



Local News

Let the ships come in *Upton announces money for river mouth dredging in his hometown*

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ST. JOSEPH - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will soon dredge the St. Joseph River mouth, allowing the shipping season to continue, U.S. Rep. Fred Upton, announced Tuesday.

Upton and the Corps reported finding \$100,000 in emergency funding to dredge the severely shoaled channel.

"Ensuring the St. Joseph harbor remains open and ready for businesses is essential to jobs and growth in our region," Upton said in a news release.

The Republican from St. Joseph said he has been working with dock owners, Berrien County and the Corps to find a solution.

The St. Joseph River mouth, like any river mouth, is prone to shoaling. Officials speculate the problem grew more severe this fall because of sand blown into the channel by powerful northwest winds.

Conditions had deteriorated so badly that the self-unloader Manitowoc, carrying 12,500 tons of limestone, ran aground while approaching the harbor Dec. 6.

Dock owners had been expecting five more freighter deliveries this season.

Shippers and dock owners fear there will be no dredging next year.

Harbor maintenance is a Corps responsibility. However, Congress has not budgeted money to dredge smaller Great Lakes harbors in 2012 - though there is a federal harbor maintenance fund supported by taxes on shippers.

The money has been diverted to other uses.

Upton in his news release said Tuesday he is a co-sponsor of a bipartisan bill to ensure the money is used solely for harbor maintenance.

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