



Northern Grain Belt Port Statistical Area Coming Soon



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LA CROSSE, Wis., May 15, 2022 — On April 20, 2022, the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC)* submitted a Letter of Intent to the U.S. Waterborne Commerce Statistics Center to form the Northern Grain Belt Port Statistical Area (NGB PSA) as a principal U.S. Port. Once approved, the NGB PSA would encompass 11 riverfront counties in the bi-state (Wisconsin / Minnesota) region and together, based on freight tonnage, would allow for a ranking of the Port Statistical Area among the top inland ports in the United States.

Robert Sinkler, a Senior Advisor with Dawson & Associates and a member of the National Waterways Conference Board of Directors remarked that, "The NGB PSA is a major paradigm shift. It marries the global importance of this bi-state region as an essential part of the national and global supply chains with its ecological importance. You can't invest in or environmentally mitigate for a port that doesn't exist. The federal recognition is important."

The region has functioned as a port region for over 200 years but lacked federal recognition as a Port Statistical Area. "Federal recognition of the NGB PSA will not only enhance economic growth of the region, it will also support restoring ecological integrity of the Upper Mississippi River ecosystem," said Dr. Anshu Singh, Director of Sustainability for the Corn Belt Ports.

"The lack of federal recognition and attributing tonnage to the NGB PSA under-represents the economic value (value of waterborne commerce) to the nation and the world generated by the bi-state area above Locks and Dam 10 on the Mississippi River," said Nicole Wagner, Executive Director, Wisconsin Corn Growers Association. Currently, the only Principal U.S. Inland Port on the Upper Mississippi (Marine Highway 35) north of Locks and Dam 10 is the St. Paul Port Authority, MN.

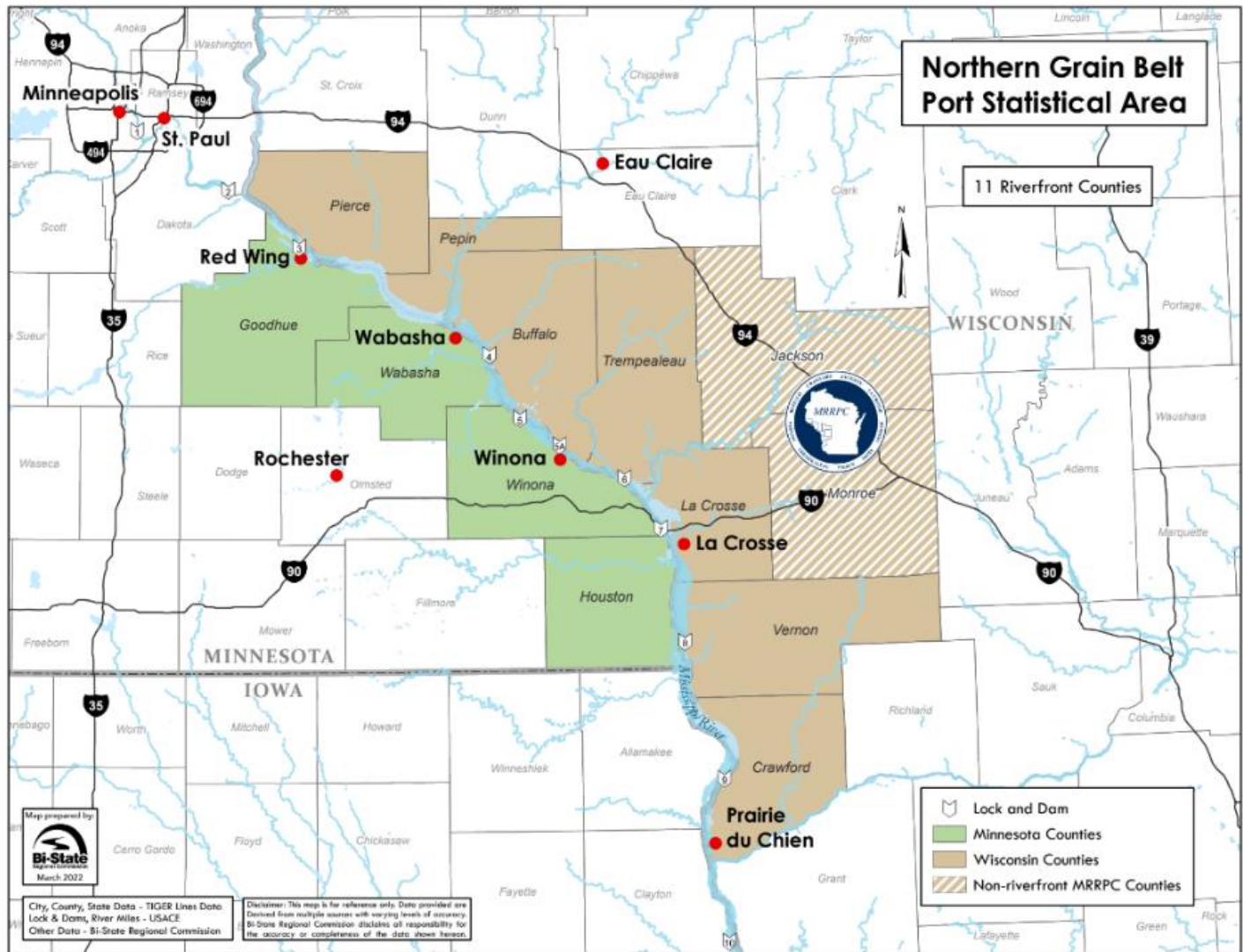
"Federal approval of the Northern Grain Belt Port Statistical Area is important for our rural communities in the bi-state region. Access to inland waterways is critical to the economic viability of our communities and allows small businesses and our farmers to export commodities around the world," said Adam Birr, Executive Director, Minnesota Corn Growers Association.

Eleven counties are listed on the Letter of Intent, four in Minnesota (Goodhue, Wabasha, Winona and Houston) and seven in Wisconsin (Pierce, Pepin, Buffalo, Trempealeau, La Crosse, Vernon and Crawford). "We expect the NGB PSA to assist in bringing valuable resources, enhance economic development, and help to raise the area's profile to improve regional, national and global visibility and competitiveness to our member counties and communities and to our neighbor counties across the river." said Peter Fletcher, Executive Director, La Crosse Area Planning Committee.

*The Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC) is a Commission of nine counties located along the Mississippi River in Western Wisconsin. The Commission was organized in 1964 under Wisconsin State Statutes to plan for the physical, social and economic development of the Region.



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Map courtesy of Bi-State Regional Commission.