



# Navigation and Coastal Protection Infrastructure

Legislative Priority Fact Sheet  
February 2008



## Background on the Issue

The combination of reduced funding for dredging in the Great Lakes navigation system, lower water levels in the lakes, diminishing options for placement of dredged material and an aging navigation infrastructure, have placed into peril one of the country's major marine transportation systems. Several years of inadequate funding for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) operation and maintenance budget for the Great Lakes have created a 16 million cubic yard, \$200 million backlog for dredging of channels and harbors to authorized project dimensions. Insufficient depth due to this lack of dredging caused the largest U.S.-flag cargo vessels on the lakes to leave as much as 8,000 tons of cargo per vessel at the dock during the 2007 navigation season. Core regional industries put at risk by under-funding operation and maintenance of the Great Lakes marine transportation system include steel manufacturing, electrical power generation, construction and agriculture.



Ship at Soo Locks. Photo: Great Lakes Commission.

Also impacted by a severe dredging backlog are the shallow-draft (14 feet of authorized depth or less) recreational harbors in the Great Lakes. The current and preceding administrations have not allowed USACE to include dredging of recreational harbors in its Great Lakes operation and maintenance budget. These harbors not only provide access to the lakes for the more than four million recreational boats registered in the eight Great Lakes states, but also serve as harbors of refuge during dangerous weather conditions and operational bases for charter fishing fleets, commercial fishing operations and ferry/excursion boat services.

At the Sault Ste. Marie (Soo) Locks, some 70 percent of the U.S.-flag carrying capacity is restricted to a single lock, the Poe Lock, built in 1969 to accommodate the new class of 1,000-foot supercarriers. In the 1980s a proposal emerged to build a second similar lock to ease costly bottlenecks and reduce the risk of a single point failure that could cripple U.S. steel manufacturing, among other core industries. The Water Resources Development Act of 2007 calls for full federal funding of the Soo Lock expansion project. Congress now has an opportunity to follow through with the necessary funding to undertake this critical project.

Other navigation infrastructure on the Great Lakes – including piers and breakwaters – is also in need of critical attention. There are more than 100 miles of these structures on the lakes, many serving not only as navigation aids, but also protecting valuable coastal zones and urban waterfronts from storm surges and flooding. More than 75 percent of them are over 60 years old and have become significantly more vulnerable due to the extended period of low water levels that have exposed and weakened timber crib core sections.

## Congressional Priorities for Navigation Infrastructure

The Great Lakes Commission requests congressional support for the following priorities to maintain navigation and coastal protection infrastructure in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway system:

- **Appropriate \$40 million in project-specific funding to the USACE for maintenance dredging** of deep draft commercial harbors, **and an additional \$40 million to reduce the current backlog** resulting from many years of inadequate funding.

- Appropriate \$15 million to the USACE to recapitalize and modernize the existing infrastructure at the Soo Locks to maximize reliability, and an additional \$15 million to initiate construction of a second large lock to avoid a catastrophic disruption of service that would result if the existing Poe Lock was taken out of operation for any reason.
- Appropriate \$20 million to the USACE for maintenance and repair of aging and weakened breakwaters and navigation infrastructure.
- Appropriate \$5 million to the USACE for dredging of federally authorized shallow draft harbors.

## Funding History and Committee Jurisdiction

Navigation Priority	Fiscal Year Funding (millions of dollars)				
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Great Lakes Navigation (operation & maintenance of existing projects)	\$86.3	\$78.4	\$67.1	\$77.2	\$103.9
Backlog Dredging	---	---	---	---	\$6.5
Soo Lock	\$2.5	\$2.6	\$1.5	\$0.5	\$1.9

### Committee Jurisdiction

House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water (USACE Operation and Maintenance Budget)

Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water (USACE Operation and Maintenance Budget)

### Progress to Date

The FY 2008 budget recently approved by Congress for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Operation and Maintenance activity in the Great Lakes (including dredging) represented a 30 percent increase over the previous year and a welcome step forward in addressing the critical dredging backlog in Great Lakes commercial harbors and connecting channels. Also, the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2007 included a provision calling for full federal funding of the Soo Locks Expansion Project, as well as language broadening the potential for beneficial use of clean dredged materials, a provision long supported by the Great Lakes Commission.

### Benefits to the Great Lakes Region

Commercial navigation on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway is critical to not only the economies of the eight states and two provinces in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Basin, but to the overall economic health of the United States and Canada. The system moves more than 200 million tons of cargo a year, generates over \$3 billion annually in revenue in the United States (plus another \$2.25 billion in Canada) and supports over 150,000 jobs. In addition, the marine mode of transportation in the Great Lakes has the environmental advantages of being more fuel efficient per ton/mile of cargo than truck or rail, producing fewer toxic emissions, causing fewer accidents, and having the capability of relieving congestion in heavily used surface transportation corridors.

Recreational boaters spend an estimated \$2.35 billion annually on Great Lakes boating trips, an additional \$1.44 billion to purchase and maintain their boats and boating equipment, and support some 60,000 jobs generating \$1.77 billion in personal income.

### Links for More Information

Great Lakes Maritime Task Force: [www.lcaships.com/glmtf.html](http://www.lcaships.com/glmtf.html)

Great Lakes Dredging Team: [www.glc.org/dredging](http://www.glc.org/dredging)