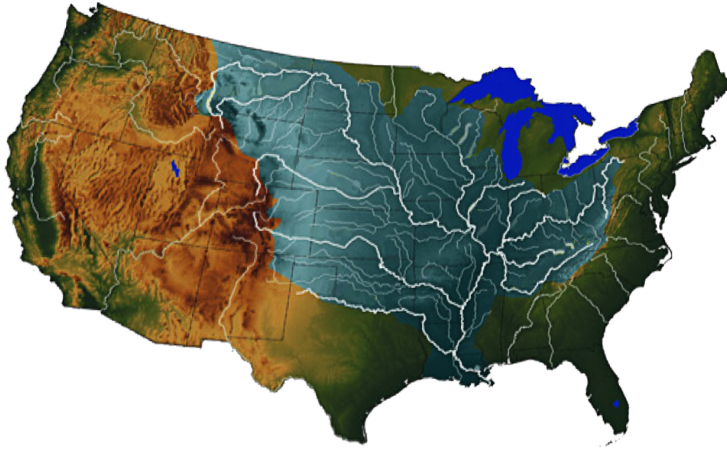


# BIG RIVER COALITION



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## Louisiana Leaders Celebrate Deepening of the Mississippi River Ship Channel

### *First 50-foot Draft Ship Traverses Ship Channel*

**New Orleans – August 16, 2022** – Louisiana elected officials, federal partners and maritime stakeholders joined the Big River Coalition today to celebrate the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) completion of the first two phases of the deepening of the Mississippi River Ship Channel, which presently provides a maximum draft for vessels to the Port of New Orleans at 50-feet. The Ship Channel has been mechanically deepened for approximately the first 200 miles of the Channel but additional efforts are required to open up the deeper draft north of the Huey P. Long Bridge.

“The deepening of the Mississippi River Ship Channel is a transformational project that will bolster our economy, create and sustain jobs, and solidify Louisiana’s status as a global anchor for trade,” said Gov. John Bel Edwards. “The economic growth from this project is expected to create several thousand new jobs, which comes on the heels of Louisiana reaching the lowest unemployment rate in state history. It’s an exciting time for our state, and I look forward to facilitating even more growth thanks to the partnerships we have forged.”

Presently, the increased draft is available through the Port of New Orleans to the Huey P. Long Bridge at Mile 106 Above Head of Passes (AHP). Expansion of the deeper draft above the Huey P. Long Bridge from 49 feet to 50 feet will require additional improvements although the dredging has been completed to Mile 175 AHP along with the additional 20 miles of Southwest Pass.

Phase 1 work began on Sept. 11, 2020 when Weeks Marine’s cutterhead dredge CAPTAIN FRANK commenced work on the initial dredge contract five miles Above Head of Passes. The USACE also awarded a contract for both another cutterhead dredge and a hopper dredge to Manson Construction Co. to complete the first phase of the deepening. The Mississippi River Ship Channel is home to four of the Nation’s top 15 ports by annual tonnage (Port of Greater Baton Rouge, Port of South Louisiana, Port of New Orleans and the Plaquemines Port Harbor and Terminal District).

The overall costs for the project estimate an investment of \$250 million, of which the State of Louisiana committed \$81 million as the non-federal sponsor.

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The Associated Branch Pilots and Crescent Port Pilots Association successfully handled the first vessel drafting 50-feet— when the bulk carrier M/V CAPRI departed carrying a load of coal – on August 5, 2022 – almost 10 years to the day after the Big River Coalition revitalized efforts to deepen the Ship Channel.

“Bigger ships carrying more cargo means more jobs and economic opportunity for Louisiana and the Nation,” said U.S. Sen. Bill Cassidy. “This project is a top priority for Louisiana’s entire federal delegation.

The USACE’s Economic Justification Report identified the benefit-to-cost ratio at 7.2-to-1, calling the project one of national and international significance, as the Ship Channel moves more than 500 million tons of cargo annually, including 60 percent of the nation’s grain and 20 percent of the nation’s energy.

“As we fight to overcome inflation and supply chain bottlenecks, our ports are more important than ever,” said U.S. Rep. Troy Carter. “Here in Louisiana, the Mississippi connects us all — economically, culturally, and physically. It’s important that we work together and speak with one voice as a region on behalf of our shared goals. That’s why this project to deepen the channel to increase shipping opportunities is so exciting — we are opening a new chapter to help energize our economy to new heights and continue to help lower costs for Americans.”

Colonel Stephen Murphy, Commander of the USACE New Orleans District, commended the project’s partnerships between the federal government, State of Louisiana, Congress and industry stakeholders.

“The National economy will benefit by more than \$127 million annually and the project will pay for itself in two years,” Murphy said. “It’s a win-win for Louisiana and America and we are proud to play a role in a project with such national significance.”

Sean Duffy, Executive Director of the Big River Coalition, said the deepening generates increased waterborne transportation cost savings that provides the U.S. a strategic advantage to help compete in global markets. The Mississippi River connects more miles of navigable waterways than the rest of the world combined and maximizing this Big River is critical to maximizing our greatest artery of trade.

“The Mississippi River is an economic superhighway,” Duffy said. “The deepening of the Mississippi River Ship Channel is truly a historic project that will create thousands of jobs, has already restored 2,000 acres of wetlands and will generate increased revenue for those whose livelihoods depend upon the River for generations to come. The Big River Coalition appreciates the diligent and unwavering support from Governor John Bel Edwards, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, Louisiana Legislature and the Congressional delegation from Louisiana and across the Mississippi River Basin.”

*The Big River Coalition is committed to ensuring the future of navigation on the Mississippi River Ship Channel (MRSC) as one of the nation’s fundamental natural resources and a true economic powerhouse. The Mississippi River and Tributaries has an estimated annual impact of \$735 billion on the nation’s economy and is responsible for 2.4 million jobs.*

Sincerely,



Sean M. Duffy, Sr.  
Executive Director