

Corps of Engineers awards contract to deepen channel

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Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. -

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District, awarded a nearly \$7 million contract to an Ohio company to deepen the downstream approach channel at the Soo Locks in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. The deepening of the downstream channel is part of the ongoing Soo replacement lock work which is being done in order to replace two World War I-era locks at the Soo, located on the St. Marys River in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Funded by the Fiscal Year 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act, the \$6.9 million contract was awarded to Kokosing Construction Co., a small business from Fredricktown, Ohio. The work will be done by Kokosing's Durocher Marine Division of Cheboygan, Mich.

"With the award of this contract we continue to move forward on the replacement lock project using the funds that Congress has provided as efficiently as possible," said John Niemiec, the Corps' project manager for the replacement lock.

A combination of about 71,000 cubic yards of bedrock and material will be removed without dewatering the area and therefore will require marine and dredging methods. The excavated material will be placed in designated areas on the northwest pier of the locks, just past the International Bridge on Soo Locks property.

The deepening of the approach channel would allow sufficient depth for 1,000-foot vessels to access the proposed replacement lock.

Key sectors of the U.S. economy depend on Great Lakes shipping with many commodities flowing through the locks. 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.

There are four locks at the Soo with two of them operational—the Poe and MacArthur Locks. Currently, the Poe is the only lock big enough for 1,000-foot ships. Opened in 1914 and 1919 respectively, the Davis and Sabin Locks are closed and these locks would be replaced with the new lock.

Operation and maintenance of the Soo Locks falls under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District. The locks have been a part of the Corps' navigation mission since 1881.

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