



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District is starting a feasibility study and environmental impact statement concerning possible navigation improvements to Manatee Harbor, Florida. The Corps will work in partnership with Port Manatee, which owns, operates, and manages facilities for cargo and other vessels at the harbor. The port has expressed interest in expanding the navigation channels at Manatee Harbor to accommodate future growth.

Port Manatee is located adjacent to Tampa Bay in northern Manatee County, Florida. It is one of Florida's deep-water seaports with a 400-foot wide by 40-foot deep entrance channel from the Port Manatee facilities to its intersection with the Tampa Bay ship channel. The port is 12 miles from the Egmont Key pilot station, including nearly three miles from the main Tampa Bay shipping channel.

Port Manatee handles a variety of bulk, break bulk, containerized and heavy-lift project cargos. The port occupies 1,100 acres, with more than one million square feet of public warehouse and office space, and 207,000 square feet of refrigerated space. Port Manatee's railroad connects to the CSX mainline with nearly eight miles of track and a 300-plus rail car capacity. The port has two mobile harbor cranes that move cargo containers.

To meet increasing demands of the growing global economy, the shipping and cruise industry continues to progress to larger, more efficient vessels. The completion of the Panama Canal expansion in 2016 will allow mega ships to transit the canal; these vessels will have a maximum length of 1,200 feet, width of 160 feet, and draft of 50 feet.

The Corps of Engineers is tasked to investigate

navigation improvements at Manatee Harbor, including potential deepening and/or widening of the harbor to accommodate existing and future vessel movements and opportunities for reducing navigation restrictions. Corps' engineers and scientists are using the best technologies available to make the nation's harbors more cost-efficient.

The Corps of Engineers and Port Manatee signed an agreement Nov. 10, 2015 to officially start the feasibility study. The Corps is initiating the feasibility phase by drafting the project management plan and executing a feasibility cost sharing agreement with the port. A public scoping meeting is set for Jan. 20, 2016 at Port Manatee.

### **Background**

The Manatee County Port Authority constructed Port Manatee and began operations in 1970. The Port made extensive improvements since then, including constructing warehouses, wharves and berths, railroad, offices, roads, stevedoring facilities and other related infrastructure.

Federal interest in navigation at Port Manatee started in 1974 through a House resolution to study navigation and related water resource problems. In 1978 the Corps of Engineers completed a feasibility report and environmental impact statement, which recommended maintenance of the channel and an enlarged channel entrance and turning basin.

Congress authorized the Manatee Harbor Federal Navigation Project in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1986 (Public Law 99-662). The project was modified by WRDA of 1990 and the 2004 Energy and Water Appropriation Act. The authorization for this current study is under Section 216 of the Flood Control Act of 1970, which supports investigation efforts for modification of existing projects.

# MANATEE HARBOR NAVIGATION STUDY

## Scoping & Study Details

The scoping process starts prior to preparation of the environmental impact statement and is intended to aid in determining the scope of the analysis and identifying significant issues. This process is also intended to help frame alternatives and information needed to evaluate alternatives.

The existing authorized navigation project was designed in the early 1990s to accommodate vessels limited to an operational draft of 40 feet. Currently, some vessels are constrained due to the existing channel depth. The depth constraints result in operational inefficiencies that translate into increased transportation costs. Shoaling where the Tampa Bay and the Manatee Harbor federal channels meet further restricts vessel transits. Additionally, large vessels may experience delays waiting for berth space or waiting to navigate the one-way channel.

Jacksonville District will develop and evaluate a matrix of alternative plans to produce a recommended plan. This process will include the appropriate level of engineering, economic, environmental, and other technical analyses to identify the benefits and potential impacts associated with recommended navigational improvements.



*(Photos courtesy of Port Manatee)*

The Corps welcomes views, comments and information about environmental and cultural resources, study objectives and important features within the described study area, as well as any suggested improvements. Letters of comment or inquiry should be addressed to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Attention: Planning Division, Environmental Branch, P.O. Box 4970, Jacksonville, FL 32207-8175.

For additional information or questions about this study effort, please contact Dr. Aubree Hershorin at [Aubree.G.Hershorin@usace.army.mil](mailto:Aubree.G.Hershorin@usace.army.mil) or 904-232-2136.