Interview with Thierry GUIMBAUD – May 11th 2020
General Director VNF – Voies Navigables de France

*Key player in the promotion and operation of waterways in France, **Voies Navigables de France** (VNF, French navigable waterway authority), fulfil three missions: the development of river logistics, land use planning around the waterway and water resources management.*

VNF manage a network of 6,700 km of rivers and canals, with a dedicated staff of 4,300 p throughout the country.

Today we share the day-to-day activity and some of the challenges with Thierry Guimbaud, Director General of VNF.

Thierry Guimbaud, how did VNF get through the recent period of covid-19 outbreak and confinement?

To cope with the Covid-19 epidemic, VNF is committed on a daily basis to maintain two of its essential public service missions at the best possible level: enabling the continuity of river transport for supplying France with essential products, and guaranteeing security of the hydraulic network for populations and users in a tense water context.

From the end of January and given the situation in China, we set up a watch. This anticipation device was very useful.

It gradually ramped up to become a light crisis structure and then, at the beginning of March, an executive crisis committee with all the managers of the establishment. This anticipation made it possible to place all "tertiary" agents in a telework situation and to close all the administrative sites from Tuesday, March 17 at 12 noon without the support functions being affected.

It must be said that with 1 head-office, 7 regional divisions and 500 implantations in France, VNF has resolutely turned over the last three years to modern working tools and dematerialization. We were already trained on videoconferencing and on devices for sharing data and documents. This crisis has taken us a new, decisive step in this direction. I thus have been able to "meet" more than 200 field managers this past month, chat very regularly with staff representatives, and get in contact with all VNF staff.

Credit photo @ VNF

We have adapted the service levels over the 2,200 kilometers of our wide-gauge network in order to