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OPERATIONAL ASPECTS

The Paraguay-Parana Waterway Hub is a joint project by the countries comprised within the River Plate basin (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, Uruguay), spreading over 3442 Km from Caceres, Estado do Mato Grosso do Sul, to Nueva Palmira, Uruguay. This natural waterway, which has been used since the times of the Spanish colonization, provides unique navigational features, with average values, low streams, an approximate volume of 20.000 m³ per second, and a gradual slope from 130 meters over sea-level in Caceres down to sea-level at the mouth of the River Plate.

Navigation is feasible all along this waterway since we find neither cascades nor fog as there are on the Mississippi River. Special attention is to be paid when passing by a few close elbows. Very important Argentinean and Paraguayan port cities are situated by the waterway, such as Rosario, Santa Fe, Barranqueras, Corrientes, Formosa, Asuncion and Corumba. A great deal of commercial and tourist activities were carried out by this waterway in the past. During the 1950's, fluvial activity found its decay due to the construction of roads and railways running parallel to the river, planned without a concept of complement or multimodalism as we know it today. We may then say that these cities turn their backs on the river. This brief introduction helps us understand the impressive development of this Waterway Hub, which had already been objectively studied and analyzed by governments and private companies of fluvial transport and from the productive, logistic and port infrastructure segments.

Regional produce, basically grains and minerals, began to increase at a steady rate within the Hinterland of the Waterway Hub, and neither trucks nor trains were able to transport this huge production by themselves at competitive values. When member States needed to deal with and provide a solution for this economic reality, they decided to resort to the Waterway Hub as one of the fittest and most environmentally friendly systems. On the other hand, they also considered the use of railways and roads as essential complements to fluvial and maritime transportation in order to make ends meet competitively as regards import-export of goods in a globalized world. During the 1980's, countries' administrations of that moment combined efforts to analyze the project called Paraguay-Parana Waterway Hub.

