



# Lake Carriers' Association For Immediate Release

September 30, 2008

## Malfunction Underscores Need for Second Poe-Sized Lock

Cleveland---A malfunction of the Poe Lock at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, on September 24 has illustrated the pressing need for Congress to appropriate the funds to build another lock capable of handling the largest U.S.-Flag Great Lakes freighters. Although the vessel delays totaled only about three hours, had the problem been more severe, cargo movement on the Lakes would have slowed to a trickle. U.S.-Flag Lakers whose length and/or beam restrict them to the Poe Lock represent 70 percent of U.S.-Flag carrying capacity.

"The Poe Lock that connects Lake Superior to the lower Great Lakes is the single point of failure that can cripple Great Lakes shipping," said James H.I. Weakley, President of Lake Carriers' Association. "In 2007, the Poe Lock handled nearly 65 million tons of cargo. Without that lock, America's steel industry is cut off from its major source of iron ore. Without that lock, Great Lakes basin utilities are denied access to clean-burning low-sulfur coal. There just aren't enough ships that are small enough to transit the MacArthur Lock to make up for loss of Poe-class vessels."

The need for a second Poe-sized lock was recognized as long ago as 1986. The Water Resources Development Act of that year authorized construction, but a lengthy debate over funding followed. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Congressman James L. Oberstar (D-MN), the funding logjam was broken last year when Congress authorized construction at full Federal expense.

"We were lucky this time," said Weakley. "There was unusually light traffic and the Corps was able to respond quickly. Nonetheless, the Poe Lock is nearly 40 years old. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers does a fantastic job of maintaining the locks at the Soo, but mechanical problems are inevitable as the infrastructure ages. Great Lakes shipping is the raw materials lifeline for America's industrial heartland. We must twin the Poe Lock as soon as possible. \$17 million has been appropriated to begin in-depth design work and build coffer dams, but in total, the project will cost more than \$340 million and could take as much as 10 years to complete. Every day we wait puts America's economy at risk. The railroads don't have the rolling stock to haul the cargo that moves on the Lakes. Even if they did, ships burn less fuel and produce fewer emissions than trains (and trucks). Loss of the Poe Lock won't just hurt the economy, it will harm the environment."

Lake Carriers' Association represents 16 American corporations that operate 63 U.S.-Flag vessels on the Great Lakes. These vessels carry the raw materials that drive the nation's economy: iron ore and fluxstone for the steel industry, limestone and cement for the construction industry, coal for power generation.... Collectively, these vessels can transport more than 115 million tons of cargo a year when high water levels offset the lack of adequate dredging of Great Lakes ports and waterways. More information is available at [www.lcaships.com](http://www.lcaships.com).

Source: Lake Carriers' Association

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