

# PA director: Raise Bayonne Bridge to keep ports competitive

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By **Charles Hack/The Jersey Journal**

Raising the Bayonne Bridge is necessary to keep the Eastern Seaboard's largest ports competitive, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey's executive director told waterfront advocates recently.

Last month, Chris Ward, the authority's executive director, told roughly 350 business and civic leaders aboard the pleasure boat Spirit of New Jersey that failing to deal with mounting costs of dredging the ports' shipping channels could jeopardize regional jobs.

"The maritime industry has come charging back. Last March was one of the largest growth months in the port's history," Ward said as the boat floated in the Hudson River. "Ports today are critical, critical drivers of the regional economy."

The Port Authority's Board of Commissioners has committed more than \$1 billion to raise the roadbed of the Bayonne Bridge to enable larger container ships expected to arrive once the Panama Canal is widened in 2014 to reach the ports of Newark and Elizabeth.

"I have made it abundantly clear that the Port Authority is not going to landlock Newark and Elizabeth after the billions of dollars we have put in there," Ward said. "By the same token, the Bayonne Bridge is not a light switch that has to be turned on or turned off. ... If we think that it is the only problem we have, we will miss the larger picture."

He said the Port Authority has to deal with sky-high costs of disposing of sediment dredged from the Hudson and Passaic rivers.

"One of the things that the Port Authority and the Army Corps of Engineers is working on is finding a cost effective dredge material handling location adjacent to the harbor," Ward said. "It is the transportation costs that are really driving up dredging costs."

The event was sponsored by the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance.

Ports Newark and Elizabeth support approximately 269,000 jobs in the New York-New Jersey region, and provide for \$11.2 billion in personal income, \$36.1 billion in business income, and \$5 billion in local, state and federal tax revenues, officials said.