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THE VESSEL

A QUARTERLY PIANC USA PUBLICATION

SECRETARY'S REPORT

BY WILL LOGAN, PHD.

PIANC USA is pleased to announce that the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Adam Telle, has appointed three new commissioners and renewed terms for two others.

The three new commissioners are:

- Christopher Frabotta, Vice President for Federal Programs for the Sullivan Brothers Family of Companies, including Callan Marine Ltd.;
- Jeff Steiber, Government Relations Officer/Small Business Liaison Officer with the J.F. Brennan Company; and
- Paul Matthews, Senior Vice President of Business Development, Ports & Harbors at Bowman.

The two commissioners whose terms were extended are:

- Jack Cox, a principal and coastal engineer with Edgewater Resources; and
- Matt Martinez, Vice President with Moffatt & Nichol.

These individuals join two sitting commissioners:

- Janey Smith Camp, Research Professor and Associate Director of Adaptation and Resilience at CAESER (Center for Applied Earth Sciences and Engineering Research) at the University of Memphis; and
- Jeff Lillycrop, Strategic Consultant, Woolpert.

PIANC USA is privileged to be advised by these extraordinary experts in coastal engineering, scientific research, port development, and government policy, along with one additional commissioner to be named soon.

Congratulations are also due to Andrew McQueen of the US Army Corps of Engineers' Coastal Hydraulics Lab, who succeeds Burton Suedel as PIANC USA's Principal Representative to the Environmental Commission (EnviCom). Suedel was named chair of that commission earlier in the year.

Lastly, we are pleased to announce appointments as principals to PIANC Working Groups:

- Yazmin Seda-Sanabria (USACE): InCom Working Group 270, Strategies to Prevent Negative Effects of External Threats in IW Infrastructure and Facilities; and
- Kyle Baekey (Woolpert): InCom Working Group 271, Inland Waterway Strategies for Navigation Availability Assessment.

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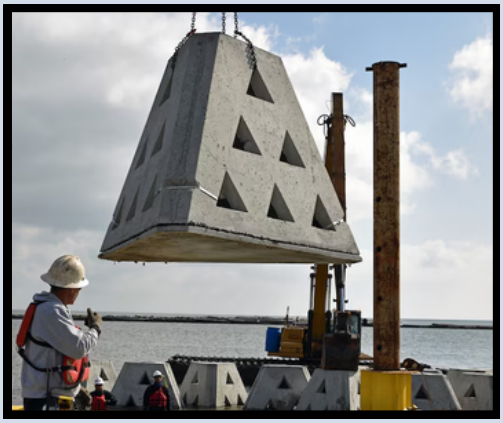
UPDATES AND EVENTS

The Chair of the Board of the Commissioners of PIANC USA, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works (ASACW), Adam Telle, was recently appointed by the President to be Acting Secretary of the Army. While Mr. Telle has maintained his title as ASACW, many of his duties have been assumed by his Principal Deputy, Mr. Lee Forsgren, and the Deputy Commanding General of USACE for Civil and Emergency Operations, Major General Jason Kelly. The latter is also President of PIANC USA.

SMART RIVERS 2027
You have until December 1, 2026 to submit an abstract. Go to Call For Abstracts – Smart Rivers 2027 or Smart Rivers 2027 for more information.



PIANC USA 2026 WEBINAR #3:
Adaptive Marina Infrastructure: Planning for Growth, Regulation, and Resilience
Wednesday, October 28, 2026, 2:00-3:00 p.m. EDT
No cost to attend, 1 PDH Credit
REGISTRATION:
https://pianc.us/event/webinar-adaptive-marina-infrastructure-planning-for-growth-regulation-and-resilience/

PIANC USA YOUNG PROFESSIONAL, KATHERINE CHAMBERS, LEADS WORKING GROUP 259 TO ADVANCE PORT RESILIENCE GUIDANCE

PIANC USA member, Katherine Chambers, continues to apply her expertise with PIANC international initiatives to address port resilience in the maritime transportation infrastructure space. As the chair of PIANC Working Group 259, Katherine leads an international team to "bridge the gap between resilience theory and frontline port operations." The group has already produced a draft of their upcoming "Practical Guide for Port Infrastructure and Operational Resilience."

Port and maritime transportation resilience is not new to Katherine's portfolio. She is currently an Acting Associate Technical Director for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC) with a focus on crisis preparedness and has led many research projects, supported ERDC's Structural Health Monitoring Program, and gained hands-on experience through emergency deployment and a detail with Corps Headquarters' Asset Management Branch. In 2024, she served as an ERDC Liaison at the Pentagon with the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works – Management and Budget Office. Outside of the Corps, she has chaired several PIANC working groups focused on various aspects of port resilience. Katherine also serves as the Chair of the U.S. Committee on the Marine Transportation Systems Resilience Integrated Action Team, where she has led the publications of four U.S. Federal interagency port resilience-related after-action impact reviews of hurricane seasons.

Ms. Chambers reports that the challenge for PIANC Working Group 259 is translating high-level principles into decisions about investment and daily operations. The guidance document is intended to:

- Improve decision making by providing in-depth practical guidance for the port sector that moves beyond generic to specific references and recommendations;
- Establish clear steps and requirements to help the financial sectors and governments to determine the quality of a resilience assessment;
- Encourage effective stakeholder engagement by ensuring all relevant parties are integrated throughout the resilience planning and implementation process, and;
- Combine findings from PIANC Working Group 178, Technical Notes 1 and 2 for both new and existing infrastructure.

We are grateful and proud of Katherine for being part of the PIANC USA team of young professionals truly enhancing the knowledge base and standards for maritime transportation infrastructure.

Adapting to AI in the Maritime Industry by Samara Rahman

Public imagination often fixates on “ghost ships” and the potential of fully autonomous vessels. However, significant transformations are happening in the less visible domains of data integrity and infrastructure management. There is a grinding friction between the rapid acceleration of technology and the legacy frameworks that are still attached to a non-artificial-intelligence (AI) world. PIANC experts and working groups have recognized the current and future use of virtual and digital applications in maritime and related infrastructure for many years. These include, but are not limited to, eNavigation, digital twins, and digital shadowing. [Reference InCom WG 257, for example.]

In parallel with definitional and standards questions posed in PIANC InCom WG 257 related to digital twins, there are a number of questions yet to answer about the application of artificial intelligence in the maritime domain. Following are some of the issue areas to consider.

1. Data Integrity
In the rush to implement cutting-edge solutions, it’s easy to overlook a somewhat obvious reality: an AI model is only as intelligent as the information it consumes. This is a critical lesson highlighted by economist and AI app developer, Ms. Erin Rooks at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), whose insights serve as a necessary reality check. As she aptly puts it, "Garbage data in, garbage data out." Sophisticated AI models are strategically useless without human experts who understand a) what the underlying data is representing, and b) the underlying mechanisms of what the AI is doing.

2. Technology Outpacing the Rulebook
The rapid maturation of AI at sea is creating a profound state of friction with existing international maritime law, for example. Research highlighted by AI at Sea from Cambridge University Press underscores that our technological reach is currently exceeding our regulatory grasp. This gap introduces systemic risks that cannot be ignored by innovation consultants or policymakers. The friction is most evident in two areas: workforce displacement and cybersecurity. There is a lag in standardized training requirements that will enable workers to achieve the high-level digital oversight necessary to handle AI tools, and as we integrate more AI-driven systems, the "human element" of error and judgment has the potential to turn into both a cybersecurity safeguard or weak point.

3. The Power of Optimization
While the media fixates on autonomous navigation, the true value of AI lies in its utility as the ultimate maritime multi-tool. According to the research found in AI in Ship Navigation, the most significant gains in efficiency are coming from autonomous navigation, pattern recognition, system optimization, and the speed of human adaptability.
[Continued on Page 5}

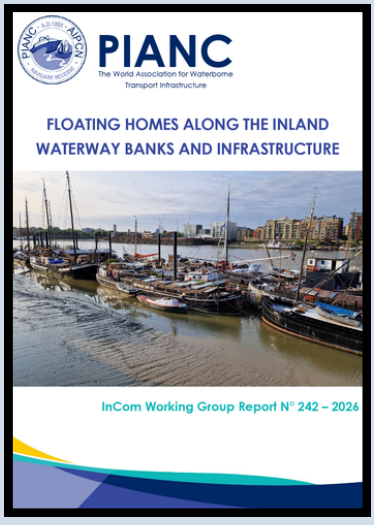
Adapting to AI in the Maritime Industry, Cont'd.

While only the future will tell, AI literacy may be the ultimate job security in an AI-driven sector. More specifically, AI literacy is important in the sense of developing the intuition to know when and how to use it. The fundamental principles of data integrity won't be going anywhere, even as AI itself changes constantly.

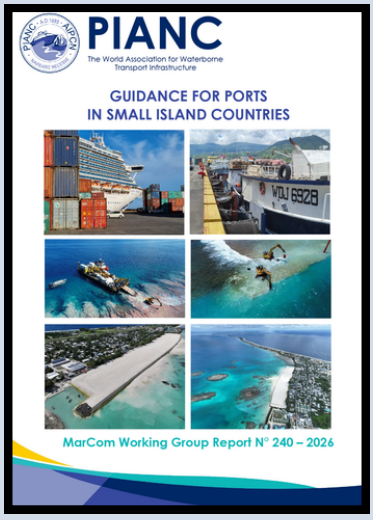
Conclusion:
The integration of AI into the maritime sector is not a process of replacing human experience, but of augmenting it for an era of unprecedented complexity. The future of shipping and maritime infrastructure technology is being built on the idea of "informed oversight." More powerful AI tools require more careful human judgment, because AI is a tool to augment experience--not a substitute for it. Our success will depend on our ability to merge these machine tools with discernment.

Samara Rahman was a student intern from the University of Maryland who provided social media and planning support. She is a double major in Computer Science and Government & Politics, especially the use of AI in government systems. Views in this article do not represent USG official views.

NEW PIANC PUBLICATIONS: WWW.PIANC.ORG/



The new WG242 report provides a comprehensive international overview of floating homes and their integration into inland waterway systems. (June 2026)



This publication provides a comprehensive, practice-oriented framework designed to support the planning, design, construction, operation, and long-term sustainability of port infrastructure in small island countries (SICs). (June 2026)

The report is a reference on the state of the art in approaches to perform ship handling simulation studies for design checking, including proof of safety and ease of trafficability. (September 2026)

CORPORATE MEMBER SHOWCASE:
CALLAN MARINE LTD.

PIANC USA is pleased to welcome Callan Marine Ltd. as a new corporate member. Founded in 2009 and headquartered in Galveston, Texas, Callan Marine is part of the Sullivan Brothers Family of Companies, a diversified group owned and managed by three Galveston brothers. Over the last 15 years, Callan has grown from a single cutter suction dredge operation into a comprehensive dredging and marine construction company with 600 employees and the equipment and experience to execute some of the nation's most consequential waterway projects. Callan's commitment to its people for "safety, integrity, and quality" aligns with PIANC's goals for setting high industry standards. PIANC USA is honored to include Callan's expertise toward keeping America's waterways open, strengthening maritime infrastructure, and deliver projects responsibly.

Callan is now executing capital dredging to deepen approximately 30-miles of the Sabine-Neches Waterway federal navigation project. The work requires the removal of 20 million-cubic yards of dredged material, construction of two anchorage basins, and channel deepening from the Port of Port Arthur to the Port of Beaumont. Beyond federal channel deepening, widening, and improvement projects, Callan Marine also performs new-work and maintenance dredging for private owners, from terminal berthing areas adjacent to federal ship channels to docking and mooring locations throughout the Gulf Coast. This work helps terminal operators maintain safe access and support the continued movement of energy products.

Christopher Frabotta, Vice President – Federal Programs at Callan Marine Ltd., also recently began serving as a PIANC commissioner. He looks forward to exchanging practical knowledge and strengthening PIANC's reach in the United States. "I'm excited to serve as a PIANC commissioner and help grow PIANC's U.S. membership and global connections" stated Mr. Frabotta. Johnny Sullivan, Callan President, remarked that "Callan Marine is pleased to join PIANC and exchange ideas with the global navigation and dredging community."

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