

Inland Waterways Move America



Photo Courtesy of the Waterways Council

Texas is a maritime state where waterways and ports support more than 207,000 Texas jobs and directly contribute more than \$34 billion to the state's economy. But sometimes the inland waterways are out of sight, out of mind, and not recognized for the vital role they play in our state and in the nation's prosperity and quality of life.

The U.S. inland marine highways move commerce to and from 38 states throughout America's heartland and Pacific Northwest, and serve industrial and agricultural centers, facilitate imports and exports at gateway ports on the Gulf Coast. This activity is facilitated by 241 locks at 105 sites, spanning 12,000 miles of commercially navigable channels.

Barges move this freight-- our nation's "building block" commodities --that is coal, grain, chemicals, gasoline and other petroleum products, iron and

steel, as well as aggregates for the building industry. In fact, more than 60% of the nation's grain exports, about 22% of domestic petroleum products, and 15% of the coal used in electricity generation moves by the waterways. That cargo totaled 575.5 million tons valued at \$229 billion in 2016. Project cargoes that are too large for our nation's highways or by rail also use the waterways, like NASA's rocket boosters, parts for electric generating stations, military equipment, and some intermodal containers.

Beyond the actual cargoes, there is great capacity and efficiency on the waterways. One common 15-barge tow (many barges hooked together) of dry cargo has the equivalent capacity of 1,050 tractor-trailer trucks on our highways or 216 rail cars and six locomotives!

Energy efficient, today's towboats pushing those barges can transport one

ton of freight 647 miles per gallon of fuel. A modern locomotive would move that same ton of freight 477 miles per gallon of fuel, and a truck would move it just 145 miles.

And barges have the smallest carbon footprint among other transportation modes. Moving identical amounts of cargo by rail generates 30% more carbon dioxide than by barge, and a whopping 10 times more emissions by trucks than by barge.

All of this is the good news part of the story, but there are challenges that face the waterways. More than half of the locks and dams on our inland waterways that keep the system navigable at different depths have exceeded their economic design life of 50 years, and 39 are over 80 years of age. Most were built in the 1930s during the "New Deal". These locks and dams require modernization and recapitalization to keep the waterways operating, and as efficiently as possible.

The freight outlook over the next several years, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation, is robust, with 14 billion tons of additional freight expected to move in the U.S. by 2040. Of that freight, 10% is expected to move by water, an additional 1.4 million tons. Our already stressed roads and rails cannot manage that excess capacity. Our waterways ease the load and are a critical part of the transportation supply chain.

While over the last five fiscal years, Congress has appropriated strong funding for the Army Corps of Engineers to operate and maintain the waterways system, previous lack

of efficient funding means that now navigation projects take nearly 40 years to build! If we could accelerate investment in our waterways infrastructure by just 10 years, an additional 10,000 to 15,000 new construction industry jobs with an annual economic value of \$800 million could be generated to benefit our economy. Currently, there are 541,000 direct jobs with associated earnings of \$29 billion in the inland waterways sector.

Our inland rivers have long been economic engines that create and sustain jobs, and spur growth. Data indicates that for every dollar (\$1) invested in an inland waterways project, \$16 is returned to the nation in transportation cost-savings and consumer benefits. That is a sure-bet Return on Investment!

Efficient waterways attract additional investment and pay economic dividends for our country. Shell

Chemical Appalachia announced plans to build a multi-billion dollar petrochemical ethane cracker plant in Beaver County, Pennsylvania, about 30 miles outside of Pittsburgh. The facility is expected to produce around 1.6 million tons annually of ethylene, used in plastics products ranging from food packaging to automotive parts. Construction will soon begin and is expected to create some 6,000 construction jobs, with around 600 people permanently employed.

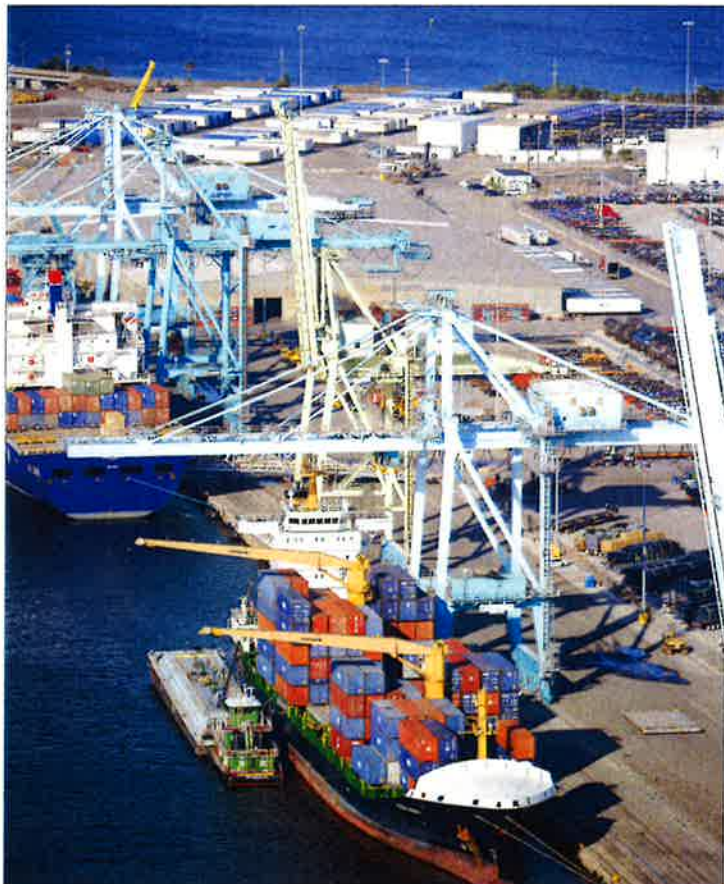
Exxon Mobil Corporation and a partner expect to build a \$10 billion dollar petrochemical plant near Corpus Christi that will be one of the world's largest ethane steam cracker plants in the world. The proposed facility could produce nearly two million tons of ethylene each year that would make materials for polyester, beverage bottles, containers, packaging, consumer and industrial projects, agricultural film and building and construction materials. Presumably

truck and rail access, as well as the waterways that lead to the Gulf of Mexico, were a consideration for the locale selected.

Efficient, reliable waterways and its lock and infrastructure reap huge economic rewards for the United States. If we build it—and maintain it—and continue to invest in it, those rewards will continue to flow, just like the rivers.

Waterways Council, Inc., is the national public policy organization advocating for a modern and well-maintained national system of ports and inland waterways. The group is supported by waterways carriers, shippers, port authorities, agriculture, labor and conservation organizations, shipping associations and waterways advocacy groups from all regions of the country.

Read more about the organization at www.waterwayscouncil.org.



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