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## President's Letter



Greetings of the Season –

This newsletter is full of news, but I wanted to focus this letter on the Mississippi Water Conference held in August at Harrah's Tunica. The cooperation among MWRA, USGS, MSDEQ and the Mississippi Water Resources Research Institute (MWRRI) resulted in the best-attended conference ever – 247. The MWRA Board of Directors, at the November 5 Board meeting, voted unanimously to cooperate again next year, but this time on the

Coast. In an attempt to dodge the Hurricane Season and to qualify for hotel rooms at a (substantially) reduced rate, we are negotiating for a conference in the first week of November. Like any first endeavor, in this year's conference, there was room for improvement. We were gratified by the conference evaluations, which included not only praise but also constructive suggestions to make our 2010 efforts even better. These recommendations were actively discussed at the Board meeting before the vote was taken. I think we can all look forward to an informative conference next year – we'll get the exact dates and location to you as soon as the hotel contract is signed.

MWRA is fortunate to have a Department of Transportation that understands the importance of moving freight efficiently. Their continuing, active support of multi-modal funding is a national "poster child" of visionary planning. We congratulate MDOT Executive Director Larry "**Butch**" **Brown** as he assumes the presidency of AASHTO – the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. This is more than an honor, it is a heavy responsibility.

MWRA will be co-hosting again this year the Annual Breakfast with Our Legislators February 4 at 7:30 at Old Capitol Inn. Neither reservation nor fee is a requirement – just come. This event has grown from the first year with about 40 attendees to 150. We are active co-sponsors with the other modes: airports, railroads and public transit. Please mark your calendar!

Dean Pennington, Ph.D.  
MWRA President

**MWRA Mission Statement:**

*MWRA promotes the advancement of Mississippi rivers, ports and harbors, coastal and inland waterways, flood control, recreation, water development and management, water supply and all other beneficial uses of water resources.*

## MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

The **MS Dept. of Marine Resources**, in partnership with the MS Gulf Fishing Banks, sank a retired fishing vessel donated by Omega Protein, Inc., to be used as an artificial reef fish habitat. The Great Wicomico, a 176-foot vessel, was sunk 13 miles south of Horn Island. Before a vessel can be deployed, all fuel, oil, engines and any wood must be removed and the fuel tanks pressure washed. About 90% of Mississippi's artificial reefs were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. A little more than 60% have been rebuilt. The MS Dept. of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, protecting and conserving maritime interests of the state.

*Sun Herald*, November 27, 2009

The **Port of Greenville** has received a \$3 million grant for improvements, including dock renovations, a new automated grain-handling facility, and new ground equipment. Port Commissioner Phield Parish said the improvements would be only the first of many to the port's infrastructure. He cited repairs to railroad tracks of the Columbus and Greenville Railroad to West Point as a priority, allowing scrap metal to be delivered to east Mississippi. He added, "If we get that part of the rail developed, this Greenville port facility will be three times as large." Congratulations from MWRA to Port Director **Tommy Hart** for his hard work on this project.

*Waterways Journal*, June 1, 2009

Special congratulations to **Sykes Sturdivant** on his election as Vice Chairman of the National Waterways Conference. Sturdivant is the elected President of the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Levee District. Congratulations are also extended to **John Janoush**, Jantran, as Vice President. Board members elected who are also members of MWRA include **Ron Coles** of WR Coles & Associates and **Don Waldon**, Dawson & Associates.



*Port of Pascagoula LNG Terminal (artist's rendering)*

At the **Port of Pascagoula**, the newest industry is Gulf LNG Energy's \$1.1 billion terminal. When complete in 2011, the plan is to have as many as 150 tankers a year bring natural gas, cooled to a liquid state (260 degrees below 0), into the terminal. The tanks have a capacity of 6.6 billion cubic feet. As a measure of protection, the company constructed a 27-foot concrete wall around the terminal. It was finished in October – just in time to test it with the advent of Hurricane Ida. The water never got to the top of the foundation – the wall had 24 feet to spare.

*Sun Herald*, November 13, 2009

Several MWRA members were recently elected to the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Development Council: **Steven Edwards**, MDOT, **John Hardy**, Lowndes County Port Authority, **Mark Sheppard**, Alabama State Port Authority and **Ron Coles** of WR Coles & Associates.

MWRA extends a special welcome to the new Assistant Port Director at Rosedale-Bolivar County Port: **Robert Maxwell** is serving as an apprentice to **David Work**. **Steve Wallace** is the new Executive Director of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Water Management District based in Tupelo. He replaces Jimmie Mills. Welcome to you both!

The Mississippi Water Resources Research Institute at Mississippi has the following MWRA members serving on its Advisory Board: **Dean Pennington, Ph.D.**, YMD Joint Water Management District, **Tom Bryant, PE**, Pickering, Inc., **Jamie Crawford**, MSDEQ, **Deirdre McGowan, Ph.D.**, Inland Rivers Ports & Terminals, Inc., **Mickey Plunkett**, USGS, and **Mathias J.M. Romkens**, National Sedimentation Laboratory. The Advisory Board met in mid-November to review and rank research proposals submitted for consideration by MWRRI. The institute is under the direction of **George Hopper, Ph.D.**, Dean and Director, College of Forest Resources at MSU.

## TENN-TOM WATERWAY MUSEUM UPDATE

The Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) awarded a grant to the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Development Authority to establish a museum in its headquarters in Columbus, MS. The goal of the Museum Board is to raise \$1 million between grants and outside contributions to complete the project. Construction is expected to begin within the next 60 days, according to Mrs. Agnes Zaiontz, the Museum Director.

The Museum will highlight the uniqueness of the waterway with its lock and dam system and will eventually incorporate artifacts and information from rail and highway sources as well. It will show the evolution of the Tenn-Tom region's transportation system with emphasis on the waterway. Included will be historical items obtained from the Smithsonian Institution and from state and local archives.

## PAT HARRISON WATERWAY DISTRICT HAS BIG PLANS!

After fifteen years as an idea gathering dust, officials are taking a new look at Lake George, a proposed lake in George County. Members of the George County Board of Supervisors and **Hiram Boone**, Executive Director of the Pat Harrison Waterway District, spoke with Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS) briefly about the project.

"There are a lot of factions coming together right now that make this a viable project," Boone said. "The lake would be an industrial reservoir, could be a supply of drinking water and could also be used for recreation." The project may gain new life with the possibility of getting American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds and using the lake as a reservoir to maintain water levels in the Pascagoula River if plans to build the Strategic Petroleum Reserve storage facility in Richton salt dome go forward.

Boone said he envisions a 500-acre lake managed and used much like Flint Creek at Wiggins, with cabins, campsites and fishing. He added that Jackson County supervisors have agreed to support the project. "This project would provide jobs, benefit industry and be good for economic development," Boone said. "That is what the stimulus bill is supposed to be about."

*Sun Herald*, November 15, 2009

## STATE LEVEE BOARD SUES EPA

The Board of Mississippi Levee Commissioners sued the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in U.S. District Court in Greenville over EPA's veto of a \$220 million flood control project that dates back decades. The levee board wants to move forward with the Yazoo Backwater Project, a proposal to build a pump station to drain wetlands, farmlands and forests north of Vicksburg when the Mississippi River is high.

Congress authorized the project in 1941, but didn't fully fund it. EPA vetoed the Yazoo pump aspect of the project in 2008, saying it would destroy wetlands, water quality and habitat for threatened species. The lawsuit challenges the agency's authority to stop the project. The lawsuit also claims EPA's veto is illegal because the project was approved by Congress before the agency was given veto power under the Clean Water Act of 1977. No trial date has yet been set. The MS Levee Board is represented by Pacific Legal Foundation, a legal watchdog organization.

*Sun Herald*, November 15, 2009

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# Calendar of Events

- January 26-28 Institute for Trade and Transportation Studies, “Freight in the Southeast: A Business Perspective.” Contact: Bruce Lambert, [bruce@ittsresearch.org](mailto:bruce@ittsresearch.org)
- February 3 MWRA Board of Directors Meeting and Mississippi Intermodal Council Dinner, Old Capitol Inn, Jackson, 4 PM, dinner at 6:00.
- February 4 **Mississippi Intermodal Council “Breakfast with Our Legislators,”**  
Old Capitol Inn, Jackson, 7:30 AM. Information: Deirdre McGowan, [insightltd@msn.com](mailto:insightltd@msn.com)
- March 9-11 **National Waterways Budget Summit**, Washington, DC.  
Contact Carole Wright, [carole@waterways.org](mailto:carole@waterways.org)
- April 14-16 **IRPT Annual Meeting**, Battle House, Mobile, AL. Information to follow at [www.irpt.net](http://www.irpt.net).
- August 24-26 **Tenn-Tom Waterway Development Conference**, Marriott Grand Hotel, Point Clear, AL.  
Contact [azaiontz@tenntom.org](mailto:azaiontz@tenntom.org)
- September date TBD **National Waterways Annual Conference, Boston.** Information to follow.
- November 3-5 ? **Mississippi Water Conference (MWRA-MWRRI)**, Mississippi Gulf Coast.  
Information to follow.



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