



NEWS RELEASE

Dismal Swamp Canal Welcome Center

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Date: November 3, 2009
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On October 14, 2009, the Congressional House acknowledged the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway Association with special recognition on their 10th anniversary (*H. Res. 465*). The Dismal Swamp Canal Welcome Center, (the first Welcome Center built off an Interstate Highway), sits on the banks of the alternate route of the ICW. The Canal is the oldest operating artificial waterway in the United States and has been placed on the National Register of Historical Places, was registered as an engineering landmark in 1988, and was included in the National Park Service's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program in 2004. It was once a 22-mile-long waterway that supported commercial vessels traveling between Virginia and North Carolina. In 1929 it was purchased by the Federal Government for half a million dollars and incorporated into a larger transportation network. Today, the Dismal Swamp Canal is an integral part of the waterway. Director, Penny Leary-Smith states, "As an AIWA board member representing North Carolina, I am proud to recognize this anniversary resolution and the organization's many accomplishments."

House Resolution 465 state that the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway (AIWW) was authorized by the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1937 to provide a safe inside navigation channel for commercial shipping, support and encouragement of interstate commerce, and safe harbor and protection for shipping from inclement weather and wartime enemy attack. The AIWW, completed in 1940, runs along the southeast coast of the U. S. from Norfolk, VA to Key West, Fla., and measures 1,088 miles long. According to the Corps of Engineers, in 2007 the AIWW supported the transportation of 2,543,000 tons of freight traffic, including commodities such as wheat, corn, soybeans, electrical machinery, iron, coal, gasoline, fabricated metal products, and electrical machinery. It also supported a total of 34,184 trips made by recreational, commercial, and military vessels.

The AIWW has enhanced the lives of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida residents as well as the greater southeastern United States for more that six decades. The wildlife,

flora, and fauna along the AIWW provide ample recreational opportunities for birdwatchers, photographers, and boaters.

The AIWA was organized in 1999 to address the navigation challenges of the AIWW and to encourage the continuation and further development of waterborne commerce and recreation on the AIWW. It is an advocate for maintenance of the AIWW to promote safe, cost-effective navigation for commercial and recreational vessels. The Association promotes the AIWW as a vital marine highway along the Atlantic coast. The AIWA has worked over the last decade as an advocate for keeping the waterway open and safe for navigation, earning the title of “Voice of the Waterway.”

The AIWW is also used extensively by recreational boaters. Studies have shown that recreational boaters bring millions of dollars to State budgets. The waterway is also used by vessels not equipped for ocean travel or when weather conditions make the ocean too rough to travel. Congressman Henry Brown, Jr. (SC), states, “Since it runs parallel to Interstate 95, the waterway has the potential to become a major marine highway, serving as a safe, fuel-efficient, and economical alternative to congested highways and rail lines.”

As this waterway continually faces funding challenges, it is very rewarding to receive the accolades bestowed on the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway Association for its hard work and achievements.

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