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## **U.S. Army Corps of Engineer Division and District Commanders Visit Port of Harlingen**

HARLINGEN, TX-- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Southwestern Division Commander Brig. Gen. Christopher G. Beck and Galveston District Commander Col. Timothy R. Vail with other Corps officials from the Southwestern District and Division met with the Port of Harlingen administration **Tuesday, Dec. 1.**

Beck assumed command of the Southwestern Division in June 2020 and was visiting facilities in his division as part of an outreach initiative to improve communication and project management between USACE and the ports.

“We have to step back and see how we move forward together,” Beck said. “(The USACE) has a great capability to bring resources and we want to see just how we can magnify the impact we can have. Our goal is to move toward a strategic approach rather than a project-by-project basis. This is a great opportunity for us to leverage the tools we have to make (the ports) successful.”

The Southwestern Division, headquartered in Dallas, is one of nine Corps of Engineers regional commands. The Division encompasses all or part of seven states and about 2.3 million acres of public land and water. As the SWD Commander and Division Engineer, Beck oversees hundreds of development projects. The mission of the USACE is to provide ports, like the Port of Harlingen, with vital public engineering services and stewardship of water resource infrastructure.

In November, the USACE and the Port partnered to improve navigability by dredging the Arroyo Colorado and turning basin to authorized depths of 14 and 16 feet, respectively.

“We really appreciate the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers coming to see and hear from us first-hand,” Alan Johnson, Port Board chair, said. “The Port of Harlingen’s business is really expanding and the USACE plays a vital part in how we grow to accommodate business. Especially their help in maintaining our channel. They completed dredging here last month and it has already made a significance difference for our customers. We appreciate their assistance in maintaining our waterways.”

Some of the items discussed were projects laid out by the Port’s Master Plan, including a \$20 million project to expand turning basin to allow for better maneuverability of barge traffic, and create additional fleeting areas to increase cargo volume over the docks. Operational procedures for streamlining future projects were also discussed.

“Our proximity to the Maquiladoras and Harlingen Industrial Park puts us in a prime location to increase our capacity and commodities,” Port Director Walker Smith said. “The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is crucial in assistance and programs that will improve our infrastructure to take advantage of more business opportunities.”

In 2019, USACE and the Gulf Ports Association partnered to create the Emerging Ports Initiative in order to increase communication and awareness of “smaller” ports’ issues and requests.

“The Emerging Ports Initiative is revitalizing our relationship with all Texas ports to assure we are accessible to our partners and their stakeholders as they pursue economic opportunities,” said Vail.

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