

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

The April edition of the Navy League publication "Seapower" has an interesting article regarding the growing size of container ships. Overseas ports have traditionally attracted larger ships. Now, with the present expansion of the Panama Canal, some American ports have started to rebuild to accommodate larger ships. In March of last year, the Twelve Hundred and One foot ship MSC Fabiola became the largest ship to dock at a North American port when it tied up at Long Beach. The Fabiola has a capacity of Twelve Thousand Five Hundred Sixty Two containers. The world's largest container ship, the Marco Polo, is slightly less than Thirteen Hundred feet long and carries Sixteen Thousand containers, and is too large for any U.S. port. Later this year, Maersk Line will introduce a ship that carries Eighteen Thousand containers. The Panama Canal expansion project, started in Two Thousand Seven, will increase the capacity of container ships from Four Thousand to Thirteen Thousand containers which will boost ship traffic along the West and Gulf coasts. Most U.S. ports cannot handle ships with more than Eight Thousand containers at present. Ports that are working to meet the challenge are Miami, Florida, Portland, Oregon, and Savannah, Georgia even though Portland's Columbia River and Georgia's Savannah River will not allow the largest ships no matter what is done but they will favor higher efficiency and higher volume. As the various ports struggle with growing pains trying to expand crane heights, under keel clearance, infrastructure and equipment to meet the demands, I wonder what plans are in the works to accommodate the land carriers. There will not only be an increased demand on the trucks and trains to move those containers in a timely manner throughout the nation, but on the highways and rails needed on which to move them. I am sure that many of you have traveled in the Oakland area and have seen the heavy truck traffic associated with the Port of Oakland. A number of years ago, the average time for a container to move from a dockside ship to its final destination was about eight days. There was an attempt to reduce this time to five days. Whether or not this was ever accomplished is not known to me. The nation's transportation infrastructure earned dismal grades from the American Society of Civil Engineers in a report card for Twenty Thirteen. The report card, covering all fifty states, included four major areas: water and the environment, transportation, public facilities and energy. The estimated price tag for the investment needed for improvements by Twenty-Two is Three point Six Trillion Dollars. I wonder how, or IF, Humboldt Bay might fit into this report. To bring Humboldt Bay into the picture would be costly to say the least, not including the consistent environmentalist stonewalling that always takes place when any type of progress is mentioned.

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