



INLAND WATERWAYS USERS BOARD

Washington, D.C. 20314-1000 (CECW-P)

Summary Minutes

Inland Waterways Users Board Meeting No. 45

September 24, 2003 in Houston, Texas

Opening Remarks

Executive Secretary Mr. Norman Edwards called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM, noting that it was a Sunshine Meeting and as such it was open to the public and recorded as a matter of public record.

Board Chairman Mr. Gerald Brown welcomed everyone to Houston and then turned the meeting over to MG Carl Strock, the Director of Civil Works and Executive Director of the Board. MG Strock introduced both the new and reappointed Board members, Mr. Norbert Whitlock, Mr. Bryan Bayshore, Mr. Mark Buese, Mr. Charles Hawn, Mr. Scott Noble, and Mr. Ronald Stovash. He also introduced the Federal Observers who were present, Mr. Alan Bunn, representing the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Mr. John Paul Woodley, Jr, the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works). He then invited Mr. Woodley to make some remarks.

Mr. Woodley expressed appreciation for the opportunity to attend the Board meeting. He recognized the importance of the of the Board's work in supporting the inland waterway system, which is a crucial transportation link for the nation. He talked about the need to balance navigation with the other needs of Congress, and the challenges that are faced, as exemplified by the Missouri River. He said that he is looking forward to getting to know and working with the Board. He also thanked the Board for the advice that they provide to both the Secretary of the Army and the Congress in their annual reports.

As it was his inaugural meeting, MG Strock introduced himself by sharing a brief personal history. He previously served as commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Pacific Ocean Division and Northwestern Division offices, where he learned a great deal about such waterways as the Columbia-Snake, the Missouri, and the Mississippi Rivers. He has just returned from a six-month assignment in Iraq. He said that he is gratified to be involved with the Inland Waterways Users Board, noting the open process in which the work of the Board is conducted. He emphasized that the role of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is to support the Board, not to control or influence it.

Chairman Brown expressed pleasure at having MG Strock on the Board, and then thanked the Galveston District staff for their support in planning and arranging the meeting. He expressed concern about the slow progress on inland waterways infrastructure. He wants to raise the Board's visibility and impact on Congress, and to raise the profile of the Board's Annual Report to Congress. He acknowledged the difficult problems, specifically the Missouri River and the Upper Mississippi River Navigation Study, but encouraged the Board to take a stand on these issues.

Chairman Brown announced that the next meeting of the Board would take place in February in Washington, DC. A prioritization work group will be convened prior to the February meeting. The minutes of Meeting No. 44 were approved.

Status of the Inland Waterways Trust Fund.

David Grier reported that the trust fund revenues were down this fiscal year through July (9.4% less than last year at this point). Total commerce on the inland waterway system is down by 2.63% as compared to last year, with grain down 9.7%. Changes in long-haul grain movements correlate strongly with changes in Trust Fund revenues. Transfers to the Corps this year for ongoing lock construction and major rehabilitation have increased over last year by 17.8%.

Mr. Grier also presented an assessment of alternative assumptions of outlays and revenues for the Trust Fund. Most of the analysis was unchanged from what was presented to the Board at its February meeting. However, for this analysis, he has added one new scenario to show the impact if future funding levels were constrained at the level of FY00 to FY03 averages. This is in response to the Board's concern that the Baseline funding program, which anticipates much higher levels of funding for projects in future years, is unrealistic based on the history of budget constraints. Under this new scenario, the constrained funding levels result in project construction delays of 1 to 20 years. Such delays would result in \$3.9 billion in foregone benefits. Only \$1.7 billion of these benefits would be recoverable, if funding levels were increased.

FY 2003/2004 Funding for Inland Navigation Projects and Studies

Mr. Jerry McCrory presented tables containing the FY2003/2004 funding for Inland Navigation Projects and Studies. The total allocation for FY2003 for projects cost-shared from the Trust Fund was \$251.4 million, up from \$177 million in the President's 2003 Budget Request. The FY2004 figures represent the President's Budget and the latest House and Senate mark-ups for the '04 appropriation. The President's 2004 request came in at \$237.5 million. The House mark-up would increase this marginally to \$243.5 million, mostly for higher funding at the Lower Mon Locks 2-4 project and a new start at John T. Myers Lock and Dam on the Ohio. The Senate version would increase the total to \$264.2 million, with increases at Kentucky, McAlpine, Marmet and the rehab at L&D 24 on the Mississippi. Final amounts will depend on the pending conference between the House and Senate.

Board members expressed concern about the continued lagging of funding streams; the construction backlog is not being reduced. The McAlpine project is of particular concern because there is only one lock. If it had to be shut down, which is a possibility if structural problems are found in the lock walls or gates, navigation on the entire river would be disrupted.

Demonstration of Ice Control at Locks, and Incorporating Ice Information in Inland Navigation Electronic Charts

Mr. Steven Daly of the USACE Cold Regions Research Engineering Lab presented a Demonstration of Ice Control at Locks, and Incorporating Ice Information in Inland Electronic Charts. Ice at locks causes delays in winter, increasing lockage time up to 12 hours. Many of the currently used techniques are outdated and inefficient, and there is a need for new methods of handling ice at locks. The Cold Regions Lab is doing large-scale demonstration tests of several innovative approaches, including heat panels, low adhesion plastics, electrolytic shedding, electro-expulsive shedding, and inflatable de-icers. These tests will provide key information necessary for optimized design of new construction and major rehabilitation projects in ice-affected rivers.

Mr. Daly also showed how satellite imagery can be used to delineate river ice, and how this information can be incorporated into Inland Electronic Navigation Charts. Knowledge of observed and forecast ice conditions will improve safety and vessel throughput efficiency in ice-affected rivers as well as allow for more accurate estimates of shipment time.

Olmsted Locks and Dam

Mr. Larry Bibelhauser of the US Army Corps of Engineers, Louisville District, provided an update on the Olmsted Locks and Dam project. This is the Board's number one priority project. The approach walls are now 92% complete. These walls were constructed off-site and then floated into position. They are now working on the final 1700-foot wall and expect to have it completed in January 2004. The maintenance and operating bulkheads are under construction, and will be finished in the summer of 2004. A contract for spare miter gates was awarded in March 2003.

Mr. Bibelhauser explained that for the dam construction, they are planning to issue a cost-reimbursable construction contract. Proposals are due October 1, 2003, and they hope to award a contract by the end of 2003. Construction of the dam is expected to take six years, with completion in 2010. Estimated cost of the total project is \$1.08 billion. Some of the FY03 funds for Olmsted were shifted to McAlpine, since the Olmsted dam had not started. Full and efficient funding for the Olmsted project will be \$100 to \$110 million per year for several years.

Introduction to Galveston District

Colonel Leonard Waterworth welcomed everyone to Galveston District, and provided an overview of their navigation work. The district has 250 miles of deep draft navigation channels and 750 miles of shallow draft channels. The District administers a \$200 million program along this coast, balancing economics and environment in an area that is growing exponentially.

Matagorda Bay

Ms. Lizette Richardson presented a status report on the Matagorda Bay Re-route Project. The recommended plan is a 13 mile, 12 foot deep channel, called the southern alignment. Dredged material will be used to create wetland habitat on Sundown Island. Plans and specs are to be completed in FY04, and this project would be cost-shared with the Inland Waterways Trust Fund. This project is a candidate for authorization in the next WRDA.

High Island to Brazos

Mr. Dennis Thomas reported that the focus is on the bends in the High Island Bends reach. Specifically, widening the bends is the recommended plan. At the second site, Rollover Pass, the plan is to construct sediment traps. At the third site, Sievers Cove, there will be channel widening.

Port O'Connor to Corpus Christi

Byron Williams described the 5 sites of concern in this reach of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, and the plans for improving them.

Tributary Channels (Gulf Intracoastal Waterway)

Mr. Herbie Maurer noted in this presentation that although the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway is a fuel-taxed waterway, the major high-use tributaries are not. These tributaries are unique to the GIWW, and many connect only to the GIWW. These shallow draft waterways fall under the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, but when O & M is prioritized on a ton/mile basis, they end up low on the list. Mr. Maurer emphasized the importance of these tributaries as critical links in the inland waterway system.

Other Business

Mr. Larry Daily distributed information on the deteriorating condition of Mississippi River Locks 19 and 11, for the Board's consideration in the prioritization process.

Mr. Norbert Whitlock raised the issue of the definition of major rehabilitation and asked MG Strock to have his staff investigate how major rehabilitation is being applied and interpreted. Mr. Michael Kidby of the USACE HQ, Operations Division expressed willingness to work with the Board on this issue.

Chairman Brown asked for volunteers for a Prioritization Work Group that will meet in January, prior to the next Board meeting, and develop recommendations on next year's priorities. The following members volunteered: Mr. Looman Stingo; Mr. Mark Buese; Mr. Norbert Whitlock; Mr. Larry Daily; Mr. Ron Stovash; Mr. Scott Noble; Mr. Mark Knoy; and Mr. Gerald Brown.

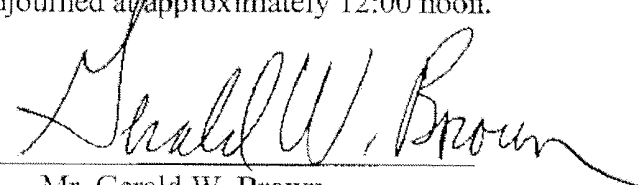
Public Comment Period

Mr. John Doyle of Waterways Work expressed concern about the uncertainty regarding what is going to be spent from the trust fund in FY 2003. He wants to see the final numbers as soon as possible. He noted that Tables 1c and 1d in Mr. Grier's Trust Fund Analysis are helpful, and represent a step in the right direction. He also noted that over the period 1992 to 2002, the Trust Fund steadily grew in size, and expressed the opinion that this is not good. It would be preferable to have the money spent on improvements to the inland waterways system, as it was intended. Mr. Doyle also commented that the failure to fund projects sufficiently has strung out the construction schedules, resulting in large losses of benefits with every year of delay.

Mr. Christopher Brescia of MARC 2000 commented that the Upper Mississippi River has the largest number of single lock locations, which makes that part of the system especially vulnerable to disruption if locks must be shut down. He noted that the same conversations occur at the Inland Waterways Users Board every year, and there seems to be a disconnect with the policy makers. He suggested that something different should be done, such as suspending the inland waterways fuel tax, since it cannot be spent anyway.

Closing Comments

Chairman Brown thanked the Board and members of the public for their attention and thoughtful comments, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:00 noon.



Mr. Gerald W. Brown
Chair