

2025 ILWW Ports Annual Meeting  
Friday, 7 Nov 25 at the Peoria Riverfront Museum  
222 SW Washington St, Peoria, IL 61602

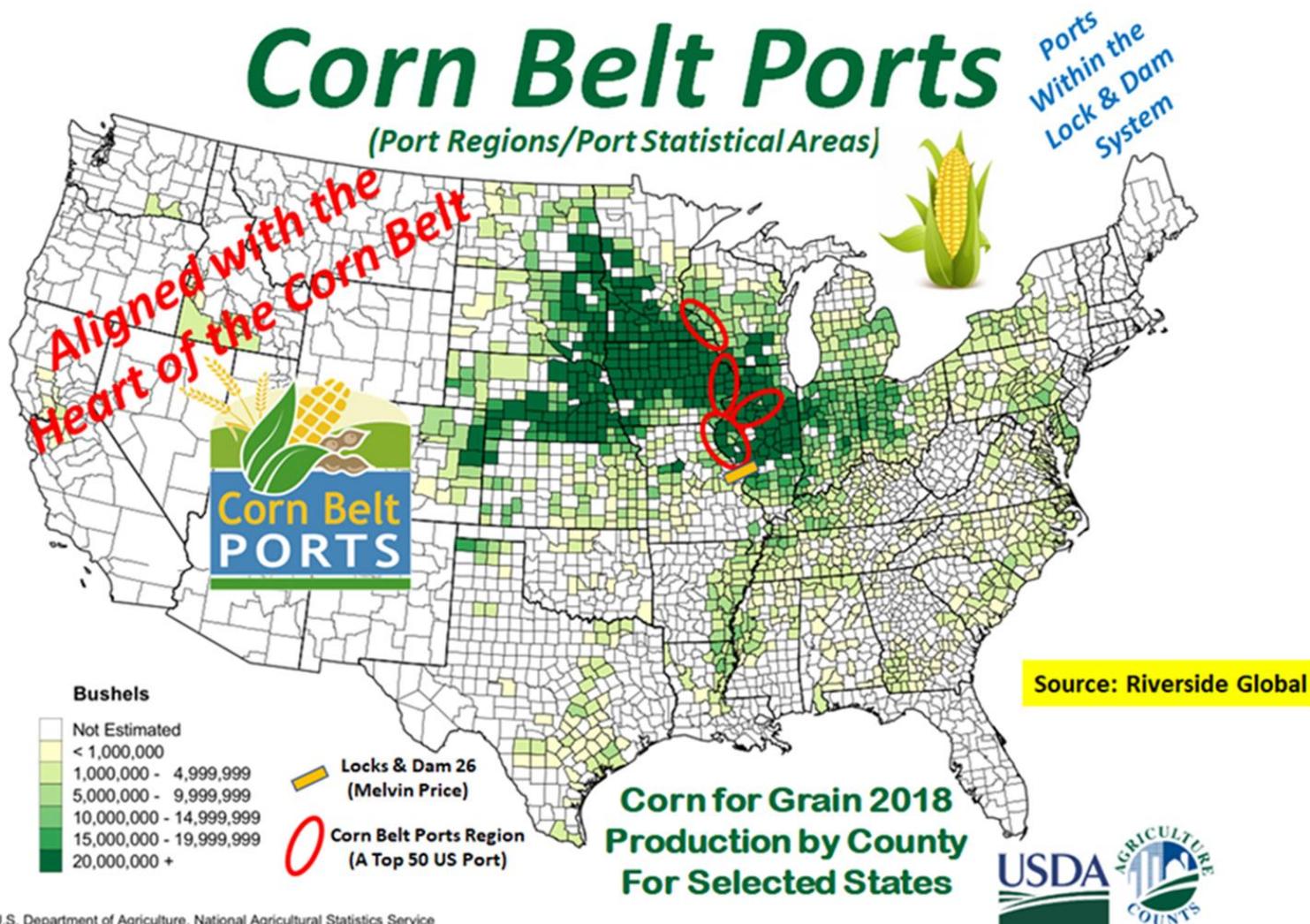
10:45 to 11:45am: Leveraging our Ports as Economic Enablers – Moderator Dr. Chris Merrett (IIRA)

- Greater Peoria Economic Development – Chris Setti, CEO
- North Central Illinois Council of Governments – Kevin Lindeman, Executive Director
- Western Illinois Regional Council – Stacy Nimmo, CEO
- Grundy County Economic Development – Aindrea Hogan, VP of Development
- Tri-County Regional Planning Commission – Eric Miller, Executive Director
- Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs – Chris Merrett, Director of Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs

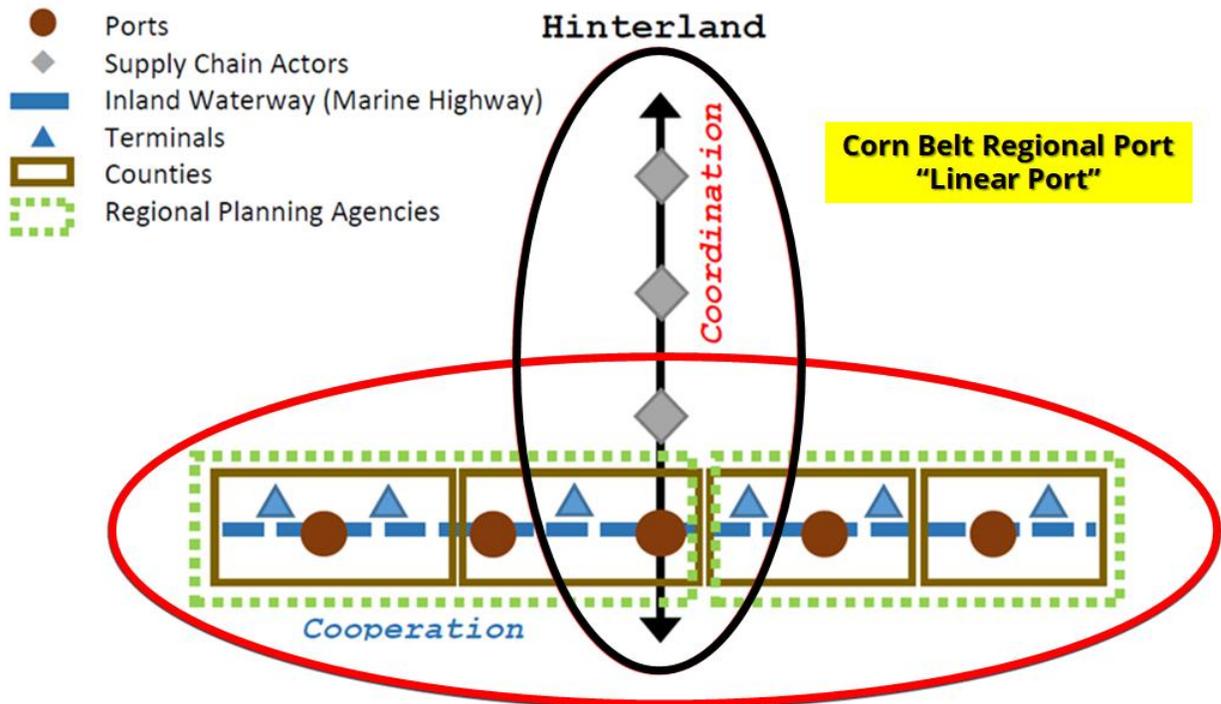
### Introduction

The Illinois Waterway (ILWW) Ports Commission is an economic development initiative encompassing 10 counties, 5 state ports and 3 regional planning agencies. It is a means to represent the economic value (and the value of waterborne commerce) as reflected in tonnage, to the nation and the world generated by North Central and Central Illinois. It also better positions the region to secure federal funding opportunities. Beyond that, it is possible that the creation of the ILWW will help its constituent stakeholders to work collectively to increase economic development associated with the regional port and its associated supply chains.

However, it is not enough to simply create this new regional entity on paper. The member organizations and actors need to think differently and act collaboratively in new ways to maximize the rural and regional economic development benefits of this regional port. Here are some questions to prompt a discussion about operationalizing and optimizing the ILWW regional port.



# Regional Port Cooperation and Coordination



## Discussion Questions

### 1. Collaboration and Planning Opportunities

- What are some specific ways that economic development agencies, including both county and regional planning agencies can improve their collaboration to promote regional ports?
- What are the ways that the ILWW can work with the other Corn Belt Ports in the region?
- Are there entrepreneurship and business development opportunities that can be promoted by the ILWW?
- What are the largest barriers to collaboration as a regional port along the Illinois River?
- How can stakeholders in the ILWW see beyond their respective silos to amplify our collective interests to pursue federal funding and infrastructure that benefits all actors in the region.

### 2. Marketing and Development Strategies

- How do we help rural and regional economic developers to share this message to a broader audience?
- How can we spread the economic benefits of this regional port into the hinterland regions of central Illinois?
- What strategies can we employ to increase the flow of commodities through the ports and terminals in the regional port?
- How can we see beyond our respective boundaries to amplify our collective interests to pursue federal funding and infrastructure that benefits all actors in the region.

### 3. Innovations and Technology

- What are some innovations that could boost the impact of the port? This could include organizational innovation as well as technological innovation.
- Are there new technologies that the regional port should be promoting, including AI, data analytics, automation, robotics, or other investments that could improve port performance and boost economic development?

### 4. Workforce Development and Community Engagement

- What are some of the workforce development needs of the region that can boost the regional port and regional economic activity?
- What are some ways that you involve the community in your initiatives or processes?
- What are some challenges encountered?

### 5. Bonus Question: If there was one thing you would like to see happen in your region, what would that be (with regards to funding or projects advancing)?

# Illinois Waterway Ports Commission

## Illinois Waterway (ILWW) Ports Commission

### 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)

### Metropolitan Planning Organization

Tri-County (Primary Applicant)

### Regional Planning Agencies (See Map)

North Central Illinois  
Tri-County  
Western Illinois

### USACE (Corps) ILWW Project Office

Peoria

### Supporting USCG (Coast Guard) Office

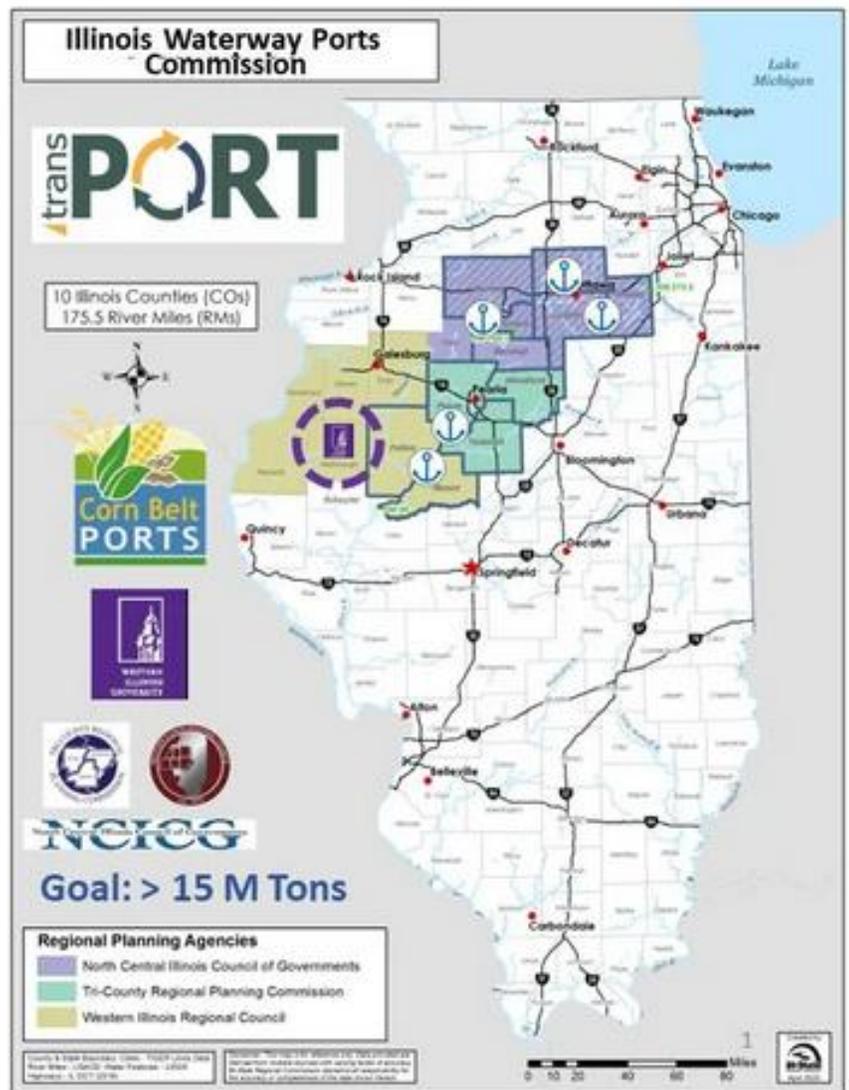
Peoria

### Illinois Waterway Visitors Center

Starved Rock Lock and Dam (Ottawa)

### Lead Resource Supt Agency (Western IL Univ)

Institute for Rural Affairs (Plus)



### Sources

- Corn Belt Regional Ports: <https://cornbeltports.com/ports-in-the-corn-belt/>
- Illinois Waterway Ports Commission: <https://ilwwports.com/>
- State Legislation: <https://www.ilga.gov/Legislation/ILCS/Articles?ActID=4417&ChapterID=15>