



The Great Lakes - St. Lawrence Seaway System
Le réseau Grands Lacs - Voie maritime du Saint-Laurent

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VIRTUAL SEAWAY TO MAKE SHIPPING SAFER, MORE EFFICIENT

(Washington, D.C. and Cornwall, Ontario, March 8, 2001) – The U. S. Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (SLSDC) and the Canadian St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation (SLSMC) are using the New Economy's World Wide Web and Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to increase marine transportation safety on the Seaway and Great Lakes and create efficiencies both in vessel transit operations and administration.

This week, the two bodies that manage Seaway operations launch their new binational site, designed to become the major source for all information related to Great Lakes Seaway shipping. It provides comprehensive environmental data, including water levels and wind speeds; shipping and navigation information; rules, regulations and official forms; and links to every organization, port, and government agency involved with the Great Lakes Seaway System.

This site, located at <http://www.greatlakes-seaway.com>, is being developed in three releases. Release 1, with helpful information, active links and a search engine is available now. Release 2, with dynamic information, will be launched in May 2001. Release 3, a fully interactive site with cargo matching, cost calculator, and full e-business capacity, will be ready in September 2001. Until now, Seaway customers had to go to more than 50 sources, including federal, state, provincial and port agencies, to get all the information now centralized on this one site. By September, shipping companies will be able to do almost all their business with the Seaway on-line, from finding cargo to fill empty vessels on their return voyages, obtaining necessary clearance to enter the Seaway and paying their bills.

Also in July, the Seaway's Traffic Management System (TMS) will incorporate satellite technology in a new Automatic Vessel Identification System (AIS), which meets International Maritime Organization standards. AIS is based on a transponder and computer screen combination that will soon be carried by every commercial vessel passing through the Seaway.

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Using GPS technology, any vessel carrying the AIS transponder will transmit its exact location both to the Seaway's Traffic Control Centers and to other ships on the waterway. As the vessel passes through the locks and channels, its location will be instantly plotted on a "virtual Seaway" both at Traffic Control Centers and aboard ship. The computer screen shows exactly where the vessel is, together with its speed and estimated time of arrival at the next lock. The Seaway's TMS adds such information as local wind speed and direction, water depth, ice conditions and safety-related messages as dictated by circumstances. The ship's captain is thereby provided all the data needed to navigate the Seaway safely.

AIS is being field tested this year and will become mandatory for all commercial vessels in 2002. It is expected to improve safety on the Seaway by transmitting precise environmental information to vessels and by showing them where all vessels are, with their course and speed. It will also reduce transit time and improve fleet management for ship owners. Since vessel arrival times can be accurately known, there will be less waiting for passage through the locks, and pilots and inspectors can be sent out exactly when needed. Other benefits include more efficient traffic management and better speed control, with a faster response time for accidents/incidents, especially important in the case of hazardous cargoes. The system enables 24-hour navigation for all vessels in all weather conditions, including poor visibility and ice cover, throughout the entire navigation season. The potential savings for ship owners amount to U.S. \$300,000 annually.

SLSDC Administrator Albert S. Jacquez and SLSMC President Guy Véronneau said: "The binational Web site and automatic vessel identification system are important new initiatives that enhance our ability to provide a seamless, efficient and competitive Seaway for all its users."

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