

Ohio River terminal to announce massive expansion

Government and industry officials are planning a news conference Wednesday to announce an 800-acre, \$30 million expansion of Rockport River Terminals, a privately-owned shipping terminal on the Ohio River east of Evansville.

The project is expected to be the initial salvo in an ongoing expansion.

Wednesday's announcement will focus on expanding the terminal to handle steel transport for the AK Steel finishing facility about three miles away, said Don Schulte, President of Lincolnland Economic Development Corp., Spencer County's economic development not-for-profit.

The expansion also might allow the terminal to handle container deliveries, Schulte said.

Historically, it has specialized in shipping coal.

A source familiar with the announcement said terminal owner Bruce Kanipe has signed options to buy 800 acres. About 600 of the acres are owned by Indiana Michigan Power, a division of Ohio-based American Electric Power, said the source, who asked not to be named.

The source also said the port will lay railroad tracks that will connect to a Norfolk Southern Corp. line a couple of miles away.

Kanipe could not be reached for comment.

Another Lincolnland board member, Dan Rininger, said Kanipe aspires to build the facility into the largest port between Pittsburgh and St. Louis. "We think this is something really special," said Rininger, who also is president of the county board of commissioners.

Indiana Department of Transportation Deputy Commissioner Sam Sarvis is expected for the announcement, as is Helen Murray, president and chief operating officer of Indiana Michigan Power.

The site near Rockport is next to a sprawling power generating plant operated by the electric company. The power plant is served by a Norfolk Southern rail line.

Several companies have expressed an interest in building an ethanol plant in the area, but none will be included in the announcement, the source said.