APA MEMBERS BET ON LAS VEGAS FOR A PRODUCTIVE CONVENTION; ODDS ARE IT WILL BE FUN, TOO!

As this edition of ON STATION hits the streets, APA staff continues to finalize arrangements for events associated with the 2010 Biennial Convention. The Convention will be held in Las Vegas from October 24-29, 2010.

The site for this year’s Convention is the spectacular Palazzo Resort Hotel and Casino. The Gulf States Regions’ co-hosts for the 2010 Convention are: Aransas Corpus Christi Pilots, Associated Branch Pilots, Brazos Pilots, Brazos-Santiago Pilots, Crescent River Pilots, Galveston Pilots, Mississippi Pilots of Gulfport, Houston Pilots, Lake Charles Pilots, Matagorda Bay Pilots, Mobile Bar Pilots, New Orleans Baton Rouge Steamship Pilots, Pascagoula Bar Pilots, and Sabine Pilots.

On Sunday, October 24th, prior to the commencement of the Convention’s substantive (but not more important) business meetings, the 12th biennial golf tournament will be held. This prestigious event, considered by some to be a launching pad to the PGA Champions Tour (previously known as the Senior Tour), will be played at the Rio Secco Golf Club.

The first day of pre-convention meetings will be Monday, October 25th. The day will kick off with the Attorneys’ Meeting, an opportunity for APA and other pilot attorneys to discuss recent developments in piloting law. In the afternoon, various APA working committees will meet to finalize proposals for consideration during the Convention’s General Sessions.

On Tuesday, October 26th, the Convention officially opens and will run through Friday, October 29th. During these General Sessions, important APA matters, required to be addressed by the APA By-Laws, will taken up. In addition, APA members will hear from senior representatives from federal agencies, such as the U.S. Coast Guard and NOAA.

The APA’s Navigation Technology Committee (NAVTECH) will meet on Wednesday afternoon. In addition to discussing the latest trends in electronic navigation, NAVTECH members will hear from officials from the Coast Guard’s navigation and waterways management programs.

The Suppliers’ Exhibition, an excellent opportunity to meet with maritime and pilotage related vendors and to discuss their products, will be held on Wednesday and Thursday.

The Convention will not be all business (this is Las Vegas after all!). A number of exciting social events have been planned. The Convention week will begin with a “Get Acquainted” event on Monday evening and end with the traditional Friday black tie Gala reception and dinner. In between, attendees will be treated to some uniquely Las Vegas offerings. Spouses will meet for a wonderful lunch event at Madame Tussauds and all attendees will enjoy an evening of entertainment with the renowned musical, “The Jersey Boys.” There will also be plenty of “free” time to see and experience Las Vegas.

For more information on the Biennial Convention and to register yourself and any guests, please go to the APA’s website, www.americanpilots.org, and look for Convention registration and general information tabs.
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SAFETY OF NAVIGATION MEETS

IMO’s Safety of Navigation Subcommittee held its 56th Session (NAV56) from July 26-27 in London. Captain Mike Watson, APA and IMPA President, led the IMPA delegation and Mr. Paul Kirchner, APA Executive Director-General Counsel, served on the U.S. delegation.

On the agenda at NAV56 was an attempt to clarify a number of “vague expressions” in SOLAS Regulation V/22 dealing with ensuring adequate visibility from the bridge to ensure the vessel can be safely navigated. The task of clarifying terms was assigned to a “drafting group,” and Mr. Kirchner represented the U.S. on this group. After several days of work by the drafting group and hours of debate in the plenary session, however, consensus on amendments to the regulation could not be reached. The two issues causing the most disagreement were the definition of “conning position” from which visibility would be measured and a proposal to allow visibility to be calculated using loading and stability computer programs.

A “correspondence group” was eventually established to provide NAV57 with draft amendments to Regulation V/22. Kirchner and IMPA staff are on the correspondence group and will work to ensure pilots and pilo- tage are fully considered in any proposed SOLAS amendments.

STCW DIPLOMATIC CONFERENCE CONVENES IN MANILA

A Diplomatic Conference was held in Manila, Philippines from June 21-25 to approve amendments to the STCW Convention and Code. Merchant Marine Personnel Advisory Committee Chairman, Captain Andrew McGovern (Sandy Hook Pilots), was on the U.S. Delegation. There were no changes to the STCW Code that impact pilots directly, but some amendments could effect underlying mariner credentials held by state pilots. The amendments go into effect on January 1, 2012. APA will monitor any regulations promulgated by the USCG to implement amendments adopted by the Diplomatic Conference and will keep APA members advised of any significant changes.

JUNE 25TH SET AS “DAY OF THE SEAFARER”

IMO has already declared 2010 to be the “Year of the Seafarer,” but recently its member states unanimously proclaimed that each year June 25th will be “The Day of the Seafarer.” The proclamation is in honor of “the unique contribution made by seafarers to international seaborne trade, the world economy and civil society as a whole.”

JOE ANGELO NAMED INTERTANKO MANAGING DIRECTOR

Mr. Joseph Angelo, currently INTERTANKO’s Deputy Managing Director, has been nominated to succeed Peter Swift as Managing Director. Angelo will assume his new duties in December 2010.

Angelo has been INTERTANKO’s representative at all “Pilot-INTERTANKO Discussion Group” meetings to date (discussed in past editions of ON STATION) and was instrumental in the development of the Memorandum of Agreement between the APA and INTERTANKO. “Joe has been a good partner and INTERTANKO was wise to tap his considerable skills. I wish he and his wife Mary the very best as they start this next chapter of their life,” said APA President Captain Mike Watson.
IN FINAL WEEKS, 111TH CONGRESS LOOKS TO PASS USCG AUTHORIZATION ACT

With only weeks until the 111th Congress recesses to allow members to return to their districts to campaign, Congressional staffs are working to resolve differences between the House- and Senate-passed versions of the Coast Guard Authorization Act. If staffs can make sufficient progress, a Conference Committee made up of a small number of Senators and Representatives could be appointed to try to formally reconcile the two chambers’ legislation for final passage by each chamber.

The APA office has watched the progress of the Authorization bills very closely during the two years of the 111th Congress. There are several provisions likely to be included in a final conference version that, depending upon how the provisions would be implemented by the USCG, could benefit pilots. For instance, a merchant mariner medical advisory committee would be established to provide advice to the USCG on mariner physical examination matters. In addition, the USCG would be given the specific statutory authority to renew a merchant mariner credential (MMC) up to 8 months in advance of the expiration date to address “license creep,” and would be authorized to extend the duration of a MMC for one year if necessary to reduce an administrative backlog at the National Maritime Center. Also, staffs have agreed on a provision to reauthorize the Great Lakes Pilotage Advisory Committee for another 10 years.

The only provision of interest to pilots still under debate relates to pilotage for certain vessels operating in Buzzards Bay, MA. The House version of the legislation contains a section requiring any tug moving a single-hull tank barge carrying 5,000 or more barrels of oil or hazardous material while transiting Buzzard Bay to be under the direction and control of a Massachusetts-licensed pilot or a federal pilot who has made a small number of round trips. This provision would have the nonsensical effect of equating an independent state-licensed pilot, who has undergone extensive training and apprenticeship, with an individual holding only a federal pilotage endorsement who has made a limited number of round trips. The Senate-passed version of the Authorization bill does not contain a Buzzards Bay pilotage provision.

The House provision, if adopted, would create a confusing pilotage requirement for Buzzards Bay that would actually undermine existing pilotage standards in the area. The APA has advised key Congressional members and staff that this provision, as presently drafted, is seriously flawed and should not be included in the final Coast Guard Authorization Act.

If a reconciled version of the Coast Guard Authori-

zation Act does not pass the House and Senate before the 111th Session adjourns (most likely following a brief “lame duck” session in December), the legislation “dies” and is no longer eligible for consideration. There has not been a Coast Guard Authorization Act passed since 2006.

CONGRESS EXTENDS INCIDENTAL DISCHARGE EXEMPTION

As reported in the last edition of ON STATION, the exemption from the Clean Water Act’s National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit requirement for discharges incidental to the normal operations that applied to non-recreational vessels less than 79 feet in length was due to expire on July 31, 2010.

Discharges “incidental” to normal operations are broadly defined to include such discharges as effluent from marine engines, gray water, cooling water, and deck runoff. Without legislation extending the permit exemption, any commercial vessel less than 79 feet — including pilot boats — would be prohibited from making routine overboard discharges without first obtaining an NPDES permit from the Environmental Protection Agency.

Since this exemption would impact local pilot associations with pilot boats less than 79 feet (pilot boats greater than 79 feet are already subject to the permit requirements), APA has been watching this legislation closely.

The Senate passed legislation, sponsored by Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA), on July 14 that extends the permit exemption until December 18, 2013. Identical legislation introduced by Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ) passed the House on July 29. President Obama signed the legislation on July 30. As a result, pilot boats less than 79 feet will continue to be exempted from NPDES permit requirements.

HOUSE COAST GUARD SUBCOMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON FOREIGN VESSEL OPERATIONS IN U.S. EEZ

On Thursday, June 17th the House Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation convened a hearing regarding the extent of commercial activity conducted by foreign flag vessels in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Among the witnesses called to testify at the hearing were Coast Guard Rear Admiral Kevin Cook and MARAD Administrator David Matsuda.

The hearing was conducted by Chairman Elijah Cummings (D-MA) and Ranking Member Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ). While the Subcommittee did not address pilotage, APA did monitor the hearing closely because the hearing agenda called for an examination of the overlapping jurisdictions of flag states and coastal states when foreign-flagged vessels and drilling units are operating in a coastal state’s EEZ.
NAVIGATION SAFETY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETS IN WASHINGTON, DC

The Navigation Safety Advisory Council (NAVSAC), which advises the Coast Guard on a wide range of issues related to navigation safety convened in Washington, DC on June 22 and 23.

Captain Mike Morris (Houston Pilots) attended the meeting as an appointed member of NAVSAC. APA Deputy Director, Mr. Clay Diamond, also attended the meeting.

Among the agenda items of particular interest to pilots were discussions on possible recommendations relating to designation of “narrow channels” for Inland Navigation Rule 9, application of Rules of the Road to unmanned vessels, and potential changes to recreational boat lighting configurations.

INADVERTENT COAST GUARD BASE STATION ACTIVITIES MAY NEGATIVELY IMPACT AIS USERS

Most ON STATION readers are already aware of the Coast Guard’s Marine Safety Alert 7-10 dated August 28, 2010 regarding Coast Guard conducted AIS Base Station operations in the mid-Atlantic and north-east region of the country during the past month that could negatively impact all AIS users operating between Connecticut and North Carolina. The Alert is available at: http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/pdf/AIS/Safety_Alert_0710.pdf

This Coast Guard AIS Base Station activity had the unintended consequence of remotely changing the transmit and receive channel configurations of some AIS units on board ship and in shore-side installations, without the knowledge of the AIS users. Affected AIS units would no longer transmit nor receive AIS data on the standard AIS VHF operating channels of 87B and 88B, effectively rendering these affected AIS units “invisible” to other properly configured and operating AIS units.

The Delaware Pilots first detected and reported the problems caused by the Coast Guard’s Base Station activity. As a result, the Coast Guard ceased the activities that caused the remote channel configuration changes. The Coast Guard does not know how many vessels or shore installations, may have been affected, however. Nor does the Coast Guard know if the owners and operators of affected AIS installations are aware of the remote changes that may have taken place in their AIS systems.

Most AIS units should have switched back to the normal, default channel settings automatically. Firmware or software issues in some units, such as the SAAB R4, Sperry R4, and assorted McMurdo AIS systems, are known to have caused these units to retain the incorrect channel settings, requiring a manual re-set of their operating channels. There may be other makes and models that also require a re-set of their operating channels. Instructions for re-setting the units are included in the Marine Safety Alert.

Captains Jorge Viso and Wayne Bailey, Chairman and Vice Chairman of APA’s NAVTECH Committee respectively, have been dealing with the Coast Guard on this matter and, in fact, had urged the Coast Guard to issue clear and detailed information about the AIS base activity problem. Pilots should be made aware of the Marine Safety Alert and should report to the Coast Guard and NAVTECH Committee any strange or unusual AIS behavior observed.

NTSB ISSUES RECOMMENDATIONS TO USCG ON USE OF CELL PHONES AND WIRELESS DEVICES

In August, National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Chairman Debra Hersman issued two recommendations to the USCG regarding the use of cell phones and similar wireless devices aboard vessels. NTSB is investigating two recent marine accidents in which crewmembers on USCG small boats that were involved in collisions had been using cellular telephones while underway to engage in non-official text-messaging activities or conversations. According to Chairman Hersman, “The use of wireless communications devices while operating vehicles in any mode of transportation poses an unacceptable distraction.”

The NTSB’s first recommendation related to internal policy for USCG vessels. The recommendation is for the USCG to “develop and implement national and local policies that address the use of cellular telephones and other wireless devices aboard U.S. Coast Guard vessels.”

In its letter to the USCG, the NTSB went on to advise that the “risk associated with distractions from using wireless devices while operating a motor vehicle are well known, and the Safety Board believes that the boating public and commercial marine industry should be reminded that similar risks may exist on the water.” In this regard, the NTSB made the following additional recommendation to the USCG: “Issue a safety advisory to the maritime industry that (1) promotes awareness of the risk posed by the use of cellular telephones and other wireless devices while operating vessels and (2) encourage the voluntary development of operational policies to address the risk.”
NORTH AMERICAN LORAN-C SIGNAL OFFICIALLY GOES DARK

On September 1, USCG LORAN Station Caribou, Maine was decommissioned. Station Caribou was the last station to transmit an American LORAN signal, thus ending the 67-year LORAN-C program.

While serious questions remain about whether LORAN-C should have been maintained as a platform for an E-LORAN system to serve as a back-up to GPS, termination of the LORAN-C program was directed by the fiscal year 2010 Homeland Security Appropriations bill.

EPA PROPOSES TO ESTABLISH NATION’S LARGEST NO-DISCHARGE ZONE

On August 25, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that it is proposing to designate the entire coast of California—out to three nautical miles—as a “no discharge zone” for vessels larger than 300 gross tons. Under the proposed rule, which covers the California coast from the border with Mexico to the border with Oregon, all discharges of sewage (treated or untreated) from vessels larger than 300 gross tons would be prohibited. According to an EPA press release, this proposed no-discharge zone is “unprecedented in geographical scope.”

The entire proposed rule can be found at: http://www.epa.gov/region9/mediacenter/nodischarge/CA_NDZ-Proposed-Rule.pdf

DOT AMENDS DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING PROGRAMS

On August 16, the Department of Transportation’s (DOT) Office of Drug and Alcohol Policy and Compliance (ODAPC) issued a notice stating that it is amending certain provisions of its drug testing procedures dealing with laboratory testing of urine specimens.

Among the notable changes to the laboratory testing requirements announced by the ODAPC are mandatory testing for MDMA (a.k.a. Ecstasy) and heroin, and lowering the testing cutoff levels for cocaine and amphetamines.


SAVANNAH HOSTS JOINT MEETING OF APA OFFICERS AND SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION

The officers of the APA, including the President, Regional Vice Presidents, and Secretary-Treasurer, gathered in the historic maritime city of Savannah, GA to hold their biannual meeting. The meeting, which was held in conjunction with the APA South Atlantic Regional meeting, took place on September 15th. The officers discussed prominent issues of national significance to pilots, shared respective regional reports, and received updates from the APA staff on the latest national and international priorities, efforts and projects.

Among the topics discussed that continues to be a very high priority for APA’s leadership is addressing ongoing problems with medical review and credential processing at the Coast Guard’s National Maritime Center.

Above and below: Officers and staff of the American Pilots’ Association hold discussions during a recent meeting in Savannah.

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LAKE CHARLES PILOT BOAT RESCUES OSV DECK HAND IN GULF OF MEXICO

While Coast Guard investigators are still trying to determine how a crewman from the offshore supply vessel (OSV) Ms. Mia fell overboard on May 20, 2010, one thing is certain — the crewman is lucky a Lake Charles pilot and pilot boat were nearby.

The OSV crew were unable to get the injured crewman back aboard their vessel, so Ms. Mia’s captain issued a “mayday” call. The call was heard by Lake Charles pilot, Captain Brett Palmer, who had just been transferred to a ship approximately three miles from Ms. Mia to begin a pilotage assignment. Captain Palmer immediately notified John Stephenson, senior boat captain aboard the pilot boat Calcasieu Pass Pilot, who had just dropped off Captain Palmer.

Stephenson quickly vectored the pilot boat toward the OSV. Once on scene, Stephenson and pilot boat First Mate Carson Fasske assessed the situation. Stephenson said, “The man was unconscious floating in the water with a pool of blood around him.”

Stephenson maneuvered the pilot boat, which was equipped with a special stern-mounted mesh platform that was specifically designed for water rescues, and, with the assistance of Fasske, was able to get the injured crewman safely aboard the Calcasieu Pass Pilot. The crewman was later transferred by Coast Guard helicopter to a local hospital where he was treated for undisclosed injuries.

Lieutenant Clint Smith of Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit Lake Charles emphasized in press accounts how fortunate the OSV crewman was that Captain Palmer heard the mayday call and that the pilot boat reacted so quickly and effectively. Smith indicated that both Stephenson and Fasske are being considered for Coast Guard marine safety awards for their role in the rescue.

This episode is an example of why pilot boats and their crews continually train for these types of emergency situations.

ELECTIONS, SELECTIONS, APPOINTMENTS, ETC.

◆ The Lake Charles Pilots have elected new officers for 2010. The new Board of Elected Officers are: Captain David B. Trent (President), Captain Brett A. Palmer (Vice President), Captain Charles Morrison (Vice President), and Captain Frank Jewell (Secretary/Treasurer).

◆ The Puget Sound Pilots recently announced their 2010-2011 Board of Directors. The board is comprised as follows: Captain Frantz A. Coe (President-Director), Captain Eric M. vonBrandenfels (Vice President-Director), Captain Jonathan E. Ward (Secretary/Treasurer-Director), Captain Ivan J. Carlson (Director), Captain Delmar G. Mackenzie (Director), Captain Donald W. Mayer (Director), and Captain Stuart E. Mork (Director).

◆ The new officers for the Aransas-Corpus Christie Pilots are Captain Bobby G. Grumbles (Presiding Officer/President), Captain Bob L. Lippold (Vice President), and Captain Ned C. Teller (Secretary/Treasurer).

◆ Captain Eric A. Nielsen, President of the Association of Maryland Pilots, reported the results of the Association’s most recent elections as follows: Captain John P. Hamill (First Vice President), Captain Elizabeth Christman (Secretary), Captain Raymond Jankowiak (Harbor List Representative).

2010 IMPA CONGRESS

The 20th International Maritime Pilots Association Congress (IMPA 2010) is being held in Brisbane, Australia from November 14-19. At this Congress, APA President, Captain Mike Watson, is seeking reelection to another 4-year term as IMPA President. Captain Watson is the only pilot nominated for the office of president and will run unopposed.

Consistent with the theme for the 2010 Congress, “World Pilots Together,” APA member pilots are encouraged to attend the IMPA Congress and to join with pilots from around the world to show unity, enjoy camaraderie, and to exchange ideas and experiences to better the profession.

To learn more about the 2010 IMPA Congress and to get registration information, please go to the IMPA website at www.impahq.org.