

## MTA/NJ Legislative Update

### **May/June Tradewinds Newsletter**

The Legislature is back in session after a brief recess in April. The MTA/NJ and the Princeton Public Affairs Group continue to work closely with legislators in monitoring, amending or promoting legislation that impacts the marine industry and boaters in the State.

The following is an update on legislation that MTA/NJ is tracking and/or working on:

**Assembly Bill 2624- Boating Safety legislation:** A new boating safety bill, sponsored by Assemblyman Robert Smith was recently introduced in the Assembly. The bill was similar to the Senate version sponsored by Senator Ciesla in that mandated boating safety instruction for all boaters phasing in the requirement over 4 years. The MTA/NJ met with Assemblyman Smith to review the bill and present amendments to the bill similar to those presented to Senator Ciesla. Definitions of boating safety courses and instructors, exemptions to protect boat sales and out of state boaters, as well as elimination of an appropriation that would have taken money from the I BOAT NJ Program fund, were addressed. The MTA/NJ was successful in getting these amendments into the bill and thankful to Assemblyman Smith for his hard work on this legislation. The bill was reported out of the Assembly Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee and now awaits a vote in the Assembly and Committee action and a vote in the Senate. The MTA/NJ will continue to work to ensure that the amendments are carried in the Senate

**Senate Bill 654 (Connors):** The MTA/NJ has been monitoring this bill which revises laws restricting operation of personal watercraft. The bill expands the distance that a PWC must remain from docks, houses, and buoys marking swimming areas from 50 to 100 feet. The bill was released by the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee and awaits a Senate vote. This bill is dramatically different from past versions (and bills moving in other States) as it does not give towns authority to ban or limit PWC's.

**Beneficial Use of Dredged Material Legislation-** Disposal and management options for dredged material in New Jersey are limited and often cost prohibitive. In addition, public perception of dredged material is extremely negative and often an impediment to dredging and the upland management of dredged material.

The MTA/NJ is pursuing legislation that would promote the beneficial use of all appropriate dredged material from dredging projects throughout the State, particularly small quantities of dredged material from non-Port state channels, municipal and private projects. Such a bill would, among other things, mandate State agencies, and encourage municipalities, to look to beneficial use options for management of dredged materials. The goal is to ensure the dual effect of expediting beneficial use planning and siting of dredged material management areas, for public and private projects, as well as serve to promote the use of dredged material as a cost-effective and environmentally friendly resource.

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**American Boating Congress-** Executive Director, Melissa Danko, and MTA/NJ Governmental Relations Committee Co-Chair, Chris Ohrenich, recently traveled to Washington D.C. to attend NMMA's Annual Legislative Conference. Over 100 people representing 25 states attended the conference and visited more than 100 Congressional offices. Participants heard from industry leaders and policy makers on a number of issues including the Recreational Marine Employment Act, Freedom to Fish, the U.S Commission on Ocean Policy, Boating Safety, and a number state legislative issues. Melissa and Chris met with Representative Frank Pallone, and staff for Senator Frank Lautenberg, and Representatives Jim Saxton, Frank LoBiondo and Rush Holt to discuss the boating industry, Wallop Breaux reauthorization and other industry issues. The dates for next year's American Boating Congress are May 1-3, 2005.

### **Support the MTA/NJ PAC**

The MTA/NJ's Political Action Committee needs your support. The MTA/NJ is working diligently to protect your business and our industry from bad legislation -legislation that could be detrimental to your livelihood. The MTA/NJ also works hard to educate New Jersey's legislators and communicate the importance of the marine trade industry to the State of New Jersey. Your contributions to the PAC enable us to keep up the hard work and support the specific legislators who will fight to protect your business and our industry. *Please consider a contribution to the MTA/NJ PAC today!* For more information, please contact the office at 732-206-1400.