

Q & A

with Dr. Geraldine Knatz, executive director, the Port of Los Angeles

In May, the Port of Los Angeles took centre stage as the port community descended on the Californian city for the IAPH 28th World Ports Conference. The Port of Los Angeles executive director Geraldine Knatz was at the centre of it all, representing not only her hometown port but the International Association of Ports and Harbors (IAPH) in what was her final act as president of the association. Geraldine Knatz spoke to Port Technology International about how she plans to take the US port forward, whilst reflecting on her two-year reign at the IAPH.



What impact will the expanded Panama Canal have on the Port of LA?

We view the competitive landscape as changing, not just with the Panama Canal but also developments in Canada, Mexico and in South East Asian cargo through the Suez Canal. However, the impact of the Panama Canal can be seen as positive. Only recently we launched a campaign called Beat the Canal, which became a rallying cry for cooperation and collaboration among stakeholders in the port arena. This also gave us an opportunity to establish our annual port day in conjunction with our local city council focusing on issues affecting the port. By kick starting our port day we were able to secure a passage of ordinance that transferred some permitting responsibility, specifically for automated equipment and large electrical cranes, from the city directly to the port. Therefore, we feel we have addressed concerns relating to the Canal's expansion in a positive and proactive way to help drive change and streamline other regulatory processes, whilst at the same time making people more aware of what goes on here in the port.

You recently described the completion of the port's ten-year dredging program as the 'single-most important infrastructure project in its history'. What does its completion mean for LA?

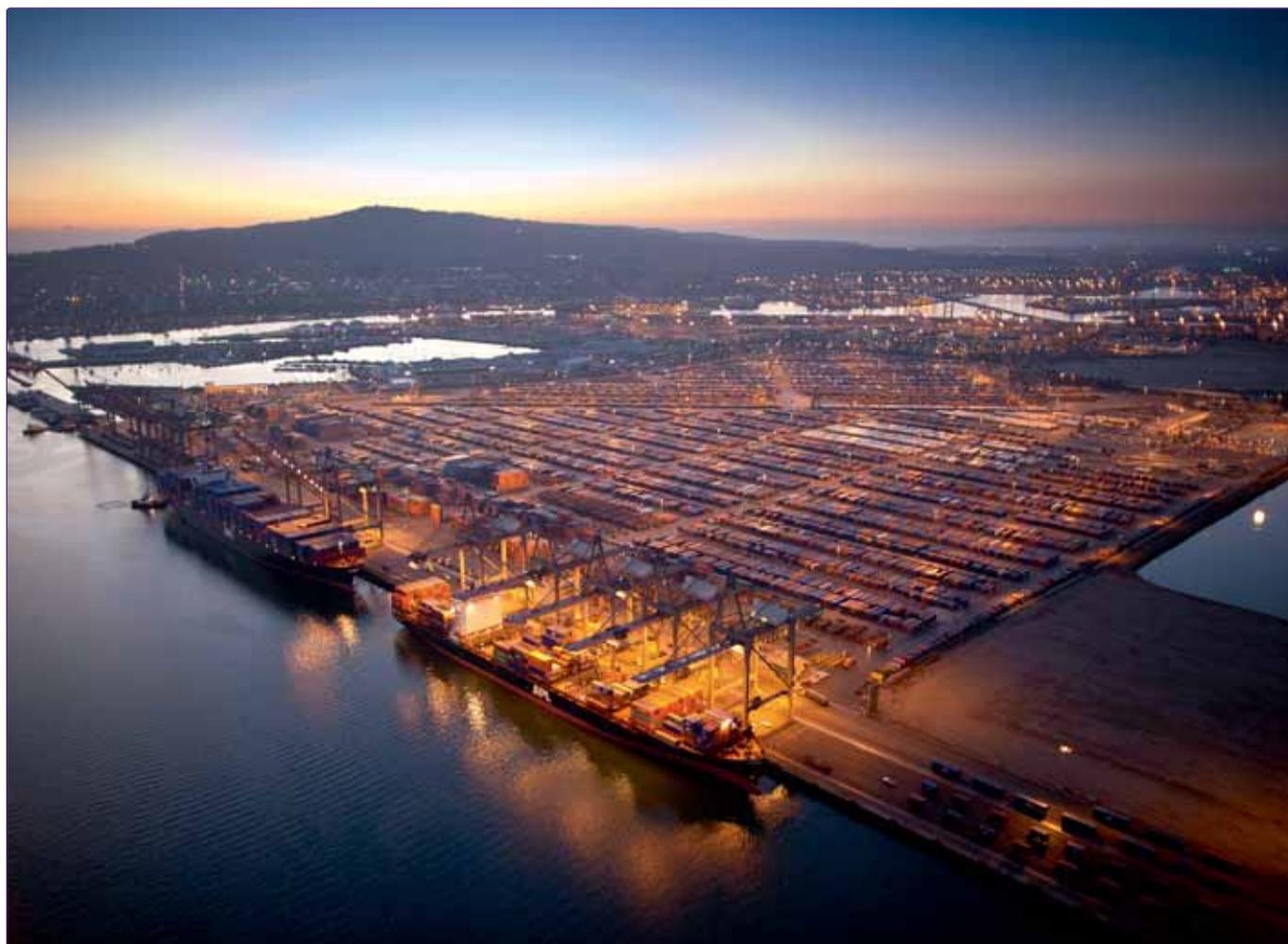
It means we are big ship ready. We can now get the world's largest ships to every area of the port and this is something we have always seen as fundamental in safeguarding the port's future. There is no reason for ships not to pass us by as they can go any place they desire, although now, and for the first time, we can accommodate them all in the Port of Los Angeles.

What is the current status of the other infrastructure projects currently being undertaken by the port, and are there any future developments worth highlighting?

We are actually coming to the end of our largest ever year in terms of capital expansion. In regards to projects already underway, we still have various phases of the China Shipping terminal and the TraPac Terminal to finish, and we have just commenced construction works for the new rail support yard within the port. Outside the port, we just approved a US\$500 million rail yard with Burlington Northern. We are also focusing on redeveloping Terminal Island, which is the core of our heavy cargo, liquid bulk and container handling facilities. Here we have come up with a new plan to try and utilise the land as effectively as possible, and make the commercial fishing area more sustainable and more compact to free up areas for future cargo expansion. Next year we have earmarked US\$400 million for capital expenditure, again our biggest ever, as part of US\$1.3 billion earmarked for port related projects over the next five years.

Reducing emissions and the environmental impact of port activities was high on the agenda at this year's IAPH World Ports Conference. What steps have the Port of LA made in tackling this issue?

We have done a lot of work during the first phase of our five-year Cleaner Air Action Plan (CAAP). Here our primary focus was on reducing diesel particulates within the vicinity of the port, which we managed to cut by around 70 percent. Going forward, we have updated that plan to focus on nitrogen oxide emissions and greenhouse gases, while our technology focus is shifting to



The Port of Los Angeles, California, USA

Photos courtesy of the Port of Los Angeles

zero-emission technology. In fact, our board (Los Angeles Board of Harbor Commissioners) has just approved a major rail yard expansion to support San Pedro Bay Port, and as a part of this there is a requirement for the rail road to incorporate the use of zero-emission trucks when deemed feasible by the ports of both Los Angeles and Long Beach. These trucks have already been built, and we have an on-road version currently being tested. The department of energy will also be funding a small fleet of zero-emission trucks with enough torque to handle a fully loaded container, and we have another on-road zero-emission vehicle but as of yet it doesn't have the capability to pull a fully loaded container. So as you can see our focus will be to push zero-emission technology into deployment.

The Port of LA recently joined a number of major European ports in establishing the LNG Fuelled Vessels Working Group. What role will the Port of LA play in this initiative, and do you see the switch to LNG-based bunker fuel as a viable alternative?

The answer to this question is a resounding yes. We established the working group as a service to the industry as there is no real guidance or standards for ports in this area – it is an entirely new field. The Port of LA is not actively involved in the LNG Fuelled Vessels Working Group, but we joined the initiative because we pioneered the use of heavy duty LNG trucks. We currently have around a thousand LNG heavy duty trucks in our market

every day, and Burlington Northern, who I spoke to recently, are seriously considering converting all of their locomotives to LNG. LNG bunkering was a major focus at the recent IAPH Conference in LA, and we had a whole panel devoted to this topic. TOTE Services, the US-based ship management company, have also come out and stated that their new builds are going to be LNG-fuelled. In LA we have had a number of customers approach us about wanting to test various technologies related to LNG fuelling.

Your time as IAPH secretary general has now come to an end. Do you feel that you have achieved your objectives?

Part of my goal at the IAPH was to increase its profile so it could engage in issues publicly, which we did with the World Shipping Council and the issue of weighing containers. This can also be seen through vehicles such as the World Port Climate Initiative, which for example helped LA become the first US port to sign up to the Environmental Ship Index (ESI). Others have since followed.

I was also brought on board to help promote membership among US ports, which is predominately made up of European and Asian ports. This was a major reason behind choosing LA as the location for our biennial conference. Not only did this increase our profile in the US, but it also gave all American ports who attended the conference the opportunity to sign up as a member port of the IAPH for free as part of the registration process.