

Panel Biographies
The Fragility of the Marine Transportation System



Scott Brotemarkle: Marine Board Program Director, Senior Program Officer, Marine Transportation and Intermodal Freight, Transportation Research Board, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine

Since 2012 Mr. Brotemarkle has served as Program Director of the Marine Board of the National Academies which operates within the Transportation Research Board (TRB). Formed in 1965, the Marine Board is an internationally recognized source of expertise on maritime transportation, marine technology and offshore development. The purpose of the Marine Board is to identify research needs and provide a forum for exchange of information relating to new technologies, laws and regulations, economics, the environment, and issues affecting the marine transportation system, offshore industries, port operations, coastal engineering, and marine governance.

In addition, Mr. Brotemarkle serves as TRB's Senior Program Officer for Marine Transportation and Intermodal Freight. In this role, he is responsible for facilitating TRB's marine transportation activities wherein he provides professional support to the technical standing committees in the Marine and Freight Systems Groups.

Mr. Brotemarkle also serves as TRB's liaison to several federal agencies, including U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Navy, National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, U.S. Maritime Administration, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and others with missions related to maritime and offshore activity.

Prior to joining TRB staff, Mr. Brotemarkle was Director of Transportation Policy and Program Development at the American Association of Port Authorities, where he had held various positions engaging seaport and marine transportation issues since 1997. Mr. Brotemarkle holds a master's degree in transportation policy, operations and logistics from George Mason University and bachelor's degree in history from Virginia Tech.



CAPT Paul Dittman (USCG, ret.): President, Gulf Intracoastal Canal Association; Member, Greater New Orleans Port Safety Council Harbor Safety Committee, Lone Star Harbor Safety Committee, Southeast Texas Waterways Advisory Council, South Texas Waterways Advisory Committee, and the Bayou Safety Committee of Southern Louisiana

Mr. Paul Dittman assumed the GICA helm in August 2021.

Mr. Dittman was the Vice President of Compliance, Security and Safety at Turn Services, a position he accepted after retiring from the U.S. Coast Guard. Most of his Coast Guard career was spent in the Eighth Coast Guard District in a variety of staff and command positions. He has worked closely with the inland towing industry in St. Louis, New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Port Arthur, TX on issues ranging from waterways management, marine inspections, casualty and personal action investigations, pollution response, high water, and port security. During his last assignment as the Director of Western Rivers and Waterways Management, he was the senior Captain responsible for overseeing all aids to navigation and U.S. Coast Guard waterways management activities throughout the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and Western Rivers system.

Mr. Dittman is a graduate of Massachusetts Maritime Academy in Bourne, MA, where he earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Marine Transportation Management and an Unlimited Tonnage Third Mate's license. He was also awarded a Master of Arts degree in National Security Strategy by the U.S. Naval War College in Newport RI. Paul and his wife, Joan, live in Covington, LA and have four children.



W. Vern Gwin: Chief, Operations Division, Mobile District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Mr. Vern Gwin is the Chief of Operations Division for the Mobile District USACE. Previously, Mr. Gwin served as the Deputy Chief of Operations Division, Technical Support Branch Chief for Operations Division, and the Program Director for the National Dredging Quality Management (DQM) program. Prior to these assignments, Vern worked in Mobile District Operations Division as the Program Manager for Beneficial Uses and Regional Sediment Management Programs and in Civil Works Programs and Project Management Division as a Civil Works project manager. After obtaining a degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Tennessee, Vern served for 11 years as a Civil Works Project Manager in the Jacksonville District. Vern is an avid snow skier, hobbyist auto mechanic and enjoys woodworking. He and his wife, Davina of 36 years, have two daughters, named Leah and Ansley.



William “Billy” Hoffman: Safety Manager, Sause Bros

Willam “Billy” Hoffman is a Safety Professional at Sause Bros. Towing Co. in Honolulu, Hawaii, with extensive experience in maritime operations and the United States Coast Guard.

Specializing in maritime and OSHA compliance, risk management, and safety program development, Billy retired as Chief Petty Officer after 22 years of service, where Billy led tactical operations, law enforcement, search and rescue, and high-risk readiness training across the Pacific.

At Sause Bros., Billy oversees safety programs for vessel crews and shoreside personnel, manages incident investigations, and supports ISM/ABS/USCG/OSHA/HI State compliance. Billy drives continuous improvement in safety management systems, training, and emergency response coordination for Hawaii.

Billy is an active member of the Area Maritime Security Committee (AMSC) Hawaii and the Science and Technology subcommittee. Previously, Billy managed marine safety, health, quality, and environmental programs at Young Brothers LLC and Foss Maritime HI, focusing on regulatory compliance and risk assessment.

Billy holds a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences from Thomas Edison State University and is recognized for leadership in team coordination, risk management, and advancing safety, environmental, and security standards in maritime operations.



CDR Xochitl Castañeda: Director, Pacific Northwest & Alaska Gateway Office, Office of Maritime & Intermodal Outreach, U.S. Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration

Xochitl (pronounced So-chee) Castañeda is the Director of the Pacific Northwest & Alaska Gateway Office in Seattle, Washington. She oversees a region that includes Alaska, Oregon, Idaho, and Washington, serving as an advocate for maritime interests across the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. Her responsibilities encompass 204 ports—54 in Washington, 23 in Oregon, and 125 in Alaska, including critical Arctic ports—as well as the Washington State Ferry System, the Alaska Marine Highway System, and the homeports for the nation’s largest fishing fleets in Alaska, Washington, and Oregon.

Xochitl works to strengthen ports and the marine transportation system in her region, with a focus on port infrastructure and military outload. She supports maritime operators homeported in her area and has purview over the following Marine Highways: M-5 (Pacific Ocean Coastal Waters), M-5AK (Alaska Coastline), M-11 (Alaska Coastal Waters), and M-84 (Columbia, Willamette, and Snake Rivers).

Originally from Pearblossom, California, Xochitl retired from the U.S. Coast Guard after 26 years as a marine safety professional. Her career included both afloat and ashore assignments, where she gained expertise in navigation, energy projects, pollution response, waterfront facilities, vessel inspections, mariner licensing, waterways management, and emergency response.

She began her education at Antelope Valley College before transferring to the University of California, Santa Barbara, where she earned a B.S. in Aquatic Biology. She later earned a Master's in Transportation and Logistics with a Maritime Engineering Concentration from American Military University. Xochitl is currently attending the Naval War College in Everett, Washington, further expanding her knowledge in national security and strategic studies.