

# Waterways Hold Solution to Congestion, Economic Challenges

By Peter Stephaich, Chairman, National Waterways Foundation

This month, as President-elect Obama is sworn in as the nation's 44th President, his Administration and those in Congress will begin the unenviable job of seeking solutions to current economic hardships.

While many have proposed injecting funds into banks, loan structures, the automobile industry and the housing market, one area that holds real promise in helping to bring economic recovery is our nation's transportation network. There are a number of large lock and dam construction projects on our inland rivers that are have suffered over the years from extensive delays due to lack of funding. These contracts have been fully vetted by the US Army Corps of Engineers and are already in place, which will permit economic stimulus funds to have the short-term desired economic effect.

The National Waterways Foundation, whose mission is to develop intellectual and factual arguments for an efficient, well-funded and secure inland waterways system, has released a new study comparing selected societal, environmental, and the safety impacts of utilizing inland river barge transportation to highway and rail transportation. Titled "A Modal Comparison of Freight Transportation Effects on the General Public," the study was conducted by the Texas Transportation Institute's Center for Port and Waterways at Texas A&M University and was cost-shared with the U.S. Maritime Administration (MarAd).

Peer reviewed and conducted over more than one year, the study does a number of important things. It:

- compares the cargo capacity of trucks, trains and inland river barges and notes that one common 15-barge river tow has the same capacity as 1,050 trucks and 216 rail cars pulled by six locomotives.
- is the safest mode, determining that, after adjusting for the differences in quantity of cargo moved by each mode, for each member of the public injured in a barge accident, 125.2 are injured in rail accidents and 2,171.5 are injured in truck accidents. For fatalities, the rates are 155 trucking fatalities and 22.7 rail fatalities for every barge related fatality.



In addition to serving as Chairman of the National Waterways Foundation, Peter H. Stephaich is currently Chairman, CEO and President of Blue Danube Incorporated based in Pittsburgh, PA. He joined the company in April 1995. Mr. Stephaich is also on the Board of Directors of Blue Danube, a position that he has held since 1982.

Mr. Stephaich also is on the Board and Executive Committee of the American Waterways Operators, serves on the Board and Executive Committee of Waterways Council, Inc., and is a Commissioner and Vice Chairman of the Port of Pittsburgh. He is also Chairman of the Allegheny Institute for Public Policy and a Trustee of the Landmarks Financial Corporation.

- looks at the environmental impacts of the three modes and concludes that inland waterways transport generates fewer emissions of particulate matter, hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide and nitrous oxide than rail or truck on a per ton mile moved basis, and,
- illustrates the effects of a hypothetical river closure on the St. Louis metropolitan area; i.e., if all area river cargo was diverted to trucks on the St. Louis interstates, traffic delays would increase by 500%, accidents and fatalities would rise by 36-45% and maintenance costs would skyrocket.

And while we are truly an intermodal society, this study's comparison of rail, truck and inland waterways transport modes offers an important new perspective on the real benefits of moving cargo by water. The study underscores the real value of inland system for moving our nation's "building block" commodities more efficiently, more cost-effectively, and in a more environmentally friendly way.

Every year roughly 624 million tons of waterborne cargos transit the inland waterways, volume equal to about 14% of all intercity freight and valued at nearly \$70 billion. Keeping our nation's goods moving domestically and for export strengthens our U.S. economy and preserves family-wage jobs for Americans.

And as our new leaders address the issue of fuel costs, consumption and dependence, the most energy-efficient way to move these goods is by barge. Barges can move

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## Women's Propeller Club Salutes Crew of the Golden Bear

During the Convention, members of The Women's Propeller Club of The United States learned that The California Maritime Academy's training vessel, the Golden Bear, had rescued two stranded California fishermen approximately 80 miles off the Monterey Peninsula. The Golden Bear was on the final leg of her annual three-and-a-half monthly summer training session, in August, 2008.

The two men were in a fishing vessel which was a 17 foot skiff equipped with a single outboard engine, which seized up while they headed towards off-shore fishing grounds. They radioed the Coast Guard in San Francisco for help. The Commander of the vessel, Captain Paul Leyda, advised the Coast Guard that the Golden Bear was about 50 miles from the stranded vessel, and would proceed to the reported location of the boat.

Once they located the skiff, the Golden Bear launched its rescue boat, skippered by Chief Mate Bill Schmid, officer Mikaela Downs and cadets Hanna Reeves and Sam Thompson. The two fishermen were transferred to the rescue boat and the disabled skiff was towed to the Golden Bear and lifted aboard with a fantail crane. Golden Bear resumed its homeward course and arrived in San Francisco the following morning where the fishermen disembarked after arrival.

For the crew and students on the Golden Bear, the opportunity to participate in a real life rescue vividly highlighted the importance of the training they have received both at the Academy and during the summer training cruises.

The Women's Propeller Club of the United States has for many years presented the Mary Patten Valiant Ship Award to a vessel and her crew who have engaged in courageous action and extraordinary seamanship in providing aid to distressed vessels and seafarers. The criteria for the Award, however, requires that the rescuing vessel's actions placed her and her crew in jeopardy, which was not the case with the Golden Bear. The members of the WPC, none the less, agreed that they would recognize the actions of the training vessel and crew, and issued a special Mary Patten Valiant Ship Citation to the ship and crew. ■

## Waterways Hold Solution

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one ton of cargo 576 miles per (one) gallon of fuel. That compares to railcars that can move the same ton of cargo only 413 miles and trucks only 155 miles. The Foundation study interestingly notes that one loaded covered hopper barge can carry 58,333 bushels of wheat - enough to make nearly 2.5 million loaves of bread. And one loaded liquid tank barge carries 27,500 barrels of gasoline, enough to keep about 2,500 automobiles running for an entire year! Transporting freight by water is simply the most energy-efficient choice.

Safety and environmental stewardship are critically important to our nation. Inland waterways transport

has a low injury and fatality record compared to rail or truck, just 1 injury by barge transport compared to 125.2 for rail and 2,171.5 for truck. And while all modes work hard to prevent accidents and spills, overall spill rates are low when comparing barge to truck and rail: rate of spills in gallons more than 1,000 gallons per million ton-miles is 3.60 for barge vs. 3.86 for rail vs. 6.06 for truck.

Our waterways - what we sometimes call inland marine highways for freight - provide great capacity to ease increasing highway congestion by carrying cargo that would otherwise travel by truck or railway. The annual traffic on America's inland

navigation system, which includes the Gulf Intracoastal Waterways in the South and the Ohio, Mississippi in the Mid-West, and Columbia-Snake River in the West, carries the equivalent of 58 million trucks trips each year. And the waterways offer excess capacity for carrying freight; our nation cannot afford nor can we physically create more lanes on our interstates or more tracks for our railroads!

Funding our nation's inland waterways system is a sound investment in the future of our nation.

To see the full report "A Modal Comparison of Freight Transportation Effects on the General Public," visit [www.nationalwaterwaysfoundation.org](http://www.nationalwaterwaysfoundation.org)