure, to transportation, trade, food safety, rural health care, banking and finance, among others.

**Q. Besides agriculture, what are your priorities for the remainder of the 118th Congress?**

A: As a member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, adequate investment in our inland waterways continues to be one of my top priorities, and not just for agricultural reasons. Hundreds of millions of tons of cargo move on the Mississippi River each year. Inland waterways investment grows America's economy – employment, sales, GDP, billions of dollars in domestic transportation savings – and U.S. agriculture's global competitiveness depends on it.

**Q. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, you have successfully increased funding and resources for the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project, one of many critical water resource projects in Mississippi that provides efficient navigation and protects people and infrastructure from flood damages. What does the MR&T project mean to the state of Mississippi?**

A. The importance of the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) project to Mississippi cannot be quantified and is hard to put into words. A quick read about or review of the photo archive of the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 – the most destructive flood in U.S. history – helps explain the MR&T

project's significance. A breach in the mainline levee north of Greenville, Mississippi, left more than a million acres of land in the Mississippi Delta under water. The painful lessons learned from the flood led Congress to authorize the MR&T project in the Flood Control Act of 1928. Today, the project's unified system of levees, floodways, tributary basin and navigation improvements protect millions of people and their property from Cape Girardeau, Missouri, to the Gulf of Mexico. I'm keen to maintain and improve this system which is so critical to Mississippi's economy and public safety.

**Q. When you aren't being a fierce advocate for the people of Mississippi, what do you enjoy doing in your free time?**

A. Spending time with my husband and daughter working on our family cattle operation. I find gratification in hard work and playing a small role in ensuring Americans continue to have access to the safest, highest quality, and most affordable supply of food in the world. ❖



**Among other Senate committees, Senator Hyde-Smith serves on the important Appropriations Committee.**

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: BIRDON AMERICA

Established in 1977, Birdon is an experienced prime contractor with an operational footprint that includes facilities in Bellingham, WA; Denver, CO; New Orleans, LA; Bayou La Batre, AL; and Portland, CT, as well as locations in Australia, Europe, and Asia.

Birdon has been engineering and manufacturing defense solutions since 1992 and is a leading global supplier of military watercraft. Birdon's highly qualified and experienced in-house design and engineering team's extensive capability includes naval architecture, product development and design, structural and Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) analysis, configuration management, supply chain management, and lifecycle support. Combined with expert tradespeople, Birdon's team is skilled in new build design and construction of highly specialized vessels, hull modifications and reconstruction, internal fit-out and modifications, and a range of other specialized marine services.

Birdon is an established and trusted partner of the U.S. Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security, the Australian Defence Force, and several other international military forces.

The company has designed, led, and delivered a wide range of marine projects, with current major projects including the U.S. Army Bridge Erection Boat (BEB) program for over 400 new build vessels, and the U.S. Coast Guard 47' Motor LifeBoat Service Life Extension Project (MLB-SLEP) for the refit of 110 vessels.

Birdon has also been awarded a \$1.187 billion contract for the U.S. Coast Guard's Waterways Commerce Cutter (WCC) program. Birdon is designing and building two variants, the River Buoy Tender (WLR) and the Inland Construction Tender (WLIC), for a total of 27 vessels.

Its subsidiary, NAMJet, designs and manufactures advanced marine propulsion systems that set the standard for thrust, durability, and innovation. Designed for a wide variety of commercial and military applications, NAMJet's line of high-thrust marine waterjets is tough enough to withstand the most brutal conditions.

Birdon's services also include end-of-life disposals, from items as small as hand grenade pins to 4,000-ton naval frigates. They have a solid track record in secure destruction, recycling, and scuttling of private, military, and government



assets across the globe. Birdon manages and undertakes the complete disposal service including salvage, transport, processing, and recycling all grades of metals, plastics, and other non-metallic items including hazardous material disposal.

As a ship designer and builder, provider of in-service support, and disposal specialist, Birdon delivers full cradle-to-grave capacity. This includes the provision of advice and strategies for retirement and recycling of assets coming to the end of their life.

At the heart of Birdon's operations lies a steadfast commitment to strengthening America's industrial base capabilities and local manufacturing; more than 98% of its supply chain partners are U.S. companies.

"Joining Waterways Council, Inc. is a crucial step for Birdon as we align with its commitment to excellence and our dedication to supporting the nation's waterways infrastructure. We look forward to learning from our peers, sharing our expertise, and contributing to the collective effort to ensure that America's waterways continue to be a reliable and efficient mode of transportation for commerce and defense," said Rob Scott, President.

"Birdon America looks forward to working with fellow WCI members to enhance the waterways infrastructure that is such a vital part of our nation's economy and security," he continued. ❖



***The River Buoy Tender (WLR) and the Inland Construction Tender (WLIC) Waterway Commerce Cutters.***



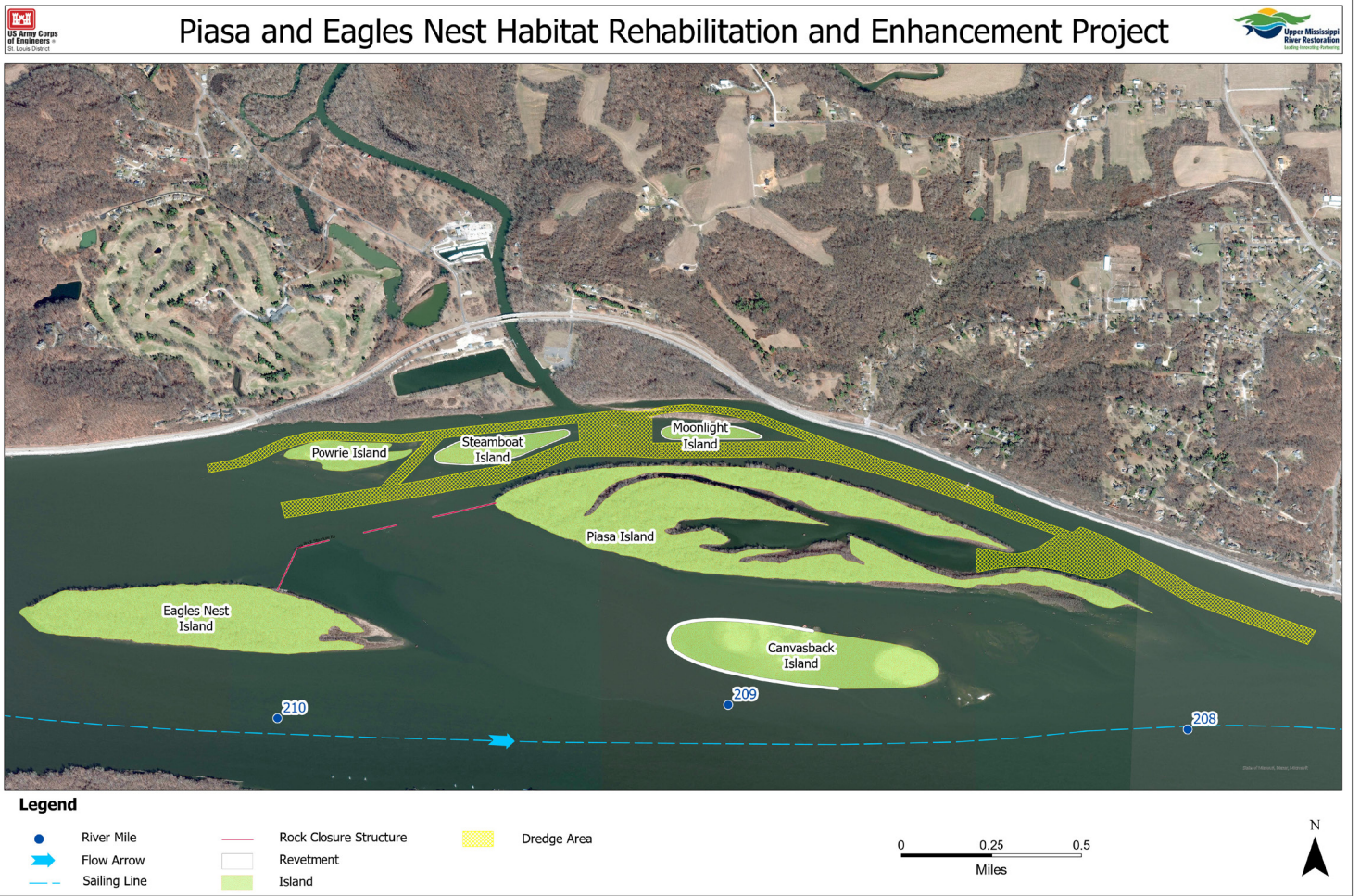
# CONSERVATION COLUMN: MISSISSIPPI RIVER PROJECT BALANCES AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS AND NAVIGATION

By Ryan Swearingin and Janet Meredith, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District

Is it possible to promote a healthier and more resilient Mississippi River ecosystem without impacting navigation? The Upper Mississippi River Restoration, or UMRR, Program was initiated to do just that. Authorized by the Water Resources Development Act of 1986, UMRR was the first environmental restoration and monitoring program undertaken on a large river system in the United States.

Since its creation, it has come to be recognized as the single most important effort committed to ensuring the viability and vitality of the Upper Mississippi River System's diverse

fish and wildlife resources since establishment of the National Wildlife Refuges in the 1920s. To date, the UMRR program has restored and connected more than 120,000 acres along the Upper Mississippi River with an additional 65,000 acres of habitat projects planned for the next decade. These projects will provide vital habitat for diverse fish and wildlife species, including rare and endangered species. What makes the UMRR Program unique is its unparalleled partnership between a multitude of federal and state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the public.



*Dredged material from the side channel adjacent to Piasa Island is used to create Moonlight Island on the Upper Mississippi River. The island, and five others, are part of the Piasa and Eagles Nest Island habitat restoration project within the Corps of Engineers Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program, located approximately eight miles upriver from Alton, IL, between Upper Mississippi River miles 208 and 211.*

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## CONSERVATION COLUMN: MISSISSIPPI RIVER PROJECT BALANCES AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS AND NAVIGATION

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The Piasa and Eagles Nest Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Project, one of 26 active Upper Mississippi River Restoration projects along the Mississippi River, is located eight miles upstream of Alton, IL, and is a collaborative effort between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. This project focuses on deepening side channels and backwater habitats and creating three new islands to benefit a multitude of fish and wildlife. Additionally, the project will enhance boating access to the area, helping to find a balance between conservation and recreation needs.

Historically, Piasa and Eagles Nest Islands were among a complex of several islands. The construction of Lock and Dam 26 and side channel alterations partially inundated Piasa and Eagles Nest Islands while surrounding islands disappeared completely. Today, silt fills the Piasa Island side channel and greatly restricts flow from the main channel. Once a deep interior backwater channel, it now dries completely during low water, leading to decreased aquatic habitat. Restoration opportunities include island stabilization and creation with side channel improvements leading to increased diversity of aquatic habitat.

Construction of the project began in 2021 with the placement of more than 200,000 tons of rock to create island containment rings and a closing structure between Piasa and Eagles Nest Islands. This partial closing structure is designed to promote a self-scouring side channel by diverting flow into the historic Piasa side channel.

Contractors are currently focused on using an 18-inch cutter suction dredge to excavate 1.5 million cubic yards of material along a 2-mile-long deep braided channel. The dredged soil material is being deposited into the containment units creating nearly 75 acres of island habitat. The enhanced side channel and backwater habitats will create velocity and depth diversity to benefit a multitude of fish species. Construction is scheduled to conclude in 2025.

As a way to name the constructed islands, Corps staff held an island naming competition. Park rangers delivered educational programming about the project to 2,400 local middle school students after which students submitted a suggested name. A panel of local stakeholders selected Steamboat, Moonlight, Canvasback and Powrie from the entries.

“The Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program and has clearly demonstrated for more than three decades that we can find a balance between healthy aquatic ecosystems and navigation,” stated John Peukert, St. Louis District deputy district engineer. “The continued public support has helped ensure this vital program endures to improve habitats while providing ancillary navigation, outdoor recreation and economic benefits for the entire nation.”

For more information on this and other Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program projects, please visit: <https://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental-Stewardship/Upper-Mississippi-River-Restoration/> ❖

## USDA SECRETARY VILSACK, ASA (CW) CONNOR, REP. BUDZINSKI, STAKEHOLDERS VISIT LOCK AND DAM 25

By Paul Rohde, WCI Vice President-Midwest Region

Secretary Tom Vilsack conducted his first visit to Upper Mississippi River Lock and Dam 25 as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture on May 3, sharing the podium with government officials and representatives of Midwestern agriculture.

Sec. Vilsack toured the lock just two weeks shy of the 85th

anniversary of its operational date. He received a briefing from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers staff of St. Louis and Rock Island Districts on the progress and plans for the new 1,200-foot additional chamber at the site. The lock addition is funded in part by the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act,

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## USDA SECRETARY VILSACK, ASA (CW) CONNOR, REP. BUDZINSKI, STAKEHOLDERS VISIT LOCK AND DAM 25

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*Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) Michael Connor (left) shakes hands with USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack, as Rep. Nicki Budzinski looks on.*

otherwise recognized by Sec. Vilsack during the event as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, signed by President Biden in November 2021.

Several dozen stakeholders gathered at Winfield, MO, to hear Sec. Vilsack's comments, along with those of Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works (Civil Works) [ASA (CW)] Michael Connor, and Representative Nikki Budzinski (IL-13).

They were preceded by two Illinois farmers who ship their harvest on the Mississippi River. Kenny Hartman, WCI member and incoming president of the National Corn Growers Association (and former WCI board of directors member), and Stan Born, a director for the U.S. Soybean Export Council, both addressed the crowd with their own personal connections to the river system, as they both rely on the river to provide competitive prices to move their grain.

ASA(CW) Connor, recognized how much he has learned and has come to appreciate the navigation portfolio of

the Corp's civil works mission since he was appointed and showed appreciation for the education process he received in his early months at the helm. He thanked agriculture stakeholders in particular for their constant advocacy to improve and maintain the system and touted the Administration's investment in both construction and operations and maintenance.

He recognized the current state as an inflection point on America's ability to be competitive in the global grain market and highlighted a Corps statistic of a reduction in unscheduled lock outages by 80 percent over the past decade. He outlined "unprecedented amount of attention for the inland waterways system" over the past four years, with the Administration's strong priority of strengthening America's supply chain.

Sec. Connor described America's Inland waterways system as "a crown jewel of our water resources infrastructure," saving American shippers between \$7 billion and \$9 billion a year, as opposed

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## USDA SECRETARY VILSACK, ASA (CW) CONNOR, REP. BUDZINSKI, STAKEHOLDERS VISIT LOCK AND DAM 25

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to other surface modes. “But it’s a hidden jewel,” he said. “I don’t think the public at large understands the true benefits, the needs that exist, and the value that exists from the inland waterways system to move our goods and cargo,” he declared.

Sec. Connor touted the multi-purpose goals of the Navigation-Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP), with investments in the ecosystem restoration measures, including “225 restoration projects on the table as part of the NESP program, to advance our environmental objectives as well as our commercial and economic objectives.” He also commended Rep. Budzinski for her role in securing funding for NESP in FY24 appropriations, through a Community Project Funding request to the Appropriations Committee for its Energy & Water bill. Overall, five House members and five Senators made the specific request for NESP to their respective Appropriations Committees for FY24.

Rep. Budzinski pledged to “continue working with my colleagues to continue sustained investment” to NESP. She introduced Sec. Vilsack, who opened by recognizing Rep. Budzinski as a “great ally for agriculture (serving on the House Committee on Agriculture), a strong voice particularly for Midwestern agriculture.”

His remarks touched on the competitive edge South American countries have achieved through their own investments to their transportation networks, closing the gap the United States has enjoyed because of our historic transportation advantage.

To demonstrate the importance of ag exports, Sec. Vilsack noted that in the first three months of fiscal year 2024, the drop off in soybean sales to China alone matched the entire U.S trade deficit with the rest of the world during that timeframe

- approximately \$6 billion. “Brazil had a competitive market opportunity” which allowed them to capitalize. By improving Lock 25 among other intermodal improvements, we are “putting ourselves back in a position where we can widen the gap, so between our quality and quantity, and price, and ability to deliver on time, we now have a competitive advantage” to provide agriculture exports to the world market.

Sec. Vilsack made a point to connect food and commodity security with national security and commended the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for their role in keeping our inland waterways system open. He closed by thanking Messrs. Hartman, Born, and the other growers in the audience for their role in ensuring America’s food security. “As significant as the Armed Forces are to our national security, so are these guys (pointing to the growers), because we can feed ourselves.” ❖



*WCI member Kenny Hartman, incoming President of the National Corn Growers Association (left), speaks with Col. Jesse Curry, Commander of the Rock Island District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.*



## WCI'S DEB CALHOUN NAMED MARITIME PERSON OF THE YEAR BY PADUCAH PROPELLER CLUB



*WCI's Senior Vice President Deb Calhoun was named the Maritime Person of the Year by the Propeller Club Port of Paducah, KY on May 18. Those receiving the honor are recognized for making considerable contributions to the river industry and those working in it, including a commitment to people, education, safety, environmental stewardship, political involvement, and economic influence. Gail O'Connell (Tennessee Valley Towing) was named the Port Person of the Year for notable contributions to the Paducah port community, demonstrated support through marine-related functions, and marine industry advocacy.*

## GEORGE FOSTER HONORED WITH INAUGURAL MIKE RUSHING AWARD



*On May 31 at the Inland Marine Expo (IMX) in Nashville, TN, the Towing Vessel Inspection Bureau (TVIB) bestowed George Foster, founder of WCI member JB Marine Service Inc., the first Mike Rushing Legacy Service Award. The award, named for Mike Rushing, who passed away in 2023, recognizes an individual who exhibits the core principles of community service, professional excellence and mentorship.*

## MERRITT LANE III NAMED CHAIR OF WATER INSTITUTE

**A**t its March meeting, the [Water Institute](#) welcomed new board chairman Merritt Lane III. He serves among the Institute's Board of Directors, composed of highly skilled and accomplished scientists, engineers, business leaders, and public servants committed to the mission, vision, and values of The Water Institute.

Mr. Lane, Chairman of the Board, President, and CEO of Canal Barge Company, Inc., has been involved in inland waterway management in Louisiana and across the country for decades, serving as Chairman of the Board of WCI, and with the American Waterways Operators, National Waterways Foundation, the U.S. Coast Guard Foundation, and the Blue Sky Maritime Coalition. ❖



**Merritt Lane III**



# REMEMBER THE ALAMO! ... AND WCI'S WATERWAYS SYMPOSIUM

The planning for Waterways Council, Inc.'s 2024 Annual Waterways Symposium is well underway, with [online registration now open](#). The events – which also include our Annual Membership and Board of Directors Meetings – will be held November 13-15, at the Omni La Mansión del Rio Hotel in San Antonio, TX, 112 College Street.

Group rates at the hotel are available until October 23, at \$249/night, plus tax. [Reserve your room](#) online or call the hotel, 1-800-THE-OMNI (1-800-843-6664) and reference Waterways Council. The schedule of events is as follows (times listed are Central) and more details are [here](#):

## AGENDA

### Wednesday, November 13

- 12:30 p.m. Waterways Symposium Registration Opens | La Mansión
- 1:30 – 4:15 p.m. WCI Annual Membership/Board of Directors Meeting La Mansión **WCI Members Only**
- 4:15 p.m.–6:00 p.m. Opening Reception | La Mansión: Four Brothers Restaurant
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner | The Alamo

### Thursday, November 14

- 7:30 – 9:00 a.m. Buffet Breakfast | La Mansión
- 9:00 – 10:00 a.m. Geopolitical Importance of the U.S. Inland Waterways | La Mansión  
Rodger Baker, *Executive Director of the Stratfor Center for Applied Geopolitics at RANE*  
*Introduced by WCI Chair Cherrie Felder, Vice President, Channel Shipyard Companies*
- 10:00 – 10:50 a.m. USACE Update | La Mansión  
Edward Belk, *Director of Civil Works, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*
- 10:50 – 11:05 a.m. National Rivers Hall of Fame National Achievement Award | La Mansión  
Presentation to the 2024 Award Recipient, To Be Announced
- 11:05 – 11:30 a.m. Networking Break La Mansión
- 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Lunch and Keynote Speaker | La Mansión  
Nathan Gonzales, *Editor and Publisher, Inside Elections*
- 1:00 – 1:45 p.m. General Session| La Mansión Speaker TBD
- 1:45 – 2:15 p.m. Networking Break + Sweet Treat | La Mansión
- 2:15 – 3:00 p.m. Economic Outlook: Global Supply Chain for Commodities Moving on the Inland Waterways | La Mansión  
Ken Eriksen, *Managing Member and Strategic Advisor, Polaris Analytics and Consulting*
- 3:00 p.m. Closing Remarks and Adjourn  
Tracy Zea, *President and CEO, Waterways Council, Inc.*
- 4:00 – 6:00p.m. Closing Reception | Ostra Restaurant, Mokara Hotel
- Evening Dinner | On Your Own



**WCI's opening dinner will take place at the Alamo, site of a battle during the Texas Revolution, when the Mexican army laid siege on a mission for 13 days that has become a metaphor for American liberty and honor.**

### Friday, November 15

- 7:00 – 9:00 a.m. Buffet Breakfast | La Mansión
- 9:00 a.m. Adjourn

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## REMEMBER THE ALAMO! ...AND WCI'S WATERWAYS SYMPOSIUM

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*WCI's November 13-15 meetings will be held at the historic Omni La Mansión del Rio Hotel that blends Spanish colonial architecture and European style with the romance of a grand hacienda.*

The fee to attend the WCI meetings and events is \$650. A discounted rate is available for government employees at \$325.

Sponsorships are available for the meeting: Platinum: \$5,000 (includes one meeting registration); Gold: \$3,500; Silver: \$2,000.

Contact Deb Calhoun, [dcalhoun@waterwayscouncil.org](mailto:dcalhoun@waterwayscouncil.org), if you are interested.

Sponsorship can also be taken online.

For questions on the meeting and registration, contact Amber McClay, 202/765-2166, [amcclay@waterwayscouncil.org](mailto:amcclay@waterwayscouncil.org). ❖

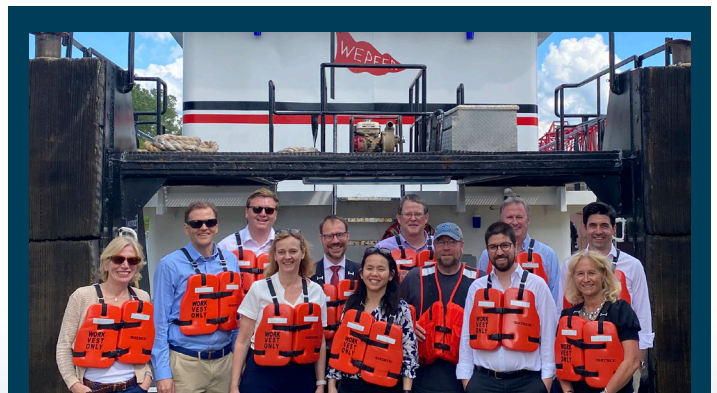
## WCI, PORT OF MEMPHIS, WEPFER MARINE HOST EMBASSY PERSONNEL FROM SEVEN COUNTRIES

On May 14, transportation counselors from the Washington, DC-based Embassies of Germany, Switzerland, France, Canada, Portugal, the UK, the Netherlands, and the EU office enlisted WCI's help in organizing a visit to the Port of Memphis, as part of the group's tour of transportation logistics hubs that included rail and trucking. The group rode aboard a Wepfer Marine harbor boat to learn more about the inland waterways and the Port of Memphis.

Prior to the boat tour, Randy Richardson, Port of Memphis Vice President, Port and Industrial Properties / Executive Director, provided an overview of the port that included its history, business and cargoes handled, and economic impact on the region.

Deb Calhoun, WCI Senior Vice President, detailed the inland waterways and its infrastructure, highlighting its environmental footprint, capacity, and economic impact.

Ken Eriksen, Managing Member and Strategic Advisor of Polaris Analytics and Consulting, presented the importance of the navigation system to global trade through the New Orleans Customs District and among the countries represented. ❖



*Embassy staff stand in front of Wepfer Marine's M/V Chris Foster.*



# WCI PARTICIPATES IN CORPS' PLANNING ASSOCIATES MEETING 2024



*At the Corps' 2024 Planning Associates meeting in April, WCI Senior Vice President Deb Calhoun (left) joined Paul Dittman, GICA President (right), and Neil Maunu, PNWA Executive Director (center), on a panel that addressed WCI, PNWA's and GICA's work and priorities.*

On April 22, WCI was invited to participate in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Planning Associates (PA) meeting in Vancouver, WA. WCI Senior Vice President Deb Calhoun joined Paul Dittman, President, Gulf Intracoastal Canal Association (GICA), and Neil Maunu, Executive Director, Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA), on an industry panel that focused on inland waterways lock and dam infrastructure, and the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, and Pacific Northwest waterways activities.

The Corps' PA program is an advanced training opportunity in water resources problems and challenges, of which the goals are to provide an opportunity for planners to develop knowledge, skills, and abilities that will help them grow into expert planners, and to develop future planning leaders who can influence the Corps' Civil Works Program, including study execution, planning processes, and development and application of policy. ❖

## REP. DALE STRONG, SEN. PETE RICKETTS PROFILED ON "FIVE ON THE FIVE"




*Rep. Dale Strong (left) was featured on WCI's June 5 "Five on the Five" interview series, and WCI's Jennifer Armstrong interviewed Sen. Pete Ricketts on July 5.*

The June 5 installment of WCI's [interview series "Five on the Five"](#) featured Rep. Dale Strong (R-AL), who discussed the importance of the waterways to the state of Alabama, and the Nation, thanking mariners (and WCI) for what they do each day. Senator Pete Ricketts (R-NE), a member of the Senate Environment & Public Works Committee, was profiled in the [July 5 installment](#) of the series and discussed the link between food security and national security and making sure we have a strong inland waterways system to support our Nation's interests. ❖



# ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST IS UNDERWAY

WCI's [2024 Photo Contest](#) with [We Work the Waterways](#) and [The Waterways Journal](#) is live! Share photos of how "Waterways Connect US" in any of four categories: Careers, Commerce, Conservation, and Culture. The submission period is through August 31. Showcase your photography skills, celebrate our vital waterways, and highlight how waterways connect us all. Amazing prizes await the winners! [Upload your entries and find more details.](#) ❖



**WATERWAYS connect US**  
**2024 PHOTO CONTEST**  
 #WaterwaysConnectUS24 | Deadline: August 31, 2024

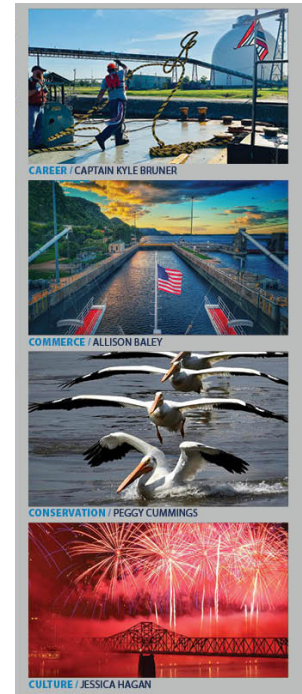
**COMMERCE** Waterways connect us to the materials we need: food on the table, gas in vehicles, building materials, and other critical commodities we use every day. Commerce photos will focus on the vessels, machines, tools, materials, and pathways (such as locks & dams, ports, terminals) that help deliver goods and services to communities across the country.

**CONSERVATION** Waterways, throughout their steady march to the sea, connect ecosystems and impact the many species that live in and beside them. Photos in this category focus on sharing the natural beauty of our rivers, such as sunrises, sunsets and wildlife, and conservation efforts, including clean-ups.

**CAREERS** Many call waterways their workplace. Waterways provide careers in transportation, shipping, recreation, and conservation, among others. This category focuses on showcasing the people at work on and along the nation's rivers, canals and waterways.

**CULTURE** Waterways connect us to our culture and impact our communities and the recreation we enjoy. Photos in this category focus on sharing the recreational activities connected to our rivers, such as river history, recreational boating, canoeing, kayaking, showboats, music, and so much more.

**WATERWAYS COUNCIL, INC.**  
**the WATERWAYS JOURNAL Weekly**  
**WE WORK THE WATERWAYS**



## INDUSTRY CALENDAR

### SAVE THE DATE:

**August 7-9:** [119th Annual GICA Seminar](#)  
 (Westin Hotel, 100 Iberville Street,  
 (New Orleans, LA)

**August 14-16:** [Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterways Conference](#)  
 (Grand Hotel, Point Clear, AL)

**August 16:** [Ceres Barge Line, Pushing Hope Charity Golf Tournament](#)  
 (Spencer T. Olin Golf Course, Alton, IL)

**August 20-22:** [Midwest Drought Early Warning System \(DEWS\) meeting](#)  
 (Embassy Suites by Hilton Downtown, Indianapolis, IN). Contact [Molly Woloszyn](#)

**October 8-9:** [AWO Board of Directors Meeting and Convention](#)  
 (Renaissance Long Beach Hotel, Long Beach, CA)

**November 12-14:** [International Workboat Show](#)  
 (Morial Convention Center, New Orleans, LA)

**November 13-15:** [WCI Board of Directors Meeting and Annual Waterways Symposium](#)  
 (Omni La Mansión del Río Hotel, San Antonio, TX)

**2025**

**February 3-5, 2025:** [WCI Board of Directors Meeting and Capitol Hill Fly-In](#)  
 (Intercontinental Hotel, Washington, DC)

**May 28-12, 2025:** [IMX2025](#)  
 (Music City Center, Nashville, TN)

**September 8-12, 2025:** [Smart Rivers 2025](#)  
 (Memphis, TN)

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