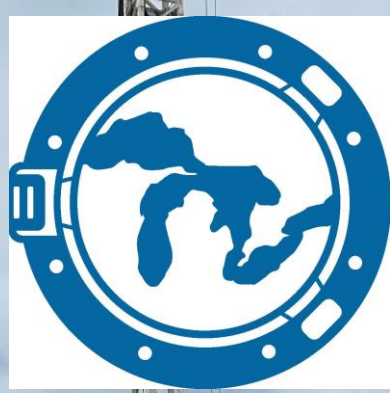


**America's**

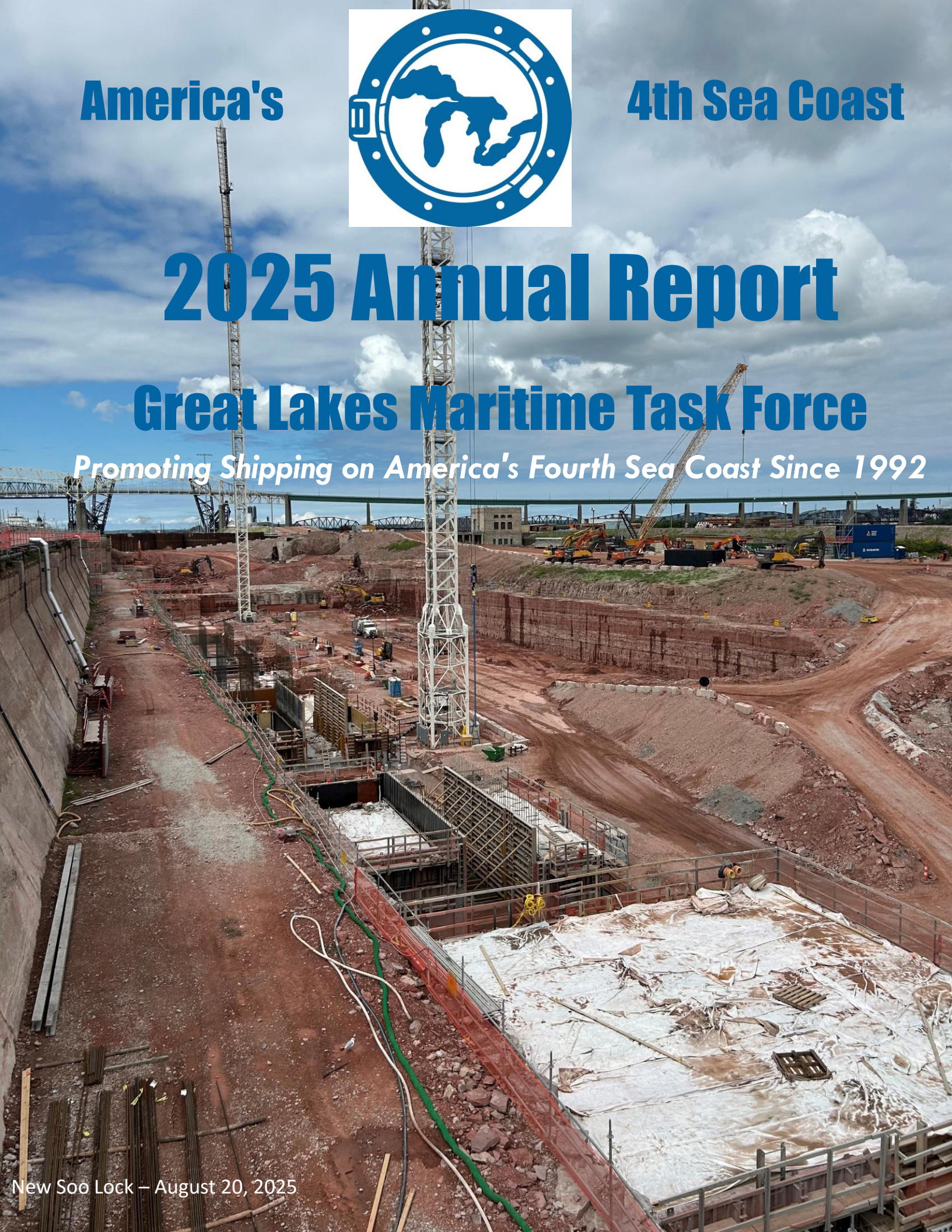


**4th Sea Coast**

# **2025 Annual Report**

## **Great Lakes Maritime Task Force**

*Promoting Shipping on America's Fourth Sea Coast Since 1992*



New Soo Lock — August 20, 2025



## TASK FORCE MEMBERS

### ILLINOIS

Amrize  
The Chicago and Western Great  
Lakes Port Council  
CN  
Int'l Union of Operating Engineers  
Local 150

### INDIANA

Central Marine Logistics, Inc.  
Ports of Indiana

### MICHIGAN

Detroit/Wayne County Port Authority  
Dock 63 Inc.  
DTE Energy  
Durocher Marine  
Edw. C. Levy Co.  
Grand River Navigation Company  
Great Lakes Dock & Materials, LLC  
Interlake Logistics Solutions  
International Shipmasters' Association  
The King Co., Inc.  
Lake Michigan Carferry Service, Inc.  
Lakes Pilots Association  
MCM Marine, Inc.  
Michigan Maritime Trades Port Council  
Port of Monroe  
Ryba Marine Construction Co.  
Seafarers International Union  
Soo Marine Supply, Inc.  
Verplank Dock Co.  
Viking Marine Construction  
Walsh Service Solutions  
Warner Petroleum Corp.  
West Michigan Dock and Market –  
Port of Muskegon  
Western Great Lakes Pilots Association

### MINNESOTA

Duluth Seaway Port Authority  
Great Lakes Fleet

### MISSOURI

International Brotherhood  
of Boilermakers

## GLMTF 2025 Year in Review

Once again the Great Lakes shipping started early with a March 21st opening of the Soo Locks. Despite the early opening, cargo numbers have been down for limestone and iron ore as the system continues to evaluate the new Administration's policies while navigating some economic uncertainty. With two months left in the calendar year, limited time remains to right the ship - especially with winter and ice season rapidly approaching.

The new large navigational lock in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, has been a huge success story and remains on track for completion in 2030. Between the United State Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) expert project management, a skilled contractor, and consistent Congressional funding, the new lock stands as an excellent example for the rest of the nation's major infrastructure projects.

The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) received a significant shot in the arm receiving more than \$25 billion in funding through the 2025 Reconciliation Bill to recapitalize their surface and aviation assets. Unfortunately, the Great Lakes heavy icebreaker was once again left out of the funding. Despite inclusion in the House of Representatives' version of reconciliation, the Senate failed to fund the desperately needed national asset. Funding was included for the replacement of the much smaller 140-foot icebreaking tugs; however, it remains unclear if the USCG will be able to acquire the new ships before funding expires.

The Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) will bring the CCGS JUDY LAMARSH into the lakes this year for icebreaking to replace the CCGS GRIFFON, which is undergoing rehabilitation work. Unfortunately, the CCG opposes keeping the icebreaker on the lakes after the CCGS RISLEY finishes its rehabilitation work in the next few years. In addition, the CCG Fleet Renewal Program offers no assistance to the Great Lakes as no intention exists to bring any new Canadian icebreakers into the mix. It seems readily apparent that the Canadian government is pleased to use U.S. icebreakers and doesn't feel the need to do their fair share.

Dredging funding continues to flow from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, but costs have increased almost ten-fold due in large part to expenses associated with dredged material placement upland or in confined disposal facilities. Michigan and Ohio ports and waterways continue to consume large portions of the overall Great Lakes USACE dredging budget with state regulations requiring expensive overreaches above and beyond the federal standard. This forces USACE to make difficult decisions on what ports and waterways will be dredged and could lead to the closure of some of these States' ports. As water levels continue to cyclically drop across the region, dredging will continue to be an ongoing need.

Although the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) completed their rule on the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA) exempting current U.S.-flagged Lakers, the USCG has not finished the enforcement regulations. VIDA serves a vital purpose applying one federal standard across U.S. States, which would minimize a patchwork of conflicting local regulations. The VIDA regulations recognize that current ballast water management systems are not effective in the freshwater of the Great Lakes. Due to a USCG shift in priorities, the VIDA implementation and enforcement regulations most likely will not be complete by the end of next year.

## NEW YORK

American Ship Repair Company, Inc.  
American Steamship Company  
St. Lawrence Seaway Pilots Association

## OHIO

American Maritime Officers, AFL-CIO  
Cleveland-Cliffs Inc.  
Consumer Energy Alliance-Midwest  
CSX Transportation-Toledo Docks  
Great Lakes District Council, ILA, AFL-CIO  
The Great Lakes Towing Company  
IAMAW Local Lodge 1943  
ILA Lake Erie Coal & Ore Dock Council  
ILA Local 1317  
ILA Local 1768  
The Interlake Steamship Company  
International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots, AFL-CIO  
Lake Carriers' Association  
Northeast Technical Services Co.  
Osborne Concrete & Stone Co.  
Port of Cleveland  
Toledo Port Council MTD, AFL-CIO

## PENNSYLVANIA

Carmeuse Lime and Stone, Inc.  
Donjon Shipbuilding & Repair, LLC  
United States Steel Corporation

## WISCONSIN

Bay Engineering, Inc  
Bay Shipbuilding Company  
Brown County Port & Resource Recovery Department  
Fraser Shipyards, Inc.  
Hallett Dock 8 LLC  
Midwest Energy Resources Company  
Port Milwaukee  
Roen Salvage Company

## GREATER WASHINGTON, DC

American Great Lakes Ports Assoc.  
American Maritime Congress  
American Maritime Officers Service  
K&L Gates, LLP  
Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association, AFL-CIO  
Transportation Institute

Restoring America's maritime dominance is paramount to our national and economic security and it all begins on the Great Lakes with iron ore manufactured into steel, which builds the ship hulls of the future. Great Lakes shipyards are primed for expansion and ready to construct the next generation of America's maritime fleet. Whether a new heavy Great Lakes icebreaker or new commercial ships, the shipyards of the heartland are uniquely positioned for success with the workforce, raw materials, and strong industrial base.

America's maritime workforce continues to age and is in need of new mariners to carry the torch of a resurging industry. The USCG's credentialing process remains antiquated and cumbersome to the point it almost requires a lawyer to complete the Merchant Mariner Credential application. The USCG is working to modernize the National Maritime Center and direction to do so continues to come from Congress. The U.S. can build as many ships as possible, but without men and women who are the soul of the ships to run them, it becomes an exercise in futility. We must invest in mariner recruitment at a national, regional, and local level. Supporting the Jones Act is crucial in this endeavor to guarantee American maritime sailors consistent future employment on U.S.-flagged vessels paying top wages with family supporting benefits.

The following annual report advocates for the resources and policies needed to support our nation's 4<sup>th</sup> Sea Coast and the industries that drive North American manufacturing through a connection with maritime trade. Please visit the GLMTF online at [www.glmtf.org](http://www.glmtf.org) for more details.

We thank you,

John E. Clemons, American Maritime Officers, AFL-CIO, GLMTF President

James H. I. Weakley, Lake Carriers' Association, GLMTF, 1st Vice President

John D. Baker, International Longshoremen's Association – Local 1317, GLMTF 2nd Vice President

Richard Hammer, Donjon Shipbuilding and Repair, GLMTF 3rd Vice President

Members of the Great Lakes Maritime Task Force



Photo Courtesy of Ed Bansek



## A message from the GLMTF President, John E. Clemons American Maritime Officers

2025 has been quite a year with a new Administration dedicated to restoring the American maritime sector. Fundamental to achieving a robust maritime is the Jones Act, which requires that ships operating between two American ports are U.S. built, U.S. owned and operated and crewed by U.S. sailors. The United States is not unique with this cabotage law as 105 countries around the world have some form of cabotage law to protect against foreign interests exploiting domestic trade. So far, the new Administration has committed to supporting the Jones Act, which is vital in the Great Lakes trade. The resurgence of American shipbuilding will depend heavily on the Jones Act. When countries, for example Canada, diminish their cabotage laws and allow foreign built vessels to dominate their domestic trade, it disincentivizes shipbuilding and completely erodes shipbuilding capability.

American sailors are paid good, family raising wages, they receive benefits, and they are afforded the highest safety standards in the world. We must celebrate their success and provide them with the comforting sense that they will always have a job sailing on U.S.-flagged vessels. These same commercial sailors are also the backbone of American defense, providing strategic sealift capability supporting our troops abroad. This is more important now than ever with the uncertain geopolitical environment dominating every aspect of the world.

With the new Administration mandating deregulation efforts by all agencies, now is the time to sensibly eliminate barriers to entry into the maritime workforce. The USCG licensing program is outdated in a digital age where applications are completed quickly and easily online. Mariners shouldn't have to wait months to receive credentials to get onboard a vessel to start working. As American maritime dominance ramps up, mariners will need flexibility to meet the needs of our nation. State maritime academies will need to increase enrollment to produce the top-notch officers required to crew our ships.

We must capitalize on the spotlight the U.S. maritime industry is currently receiving. Let's get the steel cut, the ships in the water, the sailors on the boats, and the American industrial engine humming. Now is the time for Americans to dominate the sea, the inland rivers, and our Fourth Sea Coast, which is the Great Lakes.



Photo Courtesy of Fraser Shipyard



## Keeping Ports and Connecting Channels Open

Great Lakes water levels have started to decline after historic highs experienced in 2020. Significant sediment continues to enter navigation channels either from tributary deposits or longshore current pushing material into harbor entrances. Straining federal dollars is the fact that states are increasingly exceeding the federal standard, driving cost up when USACE only budgets for the standard. GLMTF supports continued distributions from the HMTF to draw down the \$10 billion surplus and allocations of at least 13 percent of the total distribution must go to the Great Lakes Navigation System. GLMTF also asks that states employ reasonable standards that balance the needs of navigation with the reality of a constrained federal dredging budget and environmental priorities.



## Jones Act is America First

GLTMF supports strict adherence to the Jones Act and all existing maritime cabotage laws and opposes waivers that favor foreign vessel agents looking to compromise U.S. economic security. The Jones Act, is the only line of defense protecting U.S. shipbuilding and U.S. sailors from countries that would gladly undercut the American maritime industry with their government subsidized and cheaply built foreign vessels. The Jones Act prioritizes the 650,000 jobs tied to the U.S. domestic maritime trade. We, as a country, cannot afford to offshore our shipbuilding or our merchant mariners, which are vital to our national security and ability to project power around the globe. As the world's trade policies continue to shift, the Jones Act should not be a bargaining chip, but instead an example of American might and the key to rebuilding America's maritime dominance. Our domestic waterways and ports should never be for sale to other countries who do not have our best interest in mind. Supporting the Jones Act is supporting American First.



## Short Sea Shipping

The movement of goods via the marine transportation system continues to be the most economical and environmentally friendly means of moving large quantities of products. Marine transportation isn't just large oceangoing container ships that depart a port and arrive a month later to their destination; it can be, and in some cases already is, much more. The system of inland waterways and the Great Lakes have capacity to move more by water. The Harbor Maintenance Tax is a key impediment to launching new short sea shipping services. The tax is only assessed if the cargo moves by vessel, so it serves as a disincentive to move trucks and their payloads by water. GLMTF supports a narrow exemption from the Harbor Maintenance Tax for non-bulk cargo moved on the Great Lakes.

## Build Ships in the Heartland

Great Lakes shipyards are primed for additional work to support the new Administration's focus on rebuilding the U.S.-fleet. Navy frigates, USCG icebreakers and buoy tenders, commercial barges and self-unloading bulk carriers have all been built in Great Lakes shipyards. New workforce programs have inspired the next generation of skilled workers ready to make their mark on U.S. maritime history building the next generation of American ships. Great Lakes shipyards have modernized and expanded their capabilities. GLMTF supports the Title XI Ship Loan Guarantee Program and Capital Construction Fund. The minimum appropriation for Title XI should be at least \$100 million. We also support trade negotiations and/or legislation to end foreign government subsidies to their own shipyards. Finally, GLMTF supports federal tax policies that encourage the modernization of both plant and equipment for shipowners and shipyards by the use of investment tax credits.





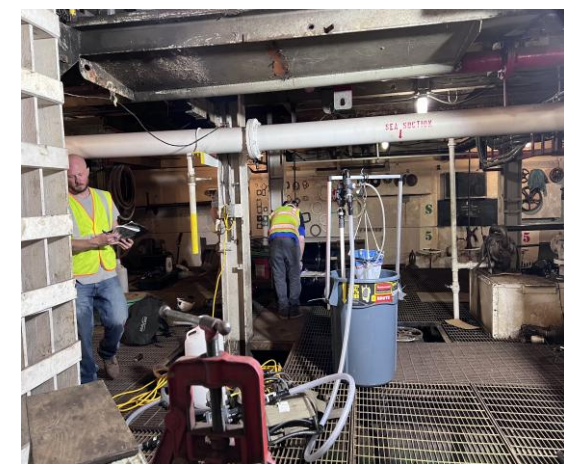


## State Maritime Academies – The Future

Merchant mariners are the backbone of American economic and national security. Rebuilding U.S. maritime capacity requires the men and women qualified and licensed to serve on ships. Our state maritime academies, including the Great Lakes Maritime Academy (GLMA), produce the best sailors in the world, held to the highest safety and environmental protection standards. In addition, GLMA is the only accession source for merchant mariners to receive Great Lakes 1st Class Pilotage endorsements, which is required to serve as a Captain or Mate on the Great Lakes. Congress should appropriate sufficient federal funding to the State maritime academies and continue to look for ways to advance these critical mariner accession sources.

## Build the USCG Heavy Great Lakes Icebreaker

The USCG has committed to building the new Great Lakes heavy icebreaker and requested all construction funding in the 2025 Reconciliation Bill. Unfortunately, the final bill left the Great Lakes out. Over the past ten years, 10,000 jobs and \$2 billion in economic activity have been lost due to a lack of USCG icebreakers on the Great Lakes. Funding must be provided now for a second heavy icebreaker to be built and operated on the Great Lakes. The Canadians continue to refuse to commit additional icebreaking resources to the Great Lakes despite the fact that Canadian ships consume the majority of federal icebreaking hours. GLMTF urges the Administration to appropriate full construction funding for the icebreaker in 2026. GLMTF also urges the Canadian Coast Guard to allocate additional icebreaking resources and station them permanently on the Lakes.



*Ballast Water Testing*

## Uniform Regulation of Ballast Water

The Great Lakes need ballast water regulations that are protective of the environment and maintain efficient waterborne commerce on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway. The U.S. EPA Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA) final rule exempted all existing vessels operating exclusively on the Great Lakes (“Lakers”) from meeting the numeric ballast water discharge standard knowing that current technology doesn’t function on the high ballasting rates of Lakers and in the fresh water of the Great Lakes. New Lakers would have to install equipment that may not meet the discharge standard (i.e., equipment standard) either. GLMTF supports the “existing Laker” exemption but does not agree with the “equipment standard”.

## 2030 New Soo Lock

GLMTF supports the appropriation of any final funds needed to bring the new Soo Lock mega project to a close. As of 2025, the project has received nearly \$2 billion. Due to this efficient Congressional funding, exceptional USACE project management, and a dedicated and professional construction contractor, the new Soo Lock has become a beacon of excellence that sets the example for the rest of the nation. The lock chamber is currently underway and a fully-operational 1200-ft long by 110-ft wide navigation lock is expected to be online in the summer of 2030. It is a true success story that ensures the reliability of the Great Lakes Navigation System.





**Great Lakes Maritime Task Force** is a member-driven organization formed in 1992 to defend the Jones Act; promote Great Lakes commercial maritime industry and trades; speak with a unified voice on issues impacting our members, economic efficiency, and environmental benefits; and advocate for the Great Lakes in the state capitals and in Washington, D.C. The Great Lakes Maritime Task Force promotes:

- A strong U.S.-flag Merchant Marine on the Great Lakes,
- Expanded domestic and international trade through public and private Great Lakes ports and docks,
- Fully funded maintenance and operation of Great Lakes deep-draft ports and waterways,
- Maximum utilization of U.S. shipyards in the Great Lakes,
- Protection of the Great Lakes environment,
- A strong maritime-dependent Great Lakes economy, and
- Necessary federal icebreaking resources in Great Lakes ports and waterways.



# **GREAT LAKES MARITIME TASK FORCE**

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