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## Dredging to Make Virginia the East Coast's Deepest Port is Underway

*First Phase of Deepening to 55 Feet Began Dec. 1, Years Ahead of Schedule*

**NORFOLK, VA** – The Port of Virginia's® journey to becoming the deepest port on the U.S. East Coast is underway as dredges took to the water Sunday (Dec. 1) to begin digging, nearly two-and-a-half years ahead of schedule

“This project, combined with all of the investments we are making at our terminals, tells the ocean carriers ‘we are ready for your big ships,’ ” said John F. Reinhart, CEO and executive director of the Virginia Port Authority. “The container ships are getting bigger and require more water depth to safely operate and we are committed to working with our customers to meet their needs today, tomorrow and decades from now.”

The port's preparation for the project, its collaboration with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the support of the elected officials on the state and federal levels were factors in securing final, early approval. Reinhart said safe, two-way flow of ultra-large container vessels, unrestricted by tide or channel width, is a significant competitive advantage for Virginia.

“The cargo flowing across our terminals is valuable to its owners and the Virginia economy, so we are investing in those systems that ensure the efficient, reliable and safe movement of cargo and ships to and from our port,” Reinhart said. “We are positioning ourselves to be East Coast's premier trade gateway. Deep, wide channels will support many Virginia businesses and fuel cargo growth, job creation and economic investment across the Commonwealth.”

In October, the port and New Jersey-based Weeks Marine finalized the contract for the first phase of work. The contract for the first phase is \$78 million and the total cost of the project, including the preliminary engineering and design work, is \$350 million.

The work that started Sunday will deepen the western side of Thimble Shoal Channel, which leads into the Norfolk Harbor, to 56 feet. When dredging is complete in 2024, the commercial channels serving the Norfolk Harbor will be able to simultaneously accommodate two, ultra-large container vessels.

In 2015, the deepening effort got underway when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the port agreed to share the cost of evaluating the benefits of dredging the Norfolk Harbor to a depth beyond 50 feet.

“We are the stewards of this port and we are investing to ensure that we meet the needs of our customers, the cargo owners and to set the path for The Port of Virginia to be a long-term contributor to the Virginia economy,” Reinhart said.

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*The Virginia Port Authority (VPA) is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The VPA owns and through its private operating subsidiary, Virginia International Terminals, LLC, operates four general cargo facilities: Norfolk International Terminals, Portsmouth Marine Terminal, Newport News Marine Terminal and the Virginia Inland Port in Warren County. The VPA leases and operates Virginia International Gateway and Richmond Marine Terminal. A recent economic impact study from The College of William and Mary shows that The Port of Virginia helped create more than 397,000 jobs and generate more than \$92 billion in total economic impact throughout the Commonwealth during fiscal year 2018.*