

Panama Canal Expansion Project



The **Panama Canal expansion project**, also called the **Third Set of Locks Project**, was intended to double the capacity of the Panama Canal by (a) increasing the number of ships by adding a new lane of traffic, and (b) increasing the size of ships, by increasing the maximum allowed width and height. The new larger-size of ships, called New Panamax, is about one and a half times the current Panamax size and can carry over twice as much cargo.

The project has built two new sets of locks, one each on the Atlantic and Pacific sides, and excavated new channels to the new locks. It has also widened and deepened existing channels and raised the maximum operating water level of Gatun Lake.

The project is expected to create demand for ports to handle New Panamax ships. Several U.S. Eastern Seaboard ports will be ready for these larger ships, and others are considering renovations, including dredging, blasting, and bridge raising. In the UK, the Port of Southampton can handle post-Panamax vessels and is expanding to accommodate more. Other major ports are considering such expansion.

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