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Corps awards \$1.9 million contract for Soo Locks Coffer Dams

DETROIT – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District, has awarded a \$1.9 million contract to build two coffer dams at the Soo Locks as the first step in creating a replacement lock for the largest Great Lakes freighters.

TAB Construction Company of Canton, Ohio, was awarded the \$1,996,726 contract to construct a coffer dam at each end of the Sabin Lock to allow for dewatering as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers prepares for future construction at the Soo, located on the St. Marys River in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan.

Each coffer dam will be constructed of a single 88 foot diameter steel sheet pile cell and will include instrumentation to monitor the coffer dam performance. This permits the lock chamber to be dewatered to conduct construction in a dry environment. "This is a very significant day in the long life of this project as we now move to the actual construction phase," said John Niemiec, U.S. Army Corps of Engineer project manager. Both coffer dams are expected to be completed in about a year.

There will be an open house at the Soo Locks June 30th from 9 a.m. to noon. The public is invited to attend a groundbreaking ceremony at 10 a.m. as key leaders including senators, members of congress, state and local government officials and Corps leaders mark the beginning of construction utilizing funding provided in the 2009 Omnibus bill. Additional funding from the \$17 million provided in the Omnibus bill will be spent in downstream channel excavation to be awarded later this year and will allow for detailed design of the lock chamber. The entire project to replace the older and inoperable Davis and Sabin locks is estimated to cost \$580 million to include inflation estimates for 20 years.

The Soo Locks are vital to Great Lakes shipping and to the nation's economy. In 2008, 8,461 vessels passed through the Soo Locks, carrying 80.6 million tons of cargo, mainly iron ore, coal, stone and other bulk products. Construction of the new lock would also mean the creation of nearly 15,000 jobs during construction over the next ten to twenty years. The proposed lock would have the same dimensions as the existing Poe lock providing redundant capability, which would allow shipping to continue if one of the locks has to close for maintenance or repairs.

Operation and maintenance of the Soo Locks falls under the jurisdiction of the Corps' Detroit District. Located on the St. Marys River, the locks have been a part of the Corps' navigation mission since 1881.

For more information about the Soo Locks please contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District Public Affairs Officer, Lynn Duerod, at (313) 226-4680.