



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

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Seaway Corporations Strengthen Ballast Water Rules

Beginning with the start of the 2008 navigation season all ocean-going vessels entering the St. Lawrence Seaway must adhere to tougher ballast water measures to prevent the introduction of invasive species. The Seaway Corporations implemented ballast water regulations that require ocean-going vessels to flush ballast tanks containing only small amounts of water or sediment (called “no ballast on board” vessels or NOBOBs) with saltwater in a area 200 miles from any shore before entering the Seaway. Since 2006 Canada has required that similar vessels transiting Canadian waters conduct saltwater flushing. These measures harmonize the requirements for NOBOB vessels transiting the binational waters of the St. Lawrence Seaway. Stringent ballast water reporting requirements as well as compliance with best management practices will continue to remain in force. The new requirements consist of the following:

- In March 2008, the Seaway Corporations issued a new regulation to require ocean-going vessels whose ballast tanks contain only residual amounts of water or sediment to undergo “saltwater flushing” before entering the Seaway. In the past, the procedure was only voluntary in U.S. waters.
- The regulation requires vessels to carry devices to measure the salinity levels of their ballast tanks to assure that proper salinity levels are maintained and recorded; this information is provided prior to Seaway entry
- The new regulation and enhanced boarding program will ensure each and every ocean-going vessel undergoes an inspection.
- The inspection program is administered by the U.S. and Canadian Seaway Corporations, Transport Canada and the U.S. Coast Guard and consists of an onboard verification process whereby ballast tanks are physically checked and water samples are tested to ensure reported salinity levels are valid; confirming effective saltwater flushing.

In a recent study, scientists found that flushing saltwater into ballast tanks that contain residual amounts of water or sediment is “highly effective” in eradicating most exotic aquatic species potentially vectored into the Great Lakes via ballast water. The study documented that this practice produced a kill rate of 99 to 100 per cent for a majority of organisms. Participants in the study concluded that the routine use of saltwater flushing would “greatly improve the protection framework” for the Great Lakes against invasive species carried in ballast tanks. The new SLSDC rule ensures that this procedure is routinely implemented.

Ships that are non-compliant with the ballast water regulations may either return to the open ocean and conduct a ballast water exchange at least 200 miles offshore or retain the ballast in their on-board tanks. Both options impose major economic penalties on ship owners. In addition, the U.S. Seaway Corporation could impose a fine up to \$36,625 per incident.

In seeking to find workable and effective solutions to the invasive species challenge, the SLSDC and Canadian St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation are coordinating with key

stakeholders, including the U.S. Ninth Coast Guard District and Transport Canada. The U.S. Coast Guard is the lead federal agency charged under American law to regulate the discharge of ballast water in domestic ports and inland waters. Since 1997, the Seaway Corporations, Transport Canada and U.S. Coast Guard have conducted ballast water inspections in Montreal for vessels entering the Great Lakes Seaway System. The U.S. Coast Guard is currently developing a comprehensive regulatory program regarding ballast water, and therefore the proposed SLSDC rule is being implemented as an interim measure until that agency issues new national ballast water regulations.

Notable Quotes

Collister Johnson, Jr., Administrator, SLSDC

“Controlling the further introductions of aquatic invasive species into the Great Lakes Seaway System is the number 1 government-marine industry priority in the environmental arena, and the Seaway Corporations are working tirelessly to effect tangible progress as quickly as possible.”

Richard Corfe, President and CEO, SLSMC

"As stewards of a shared resource, we are committed to managing our waterway in a manner that best reflects the combined interests of all stakeholders. This most recent initiative concerning ballast water management, and the implementation of the best scientifically available solutions, illustrates our commitment to achieving a balance between the competing demands placed upon the Seaway".

Dr. David Reid, Senior Physical Scientist, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

“Until reliable alternative ballast treatment systems or management approaches have been fully tested, proven to work, and are available for the major ship classes, the continued mandatory and diligent use of saltwater provides one of the best existing on-board operational management option for protecting the Great Lakes”.

Paul Pathy, Executive Vice-President, Fednav Ltd

"We are very pleased with the new Seaway rules. In line with the use of best practices, our ships have been systematically flushing their tanks even before the new regulations came into force, but the good news is that the general public and all interested parties are now assured that there is 100 percent compliance for all ships that enter the Great Lakes."

Rear Admiral John E. Crowley, Jr., U.S. Ninth Coast Guard District Commander

"The Ninth Coast Guard District is committed to continuing our aggressive efforts to inspect and enforce current ballast water management practices.

The Seaways recent regulation will add to our tool box while we wait for the national standard to be promulgated."