



Lake Carriers' Association

For Immediate Release

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Lakes Ore Trade Off to Slowest Start in Five Years Clear Need for More Icebreakers

CLEVELAND — Shipments of iron ore on the Great Lakes totaled an anemic 800,000 tons in March, the lowest level for the month since 2010. The March ore float was also nearly 60 percent below the month's 5-year average.

Heavy ice and lack of icebreaking resources on both sides of the border were the culprits. "The winter of 2014/2015 was again brutal," said James H.I. Weakley, President of Lake Carriers' Association. "The ice formations were so formidable that a number of LCA's members chose to delay getting underway rather than risk a repeat of last spring when ice caused more than \$6 million in damage to the vessels. Compounding the problem is that both U.S. and Canadian icebreakers have experienced a number of mechanical issues. The MACKINAW, the U.S. Coast Guard's most powerful icebreaker, is operating at less than full power. Other icebreakers have suffered casualties that have taken them out of service for various periods of time."

Weakley noted that with foreign steel imports again reducing operating rates at American mills to perilous levels, it is even more critical that raw materials move as efficiently as possible. "Right now American steel mills need every competitive advantage they can get. A slow start to resupplying the mills after the winter closure is a worry the industry could do without. This is just another clear indication that the Lakes need, at a minimum, another heavy icebreaker to pair with the MACKINAW, and another 140-foot-long icebreaking tug to cover for the one that has been sent to the Coast Guard yard in Baltimore for service life extension."

Weakley also called on Canada to review its icebreaking resources dedicated to the Lakes. The country used to have seven icebreakers stationed on the Lakes, but now just two are permanently assigned here.

Lake Carriers' Association represents 16 American companies that operate 56 U.S.-flag vessels on the Great Lakes and carry the raw materials that drive the nation's economy: iron ore and fluxstone for the steel industry, aggregate and cement for the construction industry, coal for power generation, as well as salt, sand and grain. Collectively, these vessels can transport more than 115 million tons of cargo per year. More information is available at www.lcaships.com. Contact: Glen G. Nekvasil, Vice President (440-333-9996).

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Information based on data from knowledgeable sources. However, accuracy cannot be guaranteed. Lake Carriers' Association assumes no legal responsibility for the outcome of decisions or commitments made on the basis of this information. This report represents the views of Lake Carriers' Association and may not necessarily represent the views of its individual members.

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