



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Strengthening Wisconsin's Maritime Economy a Focus at Statewide Meeting**

*Representatives of Wisconsin Ports to Address Transportation Connectivity,  
Freshwater Tourism, and Infrastructure Reinvestment*

On Thursday, August 5, 2021 and Friday, August 6, 2021, the annual gathering of the Wisconsin Commercial Ports Association (WCPA) will take place on Lake Superior at the Harbor View Event Center in Washburn. The meeting will include presentations from local, state, and federal experts emphasizing the vitality and resiliency of Wisconsin's ports.

"Wisconsin's commercial ports are the heart of our state's transportation economy," said Adam Tindall-Schlicht, Director of Port Milwaukee and President of the WCPA. "COVID-19 has disrupted supply chains worldwide for Wisconsin's growers, producers and manufacturers. Wisconsin's ports are safe, efficient and have additional capacity as East, West, and Gulf Coast ports struggle to meet customer demand."

A 2018 study found that maritime commerce from Wisconsin's Great Lakes ports generates \$1.4 billion in economic activity annually. A 2020 National Waterways Foundation analysis found that Wisconsin's inland activity on the Mississippi River contributes to \$1.1 billion in state and local tax revenue.

"Freshwater travel and recreational activity on Wisconsin's waterways is paramount to tourism activity statewide," said Marty Olejniczak, Community Development Director at the Port of Sturgeon Bay and Vice-President of the WCPA. "In order for the Badger State to continue its efforts to 'bounce back' from COVID-19, new direct funding for Wisconsin's commercial ports and harbors is necessary. Tourism growth will not occur without commensurate capital investment."

Wisconsin's ports welcomed recently announced State allocations from the American Rescue Plan Act, including Governor Tony Evers' new capital tourism grant program. At its 2021 meeting, the WCPA will reveal its new international marketing brand as *Wisconsin Ports*, including launch of a new website at <https://www.wisconsinports.com>, to help promote commercial and recreational utilization of Wisconsin's ports by customers and travelers across the globe.

"Major improvements to aging maritime infrastructure operated by Wisconsin's commercial ports is needed immediately," said Paul Braun, City Planner for the Port of Manitowoc and Treasurer of the WCPA. "The Wisconsin Harbor Assistance Program has been a nationwide best practice example and a critical lifeline for the work of Wisconsin's ports. Given strong demand for economic growth statewide, new and innovative approaches to public and private investment in Wisconsin's ports is crucial. Additional local and state support is needed now."

### **About Wisconsin Ports and the WCPA**

Surrounded by Lake Michigan, Lake Superior and the Mississippi River, Wisconsin is essential to maritime transportation in the United States. Wisconsin's ports contribute to the state's economy and enhance the wellbeing and quality of life of the state's waterfront communities. The mission of *Wisconsin Ports* is to promote and grow the maritime economy of the entire state. The WCPA serves as the public voice, organizational advocate and go-to resource on the importance of Wisconsin's port industry.

