



A viable shipping channel is essential  
Credits: Anna Renault

## Harbor Team dredging decisions needed for deeper channels

- By [Anna Renault](#), Baltimore Environmental News Examiner

The largest ship to ever dock in Baltimore arrived just a few days ago. “The Sindy” is capable of carrying up to 9,000 containers. The average container/cargo ship usually carries only 4500 containers.

Retired Senator Helen Bentley, a long time supporter and advocate for the Port of Baltimore, said she was amazed at the size of the ship. “I can’t imagine that ship traveling with a full load out on the ocean and not losing its cargo,” said Bentley. She stood in amazement looking at the breadth and length of this new super-sized container ship. “The Sindy” sat at dock with cargo containers sitting side-by-side with 18 across its stern – definitely more than the average ship by several. However, more impressive was the height of each row!

Local news reporters were also commenting on the size of “The Sindy,” remarking that larger vessels are in the planning stages as the Panama Canal is in the process of expansion to accommodate the larger ships. It is expected that in 2014, a wider and deeper Canal will permit these larger cargo and container ships to pass through.

The larger ships and the enlargement of the Panama Canal poses a new dilemma for the Ports America Chesapeake company which operates the Port of Baltimore for the Maryland Port Authority. The Port of Baltimore will require construction of deeper water berths to accommodate the future super-sized ships. If the Port does not make appropriate changes, the Port of Baltimore will not remain competitive. With the changes within the Harbor’s shipping channels, the Port of Baltimore will be one of two ports on the East Coast that will be able to handle these larger ships.

The changes include the need for a 50-foot draft alongside the pier according to terminal personnel. Without it, the ship would be scraping bottom. One staff member related that as big as “The Sindy” currently is other larger ships are in the works and will be coming this way.

“Presently, “The Sindy” is only half the size of what's on the drawing board,” said Senator Bentley (retired). It was noted that “The Sindy” can carry a full load of containers that when set end-to-end would stretch the length of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway. The ship its self is 1100 feet long, about the size and length of a military aircraft carrier.

It was also noted that while “The Sindy” was currently docked at the deepest berth at the Seagirt Marine Terminal in Baltimore's Port, the ship is not able to carry a full-capacity load of 9,000 containers. If she did she would be scraping bottom.

As the Harbor Team continues its deliberations for a resolution to storage of dredging materials from the current shipping channels, it must take into account the need for the deeper berths as well as shipping channels sufficiently deep to afford these new super-sized ships safe passage up the Chesapeake Bay and into Baltimore's Inner Harbor.