



**The U.S. Marine Transportation System in the National Ocean Policy:
Response of the Committee on the Marine Transportation System**

July 13, 2011

“The ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes provide jobs, food, energy resources, ecological services, recreation, and tourism opportunities, and play critical roles in our Nation’s transportation, economy, and trade, as well as the global mobility of our Armed Forces and the maintenance of international peace and security.”

(Executive Order No. 13547, Stewardship of the Ocean, Our Coasts, and the Great Lakes)

The U.S. Committee on the Marine Transportation System (CMTS) participated in developing the Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force (IOPTF), dated July 19, 2010, and through its member agencies has engaged actively in the strategic action plan writing teams for the nine policy objectives within the Ocean Policy Task Force report. It is the CMTS position that:

- The U.S. Marine Transportation System (MTS) is an integral and critical component to the National Ocean Policy and its implementation; and,
- The CMTS provides coordinated expertise and effective partnerships and networks of agencies with MTS responsibilities; it should be utilized by the National Ocean Council to successfully advance National Ocean Policy implementation across the full range of priority objectives.

The U.S. Marine Transportation System in the National Ocean Policy:

Shipping and other methods of marine transportation have been a traditional ocean use for hundreds of years. The world’s oceans and coastal waters are the highways of choice for the global movement of international trade.

As acknowledged in Executive Order No. 13547, transportation, trade, and security play critical roles in the use of our oceans, coasts and Great Lakes resources. The MTS carries 44.5 percent

by value and 78 percent by weight of all U.S. international trade.¹ The marine transportation system, directly or indirectly, supports an estimated 13 million jobs.²

The vision of the CMTS is to ensure that the U.S. MTS is a safe, secure, and globally integrated network that, in harmony with the environment, ensures a free-flowing, seamless, and reliable movement of people and commerce along its waterways, sea lanes, and intermodal connections. This vision for the MTS is complementary to the National Ocean Policy.

The MTS is one of the most prominent, visible and important human uses of our ocean and coastal waters, providing jobs and economic security. The MTS enables critical response to coastal disasters from accidents to natural hazards. Environmental stewardship is integral to the operation of the MTS, with Federal agencies, ports and other MTS stakeholders continuously working to prevent and correct adverse impacts on the coastal and marine environment. There is a fundamental interdependency between improving marine transportation safety and efficiency, and reducing the probability of impacts to the ocean and coastal environment. For these reasons any conversation about National Ocean Policy must consider the important relationships, stakeholders, and potential partners and champions that exist in the MTS.

The MTS includes:

- 25,320 miles of waterways
- 82 million recreational boaters
- 106 million ferry passengers in 2007
- 8,350 commercial facilities
- 238 lock chambers at 192 sites
- 97,000 aids-to-navigation

SOURCES: *Waterways*: U.S. Department of Transportation, Research and Innovative Technology Administration, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *National Transportation Statistics*, table 1-1. *Ferry*: Goldberg, B.; Firestine, T.; Steve, K.; *Highlights of the 2008 National Census of Ferry Operators*; *Boats*: Haas, G. E., *A Snapshot of Recreational Boating in America – Background*, July 2010. *Commercial Facilities*: U.S. Department of Transportation, Research and Innovative Technology Administration, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *National Transportation Statistic*, table 3-2. *Locks*: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, *the U.S. Waterway System—Transportation Facts* (Alexandria, VA: Annual Issues), *Geographic Distribution of U.S. Waterway Facilities*, 2009. *Aids*: U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Performance Plan, FY 2009-2014, 2008.

Interdependencies exist between the MTS, the National Ocean Policy and other key Presidential Initiatives:

Environmental Stewardship – a focus of Executive Order No. 13547 – is a priority of the MTS regulators and operators. MTS partners are actively engaged in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, burning cleaner fuels, and preventing the accidental introduction of invasive species through improved ballast water treatment technologies. The CMTS coordinates regular forums to facilitate coordination of information, ideas, and approaches among member agencies on these and other environmental topics and challenges.

¹ Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *Pocket Guide to Transportation 2011*, Tables 4-7 and 4-8.

² President’s Export Council, *Transportation & Infrastructure Letter to the President*, March 11, 2011.

A robust marine transportation system is complementary to other White House initiatives, including:

- Advancing the directives of the White House “Blueprint for a Secure Energy Future,” (March 30, 2011), whether for offshore oil and gas exploration and production, or for the installation, operation, and maintenance of wind turbines in ocean, coastal and Great Lakes waters;
- Meeting the President’s National Export Initiative goal to double exports within five years. (Executive Order 13543)

The extensive observation data and information developed in support of safe and efficient navigation are foundational tools for ocean and coastal resource management and for coastal and marine spatial planning (CMSP), including bathymetric surveys, vertical datum standards, real-time environmental observations, standards for remote sensing, and vessel tracking systems.

Best management practices can be gleaned from established practices within the MTS to institute voluntary operational marine spatial plans, such as in the Port of Chicago where the Calumet River Safety and Navigation Committee instituted a self-imposed waterway management scheme. In many cases, long-standing MTS organizations across the nation, such as harbor safety committees, could be employed to contribute local perspective to CMSP efforts.

The MTS is vital to the Nation because:

- It is critical to the Nation’s security, and is the backbone of U.S. commerce – transporting goods to market
- Nearly 78 percent, by weight, of U.S. merchandise trade is handled by water (2009).
- \$1,434 billion in foreign trade (2010), and an estimated \$800 billion in domestic trade are transported by water.
- 13 million American jobs are directly and indirectly provided by the water transportation industry (2010)

SOURCES: *Value:* Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *Pocket Guide to Transportation*. *Foreign Cargo:* U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, Foreign Trade Division, *U.S. Merchandise Trade: Selected Highlights* (February 2011). *Domestic:* U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Channel Portfolio Tool, as of 2011. *Employment:* President’s Export Council, *Transportation & Infrastructure Letter to the President*, March 11, 2011.

Addressing changing conditions in the U.S. Arctic requires integration of safety, navigation and environmental goals, which are of paramount importance to the MTS, and of interest to the CMTS Federal partners. The *Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment of 2009* (AMSA), commissioned by the U.S. Arctic Council, has a dual mandate for environmental protection and sustainable development. It was recognized in the AMSA that human uses directly impacting the Arctic environment and stewardship must be addressed, including those from maritime shipping and maritime support activities. Infrastructure to support search and rescue, increased maritime shipping, and energy support missions must be included in Arctic policy and ocean policy strategic action plans, as they are essential for environmental protection, safety of life at sea, and in support of our Nation’s economy.

A viable and robust MTS is integral to advancing U.S. ocean policy and National economic vitality, and it must continue to be a key component of future U.S. National Ocean Policy implementation. In 2003 and 2004, reports issued by the Pew Oceans Commission and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy (USCOP), respectively, emphasized better coordination of Federal roles and responsibilities in relation to our nations oceans and coasts. A key prerequisite for an effective and comprehensive ocean policy is better coordination in planning, decision making, and allocation of resources at the Federal level. As included in the final recommendations of the IOPTF, an effective and comprehensive ocean policy requires better coordination in planning, and decision making, and allocation of resources at the Federal level. The CMTS will be a key partner to implement these activities relative to the *National Ocean Policy*.

The Role of the U.S. Committee on the Marine Transportation System in National Ocean Policy

CMTS Vision Statement for the MTS

“The United States Marine Transportation System will be a safe, secure, and globally integrated network that, in harmony with the environment, ensures a free-flowing, seamless, and reliable movement of people and commerce along its waterways, sea lanes, and intermodal connections.”

The CMTS, chartered by the Cabinet members in 2005, is a Federal interdepartmental committee which is chaired by the Secretary of Transportation. The purpose of the CMTS is to create a partnership of Federal departments and agencies with responsibility for the MTS. The CMTS is directed to:

- Develop a partnership of Federal agencies with responsibility for or interest in the U.S. Marine Transportation System;
- Ensure the development and implementation of national MTS policies consistent with national needs; and
- Report to the President its views and recommendations for improving the MTS.

The CMTS is an institutionalized, inter-agency forum with experience sharing information, vetting ideas, solving problems, developing collaborative strategies, leveraging efforts, eliminating duplication of effort, heading off conflicts, and anticipating future issues and opportunities. Similar to ocean policy governance, Federal marine transportation roles and responsibilities are spread among many Departments, independent agencies and White House offices.

The CMTS has exhibited a leadership role in many of the priority areas identified for action in the National Ocean Policy as it pertains to the stressors and challenges impacting the marine transportation system:

- U.S. Arctic Marine Transportation Policy Coordination:** As directed by Congress in the 2010 U.S. Coast Guard Authorization, the CMTS is coordinating domestic transportation policies for the Arctic. It also is also facilitating cross-agency coordination and advancing a system approach to Federal marine transportation services in U.S. Arctic waters. Areas of interagency coordination pertaining to domestic marine transportation include: infrastructure development (including networks and systems of coordination and communication), navigation services, emergency and oil spill response, harbors of refuge, and the general needs to enhance safety and reduce environmental impacts from maritime operations. The CMTS U.S. Arctic Marine Transportation Integrated Action Team (IAT) is developing an interagency policy report in response to the Congressional directive.
- Navigation Technology Integration and Coordination:** Supporting safety of navigation rests with several agencies. Each of these agencies develops and operates advanced technologies, gathers data, and performs services in support of safe navigation in the coastal waters and inland rivers of the U.S. The CMTS Navigation Technology IAT was established to facilitate interagency collaboration in the setting of common goals to improve the delivery of information, improve the accuracy of navigational products, improve efficiency through data sharing, and develop technologies to assist mariners in safe navigation.
- Electronic Navigation Strategic Plan:** – The CMTS is defining a domestic strategic vision for e-Navigation incorporating the use of new technologies while ensuring these leading-edge solutions are compatible with existing navigation and communications technologies/services. The strategy is intended to prescribe how the U.S. will implement e-navigation concepts and activities in a cross-agency manner, coordinated with industry and other stakeholders in support of the safer, environmentally sound, and more efficient marine transportation system. Participating agencies include: the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Maritime Administration, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Transportation Command, and the Oceanographer of the Navy. An inventory of Federal e-navigation services was conducted to harmonize and prioritize Federal activities. The implementation plan has been outlined and identifies agency roles and responsibilities. The strategy will be consistent with and linked to international e-Navigation strategies and policies, e.g. International Hydrographic Organization, and as supported by International Association of Lighthouse Administrators.
- Research and Development (R&D) in the Marine Transportation System:** In December 2010, the CMTS Coordinating Board approved the CMTS *Strategic Action Plan for Research and Development in the Marine Transportation System* (www.cmts.gov). The R&D Integrated Action Team is coordinating the priorities for the Federal MTS R&D portfolio to provide safer, more efficient and environmentally sound MTS. Among the topics being examined for collaborative action are: resiliency to hazards, marine transport infrastructure adaptation to climate change, geospatial decision support tools relevant to the MTS, real-time navigation support tools, MTS performance metrics, pilot projects supporting use of alternative fuels, incorporating social science and human factors into the MTS, and developing tools for risk-based adaptive management.
- Data and Information:** One early CMTS project was the development of a “maritime data portal” that provides a comprehensive set of Federally maintained data and information relating to the MTS to be accessed through a single web-based data portal, via www.cmts.gov. This initiative provides MTS stakeholders access to a variety of data sets containing MTS related information in one convenient location.

- **Preparedness:** The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Coast Guard agreed that there is a need to capture the lessons that have been learned through the most recent set of natural disasters impacting the waterways, particularly in the Gulf area. These events included Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma in 2005, as well as Hurricanes Fran, Gustov, and Ike in 2008. One of the most significant avoidable threats posed during the storms has been breakaway vessels, including barges, which have hit infrastructure assets, such as levees, guide walls, and bridges, threatening the assets' structural integrity and the environment. A template is being developed by which local officials can address respective organizational responsibilities to protect life and property in the waterway.
- **Coordination of Permits for MTS Projects of National Significance:** The CMTS is assisting Deputy Secretary of Transportation John Porcari to coordinate and confirm the sharing of Federal regulatory requirements and processes as it relates to a proposed railroad bridge replacement over the Mississippi River and in the heartland of our domestic supply chain. This emphasizes the CMTS capability for collaboration and coordination to address multi-agency engagement on MTS-related issues. The collaborative nature of the CMTS is particularly important in addressing issues where there is no clear agency lead or governance process in place.
- **Environmental Stewardship in the Marine Transportation System:** A CMTS working group facilitates networking and information sharing to advance the understanding of MTS-related environmental issues, rules, and practices relevant to the marine transportation system. The group provides a forum for member agencies to shape integrated and collaborative approaches to resolve complex environmental stewardship issues and impacts of the MTS on the ocean and coasts.
- **Climate Change Adaptation and Resiliency in the Marine Transportation System:** Under the leadership of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the CMTS is engaging in information sharing on member agency activities to address the impact of climate change and sea level rise. The U.S. Coast Guard is participating in development of the National Information Management System.
- **National Export Initiative:** The CMTS is working with the Trade Policy Coordination Committee through the U.S. Department of Commerce to advance the goals of the National Export Initiative through interagency collaboration regarding the critical maritime transportation component.

CMTS - National Ocean Council (NOC) Protocol

The Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force Report (IOPTF) provide for two tiers of leadership in the organizational functions of the NOC: Principal-level and Deputy-level. The IOPTF directed that the "existing Committee on the Marine Transportation System's coordination with the NOC governance structure would be done through the National Economic Council (NEC), at both the Principal and Deputy level."³

On March 16, 2011, with concurrence from National Economic Council staff, the CMTS Coordinating Board approved engagement with NOC subgroups as an "ex-officio" member,

³ Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force, July 19, 2010, The White House Council on Environmental Quality.

recognizing that the NOC Ocean Resource Management Interagency Policy Committee (ORM-IPC) and Ocean Science and Technology Interagency Policy Committee (OST-IPC) would need to approve this approach. The ORM-IPC approved this via message to the CMTS Executive Secretariat Director on May 12, 2011.

The CMTS will ensure that the collective expertise and information from the Committee will be shared with NOC subgroups and task teams. In addition to ensuring that representatives from CMTS interagency task teams act as liaisons to the NOC strategic action plan teams, the CMTS Executive Secretariat and Federal interagency staff, as needed, will act as ex-officio members of the NOC ORM-IPC and the OST-IPC. The Director of the Executive Secretariat will ensure that the CMTS Coordinating Board and Working Group are informed of ongoing NOC activities and regularly communicate with staff level advisors to the National Economic Council.

Conclusion:

CMTS actions to ensure the readiness and resiliency of the MTS are comprehensive and far reaching. The CMTS facilitates adaptations to environmental change, whether those changes are short notice such as a hurricane or flood -- whose impacts are typically local or regional and of relatively short duration -- or those that evolve over time, often with enduring global implications.

The National Ocean Policy contained in Executive Order No. 13547, states a policy that melds environmental stewardship and economic objectives:

“to ensure the protection, maintenance, and restoration of the health of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems and resources, enhance the sustainability of ocean and coastal economies, preserve our maritime heritage, support sustainable uses and access, provide for adaptive management to enhance our understanding of and capacity to respond to climate change and ocean acidification, and coordinate with our national security and foreign policy interests.”

CMTS working groups are poised to contribute to many of the actions identified in the current full content outlines for the National Ocean Priority Strategic Action Plans (SAP). MTS stakeholders share an interest in a number of the SAP actions, including - observing and forecasting Arctic sea ice to assure accurate, quantitative forecasts to support safe operations and ecosystem stewardship. The CMTS Arctic IAT participated in developing the Changing Conditions in the Arctic SAP, and efforts are underway to improve Arctic mapping, charting, and communications. Actions being undertaken by the CMTS Research and Development IAT are integral to the Data, Observations, and Mapping SAP as well as the Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning SAP. CMTS member agencies are participating in development of the NOC’s National Information Management System and CMS Portal being developed to support coastal and marine spatial planning.

The CMTS will continue to utilize the collective experience and knowledge of its member agencies to integrate marine transportation system considerations and contributions into

ongoing and future National Ocean Policy discussions. The CMTS looks forward to working with the NOC committees and pertinent working groups to implement the Priority Objectives, and will continue to coordinate with the National Economic Council at the Principal and Deputy levels.