

The Port of Baton Rouge: Strategically Positioned to Reach U.S. and Global Markets

The Port of Greater Baton Rouge is ranked among the top ports in the nation in total tonnage, including export, import and domestic cargo. Recent, multimillion dollar projects have resulted in more deep-draft ship calls, diversification of operations, and increased efficiency for companies choosing to make their home there—and the Port still has ample room for growth.



“We feel that from a cargo and a deep-water shipping point, that we have adequate capacity left at the Port for existing tenants to grow and increase their ship counts or possibly for some newcomers to come in and utilize the docks,” says Executive Director Jay Hardman. “We are looking for companies that have a need for maritime components and hopefully have a fit for the infrastructure that we have in place to accommodate them,” he says.

Currently, companies located at the Port of Greater Baton Rouge total 24 and range from Genesis Energy, L.P., Louis Dreyfus Commodities, Drax Biomass, and The Dow Chemical Company, to Community Coffee Company and Louisiana

Sugarcane Products. Hardman says that in recruiting, they are ultimately trying to marry companies with opportunity and the need for infrastructure.

Genesis Energy, L.P.

Houston-based Genesis Energy L.P., which made a large investment at the Port with a \$150 million oil storage and import/export terminal on 91 acres in 2014, also has plans to expand its storage and handling capacity of petroleum related cargoes. Genesis estimates that thirty-three million barrels of crude oil or other petroleum products will be moved annually through Genesis’s Port terminal.

Pipelines connect both the Port’s docks and Genesis’s tank farms located in West Baton Rouge and East Baton Rouge parish, and deep-draft vessels used to transport these cargoes can range to more than 700 feet in length. To complement Genesis’s investment and accommodate such large ships and barges, the Port is rehabilitating its deepwater docks at a cost of approximately \$6 million.

Louis Dreyfus Commodities – Grain Elevator

The grain elevator at the Port of Baton Rouge, constructed in 1959, was taken over by Louis Dreyfus Commodities (LDC) in 2013. The company embarked on a \$150+ million expansion and modernization of the facility for multiple grain and oilseed commodities.

Hardman says LDC’s investment in the modernization of the grain elevator makes it the most efficient deep-draft export grain elevator on the Mississippi River. The rehabilitated elevator can handle in excess of six million metric tons of grains and oilseeds annually, and the dock is able to load an ocean-going vessel at a rate of 100,000 bushels an hour and unload barges at the rate of 80,000 bushels an hour. Estimates are that the company has increased annual ship calls at the grain dock to about 120 and the handling of grain from 750,000 tons to more than 6 million tons last year.

Drax Biomass – Wood Pellets

A development and operating company focused on manufacturing wood pellets for renewable, low-carbon power generation, Drax Biomass transports the pellets by rail to the Port from a manufacturing facility in Bastrop, Louisiana, and by truck from another facility in Gloster, Mississippi. These pellets are stored at the Port in two dome-shaped silos and then loaded onto ocean going vessels for shipment to the United Kingdom, where it is burned for fuel by industry.

Drax has invested about \$150 million in each of its pellet mills and \$50 million at the Port. Both mills produce about half a million tons of wood pellets, resulting in an additional 15 to 20 ship calls a year at the Port. As Drax creates more of an industry for wood pellets, producers are following suit. Hardman predicts the company will eventually be exporting about two million tons a year through Port facilities.

CONTAINER-ON-BARGE

Before Hurricane Katrina, the Port offered container-on-barge services through a terminal off the Intracoastal Waterway. After many years of efforts to revitalize the service and the advent of new trucking regulations, container-on-barge service returned to the Port of Greater Baton Rouge in 2016.

Operated by SEACOR, the first leg of the service transports empty containers by barge into the Port at Baton Rouge, where they are loaded with products from nearby industries. The second leg of the service transports the loaded containers via the Mississippi River to the Port of New Orleans, where they are loaded on container ships for export.

“We’ve been successful teaming with the Port of New Orleans and SEACOR in order to obtain federal funding in the form of a \$1.75 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration (MARAD) to purchase container handling equipment in order to improve the efficiencies of our container handling operations,” says Hardman. Currently, the Port’s terminal is handling approximately two hundred containers per week, and there are plans to expand the terminal’s size and capacity.



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Benefits of container-on-barge shipping include:

- Increased efficiency of logistics chain by eliminating congestion on both ends of the surface transportation system
- Improving port throughput by reducing dwell time
- Accommodating industry’s 24/7 production schedules
- Ability to load 15% more cargo than truck transportation
- Alleviating traffic congestion on surface highways

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