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## SC delegation says harbor project gets funds

By PAGE IVEY

COLUMBIA, S.C.

The federal government will spend \$150,000 this year to continue a study on deepening Charleston Harbor, Sen. Lindsey Graham and U.S. Reps. Jim Clyburn and Tim Scott said during a news conference Tuesday.

The funding will move the Charleston project forward for the rest of this year and comes with a cost-sharing agreement between the State Ports Authority and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Officials want to deepen Charleston Harbor to 50 feet so the port can handle larger ships that will be carrying cargo after the Panama Canal is widened.

While the three said Tuesday's announcement is cause to celebrate, next year's funding for the project is uncertain. The Army Corps has estimated that it will take about \$1.2 million in federal money to complete work on the Charleston port in fiscal year 2012, which starts Oct. 1.

"We've already begun working on funding for next year," Graham said. "I know it will be a challenge as it was not included in the president's budget."

Completing the study phase of harbor deepening will take about three to five years and the \$12 million to \$20 million cost will be split evenly by the Army Corps and the State Ports Authority. From there, costs increase rapidly and the total including construction is estimated at \$300 million.

This year's funding was tied up in part by a fight over earmarks. In the past, the project could have been easily moved forward with a single lawmaker securing the funding. But the new crop of tea party-supported Republicans helped push through a ban on earmarks when the GOP took over the House this year.

"I hope, though, having gone through this exercise, that the American people will know that every request by a congressman or senator for funding is not pork," Clyburn said. "To dismiss these requests as simply being pork barrel projects, I think, cheapens the work of the port and what it means to the economy of South Carolina. And the same is true for ports all over this country."

Charleston already is seeing some of the larger ships that need more than the port's 45-foot low-tide clearance, even though the widening of the Panama Canal to handle those ships is not expected to be finished until 2014. The port can handle those ships now as long as they come in at high tide.