

Seaway Fact Sheet

The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway System

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The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway System has remained a vital deep draft waterborne transportation link for moving goods between North America's heartland and international markets since it opened in 1959. The Seaway System encompasses the St. Lawrence River and the five Great Lakes, extending from the Gulf of St. Lawrence at the Atlantic Ocean to the western end of Lake Superior at the twin ports of Duluth, Minnesota, and Superior, Wisconsin.

The St. Lawrence Seaway is a model of binational cooperation between the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation (Canadian partner) and the Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (U.S. partner). Over 80 percent of seaway traffic is made up of bulk cargoes such as grains, iron ore, coal, chemicals and oil. Manufactured goods of all kinds, including finished and semi-finished steel products make up the rest of seaway cargoes. Ships from more than 50 nations call at Seaway ports in Canada and the United States.

Since its opening, the St. Lawrence Seaway has moved more than 2.5 billion metric tons of cargo with an estimated value of more than \$375 billion. Almost 25 percent of this cargo travels to and from overseas ports. The movement of maritime commerce on the Great Lakes Seaway System provides \$3.6 billion in annual transportation cost savings compared to the next least expensive mode of transportation.

The St. Lawrence Seaway became the first waterway in North America to introduce Automatic Identification System (AIS) technology for vessel traffic management and shore-to-shore communication, leading to improved safety, efficiency, and security. In addition, the U.S. and Canadian Seaway agencies ensure that every ocean-going vessel is subject to compliance inspections or reviews of its ballast tanks prior to entering the binational waterway.

LOCK SYSTEMS: All of the 15 U.S. and Canadian Seaway locks have the following dimensions:

- Attracting vessels 227.7 meters (740 feet) in length to transit
- Attracting vessels 23.8 meters (78 feet) in width to transit
- Attracting vessels 8 meters (26 feet, 6 inches) in depth to transit

LOCKS:

Montreal to Lake Ontario (2 U.S., 5 Canadian – listed east to west)

St. Lambert (Canadian)

Cote Ste. Catherine (Canadian)

Upper Beauharnois (Canadian)

Lower Beauharnois (Canadian)

Snell (U.S.)

Eisenhower (U.S.)

Iroquois (Canadian)

Welland Canal (8 Canadian Locks) Locks are numbered not named; and locks 4, 5, 6 are often referred to as the flight locks.

Soo Locks – St. Mary's River (4 U.S. parallel locks) – Sabin (U.S.), Davis (U.S.), Poe (U.S.), MacArthur (U.S.), and Unnamed (Canada)

SEAWAY FACTS

LENGTH: Montreal to mid-Lake Erie = 423 miles
Montreal to Cape Vincent = 207 miles
Distance from the Atlantic Ocean to Duluth, Minn. on Lake Superior = 2,342 statute miles (2,038 nautical miles) or 8.5 sailing days.

SEASON: A typical season runs approximately nine months (late March to late December).

NUMBER OF VESSELS: Hundreds of commercial vessels from over 50 countries make 3,000 – 4,000 transits per year.

LOCK FACTS

• Each Seaway lock holds 21 million gallons of water, equivalent to roughly 30 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

• The locks use the law of gravity to fill and empty. To raise a ship, the upstream lock valves are opened and the water flows in. To lower a vessel, the downstream valves are opened and the water flows out.

• Lockages require about 30 minutes from start to finish.

THE SEAWAY CANALS:

The Seaway System is connected by six short canals with a length of less than 60 nautical miles.

South Shore – Canadian: (Two locks – St. Lambert and Cote Ste. Catherine) 14 nautical miles from Montreal to Lake St. Louis

Beauharnois Canal – Canadian: (Two locks) 11.3 nautical miles; links Lake St. Louis to Lake St. Francis

Wiley-Dondero Canal – U.S.: (Two locks – Snell and Eisenhower) 8 nautical miles; provides access to Lake St. Lawrence

Iroquois Canal – Canadian: (One lock and a water level control facility) 0.3 nautical miles

Welland Canal – Canadian: (Eight locks) links Lake Ontario to Lake Erie

St. Mary’s Canal – U.S./ (Operated by) U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: (Four parallel locks at Sault Ste. Marie) links Lake Huron to Lake Superior

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