



## 2. Committee Business

### March 7, 2007 HTAC Meeting Summary

Chair Jason Serck called for changes to the Meeting Summary as presented.

*Motion by Ed Anderson/Joel Johnson to approve the March 7, 2007 Meeting Summary with no revisions. There was no discussion and the Motion carried unanimously.*

### MIC Harbor Planning Funding Request

MIC Director Ron Chicka reported that he had recently sent out request letters to key partners, as has been done in the past, asking for funding contributions to the MIC's harbor planning efforts. He noted that the MIC has recently beefed up its Harbor Planning work program, many current projects completed including two port plans, Erie Pier Management Plan, and work on the current DMMP. Pat Carey noted that he was able to put in a budget request to MPCA; Jim Sharrow noted that the Port Authority recognizes the value of the HTAC's work and ability to bring stakeholders together. Ron said he would be following up with all parties.

### Captain Ray Skelton Memorial Scholarship

Jim Sharrow announced that a new scholarship had been established for the Great Lakes Maritime Academy, to support deck officer undergrads; if donations to the fund reach \$15k, it will become a permanently endowed scholarship – currently at half that amount.

## 3. Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS Fish Virus) and Two Other Lurking Invaders

Jeff Gunderson, Associate Director at the Minnesota Sea Grant program, gave a PowerPoint presentation "Blood, Snot and Fears: VHS Virus and Two Other Lurking Invaders." The viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) virus is causing significant mortality in some fish species and appears to be spreading rapidly throughout the Great Lakes system. First confirmed in 2005 in freshwater Drum in Lake Ontario, the virus causes bleeding in internal organs and osmotic regulation failure. Fish are lethargic, dark in color, show signs of bulging eyes and bleeding in eyes, skin, gills and base of fins. Mortality is highest at low water temperatures (37–54° F), but rarely occurs at temperatures above 59° F. He stressed that the virus poses no concern for human health.

He noted that there are four primary strains of the virus found around the world, and that the strain isolated in the Great Lakes likely first arrived around 2002 via ballast water or fish migration from the Atlantic Maritime Provinces. It has continued to spread, with large die-offs in many other species in Lakes Erie and Ontario in spring 2006 and mortalities in whitefish and walleye from Lake Huron by fall 2006. It appears to be moving inland, into Budd Lake in Michigan and the Lake Winnebago system in Wisconsin. So far, no cases of the virus have been found in Lake Superior.

He then reviewed the USDA response, which was to issue an emergency order in October 2006 that stopped the movement of 37 species of live fish between and outside of the Great Lakes states and between the U.S. and the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec. This resulted in a significant negative impact to Minnesota fish farmers---they suddenly couldn't sell walleye, musky and smallmouth bass out of state, even though no virus has been detected in Lake Superior. Tournament anglers were also affected because of catch and release activities, all of which led to multiple requests for amendments to the order. It was amended in May 2007 to allow the movement of live fish within the Great Lakes to slaughter and research facilities as well as to allow catch and release fishing practices.

Long term impacts are unknown, but it is predicted that the VHS virus will persist, possibly mutate and become widely established, with additional species likely being affected. The virus transmits easily between fish at all ages, continues to shed and fish that survive can become lifelong carriers that shed the virus with urine and eggs. Dead fish can shed virus into the water until they are totally putrefied and frozen bait has been shown to be able to transmit the disease. Significant environmental stressors will also likely cause outbreaks in the future, mainly in the spring and fall; affecting smaller fish in particular, with population declines for some species. Steps will have to be taken to address fish stocking management and commercial activities.

He then moved on to discuss other, new invasive species, including the Bloody Red Shrimp, first found in 2006 in Muskegon, MI, and Oswego, NY. Similar to the Mysids (native) shrimp, it originates from the Black and Caspian Seas, and was introduced into the former Soviet Union as fish food. It then spread to the Baltic Sea by the late 1990s and to U.S. waters by shipping activity. The hidden life-style of this species makes it difficult to assess its geographic distribution. The species tolerates low to no salinity, temps to 48-68 deg F, and may overwinter. Impacts are mainly ecological due to competition for food (zooplankton and phytoplankton), but it will also be eaten by other organisms. Long term impacts are not known.

Another new invasive species, *Didymosphenia geminata*, is native to the United States but not observed in this region until recently. *D. geminata* is the only freshwater diatom to exhibit large scale invasive behavior, able to dominate stream beds and low nutrient river systems, forming an impenetrable mat appearing as fiberglass insulation, "rock snot", brown shag carpet, or sheepskins which cover the stream bed. Although it is more common in the western US, it now appears to have a broad distribution in North America. It has been discovered in Ontario but has not yet spread to this area.

He stressed that there are many unknowns with this species; not sure why it spreads, or how it can thrive in low nutrient environments. Conclusion: prevention is best; the longer we can forestall new species, better off we will be.

Joel Johnson and Jim Sharrow commented that although they agree that ballast water is the most important problem in shipping industry today; the article distributed about the VHS virus (from the UK Independent and the New Zealand Herald were inaccurate because they drew the conclusion that the VHS virus was definitively caused by ballast

water; which is not scientifically proven, other modes of transmission (such as fish and eel migration) are possible.

#### 4. Great Lakes Observing System

Dr. Richard Stewart, Director of the Transportation and Logistics Research Center at UWS and Co-Director of the Great Lakes Maritime Research Institute, presented information about the Great Lakes Observing System or GLOS. The GLOS is the Great Lakes node of the US. Integrated Ocean Observing System, whose primary function is interagency sharing and dissemination of data about our coastal water resources. The IOOS and the GLOS collect and coordinate data from a large network of sources (buoys, ships, satellites, underwater vehicles). Dr. Stewart is on the GLOS Board of Directors, representing the Great Lakes.

He also warned about an “under the radar issue” of concern to the GLOS and other scientific entities. Budget reallocations and shifts in institutional priorities at NASA are threatening the continued operation of U.S. earth-observing satellites. Satellite imagery, GIS, meteorological and other global data gathered from space have been and will continue to be severely diminished if the current trend of funding cuts continues. He urged HTAC members to educate themselves on this trend and to weigh in with their congressional representatives about stabilizing NASA’s Earth Science budget as well as the funding for NOAA’s National Environmental Satellite Data and Information Service. More information can be found about this issue on the American Association for the Advancement of Science website at [www.aaas.org/news/releases/2007/0430eos.shtml](http://www.aaas.org/news/releases/2007/0430eos.shtml).

He closed with a report of current operations at the Great Lakes Maritime Research (GLMRI). A report of the first round of GLMRI-funded research projects (from May 2005-November 2006) is available online at [www.glmri.org](http://www.glmri.org). GLMRI, which currently has eleven total affiliated universities, has \$700,000 in funding available for research projects pertaining to Great Lakes shipping and commerce in 2007. The RFP went out in May and proposals were due earlier this week, on June 4, 2007. They anticipate having the award notifications out by mid-August. He added that he will soon be traveling to Finland, to explore the possibility of a cooperative venture to examine treatment systems addressing invasive species originating in the Baltics.

#### 5. Erie Pier Management Plan

MIC Principal Planner Andy McDonald, Gene Clark, Coastal Engineering Specialist at the Wisconsin Sea Grant program, presented the final version of the Erie Pier Management Plan. Andy explained that it lays the groundwork for transitioning Erie Pier from a confined disposal facility (CDF) to a processing and reuse facility (PRF). If successful, it would not only preserve Erie Pier for continuous use, but could also serve as a model for dredge material disposal throughout the Great Lakes.

Gene emphasized that both the purpose and the process of developing this plan is entirely consistent with new mandates and goals set forth by the National Dredging Policy. He noted that the process was truly collaborative, with all significant players at the table for a process that lasted nearly nine months, and thanked the advisory committee participants and agencies that cooperated in this effort.

Andy then reviewed the contents of the plan on a chapter-by-chapter basis, and stressed that it is intended as a management plan, not an operational plan, noting that some specific operational components would be developed after this overall plan was approved by the HTAC and the MIC. A critical aspect for the success of this plan involves the certification of materials to meet the specifications and regulations of both states; actual standards for each state (screening guidelines) are included in Table 2. Gene noted that specifications will vary from site to site and use to use:

Noxious weed management is another issue that must be addressed by testing protocol and best management procedures—another hurdle that must be addressed in order to implement the reuse function.

Finally, the marketing of the materials will be critical to the success of this plan. Several potential large-scale uses are identified (construction, landfill cover, habitat restoration and creation) Bottom line: there are many opportunities; but it will be important to educate potential users and vendors so they understand the materials are a clean, quality resource.

Andy noted two language changes that were requested by the MPCA and incorporated since the draft was released. Gary Glass suggested that another column be added to Table 2, so that all the biological criteria are spelled out. Gene's response was that there are actually no set guidelines about for some issues, such as an acceptable level of purple loosestrife seeds. Ted R. Smith noted that this was an example of how a specific operational plan would set forward these values.

Dave Warburton asked if the plan advisory committee had considered sediment quality targets in addition to soil reference values. Gene responded that it had not been considered because in-water placement was not considered as a possible reuse for the dredged materials. After further discussion, in which it was noted that this plan is intended as a general guideline so the Corps can move forward to changing the purpose of the CDF. If the plan was otherwise deemed generally acceptable to all parties, Andy suggested that if Dave would forward information about sediment quality targets, that the plan could be amended to include that information. He closed by requesting approval of the final plan.

***Motion by Joel Johnson with a second from Ted R. Smith to approve the Management Plan.*** During the discussion, Ted noted that we are taking a leadership role in this effort to convert the function; Pat Carey noted that this idea has been kicked around for ten years, but this management plan is needed as an important first step. ***Motion carried unanimously.***

## 6. Dredge Material Management Plan

MIC Principal Planner Andy McDonald and Gene Clark, Coastal Engineering Specialist at the Wisconsin Sea Grant program, presented information about the Corps' current but outdated (1998) DMMP in some detail. He explained that its intent is to provide a base cost for dredging, but the allowed methods for disposing of dredged materials (beach nourishment, deep hole fill, and placement in Erie Pier) are either not allowed by state laws, or are incompatible with the goals set forth in the Erie Pier Management Plan.

Another problem is that any other potential uses for the dredged materials, such as creating habitat or extending the alignment of the runway at Sky Harbor airport, are not addressed in the DMMP as it currently stands.

He added that the Corps is aware of these issues and has contacted the Port Authority and the City of Superior notifying them of the shortcomings of the current DMMP. Both the DSPA and the City plan to respond to the Corps by formally requesting a new (updated) DMMP. He added that the HTAC also requested that the MIC send a letter to the Corps making this request as well.

**Motion** made by Joel Johnson with a second from Ed Anderson for MIC staff to coordinate with City of Superior and the Port Authority to draft a letter to the Army Corps Detroit office on behalf of the HTAC and the MIC to encourage the Corps to update the DMMP for the Duluth-Superior harbor. There was no discussion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

## 7. Subcommittee Reports

### Dredging

Gene Clark thanked subcommittee members on their hard work and time spent on the Erie Pier Management Plan, adding that the DMMP will likely be a new task for the committee in the coming year. The subcommittee also plans to comment on the national dredging policy that was just released.

Duane Lahti thanked Gene for his significant leadership with this subcommittee and in moving these issues forward.

### Advocacy:

Ted Smith reported that he had attended the Great Lakes Maritime Task Force meeting. The Water Resources Development Act had passed in the House with last-minute additions favorable to the Great Lakes, including full federal funding for the Poe and Soo lock expansions. The Senate, however, pulled the language and sent the bill to conference. However in the recently-passed energy bill, \$21 million was added to fund Great Lakes navigation system in 2008—due to lobbying and industry efforts, a huge achievement to get something rolling, demonstrates the success of local advocacy efforts, some based in the HTAC.

## 8. Project Updates / Roundtable Discussion

**Lisa Neitzel** reported that dredging to begin at superfund site; possible minor water quality and air quality issues. Pilot dredging program was very successful, with no noise, air or water quality issues. Naphthalene emission levels acceptable. Community work group meetings being held regularly, more information available on website [www.slrdt.com](http://www.slrdt.com).

**Jason Serck** reported on recent lobbying effort against proposed Wisconsin ballast water legislation. The City of Superior and the Port Authority are very concerned that the bill requires ballast water purification technology that does not even exist.

At a recent public hearing on the proposed legislation, about 12 speakers showed up to oppose the bill the way it's written, did good job of educating legislators, gave the message, we know there's a problem, and here are current initiatives taking place such as Great Lakes Initiative. He added that it's rare that such a coalition as this showed up to comment, hopefully eye-opening to some legislators. On the positive side, Senator Jauch is very opposed to the bill. Comments from committee members that in general, state-by-state regulation is not a good approach to the problem, a consistent federal solution is what's needed. A draft bill from Sen. Inouye is kicking around DC; Oberstar and Obey also on board.

**Martin Forbes** reported that Harbor Assistance Program applications were recently sent out, due in August, not clear exactly how much money will be made available. Superior will be submitting two projects for several million dollars in improvements.

## 9. Adjourn

*No other items were brought forward for discussion and the meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.*

Respectfully Submitted,

*Rondi Watson*  
MIC Secretary