



NEWS RELEASE

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Last vessel through the Soo Locks ends the 2011 shipping season

DETROIT – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District announces the seasonal closing of the Soo Locks in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. The Corps operates and maintains the locks as part of the Great Lakes navigation system and will use this time to perform critical maintenance on the lock structures.

The season's final vessel, the *Saginaw*, a 639-foot long self-unloading bulk carrier, cleared the Poe Lock just at midnight January 19.

During the 2011 navigation season, 4,040 cargo vessels passed through the Soo Locks carrying almost 75 million tons of iron ore, coal, grain and other commodities. In addition to cargo vessels, a total of 3,175 tour boats, private boats and other 'recreational' vessels used the locks this past year.

"The Locks are the linchpin of the Great Lakes navigation system, facilitating the transport of important commodities," said Lt. Col. Michael Derosier, district engineer. "We are proud of our responsibilities to operate and maintain the locks."

While closed to navigation for the next two months, crews will be busy with a variety of maintenance projects on both the Poe and MacArthur Locks in preparation for another busy season.

The Poe stayed open three days past the traditional closing date of the navigation season, at the request of the shipping industry, allowing the movement of over 400,000 tons of additional cargo. The locks are scheduled to re-open March 25.

The Detroit District, maintains a navigation system that includes 95 harbors and the Great Lakes Connecting Channels that join lakes Superior, Michigan, Huron and Erie. For more details, contact Lynn Rose, public affairs officer, 313-226-4680.

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