

BIG RIVER COALITION



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Mr. Richard Boe
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Environmental Compliance Branch
P.O. Box 60267
New Orleans, LA 70160-0267

Navigation Support For Deepening the Mississippi River Ship Channel to 50 Feet

Mr. Boe,

The Big River Coalition (BRC) was created in Fiscal Year 2011 in response to the announcement by the Commander of the United States Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) Mississippi Valley Division that confirmed the discontinuation of reprogramming funds to maintain the Mississippi River Ship Channel Gulf to Baton Rouge (Louisiana). This position change immediately meant the Mississippi River Ship Channel would no longer receive preferential treatment. Shortly after the 1989 grounding of the M/V MARSHAL KONYEV (Pilottown) that, in essence, closed the Ship Channel to all traffic, the USACE's Headquarters announced in a position statement that it would maintain the nation's most critical navigation channel. The BRC's originally focused on obtaining additional funding to supplement the shortfall in the Corps' Operations and Maintenance budget, to strive to establish a legislative firewall around the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund and to represent members of the Mississippi River navigation industry in matters related to coastal restoration. As our membership grew and continued to make effective progress on these initiatives, members supported the Coalition's commitment to actively advocate for the deepening of the Mississippi River Ship Channel Gulf to Baton Rouge to 50 feet.

The Coalition strives to maximize the economic efficiencies that promote increased maritime commerce and international trade. The Lower Mississippi River Deep-Draft Ports Complex (Baton Rouge, South Louisiana, New Orleans, St. Bernard, and Plaquemines) is a powerhouse in international trade and the nation's busiest port system. The cargoes moved through these five ports account for nearly 70 percent of the Nation's grain exports and more than 20 percent of the Nation's coal and petroleum cargoes.

BIG RIVER COALITION

Representatives of the Coalition attended the recent Public Scoping Meetings that were jointly sponsored by the USACE Mississippi Valley New Orleans and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. The Scoping Meetings were highlighted by overwhelming comments expressing support to deepen the Mississippi Ship Channel to 50 feet. Although, a few supporters were hopeful that the Draft Supplemental Environmental Statement (SEIS) and the General Reevaluation Report (GRR) would properly address mitigation as related to saltwater intrusion and to maximize the beneficial use of the sediment removed during the deepening. The Coalition is aware that since the channel was deepened from 40 feet to 45 feet that the Corps had to respond to three historic draughts by building the saltwater containment barrier (1988, 1999 and 2012). The successful construction of the saltwater barrier on an average of every nine years has prevented the saltwater wedge from fouling the water intakes for the city of New Orleans as designed. Therefore, the saltwater sill should ameliorate any concerns about the saltwater wedge even if it has to be constructed more frequently.

The Coalition has also worked with the Corps to increase the beneficial use of dredge material in the environmentally sensitive bird's foot delta through the utilization of cutterhead dredges as part of the Corps channel maintenance program. The Corps and navigation leaders began utilizing cutterhead dredges in the area of Southwest Pass in 2009. This effort has created land/wetlands equivalent to approximately 4,000 acres in this environmentally sensitive bird's foot delta by removing sediment from the navigation channel and beneficially utilizing it along the channel edges. The newly created land or wetlands conversely protect the critical navigation channel from storm surge and/or thalweg capture and has received recognition from state and federal government partners for the benefits of creating land in this delicate deltaic region (mainly National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, USACE, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, National Weather Service, Plaquemines Parish and the United States Geological Survey). The Coalition has been advised that the Corps also foresees the river deepening project as an opportunity to beneficially create several thousand acres through similar sediment recycling efforts.

Fiscal Year	Southwest Pass	Hopper Dredge Disposal Area
2009	46 Acres	
2010	50 Acres	466 Acres
2011	101 Acres	70 Acres
2012	530 Acres	0 Acres
2013	228 Acres	851 Acres
2014	419 Acres	None (Combined for FY 15)
2015	450 Acres	700 Acres
Total	1825 Acres	2157 Acres

The economic impact of the Lower Mississippi River Deep-Draft Ports Complex is nationally significant. Louisiana industries dedicated to national and global trade account for 396,300 jobs and \$19.5 billion in earnings. More than 170,000 of these Louisiana jobs are solely

BIG RIVER COALITION

dependent upon international trade. Louisiana exports have doubled from \$32 billion in 2009 to more than \$65 billion in 2014. The exports handled by the Lower Mississippi Deep-Draft Ports Complex have increased an astounding 227 percent in the past decade. In fact, 25 percent of Louisiana's Gross Domestic Product is derived from exports, the largest amount ever recorded for any single state in the United States. Louisiana ports carry over 25% of the country's waterborne trade. Regardless of the metric, Louisiana's economy depends upon robust international trade.

The deepening of the Lower Mississippi River to 50 feet (dredging) offers incredible benefits to America:

- The Lower Mississippi River Deep-Draft Port Complex is the largest in the United States with a deep-draft shipping channel that is over 250 miles long and offers waterborne access into 31 states and over 12,500 miles of inland waterways. This makes the Mississippi River the second most productive river transportation system in the world, behind only the Yangtze River in China.
- The Lower Mississippi River Deep-Draft Ports Complex moves approximately 500 million tons of cargoes each year. The Port of New Orleans ranks among the top ten ports by tonnage and services cruise ships, providing additional contribution to the local economy through tourism revenues. In 2014 for the first time over 1 million cruise passengers were arrived through the Port of New Orleans, the financial impact of the additional tourism dollars is in the tens of millions.
- The Port of South Louisiana alone ships nearly 300 million tons of cargo annually—more tonnage than any other port in the Western Hemisphere.
- Cargo exports through the ports on the Lower Mississippi River are estimated to be worth more than \$200 billion a year.
- Bulk grain vessels with a draft of 50 feet would carry approximately 25,725 metric tons of additional soybeans cargo (950,000 bushels) representing an estimated value of over \$15 million per vessel.
- Informa Economics, Inc. estimates the larger, more efficient Cape class (110-200k DWT) ships, reduce the cost of the movement of grains to northeast Asia by an all-water Panama Canal route by \$0.31 to \$0.35 per bushel of grain.

The Big River Coalition applauds the United States Army Corps' of Engineers (Mississippi Valley New Orleans) and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development for undertaking this historic effort. The Coalition remains indebted to our federal and state project sponsors and will continue to assist with the process and to provide documentation as requested.

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Supporters of the positions stated above are shown below.

Admiral Security Services, Inc.
AEP River Operations
American Commercial Lines
Archer Daniels Midlandmarineaux
Arkansas Oklahoma Port Operators Associations
Arkansas Waterways Commission
Associated Branch Pilots of the Port of New Orleans (Bar Pilots)
Associated Federal Pilots and Docking Masters of Louisiana
Association of Ship Brokers & Agents (USA), Inc.
Associated Terminals, LLC
Belle Chasse Marine Transportation
Bertel Shipping Company
Biehl & Company, Inc.
Bisso Towboat Co., Inc.
Blue Marine Transportation, Inc.
Blue Water Shipping Company
CGB Enterprises, Inc.
Capes Southport Agencies
Chalmette Refining
Channel Design Group
Channel Shipyard Companies
CHS Terminal
China Ship Services
City of Vidalia (Louisiana)
Committee of 100 for Economic Development Inc.
Complete Logistical Services, LLC
Consolidated Terminals and Logistics, Co.
Con-Tech International
Cooper Consolidated Stevedoring & Marine Services
Cooper/T. Smith Mooring, Co.
Cooper/T. Smith Stevedoring
Crescent River Port Pilots Association
Crescent Towing
Dredging Contractors of America
Dow Chemical Company
Duffy Maritime Consultants, LLC
Emerald International Corporation
Exxon Mobil Refining & Supply Company
Fillette, Green Shipping Services (USA), Inc.
Five Rivers Distribution

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Foresight Energy, LLC
GAC Shipping (USA) Inc.
General Maritime Transportation Services, Inc.
General Steamship Corp., Ltd.
Greater New Orleans, Inc.
Great Lakes Dredge & Dock Co. LLC
Gulf Harbor Shipping, LLC
Gulf Intracoastal Canal Association
Gulf Inland Marine Services, Inc.
Impala Warehousing (US) LLC
Imtech Marine USA, Inc.
Inchcape Shipping Services
Ingram Barge Company
Inland Rivers Ports and Terminals, Inc.
International Business Committee of the World Trade Center of New Orleans
International Freight Forwarders and Customs Brokers Association of New Orleans
International Marine Terminals
J.W. Allen & Co., Inc.
Jantran, Inc.
Johnston's Port 33, Inc.
K&C Shipping, Inc.
LBH-USA D.B.A. Celtic International
Lake Charles Harbor and Terminal District
Lake Providence Port Commission (Louisiana)
Louisiana International Deep Water Gulf Transfer Terminal Authority
Louisiana Maritime Association
Louisiana Maritime International Chamber of Commerce
Louisiana River Pilots Association
Lott Ship Agency, Inc.
Madison Port (Louisiana)
Marathon Petroleum Company LP
Maritime & Commodity Services, LLC
Maritime Endeavors Shipping Co., Ltd.
MaRyan Mining, LLC
Mid-Gulf Shipping Company, Inc.
Mississippi Valley Trade and Transport Council
Moran-Gulf Shipping Agencies, Inc.
Moran Towing Corporation
Naftilos Shipping Agencies, Ltd.
Natchitoches Parish Port (Louisiana)
National Association of Maritime Organizations
National Corn Growers Association

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New Orleans – Baton Rouge Steamship Pilots Association

New Orleans & Gulf Coast Railway

Newship (USA), Inc.

Nord-Sud Shipping, Inc.

Norton Lilly International

Offshore Marine Group, LLC

Page & Jones, Inc.

Pellerin Milnor Corporation

Plaquemines Port, Harbor & Terminal District

Port Fourchon

Port of Greater Baton Rouge

Port of Iberia (Louisiana)

Port of Lake Charles

Port of Little Rock

Port of Memphis

Port of New Orleans

Port of Pittsburgh Commission

Port of South Louisiana

Port of Vinton (Louisiana)

Port of West St. Mary (Louisiana)

Ports America Louisiana, LLC

Ports Association of Louisiana

Port Ship Service, Inc.

Propeller Club of the Port of New Orleans

Raven Energy LLC of Louisiana

Red River Waterway Commission

Resolve Marine Group

Riley-Sherman Shipping Agency, Inc.

Rio Grande Pacific Corporation

Russell Marine Group

Seagull Marine, Inc.

Southport Agencies, Inc.

Soy Transportation Coalition

St. Bernard Port, Harbor & Terminal District

Stolthaven New Orleans LLC

Stolt Tankers & Terminals

Summit Marine Services, LLC

T. Parker Host, Inc.

Terrebone Port (Louisiana)

Transmarine Navigation Corporation

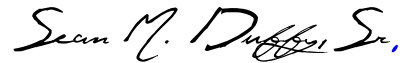
Tricon Steamship Agency, Inc.

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Twin Parish Port Commission (Louisiana)
Tulsa Port of Catoosa
Turn Services
Venice Port Complex
Vidalia Port Commission (Louisiana)
Waterways Council, Inc.
Weber Marine
Weeks Marine Inc.
West Calcasieu Port (Louisiana)
Wilhelmsen Ships Service
World Trade Center Mississippi River Alliance
World Trade Center of New Orleans
World Trade Center of New Orleans International Business Committee
World Trade Center of New Orleans Transportation Committee
Zen-Noh Grain Corporation

Sincerely,



Sean M. Duffy, Sr.
Executive Director