

Canadian, U.S. Journalists Report on Seaway Corporations' Ballast Water Inspection Process in Montreal

More than a dozen Canadian and American journalists responded to an invitation by the U.S. and Canadian Seaway Corporations to witness how Seaway marine inspectors conduct ballast water inspections of ocean-going vessels seeking to trade in the Great Lakes. Reporters were provided the opportunity to board the *FEDERAL KIVALINA*, a Fednav Ltd. 'salty' loaded with 28,000 tons of synthetic rutile sand from Australia destined for Ashtabula, Ohio.

Seaway inspectors conduct ballast water inspections at the St. Lambert Lock, located in Montreal (Quebec). The lock is the entry point by which any vessels seeking to gain entry into the St. Lawrence Seaway / Great Lakes System must pass. Access to the Great Lakes is contingent upon the vessel passing a ballast water inspection conducted by Seaway inspectors at the St. Lambert Lock.

At a press conference held alongside the vessel, Seaway leaders outlined the process of the ballast water inspections to be conducted aboard the *FEDERAL KIVALINA*. Experts from the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Great Lakes Environmental Research Lab and from the University of Windsor provided reporters with evidence of the efficacy of salt water flushing in terms of cleansing ballast water of foreign aquatic nuisance species. The contents of each ballast water tank must reflect a salinity level of at least 30 parts per thousand - a standard scientists believe to be sufficient to kill any hitchhiking exotic species. If the test results reveal that the vessel doesn't meet the minimum standard, the vessel is refused entry to the Seaway, or the non-compliant ballast tanks must remain sealed for the extent of the transit into the Seaway / Great Lakes.

The harmonization in the spring of 2008 of U.S. ballast water regulations with Canadian regulations effectively closed a "loophole" that had existed concerning the so called "NOBOB" vessels (vessels having NO Ballast On Board). Inspections now subject 100% of ballast water tanks (whether loaded or not) for 100% of all vessels entering the Seaway to the same exacting ballast water management standards.

"The daylong media event was a huge success because it showed reporters that Seaway personnel know the ballast water business intimately, and we are determined to make every reasonable step to protect the Lakes from further invasive damage," said Terry Johnson, Jr., Administrator of the Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (SLSDC).

"Our commitment to minimizing the impact of marine transportation remains steadfast" emphasized Richard Corfe, President and CEO of the Canadian St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation (SLSMC). "The combined efforts of U.S. and Canadian inspectors will ensure that no vessel is granted admission without first complying with ballast water management practices that are among the most stringent in the world today".

The two-hour long visit aboard the *FEDERAL KIVALINA* permitted reporters to ask detailed questions about the ballast water inspection process. Following the onboard component of the day's itinerary, ballast water policy experts from Transport Canada and the U.S. Coast Guard updated participants on the status of legislation, development of an internationally agreed upon standard for ballast water management, and implementation dates for these standards by the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

Excerpts from Press Coverage of the May 5th Event:

Print

- Tom Wanamaker, *Watertown Daily Times* (Albany Bureau): “Vessels found to have non-compliant ballast tanks are issued a letter of retention, preventing the ship from discharging any water from the affected tanks, which could compromise the ability to load cargo. Ship captains may return to the open ocean to perform the required salt water flush, an option that costs them time and money. Noncompliant vessels also may face fines of up to \$36,625.”
- René Bruemmer, *The Gazette*: “The new rules are expected to close the door to the great majority of foreign species that can live in North America’s freshwater system.”
- Courtney Tower, *The Bar-code Border*: “Salt water works when it flushes out the bilge in ships’ ballast tanks. Yet it is seen by the U.S. Congress and U.S. Administration as “an interim measure,” and Canada agrees.”

Radio

- David Sommerstein, *North Country Public Radio (Watertown, NY)*: “The United States and the Canada are trying to figure out how to keep new invasive species out of the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes. 185 have already snuck in, costing the region billions of dollars a year. Many hitchhiked in the ballast tanks of foreign ships. Both countries want the public to know they’re doing something about the problem.”
- *Julien Bilodeau/Pascale Guericolas, Radio-Canada Internationale (The Green Week, May 11, 2008)*: “So, for these ships, the rules already require that they exchange ballast water at sea before entering Canada. Therefore, they must exchange freshwater in their ballast tanks, replacing it with saltwater. That solves the problem because saltwater, once it is mixed (in sufficient quantity) with freshwater, nothing can survive.”

Television

- Brian Dwyer, *News 10 Now (Watertown, NY)*: “Montreal is the key city in this process because it’s before ships enter the St. Lawrence Great Lakes System and testing there helps keep the invasive species out.”