

GICA Addresses Critical Gulf Coast Issues at Annual Convention

FRIENDSWOOD, Texas – Aug. 13 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – The 102nd annual convention of the Gulf Intracoastal Canal Association will take place at the Wyndham New Orleans at Canal Place August 22-24, 2007. Special guests include Admiral Joel Whitehead, commander of the U.S. Coast Guard Eighth District; Steve Stockton, deputy director of Civil Works, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and Congressman Ted Poe, 2nd Congressional District of Texas. The agenda includes several critical issues that impact commercial navigation along the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW), which stretches from St. Marks, Florida to Brownsville, Texas.

The convention agenda includes the following topics, among others:

- * Advancement of funding for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers civil works projects in order to maintain or enhance shallow draft navigation along the waterway;
- * The future of intermodal transportation from a global perspective;
- * The value of draft on the GIWW and its impact on cargo capacities and fuel economy; and
- * Coastal development and how industry and developers are working together to ensure the safe coexistence of recreational and commercial users.

An open meeting of the GICA Navigation Committee and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers immediately follows the convention and will address:

- * Prioritization of operations and maintenance projects of the Corps of Engineers;
- * The proposed closure of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, and resulting need to expedite replacement of the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal Lock in New Orleans; and
- * Funding status of the effort to replace the Galveston Causeway Railroad Bridge, as well as current navigation restrictions and interim bridge protection measures.

The GICA expects to continue its upward trend in terms of convention attendance and financial support from sponsors.

“We’ve experienced record-breaking attendance and sponsorship from the barge industry over the last several years,” said Raymond Butler, executive director of the GICA. “We have their support because we are the only industry

organization focused solely on issues concerning the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, and we bring relevant topics to the table year after year," he said.

Among its accomplishments, the GICA is credited with spearheading the development of a unified hurricane response protocol across the Gulf Coast. The model has served industry well in terms of reestablishing the flow of commercial traffic as quickly as possible after passage of a storm. Many times this traffic is carrying critical commodities like fuel to the affected areas.

Approximately 300+ individuals are expected to attend the 2007 convention of the GICA in New Orleans, including leaders of the inland barge industry as well as district commanders and representatives of the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The organization is also pleased to welcome Michael Blaser, a renowned fine arts painter who will travel from Iowa to exhibit his river-themed works (www.michaelblaser.com).

The GICA was established in 1905 to promote the concept of a single channel connecting all major Gulf Coast ports. The Gulf Intracoastal Waterway was completed in 1949 as a result of a major collaborative effort. Today, the GICA is the only organization focused on promotion, protection and maintenance of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway.

For further information, visit www.gicaonline.com

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