TEXAS PILOTS HONORED FOR BRAVERY & DECISIVE ACTION

In February, the Coast Guard honored three Texas pilots with its Meritorious Public Service Award (MPSA). The MPSA, the 2nd highest civilian award the agency can bestow, recognizes “unusual courage and specific individual accomplishments that provide unique benefits to the public.”

On February 10, RADM David Callahan, Eighth District Commander, presented the awards to Captains Michael McGee and Michael Phillips of the Houston Pilots for bravery last September aboard the crippled and burning tanker AFRAM-AX RIVER.

Captain McGee was undocking the ship when a mechanical failure caused the tanker to race to full ahead and strike a mooring dolphin. This ripped a gash in the fuel tanks, igniting a massive inferno.

The pilots maintained their stations in the wheelhouse, surrounded by a towering wall of flames, and navigated the tanker to the middle of the channel, averting a possible disaster. Simultaneously, Captain Phillips handled communications with the USCG and coordinated firefighting efforts with the tugs and fireboats. The fire continued for 90 minutes.

Had the ship not been navigated away from other tankers and shore facilities, the USCG estimates the fire would have spread, causing fuel explosions and potentially closing the ship channel for months.

“Captains McGee and Phillips exemplify the caliber of dedicated and highly skilled mariners that make up the Houston Pilots,” said Captain Robert Shearon, Presiding Officer of the Houston Pilots.

Captains Phillips and McGee earned the MPSA for their commitment to remain on the burning ship, protecting lives and property and preventing a major environmental and safety disaster.

On February 22, the USCG presented the MPSA to Aransas-Corpus Christi Pilot, Captain Bob Lippold for his "quick and decisive actions" in preventing a serious marine casualty when the ship he was piloting—the bulk carrier AP REVELIN—lost power on the Corpus Christi Ship Channel. "Captain Lippold's actions are in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Coast Guard," said Captain of the Port, Captain Mike Cunningham, during a ceremony held by the Corpus Christi Port Commissioners.

The AP REVELIN was well underway outbound and passing busy ferry terminals when it suddenly lost power where the channel intersects the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. Rapidly losing speed and steerage, Captain Lippold quickly devised a plan to use the ship's anchors and currents to steer the disabled ship toward the south side of the channel before the vessel reached the rock jetties. He also used a nearby pilot boat to assist in maneuvering the vessel to safety.

"Captain Lippold's actions prevented damage to the ship and nearby structures as well as avoided a possible serious pollution incident resulting in a closure of the ship channel for several days," said Captain Cunningham. Captain Jay Rivera, Presiding Officer of the Aransas-Corpus Christi Pilots, added, "Captain Bob Lippold’s expertise and dedication to protecting our port and our waters is a prime example of what it means to be an Aransas-Corpus Christi Pilot."
GUIDELINES DELAYED

IMO’s Subcommittee on Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping (HTW) met in London from January 30 to February 3. Clay Diamond, APA Deputy Director-Associate General Counsel, served on the U.S. Delegation. Captain Andrew McGovern, New Jersey Sandy Hook Pilots, also served on the U.S. Delegation in his role as Chairman of the Merchant Marine Personnel Advisory Committee (MERPAC).

For the past several years, HTW has been working on revisions to the IMO guidelines on fatigue, with the goal of completing the revision by February 2017. While some progress was made during this session of HTW, the update to the IMO Guidelines on Fatigue Mitigation and Management was not completed. Work on the revised guidelines will continue at the next session of HTW, which is tentatively scheduled for June 2018.

The Sub-Committee did complete some other agenda items of interest to pilots, including approving a circular giving advice related to implementation of the 2010 Manila amendments to the STCW Code, clarifying the training requirements for Electronic Chart Display and Information Systems (ECDIS) required under the STCW Convention, and finalizing revisions to the proposed updated ECDIS Guidance for “good practice.”

APACHE & IMPA ATTEND 2017 INTERNATIONAL E-NAV UNDERWAY

Sailing between Copenhagen and Oslo, the 2017 International E-Nav Underway Conference was held aboard a ferry from January 31 to February 2. The conference is organized by the Danish Maritime Authority, with support from IALA, CIRM, the Nautical Institute, IHO, Chamber of Shipping, and BIMCO.

APA President, Captain Jorge Viso and Navigation Technology Director Bill Cairns represented the APA. IMPA President Captain Simon Pelletier spoke at the conference and offered this perspective on the direction some are trying to steer e-Nav, saying, “Route exchange and Sea Traffic Management (STM) are not things mariners have identified as a need; they are rather a shoreside wish.”

This is a conference that requires close monitoring because many of e-Nav’s more controversial notions seem to get air time at this conference. In addition to route exchange and STM, the maritime cloud, port collaborative decision-making model, and autonomous vessels were discussed.

AMERICAN PILOTS’ SUPPORT CANADIAN PILOTS’ TRIENNIAL CONGRESS

The American Pilots’ Association and numerous pilots from groups throughout the United States showed strong support for their fellow pilots to the north by attending the Canadian Marine Pilots’ Association Congress. This year’s triennial meeting, titled “Maritime Transportation and Pilotage: Timeless Value in Changing Times,” was held in Montreal from February 14-17.

Those Americans attending the Congress are shown above (from left to right): Captain John Swartout (Great Lakes), Paul Kirchner (APA), Captain Sinclair Brown (Hawaii), Captain Jorge Viso (APA), Captain Simon Pelletier (CMA/IMPA), Captain Bob Shearon (Houston), Captain Anne McIntyre (Columbia River), Captain John Boyce (Great Lakes), Clay Diamond (APPA) and Captain Eric Nielsen (Maryland).
NEW CONGRESS, STABLE LEADERSHIP FOR HOUSE COAST GUARD & MARITIME TRANSPORTATION SUBCOMMITTEE

While the presidential election was surprising to many pundits, the House results were as most expected—the republicans maintained control of the House of Representatives. The chairman and the ranking member of the important Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation (CG&MT) will be unchanged during the upcoming first session of the 115th Congress. Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA) will maintain the CG&MT Chairmanship, while Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA) will continue as Ranking Member.

CG&MT is important to the piloting profession since this body oversees laws related to the Coast Guard, shipping, and all aspects of maritime transportation. Any new federal legislation with the potential to impact professional mariners, including APA-member pilots, would likely originate with CG&MT. In addition, this subcommittee is comprised of members who tend to represent port and coastal districts. All members of CG&MT are shown below.

SENATE COAST GUARD SUBCOMMITTEE GETS NEW CHAIR & RANKING MEMBER

Unlike in the House of Representatives, there was a shakeup in the leadership of the Senate Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard (OAF&CG). There is both a new Chairman, Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-AK), and Ranking Member, Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI) of this important Senate subcommittee.

Like its House counterpart, CG&MT, OAF&CG is of great interest to pilots because it is responsible for overseeing the Coast Guard, the agency’s marine safety mission, and the Coast Guard Authorization Act, which can impact state pilots. OAF&CG is also responsible for legislation and oversight of matters that impact NOAA, marine mammals, marine navigation, and weather services.

A list of OAF&CG members for the upcoming session of the 115th Congress is provided below.

LEADERSHIP AND MEMBERS OF KEY HOUSE & SENATE SUBCOMMITTEES SET FOR START OF 115TH CONGRESS

115th Congress - House Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation

**Republicans**
- Duncan Hunter (R-50th/CA), Chairman
- Jason Lewis (R-2nd/MN), Vice Chairman
- Don Young (R-At Large/AK)
- Frank LoBiondo (R-2nd/NJ)
- Garret Graves (R-6th/LA)
- David Rouzer (R-7th/NC)
- Randy Weber (R-14th/TX)
- Brian Mast R-18th/FL)

**Democrats**
- John Garamendi (D-3rd/CA), Ranking Member
- Elijah Cummings (D-7th/MD)
- Rick Larsen (D-2nd/WA)
- Jared Huffman (D-2nd/CA)
- Alan Lowenthal (D-47th/CA)
- Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-At Large/DC)

115th Congress - Senate Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries & Coast Guard

**Republicans**
- Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-AK), Chairman
- Sen. Ron Johnson (R-WI)
- Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS)
- Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-OK)
- Sen. Cory Gardner (R-CO)
- Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT)
- Sen. Todd Young (R-IN)

**Democrats**
- Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI), Ranking Member
- Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA)
- Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT)
- Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI)
- Sen. Edward Markey (D-MA)
- Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ)
- Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)
SEATTLE eNAVIGATION CONFERENCE
ANOTHER ROUSING SUCCESS

Unlike other e-navigation conferences that inundate the yearly calendar (see, for example, the eNav Underway Conference discussed on page 2), the Philips Publishing Co.’s eNavigation Conference® in Seattle is specifically focused on operational needs of the private sector maritime industry. Held from December 6–7, 2016 and now in its 16th year, this year’s conference theme was Refining Operational Tools for Safer and More Efficient Navigation.

Captain Jorge Viso, then APA President-elect and NAVTECH Committee Chairman, had a prominent role, chairing a session on Developments in Navigation Technology. APA Navigation Technology Director, Bill Cairns, moderated a session on Developing e-Navigation Standards.

The APA continued its role of several years as a supporting organization of the conference. This year, the conference drew more than a hundred attendees, including IMPA President, Simon Pelletier, more than 30 American and Canadian pilots.

Attendance at this conference allowed participants to engage with government regulators, maritime industry representatives, and marine equipment vendors.

The APA will advise members when the dates for next year’s conference are announced.

NOAA ANNOUNCES 2017 SURVEY PROJECTS

Each year, NOAA's Office of Coast Survey (OCS) plans its hydrographic survey projects to measure water depths and identify new navigational hazards to keep the nation’s suite of nautical charts up to date. The OCS maintains over a thousand charts and publications covering 95,000 miles of shoreline and 3.4 million square nautical miles of water. As APA members know, measuring depths and determining new dangers to navigation along U.S. coasts and the Great Lakes can be a monumental job because the seafloor is constantly changing due to factors such as storms, erosion, normal tidal effects, and development.

One of the OCS's biggest tasks during the winter months is to plan hydrographic survey projects for the coming season. According to NOAA, “Survey planners consider requests from stakeholders such as marine pilots, port authorities, the Coast Guard, and the boating community, and also consider other hydrographic priorities in determining where and when to survey.”

In a February press release, the OCS announced the survey projects planned for 2017 include:

- Approaches to Savannah survey project will update nautical charts in the approach to the Savannah Outer Harbor Channel, to allow for deeper draft ships and to address concerns about migrating sand shoals.
- Approaches to Jacksonville is in need of updated survey data to meet the needs of larger, fully loaded ships transiting into the Port of Jacksonville.
- Approaches to Houston survey project will address the numerous wrecks and obstructions with their positions reported as approximate on the chart. This poses a danger to navigation particularly for the large traffic volumes in this area of high oil production activity.
- Puget Sound needs updated survey data in areas with primary traffic lanes for the large, deep draft vessels transiting to and from the region’s busiest ports—Seattle, Tacoma, and Everett.

NOAA SEEKS COMMENTS ON NATIONAL CHARTING PLAN

NOAA is seeking comments on its draft National Charting Plan. Comments are due by June, 2017.

The National Charting Plan, a strategy to improve NOAA’s nautical chart coverage, products, and distribution, aims to “provide the customer with a suite of products that are more useful, up-to-date, and safer to navigate with.”

NOAA expects the National Charting Plan to help meet the growing demand for “more precise, higher resolution charts, and greater timeliness and ease-of-access to chart updates.” The Plan outlines several improvements to chart content, such as:

- Reducing unwarranted alarms in ECDIS used by large commercial vessels.
- Improving the differentiation between dangerous and non-dangerous wrecks.
- Resolving uncertainties about ‘reported,’ ‘existence doubtful,’ and ‘position approximate’ dangers.
- Replace the current set of 1,182 irregularly shaped ENC cells compiled at 131 different scales with a more regular gridded framework of cells compiled at a few dozen standard scales.
- Develop methods to ingest changes to the database of Coast Guard maintained aids to navigation directly into Coast Survey’s chart production system.

For information on how to provide written comments on the Plan, see the Federal Register Notice at: www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2017-03-01/pdf/2017-03936.pdf
AMOS AND SAMUELL TAKE THE HELM OF NAVTECH

On January 2, APA President Captain, Jorge Viso, named Captain Paul Amos, Columbia River Pilots, as Chairman of the APA’s Navigation and Technology Committee (NAVTECH), and Captain Jonathan Samuel, Houston Pilots, as Vice Chair.

NAVTECH supports APA members by studying navigation equipment and assisting in the development and use of emerging electronic navigation technologies in cooperation with state, national and international pilotage and professional organizations to foster practical application of these technologies.

Hailing from Denton, Texas, Captain Amos permanently relocated to Vancouver, Washington in 1974. For the first sixteen years of his maritime career he worked for Knappton Towboat Company, which eventually became Foss Maritime. From 1980 to 1990, he was a captain on towing vessels for the Columbia/Willamette/Snake River system. In 1990, Captain Amos joined the Columbia River Pilots (COLRIP). He later served two years as treasurer and was vice president of COLRIP in 1999 and again in 2006. Shortly afterward, he became president and served in that position for several years. Captain Amos has been a long-serving member of NAVTECH and was instrumental in developing COLRIP’s AIS-based traffic management system. He is currently the President of the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association, is a past Chairman of the Lower Columbia Region Harbor Safety Committee and has served on a variety of industry related boards and committees. Captain Amos was recently awarded the 2016 Old Salt award by the Maritime Commerce Club of Oregon.

Captain Jonathan Samuel has more than 17 years working at sea - 7 years as Master and 10 years of service as a Houston Pilot. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in Marine Science from Texas A&M University at Galveston in 1992. He holds an unlimited Master Mariner’s license, as well as an endorsement as Offshore Installation Manager - Unrestricted. In addition to serving as NAVTECH Vice Chairman, Captain Samuel is the Chairman of the Houston Pilots’ eNavigation Committee.

Upon announcing the new NAVTECH leaders, Captain Viso said “I, along with the APA staff, look forward to working with Captains Amos and Samuel as they take the helm of this important committee. These are two very talented pilots and I appreciate their taking on this extra task. On a personal note, I want to recognize Captain Wayne Bailey for his past service as NAVTECH Vice Chair, sage advice, and friendship over the years.”

APA MEETS WITH USCG HQ & NAVCEN PERSONNEL

On February 21, APA hosted senior Coast Guard personnel to discuss the timeline for future plans for the Differential GPS beacon system and several other navigation-related issues. In attendance were Captain Scott Smith (Chief, Office of Navigation Systems) and Captain Russell Holmes (Commanding Officer, USCG Navigation Center). Participating for the APA were President, Captain Jorge Viso, Executive Director-General Counsel Paul Kirchner, and Navigation Technology Director Bill Cairns.

The Coast Guard already announced that it is phasing out its DGPS beacon system since, as the agency states, most navigation receivers are WAAS capable, and the only receivers using the DGPS beacon system are legacy or custom built systems. Most PPU units coming on line have already made the switch to WAAS, and other navigation receivers generally have the ability to switch to WAAS.

During the meeting, the USCG officials indicated that the following time line, subject to internal government budget processes, would be used. By late 2019, the Middle Atlantic, South, Gulf and West Coast states should anticipate termination of the broadcast USCG Differential corrections. Noting that there is a higher demand and use of DGPS broadcasts in northern regions, the Northeast and Alaska stations’ termination will likely be delayed until late 2020. The USCG is of the view that this timeline will give differential users sufficient time to transition to WAAS or other augmentation systems.

Other topics discussed at the meeting included the NTSB VTS Study, limitations of AIS ATON due to shipboard installation issues (e.g., GPS smoothing, gyro error, AIS antenna offset) and implementation of several specific virtual AIS installations.

This meeting continues the excellent working relationship between the APA and those USCG activities relevant to pilotage.
CAPTAIN MARK POOLE EARNS LETTER OF THANKS FROM DISNEY CRUISE LINE

In January, Captain Mark Poole, Biscayne Bay Pilots, distinguished himself in the course of his pilotage duties in Port Miami while aboard a Disney Cruise Line ship. His “professional and quick actions” earned him a letter of THANKS from a senior executive with the company.

The letter, which was sent to the Biscayne Bay Pilots’ office, read as follows:

Dear Sir,

I wish to commend the professional and quick actions of Captain Mark Poole while he was piloting the Disney Magic out of Port Miami on Friday, January 20th. While outbound Miami channel passing through the breakwater two jet skis were passing in front of Disney Magic from the starboard side. As the jets skis were in front of the Disney Magic (approximately 300 meters), two of the occupants fell off one of the jet skis into the water. With the Disney Magic proceeding at 11 knots, Captain Poole made a highly effective and safe evasive maneuver that avoided hitting the individuals in the water. Due to Captain Poole’s actions, none of the people on the jet skis were injured and the Disney Magic safely completed its transit through the breakwater. The Coast Guard Rescue Coordination Center was notified on VHF Channel 16 of the incident, and Coast Guard Sector Miami was also called once Captain Poole disembarked.

It is always challenging and dangerous when small craft ignore the Rules of the Road in a restricted waterway. Please pass along our thanks to Captain Poole on behalf of Disney Cruise Line and the Disney Magic for his skill and professionalism. What he was able to do in this difficult situation was according to the Disney Magic’s Captain, remarkable.

Sincerely,

Patrick G. Gerrity
Vice President
Safety, Security & Environmental Compliance
Disney Cruise Line

HOUSTON PILOTS HOST “SOLUTIONS CONFERENCE”

The North American Marine Environment Protection Association held its Environmental Intelligence in Shipping Conference on Feb. 23 at the Houston Pilots offices.

The conference was designed to help stakeholders understand that the maritime industry is experiencing very aggressive regulatory changes, with the adoption of a global sulphur cap of .5%, adoption of the ballast water management convention, and implementation of greenhouse gas emissions limitations.

Among the speakers at the conference were Captain Bob Shearon (Presiding Officer, Houston Pilots) and Captain Charlie Tweedel (Sabine Pilots).

ELECTIONS, SELECTIONS, APPOINTMENTS, ETC.

The following pilots’ associations announced new officers:

- Pascagoula Bar Pilots Association: Captain Darryl Langley (President), Captain Michael Torjusen (Vice President), and Captain Dan Whyte (Secretary/Treasurer)
- New Jersey Sandy Hook Pilots: Captain John Oldmixon (President), Captain Edward Sweeney (Vice President), Captain Brendan Foley (Secretary), and Captain Paul Klein (Treasurer).
- New York Sandy Hook Pilots: Captain John DeCruz (President), Captain Robert Miller (Vice President), Captain Winfield Winters (Secretary), and Captain Timothy Murray (Treasurer).
- Aransas-Corpus Christi Pilots: Captain Jay Rivera (President), Captain Kevin Monaca (Vice President), Captain K. Todd Olson (Secretary/Treasurer)
- Southwest Alaska Pilots Association: Captain Michael O’Hara (President), Captain Peter Garay (Vice President), Captain Joshua Weston (Secretary/Treasurer), Captain Eric Eliassen (Director), Captain Jeffrey Pierce (Director), Captain Donal Ryan (Director) and Captain Ronald Ward (Director).
- Alaska Marine Pilots: Captain William Gillespie (President), Captain Carter Whalen (Vice President), Captain Clayton Christy (Treasurer), and Captain Keith Austin (Secretary).
- Crescent River Port Pilots’ Association: Captain Michael Bopp (President), Captain Scott Loga (Vice President), Captain Eric Short (Secretary), Captain Kevin Nelson (Director), and Captain Thomas Bryan (Director).