

LaGrange Named Chairman Of National Waterways Conference

BY JOHN SHOULBERG

Gary P. LaGrange, president and chief executive officer of the Port of New Orleans, was named chairman of the National Waterways Conference during the organization's annual meeting in Mobile, Ala., earlier this month. He succeeds Scott Robinson, director of the Port of Muskogee, Okla.

The well-attended Mobile meeting capped a tumultuous year for NWC on a positive note. The organization was

shocked in June by the resignation and subsequent death of president Worth Hager. At Mobile, members approved a resolution in her honor which will be permanently recorded in the organization's records, and presented to her family during the NWC Budget Summit next March in Washington, D.C.

Hager was given a lot of credit for one piece of news that came while the annual meeting was in session: the long-awaited passage of the Water Resources

Development Act. She had been an effective advocate for the legislation during the period she led NWC, and members invoked her name often during the meeting when they cheered its passage.

But that legislative success wasn't the only positive for NWC in Mobile. Officials reported that sponsorships for the meeting were at the highest level in the organization's 47-year history.

Among the highlights of the NWC

—SEE NWC PAGE 6

NWC

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

annual meeting:

- Several Corps officials outlined a bleak fiscal picture for civil works projects, with static budgets and ever-increasing costs (see November 19 WJ).

- Jim Kruse, director of the Center for Ports & Waterways of the Texas Transportation Institute, Houston, gave attendees a preview of a new study to be published by the institute in the coming weeks. The study, half-funded by the U.S. Maritime Administration and half by the National Waterways Foundation, is designed to update some key statistics comparing various transportation modes. Some of the information that has been used to boost the marine industry hasn't been updated since the 1970s, he said.

Some topic areas in the study include congestion, emissions, safety impacts, infrastructure impacts and energy efficiency, he said. The study is undergoing final peer review, and should be released soon, Kruse said.

- Robert Portiss, director of the Tulsa Port of Catoosa and chairman of the search committee that is working to find a new president, said the initial phase of the search was only "modestly successful," and the committee hadn't yet selected a suitable candidate yet. The committee is expanding its search, however, and is committed to hiring a new president by March 1, 2008, he said.

- Rob Rash, chief executive officer of the St. Francis Levee District in West Memphis, Ark., described the effects that will be felt by levee districts due to proposed flood plain regulations from the

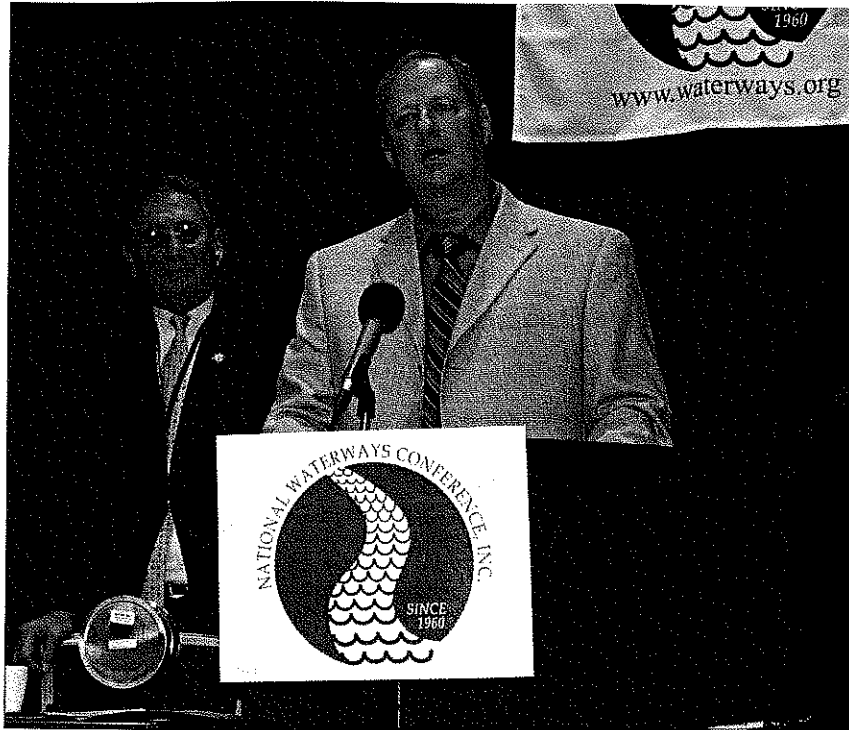
Federal Emergency Management Agency. The effect will be to throw out \$15 billion in federal money and untold billions of private money spent over the years if the regulations go into effect and decertify numerous Corps-built levees, he said.

- Speakers described, from a variety of perspectives, the process undergone by ThyssenKrupp Steel USA to select a loca-

tion for a major new steel plant in the Southeast. A site on the Tombigbee River about 30 miles north of Mobile was ultimately chosen, beating out a site on the Mississippi River in Louisiana, and dozens of other potential sites in earlier rounds, said Bob Hess, consulting partner with Cushman & Wakefield, which assisted ThyssenKrupp in the search.

The process was actually not so much a site-selection project as a supply chain project, Hess said, and the Alabama location was able to provide the best combination of infrastructure and accessibility.

- LaGrange announced that the 2008 NWC annual meeting will be held November 5-8 at the Hilton Riverside Hotel in New Orleans.



—WJ photo by John Shoulberg

Gary LaGrange, left, succeeded Scott Robinson, right, as chairman of the National Waterways Conference.