

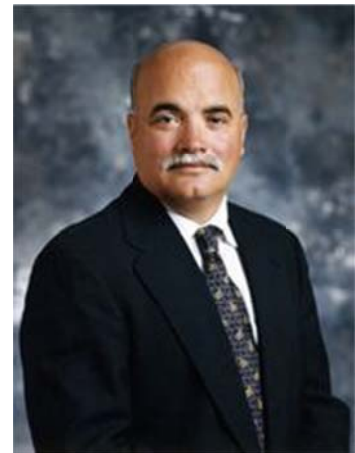
## Waterways and Port Infrastructure Keep Montana and America Moving

Montana Business

Tuesday, 21 June 2011

*Op-Ed, Rick Calhoun, Chairman, Waterways Council, Inc.*

Just a few weeks ago the evening news riveted our attention on the high-water on the Mississippi River and the tragic flooding in the nation's Midwest.



That, unfortunately, was our nation's waterways system's 15 minutes of "fame." But the benefits of America's rivers and ports deserve so much more than that. They are a precious resource, and the envy of the world because this natural "water highway" system provides for commerce and competition from Montana to Maine, allowing for a level playing field in the world's export market. Montana's grain growers, in their push for free trade agreements to better compete with Canada, well understand this need for fair competition.

Simply put, infrastructure = exports, and this quote from a recent (May 30) Journal of Commerce article underscores that: "Government officials have been slow to make the link between exports and transportation infrastructure, but one senior official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the issue of transportation

infrastructure and competitiveness has been raised frequently in conversations with executives throughout the nation.”

This segment of our nation’s transportation network is often out of sight, out of mind, as it quietly transports over 624 million tons of “building block” commodities annually for use in this country and for export. Without this critically important mode, our nation’s roadways – including those in Big Sky country -- would likely clog and crumble, our air quality would diminish, our consumption of and cost for energy and utilities would increase, our global economic competitiveness would erode, and our quality of life would fail.

Those million tons of cargo equals around \$70 billion put back into the U.S. economy and this mode provides lower shipping costs that help farmers to be competitive in world markets. It allows our building materials to move cheaper, and keeps our electricity rates lower helping many Americans in difficult economic times. In fact, more than 900,000 tons of Montana coal was shipped on the Upper Mississippi and Ohio Rivers (2007 data).

I believe that Senator Baucus is an ardent supporter of our nation’s waterways and port infrastructure system because he sees the value of getting Montana’s – and the other 49 states’-- agriculture and other products to the export market and keeping America economically competitive.

More than 60 percent of America’s grain exports, 22 percent of our domestic petroleum and petroleum products, and 20 percent of the

coal used in electricity generation is moved on our nation's waterways. As President Obama urges the doubling of U.S. exports by 2014, the inland waterways will be the key to facilitating that expansion.

The inland rivers also relieve traffic congestion. Just one 15-barge tow of dry bulk cargo keeps 1,050 trucks off our nation's already over-crowded highways, or 216 railcars from blocking railroad crossings in our communities.

And inland waterways transportation has a lower carbon footprint and generates fewer carbon dioxide emissions than rail or truck for each ton of cargo compared to transporting that same cargo by these other modes. It is also more energy-efficient: Barges can move one ton of cargo 576 miles on one gallon of fuel -- 100 miles more than rail transport and 400 miles more than truck transport.

Taken together, this should resonate with Montana residents, who cherish their open spaces and clean air. Many other states and cities are choked with road construction, repairs, congestion and pollution.

But some lock and dam infrastructures on the system are more than 50 years beyond their designated lifespan and require recapitalization. Dredging our rivers and coastal and inland ports, and repairing our locks, are as important as filling potholes and maintaining and building new bridges. Infrastructure in this country cannot reasonably be debated without including the waterways, along with highways, airports and railways.

There is a plan to fund that recapitalization, known as the Inland Waterways Capital Development Plan, developed over an 18-month period by the Army Corps of Engineers personnel and members of the Inland Waterways Users Board. The plan prioritizes navigation projects across the entire waterways system, improves the Corps' management and processes to deliver projects on time and on budget, and recommends a funding mechanism that is affordable to meet the system's needs.

We urge Congress to support this important initiative and to take steps toward caring for the infrastructure that keeps Montana – and America – moving!

For a copy of the full report and recommendations, visit [Waterways Council](#).

*Rick Calhoun is Chairman of [Waterways Council](#) in Arlington, Virginia. He is also President of Cargo Carriers, part of Cargill, Inc., located in Minnesota. He has been a long-time member of the Inland Waterways Users Board.*