

## Port of Pascagoula touts railroad reroute project at annual event with legislators in Jackson

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JACKSON, Mississippi -- Port of Pascagoula and Jackson County industry leaders headed

Mark McAndrews (File)

to Jackson this week to host a party and remind legislators of the local maritime industry and its importance to the whole state.

The 16th annual Port of Pascagoula Night, held at the Old Capitol Inn in downtown Jackson, is an informal event during which legislators mingle with port employees, Jackson County industry leaders and other elected officials.

Port Night began in the late 1990s as a way to gain \$21 million in state funding, which was used to deepen and widen the channel into Bayou Casotte.

Now, the event is used to showcase the state's return on the investment.

"When I started in the public port industry nearly 30 years ago, one of the first things I learned is that port development is a team sport, and nowhere is that sport played better than in Jackson County, Mississippi," Port Director Mark McAndrews told legislators.

The popular event was held Tuesday night.

"As reflected in tonight's turnout, we are privileged to have in attendance nearly all of the key team members that work together to generate over 19,000 jobs and \$900,000,000 in personal income on the Pascagoula waterfront," McAndrews told those gathered.

"The legislature, state officials, MDOT, MDA, our Board of Supervisors, and our industry partners all play key roles in the development of our deepwater channels, public facilities and economic development efforts in support of our Jackson County Economic Development Foundation," he said.

Two years ago, the Legislature appropriated \$10 million for a project to allow Mississippi-produced wood pellets access to world markets through the Port of Pascagoula.

Coupled with \$15 million of investment by the port and \$5 million in private funding, **the terminal was used to leverage \$14 million from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery discretionary grant program.**

That large project re-routes the Mississippi Export rail line and relocates its interchange with the CSX Railroad

from downtown Pascagoula to the east of Miss. 611. It will also close 16 rail crossings through Moss Point and Pascagoula.

The first phase of the project was awarded at the port's February board meeting, McAndrews said.

"Cooperating with our industry partners, MDA and the Board of Supervisors, we have administered in excess of \$60 million of CDBG public infrastructure projects," he said. "Matched or exceeded private investment by our partners allows them to grow, remain competitive and continue to benefit Jackson County and the state."

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