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Freeport channel milestone expands vessel access, strengthens U.S. supply chains

FREEPORT, Texas – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Galveston District and Port Freeport recognized a major milestone in the Freeport Harbor Channel Improvement Project during a ribbon-cutting ceremony July 28, 2026.



The federal navigation project deepens and partially widens the harbor channel, enhances the upper turning basin and eases the lower channel bend. The improvements provide greater vessel access, operating flexibility and navigation capability at one of Texas' leading commercial ports.

The deeper, more capable channel will improve access for larger global vessels, reduce navigation constraints and strengthen the movement of energy products, vehicles, containers, chemicals, agricultural commodities, heavy equipment and other cargo.

"This project demonstrates what the Army Corps of Engineers excels at – converting public investment and strong partnerships into navigation capability that delivers lasting national value," U.S. Army Brig. Gen. George H. Walter, USACE Southwestern Division commander. "A deeper, more capable Freeport Harbor Channel strengthens Texas' system of ports, expands access to global markets and reinforces the energy, commerce and supply chains that underpin America's economic strength and national resilience."

The ceremony brought together federal, port, congressional and maritime-industry leaders, including Phyllis Saathoff, Port Freeport Executive Director/CEO; U.S. Rep. Randy Weber, representing Texas' 14th Congressional District; Rob Giesecke, Port Freeport Commission Chairman; Col. David W. Dake, USACE Galveston District Commander, and Sang Yi, American Association of Port Authorities President and CEO.

"Delivering this project required years of disciplined engineering, construction and close coordination between the Galveston District, Port Freeport and the maritime community," said

Dake. “The result is safer navigation, greater vessel flexibility and lasting infrastructure that’ll serve Port Freeport, its customers and the surrounding communities for generations.”

Port Freeport ranks #17 in the nation by commercial tonnage and serves as an important gateway for energy, automotive, container, chemical, agricultural and industrial cargo. The channel improvement project strengthens the port’s ability to serve existing customers, pursue future opportunities and accommodate a wider range of global vessels.

“This milestone is more than the completion of a major infrastructure project; it represents years of vision, collaboration and commitment,” Saathoff said. “As the deepest port on the Gulf of America, Port Freeport is better positioned to serve our customers, strengthen America’s supply chains and create new opportunities that will benefit Texas and the nation.”

The project also strengthens the broader system of Texas ports that supports American energy, manufacturing, agriculture and international commerce. Cargo moving through Texas ports reaches communities across the country through interconnected highway, rail, pipeline and distribution networks.

“This project is the kind of infrastructure investment that produces lasting results for working families, businesses and communities,” Weber said. “A stronger Port Freeport supports Texas jobs, energy exports, manufacturing and international trade. It also strengthens the supply chains our country depends on and gives American businesses a better platform to compete in the global economy.”

Congress authorized the Freeport Harbor Channel Improvement Project under Section 7002 of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014. Port Freeport serves as the project’s non-federal sponsor.

The project includes the completion of Reach 3 at 51 feet and Reach 4 at 26 feet. Remaining project dimensions include the Reach 1 Outer Bar at 58 feet, the Reach 1 Jetty and Main Channel reaches at 56 feet, and Reach 2 at 51 feet.

“The Port Commission has remained focused on the long-term value this project will create for our port, our customers and the communities we serve,” Giesecke said. “This milestone reflects responsible stewardship and a shared commitment to investing in infrastructure that’ll support economic growth for generations. We’re grateful to USACE, our elected leaders, our staff and every member of the project team who helped make this vision a reality.”

Greater channel depth affects more than vessel size. It can increase cargo-carrying capability, provide additional operating margin and reduce some of the constraints associated with channel depth and geometry. Improvements to the upper turning basin and lower channel bend will also support safer and more efficient vessel movements.

The national significance of the project extends beyond Port Freeport. America’s ports serve as essential links between domestic producers, consumers, energy infrastructure and international markets. Modern navigation channels help those ports remain safe, competitive and resilient.

“Ports are strategic national assets, and their value depends on the infrastructure that connects them to the world,” Yi said. “The Freeport Harbor Channel Improvement Project demonstrates how investment in navigation capability strengthens an entire transportation and supply-chain network. By expanding vessel access and improving maritime efficiency, this project will help

Texas and the United States remain competitive in global trade.”

The project advances the Army Civil Works initiative, Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork, by converting federal and non-federal investment into physical navigation capability that supports public safety, commerce and national resilience.



USACE plays a central role in the nation's economic well-being by maintaining

waterways for navigation and commerce. The Galveston District maintains more than 1,000 miles of federally authorized navigation channels along the Texas coast, including approximately 270 miles of deep-draft channels and 750 miles of shallow-draft waterways.

For more news and information, visit www.swg.usace.army.mil. Follow the Galveston District on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GalvestonDistrict.

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