



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 24, 2024

Media Contact:

Chris Smith,
Corn Belt Ports
chris.smith@cornbeltports.com

Corn Belt Ports Announces the Formation of the Ports of Eastern Iowa Authority following federal designation

Federal designation and heightened regional coordination will attract investment to advance regional economic development and sustainability goals



MUSCATINE, Iowa — Six Eastern Iowa Counties jointly signed a resolution to form the Ports of Eastern Iowa Authority. This authority will operate within the Mississippi River Ports of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois region.

This formal coordination will expand the Corn Belt Ports' footprint and reinforce its critical role in national commerce, transportation, and defense. This recognition by the federal government



highlights the strategic importance of the region, which now ranks as one of the top 100 U.S. ports by freight tonnage.

The Port Authority will serve six Iowa Counties:

Clinton

Dubuque

Jackson

Louisa

Muscatine

Scott

The first organization meeting of the Ports of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois will be held on October 10 at the Western Illinois University Riverfront Campus in Moline, Ill. The meeting will be open to the public.

The Mississippi River Ports of Eastern Iowa encompasses key military facilities, including the Rock Island Arsenal in Illinois and the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant in Iowa, both of which are served by Marine Highway 35. This region has long been a cornerstone of U.S. defense infrastructure, and today, it continues to operate as the Midwest's premier hub for defense logistics, manufacturing, engineering, and training. The port's enhanced capacity and federal recognition will further solidify its critical role in supporting national defense and economic security.

A Crucial Economic and Defense Hub

As one of the most important economic and defense regions in the Midwest, the Mississippi River Ports of Eastern Iowa serve as a lifeline for the state's economy and play a pivotal role in maintaining the competitiveness of U.S. industries on the global stage. The port provides direct access to national and international markets, supporting a wide range of industries, from agriculture and manufacturing to defense and logistics.



"The formation of the Ports of Eastern Iowa Authority is a significant milestone for our region and reflects the vital role that the Mississippi River Ports of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois play in both our national defense and our economy," Ryan Sempf, Executive Director of Government Affairs for the Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce, said. "Our multi-modal ports are not only key to moving critical goods across the country but are also integral to supporting the U.S. military's efforts to maintain readiness and strategic capabilities."

Mike Thoms, Chair of the Rock Island Regional Port District, added that this was a win for the bi-state region.

"We are excited about the Ports of Eastern Iowa Authority getting established," Thoms said. "It will help unify the current regional multi-modal port activities going on across the Upper Mississippi River from each other in Illinois and Iowa. The Rock Island Regional Port District was approved by the Illinois State Legislature last year, and we have already seen the benefits of officially being recognized as a multi-modal inland port. We expect the Ports of Eastern Iowa Authority will see similar benefits. This is a win for the bi-state region"

Dr. Brad Bark, Mayor of Muscatine, Iowa, and President and CEO of the Greater Muscatine Chamber of Commerce & Industry, noted that this was an important first step for region.

"Muscatine has been thought of for decades as the Port City of the Corn Belt," Bark said. "But being officially recognized as a multi-modal inland port is the first step in realizing our region's full economic potential."

Jim Irwin, Clinton County Supervisor, emphasized the strengths of working together.

"The Ports of Eastern Iowa are much stronger united and working together to achieve common regional economic development objectives," Irwin said. "Our counties look forward to collaboratively partnering with public and private entities to advance our mutual, multi-modal infrastructure needs that will enable us to reach national and global markets at reduced cost and



risk.”

A Strategic Asset for the Future

The Corn Belt Ports continue to expand their influence across the Midwest, and the addition of the Mississippi River Ports of Eastern Iowa as a newly recognized federal statistical port will enable the region to tap into new opportunities for economic growth and development. With this designation, the region’s importance to both state and national economies, as well as its role in national defense, will only continue to grow.

“The Corn Belt Ports are committed to leveraging this new federal designation to secure additional funding, attract new industries, and further develop the region’s multi-modal transportation and natural infrastructure to support commerce and defense for decades to come,” Chris Smith, Director of Operations for the Corn Belt Ports, said.

About Corn Belt Ports

Corn Belt Ports is the federally recognized ports within the Corn Belt’s Lock and Dam System. Through continued investment and innovative organizing, Corn Belt Ports supports the integrity and sustainability of our supply chain. The Corn Belt Ports handle nearly 100 million tons of freight annually, which is expected to increase year after year. Since its inception in 2019, Corn Belt Ports have helped attract over \$2 billion of investment in multi-modal and natural infrastructure from multiple sources.