

# CAPITOL CURRENTS

April 15, 2025



## MAKE OR BREAK TIME FOR THE NATION'S INLAND WATERWAYS CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

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



Tracy Zea

After a rancorous run-up in Congress to finalizing and eventually passing a year-long Continuing Resolution (CR), the funding bill was signed by the President on March 14. Under the rules of this year-long CR, which extended federal government funding

through the end of the FY25 fiscal year on September 30, funding for the inland waterways reverts to FY24 levels. And while FY24 saw robust appropriations funding for inland navigation projects at \$456 million, the Corps' overall construction funding level has been reduced to \$1.8 billion under the CR, to be divided among the Corps' three main mission areas and six secondary missions, a decrease from funding levels of around \$2.7 billion in recent years. This forbodes an extremely tight, competitive environment for funding navigation projects ahead.

FY25 earmarked funding of \$423 million was designated for Kentucky Lock with \$218 million requests from Rep. James Comer (R-KY) and Senator Mitch McConnell (R-

KY), and earmarks of \$205 million for Montgomery Lock from Rep. Guy Reschenthaler (R-PA) and Senators John Fetterman (D-PA) and Bob Casey (D-PA).

However, the CR is precluding the use of Congressional earmarks, so this funding will not be available. Given design issues at Kentucky Lock, it was determined the project cannot use any funding in FY25. In this case, Waterways Council is pushing for funding of \$205 million for Montgomery Lock to move that project forward to completion.

The Corps, Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) will decide what projects receive funding and that decision will not be known until 60 days after the enactment of the CR when the Corps releases its FY25 Work Plan, which outlines where specific funding goes.

Washington insiders speculate that the Corps of

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# MAKE OR BREAK TIME FOR THE NATION’S INLAND WATERWAYS CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

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Engineers could decide to provide zero dollars to inland waterways construction, and depending on the decisions the Corps makes now, lack of funding could set the Montgomery project back years and increase project costs over the long term.

The inland waterways construction program has been fortunate that Congress has provided an additional \$5.1 billion above the President's annual budget request for the last 11 fiscal years. But unfortunately, the inland waterways system has only the Olmsted Lock and Dam project and a Major Rehabilitation at LaGrange Lock and Dam to show for it. Currently, there are six active construction projects, five projects in active design, and eight projects awaiting funding to begin project design work.

FY25 presents a make-or-break situation for the inland waterways construction program. The reduction in FY25 construction funding puts at risk a total of 18 authorized construction projects that are all critical to the Nation’s economy. Failure to fund Montgomery Lock at \$205 million

in fiscal year 2025 will continue to increase the backlog of construction funding, requiring the inland waterways portfolio to receive over \$1 billion in FY27 to fund all ongoing construction efficiently. This funding level in any fiscal year is next to impossible to achieve and will result in project cost increases and operational dates being delayed.

The answer is the opportunity in FY25 and ‘26 for the Corps to fund the completion of Montgomery Lock at \$205 million, and also provide funding for Chickamauga Lock, which would pave the way to ensure that in FY27 funding is provided for Kentucky Lock and Lock and Dam 25 to begin construction.

This would set the inland waterways construction program up for success in the future. Leaving Montgomery funding out of the fiscal year 2025 spending plan would set the program back several years. For the Nation’s economy, for its shippers, for U.S. competitiveness in the world marketplace, the choice is clear. ❖

## LEGISLATOR PROFILE: CONGRESSWOMAN SHARICE DAVIDS (D-KS)



*In this issue of Capitol Currents, we profile another elected official who has championed the inland waterways, Congresswoman Sharice Davids (D-KS).*

Representative Davids was raised by a single mother, who served in the Army for 20 years.

As a first-generation college student who worked the entire time she was in college, Rep. Davids understands the importance of quality public schools and affordable higher education. It is that foundation that allowed her to go on to a successful career, focused on economic and community development, which included time as a White House Fellow under President Barack Obama.

She was sworn into the 116th Congress in 2018 to represent Kansas’s 3rd Congressional

Congresswoman Sharice Davids (D-KS)

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# LEGISLATOR PROFILE: CONGRESSWOMAN SHARICE DAVIDS (D-KS)

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district and became one of the first two Native American women to serve in Congress. She is a member of the Ho-Chunk people.

Rep. Davids has centered her work in office on putting Kansans first, fighting to limit the influence of special interests and make health care more affordable and accessible to everyone. She is a resident of Roeland Park.

She served as Chief Deputy Whip, and in the 119th Congress serves on the House Committee on Transportation and

Infrastructure’s Subcommittee on Aviation, and the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management.

She also serves on the House Committee on Small Business’s Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Tax and Capital Access, and the House Committee on Agriculture’s Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities, Risk Management, and Credit, and Subcommittee on Conservation, Research, and Biotechnology.

## BIOGRAPHICAL FACTS

### Name

Congresswoman Sharice Davids (D-KS)

### Born

May 22, 1980

### Education

University of Missouri–Kansas City and Cornell Law School

### Occupation

Attorney

### Other

She is a former mixed martial artist.

**Q: Kansas farmers play a critical role in feeding the world. With agriculture representing the largest economic sector in the state, the availability of intermodal transportation is critical in moving Kansas’ products to the global market and ensuring Kansas’ family farmers save on transportation costs. You were instrumental in securing funding for infrastructure investments at the Port of Kansas City, how do you see these investments improving access to barge transportation on the Missouri River?**

A: As a member of both the House Agriculture and Transportation & Infrastructure (T&I) Committees, ensuring Kansas producers can efficiently get their crops to market is one of my top priorities. Our farmers play a vital role in feeding the world, with Kansas exporting over \$4.64 billion in agricultural products in 2023 alone. Reliable transportation access is key to keeping our farm economy strong, which is why I was proud to support funding for the Port Infrastructure Development Program through the 2021



*Representative Sharice Davids walks with a member of the Army Corps of Engineers. "Investments in infrastructure help to enhance safety, efficiency, and reliability at ports like the Port of Kansas City and help lower costs for farmers and improve access to global markets," she said.*

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# LEGISLATOR PROFILE: CONGRESSWOMAN SHARICE DAVIDS (D-KS)

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bipartisan infrastructure law. These investments will enhance safety, efficiency, and reliability at ports like the Port of Kansas City – helping to lower costs for farmers and improve access to global markets.

**Q: You recently co-led the introduction of the Nationwide Consumer and Fuel Retailer Choice Act that would extend year-round consumer access to fuels with up to 15 percent blends of ethanol. How will this legislation reduce uncertainty for American corn growers while helping the consumers?**

A: Year-round E15 is a commonsense solution that’s long overdue. This bill gives consumers a more affordable fuel option – saving up to \$0.25 per gallon – while also creating stability for American corn growers and biofuel producers. Farmers have faced a lot of economic challenges in recent years, and ensuring a consistent nationwide market for E15 will support their bottom line, strengthen rural economies, and help fuel retailers avoid a confusing patchwork of state regulations. It’s a win-win that lowers costs for drivers while supporting the hardworking folks who help fuel our country.

**Q: Before representing Kansas’ 3rd District, you were in the prestigious White House Fellows program with the Department of Transportation, how does this experience shape your work in Congress?**

A: My time as a White House Fellow at the Department of Transportation gave me firsthand insight into how federal transportation policy impacts communities. I worked on initiatives connecting infrastructure investments to economic growth, safety, and innovation – issues I now prioritize in Congress. That experience helped me understand the complexities of policymaking, from balancing local needs

with national priorities to ensuring taxpayer dollars are used responsibly. Now, as a member of the House T&I Committee, I apply that knowledge to advocate for smart investments in roads, bridges, public transit, and aviation safety. Overall, my time at DOT reinforced the importance of long-term planning and bipartisan collaboration.

**Q: Kansas City will be the home of several FIFA World Cup soccer games in 2026. What local travel advice would you give visitors to make the most of their time in the area?**

A: Kansas City is going to be an incredible host for the FIFA World Cup in 2026, and I encourage visitors to take full advantage of everything our community has to offer. Of course, you have to try some of the best barbecue in the country, but there’s so much more to explore—neighborhoods with amazing local restaurants, small businesses, and unique storefronts. You can check out world-class museums, walk or bike along our beautiful trails, or catch some live jazz, which is a huge part of KC’s history. There’s something for everyone here, so don’t just stick to the games—get out and experience the best of Kansas City!

**Q: What are some hobbies you enjoy outside of work?**

A: Outside of work, I love staying active – I play pickleball and ping pong, often with colleagues from both sides of the aisle in the House gym! It’s a fun way to build relationships while getting in some friendly competition. I also enjoy working out in general; it helps me clear my mind and manage stress. When I’m not on the move, I love getting lost in a good sci-fi book or audiobook. And of course, spending time with my family and my dog, Peanut, is always a priority. No matter how busy things get, Peanut makes sure I take a break! ❖



*Always working to improve her district’s infrastructure, Rep. Davids (center) stands with officials during a visit to Highway US-69 in Johnson County, KS, to celebrate her successful funding request to relocate or modify sanitary sewers along the busy roadway. The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) deemed the project necessary to properly modernize and expand Highway US-69, ensuring safer streets and less congestion.*

# INLAND WATERWAYS USERS BOARD PAUSED UNDER TRUMP ADMINISTRATION 45-DAY REVIEW

On March 7, the Department of Defense (DoD) ordered a 45-day review of federal advisory committees to ensure they continue to provide “appropriate value as times and requirements change.” This includes a pause in activities and related expenditures during the review period. Among the advisory groups is the Inland Waterways Users Board (IWUB), which makes recommendations to Congress about the needs of the inland waterways system.

During this period, federal advisory groups were asked to submit information on:

1. The purpose, duties, and objectives, to include terms of references, for each DoD advisory committee and each subcommittee established by the DoD Sponsor; and applicable statutory authority, if any.
2. A current listing of all DoD advisory committee and subcommittee members, to include when such members were appointed and for what term of service.
3. The estimated annual operating cost in terms of funding and full-time equivalents for Fiscal Year 2025 and reported costs for the last eight fiscal years.
4. Current activities of the advisory committee, such as final deliverables to the Sponsor and implementation of any recommendations, as well as statutory requirements for such deliverables, if any.
5. A single page describing how the DoD advisory committee's advice and recommendations benefited the

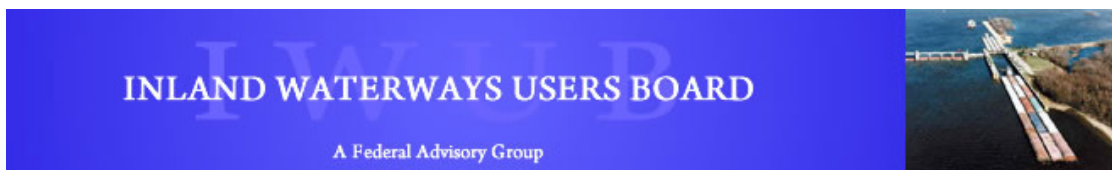


**Paducah, Kentucky was to be the site of the IWUB's first meeting of 2025 before the Board was paused.**

DoD, the Federal Government, and the United States, and how it aligns with the President's goals and my priorities of restoring the warrior ethos, rebuilding our military, and reestablishing deterrence.

6. A recommendation for retention, termination, or merger of the DoD advisory committee. If recommending termination of a statutorily required DoD advisory committee, provide a draft legislative proposal for consideration.

As a result of the review, the IWUB Meeting No. 105 that was scheduled to take place in Paducah, KY, on April 3, with a site visit to Kentucky Lock on the afternoon of April 2, was cancelled. ❖



# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: FOTH



Solving our clients' toughest science and engineering challenges.

WCI's newest member, Foth, was founded in 1938 as a four-member engineering firm in Green Bay, WI. Over time, the company expanded its services and locations to meet the evolving needs of clients, and by the 1980s, had established itself as a leader in environmental and infrastructure engineering.

The decades that followed saw further geographic expansion and diversification of services, and today, Foth is a thriving engineering, science, and consulting firm with a strong reputation for delivering innovative solutions. Their multidisciplinary teams collaborate to provide comprehensive services in environmental, infrastructure, and industrial sectors.

One of Foth's predominant service areas is transforming challenging waterfront environments and structures into assets that play a critical role in the world's transportation network and economic vitality. Comprehensive planning, permitting, design, engineering, and construction services revitalize ports and shipyards, improve navigation, and enhance both the operation and recreation of waterfront facilities, beaches, inlets, and coastal communities.

Foth partners with owners and managers of waterfront facilities – including multi-site intermodal ports – to accurately assess and develop purposeful plans to optimize cargo handling and storage and accommodate varying vessel sizes and types. Their expertise in waterfront engineering ensures that these facilities operate efficiently and safely, supporting the seamless movement of goods and people, and contributing to economic growth. As leaders in procuring funds, they also have been successful at helping their clients bring projects online and operational. They are proud of their ability to be adaptive in the ever-changing political world to bring forward projects that all decision makers see as a great investment.



*One of Foth's projects was Port Milwaukee's single largest investment in decades, The Delong Co. and Port Milwaukee, which opened the state of Wisconsin's maritime to open the state's maritime and agricultural economies to new international markets.*

The company's dedication to preservation, restoration, and resiliency is evidence of their focus on sustainability and environmental stewardship. Blending engineering with an understanding of environmental implications, Foth meets operational demands and addresses the climactic forces that impact waterfronts.

From dredging to marine construction, to coastal modeling, management, and resiliency, Foth's designs and regulatory expertise result in solutions that are built to last. This commitment has earned Foth recognition and awards for their ability to deliver projects that create value and efficiency.

Foth's commitment to innovation and continuous improvement drives their pursuit of new technologies and methodologies. They invest in research and development to stay at the forefront of industry advancements, regulatory shifts, and changes to waterfront environments, ensuring that their clients benefit from the latest solutions. This forward-thinking approach helps waterfront facilities maintain their competitive edge and positions Foth as a valuable resource for future projects and collaborations.

Learn more about their partnership approach through these transformational projects:

- This ongoing Superfund cleanup at the Port of [New Bedford](#) in Massachusetts – the top commercial fishing port by value in the United States – included a fourth confined aquatic disposal (CAD) cell and terminal expansion. Navigational dredging benefited more than 40 commercial and residential sites.

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# WCI MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: FOTH

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- One of several [Holcim terminals](#) received structural improvements and dredging to accommodate fully loaded tug barges, improving efficiency and reducing emissions.
- What began by securing multi-source grant funding became the single largest investment in decades at Port Milwaukee in Wisconsin. This public-private partnership allowed [The DeLong Co. and Port Milwaukee](#) to open the state’s maritime and agricultural economies to new international markets.

A proud member of Waterways Council, Inc (WCI), Foth describes their decision to join the WCI as vital to advocating for modern infrastructure, securing funding for economic growth, influencing public policy, and offering networking opportunities with key industry stakeholders. This collective effort ensures a stronger, more efficient waterways system that benefits the entire Nation and beyond. ❖

## FOTH BY THE NUMBERS

- 700+ employee-members
- 30 coast-to-coast locations
- 100% member-owned
- 94% member retention rate

Learn more about Foth and their services at [foth.com](http://foth.com)

# MARTY HETTEL, LONG-SERVING WCI BOARD AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER, RETIRES

**M**artin (Marty) Hettel, who has served as WCI’s Secretary and on its Executive Committee (2012–2025) and Board of Directors since 2011, and most recently as American Commercial Barge Line’s (ACBL) Vice President - Government Affairs, retired on March 21.

After graduating from college in 1980 with an Associates Arts Degree in computer programming, Marty wanted to move to a warmer climate. Friend Mark Knoy’s father, Delbert Knoy, was Port Captain at the Triangle Fleet in Reserve, LA, and offered him a part-time job as a deckhand for Federal Barge Lines. At the time, Marty was still sending his resume around for computer programming-related jobs, and he received another job offer in his field of study. Marty informed Delbert of this offer but said that he was going to continue to work as a deckhand. Delbert then told Jeff Kindle, who was managing Triangle Fleet, that they were going to lose Marty, so Mr. Kindle offered him a job in the company’s fleet dispatch division. “The rest is history, and I always tell folks I took a part-time job and made a full-time career out of it,” Marty said.

Since his work in dispatch at Triangle Fleet, Marty’s storied career was next with MEMCO Barge Line in St. Louis in 1996, under many different ownerships and several positions within the company.

When American Electric Power (AEP) moved into the tank barge business, President Keith Darling moved Marty into the Regulatory division in order for the company to be ready to operate tank barges. This role allowed Marty to gain experience in Washington, DC working with AEP’s lobbyist. When ACBL purchased AEP River Operations in 2015, part of Marty’s job was to manage ACBL’s Political Action Committee (PAC).



Marty Hettel

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# MARTY HETTEL, LONG-SERVING WCI BOARD AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER, RETIRES

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He has held positions in Logistics, Purchasing, Operations, Insurance/Claims, Personnel, Shipping & Receiving, and Freight Sales. He has also served as a member of numerous industry boards and associations, including the Ohio River Basin Alliance, Inland Waterways Users Board (IWUB), River Industry Executive Task Force, Transportation Research Board, and as a participant and donor to the National Waterways Foundation.



*Marty stands with officials at the dedication and opening of the Olmsted Locks and Dam on August 30, 2018.*

Marty says the accomplishments he is most proud of is serving as Chairman of the IWUB from 2013-2019 and as its longest serving Chairman. In his time as Chairman, the Board dedicated the opening of the Olmsted Locks and Dam, where he got the Corps to agree to have ACBL's *M/V Glen Jones* be the first to lock through the new world-class lock at the ribbon cutting ceremony.

In looking back on his time with the industry, Marty said, "I have always tried to do what is best for not only ACBL, but the industry as a whole," citing his testimony before the Mississippi River Commission (MRC) as to the need for the Corps to maintain a 12-foot channel as authorized in the Flood Control Act of 1944 (the Corps only maintains a 9-foot navigation channel between Cairo and Baton Rouge). Given the extreme low water conditions the industry has faced over the last three years, a 12-foot channel is critical. As a result of Marty's attention to the issue, the Mississippi Valley Division is now performing an Environmental Assessment Study on maintaining the channel at 12 feet.

On March 30, 2023, the Statement of the Mississippi River Commission on "Charting a Future Path Through Low Water" said, "Most of the time, waterborne commerce is able to utilize

a 12-foot channel on the Mississippi River. While Congress has already authorized a 12-foot channel on the lower Mississippi River, the Corps of Engineers receives funding to maintain a 9-foot navigation channel only. The commission has received testimony in support of a 12-foot channel on the lower Mississippi River, as well as the Red River and the Arkansas River. The Mississippi River Commission recommends that the Corps of Engineers explore the benefits, costs and policy implications of implementing the 12-foot channel on the Mississippi River below Cairo."

Also of concern to Marty is the loss of a lot of institutional knowledge in our industry. But on the flip side, this creates opportunities for the next generation to step up to the plate and learn all they can to become the future industry leaders. "I have always told people to never turn down an opportunity to learn a new part of our industry; that is how you move up within an organization," he said.

Of his time serving with Waterways Council, Marty said, "My time with WCI has taught me so much as to how to lobby our federal legislators on the importance of our inland waterways to the Nation. The very knowledgeable staff at WCI has been extremely successful helping to improve and maintain our inland waterways. By having all of WCI's membership speak with one voice on the importance of improving our waterway system is truly impressive."

Looking ahead to his next chapter, in retirement he looks forward to spending more time with his daughters and granddaughter, and fishing more.

We extend our thanks to Marty for his 14 years of service with Waterways Council and the industry, and we wish him the very best in retirement ahead. ❖



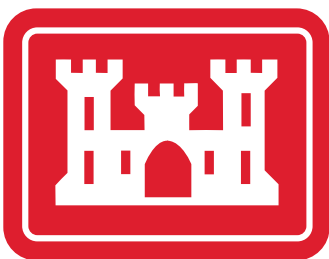
*At Marty's urging, ACBL's M/V Glen Jones was the first vessel to lock through the newly opened Olmsted Locks.*

# CONSERVATION COLUMN: UMRR HOLDS PHOTO CONTEST TO ‘EMPOWER CONSERVATION THROUGH VISION: CAPTURING THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER'S ESSENCE’

*Reprinted with permission from the Corps of Engineers Upper Mississippi River Restoration*

In February, the winners of the inaugural Upper Mississippi River Restoration (UMRR) photo contest were selected, with a variety of images showing the beauty and diversity of the waterway across several categories:

- Before/After, Construction, or Benefits of Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Projects (HREPs)
- Connecting People with Nature, Human Use, or Public Interaction
- Natural Features, Scenic Views, or Landscapes
- Cultural or Historic Features
- Long Term Resource Monitoring (LTRM) – Monitoring in Action



**Category: Before/After, Construction, or Benefits of HREPs**  
**Winner: Kacie Grupa, USACE**  
*Harpers Clough HREP Post-Wetland Construction*



**Category: Connecting People with Nature, Human Use, or Public Interaction**  
**Winner: Kyle Von Ruden, USFWS**  
*Girl with Sturgeon*



**Category: Cultural or Historic Features**  
**Winner: Alicia Carhart, Wisconsin DNR**  
*A Winding Path Through Wild Rice – Blue Lake, Pool 8*



**Category: LTRM – Monitoring in Action**  
**Winner: Alicia Carhart, Wisconsin DNR**  
*LTRM Water Quality Winter Sampling – Pool 8*



**Category: Natural Features, Scenic Views, or Landscapes**  
**Winner: Kenneth Petersen, UMRBA**  
*Great Blue Heron Mating Season*

# WCI HOLDS CAPITOL HILL FLY-IN TO MEET 119TH CONGRESS, REP. COMER HONORED FOR LEADERSHIP

From February 4-6, Waterways Council’s members and guests descended upon Washington, DC, for the WCI’s Board of Directors Meeting and Capitol Hill fly-in. At the Board meeting, led by Chairman Jeff Webb (Cargill), WCI’s 2025 key priorities were voted on by the Board, and they served as a blueprint for the messaging to Members of the 119th Congress the next day. In all, WCI members participated in 107 meetings on the Hill. Thank you to our members for your time and voices to communicate the critical importance of the inland waterways system to the Nation and to competition in the world.

After the Board meeting, a WCI opening reception was held at 12 Stories, which boasts a nearly 360-degree view of the Potomac River and the Washington, DC, skyline.

On February 5, after the Capitol Hill meetings, Congressman James Comer (R-KY), Chairman of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, was presented with Waterways Council’s 22nd Annual Leadership Service Award for his championing of the Nation’s inland waterways and support of the Kentucky Lock project. The award was presented at a Capitol Hill reception.



*WCI President/CEO Tracy Zea (left) stands with Leadership Service Award recipient Congressman James Comer, and Matt Ricketts, President/CEO, Crouse Corporation (right). The award was bestowed at WCI’s Washington, DC, meetings in February.*

“Congressman Comer has been a stalwart supporter of the modernization of the Nation’s inland waterways, and particularly for the jobs the waterways help create and sustain in his district and in the state of Kentucky,” said Tracy Zea, WCI President/CEO. “We are grateful for his work and leadership.” ❖



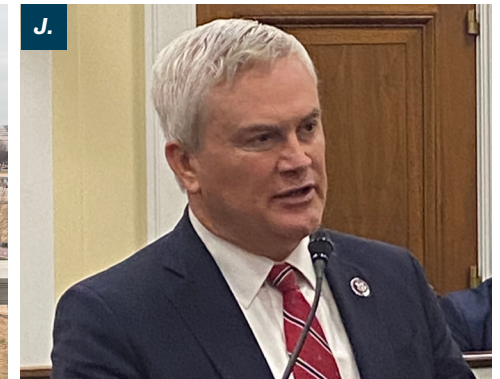
**Photo A:** WCI President/CEO Tracy Zea (left) addresses the WCI Board, with WCI Chairman Jeff Webb.

**Photo B:** At WCI’s opening reception a 12 Stories, (left to right), Gary Aucoin (Schottel, Inc.) connects with Beau Berthelot (Maritime Partners) and Bryson Person (Arcosa Marine).

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# WCI HOLDS CAPITOL HILL FLY-IN TO MEET 119TH CONGRESS, REP. COMER HONORED FOR LEADERSHIP

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**Photo C:** WCI members Karl Jefferson (LIUNA) (left) and Javar Cruz (Lecet) (right) get together at WCI's opening reception overlooking the Washington, DC Wharf.

**Photo D:** Kristin Meira, Director of Government Affairs, (left) and Cassandra Caldwell Government Affairs Manager - Mississippi River and Tributaries, of WCI member American Cruise Lines joined in WCI's events in Washington in February.

**Photo E:** Outgoing Board of Directors member Mike Somales (American Consolidated Natural Resources, Inc.) stands with WCI's Amber McClay at the WCI reception.

**Photo F:** Members of WCI's Illinois team meet with Senator Tammy Duckworth in her office as part of WCI's 2025 Capitol Hill fly-in.

**Photo G:** WCI's Louisiana team stands proudly with Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA) during a meeting in his office.

**Photo H:** Pennsylvania/West Virginia WCI team members gather around newly elected Senator Dave McCormick (R-PA) after discussing waterways issues related to the Commonwealth.

**Photo I:** WCI Treasurer Chris Blanchard (left) stands with WCI Executive Committee Member Spencer Murphy on the House Speakers' Balcony as part of the WCI Capitol Hill fly-in.

**Photo J:** Congressman Comer speaks after receiving WCI's Leadership Service Award on Capitol Hill.

# THANK YOU TO OUR MEETING SPONSORS!

A special thank you for the generosity of these companies who sponsored the WCI February meeting in Washington:

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# WCI'S JEN ARMSTRONG PROMOTED TO VICE PRESIDENT, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

**O**n February 5, at WCI's Board of Directors meeting in Washington, DC, Jen Armstrong was promoted from Director, Government Relations, to Vice President, Government Relations.

She joined WCI in 2023 after previously serving as Director, Navigation Policy and Legislation Director, Navigation Policy and Legislation for the American Association of Port Authorities.

Before that she was Appropriations Clerk/Staff Director for the Senate Energy and Water Development Subcommittee, and Program Manager, Government Affairs Liaison for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Of the promotion, WCI President/CEO Tracy Zea said, "Jen has been an integral part of WCI's legislative work on WRDA, appropriations, and our work with the Corps of Engineers, where she previously worked in a variety of positions from 2004-2016. We appreciate and rely on her counsel to WCI to help us achieve success in our work to modernize our Nation's inland waterways system."❖



*Jen Armstrong*

## THANK YOU AMBER!

**O**ffice Manager/Events Coordinator Amber McClay will leave WCI next month for Denver for a job transfer for her husband. With WCI for three years, Amber has managed and further professionalized our meetings and special events, increased the efficacy of our social media efforts in the most creative ways, standardized our accounting and billing, and been a tremendous asset to our members.

We wish Amber and her family the very best of everything ahead and we will miss her more than we can say. Thank you for all you have given us, Amber!



*Amber McClay*



*Amber stands in the U.S. Capitol with her husband, Cameron, and children, Morgan and Dillon.*

# MIRANDA LANG JOINS WCI TEAM

**M**iranda Lang has joined WCI as its Operations Manager, succeeding Amber McClay, who will depart in May for a move to Denver.

Ms. Lang previously served as University Advancement Reporting Analyst at American University in Washington, DC, producing reports, managing data collection, documenting reporting processes, conducting onboarding trainings for new hires, and coordinating annual meetings with stakeholders.

Prior to this position, she was Assistant Director for Annual Giving, Alumni Relations Coordinator, Interim Alumni Programs Assistant, and Senior Administrative Assistant at American University.

“We are thrilled to welcome Miranda to our WCI team,” said



Miranda Lang

WCI President/CEO Tracy Zea. “Her skill set in a variety of managerial roles will serve our WCI members and the organization overall,” he continued.

Please welcome Miranda at [mlang@waterwayscouncil.org](mailto:mlang@waterwayscouncil.org).

She is a 2017 graduate of American University. ❖

# “FIVE ON THE FIVES” KICK OFF FOR 2025

**W**CI’s March ‘Five on the Five’ interview series, released on the 5th of each month, featured [Kenny Hartman](#), President of the National Corn Growers Association. This first episode of 2025 was recorded live from Commodity Classic, America’s largest farmer-led farmer-focused convention that took place in early March in Denver. Hartman shared a bit about the week at Commodity Classic, NCGA’s 2025 priorities, the importance and influence of membership with WCI, and his commitment of telling Congress the importance of the future of farming.

Freshman House Member [Dr. Bob Onder \(R-MO\)](#) is April’s “Five on the Five” guest, who discusses his priorities on the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee and the Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee. With significant river miles in his district that includes the Missouri River and Upper Mississippi River pools 26 and 27, Dr. Onder addresses his beliefs about how Congress should drive spending through Community Project Funding and much more. ❖



Dr. Bob Onder

# WCI AT NDU



**WCI Vice President of Government Relations Jen Armstrong addressed National Defense University's (NDU) Eisenhower School students on March 20 in Washington, DC, as part of NDU's transportation and logistics seminar. NDU's prestigious program educates joint warfighters and other national security leaders in critical thinking and the creative application of military power to inform national strategy and globally integrated operations, under conditions of disruptive change, in order to prevail in war, peace, and competition. WCI has spoken annually to NDU for more than a decade. Shown here, the NDU class dons WCI swag.**

## 2025 INDUSTRY CALENDAR

Capitol Currents  
is published by



**WATERWAYS**  
COUNCIL, INC.

Tracy Zea, Publisher  
Deb Calhoun, Editor

499 S. Capitol Street, SW  
Suite 401  
Washington, DC 20003  
202.765.2166

waterwayscouncil.org

Vol. 22, No. 2

### SAVE THE DATE:

**May 7-9:** Warrior-Tombigbee Waterway Association Annual Meeting, Orange Beach, AL (Perdido Beach Resort).

For questions contact Mary Beth Davis Pugh, (251) 431-9055, [wariortom@aol.com](mailto:wariortom@aol.com).

**May 12-14:** American Waterways Operators' Spring Convention, Board of Directors Meeting & Barge-in, Washington, DC (Willard InterContinental Hotel).

**May 28-30:** Inland Marine Expo, #IMX2025, Nashville (Music City Center)

**September 15:** [PIANCUSA, Smart Rivers 2025](#), Memphis, TN

**December 3-5:** [International WorkBoat Show](#), New Orleans (Morial Convention Center)

**December 9-10:** WCI Annual Meeting, Board of Directors Meeting, and Annual Waterways Symposium (Nashville, TN), followed by Seamen's Church Institute River Bell, December 11 (Paducah, KY). Details to come.

