

Jan 23 - Georgia Ports Authority Posts Significant Year-End Gains

Written by Lou Phelps

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SBJ Special Report

Jan 23, 2012 – Georgia Ports Authority Executive Director Curtis J. Foltz announced today that the Ports of Savannah and Brunswick experienced record volumes in calendar year 2011 and handled 26.1 million tons of cargo, an additional 1.1 million tons, or a 4.3 percent increase.

In Savannah, the Authority handled a record 2.95 million twenty-foot equivalent unit (TEUs) containers, an additional 130,000 units, or a 3.5 percent increase over calendar year 2010. In Brunswick, the Authority handled a record 495,000 auto and machinery units, up 23 percent from the previous calendar year.

“The Ports of Savannah and Brunswick achieved record volumes in 2011 despite the nation's economic challenges,” said Foltz. “As our ports grow market share, Georgia's deep water terminals provide American exporters an increasingly vital gateway to global trade.”

Additionally, the Port of Savannah, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce, is second only to the Port of Los Angeles for the export of American containerized goods. In CY2011 alone, exports accounted for over 15.5 million tons, or 59 percent of the Authority's trade.

“Georgia's position as the number-two export port in the nation provides a clear and compelling case for why the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project (SHEP) is so critical for this state, region and country,” said GPA's Chairman of the Board Alec Poitevint. “The work to deepen the Savannah Harbor up to 48 feet is precisely the type of effort that will bring sustainable economic recovery to the United States.”

Calendar Year 2011 also marked important developments in Georgia's effort to finalize the SHEP study and move the project toward construction. These efforts include the public review and revision of study documents and securing a total of \$134 million in state funds with an additional \$46.7 million proposed by Governor Nathan Deal.

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"By making this financial commitment, Governor Deal and the General Assembly have sent a powerful message to our customers and stakeholders that the Savannah harbor deepening is a top priority for the State of Georgia," said Poitevint. The Georgia General Assembly has not yet finalized the state budget that includes the additional funds, however.

The Final General Reevaluation Report and Environmental Impact Statement by the Army Corps of Engineers was previously scheduled for release to the public for comment this past Fall 2011, but is now expected this Spring. GPA is hoping for final federal approval before the end of 2012, allowing them to begin the harbor deepening during the State of Georgia's fiscal 2012-2013 period, they state.