Alexandria may have working port by 1988

ALEXANDRIA — More than 10 new industries moving into the area and years of cooperation between the Rapides Parish Port Commission and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will give the city an operating port, perhaps by 1988.

When the corps’ Vicksburg District completes its portion of the project this month, the city will assume further work.


“Economic development will be the No. 1 goal,” Meyer said. “We anticipate new industries moving into the area and creating jobs, thus providing added revenue for the city through increased employment and an increase in the tax base.”

The new industries will include warehouses and distributors, he said.

The port will be along the Red River in the Philip Bayou area, just upriver from Alexandria and Pineville.

“The locks being constructed by the district will determine the size barges to be used,” Meyer said. “We also anticipate using six-barge tows.”

Among commodities to be shipped are corn, soybeans, industrial wiring, liquid and dry chemicals, asphalt, cement, paperboard and plywood.

“The location of the port also will allow easy access to both a railroad and an interstate highway,” Meyer said.

“We plan to run a rail spur to the port site, and will be within 5,000 feet of I-49,” Meyer said.

“There are no plans for passenger travel. However, there is no prohibition to passenger travel, and it may develop as a private enterprise,” he said.

Hearing of the corps’ Red River Waterway Project, the port commission first asked the New Orleans District in 1976 to check different sites for a possible port location.

“They went ahead with studies without the corps really being involved,” said Joe Smith, the Vicksburg District’s Red River project manager.

“In 1983, the president’s jobs bill came along, putting money back into the project, enabling us to continue construction,” Smith said.

“A contract for realigning Philip Bayou, which included fill material for the port, was awarded on Jan. 10, 1985.

“The original contract was in the amount of $7,815,000. Of that amount, the city’s cost was $775,000,” Smith said.

Earlier, the city had entered into an arrangement with the Red River Waterway Commission, the local sponsor of the waterway project, which provided about $2.3 million for altering construction of the Philip Bayou realignment to best accommodate future construction of the port.