2026 Illinois Waterway Ports Annual Meeting Agenda

2026 IWPC and CBP Annual Meeting

Thursday, 15 Oct 26 at the Grand Bear Resort
2643 N. IL Route 178, Utica, IL 61373

Register: IWPC and CBP Annual Event Registration

Purpose: The primary purpose of the meeting is to celebrate the great accomplishments over the last year, and identify actions and achievable results for the next year. Secondarily, we will share information amongst stakeholders, network and help build a common unified regional vision for the Illinois Waterway Ports Commission inclusive of the six port operating organizations.

8:30-9:00 Registration

9:00-9:05 Administrative Remarks – Illinois Valley Regional Port District Staff (Host) [Confirmed]

9:05-9:10 Welcome, Travis McGlasson, Illinois Waterway Ports Commission Chair (Host) [Confirmed]

9:10-9:20 Welcome, Robert Hasty, Mayor, Ottawa, Illinois (Host) [Confirmed]

9:20-9:45 Keynote Speaker Todd Main, Director of Market Development, Illinois Soybean Association, Update Illinois Soybean Association Trans 2050

9:45-10:00 Robert Sinkler, Executive Coordinating Director, Corn Belt Ports, UPDATE: ILWW Ports Commission and Corn Belt Ports [Confirmed]

10:00-10:15 Networking Break

10:15-11:15 Panel 1 (Supply Chain Resiliency) – Moderator **Travis McGlasson** [Chair IWPC, County Chair Marshall]

A panel on supply chain resiliency featuring leaders from the Illinois Farm Bureau, Alto Ingredients, J.F. Brennan Company, and the Illinois River Carriers Association will bring together four critical voices from across the Illinois River's agricultural, industrial, and inland waterway sectors. Rodney Knittle, Todd Benton, Matt Hogan, and Mike Blaske will examine how persistent gaps in the Illinois River's multimodal system—ranging from aging river infrastructure and limited rail capacity to first-mile/last-mile bottlenecks—continue to strain the movement of goods. The discussion will highlight the operational challenges facing producers, processors, and carriers, including extreme weather disruptions, regulatory uncertainty, and rising costs. Panelists will also address workforce development gaps that threaten long-term reliability, from shortages in skilled trades and maritime crews to the need for modern training pipelines that match today's technology-driven logistics environment. Together, they will outline collaborative strategies, policy priorities, and practical innovations needed to strengthen resiliency across the entire supply chain.

Illinois Farm Bureau [**Rodney Knittle, Associate Director of Transportation**], Alto Ingredients, Inc. [**Todd Benton, Chief Operating Officer**], J.F. Brennan Company, Inc. [**Matt Hogan, Director of the Construction Group**], Illinois River Carriers Association [**Mike Blaske, General Manager, Illinois Marine Towing, LLC**.] [Confirmed]

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11:15-11:30 Jim Tarmann, Managing Director, Illinois Corn Marketing Board / Illinois Corn Growers Association

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11:45-12:30 Networking Lunch

12:30-1:30 Panel 2 (Leveraging our Ports as Economic Enablers) – Moderator Dr. Chris Merrett (IIRA)

Integrating the Illinois Waterway ports into regional economic development and CEDS planning adds a powerful multimodal dimension to how communities pursue growth, investment, and long-term competitiveness. By recognizing ports as economic enablers—linking river, road, air, rail, and pipeline assets—regional plans can better align infrastructure priorities, land-use strategies, and Opportunity Zone investments with the logistics strengths that drive industrial expansion and rural prosperity. This panel brings together Kathie Brown, Kevin Lindeman, Stacy Nimo, Nancy Norton, Bill Blessman, and Dr. Chris Merrett to explore how coordinated planning across the six port-operating organizations can amplify the region's economic potential. Through shared insights, stakeholder networking, and collaborative vision-building, the session aims to strengthen a unified regional strategy for the Illinois Waterway Ports Commission—one that fully leverages multimodal connectivity and positions the waterway system as a catalyst for inclusive, sustainable economic growth.

Greater Peoria Economic Development [**Kathie Brown, Director of Rural Outreach and Development**]; North Central Illinois Council of Governments [**Kevin Lindeman Executive Director**]; Western Illinois Regional Council [**Stacy Nimo CEO**]; Grundy County Economic Development [**Nancy Norton, CEO**], Heart of Illinois Regional Port District (HIRPD) [**Bill Blessman, Board of Directors, HIRPD**], and Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs [**Dr. Chris Merrett, Dean of Innovation and Economic Development and Director of Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs**] [Confirmed]

1:30-1:45 Bob Brettell, Managing Partner Prosody Consulting, Public Private Partnership [Confirmed]

1:45-2:00 Networking Break

2:00 – 2:15 Leah Thill, Director Midwest Regional Office, CALSTART, Update: Illinois EPA Clean Ports Grant [Confirmed]

State Update

2:15-2:30 BJ Murray, Section Chief, Aviation & Marine Transportation Program Planning, Illinois Department of Transportation, Office of Planning & Programming [Confirmed]

2:30-2:55 Corps of Engineers Briefing (Includes Q&A) [Confirmed]

Mr. Tom Heinold, Chief of Operations Division, MVR Operations Update, Rock Island District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Registration fee is $25 per person

Registration Fee Industry: $250

RSVP NLT 2 Oct 26 if you plan to attend

Register Here: IWPC and CBP Annual Event Registration

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Illinois Waterway Ports Commission (IWPC)

Major Cities
- Peoria Metropolitan Area
- Ottawa

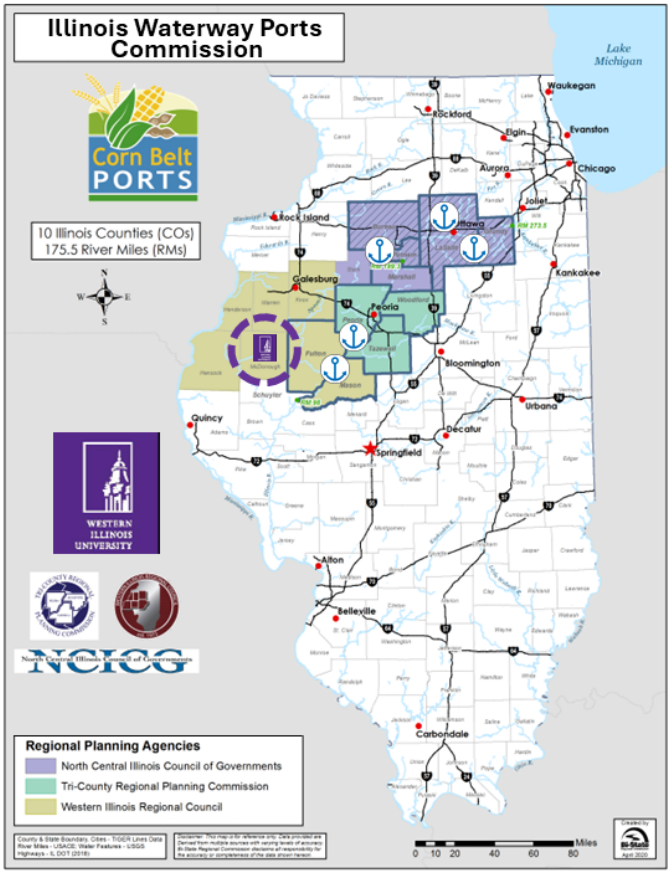
Ports (State Recognized)
- Havana Regional Port (2311)
- Heart of Illinois Regional Port (2312)
- Illinois Valley Regional Port (2313)
- Ottawa City Port (7712)
- Seneca Regional Port (7710)
- IWPC Managed Port Area

Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Tri-County

Regional Planning Agencies (See Map)
- North Central Illinois
- Tri-County
- Western Illinois

USACE (Corps) ILWW Project Office
- Peoria

Supporting USCG (Coast Guard) Office
- Peoria

Illinois Waterway Visitors Center
- Starved Rock Lock and Dam (Ottawa)

Lead Resource Supt Agency (Western IL Univ)
- Institute for Rural Affairs (Plus)