

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

Over the years, citizens of Humboldt County have continued to discuss the possibilities of Humboldt Bay becoming part of the maritime container industry. I would hope that the Harbor Commission and others involved in the management of Humboldt Bay are paying attention to the changes that are taking place on the World wide container scene. Will the changes improve our area's chances for consideration as a viable port or will they close the door on the idea? I can't answer that question one way or the other. There are two major changes taking place. One is: Container ships are getting larger: For comparison purposes, many of the ships that you see in San Francisco Bay have a capacity of about three thousand TEUs (one TEU is the equivalent of a twenty foot container). You have possibly seen pictures of the "Emma Maersk", the largest container ship in the World. Launched in Two Thousand Six, Thirteen Hundred and Two feet in length, One Hundred Eighty Four feet wide, her capacity is Fifteen Thousand Two Hundred TEUs. She carries a crew of thirteen. World War Two era ships carried a crew of thirty to forty. She WAS the largest, but no more. Maersk Lines has ordered twenty of the new Triple E Class container ships being built in the Daewoo shipyards in South Korea. Triple E stands for "Economy of scale, Energy efficient and Environmentally improved". Maersk has already taken delivery on seven of the ships and has placed them in service. Each of these ships is Thirteen Hundred and Six feet in length, One Hundred Ninety feet wide, has a capacity of Eighteen Thousand Two Hundred Seventy TEUs and carries a crew of nineteen. These vessels are too large for any port in the United States and will be used on trade routes such as the longer trips between Europe and Asia. The second major change coming up is the June, Twenty Fifteen opening of the enlarged Panama Canal. Presently, the Canal is limited to container ships of Forty Five Hundred TEUs. In Twenty Fifteen, that will increase to Seventy Five Hundred TEUs. With these two major events on the horizon, smaller ships, especially those retained for the old Panama Canal, will be freed with the owners looking for new ways to fill them with cargo or the ships will be taken out of service which could force some of the smaller shipping companies into bankruptcy. World Trade, although still growing, is not experiencing the rapid growth rate that it was ten years ago. Profit margins in the industry are narrow and any ship, no matter the size, is not efficient without a full cargo. How will these worldwide changes affect Humboldt Bay? I wish I knew but I am of the opinion that there will be some type of impact.

Fred Nelson for Community Comment