



Plan to deepen the river between Baton Rouge to the Gulf approved by Corps.

The Army Corps of Engineers recently endorsed a plan to dredge and deepen the main channel of the Mississippi River to 50 feet from Baton Rouge to the Gulf of Mexico. Governor John Bel Edwards also spoke positively of the plan. He said, "One in five jobs in Louisiana is tied to our ports, and this project will help to make our world-renowned port system even more competitive, while creating opportunities for manufacturers, growers and producers who rely on our ports up and down the entire Mississippi River." The final proposal will depend on approval by the White

In addition to allowing larger Panamax vessels to move upriver to Baton Rouge, deepening the river will reduce the current necessity of ships having to load with less cargo weight than their size allows when moving up or down the Mississippi between New Orleans and the capital city, stated Jay Hardman, executive director of the Port of Greater Baton Rouge.

“This would be an economic boon to farmers up and down the Mississippi River’s reach,” said Hardman. “Soybean farmers in particular should be very glad to hear this news, with the anticipated increase in the volume of agricultural commodities.” Hardman also said that the docks at Baton Rouge can currently handle the larger Panamax vessels and deepening the river would increase the economic efficiency for the outbound export and inbound movement of crude oil already moving through the port in Baton Rouge.

Material dredged in the lower portion of the river would be used to build about 2.2 square miles of new wetlands in the federal Delta National Wildlife Refuge and the state Pass A Loutre Wildlife Management Area.

A spokesperson from the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development said the state expects to use several different sources to pay for its share of the project, including the annual capital outlay budget. Congress must also include funding for the project in its fiscal year 2019 budget as well as funding for the increased cost of annual dredging.

