

1: You've been at the forefront of the Tulsa Port of Catoosa basically since its beginning. How different did it look 42 years ago? In 1973, there were only three industrial facilities located at the port, and the first barge shipment in 1971 was newsprint for the local evening paper. There are 66 industries at this port now, and the list of commodities transported on this waterway includes agricultural products, petroleum products, steel and project cargo such as heavy machinery. The total annual cargo along the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas Navigation System averages more than 11 million tons, and more than 8,000 people are employed along the waterway in Oklahoma alone.

2: Remind us of the economical advantages touted by those who carry freight via barges. Barge transportation is the cleanest, safest and most economic transportation in the world. It's very common to see 12 barges pushed by one towboat — an equivalent to 720 semi trucks! Water transport reduces air pollution, keeps our highways safer, and in some cases, is the only method of transport available. Some of our project cargo would be impossible to haul by truck or rail because of size or weight constrictions. We can also transport three bushels of grain from here to the Gulf coast for the price of a first-class postage stamp. One company I spoke with last week said it would not be in Tulsa without the port. That is proof enough of the importance of this mode of transportation. Overall, the waterway in Oklahoma reduces transportation costs in this state by 15 percent.

3: The McClellan-Kerr waterway was partially shut down for a time because of maintenance a few months ago. How bad is the upkeep situation right now? Despite the continued success of the port, there are many potential problems long overdue for maintenance along the waterway. Any of them could shut it down for weeks or even months. We estimate the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers needs between \$80 million and \$100 million to complete these tasks. But it is worth it. If the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System were unusable, the economic loss to Oklahoma would exceed \$2 million per day. It is imperative

we have the support of Congress to repair these essential structures. 4: The Tulsa Port of Catoosa is the most inland stop on the waterway. Could you ever foresee it going farther upstream? Why or why not? It would be extremely expensive to extend the navigation system, but this by no means limits our reach! Our recent satellite marketing agreements with industrial parks in Avarad, Okla., and Newton, Kan., are just a few examples of how we are making our waterway more accessible to shippers. The relationships we have established are extremely productive for both sides, and these ties will continue to grow in the years to come. 5: Your name suggests you were born to run a port. Seriously, what was your childhood dream for a profession? How does this job connect to that? The real turning point in my life occurred when I turned 18 and joined the United States Navy. I was excited because I finally saw myself taking control of my life, but I was scared to leave the security of my home and parents. During the next four years, I worked with some of our nation's finest military officers and sailors, including a rear admiral who awarded me a special commendation for my work as a member of his staff. I also graduated second in a class of 40 from a Navy school and within three years earned the rank of Petty Officer Second Class. I left the Navy to earn a masters degree in economics. Working at the port has been fun, challenging and rewarding. The mentorship of business people, including those on our Port Authority Board, along with a talented and hard-working staff have helped me realize my goals as a developer and effective manager. I have no immediate plans to retire. Instead, our talented team oversees much of the daily operations while I attempt to help develop and implement an action plan between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; the states of Arkansas and Oklahoma; shippers, ports, and terminals located along the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System to ensure the continued maintenance operation and development of our waterway. This effort is critical to our port's future

given the declining trend of federal dollars for civil works projects and energy and water projects in general. Bob Portiss has worked at the Tulsa Port of Catoosa since the early 1970s and became port director in 1984. The port is the most inland stop on the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas Navigation System and includes a 2,000-acre industrial park. [Subscribe to Daily Headlines](#) [Sign up!](#) * I understand and agree that registration on or use of this site constitutes agreement to its [user agreement](#) and [privacy policy](#).