

# Waterways

A publication of the Upper Mississippi Waterway Association  
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TSA says demand greater than anticipated, so...

## TWIC deadline moved into 2009

April 15, 2009, will have a double whammy for waterway industry workers, now that the Department of Homeland Security has reset the deadline for applications for the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC). Until recently, the deadline had been Sept. 25, 2008.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) says the demand for credentials appears to be at least double the original estimate. The Coast Guard said in January of this year that it estimated as many as 1.5 million workers would need the credential.

TSA has opened nearly 100 enrollment centers around the country, but says that enrollment has been slow. In fact, as of April 30, about 260,000

applications had been processed.

The extension came after pressure from members of Congress who had heard from workers who complained that in addition to the cost, delays at some enrollment centers meant more than one day's pay was lost.

Ports in New England, including Boston, will require a TWIC card for admittance to secure areas beginning Oct. 15, 2008.

### Corps on boating safety

For the first time in several years Minnesota

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(Left) The timing was (*probably*) coincidental, but Holkon Miller and Upper River Services demonstrated some precise piloting and placement for the Executive Committee at its April meeting at the St. Paul Pool and Yacht Club.

With Miller at the controls, the club's dock was literally inched into place and secured while other UMWA members did some sidewalk superintending from the shore and the windows of the meeting room.

## **From the Executive Director**

The University of Minnesota's Center for Transportation Studies is hosting a May research conference to discuss a national strategy to reduce congestion on America's transportation system. Unfortunately, the agenda says nothing about waterways.

While some agenda items cover fringe issues such as the privacy of information and cell phone traffic data, the majority of other issues specifically apply to freight and mass transit: project scheduling, construction, alternative funding, railroads, airlines, trucks and even alternative life styles. However, no reference is made to towboats or barges.

### **Say something**

In a perfect world, a first-class land-grant university in a state that hosts the headwaters of fifth longest river in the world would say something, anything, about the Mississippi River. It could say that the barge industry pollutes, is inefficient or harms the environment – the industry can effectively defend itself against such charges. But to say nothing about what is arguably the most efficient and ecologically-friendly mode of freight transportation that unquestionably reduces highway and railroad congestion leads you to suspect it was an oversight on the part of conference planners, or that some other thought process is at work. We think it is some of both.

The conference title "National Strategy to Reduce Congestion on America's Transportation Network" implies that all transportation options will be discussed. Perhaps they will be although you cannot tell that from the brochure. The luncheon discussion on lowering carbon footprints may give invited speakers from Stanford University an opportunity to compare exhaust emissions from rail, truck and towboats and reflect on how towboats generate considerably less air-fouling emissions than rail or truck options. And how towboats are 3.7 times more fuel efficient than trucks and 1.3 times more fuel efficient than railroads. We think they should.

Other presenters may discuss publications such as the November 2007 report prepared by the Houston-based Center for Ports and Waterways,

Texas Transportation Institute. This paper reexamined many of the same modal shift issues covered by MnDOT in the early 1990s and later by MARAD, but with one significant difference: the Texas A&M report focuses on modal diversion consequences in the event of a major waterway closure – an ever-increasing possibility.

Likewise, the Wednesday morning session on transportation performances in the Twin Cities region may include a discussion on comparative freight capacities showing that one barge carries the equivalent of 16 rail cars or 70 trucks and how that impacts fuel use, emissions, air quality, traffic congestion and wear and tear on streets and highways. Some in the audience will already know this, others may not. Nevertheless, confirmation from the podium would be in keeping with this group's quality standards.

### **Letter to CTS**

In a recent letter to CTS, UMWA expressed its disappointment in the lack of waterway inclusion and offered to participate in future conferences. Hopefully, our offer will be accepted.

However, the waterway agenda quite possibly plays a part in CTS' non-reference to the towing industry.

As excellent advocates for inland waterway interests, national and regional organizations continue to pursue issue-defining arguments and funding to expand capacity and reduce congestion on the nation's inland waterways. It is largely through these efforts that we have the 2007 WRDA, in spite of a Presidential veto.

An excellent example of upper river regional support for WRDA and NESP is the combined efforts of Audubon, Upper Mississippi River Basin Association, Wisconsin DNR, The Nature Conservancy, American Land Conservancy, labor unions, River Resource Alliance and UMWA.

This group of diverse interests made numerous visits to congressional delegations of Upper Mississippi River states jointly supporting WRDA legislation as a means to advance the economic and environmental health and sustainability of the upper river. Yet, in spite of

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sincere efforts by past and present center-stage, highly motivated waterway interests, something continues to impede the construction of necessary projects.

In our view, that obstructive “something” can be found in the fact that politicians understand that constituents have rival agendas. In addition they want to be in office again next term to advance their own interests. It’s as uncomplicated as that.

No group, no matter how dedicated, expert or skilled can expect other kindred groups to always share their issues or goals.

Potential supporters, including elected officials, faced with limited financial and political resources, will save those scarce resources to themselves survive another day to advance personal and public agendas.

And if your issues are contentious, as some waterway issues are, silence from potential supporters is all the more understandable. While expected, silence also reinforces the determination of the waterway industry to find common ground and allies to make affordable economic and environmental sustainability on the Upper Mississippi River a reality.

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issued a governor’s proclamation declaring a “Safe Boating Week.” Signed in a private ceremony at the State Capitol, the proclamation noted the importance of boating to Minnesota and commended those organizations working to make recreational boating safer.

In its recent advisory on boating safety around locks and dams, the St. Paul District of the Corps of Engineers had some very specific recommendations. Among other things the Corps counseled boaters to approach dams carefully and to be mindful of restricted areas marked by danger signs.

The advisory says, “The surface of the water near a lock and dam may appear calm; but strong and deceptive currents lie beneath the surface.

The currents are powerful enough to drag a boat and its occupants to the bottom. The currents downstream from the dam are particularly deceptive because they actually reverse direction and flow back toward the dam.”

**More than 60 in Iraq**

On another topic, the Corps of Engineers newsletter recently reminded readers of the number of District employees who are now serving in Iraq. For some of them, it’s a second tour. To read the list find the April newsletter at <http://www.mvp.usace.army.mil/>

**Idea still alive**

As Terry Schwalbe told Executive Committee members in April, the idea of a River Basin Commission to cover all of the Minnesota River is still alive, but essentially tabled till next year. House File 4232 received its first reading on May 7, and was referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. Bill language says the, “purposes of the Minnesota River Basin Commission are to provide the following for the Minnesota River Basin: (1) protect, preserve, and use natural surface and groundwater storage and retention systems; (2) maximize benefits of public capital expenditures needed to correct flooding and water quality problems; (3) identify and plan for means to effectively protect and improve surface and groundwater quality; (4) establish more uniform policies, goals, and objectives for surface water and groundwater management; (5) prevent erosion of soil and associated pollutants into surface water systems; (6) promote groundwater recharge; (7) protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat; (8) secure other benefits associated with the sustainable use and management of surface water and groundwater resources; (9) promote coordination and cooperation among basin water management organizations; (10) work with other public agencies and citizen volunteers collecting scientific data used to identify and restore impaired waters; and (11) facilitate resolution of water resources conflicts.”