

## **Connecticut Maritime Commission Annual Report 2006**

The Connecticut Maritime Commission (CTMC) was established in July 2004 by State Statute (TITLE 13b CHAPTER 242\* Section 13b-51a) as the successor agency to the Connecticut Port Authority. The CTMC consists of fifteen members representing five State agencies, the maritime business industry, local port authorities, port operators, marine passenger services, port labor unions, recreational marine services and the coastal communities. The State agencies are represented by the Commissioners of the Departments of Transportation (CONNDOT), Economic and Community Development (DECD) and Environmental Protection (DEP), the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and the Chairman of the Transportation Strategy Board (TSB) or their respective designees. The remaining members of the CTMC are appointed as follows: four members appointed by the Governor; one member each appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, the speaker of the House of Representatives, the majority leader of the Senate, the minority leader of the Senate, the majority leader of the House of Representatives and the minority leader of the House of Representatives. All appointed members serve for terms coterminous with their appointing authority and until their successor is appointed and has qualified. Vacancies on the CTMC are filled for the remainder of the term in the same manner as original appointments. The chairman of the CTMC is selected by the Governor from among the appointed members of the commission. The CTMC members annually elect one of their numbers as secretary. The commission may elect such other officers as it deems proper. Members receive no compensation for the performance of their duties.

During calendar year 2006 the CTMC met monthly on the third Thursday of each month. The annual schedule of the CTMC meetings and the minutes of meetings held were made available to the general public by being posted on the CONNDOT webpage ([www.ct.gov/dot](http://www.ct.gov/dot)) under "About Us" and then "Commissions".

In accordance with TITLE 13b CHAPTER 242\* Section 13b-51a.(f) of the Connecticut General Statutes, on or before January 1<sup>st</sup>, the CTMC is to submit an annual report to the Commissioner of Transportation, the Governor and the Transportation Strategy Board. The report is to provide: (1) a list of projects which, if undertaken by the state, would support the state's maritime policy and encourage maritime commerce and industry; (2) recommendations for improvements to existing maritime policies, programs and facilities; and (3) such other recommendations as it considers appropriate. Copies of the report are to be submitted to the General Assembly as well.

The first priority of the CTMC was to develop a Maritime Policy for the state of Connecticut. In December 2005, the CTMC drafted a Maritime Policy statement and forwarded it to the Governor and the legislative leaders for review and approval. Obtaining comments from elected leadership was pursued throughout 2006. The Maritime Policy identified Long Island Sound as a tremendous resource of underutilized

transportation infrastructure that should be used for the movement of both persons and goods, as it had historically been used. The creation of inter-modal sea-land transportation hubs that enable existing and emerging coastline vehicular choke points to be bypassed will support the overall transportation strategy of the State. Coordinated marketing of the capacity of Connecticut's deep-water ports to expand niche connections with cargo sources is a critical link to the Sound. The Maritime Policy also identified dredging as a critical issue related to the economic health of the State's ports.

The degree of accessibility to Connecticut ports and waterways is controlled by the depth of the existing navigation channels. Most, if not all, of the ports' channels have an authorized depth established by Congress. It is the responsibility of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) to maintain these depths. The ACE requests funds from Congress for specific projects. Historically, however, Congress has not provided the ACE with funding for all of the project needs within any specific fiscal year. Thus, priorities must be established. Due to the background and expertise of the CTMC membership, the CTMC has taken on the task of setting dredging priorities within waterways of the State to maximize the benefits of the limited federal funds..

The CTMC identified maintaining the channel depth at the State's three largest commercial ports (Bridgeport, New Haven, and New London) as the highest priority, but not to the exclusion of maintaining the smaller commercial and recreational ports and waterways along the coast of Connecticut. The CTMC committed to development of a capital program to actively assist in facilitating the funding and regulatory process for State approval of Federal maintenance dredging projects.

In January and February of 2006, the CTMC held its monthly meetings in conjunction with the DECD-sponsored Maritime Cluster meetings as part of the process. Additionally, the CTMC initiated a legislative proposal to create a dredging advocate position within the CONNDOT. Although the legislative proposal failed, the CONNDOT administratively pursued creating a dredging coordinator position within its Bureau of Aviation and Ports. Specific dredging projects, development of the LIS Dredged Material Management Plan (DMMP), funding for dredging projects, testing of dredge materials, "permit" for dredging projects, establishing a dredging project advocate position and repealing the Ambro Amendment to the Marine Protection, Research & Sanctuary Act (MPRSA) also known as the Ocean Dumping Act dominated discussion during the March, April, May, June and July meetings of the CTMC. Support by the CTMC was instrumental in the Bond Commission approving a \$750K bond for Bridgeport as the local match for the federally sponsored Innovative Dredged Material Treatment project to determine if dredged sediments treated to remove contaminants can be beneficially reused as topsoil or roadway sub grade material

In May, the CTMC voted to support the repeal of the Ambro Amendment. The Chairman sent letters to the Connecticut Congressional delegation, the Governor and the state legislators seeking their support. The CTMC also began a discussion on establishing a State Revenue Source for maritime projects such as dredging, removal of derelict vessels, facility improvements, etc. Some ideas that could establish such a fund would be to

increase the registration fee on recreational boats, redirect some of the tax revenue on the fuels sold at marinas, petition the CT Congressional delegation to release more of the Harbor Maintenance Tax funds, and others.

In June the CTMC agreed to send a letter to U. S. Coast Guard Sector Long Island Sound requesting that the Captain of the Port designate anchorages near the entrance to New Haven and Bridgeport harbors. Designated anchorages would provide a margin of safety to all mariners as well as disallow the fouling of the areas by cables and pipelines. The CONNDOT reported that the Department had received a tentative approval to add project management positions to be able to execute the funds provided in the Transportation Bill. The DOT Commissioner has committed to earmarking one of the first 25 positions as a dredging coordinator.

In July the CTMC emphasized the need to collect data relative to commercial and recreational use of CT's waters and harbors in order to support requests for dredging funds. DECD and the Connecticut Maritime Coalition took the lead on data collecting. The August meeting was cancelled due to anticipated vacations.

The meetings held in the months of September, November, and December focused on draft legislation to provide a bonded capital fund for maritime projects. The draft legislation if enacted would provide a bonded fund to be used for "Harbor Improvements". The draft legislation was provided to the TSB for review and support. The TSB made the draft Legislation public at the 11 December 2006 TSB meeting held in Danbury. Additionally, the CTMC authorized the Chairman to seek a meeting with the new co-Chairs of the Transportation sub committee to obtain support/sponsorship for the draft legislation. The CTMC approved having the Chairman sign and send letters to the CT Congressional Delegation seeking support for Federal funds to maintain the project depths of the State waterways. The CTMC provided additional input to the TSB for the revised State Transportation Strategy.

The CONDOT reported that applications had been reviewed, interviews held and a selection report submitted to the Human Resources unit. Once the report is approved the recommended candidate will be offered the position. It is anticipated that the position will be filled by mid January 2007.

Although all of the CTMC meetings are open to the public, the annual meeting of the CTMC required to be held in accordance with CGS Sec. 13b-51a (e) was held on 16 November 2006. The CTMC 2007 meeting schedule was established and posted on the CONNDOT webpage. The 2007 monthly meetings will be held on the third Wednesday of each month at several different locations around the state to better facilitate public participation.