



Mid-America Port Commission rising in national rankings

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QUINCY — A port centered in the Quincy-Hannibal, Mo. area is climbing in the national rankings.

The Mid-America Port Commission [MAPC] rose from 44th to 41st place in the Top 50 Principal U.S. Ports List and saw its freight tonnage handled reach 15 million tons, up 3 million over the previous year.

MAPC currently is the seventh largest inland port in the nation, larger than the Port of Galveston in Texas, and remains the largest port on the Upper Mississippi River, based on rankings released by the U.S. Waterborne Commerce Statistics Center.

“It is nice to see the steady growth in the use of our ports,” Brent Hoerr, a Palmyra, Mo., farmer and a board member of the Upper Mississippi, Illinois and Missouri Rivers Association, said in a news release. “We do anticipate the slow, steady growth to continue.”

Bob Sinkler said the growth is exciting for the region.

Sinkler serves as executive coordinating director for the Tri-State Corn Belt Ports encompassing three ports serving the heart of the Corn Belt above Lock and Dam 26 on the Mississippi River

— MAPC, the Illinois Waterway Ports centered on Peoria and Ottawa and the Mississippi River Ports of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois centered on the Quad Cities.

Sinkler said the Corn Belt Ports, a port statistical area established in 2020, provide a federally-recognized port of loading for one of the country's largest grain-producing regions.

"This helps recognize the contributions of the American farmer in the tri-state region to the global economy and global commerce. A lot of tonnage shipped on our waterways is a result of the hard work of farmers in the tri-state area," Sinkler said.

"For a second year in a row, the Mid-America Port Commission will be recognized as a Top 50 U.S. Power Port by Global Trade Magazine," Great River Economic Development Foundation President Kyle Moore said in a news release. "This federal port designation is important for us. Being larger than the Port of Galveston gives our port region numerous economic advantages."

Communities and counties within the port territory also stand to gain.

"It will make the communities around the river more competitive for grants, enable our communities, our counties to attract more direct and indirect investment," Sinkler said. "They're just more attractive to a business trying to find a place to locate."

The rankings, released last month, show the ILWW Ports handled an additional 800,000 tons, for a total of 14.9 million tons of domestic freight in 2020, and maintained its position as the nation's 42nd largest port.

MRPEIWI climbed 25 spots in the ranking to 56th largest port and 11th largest inland port, with 8.4 million tons of freight handled.

The three ports collectively are the equivalent of the largest inland port in the nation and handled 38.3 million tons of the freight as the 17th largest port in the country.

“People don’t have an appreciation that there really are nationally significant ports in the Midwest,” Sinkler said. “What we like to do is combine all three to make our light shine a little brighter when talking to decision-makers, influences at the national level. You can’t ignore that kind of contribution to waterborne commerce. Each one of the three ports, in their own right, are Top 60, and two are Top 50.”

Work to designate the port statistical area began in 2019 and involved efforts by 40 counties and a dozen regional planning agencies with riverfront counties.

“It’s a good model for the nation, too, on how people from cities and rural areas, both political parties, can come together and create something good for the region, and do it quickly with a sense of purpose,” Sinkler said. “They knew this was good for the region and this part of the country. It’s nice to see these kinds of things come together and happen.”

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