

HTAC NAVIGATION AND SAFETY SUB COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES October 12, 2023

The meeting was held online via Microsoft Teams and in person. LT Joseph McGinnis called the meeting to order at 9:05 am. CDR DeWitz opened with opening remarks showing appreciation of the collaboration of members of the committee. Special thanks to the great work the Harbor Safety Work Group has done in their research project.

Members Present:

Jeff Stollenwerk, Duluth Seaway Port Authority
Kevin Johnson, MN DNR Parks & Trails Two Harbors
Linda Cadotte, City of Superior, Parks, Rec & Forestry
Kelsey Prihoda, MN Sea Grant
Gary Glass, Isaac Walton League, America
John Stockert, Key Lakes
Richard Stewart, Individual
Barb Huberty, MNPCA
Richard Laskey, Key Lakes
Kris Liljeblad, HTAC Chairperson
Ben Gates, USCG- MSU Duluth
LT Sean Murphy, USCG- MSU Duluth
LT Joseph McGinnis, USCG -MSU Duluth
CDR Jarrod DeWitz, USCG -MSU Duluth

Discussion Topics

Kelsey Prihoda talked about the background to the reformation of the Harbor Safety Workgroup to work towards identifying drowning hotspots in the St Louis River Estuary. Goal of the workgroup is to develop a fact sheet to share findings of the project and conduct outreach and education. Gary Glass then asked if this research has been done at Park Point and ship canal. This research has just been done for the estuary.

LT Joe McGinnis thanked folks for their honest feedback and comments for the Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) for the Regulated Navigation Area (RNA) regarding six sites of the Area of Concern Project. USCG is working with their legal team to determine the appropriate way to answer comments.

LT Joe McGinnis talked about MSU Duluth having a busy summer. The summer included 13 Marine Events including a new Bayfield event involving a Portage to honor Chief Buffalo of the Red Cliff Band. USCG members worked closely with the Smithsonian to help them obtain ballast water samples from vessels. A press release was also issued by MSU Duluth to address laser pointers used on a laker this past summer. Wanted to spread awareness that this is illegal and if caught, there are penalties for the offense. Also mentioned is the winter layup season which will occupy some of MSU Duluth's time. There is also a dredging meeting regarding dredging schedule for the federal channel. This meeting is hosted by the Army Corps and is open to the public to attend and give insight into parts of the federal channel that should be dredged. If anyone is interested in attending, they should reach out to LT Joe McGinnis.

Round Table

CDR DeWitz: August 11th a sailboat hit the lift bridge. Wanted to remind folks to be aware of their environment and wait until the bridge is open all the way prior to transiting towards the bridge. Richard Stewart asked if sailboats often hit the bridge, has there been outreach to the sailing club, and if there is a safe distance mariners should stay away from the bridge. LT McGinnis responded by stating there is apparently one allision with the bridge by a sailboat annually according to Dave Campbell. Dave has gone out of his way to educate the local yacht club of being cognizant of the bridge and to maintain a safe distance from the bridge while it is raising. Gary Glass asked what the specific distance is and if there is a light on the bottom of the bridge to indicate that. CDR DeWitz mentioned that we will be contacting Dave Campbell to learn more about the safe proximity to avoid an allision with the bridge. This conversation led to the discussion of navigation rules and how the St. Louis River Alliance has an estuary trail guide with a QR code which contains boating safety. The discussion then led to ideas on how to get boating safety information out there for recreational vessels to share the water with commercial vessels while following the Navigation Rules of the Road.

Gary: Reported the 8th street portage crosswalk construction is complete and has been asking the city for signage. They would be doing some investigation into the portage prior to agreeing to signage. Also brought up the north tower by the lift bridge needs upgrading and has not been updated for 25 years. This light should indicate when current is flowing upstream so commercial vessels should know for safety of navigation. The update to the light should include a second light that can read paddle depth for recreational users. Currently the light reads depth down to 8 feet. Duluth owns the light. Richard Laskey let the group know that the lights were useful and would not want to see them go away. Gary will address these concerns with the city.

Barb: Discussed Munger Landing project completion date of Spring 2024.

Jeff: Vessels installed with a UV treatment system will not work in turbid waters around the Twin Ports. Captain of the Port (COTP) has discretion to allow for vessels to bypass treatment to allow for commerce to continue. DSPA would like to see vessels not go to Canada to do ballast exchanges because it affects their ecosystem. CDR DeWitz acknowledged the impact and understands the discretion that the COTP may utilize for exigent circumstances. Gary asked about VHS (a disease that can be transmitted to fish) being transmitted via ballast water in the twin ports.

John: Wanted to bring up that one of their vessels was hit by a drone in Green Bay, WI. This drone almost hit a crew member. LT Murphy told them to report the incident to the nearest USCG Sector so they can work with local law enforcement and the FAA to work on a solution to stop drone pilots from flying close to Lakers.

Kelsey: Mentioned that VHS is not an issue in the Twin Ports or in this part of Lake Superior to the best of her knowledge. Wanted to bring up Duluth-Superior Maritime Luncheon on October 20th at VIP Pizza where Marie Strum and Esther Johnson from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Detroit District will be the keynote speakers.

Kevin: Brought up that 12-year-olds that operate a boat with a less than or equal to 25 hp motor do not need any training prior to operating that boat. This hazard brings up the question what education and outreach can be done to educate these boaters to prevent accidents on the waterway.

Linda: The city of Superior has continued work on upgrading the boat launch at Woodstock Bay. Linda also mentioned that there is a grant approved that will go towards a resiliency study on WI Point.

Warden: Mentioned WI does have boat safety regulations for people born after January 1, 1989, that requires those folks if they have a boat with an engine to take a boater safety course. WI DNR had a busy summer with 5 rescues in one weekend in July.

LT McGinnis: Appreciated everyone's discussion points and challenged the group prior to next meeting to think of boat safety issues that are prevalent in the area and at the next meeting we can discuss and collaborate ways to address these issues. Mentioned that some familiar faces are due to transfer this upcoming transfer season and if folks want some important issues to remain on MSU Duluth's radar, to contact LT McGinnis and let him know so that the unit can include this in their passdown to the next Commanding Officer and Waterways Manager.

Closing Remarks

CDR DeWitz mentioned that LT McGinnis did a great job with the meeting. This subcommittee has a great group of folks that bring real issues to the table and is active in education and outreach to help make the waterway safe. He also mentioned that we will contact the bridge operator to see if members can get a tour of the bridge and see if they can be on the bridge when it lifts with USCG.

Meeting adjourned 10:55 am