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Ports team to attract business

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TAMPA — Officials from the Port of Tampa teamed with port officials from Mobile and Houston on a visit to Asia this month to recruit new container cargo service from Asia via the Panama Canal, port director Richard Wainio said in his 2010 state of the port address recently.

"The response has been favorable to our unique approach whereby the three ports jointly present a complete itinerary for three strong complementary markets that are currently underserved," Wainio said.

Tampa is served by Zim Integrated Shipping Services container service to Asia and South America, and port officials want to expand its lucrative container cargo business.

Wainio said more than two years of recession and declining U.S. and global trade ended this year. Recovery is under way, he said, from the worst economic and financial downturn experienced by the maritime industry since World War II.

The recent U.S. trade accord with South Korea is a positive step and the momentum should be followed by passage of both the Panama and Colombia free trade agreements this coming year, he said.

Overall port maritime activity, measured in cargo tonnage, strengthened slowly over the last half of the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30.

Total bulk and general cargo increased 14 percent in fiscal 2010 to 15 million tons, compared with the previous year. Container cargo declined 8 percent to 44,827 20-foot equivalent containers, while cruise lines handled 802,775 passengers, 162 fewer than in 2009.

The port has expanded its container terminal from 25 to 40 acres. Construction will begin next year on the Tampa Gateway Rail project that will handle trains carrying cargo containers and accommodate 100-car trains bringing ethanol to the port, where it will be blended with inbound gasoline.

In addition, construction began this year on the \$500 million Interstate 4-Cross-

town Connector for port truck and other vehicular traffic.

Expansion began in Port Redwing on two berths, channel deepening and acquisition of land for rail and road development and warehouse operations.

REK Pier, the primary entry point for gasoline serving 8 million west central Florida residents and jet fuel for Orlando International Airport is being replaced with a \$35 million expanded facility to handle larger tankers.

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