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**STATE OFFICIALS ISSUE REPORT
ON RESTORATION'S PROGRESS**

GULFPORT, Miss. – State officials issued a report today outlining significant progress on the Port of Gulfport's restoration project and reaffirmed that changes undertaken over the last year will expedite the project's completion and build capacity for job creation and development opportunities.

The 19-page report from Governor Phil Bryant, the Mississippi Development Authority and the Mississippi State Port Authority indicates the Port's \$570 million restoration is on schedule for completion in 2016 with construction activity to ramp up over the next year.

"The Port of Gulfport's restoration has been one of the most important tasks I have faced as governor," Governor Bryant said. "Completing this project benefits the coast as well as the rest of the state. I commend the port's leadership for ensuring the project progresses while yielding the maximum benefit for the taxpayers. Once finished, this investment will greatly benefit the region and state."

The changes in restoration design and approach resulted from the five directives Governor Bryant set forth soon after taking office. In 2012, Governor Bryant said the Port project must:

- Create the required new jobs,
- Deepen Gulfport's channel,
- Maintain current tenants,
- Increase the Port's capacity, and
- Foster commercial development.

"The renovation and restoration of the Port of Gulfport will be of great economic benefit to Mississippi and its residents and position our state to better compete in the global marketplace," said MDA Executive Director Brent Christensen.

"Our excellent transportation network, including our ports, is attractive to businesses seeking new locations. The strengthening and developing of the Port of Gulfport will increase capacity, in turn generating new jobs and investment for Mississippi," said Christensen.

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Final design and construction is well underway, and more than \$237 million in design, engineering and construction contracts have been issued in relation to the restoration project. The Port has completed the filling of 84 acres in the Mississippi Sound and is currently developing 50 acres that will provide additional available space for new tenants to use.

“Prospective tenants already recognize what we are about to have here in Gulfport,” said Jonathan Daniels, MSPA executive director. “We are not waiting for the completion of construction. We’re moving forward to recruit investment and jobs.”

Some \$570 million in Community Development Block Grant funds is being utilized to restore the Port following Hurricane Katrina. In 2007, state officials submitted a plan to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that would provide for the restoration of the port’s public infrastructure and publicly owned facilities. This plan initiated years of design work and environmental and regulatory review and approval, and in May 2011 HUD released the final allocation of funding for this project, allowing the state to begin the restoration.

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Editor’s note: The full report can be found at www.portofthefuture.com and www.shipmspa.com.