Louis Dreyfus Commodities placed its most recently operational Mississippi River barge terminal beneath the bluffs at the Port of Natchez, MS (601-442-2561). The 120,000-bushel terminal elevator has been receiving grain, primarily soybeans and sorghum, since August 2015.

However, most of that grain comes from across the river in Louisiana, where the soils and terrain are more conducive to intensive crop production, primarily in Concordia, Catahoula, and Tensas parishes.

“We saw an opportunity to originate grain from a large production area and thought the Port of Natchez would be a good fit for an export barge facility,” says Scott Stanford, commercial manager for both the Natchez terminal and Louis Dreyfus’ huge shiploading terminal at Port Allen, LA. “It allows us to control the quality of the grain and timing of shipments.

Stanford, who came to Dreyfus from Bunge North America in 2013, says the Mississippi bank offers the advantage of deeper water than the Louisiana side. “There are no low-water draft restrictions on the Mississippi side, and we have the same advantage during high water.”

Day-to-day operations at the mini-terminal are handled by Port of Natchez personnel, while Stanford heads up grain originations and merchandising from Port Allen.

To build the facility, Dreyfus selected Younglove Construction LLC, Sioux City, IA (712-277-3906), as contractor and
millwright. Dreyfus has been a fan of Younglove’s work since the contractor headed up Phase II of the huge expansion of the Port Allen terminal in 2014. (Younglove also is the contractor on a new Louis Dreyfus barge terminal nearing completion in West Memphis, AR.)

Construction at Natchez began late in 2014 for an undisclosed cost.

Facility Specifications

Storage at the barge terminal consists of three GSI 40,000-bushel corrugated steel hopper tanks. These stand 36 feet in diameter, 58 feet tall at the eaves, and 68 feet tall at the peaks, with 45-degree steel hopper bottoms. The structure is supported at either end by Warrior towers, with a switchback staircase on the east tower.

Because grain moves very quickly through the facility, the tanks are not equipped with either grain temperature monitoring or aeration.

Incoming trucks deposit grain into a single enclosed mechanical receiving pit holding about 300 bushels. The pit feeds a 20,000-bph InterSystems leg equipped with two rows of Maxi-Lift CC-Max 12x8 buckets mounted on a 27-inch Goodyear belt.

The leg, in turn, deposits grain onto an InterSystems 20,000-bph overhead drag conveyor running out to storage.

The tank hoppers empty onto a 40,000-bph InterSystems enclosed belt conveyor running approximately 600-feet on a roughly 5-degree incline out to the docks.

The Natchez terminal can handle two barges at a time, one at a 400-foot dock being loaded and a second waiting at a 200-foot staging dock to the north. Barges are loaded using a Premier Fabrication loading spout that can swivel 180 degrees side to side and additional up and down motion to compensate for high- and low-water conditions.

“We shoot for 2 hours 20 minutes loading time on a barge carrying 70,000 bushels,” says Stanford.

Ed Zdrojewski, editor