

Port of Portland subsidizes Lewiston container service

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The Port of Portland is subsidizing a barge and rail system to get products out of Lewiston, Idaho after major shipping lines stopped serving the port.

A container barge set off Thursday from Lewiston for the first time in eight months carrying containers of agricultural and paper products to the Port of Morrow in Boardman, The Oregonian reports (<http://is.gd/xjtbFk>). From there the containers will be put on a rail shuttle to Portland. From Portland the boxes will be taken to Seattle or Tacoma or loaded onto a Westwood ship that comes to the Port of Portland once a month.

Nearly all of the port's shipping business was canceled earlier this year during labor strife at Port of Portland's container terminal.

"We appreciate this kind of 'out of the box' thinking from all parties involved, providing a partial solution to shipping challenges while we continue working to recruit critical new transpacific service," said Port of Portland Executive Director Bill Wyatt. "We hope the success of this plan will entice labor and terminal management to come together in agreement sooner and shippers to resume frequent, regular container service."

The Port of Portland is paying \$51,000 to get the port-to-rail system up and running. Officials expect it to pay for itself by January.

Normally two barges a week would have been setting out from Lewiston carrying hundreds of containers of pulse crops such as chickpeas, lima beans, lentils, and other legumes. However when Hapag-Lloyd stopped sending empty containers for farmers to fill up and send back to Portland that stopped.

Without Hapag-Lloyd, which shipped 90 percent of those exports to European countries, Lewiston port officials shut down their container port. Farmers and the Clearwater Paper Corp. have since had to truck boxes to California and Seattle.

"This is not making up for the loss of container-by-barge to Portland by any degree, but hopefully it provides another option for exporters in a very constrained market," said David Doeringsfeld, director of the Port of Lewiston.

Information from: The Oregonian, <http://www.oregonlive.com>

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