

# ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TENNESSEE'S INLAND WATERWAYS



IN 2021, TENNESSEE'S INLAND PORTS, INLAND WATERWAYS,  
AND INLAND WATERWAYS-DEPENDENT INDUSTRIES SUPPORTED

Nearly **100,000 jobs**

**\$6.5 billion** in personal income

**\$12.0 billion** in Gross State Product

**\$26.4 billion** in total output

...Giving rise to  
**\$1.1 billion**  
in state & local  
tax revenue

Tennessee has nearly

**950 MILES**

of navigable inland  
waterways, ranking it

**11<sup>th</sup>** in the  
nation

## INLAND WATERWAYS SUPPORT TENNESSEE'S KEY INDUSTRIES

Industry Sub-Category	Percent of Goods Shipped by Water (Tons)	Direct Tennessee Jobs
Crop Production	↻ 10.8% of inbound / ↻ 34.0% of outbound	1,680*
Fabricated Metal Product Mfg	↻ 6.1% of inbound	38,440
Waste Mgmt & Remediation Ser	↻ 10.6% of inbound	9,440
Primary Metal Mfg	↻ 9.4% of inbound	7,960
Utilities	↻ 5.1% of inbound	3,790

\*Total for Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting sector (NAICS 11)

## TOP INLAND WATERWAYS COMMODITIES BY WEIGHT (comprising 67% of total tonnage)

Sand, Gravel,  
Shells, Clay,  
Salt, & Slag  
**12.1 million tons**

Petroleum  
Products  
**4.2 million tons**

Food & Food  
Products,  
such as  
oils & seeds  
**3.4 million tons**

## TOP INLAND WATERWAYS COMMODITIES BY VALUE (comprising 49% of total value)

Agricultural  
Products, such  
as oils & seeds  
**\$1.4 billion**

Motorized  
Vehicles  
**\$856 million**

Cereal Grains,  
including wheat,  
corn, barley, & oats  
**\$547 million**

## TENNESSEE'S INLAND WATERWAY ASSETS AT A GLANCE

Tennessee, Mississippi,  
and Cumberland Rivers

**5 public ports**

In 2021,  
**29.5M tons of freight**  
valued at  
**\$5.6 BILLION**

moved on Tennessee's  
inland waterways, which  
is equivalent to over  
**737,000 TRUCKS**

Avoided trucks translates into  
**reduced congestion, emissions,  
and crashes**, and contributes to  
the state of good repair of  
highway infrastructure

## BENEFITS OF INLAND WATERWAYS TRANSPORTATION

America's inland waterways system is vital to our nation's competitiveness and economic growth. The inland waterways efficiently, sustainably, cost-effectively and safely transport critical commodities like agricultural goods, energy products, building materials and industrial chemicals to destinations within the U.S. and to deep water ports for export. In 2021, nearly 500 million tons of goods valued at more than \$158 billion moved on the U.S. inland waterways system. The U.S. Department of Transportation Freight Analysis Framework freight forecasts suggest total water tonnage will increase at an annual growth of 0.7% per year through 2040. Barge transportation is the safest, most environmentally friendly, economical, and fuel-efficient way to move our nation's goods for use domestically and for export. On a single gallon of fuel, one barge can move freight more than four times farther than trucks, releasing 10 times fewer emissions.

Called "the backbone of the transportation logistics system," the inland waterways are a key part of the United States' transportation supply chain. The system includes a vast network of 12,000 miles of connecting waterways and 219 locks. However, the majority of locks and dams on the Mississippi River system were constructed during the 1930s and are operating well beyond their 50-year design life. Modernizing the nation's inland waterways system will support and create American jobs, increase U.S. exports, and inject billions of dollars into the U.S. economy to power our growth for the next 50 years.

Sources: U.S. Department of Agriculture Inland Waterways Study (2019); U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Waterborne Commerce Statistics; Federal Highway Administration Freight Analysis Framework; U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics; IMPLAN

One standard  
15-barge tow  
moves the equivalent volume of  
216 rail cars  
plus 6 locomotives



or  
1,050 trucks



Source: National Waterways Foundation

Our nation's ports and waterways remain the crucial **backbone of our economy**. Approximately **2.3B tons of cargo** are shipped to, from or through **41 states each year**. The U.S. marine transportation industry supports **trillions of dollars in commerce and millions of jobs**.



Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Value to the Nation Civil Works, 2021.

The annual net economic benefit generated by the Corps' Civil Works mission is estimated to be **\$89B** – a return of about **\$12 for every dollar expended** – with the total amount provided to improve the nation's water infrastructure at **\$10.24B**.

Source: Senate Environment and Public Works Committee summaries, 2023

In 2021, there were **115,580 recreational lockages** on the inland waterways system.

Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Recreation 2021 National Report

Barges have the smallest carbon footprint among surface transportation modes

832% more than barges

140.7

43% more than barges

21.6

15.1



Tons of CO2 per Million Ton-Miles

Compared to barges, moving an identical amount of cargo by rail generates 43% more carbon dioxide emissions, and trucks generate over 800% more emissions.

Source: Texas Transportation Institute

Marine transportation is critical to **agricultural exports**, forecast at **\$175.5B**.

Agriculture will provide a **\$10.5B trade surplus** to the American economy, with **imports forecast at \$165 billion**. Forestry and fishery products, and critical farm inputs such as fertilizer, feed, and fuel move on the waterway system as well.

Agricultural exports are responsible for **25.5%** of **U.S. farm income**, also driving rural economic activity and supporting more than **1M American jobs** on and off the farm.



Source: A Reliable Waterway System Is Important to Agriculture, 2022