

Coast Guard Fiscal Year 2005 Budget Request and Hill Doings

The Administration has requested \$7,471M for the Coast Guard in its 2005 fiscal year (FY) budget request to Congress, an increase of eight percent over the FY 2004 level. The request reflects several increases in the area of recreational boating safety, including *increases* of \$60M in the area of Search and Rescue (from \$986M to \$1,046M); \$16M in the area of Marine Safety (from \$487M to \$503M); \$58M in Aids to Navigation (from \$946M to \$1,004M); \$18 million in Ice Operations (from \$185M to \$203M). The largest increase is in the area of Ports, Waterways and Coastal Security which jumps from \$1,831M in FY 2004 to \$2,099M in FY 2005, a plus-up of \$268M.

FY 2005 Initiatives for the Coast Guard include \$10M more for the Deepwater Program; \$7.750M for the Great Lakes Icebreaker Project; \$161M for the Rescue 21 Project to recapitalize the Coast Guard's coastal zone communications network; \$26M to operate five, new 179-Patrol Coastal cutters being transferred to the Coast Guard by the Navy, and \$2.200M for Enhanced Maritime Domain Awareness. The Coast Guard also added over 500 new personnel in FY 2004 to support multi-mission Small Boat Stations and Command Centers.

In spite of the budget increases, Senators Collins (R-ME) and Lieberman (D-CONN), Chair and Ranking Member, respectively, of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, recently expressed their disappointment to Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge that the Coast Guard's budget was not adequate for present homeland security demands. (Testimony of February 9, 2004 before the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee.) They were especially critical of the Administration's proposal to take 22 (vs. 10)

years to complete acquisition of the Coast Guard's Deepwater Program, and to reduce funding for First Responders.

In the meantime, Congress is working on legislation to reauthorize the programs of the Coast Guard. As of this writing, the House has passed its bill (H.R. 2443), and the Senate has reported a bill (S. 733) from Committee but has not yet voted in the full Senate. Some interesting highlights from these bills include: (1) authorization for the Coast Guard to establish a new National Coast Guard Museum at or near the Coast Guard Academy in New Groton, Conn.; (2) Sense of the Congress that the Coast Guard should continue to place a high priority on addressing the safety risks posed to boaters by elevated levels of carbon monoxide, by working with manufacturers, and the entire boating community; (3) increased civil penalties for failure to comply with recreational vessel and associated equipment safety standards; and (4) Report to Congress on compliance with 1996 amendments to the Small Passenger Vessel Regulations requiring the master of a small passenger vessel to require passengers to don life jackets when possible hazardous conditions exist, including severe weather.

The Senate has also acted in recent weeks to pass a five-year reauthorization of the Wallop-Breaux Trust Fund by including these provisions in the \$318B Highway Funding Bill passed on February 12, 2004 by the Senate (S. 1072). The bill is pending in the House (HR 3550), but has been threatened with a veto threat from President Bush over the funding levels.

More on Wallop-Breaux in the next issue.

(SUMMIT -... continued from page one)

At 9:50 a.m. don't miss the last time for exhibitors and that cup of coffee you need as well as another chance to win a door prize. Tuesday afternoon will be work & play. We will be on the beach, by the pools and even in and on the water with a variety of opportunities: learning how to use a sea kayak, experimenting with a variety of personal watercraft, checking out some of the new personal floatation devices and exploring boats and equipment provided by various organizations and exhibitors. It might even include sailboats.



Wednesday features more sessions and some that always draw a crowd are the regional award winners – competing for the national Boating Education Advancement Award. The Youth Program Award winner will present too. There are so many to select from, you will find it difficult to decide how you might be two places at once. Wednesday afternoon includes a general session and shortly thereafter the closing banquet – a great way to say farewell to many of the new friends and colleagues you have met. Don't fret: soon after the Summit, each delegate receives a Proceedings which recaps the activities, the sessions, summarizes the exhibits and lists all delegates – so along with lessons learned and fond memories, you receive an opportunity to see in more detail, those sessions you could not attend.

On Thursday – for those that want additional training – there are some courses: the NSBC Instructor Training Course (runs Thursday and Friday) and the NWSC Ice Safety/Hypothermia Awareness Course. Check out the Summit website for more details on registering for either of these classes. Visit: www.safeboatingcouncil.org and click on the Summit logo.

Now, if you think about all of these things, and realize that you are not registered but should be: it's not too late. Just call the Summit registration office at 614-228-3308 and tell them you really cannot afford to miss this event. They will provide you with details for registering.

The Summit really is the pinnacle of boating and water safety education, so . . . will you be there?

NSBC THANKFUL FOR MEMBERS THAT HELP SERVE

Many member organizations aid the NSBC's mission in various ways. Here is one example.

The Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) is a conservation and reclamation district that provides energy, water and community services to Texans. It manages 600 miles of the lower Colorado River and operates six dams that form the Highland Lakes. LCRA also offers boating and water safety education, buoy permitting and maintenance, regulation of docks and marinas, and parks and recreational facilities. Its lake patrol officers contribute to recreational safety by enforcing safety laws and providing medical response.

As a sustaining member of the NSBC, LCRA shows its commitment to water safety with its service on NSBC's Board and oversight of the Local Recreational Boating Safety Grant Program and complimentary production and printing of the *Grant Program Annual Report*.