

**Governor Jeff Landry's
Louisiana Ports/ Waterways & Investment Commission
Working Groups and Task Forces**

**Task Force on Navigation and Safety
RECOMMENDATIONS March 10, 2025**

- 1) Request assistance from state representatives to ask the Louisiana Congressional Delegation support the funding request to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for \$15 Million from the Fiscal Year 2025 Work Plan. The challenge to industry's interpretation of the Water Resources Development Act of 2020 Section 106 has been removed and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers requested a Letter of Intent (LOI) from the Big River Coalition and the Louisiana Department of Transportation & Development to request funding of \$15 Million through the Continuing Authorities Program (CAP). The Big River Coalition is concerned the CAP program is unlikely to be funded based on red flags the USACE shared and made the request for the Work Plan funding in the same amount, to remove obstacles and maintain the momentum and request the funding to dredge a critical portion of the Pilottown Anchorage. The USACE directly requested the enclosed LOI due the Congressional legal clarification on the authority to dredge granted by the Water Resources Development Act of 2020 Section 106: "This section authorizes the Corps to maintain anchorages of the U.S. Coast Guard." Anchorages need to be protected, surveyed, lengthened and dredged to accommodate vessels calling the Mississippi River, vessels of 1,200 feet or more call on approximately 300 terminals. Dredging of the Pilottown Anchorage is critical for navigational safety. According to a document provided by the CPRA, titled AVAILABLE SEDIMENT BY BORROW SOURCE released with the 2023 DRAFT COASTAL MASTER PLAN there are over 133 million cubic yards of sediment in the Pilottown Anchorage much of this sediment is linked to the West Bay Sediment Diversion. The next largest borrow sources have less than 35 million cubic yards of sediment in them. The referenced document is enclosed but is also available at the following link:
https://coastal.la.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/F1.5_2023AvailSedBorrowSrce_Jan2023.pdf
- 2) To support the requests detailed in the full report in the section provided by the Louisiana Association of Waterway Operators and Shipyards (LAWS) on replacing the Black Bayou and Grand Lake Bridges with fixed span bridges.
- 3) The USCG Aids to Navigation (ATON) situation is one that continues to put navigation at risk and the Task Force requests the support of the state delegation to help secure additional funding dedicated to ATON repair, maintenance and replacement (only). The USCG needs a comprehensive funding mechanism specifically to manage ATON maintenance and promote navigational safety. The present funding mechanism is inadequate and multiple ATONs have been offline for years, such as the Front Entrance Range to Southwest Pass. This range should be a top priority based on the number of vessels that call the Mississippi River and the huge economic value generated by maritime commerce. The USCG has been unable to respond since the east range was wiped out by Hurricane Ida in 2021. Due to critical shortages in the USCG budget funds for ATON replacement should be included in Supplemental Appropriations requests following declared national disasters.
- 4) Recommend that all bridges that cross waterways have visible Messaging Signage Boards to indicate if a bridge is out. An emergency alert system for motorists, in the M/V DALI allision with the Francis Scott Key Bridge lives were saved because the bridge was closed to oncoming traffic quickly. This was only possible because there was work going on the bridge and the police vehicles were on scene. The condition of the present fendering systems on the seven bridges that cross the Mississippi River Ship Channel are a concern and it is recommended that LDOTD work to complete repairs and to fortify the existing fendering systems as best as possible. Industry members realize that the fendering systems are victims of occasional strikes especially with shallow-draft traffic.

- 5) Request that the CPRA promote coastal restoration projects that are beneficial to the needs of the navigation industry. e.g., a beneficial use of dredge material project that would remove sediment from the Pilottown Anchorage. The CPRA has made it a priority to re-establish a Mississippi River Navigation Focus Group, to allow industry input and to vet for navigational impacts, focusing on restoration that increases navigational safety. The Focus group should be convened to allow review prior to all CPRA projects that will impact the Mississippi River Ship Channel for project awareness and to develop proper transit restrictions. This level of attention is routine when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is performing channel maintenance operations.
- 6) The Task Force proposes a repeat of federal funding strategies to expand the LMR PORTS[®] suite of sensors in FY 2026 via Congressionally Directed Spending Appropriations. The Task Force continues to develop a prioritized list for new sensor technologies, with sensor adaptation strategies being developed via direct discussions with NOAA. The Task Force members will continue to work on adjustments to the LMR PORTS[®] system one recommendation outstanding is to incorporate a general statement on the height of alternate bridge spans, e.g., alternate span height is 7 feet less than main span air gap sensor reading.
- 7) There are three major crevasses on the eastern side of the Ship Channel between Belle Chasse and the Head of Passes: Mardi Gras Pass, Neptune Pass and Fort St. Phillip. The crevasses should all be closed to protect the Ship Channel, the loss of flow increases sedimentation in the channel and by reducing the flow in the river channel increases the ability of saltwater to migrate upriver. The eastern side below Bohemia is not protected by manmade levees and is the low point or ground zero for coastal restoration, failure to protect the eastern side threatens maritime commerce and freshwater drinking supply for New Orleans and downriver communities. Scientists and researchers at Tulane University's River-Coastal Science and Engineering have performed "Preliminary Modeling" that indicates closing off the three crevasses would repel saltwater during low river stages which matches the focused hydrology benefits of keeping the flow in the mainline river channel that was utilized by James Buchannan Eads to deepen South Pass for maritime commerce.

The following quote is added based upon timing of a new article released by the Mississippi River Commission titled *Dredging Up the Pass: Eads vs Humphreys and the Riddle of the Passes*:

"The engineering principle behind these projects was simple: use the natural energy of the river to clear and deepen the channel. Eads believed he could apply this same principle to the problem of the Head of Passes."

The task force submits this report to promote efficiency and growth in Louisiana's waterway and ports system resulting in greater economic development for the benefit of the State.