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Corn Belt Ports continue to grow

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EAST DUBUQUE—The recently created Corn Belt Ports that serve most of the Mississippi River in Illinois and the bordering states of Missouri and Iowa have experienced continued growth. Two of the three port areas were recently named as a top 50 principal U.S. port by the U.S. Waterborne Commerce Statistics Center.

According to the annual report released in November, the Corn Belt Ports together handled 38.3 million tons of freight, making them the equivalent of the 17th-largest port in the U.S. Based on the data, the Corn Belt Ports are similar in size to the port of Baltimore. Collectively, the ports are the largest inland port in the nation. This is a drastic increase from last year's report, where the Corn Belt Ports were the fourth largest inland port and 22nd largest in the country.

The three ports that make up the Corn Belt Ports are the Mid-America Port Commission (MAPC), which is defined by the confluence of the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers and is centered on Quincy; the Illinois Waterway Ports (ILWW), which are centered on the ports of Peoria and Ottawa and includes ten counties within the state; and the Mississippi River Ports of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois (MRPEIWI), which is centered on the Quad Cities and Dubuque. The MAPC is the largest of the three, with ILWW close behind. MRPEIWI is ranked individually as the 56th-largest port and the 11th-largest port in the nation, with 8.4 million tons of freight handled. MRPEIWI, based on data, is the same size as the Port of Miami.

“Additional adjustments to MRPEIWI are being considered to align port boundaries with existing terminals in the bi-state area to support regional transportation planning and development efforts,” according to Corn Belt officials.

“The remarkable rebound the Mississippi River Ports of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois made after the 2019 floods highlights the resiliency of our regional transportation infrastructure,” said Molly Glover, president and CEO of the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce. “Our regional port climbed 25 places after the flood, and is now ranked as the 56th-largest port in the nation, a category that includes costal ports. Our multimodal port is key to maintaining business growth and supporting regional logistics operations.”

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