

# Likely That Corn Belt Ports Will Attract a \$1.8 Billion 5-Year Investment in Waterway and Marine Highway Upgrades

November 9, 2021

## Corn Belt Ports

Tri-State Region (IL, MO & IA)

MEDIA RELEASE #4



Bipartisan leadership and support enabled passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act late on November 5, 2021. The \$1.2 trillion bill invests \$17 billion in port and waterways infrastructure, according to the White House. President Biden is expected to sign the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act soon.

For the nation's inland waterways system, a historic \$2.5 billion of 100% federal funding is provided for construction and major rehabilitation of inland waterways projects:

<https://waterwayscouncil.org/media/press-releases/article/2021/11/wci> . Capital Investment Strategy (CIS) navigation projects will be given priority for funding under the bill, and **all** of the Corn Belt Ports Priority Navigation Projects are on the CIS list: [National Waterways Conference](#) ; [Microsoft Word - Capital Investment Strategy - 2020 Update - 10 Dec.docx \(army.mil\)](#) [Page 24, Table 12]. This means that during the next 5 years the Corn Belt Ports Region will likely see over \$1.8 B to construct three 1200' modern locks. CIS ranking order (All are in the Mid-America Port Commission area): Lock and Dam 25 (Mississippi River), LaGrange Lock and Dam (Illinois Waterway), and Lock and Dam 24 (Mississippi River).

Project-specific funding will be allocated in a detailed spend plan by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and submitted to the House and Senate within 2 months after the President signs the bill.

This investment will likely also enable construction on the multi-year, Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) to officially begin. More on NESP:

<https://waterwayscouncil.org/file/360/NESP%20OnePagerNGOsFactSheet.pdf> . NESP has enjoyed widespread bipartisan, bicameral support: <https://bustos.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/FY21-NESP-Work-Plan-Letter-final-1.pdf> . The NESP Construction Ready Projects in the Heart of the Corn Belt are identified on the included diagram, and construction will begin within 6 months of construction start authorization.

In 1986, Congress designated the Upper Mississippi River System (which consists of the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers) as both a nationally significant ecosystem and a nationally significant navigation system. That designation provided the Federal investment framework for NESP.

Additionally, the Corn Belt Ports will benefit from the \$4 billion in the infrastructure bill specifically for the Corps' Civil Works Operations and Maintenance account. Many smaller inland waterways and dredging projects in the Corn Belt Ports Region will be eligible to compete for funding that will also be allocated in a Corps spend plan. Tens of millions of dollars in grants will also be available for the Corn Belt Ports to compete for from the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Maritime Administration.

More on the Corn Belt Ports can be found at: : [CBP About - Western Illinois University \(wiu.edu\)](#) ; [Corn Belt Ports - Riverside Global](#)

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Tom Oakley, **Tri-State Development Summit** Transportation Chairman who has spent a lifetime of public service in championing and securing multi-modal transportation system improvements in the Tri-State Region, stated. "This will be the largest investment in the waterways serving the Heart of the Corn Belt since the 1930s when our Locks and Dams were originally constructed. These infrastructure investments will ensure that our ports have safer, more modern, resilient, and sustainable access to global markets. All of our riverfront counties are now part of a Top Ranked U.S. Principal Port and are recognized as a crucial part of the global supply chain. This long overdue federal investment in our infrastructure clearly reinforces that."

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Jim Tarmann, The Managing Director at the **Illinois Corn Growers** who oversees waterway transportation issues for IL Corn believes, "No one can ignore the contributions and value of waterborne commerce to the national and global economies generated in the Tri-State (IL, MO, IA) area above Locks and Dam 26. The Corn Belt Ports are all three routinely Top 50 Principal Ports based on freight tonnage handled, and collectively they are the equivalent of the largest inland port in the nation. There is no question that our Corn Belt Ports need this investment, and it would not have been possible without the strong bipartisan Congressional support that we have enjoyed."

Brent Hoerr, a long-time member of the **Missouri Corn Growers**, and a Board Member of the Upper Mississippi, Illinois, and Missouri Rivers Association said, "NESP was authorized by Congress fourteen years ago in 2007, but never funded for construction. This new start shows what influence we can really have when 40 riverfront counties, 12 regional planning agencies, and 11 city and county ports in 3 states come together to form the equivalent of the largest inland port in the nation to help influence this nationally significant infrastructure investment."

Lance Lillibridge, President of the **Iowa Corn Growers Association** and farmer from Vinton, Iowa mentioned, "Iowa is not a land-locked state in the Midwest as many believe. We are the nation's largest producer and exporter of corn and second of soybeans. Our Ports of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois must have reliable access to global markets. We have been working hard for many years to make this long overdue investment in our export infrastructure a reality which will benefit many."

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Dan Silverthorn, the long-time Chairman of the Board for the **Heart of Illinois Regional Port District** on the Illinois Waterway said, "These construction projects will ensure that our ports have reliable access to global markets. The nation can't ignore the importance of the equivalent of the largest inland port in the nation, based on freight tonnage handled. It is good to see the 1930s, steamboat-era locks being replaced by modern and safer ones in the heart of the nation's agriculture region. This investment will translate to thousands of well-paying jobs in the Corn Belt for several years."

Mike Norris, Chairman of **Mid-America Port Commission (MAPC)**, stated that, "the busiest Locks and Dams on the Upper Mississippi River and on the Illinois Waterway are in the MAPC area. The NESP new

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start investment is urgently needed and will complete critical improvements to navigation and natural infrastructure projects. MAPC appreciates the efforts of all who made it a reality.”

Denise Bulat, The Executive Director of the **Bi-State Regional Commission between Illinois and Iowa**, and the primary transportation planning lead for establishing the Corn Belt Ports, remarked, “the NESP construction new start will include in the short-term a badly needed mooring cell in the Quad Cities that will enable the towboats and barges to move through our area more efficiently. That is the first major navigation construction new start between Illinois and Iowa since the 1200’ lock was constructed at Keokuk, IA between 1952 and 1957. We are looking forward to helping plan and site the dozens of multi-purpose ecosystem restoration projects that we anticipate being constructed in each of the 3 Corn Belt Port areas in future years.”

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Christopher Setti, Chief Executive Officer of the **Greater Peoria Economic Development Council** said, “The ports and terminals along the Illinois Waterway have always been an important and essential part of the global supply chain. We welcome this long overdue investment in our regional multi-modal transportation infrastructure that will help enable our ports in Central and North Central Illinois to have reliable and sustainable access to global markets. This multi-billion dollar upgrade to our ports and waterways will ensure we have the resilient transportation infrastructure needed for the future. The solid bipartisan support behind this regional effort has been good for both the Heart of Illinois and the Heart of the Corn Belt.”

Mayor Mike Troup, **Mayor of Quincy** stated, “Quincy, IL and Hannibal, MO are at the very center of the largest inland port on the Upper Mississippi River based on freight tonnage handled. This NESP new start will not only ensure that the Mid-America Port Commission will have reliable access to the seaports in Louisiana, but the construction of six new 1200’ locks in our port region over time will create thousands of jobs. The dozens of new ecosystem restoration projects anticipated at the confluence of the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers will also provide numerous benefits from construction jobs, to aquatic habitat, to recreation, to improved water quality. Our region is an essential part of the global supply chain, and this investment is long overdue.”

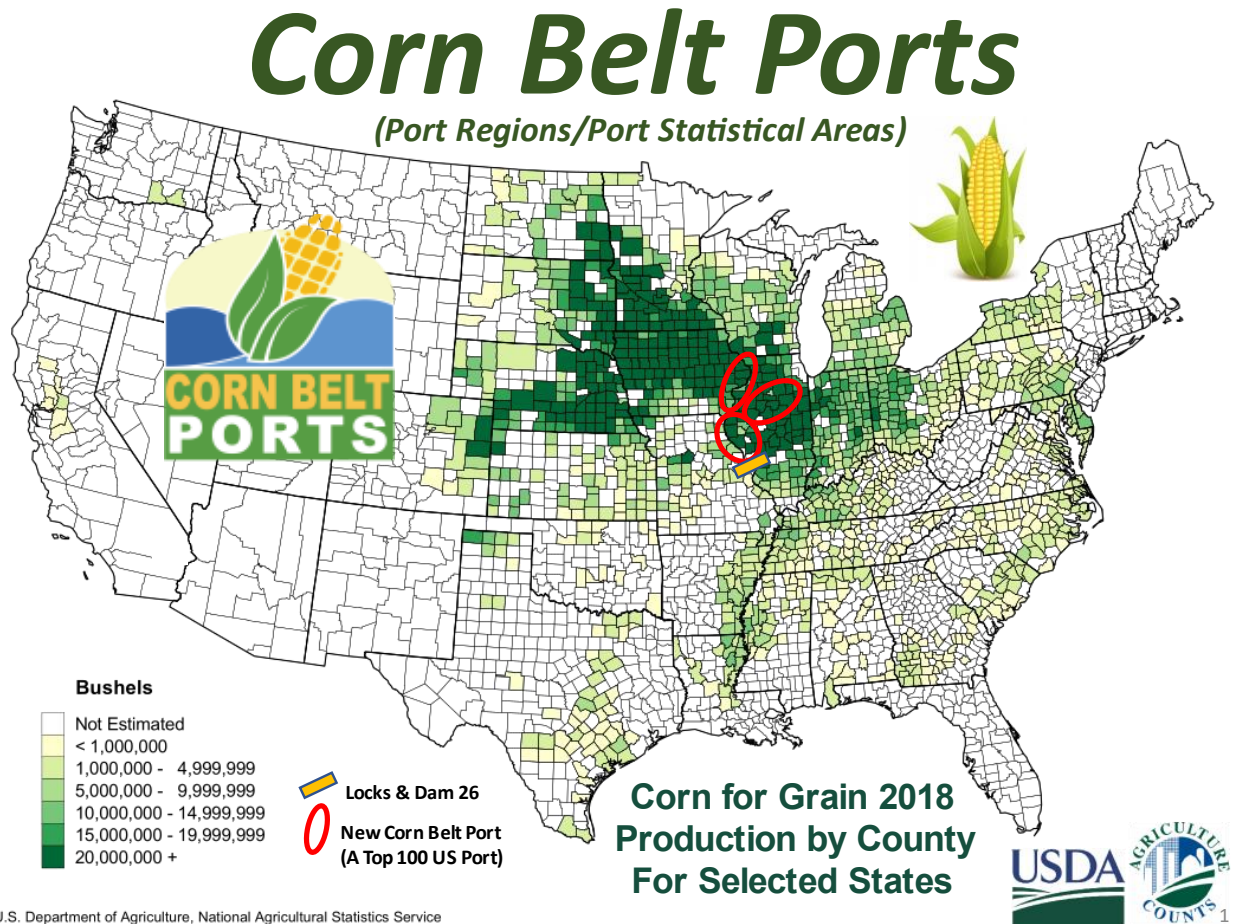
Mayor Bob Gallagher of **Bettendorf, IA (one of the Quad Cities)** and former Co-chair of the Mississippi River Cities Towns Initiative said, “Agriculture exports power the Ports of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois. This investment in our waterways will help ensure that the top two corn producing states in our nation will have the reliable access needed for our ports in the Heart of the Corn Belt to reach global markets. It will also help ensure that the many other benefits of our waterways can be realized well into the future, which are currently characterized by navigation infrastructure that is decades beyond its original design life.”

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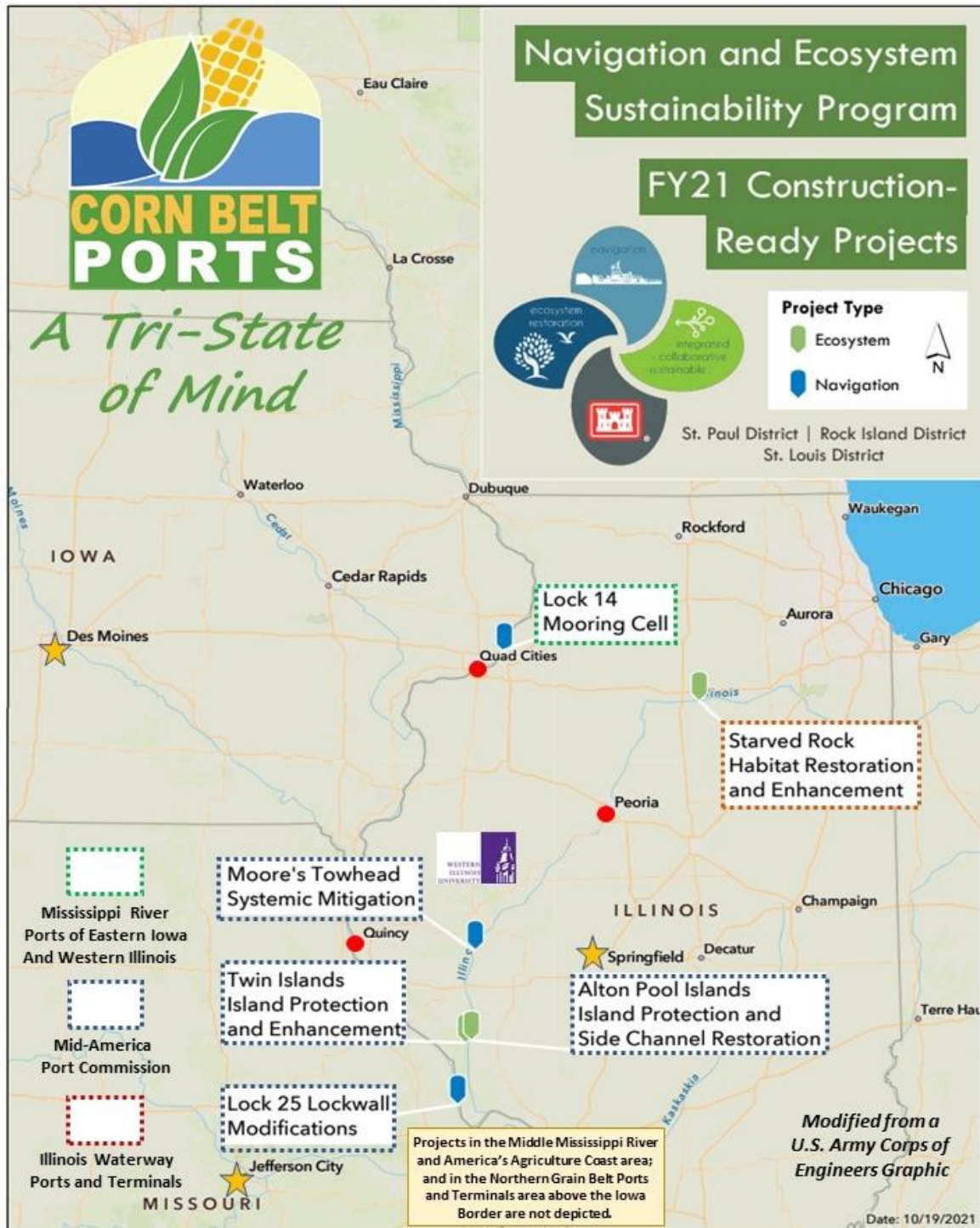
“The Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) was essentially dead and had received no funding for a decade. Our Bipartisan Congressional Delegation pushed for and obtained the first funding in 10 years. \$4.5 million was appropriated for preconstruction engineering and design (PED) in FY 20. And, again in FY21, the program received \$5 million for additional PED work. This enabled the construction new start funding in the Infrastructure Bill,” stated Mike Klingner, the Chairman of the Board of the **Upper Mississippi, Illinois and Missouri Rivers Association (UMIMRA)**.

Dr. Anshu Singh, the **Corn Belt Ports’ Sustainability and Conservation Director** plays an important role in ensuring that the Corn Belt Ports support the coordinated development and management of water, land, and related resources, in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of the vital Upper Mississippi River Basin ecosystem. “Interagency integrated water resources management is simply a way of life in the Corn Belt Ports, and with this new investment it is my job to help implement it,” remarked Dr. Anshu Singh.



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More on NESP can be found at: [Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program \(NESP\) \(army.mil\)](https://www.army.mil/nesp)