GEORGIA PORTS AUTHORITY FY2020 ANNUAL REPORT

The [Georgia Ports Authority’s FY2020 Annual Report](https://gaports.dcatalog.com/v/FY20-Annual-Report/?page=1), presented in Flipbook format, offers a new and vibrant way to experience the breadth and impact of Georgia’s port operations. The online publication employs a mix of media, including crisp text, compelling photography, sweeping aerial video and digital animation. Aimed at a broad audience including lawmakers, port customers and the general public, GPA’s Annual Report is tasked with communicating the Authority’s fiscal year performance, overall financial health, progress on important infrastructure projects, and insight into the direction port and state leaders envision for the Authority.

**What were the entry’s specific challenges or opportunities?**

The development and production of the GPA’s FY2020 Annual Report afforded the opportunity to showcase achievements over the prior fiscal year in terms of cargo volumes at the Ports of Savannah and Brunswick, exciting new infrastructure investments, as well as overall GPA financial performance.

At a final volume of 4.43 million twenty-foot equivalent container units, FY2020 was one of the busiest fiscal years ever for the Port of Savannah in terms of containerized trade, despite the challenges of a global pandemic. While that level of trade represented a 1 percent decline from the previous fiscal year, such stability in the face of a widespread economic slow-down constituted a bright spot in the state and national economies that deserved celebration.

In addition to the review of the fiscal year, the report highlights important progress on development projects such as the Savannah Harbor deepening, the largest intermodal rail facility for a port authority in North America, and a new container yard completed at Savannah’s Ocean Terminal in only a year.

Along with a snapshot of past and present activities, the Annual Report gives current and potential customers, lawmakers and other stakeholders a well-rounded look at GPA’s plans to grow along with the demands of port users and the global marketplace.

**How does the communication used in this entry complement the organization’s overall mission?**

The mission of the Georgia Ports Authority is to empower entrepreneurs, strengthen industries, sustain communities and fortify families by relentlessly striving to accelerate global commerce. The Annual Report details the efforts GPA made in FY2020 to carry out those priorities.

The report includes letters from Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp, GPA Board Chairman Will McKnight and GPA Executive Director Griff Lynch. Their letters cover the value Georgia places on logistics as an economic driver, including the creation and support of thousands of jobs, and the steps GPA is taking to stay ahead of demand and the competition.

Other sections include:

* Profiles on the Ports of Savannah and Brunswick
* Updates on Savannah’s Berth 1 renovation and the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project
* The economic impact of port-related businesses that have located in Georgia
* GPA’s plans to grow its territorial reach and market share through intermodal rail
* A profile on GPA’s expanded container operation at Savannah’s Ocean Terminal
* A review of trade moving through the Appalachian Regional Port
* Stories detailing GPA’s 75-year history, illustrated with historical photos
* And financial performance numbers

**What were the communications planning and programming components used for this entry?**

With its FY2020 Annual Report, the GPA aimed to foster and reinforce an industry view of its administration and services as proactive, capable, reliable and growing along with customers’ needs. To accomplish this goal, GPA Communications staff engaged in the following activities:

**OBJECTIVES:**

* Report on GPA’s FY2020 performance
* Provide useful resource information for GPA sales staff and port advocates outside the organization – presented in an easy-to-digest, dynamic format with compelling video and photography.
* Develop an online audience for the FY2020 Annual Report of at least 10,000 people.

**What actions were taken and what communication outputs were employed in this entry?**

**Timeline**

* 08/04/20 – Initial content planning meeting. Photo library review, additional photo assignments made
* 08/05-09/29/20 – Research, interviews with internal and external sources, writing
* 10/13/20 – Final text edits and photos submitted for Ocean Steamship historical profile and Brunswick docks historical profile
* 10/28/20 -- Final text edits and photos submitted for Port of Brunswick FY2020 profile
* 10/29/20 – Final text edits and photos submitted for GPA intro story, Port of Savannah, Economic impact story
* 11/02/20 -- Meeting with designer to determine look of publication
* 12/16/20 – First design draft submitted, beginning to trim text and select new images where necessary to better fit design.
* 12/18/20 – Second design draft
* 12/23/20 – Final text edits submitted for GPA World War II Army depot historical profile and Berth 1 renovations story
* 12/29/20 – Third design draft
* 12/30/20 – Fourth design draft
* 12/31/20 – Fifth design draft
* 01/05/21 – Sixth design draft
* 01/05/21 – Seventh design draft
* 01/11/21 – Final text edits submitted for Mega Rail story and Ocean Terminal expansion story
* 01/15/21 – Final text edits submitted for the Governor letter
* 02/04/21 – Final text edits submitted for the Executive Director letter
* 02/05/21 – Final text edits submitted for Savannah Harbor Expansion Project story
* 02/09/21 – Final text edits submitted for Appalachian Regional Port profile
* 02/23/21 – Final text edits submitted for Chairman letter
* 02/24/21 – Eighth design draft
* 03/02/21 – Final design draft

**Research**

Internally, Communications staff reached out to various departments, including Engineering, Trade Development and Strategic Operations to gather the background data that formed the foundation of the report.

Video interviews were also conducted with port users for their outlook on the future of trade through Georgia’s ports.

Once the background information was gathered, GPA staff decided on the topics to be covered and the top-priority issues to be addressed in each article.

**Writing, Photography and Design**

In August 2020, Communications staff met to discuss and decide on the major themes of the publication.

The over-arching messages of the FY2020 Annual Report were GPA’s importance to the state and national economies, and that Georgia’s ports are preparing for the future through smart infrastructure investments.

Ideas that carry throughout the book include:

* The GPA as a stable source of economic strength for the state
* Progress on the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project (SHEP) -- assuring customers the project will be completed in a timely manner.
* Regional/national impact of Georgia’s ports.
* The link between the ports’ success and the economic prosperity of the state and local community.
* GPA as a proactive, growing entity that is prepared to handle the demands of an evolving global marketplace. (Expanding terminals and equipment, doubling rail capacity, deeper water, etc.)

To bring the report to life, drone video and photography and taped interviews were employed, supplemented by GPA’s general library of images. The videos and still images lend a sense of immediacy and action to each story, bringing the reader into the port environment. The visuals help to communicate the size and majesty of the ships, the cranes and the sea of cars and containers that converge on GPA’s deepwater terminals.

In November, Communications staff held a first meeting with the contracted design firm.

The designers presented multiple choices for the look of the publication. The group chose a design using a horizontal format, to better accommodate the photographic subject matter (vessels, containers, container yard, cranes, fields of automobiles awaiting processing).

The [Georgia Ports Authority’s FY2020 Annual Report](https://gaports.dcatalog.com/v/FY20-Annual-Report/?page=1) features a vibrant, athletic design approach. As a response to the COVID-19 global pandemic, a sweeping, angular design inspires a 3-stripe insignia, symbolizing endurance, versatility and adaptability. The three-stripe design component can be seen in alternating colors throughout the report, as the content touches upon the progress of significant port projects and milestones.

Final numbers for the budget and cargo throughput were derived after the end of the fiscal year, which runs through June 30. Work on the content began in earnest in August, with text revisions and photo choices preceding subsequent design drafts. The first designs were delivered in December, and tweaks to the design occurred over the next two months.

The publication went live online March 2, 2021, in time to share with lawmakers while the Georgia General Assembly was in session.

**Distribution**

For the first time, the Annual Report is presented in digital Flipbook format only on the GPA website.

Digital-only distribution allowed the inclusion of value-added aspects such as video statements, links to interactive digital tours of GPA terminals and related news releases that offer greater detail, a video photo album tracking the Authority’s 75-year history, aerial videos and digital animation illustrating major infrastructure improvements, as well as a panel discussion on export trade.

**What were the communications outcomes from this entry and what evaluation methods were used to assess them?**

The Georgia Ports Authority has tracked social media and web traffic to determine response to its FY2020 Annual Report, finding strong adoption of the digital format. GPA departments were also surveyed to determine the usefulness of the digital annual report.

**RESULTS:**

OBJECTIVE: Reach at least 10,000 people with the FY2020 Annual Report.

RESULT: The Georgia Ports Authority’s FY2020 Annual Report has seen the largest response thus far through the professional networking site LinkedIn, from which 9,300 people have viewed the report. Another 2,500 have clicked through from Facebook and 1,300 from Twitter. Additionally, more than 8,700 unique visitors have navigated to the report from the GPA website. Through May 27, a total of 21,800 people have viewed the Annual Report.

OBJECTIVE: Provide a useful community and government relations tool.

RESULT: Feedback from GPA departments queried included responses such as:

* **Stacy Watson, GPA Director of Economic & Industrial Development:** A good PR piece to share with economic development prospects, property developers, and real estate investment trusts to show our financial position and the fact that we continue to invest in our future.  It perfectly illustrated the strong financial standing of the GA Ports.
* **Lee Beckmann, GPA Manager of Governmental Affairs:** The Georgia Ports Authority’s FY2020 Annual Report really knocked it out of the park. In a year where people were unable to connect face-to-face, the release of a virtual publication was key to the delivery of this important information. Adding a touch of interactivity and video to the piece just took it over the top. I use this publication each year to engage public officials and interested citizens on the progress at our facilities and didn’t miss a beat, thanks to GPA’s spectacular communications team.