CAPTAIN VISO HITS THE DECK RUNNING

When Captain Jorge Viso took office as American Pilots’ Association (APA) President in January, he committed to regularly getting out of that office to personally visit APA-member groups around the country.

“My job is to advance the State Pilot System and to represent the interests of member pilot associations,” Viso said. “In order to best carry out my responsibilities as APA President, it is vital that I try to understand the unique aspects of, and challenges facing, each association. The way to do this is to observe first-hand their operations and to get underway on their pilotage waters.”

During these visits, Captain Viso plans to meet with individual pilots, look at facilities and offices, ride pilot boats, see what various groups are using for PPUs and understand how the PPUs are tailored for specific pilotage areas, and get underway with pilots in the course of their normal operations.

Captain Viso began his visits to pilot groups in February with a short drive to the Association of Maryland Pilots. During this February 23-25 trip to Baltimore, he rode with Captain Beth Christman and Captain Mike Flanagan during their assignments on a 1,000 foot container ship. He then accompanied Captain Christman and Captain Pat Hudson during their pilotage of a large cruise ship.

In March, the APA President headed to the Lone Star State to visit some of the Texas pilots. The Texas trip was from March 21-24 and coincided with Viso’s speech to the U.S. Hydro Conference in Galveston (see page 4). This visit began with a March 21 trip with Captain Wally Hogan, Presiding Officer of the Galveston-Texas City Pilots, as he piloted an Aframax tanker through Bolivar Roads to the Texas City docks. Captain Viso then headed north for a trip with the Houston Pilots. Viso and Captain Bob Shearon (Presiding Officer, Houston Pilots) went with Captain Steve Hill, during his assignment aboard a general cargo ship bound for the Houston city piers.

Following Houston, Viso stopped by the Aransas-Corpus Christi Pilots where he joined Captain Bobby Grumbles and Captain J. Lucius Edwards for a “two pilot job” on a Suezmax tanker. Aransas-Corpus Christi Presiding Officer, Captain Jay Rivera, was also on this transit that involved the use of three tugs.

The final stop in Texas was at the Matagorda Bay Pilots. Unfortunately, due to high winds and heavy seas, the bar was closed so Captain Viso was not able to get underway. He did, however, meet with Captain David Adrian, Matagorda Bay Pilots Presiding Officer, and was given a tour of the inner harbor aboard one of the group’s pilot boat.

In April, visits to APA-member groups continued with a stop at the San Francisco Bar Pilots. Here, Captain Viso rode with Captain Cevan Lesieur during his assignment on a bulk carrier.

The Virginia Pilots were next up, as Viso visited this group on April 21-22. His first trip with the Virginia Pilots was with Captain John Morgan during an assignment on a bulk carrier’s trip into the Norfolk Southern Terminal. He then accompanied Captain Chris Behm on a container ship bound from sea to the Portsmouth Marine Terminal.

On May 13, Captain Viso was in Charleston to observe a historic event. Viso was with Captain Rob Weil as he piloted the COSCO DEVELOPMENT, the largest containership to arrive on the U.S. east coast. Viso then accompanied Weil on another inbound transit of a large, deep-draft containership.

Captain Viso plans to continue visiting more member pilot associations throughout 2017.
AT NCSR4, PILOTS BEAT BACK ATTEMPT TO WEAKEN PILOT LADDER RULES

IMO’s Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications, and Search & Rescue (NCSR) held its 4th session from March 6-10. APA President, Captain Jorge Viso, served on the International Maritime Pilots Association (IMPA) delegation, while Paul Kirchner, APA Executive Director-General Counsel, was on the U.S. delegation.

NCSR4 continued its work on e-Navigation issues such as multi-system GNSS, new modules for integrated navigation systems, harmonized displays, and ship reporting systems. The NCSR4 issue of greatest import to pilots, however, was pilot ladders.

Japan submitted a proposal to eliminate “by interpretation” the current international requirement that ladder steps made of hardwood that is "free of knots." Japan’s proposal was that “free of knots” should be interpreted to mean "free of significant knots". This was, of course, of great concern to APA, IMPA, and other pilots because knots in wood can weaken the overall strength of the wood.

APA assisted in drafting an IMPA reply paper, secured the support of the Coast Guard-led U.S. delegation, and met with a number of delegates from IMO countries and organizations to explain the problems with the Japanese proposal. Through a coordinated and thorough response by pilot representatives attending NCSR4, the Sub-Committee overwhelmingly rejected this nonsensical proposal.

The Japanese proposal is only one of several attempts made at IMO by various interests to erode the pilot ladder requirements despite IMO’s 2012 decision to improve those requirements. It is important that these attempts are resisted and the current requirements are protected. Of course, seeing the requirements enforced is an even bigger challenge, and one APA and IMPA continually work on.

The IALA ENAV Committee held its 20th session from March 13-17 at IALA Headquarters in St. Germaine en Laye, France. Bill Cairns, APA Navigation Technical Director, participated in the meeting. The Committee considered ongoing e-Nav work on data modeling, testbeds, communications, PNT, and maritime service portfolios (MSPs).

Pilots continue to watch the development of the MSPs and, in particular, MSP 6 on Pilotage Services. APA/IMPA were successful in having IALA note the “pre-eminence” of IMPA in pilotage matters and invite IMPA to develop the pilotage service MSP. APA will continue to coordinate closely with IMPA on the development of the pilotage MSP.

On Station, the costs of which are paid from the member’s dues. Any comments, suggestions or questions concerning On Station should be directed to the attention of the APA office at the above address.

Day of the Seafarer will again be observed on June 25. The stated purpose of this annual observance is to recognize the unique contribution made by seafarers from all over the world to international seaborne trade, the world economy and civil society as a whole. The theme for this year’s observance is “Seafarers Matter.” For more on the Day of the Seafarer, visit: www.imo.org/en/About/Events/dayoftheseafarer/Pages/Day-of-the-Seafarer-2017.aspx
HOUSE MOVES FORWARD WITH BIPARTISAN USCG AUTHORIZATION BILL

On May 24, the U.S. House of Representatives Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee approved the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2017, H.R. 2518. This bill, like other Coast Guard authorization legislation in years past, seeks to make maritime policy changes in addition to authorizing Coast Guard functions, assets and personnel. H.R. 2518 is truly bipartisan legislation, being cosponsored by Rep. Bill Shuster (R-Pa) and Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-Ca), Chairmen of the T&I Committee and the Coast Guard & Maritime Transportation (CG&MT) Subcommittee, as well as Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Or) and Rep. John Garamendi (D-Ca), the Ranking Members of T&I and CG&MT.

H.R. 2518 includes a section that recodifies and “cleans-up” the Port and Waterways Safety Act, which is a long-standing law governing vessels in U.S. waters, granting the U.S. Coast Guard certain authority over such vessels and requiring vessels to meet safety, communications and other requirements. As discussed below, the bill also includes a provision that strengthens the pursuit of a back up to GPS, and also addresses the requirement for mariners to receive radar refresher training.

Section 411 of H.R. 2518 would require the Coast Guard to establish, operate, and maintain “a reliable land-based enhanced LORAN, or eLORAN, positioning, navigation, and timing system.” This section lays out detailed requirements that the eLORAN system must meet and makes clear that the purpose of such a system is “to ensure the availability of uncorrupted and nondegraded positioning, navigation, and timing signals for military and civilian users in the event that GPS signals are corrupted, degraded, unreliable, or otherwise unavailable.” Rep. Garamendi said, “In addition to robust funding for the Coast Guard, this year’s bill will advance the development of eLORAN, a crucially needed backup system for GPS navigation.” Garamendi has been among the most vocal Congressional leaders advocating for a dependable back up to GPS.

Section 213 of the Coast Guard Authorization Act would eliminate the long-standing requirement under 46 CFR 11.480(f) that mariner’s must complete a “refresher course” in order to renew a Radar Observer Endorsement to a Merchant Mariner Credential. It is unclear what requirement, if any, the Coast Guard may opt to put in place if Section 213 is ultimately enacted into law, but APA will watch the advancement of H.R. 2518.

SENATE ALSO TAKES BIPARTISAN APPROACH TO CG AUTHORIZATION

The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation (CS&T), on May 18, passed S. 1129, the 2018 Coast Guard reauthorization act by voice vote. This legislation was introduced and cosponsored by Sen. John Thune (R-SD) and Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fl), the Chairman and Ranking Member of the CS&T Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries and Coast Guard.

Like its House counterpart (H.R. 2518), the Senate bill’s principle purpose is to authorize the Coast Guard’s budget, human and capital resources, and legal authorities, but there are also some provisions of general interest to pilots.

S. 1129 addresses the contentious issue of ballast water management, by including the Commercial Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (CVIDA). According to press releases, CVIDA is described as “bipartisan legislation that streamlines what is currently a broken regulatory system in which commercial vessels moving vital maritime commerce on U.S. waterways are subject to conflicting and duplicative vessel discharge regulations by two federal agencies and 25 states. Under CVIDA, regulations for ballast water and other discharges from commercial vessels operating are consolidated under the authority of the Coast Guard, in consultation with EPA." Some large pilot boats are subject to existing incidental discharge rules, so the inclusion of CVIDA in S. 1129 could be significant.

Like H.R. 2518, the Senate bill would also require the Coast Guard to “eliminate the requirement that a mariner complete an approved refresher or recertification course to maintain a radar observer endorsement.”

In a provision of particular importance to U.S. Great Lakes Pilots, Section 301 of S. 1129 maintains the current membership of the Great Lakes Pilotage Advisory Committee (GLPAC). GLPAC’s membership is 3 pilots, 3 industry representatives and 1 “independent” member, but the Coast Guard had sought inclusion of additional members, including a member representing foreign shipping interests—and this member needn’t be a U.S. citizen. Fortunately, the Senate resisted this ill-advised proposal.

If S.1129 is ultimately passed by the full Senate, and H.R. 2518 is approved by the full House of Representatives, the two Chambers would have to “conference” the competing versions and try to arrive at a compromise. APA will continue to monitor the progress of both pieces of legislation.
NAVcen announces new Vessel Info Service

In March, the Coast Guard Navigation Center (NAVcen) announced that it had developed what the agency is calling the Vessel Information Verification Service or VIVS. The NAVcen stated that VIVS “contains vessel specific information derived from a variety of approved sources. The information contained in VIVS represents a daily (excluding weekends and holidays) snapshot of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) data on U.S. flag vessels and foreign vessels operating in U.S. waters. The NAVcen announcement provides additional information and is available at:

www.navcen.uscg.gov/?pageName=aisVesselSearch

Coast Guard Posts Bulletin on Shipboard Cybersecurity Risks

On March 30, the Coast Guard posted a bulletin containing remarks delivered by Rear Admiral Paul Thomas, Assistant Commandant for Prevention Policy, at the recent Connecticut Maritime Association session concerning shipboard cybersecurity risk management.

Rear Admiral Thomas’ full remarks can be found at:


Viso Addresses U.S. Hydro Conference

APA President Captain Jorge Viso was recently a keynote speaker at the 2017 U.S. Hydrographic Conference. This biennial event, presented by The Hydrographic Society of America, was held in Galveston, Texas from March 20-23.

This year’s event, the 16th such conference, included technical sessions on the latest developments and applications in hydrographic surveying, multibeam and side scan sonar, data management, electronic charting, marine archaeology, and related topics. Captain Viso’s speech discussed in some detail what pilots need from NOAA and the hydrographic community with respect to PPUs and other navigation technologies. Rear Admiral Shep Smith, NOAA’s Director of Coast Survey, was also a conference keynote speaker.

APA Staff Attends Marine Board Session on Autonomous Shipping

On 24-25 May 2017, the Marine Board of the Transportation Research Board (TRB), an arm of the National Academy of Sciences, met for its Spring meeting in Washington, DC. Among other topics, the Marine Board held a session on Autonomous Ships, Vehicles, and Shipping. Paul Kirchner, APA Executive Director-General Counsel, Clay Diamond, APA Deputy Director-Associate General Counsel, and Bill Cairns, Navigation Technology Director, attended this session.

The autonomous shipping session included 5 speakers addressing the perspectives of technologists, mariners, ship operators, regulators, and lawyers. Captain George Quick, a Vice President of the International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots, offered the mariner / ship operator’s views with a cogent assessment of autonomous and unmanned ships and their various limitations. Captain Quick also noted the manning requirements imposed on ships by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and that in June the IMO Maritime Safety Committee meeting (which APA will attend) will consider a regulatory scoping exercise on autonomous shipping. The consensus of the panel was that, due to both technical and non-technical concerns, caution should be exercised in moving forward with even limited testing of autonomous and unmanned ships.

One of the First PPUs Now Resides in APA Office

During a recent visit to the Pilots’ Association of the Bay and River Delaware (PABRD) office, Captain Jorge Viso accepted, on behalf of the APA membership, one of the original Portable LoRan-Assist Device (PLAD). This device was used as one of the first PPUs.

It is appropriate that the PLAD was donated and presented by retired PABRD Pilot, Captain Joe Bradley, since Captain Bradley was the person most responsible for the PLAD’s development and operational implementation. Captain Wayne Baily, current B&RD Pilot and former Vice Chairman of the APA’s NAVTECH, also participated in the presentation.
Dinh-Zarr Replaces Hart as NTSB Chair

On March 16, current Vice Chair of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), Bella Dinh-Zarr, was named Acting Chair. She will replace Christopher Hart, who will remain as a board member.

Hart’s tenure as the NTSB’s 13th Chairman began March 15, 2015. Hart was nominated in January 2015 by President Obama and confirmed by the U.S. Senate March 12, 2015. Hart served as the NTSB’s Acting Chairman for nearly a year prior to being named and confirmed as Chairman.

Dinh-Zarr began her tenure as the NTSB’s Vice Chairman March 31, 2015, and began her term on the board March 23, 2015. Prior to her appointment to the board she served as Director of the U.S. Office of the FIA Foundation, an international philanthropy dedicated to promoting safe and sustainable transport, and as the North American Director of Make Roads Safe – The Campaign for Global Road Safety. Prior to that she held positions at AAA, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and the Texas Transportation Institute.

Later in March, current board member Robert L. Sumwalt was designated by President Trump to serve as the NTSB’s vice chairman. The NTSB press release made clear that Sumwalt’s designation as Vice Chairman was made in conjunction with the President’s intent to nominate Sumwalt for another five-year term as an NTSB board member.

The NTSB has five board members, each nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate to serve five-year terms. By statute, the President designates, with Senate confirmation, a chairman and also designates a board member as vice chairman. The vice chairman and chairman each serve two-year terms. When there is no designated chairman, the vice chairman serves as acting chairman. Board members whose terms expire may remain on the board until their replacement is appointed.

Don’t Forget the APA PAC Fund

Send your voluntary contribution to:
APA Political Action Committee
499 South Capitol St., SW—Suite 409
Washington, DC 20003-4023

President Proclaims May 22nd as National Maritime Day

On National Maritime Day, we recognize the important role the United States Merchant Marine plays in supporting our commerce and national security. We honor the proud history of our merchant mariners and their important contributions in strengthening our economy.

Americans have long looked to the sea as a source of safety and well-being. Bounded by two oceans and the Gulf of Mexico, and crisscrossed by inland waterways, America was destined to be a maritime nation. Our fledgling Republic expanded and became stronger, as our Nation’s growing Merchant Marine connected the States and cemented ties among our new allies.

Today, the men and women who crew ships remain essential to our Nation’s prosperity and security. Those in the maritime industry, including merchant mariners, promote our economic growth, facilitating the export of more than $475 billion in goods just last year and sustaining our critical defense industrial base. Merchant mariners also actively protect our homeland, serving as our eyes and ears on the seas. They serve with distinction and courage, heading into war zones, and too often sacrificing their own lives for our protection.

The Congress, by a joint resolution approved May 20, 1933, has designated May 22 of each year as "National Maritime Day," to commemorate the first transoceanic voyage by a steamship, in 1819 by the S.S. Savannah. By this resolution, the Congress has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation calling for its appropriate observance.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, DONALD J. TRUMP, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 22, 2017, as National Maritime Day. I call upon the people of the United States to mark this observance and to display the flag of the United States at their homes and in their communities. I also request that all ships sailing under the American flag dress ship on that day.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this nineteenth day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand seventeen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-first.

- DONALD J. TRUMP
APA NEWS

HOUSTON PILOTS EARN PLIMSOLL AWARD

Professional Mariner magazine has presented the 2017 Samuel Plimsoll Award for Outstanding Service to two APA-member pilots whose judgement, actions, and bravery dramatically minimized the danger posed by an oil tanker ablaze in the Houston Ship Channel.

Professional Mariner honored Captain Michael McGee and Captain Michael Phillips of the Houston Pilots for their actions aboard the tanker Aframax River on the night of September 6, 2016. As detailed in the last edition of ON STATION, the 810-foot ship caught fire and burned for an hour in the Houston Ship Channel, with flaming diesel spreading across the water and threatening other nearby vessels and terminals.

“Captain McGee was conning the vessel and undocking when the ship experienced an engine failure and struck two mooring dolphins,” Captain Robert M. Shearon, the Houston Pilots’ Presiding Officer, said in a prepared statement 10 days after the incident. “As a result of the contact, a port fuel tank ruptured, causing a spill of diesel fuel that ignited and burned.”

Captain McGee and Captain Phillips, with 18 and 24 years’ experience, respectively, as Houston Pilots, maintained their stations in the wheelhouse as flames covered the bridge wings. Captain McGee maneuvered the ship toward the middle of the channel after the fire started, Captain Shearon said, to minimize the threat to surrounding property. Captain Phillips handled communications with the Coast Guard and coordinated firefighting efforts with two port fireboats and four tugboats from G&H Towing.

“One pilot’s face and hair were singed,” Captain Shearon said. “The other pilot broke out and charged a fire hose and extinguished a fire on the port bridge wing himself.”

Once the fire was out, Captain McGee guided the Aframax River — unloaded at the time but carrying about 90,000 gallons of fuel — to a nearby dock. In testimony in December before the Pilot Board of Investigation and Recommendations Committee, Captain Phillips said he had turned to Captain McGee during the ordeal and warned, “We are going to die.” No injuries were reported among the ship’s twenty five-person crew.

In February, the Coast Guard presented Captains McGee and Phillips with the Meritorious Public Service Award for their “prompt and effective response to a major marine casualty.”

“It really was one of the finest examples of state pilots protecting the waterway and citizens at their own risk,” stated the Plimsoll nomination for Captains McGee and Phillips.

APA has coordinated with the IMPA to nominate these two Houston Pilots for the IMO’s Exceptional Bravery at Sea Award. Details about this IMO award, which will be announced in September 2017, are available at: www.imo.org/en/About/Events/bravery%20award/Pages/default.aspx.

Mark Your Calendar

2017 APA Board of Trustees Meeting
Washington, DC, October 16-18

24th IMPA Congress
Dakar, Sénégal, April 23-27, 2018,
http://impadakar2018.com/

2018 APA Biennial Convention
Savannah, Georgia, September 30-October 5

ELECTIONS, SELECTIONS, APPOINTMENTS, ETC.

The following APA-member pilots associations recently announced new officers:

♦ Northeast Marine Pilots: Captain Sean Bogus (President), Captain Richard Astles (Vice President), Captain Clinton Walker (Secretary), Captain E. Howard McVay (Co-Treasurer), and Captain Vincent Kirby (Co-Treasurer).

♦ Mobile Bar Pilots: Captain J. Christopher Brock (President), Captain Scott M. Driscoll (Vice President), Captain Kirk M. Barrett (Secretary/Treasurer), Captain Peter Burns (Boat Captain), and Captain W. Curtis Wilson, III (Director).

♦ Sabine Pilot Association: Captain Charles Lahaye (President), Captain Brian Thibodeaux (Vice President), Captain Jason Clark (Secretary/Treasurer), and Captain Stephen Williams (Boat Superintendent).

♦ Pilots’ Association for the Bay & River Delaware: Captain Jonathan Kemmerley (President), Captain David Cuff (DE Director), Captain Colten Moran (DE Director), Captain Drew Hodgens (PA Director), Captain Dennis Cuff (PA Director), and Captain John Hanley (Secretary / Treasurer).