

River port plans move forward

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The long-standing dream of building a major port along the Ohio River in Spencer County took a big step toward realization Wednesday as Indiana Michigan Power transferred the right to purchase 600 acres of property to MidAmerica Terminals for the development of a river port.

The transfer of the riverfront property, together with the acreage that MidAmerica Terminals now controls, will bring to about 900 acres the total property available for construction of the port, said Bruce Kanipe, president of MidAmerica Terminals, the company that is acquiring the property and developing the port.

The property is between river mile-markers 743 and 744 between Rockport and Grandview, Ind.

Construction on the first-phase of the facility, which is expected to cost about \$30 million is expected to start in June or July and take 12 to 18 months, Kanipe said. It should be ready for operation in January 2009.

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— Bruce Kanipe, president of MidAmerica Terminals

The port is expected to employ up to 18, not including the employees of other companies that locate there, Kanipe said.

Tom Utter, executive director of Lincolnland Economic Development, the Spencer County economic-development agency, said that several companies have already expressed interest in locating at the port, which will also serve as an industrial park and logistics center.

“It’s going to positively impact our economy for the next century,” Utter said.

Development of the port and its intermodal capabilities, or ability to have cargo transferred between barge, train and truck, is being facilitated by the construction of the William Natcher Bridge between Spencer County and Owensboro, Ky., by the widening of U.S. 231 in Spencer County to four lanes and by the

existing Norfolk Southern Railroad lines, Utter said.

The rail loops will allow trains of up to 125 cars and larger serve the facility, Utter said. That puts it into one of the handful of river ports in the country that can facilitate such trains of 75 cars or more, he said.

Utter said the port is expected to handle both imported and exported agricultural products. It will also be used to export finished products from the area’s furniture sector. It will import materials used by that sector and other local manufacturers, Utter said.

Utter said that the port was something the community has known it would benefit from for a long time. The chief obstacle to its development has been funding its development in a low-population county, Utter said.

“We were able to get a pri-

vate sector company to negotiate the last four years to acquire enough property to build out the river port port. That’s what’s changed,” Utter said.

Kanipe moved to Spencer County four years ago and, working with Lincolnland Economic Development, began operating Rockport River Terminals, a small port in the area, as he began negotiating for land for a larger port.

Kanipe said that he has been operating ports with his family and associates for about 25 years. He and others operate the Dekoven Dock Inc. in Union County, Ky.

Of the Spencer County port, Kanipe said “the site ... has the potential to be one of the largest and most active river ports between Pittsburgh and St. Louis. The availability of rail, river and highway transportation makes this a prime site for development.”

The port will continue to be developed with the private money of companies that locate there, Utter said.

“We’re very grateful that Kanipe and his company saw this potential and decided to invest in this community,” Utter said.