

TRVA News

Tennessee River Valley Association
Tennessee-Cumberland Waterways Council

Winter 2010 Newsletter

Inland Waterways Users Board Endorses Recommendations of the Inland Marine Transportation System Capital Investment Strategy Team (White Paper Working Group)

At their final meeting of 2009, the Inland Waterways Users Board (IWUB) on December 15th endorsed the recommendations of the Inland Marine Transportation System Capital Investment Strategy Team, commonly referred to as the "White Paper Working Group." The Team, a combination of Corps navigation, economics and engineering experts and Inland Waterway User Board members from industry, has been meeting regularly since the beginning of this year to draft a proposed 20-year Capital Development Plan for the Inland Waterways Navigation System which, if adopted into law, will prioritize projects across the entire system, improve the Corps' project management and processes to deliver projects on time and on budget, and to develop a funding mechanism that is affordable and meets the needs of the system.

The Team's plan calls for completion of the projects at Olmsted, Lower Mon, Chickamauga, Kentucky, and Inner Harbor within the 20-year plan. The Plan also includes new starts at Lock and Dam 25 in 2011, GIWW--High Island to Brazos River, Texas in 2013, Lagrange in 2017, Greenup in 2022, Lock and Dam 22 in 2022 and Lock and Dam 24 in 2024.

The recommendations also included numerous changes to the Corps' management and processes of delivering projects designed to result in significant efficiencies including, but not limited to: risk based cost estimates, independent external peer reviews, project management certification for Corps project managers, early contractor involvement during the design phase, IWUB concurrence on new starts, IWUB status briefings, adopting applicable concepts from the Corps' Military Construction program, developing design centers of expertise, standardizing designs, and re-examining the use of the continuing contracts clause. The team believes these changes will result in projects being completed on time and on budget and reduce O & M expenditures. The Corps/Industry Team noted that a premise upon which these predictions are based is that Congress will provide funding to each project as needed to ensure on time and cost efficient construction.

The Team recommended revisions to the current cost sharing policy for the Inland Waterways Trust Fund. Under the proposal, new construction of Locks remains at 50% Federal / 50% IWTF cost share. Major Rehabs of Locks above \$100 million remain at 50% Federal / 50% IWTF cost share and Major Rehabs under \$100 million would be 100% Federal cost. All Dam work would be 100%

TRVA News

Federal cost and a cost-sharing cap would be implemented so that any projects that exceed the cap would thereafter be at 100% Federal cost. The Team also recommended that the fuel tax remain as the funding mechanism for the IWTF and that the fuel tax be increased between 30% and 45% (or 6 to 9 cents) as needed to generate \$110 million per year as industry's share into the trust fund.

Again, the IWUB endorsed these recommendations and urged the Working Group to complete their final report based on the recommendations as presented on December 15th. The final report should be presented to the IWUB at their next meeting in the Spring of 2010.

These recommendations will likely be included in the Water Resource Development Act of 2010 (WRDA). If adopted and implemented, this legislation will be of tremendous benefit to the Tennessee River's cost-shared Kentucky Lock Addition and Chickamauga Lock Replacement Projects that are currently threatened with decade long suspensions.

On January 12th, the Board of Director of the Waterways Council Inc. voted unanimously to endorse the recommendations of the industry-U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Inland Marine Transportation System Capitol Investment Strategy Team for a 20-year Capitol Development Plan. The National Waterway Conference and other related organizations are currently developing positions and are expected to also release similar endorsements of the plan in the near future.

High-water Mark

By: Dave Flessner

From Chattanooga Free Press January 5, 2010

After three years of drought, the Tennessee Valley is as flush with water as it has ever been at this time of the year.

Even after 70 days of spilling water through its dams to reduce the level of reservoirs, TVA still began the New Year with more water stored in reservoirs above Chattanooga than at the end of any previous year since TVA erected its network of dams in the 1930s and 1940s.

In the Tennessee River, an extra 45 billion gallons of water is flowing through Chattanooga every day above the minimum flow requirement — or as much water every day as what Atlanta uses from its main reservoir, Lake Lanier, in six months.

The extra flow has raised river levels, stalled some barges and reignited interest among some Georgians interested in tapping into the Tennessee River to help supply future water needs.

“We’ve got lots of water we’re trying to move through our system,” said Chuck Bach, general manager for river scheduling for the Tennessee Valley Authority, which operates a network of 49 dams for flood control in the region. “We try to bring our reservoirs down to their lowest levels ... by the first of January, but that has been a challenge this year because of all of the extra rain we have received.”

TRVA News

In 2009, nearly 62.59 inches of rain fell on Chattanooga, or 8.07 inches more than normal, according to the National Weather Service. Last year's precipitation total was up by more than 15 inches from the previous year, making 2009 the wettest in Chattanooga since 2003 and the 17th wettest in the 160 years for which comparable data is available.

TVA is spilling water this week through all of its Tennessee River dams except its Wilson and Wheeler Dams, although the flow rate has been reduced from last week. As a result, barge operators who had to halt some shipments are again plying the Tennessee River.

Barge operations are suspended when the flow of the river exceeds 90,000 cubic feet per second through the Tennessee River Gorge, where the river narrows. With such flows, the river current becomes too strong to safely navigate, according to river regulators and operators.

"There have been some delays because of the river flow in recent weeks, but there's been a good working relationship between TVA, the (Army) Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Coast Guard, along with industry, to keep the river in use as much as possible and to avoid any incidents of collisions or injuries," said Cline Jones, executive director for the Tennessee River Valley Association in Decatur, Ala.

More than 50 million tons of cargo is shipped by barge every year along the Tennessee River. But the high water did require some barges to temporarily park in and around the Chattanooga area during this event, Mr. Jones said.

Interstate Battle

That "extra" water could be used in Georgia, according to the leaders on one of the water councils created in Georgia to study that state's water supply problems, which were aggravated by the drought in recent years.

"It's a shame you can't capture the excess water during these times of heavy rains and reserve it for hard times next August or whenever there may next be a shortage of water," said John Bennett, city manager in Rome, Ga., and chairman of the 25-county Coosa/Northwest Georgia Water Planning Council.

"I think eventually there will be some additional reservoirs built in North Georgia," he said. "Certainly in other parts of the country, water is moved a lot further than what we are talking about moving water from the Tennessee River into North Georgia." Tennessee legislators have balked at giving up water from the Tennessee River.

Rep. Mike Bell, R-Riceville, said there is a reason the river carries the name "Tennessee." Rep. Bell said recently that giving away its water is "not negotiable."

But Walker County Coordinator David Ashburn, vice chairman of the Northwest Georgia Water Council, said runoff from at least a half dozen Georgia counties flows into the Tennessee River and the river needs to be considered a part of the solution to the South's water problems.

"When you hear people say to Georgia, 'Leave our water alone,' they need to remember

TRVA News

that Georgia already supplies much of what is in that river to start with,” Mr. Ashburn said. “You can take water out of the Tennessee and in no way affect the flow and uses of that river.”

Hydro Generation

With all the water spilling through its dams, TVA is generating its cheapest power using its 29 hydroelectric dams around the clock, boosting hydro generation above normal for the first time in more than three years.

TVA is losing some of the potential hydro capacity because it lacks enough hydro units to capture all of the water moving through its dams, officials said.

Mr. Bach said TVA has looked at adding more generation capacity in the past and determined that it would cost too much for the limited times when such additional production could be tapped.

“This type of situation is far more the exception than the rule,” he said. “We have looked at that, but it didn’t make sense.”

Mr. Bach, who has headed river operations for three years, opened most of the floodgates in the river this fall for the first time.

“It’s fun now to be able to go out and talk with people about having water we have to deal with rather than just talking about the drought all the time,” he said. “We weren’t very popular during the drought.”

BY THE NUMBERS

* 62.59 inches: Total rainfall in Chattanooga in 2009, or 8.07 inches above normal

* 55.95 inches: Total rainfall in the Tennessee River watershed above Chattanooga, or 12 percent above normal

* 47.33 inches: Total rainfall in Chattanooga in 2008, or 6.86 inches below normal

* 73.3 inches: Total rainfall in the wettest year in Chattanooga in 1994.

* 65.77 inches: Total rainfall in 2003, the last year with comparable rainfall to that in 2009

Sources: National Weather Service, Tennessee Valley Authority



TRVA Prepares Resolutions in Support of Continued Construction Through Completion of the Chickamauga Lock Replacement Project

TRVA has prepared a resolution in support of the continued construction through completion of the Chickamauga Lock Replacement Project on the Tennessee River. In January the Coalition of Alabama Waterways Associations and the Association of Tennessee Valley Governments adopted the resolution offered by TRVA. TRVA encourages adoption by organizations throughout the region of similar resolutions that will support legislation to continue this critical infrastructure project.

The actual resolutions as adopted by the Coalition of Alabama Waterway Associations and the Association of Tennessee Valley Governments are available for viewing and download on the TRVA-TCWC website under the News tab.

The Tennessee River Valley Association is prepared to assist other associations and organizations in the preparation of similar resolutions in support of this project that is critical to the Tennessee River System.

The recommendations endorsed by the Inland Waterway Users Board if adopted will offer the needed funding for both the Chickamauga Lock Replacement and the Kentucky Lock Addition. Without legislation that provides a resolution to the insolvency of the Inland Waterways Trust Fund, these two vital construction projects on the Tennessee River will be suspended for at least a decade under the current funding method.

Groundbreaking Set for Kentucky Lock Addition's Next Phase

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Nashville District has awarded a \$40,721,812 contract for the construction of the upstream nine concrete monoliths of the new 1,200-foot lock on the Tennessee River.

The Contractor is Thalle Construction Company Inc. of Hillsborough, N.C.

The contract was awarded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and includes the base contract and the first two of ten options, which will permit construction of all nine upstream concrete monoliths and complete the most upstream monoliths to the 100-foot height.

Work on the two-year contract should begin in early March. A Ground Breaking Ceremony is scheduled for Friday March 5, 2010 at 1:00PM at the Livingston County Kentucky construction site.

If additional funding becomes available, up to eight options will be exercised on the contract to complete the remaining eight monoliths to full height, for a 1,200-foot lock, bringing the full value of Thalle's contract to \$56.95 million.

"This contract is the seventh major construction contract to be awarded on the \$714 million Kentucky Lock Project," said Don Getty, Project Manager. "Two more are planned to complete the project in 2016, contingent on efficient funding in fiscal year 2012 and beyond."

Mobile Turning Basin Construction to Benefit Environment

From Seaport Magazine November 2009

Engineers are putting together a jigsaw puzzle as they dredge a new turning basin in the Port of Mobile. The material coming up from the riverbed is being put to work in three different sites to help the environment and advance the construction of a new intermodal port.

"The top 27 feet, about 1.3 million cubic yards, will go to our open-ocean disposal site," said Patrick Robbins, chief of legislative and public affairs for the Mobile District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

This open-ocean disposal site has become a fish nursery on the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico. Susan Rees, program manager for the Corps' Mississippi Coastal Improvement Program, explains how this is helpful to the fishery. "The bottom of the Gulf off the coast of Alabama is flat and monotonous," Rees said. When you put structures in the water, it's good for the fishery." The area, about three miles south of Dauphin Island on the west side of the ship channel, is marked so fishermen can find it.

Once the new turning basin's top layer is removed, a second layer of material will be removed and used to help restore sands to barrier islands located along Alabama and Mississippi coastlines. More than 500,000 cubic yards of sandy material found in the middle layer will be deposited off Sand Island. Once in place, the sands will enter the natural tidal system to replenish and strengthen the barrier island system.

Rees says the Mobile Bay tidal delta will do most of the work in this nourishment project. "Not every estuarine area has an ebb tidal area. This is where ebb currents are stronger than flood currents. Mobile's ebb tidal delta is one of the largest in the world, extending six miles into the Gulf," explained Rees. She says the dredged sand will be disposed in a shallow area off Sand Island, allowing the currents to carry it to Dauphin Island and eventually, to the rest of the Mississippi island system.

The final layer of sandy material dredged will be used to fill the Port Authority's future rail yard at Choctaw Point. The Intermodal Container Terminal Facility (ICTF) will expand market reach and reduce truck traffic associated with Mobile Container Terminal. "Rail intermodal is a crucial step in modernizing and reducing the carbon footprint of the 10th largest port in the country," said James K. Lyons, director and CEO for the Port Authority. The intermodal rail yard will allow inbound and outbound containers to move by rail rather than by truck.

The Port Authority's director of environmental and program management, Bob Harris, says the plan to reuse material dredges from the new turning basin is beneficial for another key reason. "It's estimated that we will dispose of 850,000 cubic yards at the ICTF, negating the need to dispose the material into long-term storage at land based dredge disposal areas," said Harris. "Currently, material dredged to keep the harbor open is deposited in a permitted disposal area with finite capacity. Yet, there is ongoing need to dredge our harbor and ship channels due to sediments that flow downstream from our river systems. If we can find functional, environmentally sound uses for any dredge material, it alleviates some of the capacity pressures in the long-term storage areas."

Another benefit the turning basin material provides to the intermodal yard centers on its use to elevate the rail intermodal yard above the 100-year flood elevation. Typically, coastal areas are subject to hurricane or tropical storm surge and coastal flooding. When such happens, communities rely on federal funds to help offset costs from storm damage. "By raising the intermodal yard's base elevation, we reduce the flood risk and ultimately eliminate any potential cost to the taxpayers under the federal flood insurance program," Harris said.

“Had we not been able to reuse this material, the alternative would have been to load the dredge material into barges and take it offshore. It’s a long trip to the federal offshore disposal area, several hours there and back. That too would have substantially contributed to the Corps’ and the Port Authority’s costs,” Said Harris.

The Alabama State Port Authority is the local sponsor for the project, which represents 25 percent of the turning basin construction and first year maintenance cost. The balance is funded through the Corps’ allocation under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act. The turning basin will measure 1,175 by 715 feet and is between Pinto and Little Sand Island. Robbins says the work started in September and is on schedule to be completed within one year.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Closure Schedule for 2010 and Proposed 2011

During his presentation to the TRVA Annual Meeting, the Chief of the Nashville District’s Navigation Branch, Jeff Ross updated TRVA and guests on maintenance plans for the Tennessee and Cumberland River Systems locks in 2010-2011. The current schedule follows:

Calendar Year 2010

Fort Loudoun Lock is scheduled for closure to navigation traffic from

6:00AM on 20 April 2010, through 6:PM on 11 May 2010.

Melton Hill Lock is scheduled for closure to navigation traffic from

6:00AM on 8 June 2010, through 6:00PM on 29 June 2010.

Chickamauga Lock is schedule for closure to navigation traffic from

6:00AM on 20 July 2010, through 6:00PM on 16 August 2010.

Watts Bar Lock is scheduled for closure to navigation traffic from

6:00AM on 12 October 2010, through 6:00PM on 2 November 2010.

Calendar Year 2011 (Proposed Dates)

Chickamauga Lock 19 April through 10 May

Wheeler Auxiliary 7 June through 28 June

Wilson Auxiliary 26 July through 23 August

TRVA News

Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Transportation Museum to Open

The Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Development Authority and the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Development Council recently named representatives to serve on the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Transportation Museum Board of Directors.

T. L. Phillips of Columbus, Miss., and Martha Segars of Iuka, Miss., will each serve a two-year term representing the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Authority. Phillips currently serves as chairman of the museum board of directors.

Donald G. Waldon, former Tenn-Tom administrator of Fayette, Ala., and Milton Sundbeck of Southern Ionics in West Point, Miss., will represent the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Development Council.

The Mississippi Department of Transportation recently awarded a grant to the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Development Authority to establish a museum at its Columbus headquarters. The goal of the museum board is to raise \$1 million between grants and contributions to complete the museum.

The museum will highlight the uniqueness of the waterway featuring its lock and dam system, and eventually provide information about the region's rail and highway transportation. Artifacts from the Smithsonian Institute as well as state and federal archives will be incorporated into museum showcases. Exhibits will be periodically updated to provide new information.

Mobile District News

Colonel Byron Jorns, Commander of the Mobile District, has been named Executive Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) Jo-Ellen Darcy. Colonel Jorns, who has also served as the Commander of the Nashville District is scheduled to assume his new post at ASA on June 1, 2010. Congratulations Colonel Jorns!

Upcoming Events

February 23-25
Ohio River Basin Conference
Hyatt on Capitol Square Columbus, OH

February 25-26
Coosa-Alabama River Improvement Association Annual Meeting,
Renaissance Hotel Mobile, AL

March 2-4
USCG, USACE Inland Waterways Navigational Conference, St
Louis, MO

April 14-16
Inland Rivers Ports & Terminals
Battle House Hotel, Mobile, AL

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