2004 IRON ORE TRADE

Iron ore shipments on the Great Lakes totaled 62.6 million net tons (55.9 million gross tons) in 2004, an increase of 13.1 percent compared to 2003, but only 2 percent better than the commodity's 5-year average. In what will become a recurring theme in this report, the comparison with 2003 is misleading. The North American steel industry (and the economy in general) struggled most of that year. The 2003 iron ore float was the lowest recorded since 1986.

However, demand for steel came to life toward the end of 2003, and as a result, the closing date for the Soo Locks was extended to January 24, 2004. (The regulations currently in effect mandate a January 15 closure.)

It is difficult to determine exactly how much additional iron ore was shipped as a result of this extension. Technically, Lake Superior ports loaded 313,678 net tons (280,069 gross tons) of iron ore during the extension. However, had the locks closed as scheduled on January 15, the cargos that were loaded in the days immediately preceding that date would never have moved. Ice conditions were so formidable that carriers could not have gambled that a vessel that completed loading on say January 12 could have reached the Soo Locks by January 15.

The 2004 iron ore total includes two cargos shipped from Taconite Harbor, Minnesota. Taconite Harbor was the shipping port for iron ore mined at Erie Mining Company, which later became LTV Steel Mining Company. The mine closed in 2001; shipments ceased on August 21 of that year. The two cargos loaded in 2004 were iron ore reclaimed during a clean-up operation.

2004 IRON ORE SHIPMENTS BY MONTH

(gross and net tons)

MONTH	GREAT LAKES		EASTERN CANADA		TOTALS	
	GROSS TONS	NET TONS	GROSS TONS	NET TONS	GROSS TONS	NET TONS
January	3,227,737	3,615,065	58,467	65,483	3,286,204	3,680,548
February	245,580	275,048	0	0	245,580	275,048
March	1,547,284	1,732,958	186,415	208,785	1,733,699	1,941,743
April	4,733,116	5,301,090	812,738	910,267	5,545,854	6,211,357
May	4,561,560	5,108,947	979,075	1,096,564	5,540,635	6,205,511
June	5,137,523	5,754,026	1,107,955	1,240,910	6,245,478	6,994,936
July	4,810,374	5,387,619	1,148,167	1,285,947	5,958,541	6,673,566
August	5,238,099	5,866,671	496,151	555,689	5,734,250	6,422,360
September	4,688,594	5,251,226	852,539	954,844	5,541,133	6,206,070
October	4,558,116	5,105,090	971,716	1,088,322	5,529,832	6,193,412
November	4,283,969	4,798,045	1,130,378	1,266,023	5,414,347	6,064,068
December	4,389,207	4,915,912	741,143	830,080	5,130,350	5,745,992
TOTAL	**47,421,159**	**53,111,697**	**8,484,744**	**9,502,914**	**55,905,903**	**62,614,611**

2003/2004 ICE SEASON IRON ORE SHIPMENTS
DECEMBER 16, 2003 – APRIL 15, 2004

(gross and net tons)

LOADING DOCK	TONNAGE SHIPPED		NUMBER OF CARGOS
	GROSS TONS	NET TONS	
U.S. GREAT LAKES PORTS			
Duluth, MN	721,578	808,168	32
Superior, WI	2,322,761	2,601,493	64
Two Harbors, MN	2,339,917	2,620,706	63
Silver Bay. MN	1,488,884	1,667,550	47
Presque Isle, MI	1,368,019	1,532,182	64
Escanaba, MI	1,773,990	1,986,868	63
TOTAL – U.S. GREAT LAKES PORTS	**10,015,149**	**11,216,967**	**333**
EASTERN CANADA			
Pointe Noire, QC	267,078	299,127	10
Port Cartier, QC	345,198	386,621	18
Sept Iles, QC	316,256	354,206	12
TOTAL – EASTERN CANADA	**928,532**	**1,039,954**	**40**
TOTAL – ALL PORTS	**10,943,681**	**12,256,921**	**373**

ICE SEASON / EXTENDED SEASON IRON ORE SHIPMENTS
NAVIGATION SEASONS / ICE SEASONS 1995-2004

(gross and net tons)

The United States Coast Guard defines the ice season as beginning on December 16 and ending the following April 15. To insure statistically consistency, LCA now uses that time span to illustrate the importance of iron ore shipments during periods of ice cover. In previous years, the Association used the "Extended Season" approach, which tabulated iron ore moved between December 16 and the close of navigation, most often the end of January.

NAVIGATION SEASON / ICE SEASON	GROSS TONS	NET TONS	NUMBER OF CARGOS
1995 Navigation Season	5,716,017	6,401,939	192
1996 Navigation Season	4,761,182	5,332,524	143
1997 Navigation Season	5,382,107	6,027,960	162
1998 Navigation Season	4,058,900	4,545,968	128
1999 Navigation Season	5,565,682	6,233,564	191
2000 Navigation Season	3,811,741	4,269,150	142
2001 Navigation Season	2,862,919	3,206,468	95
2002 Ice Season	6,556,124	7,342,856	210
2003 Ice Season	7,607,747	8,520,681	248
2004 Ice Season	10,943,681	12,256,921	373
10-NAVIGATION SEASON / -ICE SEASON TOTAL	**57,266,100**	**64,138,031**	**1,884**