



Dedicated to a greater understanding of the widespread public benefits of our nation's water resources infrastructure.

NWC FEDERAL SPOTLIGHT [EXCERPT]

June 2, 2022

Good afternoon NWC members!

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Best,

Julie Ufner, NWC

WELCOME NWC'S NEWEST MEMBER

Join NWC in welcoming our newest member, the Corn Belt Ports!!!

About the Corn Belt Ports: Under a contract with TransPORT, the Corn Belt Ports coordinate, synchronize and support government agency-related activities for the Tri-State (IL, IA, MO) area in the Heart of the Corn Belt above Locks and Dam 26 in order to attract increased direct and indirect investment (including grants) into the region, and support economic development and sustainability objectives. And, the Corn Belt Ports also share best business practices to advance infrastructure improvements (including natural infrastructure) across the region. The area is the equivalent of the largest inland port in the nation based on freight tonnage handled; and includes 40 riverfront counties, 12 regional planning agencies, 11 city and county ports and 3 federal Port Statistical Areas served by over 635 miles of waterway in parts of 3 states. Please see under the "[Member Spotlight](#)" section to see the latest on Corn Belt Ports.

The NWC representatives for the Corn Belt Ports:

- **Dr. Anshu Singh**, Director of Sustainability, Corn Belt Ports, anshu.singh@cornbeltports.com
- **Chris Smith**, Director of Operations, Corn Belt Ports, chris.smith@cornbeltports.com

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

FEDERAL RECOGNITION OF THE NORTHERN GRAIN BELT PORTS COMING SOON. By Dr. Anshu Singh, Director of Sustainability and Conservation for the Corn Belt Ports

The Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC) plans on establishing a regional port statistical area between Wisconsin and Minnesota that, based on freight tonnage handled would likely be a Top 50 U.S. Leading Port and larger than the Port of Miami, FL. The MRRPC in La Crosse, Wisconsin submitted a Letter of Intent on April 20, 2022, to the U.S. Waterborne Commerce Statistics Center to form a Port Statistical Area (PSA). The PSA is being referred to as the Northern Grain Belt Ports (NGBP) and encompasses 11 riverfront counties between Wisconsin and Minnesota. Red Wing, Wabasha and Winona in Minnesota, and the cities of La Crosse and Prairie du Chien in Wisconsin will be included in the planned PSA.

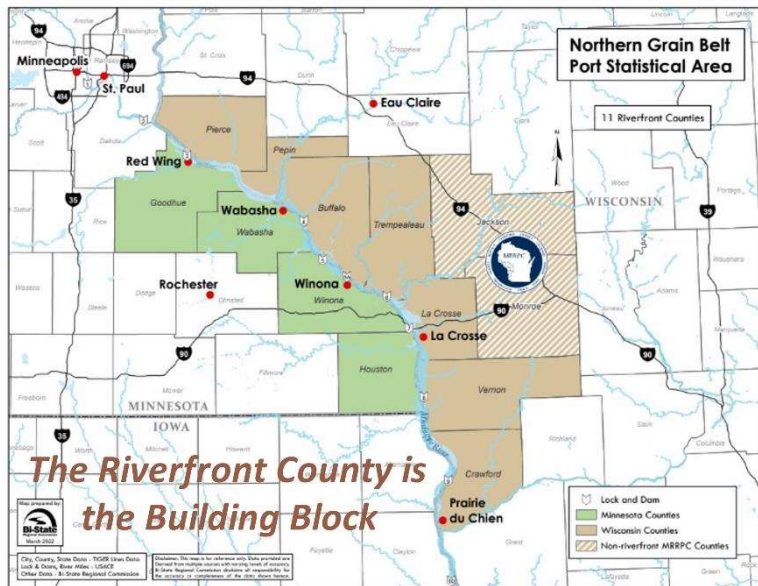
This is a non-traditional approach of looking at inland ports. The NGBP is a long, linear multi-modal transportation feature with distributed terminals that aligns with Marine Highway 35 on the Upper Mississippi River between Wisconsin and Minnesota. This regional effort is modeled after the Upper Mississippi River Basin's Corn Belt Ports. The Corn Belt Ports include the ports in the Tri-State (IL, MO, IA) region that are in the Heart of the Corn Belt above Locks and Dam 26. The Corn Belt Ports were federally recognized as port statistical areas in 2020/21 and includes the Upper Mississippi River Ports (UMRP) of Iowa and Illinois, the Mid-America Port Commission (MAPC), and the Illinois Waterway (ILWW) Ports.

Similar to each of the Corn Belt Ports, the NGBP supports the development of rural and non-rural multi-modal transportation and natural infrastructure. It is centered on an Interstate Highway intersection (I-90) with the Upper Mississippi River (M-35). It aligns with an existing regional planning agency, a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and regional economic development organizations.

Chris Smith, the Director of Operations for the Corn Belt Ports who has been asked to share lessons learned from the Corn Belt Ports Initiative with the MRRPC, said "The Northern Grain Belt Ports will encourage integrated regional transportation planning, and ecosystem restoration and sustainability efforts. The NGBP is very similar in concept to the multi-county Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) uses to support federal planning and resourcing decisions. This is a new and more accurate way of looking at things when it comes to transportation data and information."

Robert Sinkler, a Senior Advisor with Dawson & Associates and a member of the NWC Board of Directors remarked that, “The NGBP along with the three Corn Belt Ports is a major paradigm shift. It marries the global importance of this multi-state region as an essential part of the national and global supply chains with its ecological importance. There are few people that can bridge the realities of this agricultural commodities-based region with sustainability demands. You can’t invest in or environmentally mitigate for a port that doesn’t exist. The federal recognition is important.”

There have been increased federal, state, and non-profit organization investments in the Upper Mississippi River Basin above Locks and Dam 26 since the Upper Mississippi River Basin federal port recognition efforts began. This includes investments in both transportation and natural infrastructure for a unique multi-state region that is designated by the U.S. Congress, “as both a nationally significant ecosystem and a nationally significant navigation system.” It is the only inland river in the United States with this designation. A different way of looking at the value of waterborne commerce was needed, especially since the Upper Mississippi River Basin is an essential part of the national and global supply chains.



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