



Lake Carriers' Association

For Immediate Release

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The Greatest Ships on the Great Lakes

Inherits Proud Name And Critical Mission

Industry Welcomes Lakes' Newest Icebreaking Asset

Cleveland---The continued reliability of moving cargo on the Great Lakes during the "ice season" took a giant step forward with the launching of the U.S. Coast Guard's new Great Lakes Icebreaking Buoytender *Mackinaw* in Marinette, Wisconsin on April 2. The vessel is expected to enter service this fall and assist the movement of vital raw materials when ice begins to form on the Great Lakes in December.

"Lake Carriers' Association is pleased the Lakes will continue to have a U.S. Coast Guard vessel designed to perform heavy icebreaking when the current *Mackinaw* is retired next year," said James H. I. Weakley, President of the trade association representing U.S.-Flag vessel operators on the Great Lakes. "Our members routinely move 15 million net tons of cargo between mid-December and mid-April. Without these deliveries, Great Lakes basin industries would have to bear the burden of stockpiling more iron ore, coal, limestone and other raw materials to maintain production and employment during the winter months. In this now global economy, the Lakes must be open to navigation as long as possible, or major employers will forfeit the competitive edge waterborne commerce on the Great Lakes provides them."

The *Mackinaw* is replacing a U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker of the same name launched in 1944 to ensure the movement of raw materials needed to win World War Two and now scheduled for decommissioning in 2006. While still structurally sound, the current *Mackinaw* is in need of extensive modernization to reduce its operating costs, but its design is such that icebreaking would still be its only function. The new *Mackinaw* has been designed to perform other Coast Guard missions such as placement of Aids to Navigation, Search and Rescue and Homeland Security.

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The Association Representing Operators of U.S.-Flag Vessels on the Great Lakes

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The new *Mackinaw* was authorized by Congress in 1999, following a study to determine icebreaking needs on the Great Lakes. The study concluded the Lakes must have a heavy icebreaker to ensure the movement of cargo during periods of ice cover.

"The Great Lakes delegation in Washington worked tirelessly to gain authorization and appropriations for the new *Mackinaw*," said Weakley. "In particular, I want to thank Congressmen Dave Obey (D-WI), James L. Oberstar (D-MN), and Bart Stupak (D-MI) and Senator Mike DeWine (R-OH) for their commitment to this project."

The movement of dry-bulk cargos on the Great Lakes generally begins in early March and continues until the end of January. During that period, shipments of iron ore, coal, limestone and other cargos can top 200 million net tons. During a typical ice season (December 16-April 15), shipments of certain commodities will equal 15-20 percent of the year's total.

The ice that forms on the Great Lakes can be 3-4 feet thick. "Windrows" (slabs of broken ice piled atop each other by the wind) can reach heights of 10-12 feet. Some of the largest commercial vessels working the Great Lakes have ice-strengthened hulls and power plants capable of generating 19,500 horsepower, but they need a vessel designed to perform heavy icebreaking to keep the shipping lanes open. The *Mackinaw's* primary responsibility will be the major chokepoints, Whitefish Bay at the eastern end of Lake Superior, and the Straits of Mackinac that connect Lake Michigan to Lake Huron. Smaller Coast Guard icebreaking buoy tenders work the connecting channels (St. Marys, Detroit and St. Clair Rivers) and approaches to ports and harbors.

Lake Carriers' Association represents 14 American corporations that operate 56 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 transport as much as 125 million net tons of cargo a year.

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