

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Weekly Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

June 21, 2013

U.S. Has Long History of Aiding, Welcoming Refugees.....	1
Energy Innovation Key to Economic Growth, Clean Environment.....	1
Victim Identification First Step to Ending Human Slavery.....	2
President Obama Proposes Further Cuts in U.S. Nuclear Weapons Stockpile	3
G8 Leaders Seek Political Transition in Syria	4
Food Security, Hunger Remain Significant Global Challenges.....	4
PEPFAR Marks 10 Years, 1 Million Healthy Babies	5
U.S.-EU Trade Talks to Begin Week of July 8	6
Agency Moves to Expand Protected Site of Historic Shipwrecks.....	7
Southeast Asian, U.S. Trade Officials Focus on Deepening Ties	8

U.S. Has Long History of Aiding, Welcoming Refugees

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 20 June 2013

Washington — The United States has a long history of aiding as well as taking in the world's refugees, says Secretary of State John Kerry.

At a special event at the State Department marking World Refugee Day, Kerry noted that the earliest refugees started coming to America in the 17th century — Puritans who fled religious persecution in England.

Today, the United States is the largest recipient country for those fleeing violence, persecution, famine and drought. More than 58,000 refugees from 66 countries were resettled to the United States in fiscal year 2012 alone, and nearly 70,000 refugees are expected to arrive in the United States in the coming fiscal year.

In addition, the United States provides more aid to the UNHCR — the United Nations Refugee Agency, the office responsible for aiding the world's refugees — than any other country, and more than the next six countries combined, Kerry said.

"This funding provides clean water, provides shelter, provides medicine to families around the globe," Kerry said. "This funding will advance our efforts on behalf of those who simply cannot defend themselves, including the elderly and the disabled. It will help to continue all of the programs to protect women and girls from abuse and exploitation and to aid the victims of gender-based violence. And we make this investment because it makes a real difference in the lives of fellow human beings."

Kerry also announced that the United States is nearly doubling its contributions this year to the UNHCR. "We are giving to the High Commission on Refugees a \$415 million commitment that brings our 2013 total to \$890 million," the secretary said.

The presence of refugees in the United States, Kerry said, "makes our country more diverse, our culture richer and our national character stronger." Kerry noted that the families of former U.S. Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and Madeleine Albright came to the United States to escape Hitler and Stalin, and a number of State Department Foreign Service officers serving today were once refugees.

In light of the many refugees who have built fruitful lives in the United States — contributing to business, science, technology, and literature — "it is worth all of us standing up for the world's most vulnerable, fighting on behalf of refugees, people who are determined to work hard, to give back, to rebuild their lives," Kerry said.

World Refugee Day, observed each year on June 20, seeks to raise public awareness to the plight of refugees everywhere. This commemorative day was established in 2000 by the United Nations General Assembly.

Energy Innovation Key to Economic Growth, Clean Environment

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 20 June 2013

Washington — The second person to serve President Obama as energy secretary is roaring into the job at full throttle. Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Ernest Moniz appeared before the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology June 18 to explain how he'll tackle the administration's goals to produce more energy, grow the economy and protect the environment at the same time.

Moniz steps into the position during a period of profound change in the U.S. energy sector. New discoveries and new technologies have created significant increases in domestic energy production, allowing a decrease in reliance on oil imports. In the renewable energy segment of the market, innovation and environmental concerns have resulted in a doubling in the output of power generated by wind and solar. The results translate into progress in reducing greenhouse gases.

"Carbon emissions have fallen to the lowest level in the U.S. in nearly two decades," said Moniz.

He cautioned against belief in quick fixes and overnight solutions for problems in the energy sector, which have been decades in the making. But Moniz and the president have a huge goal in mind for the not so distant future.

"Shifting America's cars and trucks off oil" is what the administration is aiming for, Moniz said. More efficient vehicles, alternative fuels and vehicle electrification all are part of the solution, along with new standards for gradual increases that manufacturers must make in the fuel efficiency of new vehicles coming out of factories.

Transportation consumes about 27 percent of all energy used in the United States each year. It accounts for more than 70 percent of all oil use. Transportation is the second-largest U.S. energy consumer, just behind industrial enterprises, which consume about 30 percent of all energy used, according to the Energy Information Administration, an office of DOE.

Another key strategy for doing more with less energy and less pollution is ongoing research and development of better technologies. Moniz said the Obama administration is asking Congress to provide that research funding for upcoming budget years.

The Democratic administration and the Republican-controlled House of Representatives have found agreement difficult when it comes to budget matters. But House Science Committee Chairman Lamar Smith, a Republican from Texas, also said the research will be critical to future development. Research should be devoted, Smith said, to making alternative fuel technologies more affordable.

“Global coal use is expected to increase 50 percent by 2035, which will dramatically increase carbon dioxide emissions,” Smith said. “This won’t change unless alternative forms of energy become more cost-effective.”

Decreases in greenhouse gas emissions from the United States will do little to prevent dangerous levels of climate warming if emissions increase in the rest of the world. So affordable, alternative energy technologies accessible to developing countries are the “only practical long-term solution,” Smith said.

Moniz says DOE has calculated that tremendous gains can be made with research investments.

“These investments will help us double American energy productivity by 2030, double renewable electricity generation again by 2020, cut net oil imports in half by the end of the decade [and] save consumers and businesses money by reducing energy use,” Moniz said.

The DOE's SunShot Initiative is a program already working to make solar energy cost-competitive with conventional sources of electrical energy. In the little more than two years since it began, the initiative has worked with private sector partners to start about 150 projects, all working to better develop aspects of solar energy technologies so they are more readily available for integration into the nation's overall energy grid. Those activities aim to bring down the kilowatt-hour price of solar-generated power so that it is cost-competitive with power now generated by carbon-based fuels.

The U.S government also invests in innovation through the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) to support high-impact energy-related research projects with the potential “to transform the energy sector,” Moniz said. The agency has been at work only since 2009, but already it has supported scientists and researchers who are making important advances, such as building batteries with greater energy density and engineering microbes to make a transportation fuel.

Victim Identification First Step to Ending Human Slavery

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 20 June 2013

Washington — Identifying human trafficking victims is

the first step in ending modern-day slavery, says U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry.

Before an audience of diplomats, nongovernmental organization representatives and anti-trafficking activists at the June 19 rollout of the 13th annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, Kerry said, “There are countless voiceless people, countless nameless people, except to their families, or perhaps a phony name by which they are being exploited, who look to us for their freedom and for the possibility of life itself. ... As we look at the challenge of modern-day slavery, regrettably our focus has to begin with the victims.”

Based on information U.S. diplomats have collected from governments worldwide, some 46,000 trafficking victims have been identified in the last year, the secretary said. That's a mere fraction of the estimated 27 million men, women and children who are believed to be enslaved for labor or for the sex industry. Nonetheless, there was a 10 percent increase in victim identification last year, according to the report.

Because many trafficking victims go unrecognized and many remain hidden through fear and the power of their enslavers, traffickers are able to operate with impunity in this billion-dollar criminal enterprise, the report says. And while a majority of the world's countries now criminalize all forms of human trafficking, government officials unevenly apply anti-trafficking laws, according to the report. Even so, trafficking convictions rose in the last year by 20 percent, from 3,969 to 4,746, the report says.

This year's report focuses on victim identification as a top priority in the global movement to combat trafficking in persons. It details training and techniques that make identification efforts successful. These innovations, the report says, will enable more effective delivery of services to trafficking victims and aid in developing improvements in the global response to trafficking.

“Only through vigorous victim identification can we ensure that trafficking survivors get the services they need, can participate in legal proceedings, and can have their voices heard,” Kerry writes in the introduction to this year's TIP report.

“Ending modern slavery must remain a foreign policy priority,” Kerry writes. “Human trafficking undermines the rule of law and creates instability. It tears apart families and communities. It damages the environment and corrupts the global supply chains and labor markets that keep the world's economies thriving.”

Human trafficking is also “an assault on our most dearly held values of freedom and basic human dignity,” Kerry

writes. "American leadership means protecting those values at home and working to advance them around the world."

The United States will support people who are working to prevent trafficking, who come to the aid of victims, and who work to bring traffickers to justice, Kerry says. "We will continue to do so by bringing together an array of stakeholders — from civil society and the faith community to the private sector and government leaders — to forge partnerships aimed at spurring innovation and improving collaboration," he writes.

"Governments bear primary responsibility for responding to this crime," he says, and the annual TIP report is "the gold standard in assessing how well governments — including our own — are meeting that responsibility."

This year's report includes narratives for 188 countries and territories. The two new entries are on Bhutan and St. Maarten. The report is used by the U.S. government as a diplomatic tool in its bilateral and multilateral relations.

President Obama Proposes Further Cuts in U.S. Nuclear Weapons Stockpile

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 19 June 2013

Washington — President Obama says he wants to take "additional steps forward" with Russia to cut the number of deployed nuclear weapons and move further beyond the nuclear postures both countries held during the Cold War.

Speaking in Berlin June 19, Obama said he is pursuing his long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons, first announced in Prague in 2009, and said that as a result of the 2011 New START Treaty with Russia, both countries are already on track to cut the number of deployed nuclear weapons to their lowest levels since the 1950s.

"After a comprehensive review, I've determined that we can ensure the security of America and our allies, and maintain a strong and credible strategic deterrent, while reducing our deployed strategic nuclear weapons by up to one-third" beyond the cuts made in New START, he said.

Along with calling for the negotiated cuts, the president said he will also work with NATO members to "seek bold reductions in U.S. and Russian tactical weapons in Europe."

Obama said the United States will host a 2016 summit to follow up on efforts to secure nuclear materials around the world, and that his administration will work to build support for the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

He also said he would call on all nations to begin negotiations on a treaty that would end the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

"These are steps we can take to create a world of peace with justice," Obama said.

According to a June 19 fact sheet released by the White House, the president's proposals are "the latest in a series of concrete steps the President has made to advance his Prague agenda and the long-term goal of achieving the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons."

Obama had directed U.S. national security agencies to conduct a detailed analysis of nuclear deterrence requirements to help align U.S. nuclear policies to "the 21st century security environment."

Under the president's new guidance, the United States recognizes that "the potential for a surprise, disarming nuclear attack is exceedingly remote," and it "will only consider the use of nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States or its allies and partners," the fact sheet said.

Obama also directed the Department of Defense to strengthen U.S. non-nuclear capabilities and to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in deterring non-nuclear attacks.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, the fact sheet said, the United States will maintain "a safe, secure and effective arsenal" to deter attacks and to guarantee its own defense, as well as that of its allies and partners.

The fact sheet said the president's guidance "will maintain strategic stability with Russia and China, strengthen regional deterrence, and reassure U.S. allies and partners, while laying the groundwork for negotiations with Russia on how we can mutually and verifiably reduce our strategic and nonstrategic nuclear stockpiles and live up to our commitments under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty."

In remarks at the George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs in Washington, Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation Thomas Countryman said the progress made by the United States and Russia in reducing their nuclear stockpiles has been "quite impressive."

Speaking June 18, Countryman said there has been "a reduction of about 80 percent from the peak of the number of weapons that the U.S. and the Russians have had."

Countryman cautioned that there is "no quick fix" to achieving the president's goal of getting rid of nuclear

weapons, but said the United States is “on a realistic path aimed at reaching nuclear disarmament in stages.”

G8 Leaders Seek Political Transition in Syria

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer | 19 June 2013

Washington — President Obama, echoing a consensus reached at the Group of Eight (G8) Summit in Northern Ireland, says he wants to build on efforts to achieve a political transition in Syria.

“We will continue to work to try to find a political solution to this process and, most importantly, alleviate suffering and ensure that chemical weapons are not used by anyone inside of Syria,” Obama said June 18 following a meeting with French President Francois Hollande. That solution includes building a “strong opposition that can function in a post-Assad world,” he said.

The G8 leaders, meeting June 17–18 at the Lough Erne Resort in Northern Ireland, said in a final summit communiqué: “We are determined to work together to stop the bloodshed and loss of life in Syria and to support the Syrian people to establish peace and stability through political means.”

The G8 includes Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. The group represents approximately 50 percent of the world’s gross domestic product, or broadest measure of national wealth.

At a June 19 press conference in Berlin with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Obama said the G8 is united in its desire to see a negotiated political settlement in Syria. “We want to see a Syria that’s unified, democratic and at peace,” the president said.

The summit communiqué followed a report from U.S. intelligence agencies that said the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad had used various banned chemical weapons approximately eight times on Syrian opposition forces in a 2-year-old civil conflict. Obama said that the results of the intelligence gathering, and intelligence from several allies, including France, are being provided to the United Nations and the European Union for further action.

Obama had warned the Assad regime that using chemical weapons on Syrian civilians was an act that would not be acceptable and was in violation of international norms. An international treaty banning the use of chemical and biological weapons was approved in Geneva in 1925 and later entered into force in 1928.

The United Nations has estimated that approximately 92,901 Syrian civilians have been killed since the conflict

began in March 2011. The civil conflict followed a widespread government crackdown on peaceful demonstrations.

“Both of our governments have strong evidence that, in fact, chemical weapons have been used in the past by the Assad regime,” Obama said. “But we are very comfortable with the approach taken by the G8 that allows the U.N. the full powers it needs to investigate and establish these facts on the ground.”

The United Nations estimates that the conflict has led to 4.2 million people being displaced in Syria and 1.6 million refugees spreading to neighboring nations within the region.

“We acknowledge the vital humanitarian role played by neighboring countries hosting Syrian refugees, above all Lebanon and Jordan, in dealing with the significant economic and security pressures they are facing as a result of the conflict and refugee influx,” the G8 communiqué noted. The United Nations has appealed for nations to raise \$5.2 billion in assistance for the refugees during 2013.

Obama announced at the G8 Summit that the United States was providing more than \$300 million in additional lifesaving humanitarian assistance to help feed, shelter and provide medical care for children, women and men affected by the ongoing Syrian conflict.

“The United States remains the single-largest contributor of humanitarian assistance for the Syria crisis to nearly \$815 million since the crisis began,” the White House noted in a new fact sheet on assistance June 17.

The additional \$300 million will be used for increased food aid, medical care and clean water and will provide shelter and other relief supplies for families suffering in Syria and neighboring countries, the White House said.

Food Security, Hunger Remain Significant Global Challenges

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer | 19 June 2013

Washington — Secretary of State John Kerry announced the 2013 World Food Prize laureates, who are pioneers in plant biotechnology, saying shortages of food in the poorest regions of the world remain a staggering challenge.

At an announcement June 19 at the State Department, Kerry said that nearly 870 million people, one-eighth of the world’s population, suffer from chronic hunger.

“And it is obviously a trap that prevents people from realizing their God-given potential, but more than that,

places people in extremis, places communities in extremis," Kerry said at the midday ceremony.

"It can actually feed into terrorism. It feeds into failed states. It feeds into all of the challenges that we face in terms of building order and creating stability on this planet," Kerry added. "And the struggle for food is, in the end, a struggle for life itself."

The 2013 World Food Prize was awarded to Marc Van Montagu, professor emeritus at the Institute of Plant Biotechnology for Developing Countries, Department of Molecular Genetics, at Ghent University, Belgium; Mary-Dell Chilton, distinguished science fellow at Syngenta Biotechnology Inc. in Triangle Park, North Carolina; and Robert Fraley, executive vice president and chief technology officer at Monsanto Company in St. Louis.

"They were honored for their independent breakthrough achievements in founding, developing and applying modern plant biotechnology," the department said. "Their research has made it possible for farmers to grow crops with improved yields, resistance to insects and disease, and the ability to tolerate extreme variations in climate such as excessive heat and drought."

The three scientists worked independently, but reported their research findings at the 1983 Miami Winter Biochemistry Symposium. Their announcements marked the beginning of a plant biotechnology era that has changed modern agriculture.

Kerry said that the food security challenges the world faces are well beyond what the statistics tell world leaders and scientists.

"The challenge is that by 2050, the world's population is going to grow to 9 billion people," Kerry said. "That is going to demand at least a 60 percent increase over our current agricultural production."

Kerry said that President Obama made combating hunger a moral imperative for the United States, and he put food security at the forefront of the development agenda. Kerry added that the president has rallied global leaders to reverse the three-decade decline in agricultural investment and put forth new initiatives, like Feed the Future, that altered the development equation.

Instead of only giving out food, the United States seeks to empower people in agriculture with the skills and resources to be able to improve their lives and produce food, Kerry said.

This year marks the 27th anniversary of the World Food Prize, which recognizes individuals who have advanced human development by improving the quality, quantity

or availability of food in the world. Each year, more than 4,000 institutions and organizations around the world are invited to nominate candidates for the prize.

The laureates will be awarded the prize at an October 17 ceremony during the Borlaug Dialogue international symposium in Des Moines, Iowa, which is attended by representatives from more than 65 countries.

The World Food Prize was created in 1986 by Norman Borlaug, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to fight hunger. Borlaug was honored in 1970 for work that boosted agricultural production in what has become known as the "Green Revolution."

PEPFAR Marks 10 Years, 1 Million Healthy Babies

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 18 June 2013

Washington – One million babies are alive today because their HIV-infected mothers received medication to prevent them from transmitting the virus to their infants. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry noted that landmark June 18 in a State Department ceremony recognizing the 10th anniversary of the President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which launched large-scale U.S. assistance for treatment and care of people with HIV/AIDS.

With distribution of assistance exceeding \$37 billion, PEPFAR is the largest and most successful foreign assistance program ever adopted, Kerry said.

"One million babies – like Tatu's daughter Faith – can grow up happy and healthy, go to school, realize their dreams, break out of this cycle, maybe even have sons and daughters of their own free from the burden and the fear of HIV," Kerry said.

Tatu Msangi, a nursing officer at a medical center in Tanzania who attended the anniversary ceremony, had discovered in 2004 she was both pregnant and HIV-positive. Though shocked and fearful, Msangi received the drugs that prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV and gave birth to a healthy daughter she named Faith.

"My daughter Faith is all the proof you need that an AIDS-free generation is possible," Msangi told the audience, many of whom have vivid memories and their own stories to tell about the AIDS timeline and implementation of PEPFAR.

When the U.S. Congress approved PEPFAR funding, more than 30 million people worldwide were infected and, in the developing world, only a small fraction were receiving treatment. Some experts believed the law was too late, Kerry said.

"Today a disease that seemed unstoppable is in retreat," Kerry said. He cited supporting statistics: New HIV infections have declined by 20 percent, the number of deaths is down one-third in Africa, and 8 million people are receiving drugs that can keep the virus in check.

Kerry said 13 nations have now reached the "tipping point," where the number of people receiving treatment exceeds the number of newly infected people. That means the virus is under control, and in decline. That means that progressing to the birth of a generation without AIDS is possible, he said.

With U.S. assistance under the PEPFAR program, Namibian Minister of Health Richard Nehabi Kamwi said, his country has passed the tipping point. With AIDS in decline, he said, Namibia is also making enormous progress overcoming the diseases that are so often associated with HIV infection.

"We are on the verge of malaria elimination, working stringently towards TB elimination," Kamwi said at the State Department ceremony. "And with the strength of our global partnership, Namibia may be the first country on the African continent to eliminate HIV transmission."

Providing funding for large deliveries of AIDS drugs was only one component of PEPFAR activities. The program also worked to establish the clinics, the health care workforce, the laboratories and other facilities that could provide not just AIDS care, but a broader level of overall health care than had been available before. In six countries where assistance has been most intense, Global AIDS Ambassador Eric Goosby said, significant health care improvements have been achieved.

"We've seen reductions in maternal-child, and TB-related mortality, dramatic reductions," Goosby said. "We've seen increased use of antenatal care and wider availability of safe blood [for transfusion]."

Both Goosby and Kerry acknowledged that there is more to do, more people who need medicine, and more places that need hospitals. But Kerry said the PEPFAR successes should provide inspiration to move forward, "to know that we can do the remarkable, we can find solutions to what seems to be unsolvable, we can overcome the insurmountable, and we can leave politics and ideology at the wayside in order to choose life."

Kerry extended thanks to many lawmakers, activists and medical experts who contributed to the PEPFAR mission. Goosby called them "AIDS heroes" and announced that his office is launching an annual program to recognize people who have made great contributions to the effort to combat the disease and improve global health. The first individuals to receive the honor will be named on World

AIDS Day December 1.

U.S.-EU Trade Talks to Begin Week of July 8

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 17 June 2013

Washington — President Obama and European leaders said negotiations for a new trade agreement known as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) will begin in Washington in early July. The talks are aimed at deepening the economic relationship between the United States and the European Union (EU).

Speaking in Lough Erne, Northern Ireland, June 17 on the sidelines of the Group of Eight (G8) summit, Obama said the U.S.-EU relationship is already the largest in the world, encompassing nearly half of the global gross domestic product and totaling about \$1 trillion in goods and services and nearly \$4 trillion in investment in each other's economies every year.

"This potentially groundbreaking partnership would deepen those ties. It would increase exports, decrease barriers to trade and investment. As part of broader growth strategies in both our economies, it would support hundreds of thousands of jobs on both sides of the ocean," the president said.

According to a June 17 fact sheet from the White House, the first round of T-TIP negotiations will take place the week of July 8 under the leadership of the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

Along with helping to increase trade and investment levels between the U.S. and the EU, the agreement would eliminate all tariffs on trade, as well as address "behind the border" nontariff trade barriers impeding the flow of trade goods, including agricultural products.

The fact sheet said the agreement would also promote greater compatibility, transparency and cooperation, while maintaining high levels of health, safety and environmental protection.

The T-TIP can also serve to develop rules, principles and ways to cooperate on issues of global concern such as intellectual property rights protection, how to address state-owned enterprises and discriminatory localization barriers to trade, the fact sheet said.

Joining the president in a press appearance in Lough Erne were G8 summit host David Cameron, prime minister of the United Kingdom; José Manuel Barroso, president of the European Commission; and Herman Van Rompuy, president of the European Council.

Barroso said the T-TIP would benefit not only Europeans and Americans but the rest of the world as well.

"Given the integrated supply chains in today's global markets, everyone can benefit from this agreement," he said.

Through the negotiations, the United States and the EU are writing "the next chapter of what is our common history, also forged by the sense that we share the same principles and values, the principles and values of open economies and open societies," Barroso said.

Van Rompuy said opening up trade between Europe and the United States is "simply common sense."

"Not just our own economies, but also those of our trading partners will benefit. The positive ramifications will even go beyond the economy as such," he said, adding that as the global economy becomes more interdependent the world will become safer.

Cameron said the deal could add as much as \$157 billion to the EU economy, \$127 billion to the U.S. economy and as much as \$133 billion to economies in the rest of the world.

"We're talking about what could be the biggest bilateral trade deal in history; a deal that will have a greater impact than all the other trade deals on the table put together," he said.

In the coming negotiations, both sides need to maintain the political will to overcome their differences. "This is a once-in-a-generation prize and we are determined to seize it," Cameron said.

Agency Moves to Expand Protected Site of Historic Shipwrecks

17 June 2013

Washington — A U.S. federal agency is asking for public comments on a proposal to expand a marine sanctuary in the Great Lakes that holds historic significance because of the shipwrecks below its waters.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) on June 14 asked for public comment on a draft environmental impact statement and proposed rule for expanding the boundaries of Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary in Lake Huron from its current 1,160 square kilometers to 11,137 square kilometers.

Located in northwestern Lake Huron, Thunder Bay is adjacent to one of the most treacherous stretches of water within the Great Lakes system. Unpredictable weather, murky fog banks, sudden gales and rocky shoals earned the area the nickname "Shipwreck Alley."

NOAA said that the sanctuary protects one of America's

best-preserved and nationally significant collections of shipwrecks. "Fire, ice, collisions, and storms have claimed over 200 vessels in and around Thunder Bay," NOAA said. "To date, more than 50 shipwrecks have been discovered within the sanctuary and an additional 30 wrecks have been located outside of the sanctuary boundaries."

Although the sheer number of shipwrecks is impressive, NOAA said, it is the range of vessel types located in the sanctuary that makes the collection nationally significant. From an 1844 sidewheel steamer to a modern 152-meter-long German freighter, the shipwrecks of Thunder Bay represent a microcosm of maritime commerce and travel on the Great Lakes, the agency added.

Northeastern Michigan's maritime landscape includes the hundreds of shipwrecks located on Lake Huron bottomlands. It also encompasses all of the cultural and natural features related to maritime heritage. Lifesaving stations, lighthouses, historic boats and ships, commercial fishing camps, docks, and working ports are among the more obvious historic and archeological features.

Many features are less visible and some remain unrecognized or unknown, NOAA said. Humans have used the waters of Thunder Bay and its shores for thousands of years, NOAA said. Geological and archeological evidence suggests a high probability of prehistoric archeological sites awaiting discovery, NOAA said. "In addition to helping to protect and interpret individual sites, managing the sanctuary as a maritime cultural landscape reveals a broad historical canvas that can encompass many different perspectives to foster an interconnected understanding of the maritime past," NOAA said. "The maritime cultural landscape allows Thunder Bay's maritime heritage to continue to unfold as new discoveries are made and encourages an increasingly diverse public to find shared meaning in this nationally and internationally significant place."

The proposed expansion is based on several years of research by NOAA and its scientific partners as well as public input, and would include protection of an additional 47 known historic shipwrecks.

One of 14 sites managed by NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Thunder Bay sanctuary currently protects 45 nationally significant shipwrecks. Research indicates that as many 100 shipwreck sites are yet to be discovered in northern Lake Huron, NOAA said.

"The proposal to expand the sanctuary is the result of a collaborative effort that involved considerable input from all sectors of the local community," said Jeff Gray, sanctuary superintendent. "We welcome further public review and comment as we go forward with the

important job of managing this special place, which is important to the regional economy and protects world-class historical and recreational shipwreck sites.”

NOAA says sanctuary managers rely on a variety of mechanisms to understand and protect a sanctuary’s living and historical resources. The National Marine Sanctuaries Act, along with site-specific legislation and regulations, provides the legal framework outlining the activities that are allowed or prohibited. The sanctuaries implement a permit system to regulate and oversee potentially harmful activities in sanctuaries. This framework may be enhanced by the adoption of state and other federal laws and regulations, according to NOAA.

NOAA is holding public hearings to gain input on the plan and is accepting public comments on the expansion proposal until August 13. After the deadline, the agency will examine the comments and announce further action. The proposal is available on a U.S. government rulemaking website.

Southeast Asian, U.S. Trade Officials Focus on Deepening Ties

14 June 2013

Washington — Job-promoting trade and economic opportunities between the United States and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) were the focus of a recent “road show” involving trade ministers and other senior economic officials from both sides, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) says.

“Further deepening our ties to ASEAN is a priority for the United States, and I am pleased that this week’s ASEAN Road Show, which began in California and culminated in Washington, D.C., has highlighted the opportunities to promote jobs through enhanced trade and investment between us,” said Acting USTR Miriam Sapiro.

“We believe that today’s discussions will propel our efforts to further our economic partnership, which holds significant promise, especially as ASEAN works to achieve full regional economic integration by 2015,” Sapiro said following a June 13 meeting in Washington between ASEAN and U.S. delegations.

In the meeting, the two sides discussed concrete initiatives to deepen their economic ties and create new opportunities that would benefit their businesses and workers, USTR said in a press release issued the same day. The delegations sought progress on work underway as part of the U.S.-ASEAN Enhanced Economic Engagement Initiative, launched in 2012 by President Obama and the 10 ASEAN leaders. The ministers also exchanged views on regional initiatives and how they

could work together to support a successful World Trade Organization ministerial meeting in Bali, Indonesia, in December.

The ASEAN delegation included Brunei Darussalam Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Lim Jock Seng, Malaysian Trade Minister Mustapa Mohamed, Burmese Minister of National Planning and Economic Development U Kan Zaw, Lao Minister of Industry and Commerce Viyaketh Nam and Philippine Secretary of Trade Gregory Domingo. On the U.S. side, Sapiro was joined by Acting Secretary of Commerce Cam Kerry, Under Secretary of Commerce Francisco Sánchez and State Department Acting Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Joseph Yun.

U.S. goods trade with ASEAN was \$198 billion in 2012, making the 10 countries of ASEAN collectively the fourth-largest U.S. export market and fifth-largest overall trading partner. U.S. trade in services with ASEAN countries totaled \$30 billion in 2011, the latest year for which data is available.

Collectively, the ASEAN nations represent a top-five market for U.S. farmers and ranchers, with U.S. agricultural exports in 2012 of nearly \$10 billion. U.S. foreign direct investment in ASEAN totaled more than \$159 billion in 2011.

ASEAN members include Brunei Darussalam, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov>)